

A Study on Needs Assessment in Designing Curriculum on Mother Tongue Courses: The Case of Assosa University

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Abstract

This study was aimed at assessing the needs of indigenous group of people who are born of Shinasha, Gumuz and Berta Language speakers in Metekel, Assosa and Kemashi Zones, Western part of Ethiopia. The study was conducted in Kemasi zone in kemashi and Yaso Woredas, in Assosa zone, Assosa, Homosha, Bambassi and Mengi Woredas, where as in Metekel zone the sample areas included Wombera, Bullen, Mandura, Dangur and Guba Woredas. The objectives of this survey study were to conduct community needs on local language, to check for precondition on human and material resource to establish mother tongue education and to make decision on launching the local languages in degree program in Assosa University. The targeted population was 198 and the sample size was calculated using Yemane's formula ($n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$) (Belay and Abdu Nasir, 2015). In this formula n represents sample size, N stands for number of target population and e represents margin of error ($\alpha = .05$). The study was highly demanded by the indigenous people of the region - Shinasha, Berta and Gumuz people to upgrade their language in general. And Assosa University is the only higher institution in the region to run the program. In order to collect the required data in line with needs assessment objectives, the researchers used three different data gathering tools. Questionnaire, Interview and Focus group Discussion. The data obtained were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Therefore, the study revealed key findings that helped to launch degree programs in Assosa University.

Keywords: Needs Assessment, Mother tongue Education, Designing Curriculum

1. Introduction

A goal of a community needs assessment is to develop an informed understanding of the gaps or needs that exist within a community and their impacts upon the community's members. Another goal of a community needs assessment is to develop a detailed analysis of community assets, or resources, that currently exist in the community and can be used to help meet community needs. Community assets include organizations, people, partnerships, facilities, funding, policies, regulations, and a community's collective experience. Any positive aspect of the community is an asset that can be leveraged to develop effective solutions.

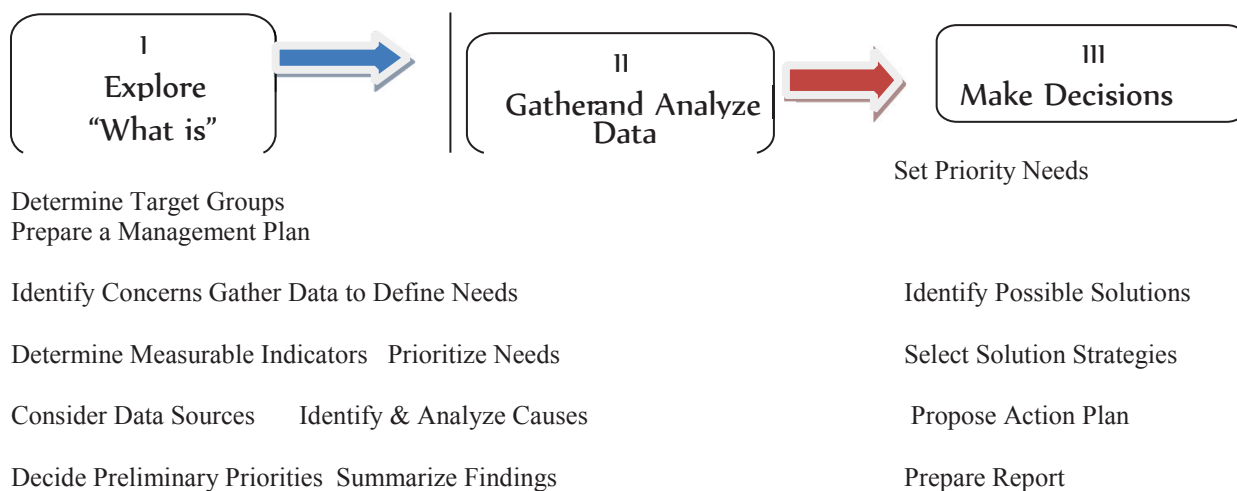
There are many benefits to conduct a community assessment. There is increased understanding within the community about its needs, why they exist, and why it is important for the needs to be addressed. Community members have the opportunity to share how the needs impact the quality of life for the larger community. Community engagement is increased because members from different parts of the community are included in discussions about needs, assets, and the community's response. The community's strengths and weaknesses are identified. There is an inventory of the resources currently available within the community that can be leveraged to improve the quality of life for its community members. Communities identify the asset gaps that exist in their communities. Community members have an increased awareness of how they can contribute to their community's assets.

"Need" refers to the gap or discrepancy between a present state (what is) and a desired state (what should be). The need is neither the present nor the future state; it is the gap between them. But needs assessment is an assessment on the target groups to gather data, analyze the gathered data for the reason to fill the gap identified. In other words, needs assessments are focused on particular target groups in a system. Common target groups in education settings include students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the community at-large. Ideally, needs assessments are initially conducted to determine the needs of the people (i.e., service receivers) for whom the organization or system exists (e.g., students) (Mackillop, 1997).

Therefore, a "Needs Assessment" is a systematic approach that progresses through a defined series of phases. A system is a set of regularly interacting elements that form a unified whole and organized for a common purpose. An important characteristic of a system is that all parts are interdependent—anything that affects one part of the system has consequences for the whole (Witkin, Bell, R., and James W. Altschuld (1995)). Therefore, the big objectives of the study were, to conduct community needs on local languages, to check for precondition on human and material resource to establish mother tongue education in Assosa University and to make decision on launching the local language education program in Assosa University

1.1. Three-Phase Model of Needs Assessment

To show the process of this needs assessment the team has used three-Phase Model which clearly depicts the beginning and the final works of the journey. Therefore, this three phase model can tell readers the clear picture of the path from the time of data collecting (needs assessment) up to the data analysis session in this scientific study. As a result, the following diagram shows a systematic approach that the team progresses through a defined series of phases.



2. Methodology

In order to collect the required data in line with the needs assessment objectives, the researchers used three different data gathering tools. Questionnaire, Interview and Focused group Discussion were the selected tools to collect data from the sample study areas. The information manipulated through these tools were well edited and checked by research experts in checking for the validities expected in using effective data collecting tools in conducting this needs assessment.

2.1. Questionnaire

Here the researchers decided to use Likert scale model questionnaire. The Likert Scale is an ordinal psychometric measurement of attitudes, beliefs and opinions. In each question, a statement is presented in which a respondent must indicate a degree of agreement or disagreement in a multiple choice type format. The advantageous side of the Likert Scale is that it is the most universal method for survey collection, therefore, they are easily understood.

Five Likert Scale model questionnaires were used to collect data from focal persons in each capacity buildings of the Woreda, from pilot school teachers, and from local language teachers in Gilgel Beles College of Teachers Education (GBCTE). The objective of using questionnaire in conducting this needs assessment was to get numerical data from the respondents interest ,belief incorporated in learning mother tongue courses while joining the university and could be rated in the forms of the five Likert scale model which could be quantified in percent and other simple mathematical expressions. Questionnaires were distributed to the three zones in the sample Woreda pilot school teachers. Seventy seven questionnaires were distributed to the three zones where the pilot school were found; hence 57 of the questionnaires were filled and returned appropriately whereas 19 were discarded-some were not returned and the remaining was not properly filled based on the instruction held on the liker scale model.

2.2. Interview

Kvale (1983) defines the qualitative research interview as "an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena". Collecting these descriptions can be done in several ways, of which face-to-face interviews are the most common. Wengraf (2001, p.194) even speaks of "double attention", which means "that you must be both listening to the informant's responses to understand what he or she is trying to get at and, at the same time, you must be bearing in mind your needs to ensure that all your questions are liable to get answered within the fixed time at the level of depth and detail that you need". Following these facts interview was conducted to have descriptive data from the Regional education bureau, Capacity Building officers, curriculum experts, local languages focal persons and community leaders. Totally, 65 concerned bodies were interviewed to collect data for the needs assessment.

2.3. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Focus group discussion is a structured discussion with the purpose of stimulating conversation around a specific topic. It is led by a facilitator who poses questions and the participants give their thoughts and opinions. It also gives us the possibility to cross check one individual's opinion with other opinions gathered. A well organized and facilitated FGD is more than a question and answer session <https://pure.tue.nl/ws/files/1948695/Metis202565.pdf>. In this needs assessment this tool was used to have in-depth discussion with community leaders in each zones and Woredas of the region. This tool offers an opportunity for getting fully fledged information from the participants where one can correct, add, and remind the other while making the group discussion. For the FGD purpose 110 community leaders were involved across the region within the three zones.

3. Target Groups of the Study

The target groups of this needs assessment were the following: heads of the regional Educational Bureau, focal personnel of the local Languages (Bertegna, Gumuzegna and Shinashign) in each woreda, Administrative heads of the three zones (Assosa, Kemash and Metekel), Administrative heads of the selected Woredas from the three zones: Assosa zone (Assosa Administrative town,

Mengie, Homosha and Banbasi; Keemash zone -Kemashi Woreda and Yaso, and Metekel zone- Wombera, Bullen, Mandura, Dangur and Guba Woredas, Community Leaders and older people from each Woreda, zonal Educational Officers, Gilgel Beles College of Teachers Education (Deans, Language Dep't head and Local Language Teachers), Some local Language Trainees from Each Department and Community Leaders of each Local language in each Woreda were incorporated.

Table (1) Data obtained through questionnaire

No	Items	SA	%	A	%	N	%	D	%	SD	%
1	I joined and studied mother tongue courses based on my interest.	51	73.9%	11	15.9%	0	0	1	1.4%	0	0
2	I enjoyed learning the courses during my stays in the college.	39	56.5%	26	37.68%	2	2.89%	0	0	2	2.89%
3	The courses I took were helpful for my career.	34	49.27%	30	43.47%	1	1.4%	0	0	4	5.79%
4	I have learnt a lot from my instructors that would help me to upgrade myself in the course.	37	53.6%	26	37.68%	3	4.34%	1	1.4%	2	2.89%
5	The teachers were committed very much in empowering us in the skills, attitude and knowledge during the mother tongue trainings.	40	57.97%	23	33.3	4	5.79%	2	2.89%	0	0
6	I enjoyed teaching my students through mother tongue.	52	75.36%	11	15.9%	4	5.79%	0	0	2	2.89%
7	I can easily produce related examples while teaching the course in mother tongue.	40	57.97%	26	37.68%	2	2.89%	1	1.4%	0	0
8	My Students are capable of understanding the utterances (The Language and the content)	35	50.72%	19	27.5%	13	18.8%	2	2.89%	0	0
9.	There is no language barrier during teaching-learning the lesson.	18	26.08%	25	36.23%	8	11.59%	10	14.49%	8	11.59%
10.	I have been confused of developing my future career	18	26.08%	22	31.88%	7	10.14%	13	18.84%	9	13.04%
11.	I have a plan to promote myself as mother tongue teacher in future.	53	76.81.%	12	17.39%	2	2.89%	0	0	2	2.89%

Table (2) Pilot school Teachers interest in Attending Mother Tongue Courses

No	Items	SA	%	A	%	N	%	D	%	SD	%
1	I joined and studied mother tongue courses based on my interest.	51	73.9%	11	15.9%	0	0	1	1.4%	0	0
2	I enjoyed learning the courses during my stays in the college.	39	56.5%	26	37.68%	2	2.89%	0	0	2	2.89%
3	The courses I took were helpful for my career.	34	49.27%	30	43.47%	1	1.4%	0	0	4	5.79%

As can be seen from table(2) 51(73.9%) of the respondents strongly agree on the question which they were provided about their personal interest in joining and attending mother tongue courses while they were candidates in the college. Whereas 11(15.9%) of the respondents show that their agreement to the question. Thirdly, 1(1.4%) of the respondents' data displayed that they did not agree and did not show their positive interest about the mother tongue courses when they joined and trained at the college. Additionally, 39(56.5%) of the respondents response displayed their strong agreement in enjoying the learning during their stay at college, 26(37.68%) of the respondents showed their agreement as they were enjoying their learning, but 2(2.89%) of the respondents data show that they were not enjoying while attending their courses at college.

The remaining, 2(2.89%) of respondents were neutral in this study. On the other hand, the relevance of the mother tongue courses to their future career was checked by providing lists of questions on the questionnaire-how much it will be helpful. Hence, 34(49.27%) of the respondents claimed-strongly agreed that the course they took is helpful in their future career. Almost in same way 30(43.47%) of the respondents agreed that the course is helpful to them in developing their future career. But, 1(1.4%) of the respondents were not taking part (neutral) in responding to the scales address to them. To the opposite, 4(5.79%) of the respondents put strong disagreement scale for the statement how the course they took were helpful to their career. From the data presented in table1, one could simply conclude that almost all of the respondents have shown positive attitude about the training they took at college, enjoyed learning the mother tongue course. The table also displayed mother tongue pilot school teachers had a strong belief that the courses were helpful in their future career which they commenced training at the college.

To the contrast, nearly, insignificant number of pilot school teachers' respondent showed negative interest to the course they had taken in the college.

Table (3) Pilot School Mother Tongue Teachers Views on their College Stay

No	Items	SA	%	A	%	N	%	D	%	SD	%
4	I have learnt a lot from my instructors that would help me to upgrade myself in the course.	37	53.6%	26	37.68%	3	4.34%	1	1.4%	2	2.89%
5	The teachers were committed very much in empowering us in the skills, attitude and knowledge during the mother tongue trainings.	40	57.97%	23	33.3%	4	5.79%	2	2.89%	0	0

From table 3, 37 (53.6%) respondents showed their strong agreement to the issue raised to them about what they have learnt from their teacher during their stay at the college. 26(37.68 %) of the respondents showed their agreement to the good lesson they have learnt good lessons from their teachers in the college. 3(4.34%) of the respondents were not definitely show neither agreement nor disagreement. 1(1.4%) of the respondents reacted their disagreement to the question raised to them. Finally, 2 (2.89%) of the respondents showed their strong disagreement. The pilot school teachers were also provided with the statement about their college teachers' commitment in empowering the skills, attitude and knowledge they needed in their future career during their college stay. Accordingly, the data collected from the target groups in the sample areas of the study explains that 40(57.97%) of the respondents did have strong agreement in responding to the question addressed to them, whereas 23 (33.3%) of the respondents were agreed that their teachers at the college were committed enough in empowering their students-the current pilot schools teachers, on skills, attitude and knowledge of the subject matter. But, 2(2.89%) of the respondents were showed their disagree. This implies that insignificant numbers of the pilot school teachers did have negative response the commitment of college mother tongue teachers in this needs assessment study. Meanwhile, 4(5.79%) of the respondents were neutral to the question provided to them-neither agreed nor disagreed.

Therefore, based on the facts displayed on table 2, it could be concluded that almost all pilot school teachers did have learned good lessons from their mother tongue instructors. They show their witnesses that their teachers were committed enough in teaching the courses and empowering the skills, attitudes and knowledge of

the former students.

Table (4) Pilot Schools Mother Tongue Teachers Effort and Commitment in teaching mother tongue Courses

No	Items	SA	%	A	%	N	%	D	%	SD	%
6	I enjoyed teaching my students through mother tongue.	52	75.36%	11	15.9%	4	5.79%	0	0	2	2.89%
7	I can easily produce related examples while teaching the course in mother tongue.	40	57.97%	26	37.68%	2	2.89%	1	1.4%	0	0

In this needs assessment study 52(75.36%) of pilot school teachers response revealed their strong agreement as they were enjoying in teaching mother tongue courses to their students. Whereas 11(15.9%) of the respondents showed their agreement on the issue listed about the same subject. Meanwhile, 2(2.89%) of the respondents revealed that their negative attitude towards teaching their courses while offering different courses and they were not enjoying in teaching the course in the class. But, 4(5.79 %) of respondents were neither agreed nor disagreed on the point raised to them. Additionally, those pilot school teachers were assessed and asked about whether they were producing relevant and related examples while teaching the courses. Hence, 40(57.97%) of the respondents show their strong agreement in that they were easily capable of producing related examples, and 26(37.68%) of the respondents portrayed their agreement as they were capable of producing related examples with related the lesson they offer in the class, 2(2.89%) of the respondents were neutral with regard to this point. But, 1(1.4%) of the respondents revealed that they were unable to produce related examples easily and showed their disagreement to the question they provided. Based on the data portrayed on table (3), one could conclude that pilot school teachers were enjoying in teaching their courses and they have potential in creating different contexts and related examples which were thought to substantiate the big picture of the courses in the respective subjects.

Table (5) The Role of Mother Tongue Language as Medium of Communication

No	Items	SA	%	A	%	N	%	D	%	SD	%
8	My Students are capable of understanding the utterances (The Language and the content)	35	50.72%	19	27.5%	13	18.8%	2	2.89%	0	0
9.	There is no language barrier during teaching-learning the lesson.	18	26.08%	25	36.23%	8	11.59%	10	14.49%	8	11.59%

As can be seen from the above tabulated data, 35(50.72%) of the respondents did have a positive outlook to the question provided to them and communicated as strong agreement in responding to the question. In connection to this, 19(27.5%) of the respondents agreed on the same issue positively as students are capable of understanding the utterance-both the content and the language, though 13(18.8%) of the respondents were neutral to the idea. Conversely, 2(2.89%) of the respondents did not have agreed and marked as students did not have the capability in understanding the utterance of the content and the language while learning their lessons. Besides to this, as can be seen on the same table question number (9), 18(26.08%) of the respondents did have strong agreement as students would not have barrier in understanding the lessons during their lesson, 25(36.23%) of the respondents also show their agreement on the same issue. To the contrast, the data in the study displayed that 10(14.49%) and 8(11.59%) of the respondents reacted to the statement and responded as disagree and strongly disagree. Nevertheless, 8(11.59%) of the respondents were neutral to the point in responding neither agree nor disagree.

At last, it could be concluded that students attending their schooling in pilot schools in the three languages (Berta, Gumuz and Shinasha) are capable of understanding the utterance (language with its content) during learning their courses. In line with this, the data show that pilot school students who learn all subjects in their mother tongue did not have language barrier to understand and follow up their classroom teacher while attending their lesson. Yet, insignificant percent of the data revealed that as those students were not capable of

understanding the utterance and did have barrier in understanding their teacher while attending mother tongue courses.

Table (6) Mother Tongue Teachers Interest of Upgrading in Mother Tongue Language

No	Items	SA	%	A	%	N	%	D	%	SD	%
10.	I have been confused of developing my future career	18	26.08%	22	31.88%	7	10.14%	13	18.84%	9	13.04%
11.	I have a plan to promote myself as mother tongue teacher in future.	53	76.81.%	12	17.39%	2	2.89%	0	0	2	2.89%

According to the data obtained from the target groups in the sample areas of the region during conducting needs assessment some questions were prepared to gather information about the future fate of pilot school teachers' professional development. Therefore, 18(26.08%) of the respondents said they were confused of developing (upgrading) the profession they are teaching now. They showed strong agreement on the confusion they have towards developing their future career. Again, 22(31.88%) of the respondents show their agreement on the confusion they felt towards upgrading their profession. Conversely, 13(18.84%) of the respondents disagreed to the statement about the confusion in future career development, as well as 9(13.04%) of the respondents show their strong disagreement towards the idea, that means they were not confused and thought of the professional development. On the other hand, 7(10.14%) of the respondents were neutral to this point of discussion.

Almost all of the mother tongue teachers do have good ambition to promote their profession in vertical way. That is 53 (76.81%), and 12(17.39%) of the respondents show their strong agreement and agreement based on the scale they were provided respectively in line with their desire to promote their profession in mother tongue education. Whereas 2(2.89%) of the respondents did show not their interest to promote in mother tongue education and strongly disagree to promote up grading their professional career in this manner. Yet, 2(2.89%) of the respondents remained neutral to the statement about promoting in mother tongue education.

As conclusion, the pilot school teachers were confused of the subject matter in which they ought to develop their professional career so far. The data on the table exactly displays that students feeling and impression was highly distorted and have come confused on their future academic fate. Following this confusion on their future professional development career, the pilot school teachers were asked about their plan they had to promote themselves in mother tongue education in their further academic study. Therefore, this needs assessment study reveals that pilot school teachers have a plan to further study in mother tongue education.

4. Data Obtained through Interview and Focus Group Discussion

Interview with Regional Education Bureau (REB): The history of mother education in the region (BGRS) has begun in the short term training given to indigenous people who were educated in any profession and who could speak and write the language proficiently. At its outset the language was offered as a subject in the school to indigenous students. Evaluation was conducted by the concerned experts and a positive result was registered. Based on the evaluation made the regional education bureau decided to establish pilot schools in some selected schools to offer all the subjects in mother tongue. The pilot schools were offering all the subjects through mother tongue in the first cycle primary schools (1-4). Starting from second cycle primary school (5-8) the mother tongue has been given as a subject. Now a days, mother tongue education has covered the primary school cycle- last year the first grade 8 regional examination was given to the students and in this academic year it was fully expected to commence the mother tongue education at grade nine; but, this regional program has failed to continue due to lack of man power (because the curriculum requires degree holders in all areas to run the program). However; on some pilot schools grade nine courses have been offered since October 2010 E/C.

5. Political Appointees: Political appointees and their role in facilitating Mother tongue Education Initially when the program was launched almost all political appointees were not interested and happy to send their children to schools where mother tongue is taught (pilot schools). Because, they thought that educating their children in mother tongue schools would not bring lifelong change to their future career(Learning through mother tongue is locally bounded). But, later on due to government officials movement across the region in awareness creation program this ideology is absolutely changed and everybody begins to sympathize on the issue and teaching their children through mother tongue is like preserving the culture, custom more over they understood that learning through mother tongue is a means to learn about ones identity and in turn a means to educate others about their own identity. Now the political appointees have become a role models in sending their children to pilot schools where mother tongue education is given in all subjects. The data gained from these political appointees about the communities they are leading reveals that, the communities do have great inspiration to send their children to mother tongue medium schools where children could easily write and speak

during their learning lessons through their mother language perfectly.

5.1. Zonal political appointees (Administrates): Regional, Zonal and woreda political appointees have been interviewed in line with launching mother tongue education at university level, its advantage to the community at large and to students learning outcomes in particular. Based on the information obtained from those political delegates, the communities or people they lead have a positive attitude towards opening the program and delivering the lessons in these local languages. According to the informants' point of view, the first advantage is this language would be the language of academic instruction at higher levels, college and high school where the culture, the tradition and the life conditions of those indigenous people will be taught and shared to the remaining parts of the country and the world. This is because, it is only through the means of education that one can teach his or her identity ("who he/she is? Where he/she comes from") to the other far apart people or world besides educating these facts to the neighboring regions.

Besides to the above mentioned facts, learning through mother tongue has great change on students' performance. According to Mr. Tamine Bake (the political appointee in Kemashi Zone) and Mr. Yewlsew Temesgen (an educational expert in the regional educational office), students' results have a difference when compared to the results they obtained in other subjects (offered in English as target group and Amharic as subject). That is, students who attend their education in mother tongue language have registered good results and when compared with those subjects (English) results. According to the information gained from Mr. Tamine Bake, "his little daughter has registered the lowest score (70%) in her mother tongue subjects and 49/50% for her English result. Therefore, one could possibly conclude that students can perform better when they are taught in their mother tongue than when taught in other languages at the school.

Again based on the data collected from other political appointees, launching mother tongue education program at higher education (ASU) has a great political implication to the indigenous people living in this region. Gumuz, Berta, Shinasha and Mao Komo peoples' language were at the verge of losing their identity, culture, tradition, and other significantly realized ritual ceremonies until this government (EPRDF) appears to govern the country. Therefore, "**these years have come with blooming days for us like the indigenous people in the region**". So that, as to these indigenous informants, establishing this golden program will make the culture, traditions, practices bloom correctly and will be re-inculcated back to the community, hope fully right after a year or years.

5.2. Capacity Building (Zonal and Woreda): According to the data obtained from the capacity building administrators either at zonal or woreda level, students who have been learning through their mother tongue medium of instruction from grade 1-4 perform better than those who were attending their subjects in English as medium of instruction when they meet at grade five where the pilot school students and English language as medium of instruction students attend the classes together. This reality goes to touch grade 8 regional examination. When the result is analyzed by educational experts in the Educational Bureau, students who learnt their first cycle primary school in mother tongue have registered good or relatively better results than students who learn their first cycle primary school in English language as medium of instruction.

5.3. Gilgel Beles College Deans: Mother tongue education program has started in 2004 E/C in certificate in regular program and this certificated program ceased in 2007 E/C for the reason it was replaced by training diploma candidates. The college is going to graduate its first batch in this academic calendar (2010 E.C). When we see the curriculum designed for this mother tongue courses, in certificate, all courses were offered in mother tongue medium of instruction except English language course but, in diploma level all the major courses are offered in mother tongue and the remaining common courses and subject area methodology courses are taught in English language medium of instruction. Woreda and zonal experts recruit the candidates to train all the courses in mother tongue language medium of instruction in (Gumuz, Berta and Shinashign) but, the college trains the recruited candidates in mother tongue medium of instruction only for the major subjects. As a result, the graduates faced difficulties when they get back to the Woredas where they are supposed to be assigned to teach in different pilot schools. This misconception between the college and the woredas creates a gap in understanding each other on the designed curriculum, its implementation and later unable to resist the challenges raised from the graduates. The *curriculum* was designed in collaboration with the Summer Institute of Language (SIL) which is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). SIL works with the Ethiopian government in rehabilitating the disadvantaged communities whose language is at the risk of disappearing. This organization also works with different regions of the country in providing short and long term trainings to empower the local language teachers with teaching science of mother tongue education and its practical methodology aiming at offering the courses in the respective colleges and schools in the country. In addition, this institution helps the local language teachers to develop teaching materials and supplementary reading materials as to make the program effective.

5.5. Local Language Focal persons (Regional, Zonal and at Woreda Level): The local language focal person are delegated in the regional education bureau, in zonal capacity building offices and at each woredas of the region. The local language focal persons have their own office where they do many indoor activities to empower themselves ahead leaving for supervision to pilot schools and where the language is taught as subject to support the local language teachers. Accordingly, those focal persons do have many responsibilities in shaping the bad attitude of the society in general and attitude of some teachers in the schools. Initially, the communities developed a bad and a negative attitude towards attending schooling where the teaching learning process has been running through mother tongue language in every schools in each schools of the region; later, due to the high involvement and facilitation in awareness creation campaign almost all political appointees and community leaders as well mother tongue teachers have shifted to have positive attitude towards mother tongue education. Hence, every political appointees and community leaders have got a lion's share in sending their children to mother tongue education schools in the region. Even non-indigenous communities (Wombera Wereda) have begun questioning to send their children to schools where medium of instruction is local language. Moreover, the literates of the non-indigenous people have addressed their interest to have training on mother tongue writing skills and more particularly learning about letters and the cross ponding sounds which enable them to go further in communication.

5.6. Curriculum Experts (Regional, Zonal and at Woreda Level): During the needs assessment the regional, zonal and Wereda curriculum experts were the subjects. The team has posed questions about the current status of mother tongue education at schools levels, particularly at the pilot schools. The performance of students at school who are learning through their own mother tongue have shown better performances. The experts have gained the information from field visits and reports during educational awareness creation campaign. But, the program was not without a challenge. While attempting in running the program smoothly, the schools have faced various obstacles- such as lack of skilled man power in running the program, teaching materials.

Before fully establishing the current number of pilot schools in the three zone of the region, the number of pilot schools were small which were established for the purpose of sample study. For example, in Kemashi zone there were 18 schools where the SaGumuz was give as a subject in schools. But, currently the data reads expansion of schools to 49. Similarly, in the remaining Zones- Assosa and Metekel the number of schools has grown.

The team raised the points about number of teacher who have diploma certificate from the indigenous community whose back ground is from language, English and other social sciences who could up grade themselves in the mother tongue languages in the three Gumuz, Berta and Shinasha. All the three zones curriculum experts have informed that there is enough number of teachers from the indigenous community.

5.7. Challenges and Opportunities: The challenges faced during running the mother tongue education were many. Among these problems related with lack of trained man power was one of the critical point. The other challenge was lack of pre-prepared material- student's book, teachers guide, reference books, additional materials written in the target mother tongue for supplementary reading, translation problem etc. The obstacles were overcome through commitment from the political appointees and interested educated persons from the target mother. Teachers educational back ground was also one of the serious challenges in running the mother education in three (Gumuz, Berta and Shinashigna) languages in all pilot or model schools. The solutions taken to overcome the problems were that recruiting interested trained teachers from any educational back ground and empower them with short term trainings to bring them at hubs of the training and to resist the challenges. Despite these all facts taken as challenges, those trained teachers have taught the subjects effectively even better than those who have language educational back ground.

Finally, the team requested all the stakeholders interviewed during the needs assessment about their contribution to the Assosa University in establishing the mother tongue education program and even after the establishment of the program and; they strongly expressed their zeal to stand beside the university in any aspect of support- Political commitment, professional support, realizing the required expert that may be working in their institution.

Focus Group Discussion

5.7. Communities Leader in The region (Metekel, Assosa and Kamashi Zones)

Focus group discussion was one of the data collecting tool used in this needs assessment. FGD was conducted to some of the community leaders, who are well known, respected, understood in the community in their role play in every activities of the society with in the society. In all visited sample areas the selected community leaders in FGD have through expressed their feeling that delivering the lessons through mother tongue language is an easy and appropriate ways of transformation knowledge, skill and attitude to the next generation in the remarkable and noticeable way. Most of the FGD participants were oldies who have gone some steps of

schooling in the old curriculum and dropped out from schooling. They have remembered the problem they had been faced in the school. One participant reminds “*I was under pressure when my teacher asked me even my name. I have come to know when the teacher left the class by asking my classmate who can understand what my teacher had said.*” “*I feel today it could be the frustration that I felt in front of my peers that pushed me to drop my education. I was communicating with my classroom teacher through translation*”. But now a days, this generation students do have great opportunity of communicating with teachers without barrier; so that they can understand their lesson easily; because they learnt through their mother tongue. The other participant in the FGD explained that students have opportunity of writing poems in our language (Bertegna) in front of their family when celebrating parents’ day at school, this time I feel happy in the situation and thought as if I was reborn. Besides, this was my first time I begin to realize that knowing the language and knowing about the language is quite different. Traditions, customs, beliefs and values of certain community will be not be transferred correctly as the original one orally where as written language is the only means to preserve and keep all cultural values in keeping its originality in transferring from one generation to the newly coming up generations. The community has lost many important traditions, customs, and values since it has been transferred from generation to generation orally which is subjected to modification. This shortage of recorded information has made the new generation to miss the own culture completely and copy the culture of the western.

5.8. Gilgel Beles College of Teachers Education Local Language Teachers

The need assessment team has spent enough time in FGD with local language teachers in dealing about the experience of local language teaching, local language design, and recruitment of local language trainees and preparation of teaching materials.

The local language teachers explained that local language training has begun in 2003 E.C in certificate program for the first time in regular program .The certificate program ran till 2007 E.C. Then, in 2008 E.C the diploma candidate training was launch launched. In teaching the diploma candidates there were many challenges affecting delivering the courses to the trainees. Among these to mention few, the recruited candidates were under the requirement for the diploma, lack of teaching materials, ineffective translation- solo translation which created confusion of dialect and so forth.

6. Key Findings

Based on the information gained through all the data collection methods the following key findings were reached. Many believe that learning through mother tongue was something that was considered as a backward tradition in earlier periods before they have seen the positive effects mother tongue education has brought to their children. Following these facts, the mother tongue education running at pilot schools have changed their attitude. Hence, children at pilot school have better knowledge of their own mother tongue. The period, when mother tongue was not offered, was a dark period for the community when they thought about mother tongue issue today. All community members thought that attending mother tongue education at school has brought key changes in the equality of all languages earlier. Every administrators did not trust that these languages were capable in using it as medium of instruction. But, now a day’s optimistic thoughts have been observed, almost all respondents have strong positive attitude toward the opening of mother tongue at university level. Therefore, results gained through FGD from the community also have shown a big interest in mother tongue education. Results from interview from the target group have also confirmed that as there is strong interest in mother tongue education. Parents have suspicion of continuing the mother tongue in all level of school but when their children reached grade eight they all are happy. There is strong question from the community about the continuation of mother tongue in high schools and preparatory schools. There is urgency from all community get qualified mother tongue teachers in handling mother tongue education .Mother tongue teachers were not certain how they could upgrade their qualification. Many educated people from the ethnic groups have shown strong commitment to join the profession. Political appointees were committed enough to leave any employee if there would be any need.

7. Recommendations

This needs assessment has addressed that there is strong community interest in educating their children in their own language. On the ground the assessment has indicated the local languages have been effectively used as a medium of instruction with all the limitations connected to the nature of the languages. The assessment indicated the gap that exists between the demands of the community in educating their children in their own language and the required trained man power. In addition, the assessment showed that there must be some measures to be taken in order close the gap that exists between the mother tongue medium of instruction needs of the community and the lack of trained man power in the field. As a result of this needs assessment, establishing “Local Languages School” at Assosa University is an inevitable measure in order to answer the demands of the community.

8. References

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