MLE POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES FOR ODISHA

Drafting Committee

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Crossing the Rubicon………

Working for a cause that you believe in is like fighting a war. A war which one can hope to win only if one is committed to venture into new boundaries, to dare to take a plunge, to cross the Rubicon, like Caesar.

The Committee for Drafting this "MLE Policy and Implementation Guidelines", constituted by OPEPA, is committed to the cause of bringing quality education to the disadvantaged. We took up the challenge as a call to contribute, to dare, to cross……

We thank Smt. Usha Padhi, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, S&ME, Govt. of Odisha and Shri Krushna Gopal Mahapatra, Director, OPEPA for the trust and the MLE Cell in OPEPA and Smt. Lalita Patnaik & Sri Amarjeet Pradhan of UNICEF, Odisha for the big support. We did draw our mandate and inspiration from all of them in our first meeting with them on August 29, 2012 when our work began. We coopted Dr. Minati Panda, Director, NMRC and Dr. Basanta Manjari Acharya, Deputy Director, OPEPA for further support.

We are glad that we began well and ended on time. But, we know, it is only a small step, the end of a beginning, for there are miles to go, wars to fight, and many-a-Rubicon to cross………

Ajit Mohanty
(for the Drafting Committee)

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I. Background Note

➢ Tribal people constitute 22.13% of Odisha's population. There are 62 scheduled tribes including 13 identified as primitive tribes.

➢ The ST communities in Odisha speak 72 mother tongues broadly grouped into 38 languages. However, the current figure for the number of tribal languages in Odisha varies from 22 to 26. It seems many tribal languages have become extinct and many more are endangered (see UNESCO, 2009: *Atlas of world's languages in danger.* http://unesco.org/culture/en/endangeredlanguages.)

➢ The STs have a higher incidence of Poverty compared to other social classes in Odisha (52.09% compared to 32.62%, 17.08%, 13.18% & 29.54%, respectively, for SC, OBC, Others & Total Population; www.odisha.gov.in/p&c/Download/2011-12/Annual_Plan_2011_12_Vol_I.pdf accessed on October 24, 2012)

➢ Compared to other Social categories, the STs in Odisha fare the worst in literacy; 37.37% against the overall State Literacy rate of 63.08% (55.53% for the SCs), with a wide gender gap (51.48% & 23.37%, respectively, for male & female STs) in Odisha.

➢ Incidence of educational failure and dropout ('push-out') among the STs are very high. By Class V, over 50% of the ST children are out of school and 80% by Class X. This means that out of 100 tribal children joining Class I, only 20 remain to appear High School Examination, which only 8 of them pass. Thus, there is a huge wastage of 92% in the public system of school education for tribal children. Educational failure of the ST children perpetuates capability deprivation and poverty (Mohanty, 2008; Mohanty & Skunabb-Kangas, 2012).

➢ Causes of Poor Educational Performance of the ST children are many and have been severally discussed in various Government and non-Government documents. However, language barrier that most tribal children face when they join school in a dominant language, which is not their mother tongue, is held to be a major factor in their educational failure (Mohanty, 2000; Jhingran, 2005; OPEPA). In Odisha, DPEP assessment showed that most of the ST children, particularly those in high tribal concentration areas, have inadequate exposure to Odia when they come to school. It takes at least 3 years for a tribal child entering Class I to understand the language of the teachers and textbooks and the problem of 'non-comprehension' burdens the child in early years leading to maximum "dropout" in Classes II & III and cumulative learning deficiency. The home language and school language mismatch in primary schooling is critical since primary education, including math education, is mostly education in language use – comprehension, expression, reading and writing. More importantly, the practice of early schooling in an imposed dominant language goes against the strong evidence that early literacy and education in mother tongue as the language of teaching is the most effective form of education for the linguistic minority children.

➢ There are more than 14,000 Primary level schools in Odisha with at least 50% ST children; over 6800 of these schools have more than 90% ST children.

- Keeping in view the large scale learning problems among the ST children due to the language barrier that they face in early education, several attempts were made to deal with the mismatch between home and school languages.
- In 1996, under the DPEP in Odisha, early primers were prepared in six tribal languages. However, due to various operational problems, these were not put to use.
- In 2006, OPEPA decided to start mother tongue based multilingual education (MLE) in 10 tribal languages with the first batch of children under the programme joining Class I in the year 2007.

II. Current Status of MLE in Odisha

- OPEPA has taken up mother tongue based MLE as an innovative programme in tribal education under SSA. The programme is currently implemented in 544 schools in 10 tribal languages[1] with 384 MLE teachers and 428 Sikhya Sahayaks (Language Instructors). The programme covers Classes I to V. So far 33,555 children have been covered under the programme. The programme is to be extended to 1000 schools in 9 tribal languages in addition to the 10 languages in the current MLE programme.
- Since 2006, the MLE Cell in OPEPA has taken up a massive task of planning and implementation of MLE programme in Odisha including identification of languages, selection of schools, Material Preparation, Teacher Training, programme operation, Monitoring and Evaluation. The scale in which the programme has been taken up is commendable. That the programme has produced, in 10 languages, 180 textbooks, 510 and 810 Big and Small Books, respectively, for Classes I and II, 60 story books, and 40 alphabet/number charts shows that the effort has been mammoth. The programme has also contributed substantially to capacity building having created a group of 20 MLE Resource Persons and 60 Trainers and trained 384 teachers, 428 Vidya Volunteers or Language Instructors besides producing over 17 Training Manuals and Modules.
- Languages in MLE as Languages of Teaching and Language Subjects: Tribal MT as the medium of instruction (MI) from Class I till Class III and as Language Subject from Class IV; Odia as language subject in Classes II and III and as MI from Class IV, English as Language Subject from Class III.
- Broad Evaluation of MLE Programme in Odisha shows a high degree of success. Odisha was the second state (after Andhra Pradesh) in India to start MLE programme and the Odisha model has drawn wide national and international attention; the Odisha Pilot Programme of MLE has influenced MLE policy and practice in Nepal (Skutnabb-Kangas & Mohanty, 2009). Several evaluations of Odisha MLE (UNICEF, NCERT, Panda & Mohanty, 2009 & others) show significant positive impact of the programme. MLE in Odisha has been found to have positive effects on children's classroom achievement, participation and attendance, community perception and involvement, and teacher attitude.

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[1] The languages covered under MLE programme are Kui, Saora (Saura), Kuvi, Juanga, Santali, Koya, Kissan, Oram, Munda, and Bonda.

- Mother tongue based education is now planned to be introduced in the early childhood (pre-primary) programmes in Odisha.

III. Problems and Issues

- Despite its demonstrated effectiveness as a system of quality education for the ST children, the MLE programme in Odisha, like any other good system of education, leaves scope for further improvement. The programme itself has remained under the shadow of uncertainties due to several factors: a) absence of a clear long-term perspective, b) inherent weaknesses in the nature of the programme, c) implementation difficulties, d) evaluation and monitoring problems and e) limitations of the current model of MLE in dealing with diverse linguistic contexts of the classrooms.

- Recent developments such as the incorporation of mother tongue based educational programme component in pre-primary education for 3 – 6 year olds in Odisha and the questions of quality of education as envisaged in the RTE Act, call for a review of the current MLE programmes in the state.

- Extension of MLE to larger number of languages and schools would require flexibility and structural adjustments in the nature of the programme and its implementation.

IV. Objectives

- The present report seeks to address the problems and issues broadly indicated above by recommending policy and implementation guidelines in respect of (a) languages-in-education of ST children, (b) changes in the current structure and plan of MLE for better effectiveness, (c) application of MLE in multiple language classrooms, (d) possible adjustments in the MLE programme in view of the introduction of MT based pre-primary education, (e) effective practices in material preparation, teacher training and placement, classroom pedagogy, monitoring and evaluation of MLE of ST children.

V. Educational Goals for Tribal Children

- A fair and equitable opportunity for achieving academically at school;
- High competence in mother tongue as a basis for all learning, including quality learning of other languages and for identity and self-confidence;
- High levels of multilingualism;
- Strong, positive multilingual and multicultural identity and positive attitudes towards self and others;
- A fair chance of developing awareness and competence necessary for democratic citizenship and working for a more equitable world for oneself and one's community as well as others.

VI. Models of Education for Linguistic Minorities and MLE: What Works, what does not?

- **Dominant-language-medium Schooling:** United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues commissioned two expert papers (Magga et. al., 2005 and Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar, 2008) (see also Mohanty & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012) both of which, along with a large bulk of research, have shown that education in a dominant language (submersion schooling) for the indigenous tribal minorities:

- o Violates right to education and prevents access by creating linguistic, pedagogical, cognitive and psychological barriers;
- o Causes serious mental harm and marginalization, curtails development of children's capability (leading to poverty), and assimilates them forcefully to the dominant group;
- o Has a subtractive effect on the mother tongue while the development of proficiency in the language of schooling remains slow and limited;
- o Results in inadequate development of multilingual proficiency which deprives children of the cognitive and metacognitive benefits strongly associated with multilingualism;
- o Creates a language barrier and problems of non-comprehension in schools which cumulate to school failure and large-scale "push out";
- o Leads to extinction of tribal languages and loss of linguistic diversity.

Thus, dominant-language-only programme of education is the least effective form of education for the linguistic minorities and it is organized against solid research evidence on how best to enable children to achieve academically in school and how to reach high levels of multilingualism.

➢ **Early-Transition Schooling:** In early-transition (also called early-exit) programmes, tribal and other linguistic minority children are taught mainly in their mother tongue for up to 2 to 3 years with the dominant language as a subject. By Class IV, most of the teaching is in the dominant language medium whereas mother tongue may or may not be taught as a school subject. There is a large body of research (including the very well-known large-scale studies – Ramirez et al., 1991; Thomas & Collier, 2002 and, more recently, Heugh et al. 2010) showing that early-exit transitional programmes:
- o Fail to develop adequate mother tongue proficiency while proficiency in dominant language also remains limited and, therefore, the usual cognitive benefits of multilingualism do not accrue to the children;
- o Show limited and short-term academic benefits, at best.

Thus, early-transitional programmes of MLE may be somewhat better than the dominant-language-medium schooling but they are not very effective; initially the children in early-transition programmes seem to perform quite well, but when the mother tongue medium teaching becomes minimal and gets over, their performance declines and competence in the dominant and other school languages, such as English, remains low. Early-transition programmes are weak and soft assimilative forms of MLE and they fail to develop strong linguistic and cultural identity. Early transition to L2 (or the dominant language) goes against the research evidence, which make a strong case for at least 6 – 8 years of use of mother tongue as the main medium of instruction in MLE programmes of the 'late-exit' variety.

➢ **Late-Transition Schooling:** Strong and successful models of MLE for indigenous tribal minority children all over the world use mainly the mother tongue as the medium of instruction (MI) during the first 6 – 8 years of primary education with the dominant language as a second language subject taught by multilingual/bilingual teachers who know the children's mother tongue. There is robust research evidence to show that

the length of mother tongue medium education is more important than any other factor in predicting educational success of MLE programmes. Both the Ramirez et al. (1991) study involving a sample size of 2,353 students and the Thomas and Collier study (world's largest longitudinal study of minority students), involving a total of over 2,10,000 students, show that when different models of early- and late-transition from the mother tongue are compared, length of education in mother tongue medium was the strongest predictor of children's school achievement, bi/multilingual competence and achievement in the dominant language (English). Ethiopia's national evaluation of different regional variations of mother tongue medium education (Heugh et al., 2010) shows that the students with 8 years of mother tongue medium education (MTM) along with Amharic (the national language of Ethiopia) and English as school subjects, had better school achievement as well as proficiency in English compared to those with 6 years of MTM who, in turn, performed better than those with 4 years of MTM. Thus, the research and practice of MLE all over the world, strongly support the conclusion that, compared to the early-transition, late-transition forms of MLE with at least 6 – 8 years of teaching in the mother tongue medium leads to:
- o Better academic achievement,
- o Higher levels of multilingual competence, and
- o Better achievements in dominant languages (including English).

➢ **Mother-tongue-medium Schooling with no transition:** As with the 'mainstream' programmes for the dominant language groups, mother-tongue-medium education with no transition and with other regional, national and international languages taught as second and foreign languages and as school subjects, can be seen as the strongest form of education for tribal and indigenous groups. These forms of schooling in the mother-tongue-medium with other languages as school subjects can promote:
- o Better school achievement,
- o High levels of achievement in dominant and other languages (such as English)
- o Positive linguistic and cultural identity.

However, in multilingual societies like India, education must foster high degree of multilingual proficiency among all children. Tribal and other linguistic minorities, in particular, must develop, through education, competence in the languages of regional, national and wider communication. Thus, while the dominant language medium of education has not worked, mother-tongue-only programme (with other languages being taught as school subjects) cannot be seen as a viable alternative for tribal children in a multilingual society. MLE is accepted and promoted as an effective model of quality education for the indigenous tribal and other linguistic minorities all over the world.

VII. MLE and the Question of Transition from Mother Tongue to Other Tongue:

Multilingual education (MLE) involves use of two or more languages for teaching and it seeks to develop high levels of multilingualism and multiliteracy (Mohanty, Panda, Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009). Psycholinguistic principles of bi- or multi-lingual education (Cummins, 2009) suggest that positive transfer to a second language occurs when

cognitive and academic proficiency in the mother tongue is well developed. Therefore, early support for development of mother tongue through schooling is necessary. International experience with MLE (Heugh & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2010) shows that quality education for high levels of academic achievement and development of multilingual proficiency must begin with development of proficiency in MT used as the language of teaching for at least 6-8 years of schooling and gradually develop other languages through their systematic use as language subjects and language of teaching.

Is three years of mother tongue medium education not long enough for a smooth transition to the major/dominant language? Clearly, the answer is "no". Apart from the bulk of research on this question (including Ramirez report, Thomas & Collier studies and the national evaluation in Ethiopia by Heugh et al. 2007), a 2012 report on the Kom Experimental Mother Tongue Education Pilot Project in the North West region of Cameroon (Walter & Chuo, 2012) shows that "three year period of the intervention (in MT medium MLE) is not long enough to adequately prepare students for an effective transition to L2 instruction". In this experimental MLE programme, children's MT (Kom) is used as the MI in Classes I to III with English taught as a school subject. From Class IV onwards, the children return to the standard English-only instruction programme. In Class V, comparison between children in the 12 experimental schools with 12 matched English-only schools showed significant drop in the performance of the early-transition children (who had switched after Class III from Kom mother tongue medium to English medium instruction). It may be noted that, despite the drop in their performance between Classes III and V, the MT medium children still performed better than the non-MT English medium children.

Thus, the research findings in respect of MLE programmes in different parts of the world are emphatic and clear: mother tongue based MLE programmes are better than the dominant language programmes and late-transition MLE programmes are better than early-transition MLE.

VIII. Languages-In-Education of Tribal Children in Odisha: Policy Guidelines

➢ **Mother Tongue Based MLE for Tribal Children in Odisha:** While models of education cannot be uncritically transferred to other contexts and have to be localized, experience from different parts of the world forcefully suggest some broad principles delineating the characteristics of highly successful and less successful programmes of education for the indigenous and tribal minorities. Without any question, mother tongue based multilingual education (MLE) is the most effective form of education for tribal minorities and Odisha has taken a momentous step in launching the pilot programme of MLE in tribal languages. The MLE programme in Odisha must be continued and extended to ALL tribal children in the state in a phase-wise manner subject to availability of resources and feasibility conditions.

➢ **Transition from Tribal Language MI to Odia as MI:** MT-based MLE is vitally linked to tribal children's educational success, capability development, identity and chances of upward socio-economic mobility. Successful models of MLE for tribal/indigenous children use mainly the mother tongue as the teaching language for at least 6 – 8 years with good teaching of the majority language as a second language subject as

well as other language(s) of wider and international communication (such as Hindi and English). It is evident that MT provides the scaffolding on which one can build a strong basis for education and learning of languages and if the scaffolding is withdrawn too early it is quite likely that there will be problems, as has been shown earlier. The current MLE programme of OPEPA has the following plan of use of languages as medium of instruction (MI) and as language subjects:

- ❖ Class I – L1 (MT) as MI
- ❖ Class II – L1 (MT) as MI; L2 (Odia) as subject
- ❖ Class III – L1 (MT) as MI; L2 (Odia) and L3 (English) as subjects
- ❖ Class IV – L2 (Odia) as MI; L1 (MT) and L3 (English) as subjects
- ❖ Class V – L2 (Odia) as MI; L1 (MT) and L3 (English) as subjects

Evidently, the Odisha MLE programme follows an early-transition plan with 3 years of use of MT as MI and subsequent transition to Odia as MI. English is introduced as a language subject from Class III onwards. Before turning to the questions relating to languages in MLE, it is necessary to examine the duration of use of MT as MI. Are three years of mother tongue medium teaching long enough? The answer lies in the purpose of the intervention through MLE. Basic literacy in mother tongue is not an isolated end in itself; it is also important that a child is enabled to engage in complex academic and creative activities, regulated thinking for effective problem solving and conscious reflection on language as an object of thought (and not just as a vehicle of expression). For this level of critical cognitive engagement with language as a powerful tool, demonstrated proficiency in social communication through the mother tongue is necessary but not sufficient; mother tongue proficiency needs to be developed to a higher cognitive and academic plane so that it can effectively support school learning and development of proficiency in other languages. The consensual position that emerges from worldwide experience with MLE is that a minimum of 6 years of MT as the MI is needed for the benefits of MLE to be sustained in the long run. For the tribal children's developed MT proficiency to act as a catalyst for fostering high levels of classroom achievement and positive transfer to proficiency in Odia and English, 3 years of use of MT as MI is certainly not sufficient. Performance of Odisha MLE children is definitely better than their non-MLE counterparts, but the level of classroom achievement is still not high enough to warrant withdrawal of the MT as MI after 3 years of primary schooling, even if the MT is continued as a language subject. If the intensive support for development of MT proficiency is withdrawn too early, the level of MT proficiency is likely to remain inadequate to scaffold development of higher levels of classroom performance and multilingual proficiency. If the benefits of MT-based MLE are to be sustained beyond the point of transition from MT, three years of use of MT as MI is clearly not enough. However, the following contextual factors need to be considered in dealing with the question of length or duration of use of MT in MLE programme for tribal children in Odisha:

- o The multilingual social reality in India (also in Odisha) which increases the chances of multilingual exposure for children even in remote and less accessible regions;

- o The need to develop school-based competence in at least 3 – 4 languages (MT, Odia, English and, later, other languages like Hindi and Sanskrit);
- o The broad structural break (cleavage) between primary (Classes I to V) and post-primary stages of education in Odisha which makes it more likely for tribal children to join the regular post-primary/secondary schools along with the majority-language children;

and, more importantly,

- o The Government of Odisha has developed curriculum framework (*New-Arunima*) for pre-primary education and this is being adapted in different tribal languages for introduction of MT-based pre-primary education for 3- to 6-year-old children.

That MT-based pre-primary education may now be available for tribal children in Odisha is definitely a great advantage but the number of years of MT in MLE cannot be shortened on this ground alone since, in most countries where late-transition advantage is noted, some form of MT-based pre-school education is available. However, while this and other contextual conditions as the ground realities in Odisha MLE have to be taken note of, there is a strong case for use of MT as MI for at least the five years (Class I to V) of primary level MLE. This, of course, has to be supported by a minimum quality of education in the MT as well as Odia and English. It is recommended that the MT of tribal children be used as the medium of instruction for the five years of primary education in the MLE programme in Odisha to realize the long-term benefits of MLE for sustained impact on tribal children's educational achievements, high levels of proficiency in Odia and English, and positive transfer to post-primary education with a sense of self-efficacy and identity.

➢ **Languages in Odisha MLE as School Subjects:** Odia is introduced in Class II and continues as a school subject in the current MLE programme; at present Odia is also the language of teaching (MI) from Class IV. English is taught from Class III as a school subject as in all other Government schools in Odisha. In view of the need to continue with MT as the language of teaching for at least five years, Odia must continue as the second language subject from Class II onwards.

Research on MLE and teaching of English as a second or foreign language has consistently shown that the longer the MT is used as the MI, the better is the achievement in English as a school subject. This may appear to be counter-intuitive, but as pointed out, development of high levels of cognitive and academic proficiency in MT along with progressive exposure to other languages in the classroom promotes metalinguistic awareness of languages and engagement with cross-linguistic reflections to make learning of languages more effective and quick. The psycholinguistic principles of positive transfer of developed MT proficiency to other languages are well established. Pedagogues of English all over the world as well as in India agree that the time spent on development of MT is at no cost to learning of English as a second/foreign language. Keeping in view the commonality of proficiency across different languages and linguistic interdependence and

also the psycholinguistic basis of positive transfer from developed MT to other languages, late introduction to English founded on strong MT development is supported on sound pedagogic grounds. However, in India, the popular aspirations for English as a language of global and economic advantages have resulted in increasing popularity of private English-medium schools and pushing English to a prominent position in school curriculum and to earlier Classes in the Government primary schools. In fact, English is now taught from Class I level in most of the states in India. Odisha stands out as having a policy of English from Class III, which can be seen as relatively a positive and well-reasoned step. Although from the pedagogic perspective, a later introduction in Class IV to VI as in earlier days is justifiable, it may not now be practical and politically expedient to ask for moving up the point of introduction of English in the state curriculum by a year or two without a prolonged debate on the issue. It would also not be feasible to seek a diverse pattern of later introduction of English in the MLE programme for tribal children. In view of the different level and nature of familiarity with the language in the milieu, teaching of English to tribal children calls for some special pedagogic strategies some of which are mentioned later in this report. In respect of the point of introduction of English in the MLE programme for tribal children, it is recommended that, as in the common state curriculum, English be introduced as a language subject not earlier than Class III.

Finally, in view of the fact that the MLE programme has led to production of a large bulk of language materials in different tribal languages, which, also independently on their own, have resources for language development (also as a ripple effects of MT based MLE), the question of continuing the tribal MTs as a language subject in the post-primary grades can be seriously taken up. Andhra Pradesh, for example, is actively planning for taking the 8 tribal languages in its MLE programme to a language subject status from Class VI. It is recommended that use of tribal languages as language subjects in post-primary levels starting with Class VI should be actively considered.

IX. MLE FOR MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOMS

The current model of MLE in Odisha is applied to classrooms with a single tribal MT, which is sought to be strengthened through its use as MI before a transition to the second language as MI. This model cannot be directly applied in the context of a large number of multilingual classrooms in Odisha in which children from different language communities bring their MTs to the same classroom; it is not uncommon to find classrooms with children from three to five MTs. The dominant language programme of education with use of Odia as the MI fails to address the language barrier that each of the different MT children face and the current MLE programme is limited since it cannot deal with the required strengthening of a number of MTs simultaneously. The usual strategy in developed countries in dealing with multilingual classrooms is to separate the children into single MT groups and apply the conventional model of bilingual or multilingual education. This approach is a difficult option in resource-constrained conditions. In less resource rich countries, usually the small language communities remain isolated and as such the problem of teaching children with multiple MTs coming together in the same classroom has not surfaced as a major challenge. As such, the challenges of teaching multilingual classrooms with different MT children have not been

addressed so far anywhere in the world. Odisha would be a pioneer in responding to the challenge.

The fundamental psycholinguistic principles of MLE would still apply to the ML classroom context; building a strong foundation of each child's language (L1 or MT) is a prerequisite for high levels of multilingual competence, development of the second language (L2 or Odia) and effective classroom learning. The real challenge, therefore, is simultaneous promotion of multiple mother tongues through effective classroom communication and teaching-learning strategies. Fortunately, a lot is known about how languages support each other, the dynamics of multilingual communication and the mechanisms of transfer across languages, in order to develop specific strategies for extension of the pedagogic principles of MLE to multiple language classrooms. Broadly, some strategies for MLE in multiple language classrooms involving simultaneous development of multiple MTs, multilingual awareness and cross-linguistic reflection, progressive engagement with classroom curricular learning and development of MT and L2 (Odia) can be suggested, as some examples:

➢ Using all the languages of children as resources rather than as problems; for each child, her language is the only way of her articulation and, therefore, classroom must create space for her articulation;

➢ Using children's spontaneous communication links and chains of multilingual communication as prototypes for classroom communication network (in multilingual contexts, children from different MTs do evolve strategies/mechanisms for establishing communication links in play groups and informal contact situations); this can be facilitated by use of link languages wherever such languages are used by the contact language communities

➢ Designing activities that involve the use of the multiple of languages available in the classroom. In such activities the teacher's role is one of a facilitator and a learner

➢ Classroom processes are transacted in a way that encourages the use of ALL the languages available in the classroom and promotes progressive use of Odia

➢ Developing specific multilingual communication networks and translanguaging through open activities of expression and comprehension, such as picture-story telling, vocabulary development activities, reading and writing

➢ Facilitation of multilingual communication activities (as mentioned earlier) through the help of community volunteers and children from higher Classes (in multi-grade contexts)

➢ Encouraging use of multiple language- and culture-based counting systems, math and games activities for promotion of mathematical concepts in children's languages

➢ Using language games and cross-linguistic reflective activities focusing on structural aspects of languages for development of language awareness, metalinguistic skills and cross-linguistic reflection

➢ Promotion of multiliteracy engagement through unrestrained oral and written expressive activities

➢ Collaborative production of multilingual texts by children working with teachers, community volunteers and other children from higher grades

➢ Gradual use of Odia text books and materials for attainment of specific curricular

objectives

These examples are given only to show that it is feasible to extend MLE programme to multilingual classroom situations. It would not be necessary to develop specific textbooks but some supplementary texts and other TLMs need to be developed and classroom strategies planned. The TLMs already developed in the MLE programme can also be used.

It is recommended that MLE programme be extended to cover multilingual classrooms, which would need special strategies for fostering high levels of classroom learning and multilingual proficiency through simultaneous development of multiple MTs, metalinguistic awareness and cross-linguistic reflections. Some multilingual contexts of classrooms with presence of children belonging to at least 3 mother tongues be identified to start a pilot programme following development of specific teaching-learning plans by an expert group set up specifically for the purpose.

X. IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES FOR MLE IN ODISHA

X.I. MLE Teacher Training and Recruitment:

There are 33,555 children in 544 schools in Odisha's MLE programme. The programme is supported by 812 teachers including 384 regular teachers (as MLE teachers) and 428 specially engaged Language Instructors (Siksha Sahayak) who have had no training in MLE. The ratio of 1:41 is rather high considering that the children are distributed over 5 grades in the MLE programme. For the existing 544 MLE schools, appointment of 1632 MLE teachers is targeted, which, in turn, entails two problems – one, availability of teachers (also Siksha Sahayaks) from within the tribal communities satisfying the minimum eligibility requirements and, two, providing adequate training for the MLE teachers/Instructors/Sahayaks for effective implementation of MLE. A teacher for MLE should essentially be from the target language community, necessarily fluent in the language and familiar with the culture of the community enabling him/her to transact freely with children in their mother tongue and to bring cultural elements and materials from immediate environment of the child into the classroom and school activities with ease.

- o Recruitment of MLE Teachers/Sahayaks/Instructors: A teacher in any school including the MLE School has to fulfill certain requirements of basic academic qualification and language competency. As per the state norm, s/he must have passed the H.S.S.C. Examination with pre-service training in elementary education (C.T. or Diploma in Elementary Education or its equivalent). In addition to his/her familiarity with the mother tongue of the children, he/she has to be well conversant in transacting with L2 and L3. Recruitment of teachers for MLE School is difficult in many ST communities because of acute shortage of persons in some tribes having required minimum qualifications. To manage the mother tongue-based education, one person from the nearby community was engaged, in the initial phase of the MLE programme, as a teacher on contract basis in the MLE schools. In almost all cases, these teachers (commonly known as MLE teachers) are without the requisite basic academic qualification (M. M. Mohanty, Nanda & Dash, 2011). However they were provided intensive in-service training to transact mother tongue–based

education in earlier grades. But with up scaling of the programme to class V, more teachers with adequate qualification and efficiency are required. Further, the teachers' basic prescribed qualification as per stipulations of the RTE Act is to be ensured before their engagement.

The following recommendations are made in respect of recruitment of MLE teachers for the MLE programmes:

- ✓ Eligible persons from the community with fluency in the mother tongue of the children as well as competency in L2 (Odia) and L3 (English) may be considered for recruitment as teachers in the local MLE Schools. Such recruitment should invariably be made by the local authority in consultation with the school committee.

- ✓ Persons from the community with lesser qualifications than prescribed but with fluency in the target language may be engaged on contract basis with a condition of acquiring the required qualifications within a reasonably stipulated time. Such candidates need to be provided adequate support by the state for acquiring the necessary qualification. The state government may move the appropriate authorities for special relaxation of the time limit for such candidates to acquire the required minimum qualification.

- ✓ In case of target language communities having acute shortage of eligible persons to become teachers (even after relaxation of the eligibility criteria), persons not belonging to the community but with proven proficiency in the local language (L1) and familiarity with the local culture, traditions and practices may be considered for engagement as teachers in MLE schools.

- ✓ A long-term plan for attracting potential candidates from the tribal language communities to teaching jobs needs to be developed to identify and sponsor prospective secondary or higher secondary school graduates from the community and provide them all possible incentives and supports so that on completion of the required educational programme and pre-service training they are immediately engaged as MLE teachers.

- ○ Training Teachers/Sahayaks/Instructors: Each MLE Teacher/Sahayak/instructor should have at least a 14-day MLE training at the district level offered by the DIET supported by a team of Master Trainers. The current practice of grade-specific training may be discontinued and replaced by a composite MLE process based training with emphasis on language pedagogy for MLE classrooms.

- ✓ Pre-Service and In-Service Training: Teacher preparation for the MLE schools is of utmost importance to enhance skills of the classroom teachers to deal with the typical issues associated with the education of extremely disadvantaged children in the mother tongue-based instructional processes. The teacher preparation for the MLE programme should not be one time affair rather should be a continuous process to empower the teachers to address the emerging pedagogical and management issues and to be aware of the

innovations in the process that are brought about in other schools or evolving from the research on the MLE programme. The principles, processes and management of MLE need to be adequately incorporated in the *pre-service training curriculum* of elementary school teachers dealing elaborately with strategies, approaches and methods for teaching and learning L1 (Mother tongue), L2 (Odia) and L3 (English). The discussions on the theoretical inputs should be appropriately combined with hands on training in real classroom and school situations.

- High emphasis should be attached to the in-service training of MLE teachers to sharpen their skills for effective classroom transactions, to properly address the emerging pedagogical and management issues and to acquaint them with innovative practices.
- These in-service training programmes of the teachers in the MLE schools shall be within the provisions of the SSA and the RTE Act 2009 and shall be of following types:

  : Induction training for 30 to 60 days for the newly recruited trained and untrained teachers, respectively, with the components of MLE suitably incorporated into the training.
  : At least 5 to 7 days from the mandated 20 days of annual in-service training for all teachers may be utilized for the teachers of the MLE schools.
- Regular monthly sharing meetings at the cluster level to discuss immediate issues as well as sharing innovative ideas.
- All the training programmes should be conducted in the participatory mode and must have classroom transaction component in which the participating teachers would have direct experience of implementing the training inputs in the real situations.
- Major training inputs: In addition to the inputs provided to all teachers of the state, the training programmes for those working in the MLE schools should address the following issues:
  ⇒ Language learning at different levels/stages
  ⇒ Transaction of Language learning with L1 as medium of instruction
  ⇒ Transaction of Language learning with both L1 and L2 as media of instruction
  ⇒ Transaction of subjects other than languages with L1 or L2 or both L1 and L2
  ⇒ Initiation and management of transition from L1 to L2 and to L3
  ⇒ Classroom management techniques in the MLE classes
  ⇒ Community/Parental involvement/support in classroom activities
  ⇒ Srujan: its purpose and conducting activities
✓ Cascade Process of MLE Training and Capacity Building: For effective training of a large number of MLE teachers in the district level DIET, it is necessary to

follow a cascade process beginning with a State Level Resource Group created by intensive and structured training in MLE Theory, Practice and Pedagogy which can be imparted by a team of experts. The State MLE Resource Group, in turn, can prepare the Master Trainers who would impart District DIET level training to the in-service and pre-service MLE teachers. The process of capacity building and training of the State Resource Group and Master Trainers can be taken up in collaboration with some specialized MLE resource institution such as the National Multilingual Education Resource Consortium (NMRC). In view of the often noted distortion in transaction and transmission of training skills and knowledge base in a cascade model, it is important to develop a Flexible Training Package with modules, units, themes, activities and resource materials (in Odia) for training and capacity building to serve as a guide to specific Training activities.

X.II. Broad Pedagogic Strategies for MLE

Effective pedagogic strategies remain the key to the success of any educational activity. General pedagogic principles and good practices must form the core of MLE as of any other system of education. At the same time, MLE for linguistic minorities and tribal children needs to be implemented with some special pedagogic considerations. Realizing the objectives of MT based MLE requires culture based pedagogy and classroom activities drawn from everyday experiences of children in the programme. While MLE classroom transactions target achievement of uniform curricular objectives across different contexts, specific pedagogic processes must remain sensitive to cultural, ecological and experiential diversity. It is recommended that MLE programme be implemented with an emphasis on sound pedagogic principles under the guidance of experience pedagogy experts. Pedagogy Units of SCERT and OPEPA need be strengthened to support MLE program implementation at all levels including training, preparation of textbooks and TLMs, classroom activities, and evaluation.

MLE is often seen as a mode of education to facilitate home to school transition making it possible for a child to move from a minority MT to more dominant languages. The notion of "*exit*" from the language of the child to target language(s) has been criticized as possibly accepting uncritically the hierarchical positioning of languages in the society (Panda, 2012) and in the process undermining the linguistic and cultural identity of the target group. In view of this inherent problem in the underlying assumptions and rationale of MLE, it is recommended that the pedagogy in MLE programme must seek to balance between the languages and diverse cultural practices in a manner that can effectively challenge the hegemonic positioning of some dominant languages and cultures fostering a strong sense of identity and pride in children's own language and culture. Attainment of these and other broad objectives of MLE requires a critical reappraisal of the current pedagogic practices and effective changes.

Some such changes are broadly mentioned below only as suggestions for more critical consideration:

- o Classroom and community activities to be based on critical pedagogy
- o Changing the hierarchical structure of the classroom
- o Collaborative classroom learning

- o Identity focused classroom and community activities
- o Promotion of critical literacy and oracy engagement with community participation
- o Strengthening community level advocacy initiatives for promotion of MLE
- o Non-hierarchical language teaching practices which do not treat a language as an isolated entity but as a part of complex multilingual social structure
- o Recognizing the centrality of building on prior knowledge to promote optimal learning including learning of languages; since prior knowledge is encoded in MT (L1), it is relevant even when instruction is for and in non-MT languages like Odia and English and, therefore, unconstrained use of MT and other languages in teaching of any language and subject can be methodologically promoted (systematic use of MT is now found, in ELT research and practice, to be an effective strategy in teaching English as a second/foreign language)
- o Interdependence of literacy related skills and knowledge across languages entails cross-lingual transfer as a normal process which can be effectively used as a pedagogic strategy
- o The practice of subject specific assignment of languages as MI (for example, teaching Science and Mathematics in a dominant language and EVS in the MT) should be discontinued since such practices reinforce hierarchical positioning of languages
- o Special initiatives need to be taken for development of the target language materials beyond the required textbooks and TLMs (e.g. development of non-text materials such as children's story books, glossaries, Dictionaries, Compilation of folk tales, songs, creative expression of adults as well as children)

Some specific strategies for English teaching / learning in the MLE context of Odisha

The mother tongue skills should form the foundation for teaching / learning of English. Not only the languages but also the major language skills like listening, speaking, reading and writing and the sub-skills these macro skills involve are similar in all the languages. These skills and sub-skills once systematically developed in the mother tongue can easily be transferred to teaching/learning of English.

Based on the principles of language acquisition, teaching of any languages should start with teaching of listening and speaking rather than reading and writing as is often the practice, (See the English primer for Class – III prepared by SCERT and DPEP).

Tribal and rural learners have some exposure to English in their environment, which are different from their urban and upper class counterparts; they join the English class with some familiarity with the language, which can be used as their resources.

Teaching/learning of English is to be systematically integrated into the teaching/learning of other languages.

X.III. Material Development and Availability

- ➢ **Textbooks in MLE Programme:** The MLE programme in Odisha has developed and used specially designed textbooks in tribal languages. Issues have often been raised

about the need for such special textbooks. A second option or alternative to the language-specific textbooks is to develop graded supplementary materials (in form of primers) in MT to support classroom transaction of the common state level textbooks in Odia. These two alternatives are related to the dual need to have curricular materials rooted in the everyday experiences of children, on one hand, and to ensure uniformity across languages and regions, on the other. This issue can be dealt with by clarifying the distinction between curriculum and text materials. Curriculum provides a broad framework of teaching-learning objectives in any educational programme. A curricular framework specifies the teaching-learning standards and objectives to be targeted at different levels/grades/classes in school education. These objectives need to be comparable or uniform across schools, regions, languages and programmes, not just within a state but also nationally. In fact, NCF 2005 sought to provide a curricular framework across all schools in India. But, at the same time, the NCF also clearly recommended that the processes of realization of the broad curricular objectives through textbooks, teaching-learning materials (TLMs) and classroom transactions need to be rooted in children's language, culture and everyday experiences. Thus, clearly, a policy of uniformity with diversity is mandated. The concern that use of linguistically and culturally diverse sets of texts, TLMs and class transactions would limit and confine a child to her immediate milieu is grossly unfounded. Understanding the phenomena and the world beyond the immediate culturally rooted experiences is contingent on how effectively are the scientific concepts developed on the basis of everyday concepts that children come to school with. For adequate development of scientific concepts in school it is necessary to ensure multiple points of contact between the everyday experiences and scientific concepts (Panda, 2007, 2010). For example, a child's understanding of the universal number system is necessarily embedded in and grows out of her understanding of the culturally rooted system of counting developed through everyday experiences. Thus, cultural rootedness of children's experiences provides necessary scaffolding for development of a scientific understanding of the school concepts, which, in turn, are minimum conditions for a child to be able to go beyond the immediate information/experience to appreciate a wider world of diversity. In fact, empirical findings in research clearly show that, when classroom learning is in the mother tongue medium and based on cultural experiences, children show better understanding of concepts and a high level of cognitive flexibility, which is necessary for them to appreciate diversity and to understand differences. To conclude, use of culture- and language-specific textbooks and other TLMs is NOT a hindrance for development of scientific temperament, objectivity and understanding of the differences in a diverse world; rather, it is a minimum condition for quality learning, effective development of scientific concepts and an expanding global consciousness. Therefore, it is recommended that the present practice of developing language specific and culturally rooted textbooks and TLMs prepared in conformity to the uniform state curriculum needs to be continued.

➢ **Development of Textbooks and TLMs:** The present system of material development for MLE programme seems to have worked well in producing a set of Textbooks and TLMs, which are generally viewed as of good quality. Some improvements, however, can be suggested for sustainable quality in material development with emphasis on children's culture-specific learning styles and preferences, which have not received adequate attention.

   The present system of constituting Textbook and Material Preparation teams by drawing from a pool of teachers, indigenous knowledge holders (IKH) and artists from the target language community must continue. Across all languages in the MLE programme, a process of decentralized material development with central review and monitoring mechanism is needed to ensure uniformity in quality and curricular coverage with diversity in cultural and linguistic content. The material/textbook preparation team for each language should work in the respective district and the process is to be coordinated by the DIET faculty. In preparation of language specific textbooks and other TLMs, it is necessary to foreground local variations in patterns of language use and cultural practices. Within each language, there are regional variations in styles of use, vocabulary and forms of expression. It is imperative that the materials and transactions to which children are exposed should be open to diversity without assigning a dominant or hegemonic status to any particular local variety. This practice, besides fostering better language development and flexible linguistic and cultural skills, will also enrich the target language.

   Further, it is noted that mechanical and uncritical interpretation of certain concepts as projected in the MLE training manuals have led to some problems in how the textbooks and TLMs have been designed. For example, the idea of Road I and Road II to classroom learning (including Language and Math) as exclusively emphasizing accuracy and comprehension, respectively, has been mechanically applied in a manner which ignores the vital links and overlaps between the two aspects of complex human learning. Similarly, another pair of seminal concepts – BICS and CALP – has been somewhat misleadingly projected as mutually excusive. These conceptual categories need to be critically examined and their projections in MLE training and material development reviewed. The current textbooks are organized around rather a very mechanically and rigidly structured idea of "theme web", which involves dividing a school year into time zones and cultural themes into domains and identifying significant community activities during a specific time zone. The text materials are sought to be organized around a selected theme and specifically identified activity(ies) in a given time period/zone. While the notion of theme web as a method of organizing lessons in a textbook has some merits, closer scrutiny of its application in preparation of the texts shows a mechanical adherence, which overemphasizes uniformity, treats cultural traditions as static and is likely to stifle creative innovations. It will be useful if these and similar issues are taken up in future efforts in development of learning materials and textbooks.

- ➤ **Modalities of Textbook and Material Preparation and Distribution: Suggested Processes**
  - ✓ Identification of Textbook and TLM Preparation Team. The Team should consist of at least one from each of the following categories with preference for inclusion women. (A team leader from among the first five categories is to be identified):
    - ❖ Experienced Teachers for the Target language Community (Native speakers of the target language)
    - ❖ Indigenous Knowledge holders and Community Leaders
    - ❖ Folk artists, story tellers, poets, singers, writers, artisans, crafts persons, and experienced cultivators from the target language community
    - ❖ Artists for textbook illustration and preparation of TLM (preferably from the target community)
    - ❖ Two experienced primary school teachers from non-tribal communities including at least one language teacher
    - ❖ One Education Expert from the filed of curriculum, pedagogy and textbook development
    - ❖ One expert on reading and language teaching.
  - ✓ Orientation of Team Leaders. Team Leaders of all the language groups or the District Team Leaders in the MLE programme will go through an Orientation Workshop on Preparation of Textbooks and TLM with focus on basic aspects of MLE, curriculum, pedagogy, language issues, cultural content and other considerations in material preparation for linguistic minority children. It is necessary to involve SCERT in this Orientation Workshop. The entire identified faculty from the DIETs (responsible for MLE material development) in the concerned districts in the MLE programme should participate in the orientation workshop.
  - ✓ Preparation of Textbooks. The practice of bringing all the respective language groups together in a centralized workshop for simultaneous preparation of all the language-specific texts seems to have been effective, but it has limitations of any centralized top-heavy system. It is recommended that the specific language teams should meet in the District level under the supervision of the DIET faculty who may also invite other experts to provide necessary guidance. The teams working in the district level would have the advantage of locally available resources.
  - ✓ Review and Quality Monitoring. All the language-specific textbook manuscripts prepared in the district levels, can be centrally reviewed and compared for uniformity in curricular framework and standard in a pre-planned format reflecting the major dimensions and criteria for quality of textbooks. Some external experts should also be a part of the team of reviewers.
  - ✓ Printing and Distribution of Textbooks. Implementation of MLE programme has been severally plagued by problems and delays in the process of printing and distribution of the Textbooks. In most cases, the textbooks have either not

reached on time or have not been available to every child in the MLE classes. It is necessary to decentralize the printing and distribution of the Textbooks to the district level so that there is timely printing and disbursement and each child gets a copy in the beginning of the academic year.

X.III. Monitoring, Evaluation, Research & Development

➢ Programme Monitoring. Monitoring of the operational aspects of MLE programme seems to have been the weakest link in the process of programme implementation. This has created a chasm between what the MLE Cell in OPEPA plans in the state level and what is delivered at the school level. This has led to problems in teacher recruitment, training and placement, material production and delivery, school based activities, teaching and evaluation of children and corrective mechanisms as and when required. At present, apart from the supervision and control exercised by the competent authorities in different levels of the administration and management of school education, the responsibility of monitoring and academic support system is entrusted with BRCC and CRCC. It is a general and widely shared observation that this system is not working effectively. Evidently, the functionaries in different levels of school administration in the Government machinery are saddled with many responsibilities and it is difficult to fully attend to the monitoring and evaluation of a special programme like MLE. Further, many of the functionaries, particularly those closer to the school level activities, have limited exposure to the nuances of MLE programme implementation. This weakens the process of monitoring and evaluation and academic support to the MLE programme. It is recommended that an independent expert body can be entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring and evaluation of the MLE programme and providing necessary academic support to the teachers and other field level functionaries in the programme. It is also important to strengthen the DIETs to provide material and intellectual support to the MLE programme, to function as MLE Resource Centres and to play a major role in MLE training. SCERT should also be enabled to provide multiple levels of support to the MLE programme in the areas of material development, pedagogy, training, monitoring, evaluation, research and development.

Monitoring Teacher recruitment and Placement for MLE Schools. MLE programme in Odisha has been handicapped and weakened by shortage of trained MLE teachers. Appointment of Volunteer teachers or instructors, mostly without any training, has not yielded significant benefits. Even where trained MLE teachers have been placed in schools identified as MLE schools, the uncertainties over continued availability of their services have remained since sometimes their services are transferred out of the MLE schools. Thus, recruitment and placement of adequate number of trained MLE teachers remains a major priority for proper management of the MLE programme. It is recommended that adequate number of trained MLE teachers be recruited and placed in the MLE schools. Further, it is necessary to mandate prior approval of OPEPA (MLE Cell) for transfer of the MLE teachers and other teachers in the MLE schools.

Community Level Supportive Monitoring. Tribal children tend to perceive school learning as highly dissonant with their home-based and community learning styles and preferences. Their immersion in school programme and progress in learning need to

be closely and continuously monitored in the school and also at home in off-school hours. Unless the school reaches the community, their progress in school would be constrained because of lack of relevance. Besides the government authorities exercising an overall monitoring and supervisory role, the community and the CSO's operating in the tribal region need to be empowered to provide supportive monitoring to schools.

Assessment of MLE Children. Children's mother tongue would be the language in which they would be assessed. In conformity with mother tongue MI in elementary MLE schools, assessment of children's competence level in curricular areas and curricular activities need to be made in their mother tongue following the mode of CCE. Besides curricular progress, the personal-social characteristics of children such as attendance, participation, classroom interaction, peer interaction etc. are also to be qualitatively assessed.

Tribal children learn better by observing and actively interacting with their environment. Hence, school-based oral and written assessment alone is less likely to capture their potentialities, particularly in earlier grades. There is, thus, a need to use multiple modes of evaluation /assessment such as observation, portfolios, checklists, and anecdotal records in addition to oral and written assessments. Qualitative formative assessment and grading following the mode of CCE are to be preferred over quantitative and summative assessment throughout the span of elementary education.

Cumulative school report/progress cards need to be prepared in the local language and shared with parents. The assessment outcomes need to be reviewed in regular cluster-level meetings in order to develop remedial measures and evaluate the impact of remedial intervention.

Research and Development. Research and Development unit is an integral component of any functional and successful system. Effective and sustainable MLE programme requires a competent system of continuous assessment and programme improvement initiatives. MLE Programme needs to strengthen its research and development activities at different levels of the programme. While at the state-level research is necessary to assess the overall functioning and the impact of MLE schooling, at the cluster level, the CRCC's and the teachers need to be suitably oriented to conduct action research to bring improvements and innovations into the system at the grassroots level. cluster level Learning Resource Centres need to be set up to facilitate these activities.

The overall impact of the MT-based MLE programme needs to be externally evaluated by a national/state-level organization/agency on an annual basis to provide formative evaluation and feedback and suggest indicators of overall progress and strategies of intervention for further development.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Mother Tongue Based MLE for Tribal Children in Odisha:
♦ The MLE programme in Odisha must be continued and extended to ALL tribal children in the state in a phase-wise manner subject to availability of resources and feasibility conditions.

Transition from Tribal Language Medium to Odia as Medium of Instruction:
♦ The MT of tribal children be used as the medium of instruction for the five years of primary education in the MLE programme in Odisha to realize the long-term benefits of MLE for sustained impact on tribal children's educational achievements, high levels of proficiency in Odia and English, and positive transfer to post-primary education with a sense of self-efficacy and identity.

Languages in Odisha MLE as School Subjects:
♦ In view of the need to continue with MT as the language of teaching for at least five years, Odia must continue as the second language subject from Class II onwards.
♦ In respect of the point of introduction of English in the MLE programme for tribal children, it is recommended that, as in the common state curriculum, English be introduced as a language subject not earlier than Class III.
♦ It is recommended that use of tribal languages as language subjects in post-primary levels starting with Class VI should be actively considered.

MLE for Multilingual Classrooms:
♦ It is recommended that MLE programme be extended to cover multilingual classrooms, which would need special strategies for fostering high levels of classroom learning and multilingual proficiency through simultaneous development of multiple MTs, metalinguistic awareness and cross-linguistic reflections. Some multilingual contexts of classrooms with presence of children belonging to at least 3 mother tongues be identified to start a pilot programme following development of specific teaching-learning plans by an expert group set up specifically for the purpose.

IMPLEMENATION OF MLE PROGRAMME: SUGGESTED GUIDELINES

Recruitment of MLE Teachers/Sahayaks/Instructors:
♦ Eligible persons from the community with fluency in the mother tongue of the children as well as competency in L2 (Odia) and L3 (English) may be considered for recruitment as teachers in the local MLE Schools. Such recruitment should invariably be made by the local authority in consultation with the school committee.
♦ Persons from the community with lesser qualifications than prescribed but with fluency in the target language may be engaged on contract basis with a condition of acquiring the required qualifications within a reasonably stipulated time. Such candidates need to be provided adequate support by the state for acquiring the necessary qualification. The state government may move the appropriate authorities for special relaxation of the time limit for such candidates to acquire the required minimum qualification.

- In case of target language communities having acute shortage of eligible persons to become teachers (even after relaxation of the eligibility criteria), persons not belonging to the community but with proven proficiency in the local language (L1) and familiarity with the local culture, traditions and practices may be considered for engagement as teachers in MLE schools.
- A long-term plan for attracting potentials from the tribal language communities to teaching jobs needs to be developed to identify and sponsor prospective secondary or higher secondary school graduates from the community and provide them all possible incentives and supports so that on completion of the required educational programme and pre-service training they are immediately engaged as MLE teachers.

Training of MLE Teachers/Sahayaks/Instructors:
- Each MLE Teacher/Sahayak/instructor should have at least a 14-day MLE training at the district level offered by the DIET supported by a team of Master Trainers. The current practice of grade-specific training needs to be discontinued and replaced by a composite MLE process based training with emphasis on language pedagogy for MLE classrooms.

- Pre-Service and In-Service Training: The teacher preparation for the MLE programme should not be one time affair rather should be a continuous process to empower the teachers to address the emerging pedagogical and management issues and to be aware of the innovations in the process. It is recommended that the suggestions in this report regarding the content, duration and process of training be followed.

- Cascade Process of Training and Capacity Building: For effective training of a large number of MLE teachers in the district level DIET, it is necessary to follow a cascade process beginning with a State Level Resource Group created by intensive and structured training in MLE Theory, Practice and Pedagogy, which can be imparted by a team of experts. The State MLE Resource Group, in turn, can prepare the Master Trainers who would impart DIET level training to the in-service and pre-service MLE teachers. The process of capacity building and training of the State Resource Group and Master Trainers can be taken up in collaboration with some specialized MLE resource institution such as the National Multilingual Education Resource Consortium (NMRC). In view of the often noted distortion in transaction and transmission of training skills and knowledge base in a cascade model, it is important to develop a Flexible Training Package with modules, units, themes, activities and resource materials (in Odia) for training and capacity building to serve as a guide to specific Training activities.

Pedagogic Strategies for MLE
- It is recommended that MLE programme be implemented with an emphasis on sound pedagogic principles under the guidance of experience pedagogy experts. Pedagogy Units of SCERT and OPEPA need be strengthened to support MLE program implementation at all levels including training, preparation of Textbooks and TLMs, classroom activities, and evaluation.

- Pedagogy in MLE programme must seek to balance between the languages and diverse cultural practices in a manner that can effectively challenge the hegemonic positioning of some dominant languages and cultures fostering a strong sense of identity and pride in children's own language and culture. Attainment of these and

other broad objectives of MLE require a critical reappraisal of the current pedagogic practices and effective changes. (Some suggestions have been made for more critical consideration; some specific suggestions are also made for ELT in MLE Program

Material Development and Availability

♦ The present practice of developing language specific and culturally rooted textbooks and TLMs prepared in conformity to the uniform state curriculum needs to be continued.

♦ The present system of constituting Textbook and Material Preparation teams by drawing from a pool of teachers, indigenous knowledge holders (IKH) and artists from the target language community must continue. (A procedure for constitution of the teams, identification of team leaders and their orientation/preparation is suggested)

♦ Across all languages in the MLE programme, a process of decentralized material development with central review and monitoring mechanism is needed to ensure uniformity in quality and curricular coverage with diversity in cultural and linguistic content.

♦ The material/textbook preparation team for each language should work in the respective district and the process is to be coordinated by the DIET faculty.

♦ In preparation of language specific textbooks and other TLMs, it is necessary to foreground local variations in patterns of language use and cultural practices. Within each language, there are regional variations in styles of use, vocabulary and forms of expression. It is imperative that the materials and transactions to which children are exposed should be open to diversity without assigning a dominant or hegemonic status to any particular local variety.

♦ It is noted that mechanical and uncritical interpretation of certain concepts as projected in the MLE training manuals have led to some problems in how the textbooks and TLMs have been designed. There is a need to review these concepts and the methodology of identification of themes.

♦ It is recommended that the specific language teams should meet in the District level under the supervision of the DIET faculty who may also invite other experts to provide necessary guidance. The teams working in the district level would have the advantage of locally available resources.

♦ Review and Quality Monitoring. All the language-specific textbook manuscripts prepared in the district levels, can be centrally reviewed and compared for uniformity in curricular framework and standard in a pre-planned format reflecting the major dimensions and criteria for quality of textbooks. Some external experts should also be a part of the team of reviewers.

♦ Printing and Distribution of Textbooks. Implementation of MLE programme has been severally plagued by problems and delays in the process of printing and distribution of the Textbooks. In most cases, the textbooks have either not reached on time or have not been available to every child in the MLE classes. It is necessary to decentralize the printing and distribution of the Textbooks to the district level so that there is timely printing and disbursement and each child gets a copy in the beginning of the academic year.

Monitoring, Evaluation, Research & Development

♦ <u>Programme Monitoring</u>. It is recommended that an independent expert body can be entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring and evaluation of the MLE programme and providing necessary academic support to the teachers and other field level functionaries in the programme. It is also important to strengthen the DIETs to provide material and intellectual support to the MLE programme, to function as MLE Resource Centres and to play a major role in MLE training. SCERT should also be enabled to provide multiple levels of support to the MLE programme in the areas of material development, pedagogy, training, monitoring, evaluation, research and development.

♦ <u>Monitoring Teacher recruitment and Placement for MLE Schools</u>. It is recommended that adequate number of trained MLE teachers be recruited and placed in the MLE schools. Further, it is necessary to mandate prior approval of OPEPA (MLE Cell) for transfer of the MLE teachers and other teachers in the MLE schools.

♦ <u>Community Level Supportive Monitoring</u>. Besides the government authorities exercising an overall monitoring and supervisory role, the community and the CSO's operating in the tribal region need to be empowered to provide supportive monitoring to schools.

Assessment of MLE Children.

♦ Assessment of children's competence level in curricular areas and curricular activities need to be made in their mother tongue following the mode of CCE. Besides curricular progress, the personal-social characteristics of children such as attendance, participation, classroom interaction, peer interaction etc. are also to be qualitatively assessed.

♦ There is, thus, a need to use multiple modes of evaluation /assessment such as observation, portfolios, checklists, and anecdotal records in addition to oral and written assessments. Qualitative formative assessment and grading following the mode of CCE are to be preferred over quantitative and summative assessment throughout the span of elementary education.

♦ Cumulative school report/progress cards need to be prepared in the local language and shared with parents. The assessment outcomes need to be reviewed in regular cluster-level meetings in order to develop remedial measures, and evaluate the impact of remedial intervention.

Research and Development.

♦ MLE Programme needs to strengthen its research and development activities at different levels of the programme. While at the state-level research is necessary to assess the overall functioning and the impact of MLE schooling, at the cluster level, the CRCC's and the teachers need to be suitably oriented to conduct action research to bring improvements and innovations into the system at the grassroots level and cluster level Learning Resource Centres need to be set up to facilitate these activities.

♦ The overall impact of the MT-based MLE programme needs to be externally evaluated by a national/state-level organization/agency on an annual basis to provide formative

evaluation and feedback and suggest indicators of overall progress and strategies of intervention for further development.

CONCLUSION

MLE in Odisha can reasonably claim a substantial success. It has inspired MLE movement in different parts of globe. Odisha's pilot programme has been a small but decisive beginning, something well begun but only half done. The time to move ahead is NOW. The recommendations only offer suggestive policy and implementation guidelines for MLE in Odisha; they do not offer a recipe for success, which comes with commitment. The questions of feasibility often camouflage dearth of will power. Economics of languages, of heritage, of traditions and of MLE do show that any investment in them pays off and yields rich dividends. The famous welfare economist Francois Grin (2003) worked out the economics of protecting multilingualism and diversity and concluded "available evidence indicates that the monetary cost of maintaining diversity are remarkably modest,….. therefore, there are strong grounds to suppose that protecting and promoting regional and minority languages is a sound idea from a welfare standpoint…." (Grin, 2003: 26). Earlier a World Bank Report showed that mother tongue based MLE is in fact 27% cheaper in the long run than the dominant language medium education, even if the initial costs may be marginally higher. When one factors in the cost of the huge wastage in our current system of dominant language education (92% school failure and push out between Class I to X for the ST population) and the economic benefits of maintenance of minority languages, MLE is cost-effective, even cheaper. Therefore, feasibility of implementing MLE for ALL tribal children cannot just be a question of availability of economic resources; it is rather a question of political, administrative and academic will. Odisha has taken a pioneering step with MLE. It must now make it a pioneering movement. The question is not whether Odisha can afford MLE, rather it is WHETHER ODISHA CAN AFFORD *NOT* TO IMPLEMENT MLE?