Background

Education is a data-driven field. Governments and Civil Society Organizations alike look to statistics to guide their work. Nonetheless, international assessments (PISA, TIMSS, EGRA, etc.), national standardized exams, classroom grades and teacher observations can often paint very different pictures of student performance. Many experts question the validity of large-scale standardized testing, especially for children from ethnolinguistic minority groups who may be disadvantaged by the language and cultural assumptions of the test.

Over the past decade, the multilingual education (MLE) movement in Asia-Pacific has gained significant momentum. New MLE programmes have arisen in multiple nations, often resulting in MLE-friendly national policies. Sixteen Asia-Pacific countries have endorsed UNESCO’s Bangkok Statement on Language and Inclusion, pledging to gather data disaggregated by home or first language and to collect data related to SDG thematic indicator 4.5.2 and other literacy-related indicators.

In the early days of the MLE movement, project implementers typically conducted their own customized monitoring and assessment programs, including pre-tests and post-tests, to check student achievement in the various languages and subjects studied. Nevertheless, the MLE movement has not yet adequately addressed questions of large-scale assessment, including international standardized testing. For many countries, the results of large-scale assessments become political issues, driving policy debates that can result in retrogressive policies and practices that damage linguistic minority children.

Assessment issues have become even more pressing in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Learning loss has been most acute among children who were already disadvantaged. Children speaking ethnic minority languages have suffered from a lack of distance learning materials in their mother tongues as

---

well as from reduced exposure to the language(s) of testing. These factors can lead them to perform poorly on standardized assessments and lead policy makers to question the validity of the MLE model.

Key questions to be addressed in this webinar thus include:

- How do policymaker’s choices regarding the language of testing impact children?
- What assessment practices can MLE implementers utilize to track genuine student progress and feed advocacy efforts?
- How can locally-developed assessment tools be correlated with national and international testing frameworks to demonstrate the true learning of students in MLE programmes?
- What strategies might MLE implementers use when dialoguing with national policymakers on assessment issues?

**Objectives**

1. To raise awareness of how linguistic and cultural issues should be reflected in assessment frameworks
2. To highlight approaches to assessment that may be helpful for (1) MLE implementers and (2) advocates
3. To catalyse multilateral engagement, understanding and cooperation in approaching assessment issues in linguistically diverse settings

**Target Audiences**

The target audience for the webinar includes regional, national and international level education stakeholders (including both policymakers and implementers).

**Working Language**

English will be the working language of the webinar.

**Dates and Format**

Date: 3 December 2021
Time: 8:30 AM (Bangkok time)
Format: Zoom

---

Registration

Registration is free and required in advance. Once you register, a unique join URL will be sent to your email. Registration link: https://unesco-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_xwHKKS4GQ8mxLoODIPSVw

For more Information

Asia Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group Secretariat
E-mail: ap.mlewg@gmail.com

Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30 am – 8:38 am</td>
<td>Welcome and Introduction from the Asia-Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Margarete Sachs-Israel, Chief of Section for Inclusive Quality Education, UNESCO Bangkok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Francisco Benavides, Regional Education Advisor, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:38 am – 9:38 am</td>
<td>Panel Speakers (20 min each):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Stephen Walter, Associate Professor, Dallas International University and SIL International, Assessing Learning Outcomes in MLE Projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Manuel Cardoso, Learning Specialist, UNICEF, Utilizing MICS Foundational Literacy Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Carol Benson, Associate Professor, Teachers College, Columbia University, A New Approach to Linguistic Minority Student Assessment in Cambodia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:38 am – 9:58 am</td>
<td>Q&amp;A and Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Discussant: Dr Maria ‘Ched’ Mercedes E. Arzadon, Assistant Professor, College of Education, University of the Philippines-Diliman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:58 am – 10:00 am</td>
<td>Wrap Up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Erin Tanner, Education Specialist, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>