“Literacy and Oracy in Mother-Tongue Based Multi-Lingual Education”

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Public lecture
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1. Definitions of Literacy, Oracy, Literate, Orate
2. Value judgments about literates and orates
3. Whose responsibility is it to enable children and adults to become literate? Equity. Where is Mauritius?
4. Types and levels of literacy (basic, functional, high-level, computer, etc). How long does it take to acquire sustainable literacy? Achieving high-level literacy through formal education is a human right
5. In what kind of programmes is it best to acquire high-level literacies (multiliteracy) under various circumstances? Subtractive submersion programmes? Early-exit transitional programmes? Late-exit transitional programmes? Mother-tongue-based Multilingual Education (MLE) programmes?
1. Definitions of Literacy, Oracy, Literate, Orate
Why do we need to define concepts?

“The concepts we use are almost never neutral. In contested arenas such as bilingual education, words and concepts frame and construct the phenomena under discussion, making some persons and groups visible, others invisible; some the unmarked norm, others marked and negative. Choice of language can minoritise or distort some individuals, groups, phenomena, and relations while majoritising and glorifying others. Concepts also can be defined in ways that either hide, expose, and rationalize, or question power relations.”

(Skutnabb-Kangas & McCarty 2008: 3)
Definitions: Literacy and Oracy

LITERACY: the ability to read and write.
- competence or knowledge in a specified area: wine literacy can't be taught in three hours.

ORACY: the ability to express oneself fluently and grammatically in speech.
ORIGIN 1960s: from Latin *os*, *or-* ‘mouth,’ on the pattern of *literacy*.
(from the online dictionary in Word)
Definitions: Literate and Orate

**LITERATE**, adjective
(of a person) able to read and write.
- having or showing education or knowledge, typically in a specified area: we need people who are economically and politically literate.

**ORATE**, verb [intrans.]
make a speech, esp. pompously or at length.

This definition means that there is no adjective corresponding to literate.
A person cannot be orate.
2. Value judgments about literates and orates
Definitions: Literate

**LITERATE**, adjective [**ORATE** as an adjective does not exist]

**1** many of the workers were not literate able to read/write, educated, schooled. **antonym illiterate**.

**2** her literate friends educated, well-educated, well-read, widely read, scholarly, learned, knowledgeable, lettered, cultured, cultivated, sophisticated, well-informed. **antonym ignorant**.

**3** he was computer literate knowledgeable, well-versed, savvy, smart, conversant, competent; **antonym ignorant**. (Thesaurus, Word, online)
Definitions: Literate

These definitions give the impression that a literate person is in many ways POSITIVE. If you are orate (not literate), you are NOT educated or knowledgeable or cultured or sophisticated or well-informed or smart or competent. You are the opposite of all these positive characteristics.

“Illiterates” are IGNORANT.
LITERATE, adjective [ORATE as an adjective does not exist]

1. many of the workers were not literate able to read/write, educated, schooled. antonym illiterate.
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Fairness? Everybody should be defined

- either positively, in terms of what they are and know: “literate” versus “orate”;
- or BOTH should be defined negatively, in terms of what they are NOT and do NOT know: “inorate” versus “illiterate”.

It is unfair to define one group positively in terms of what they are/know (“literate”) but define the other group negatively, in terms of what they are NOT/do NOT know (“illiterate”). This hierarchises people.
UNESCO 1958 definition of literacy is still used in 2009

“Literate/illiterate. As used in the statistical tables, the term refers to a person who can/cannot read and write with understanding a simple statement related to his/her everyday life” (EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009: 411, emphasis added).
Definitions of literacy: multiple paradigms

“Literacy can be defined as the ability to read and write. Yet this definition masks two different paradigms informing literacy research and practice. *Autonomous* views characterize literacy as abstract, neutral, and independent from the social context and language users (Ong, 1982). *Ideological* views characterize literacy as “socially and historically situated, fluid, multiple, and power-linked.” (Skutnabb-Kangas & McCarty 2008: 3).
“Educationally, an autonomous view emphasizes discrete language skills, often taught through direct instruction and scripted phonics programs. An ideological view binds reading and writing to oracy, emphasizing the development of different literacies (and multiliteracies) for different purposes through meaningful social interaction and critical examination of authentic texts.”

(Skutnabb-Kangas & McCarty 2008: 3-4)
Our definitions: Oracy, orate, orature

**ORACY**: High levels of spoken language proficiency; to be a competent speaker or storyteller. An **orate** is an individual who communicates through listening and speaking but not reading and writing; orates often have superb memory strategies in comparison with persons considered literate because orates carry their entire “library” in their heads. **Orature** is oral literature. (Skutnabb-Kangas & McCarty 2008: 11).
BOTH LITERACY AND ORACY HAVE BOTH GOOD SIDES, AND DRAWBACKS. SOCIETAL POWER STRUCTURES DECIDE HOW THESE ARE VALUED.
Literacy glorified, oracy stigmatised

Today **LITERACY** is glorified and made into a norm that cannot be questioned, while **ORACY** in adults is stigmatised and made into something to be ashamed of. Everybody HAS to be literate. People who are orate are made to feel that it is their own fault; they “ARE” stupid and ignorant.
3. Whose responsibility is it to enable children and adults to become literate?

Equity.

Where is Mauritius?
If some people are orate, despite having attended school and despite having wanted to learn how to read and write well, who is responsible?

Is it the person herself, or school and society?

Literacy is ‘socially and historically situated, fluid, multiple, and power-linked.’

Where is equity?
High levels of literacy should be one of the outcomes of formal education.

**Equity.** As used in the report, the term describes fairness in the distribution of opportunities for education. Enhanced equity implies a reduction in disparities based on gender, poverty, residence, ethnicity, **language** or other characteristics and circumstances that **should not influence education outcomes** (*EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009: 409; emphasis added*).
Table 1: Mauritius’s human development index 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HDI value</th>
<th>Life expectancy at birth (years)</th>
<th>Adult literacy rate (% ages 15 and above)</th>
<th>Combined gross enrolment ratio (%)</th>
<th>GDP per capita (PPP US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Norway (0.971)</td>
<td>1. Japan (82.7)</td>
<td>1. Georgia (100.0)</td>
<td>1. Australia (114.2)</td>
<td>1. Liechtenstein (85,382)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79. Turkey (0.806)</td>
<td>80. Algeria (72.2)</td>
<td>81. Namibia (88.0)</td>
<td>74. Croatia (77.2)</td>
<td>66. Montenegro (11,699)</td>
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<tr>
<td>80. Ecuador (0.806)</td>
<td>81. Brazil (72.2)</td>
<td>82. Sao Tome and Principe (87.9)</td>
<td>75. Saint Lucia (77.2)</td>
<td>67. Panama (11,391)</td>
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<tr>
<td>81. Mauritius (0.804)</td>
<td>82. Mauritius (72.1)</td>
<td>83. Mauritius (87.4)</td>
<td>76. Mauritius (76.9)</td>
<td>68. Mauritius (11,296)</td>
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<td>82. Kazakhstan (0.804)</td>
<td>83. Honduras (72.0)</td>
<td>84. Equatorial Guinea (87.0)</td>
<td>77. South Africa (76.8)</td>
<td>69. Bulgaria (11,222)</td>
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<td>83. Lebanon (0.803)</td>
<td>84. Lebanon (71.9)</td>
<td>85. Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (86.8)</td>
<td>78. Georgia (76.7)</td>
<td>70. Uruguay (11,216)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182. Niger (0.340)</td>
<td>176. Afghanistan (43.6)</td>
<td>151. Mali (26.2)</td>
<td>177. Djibouti (25.5)</td>
<td>181. Congo (Democratic Republic of the) (298)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From UN Human Development Report 2009, published 5 October 2009, 
http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_MUS.html

182 countries compared; Mauritius is number 68 on GDP (Gross Domestic Product) but “only” number 83 on Adult literacy. WHY?
4. Types and levels of literacy (basic, functional, high-level, computer, etc).

How long does it take to acquire sustainable literacy?

Achieving high-level literacy through formal education is a human right.
OF COURSE IT IS GOOD IF EVERYBODY BECOMES LITERATE, BUT...

WHAT TYPE OF LITERATE AT WHAT LEVEL (BASIC, FUNCTIONAL, MORE)?

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

HOW EASY OR DIFFICULT IS IT?
Different kinds of literacies

- **Basic literacy**: to be able to read and write
- **UNESCO 1958**: the ability of an individual to read and write with understanding a simple short statement related to his/her everyday life
How long does it take to acquire Basic Literacy?

- These skills of Basic Literacy can be taught to adults in very few hours if the adult knows the language (it is her mother tongue or an extremely well known other language), if the writing system is fairly simple; if there is high correspondence between what one hears and what one writes; if the teacher knows what to do; and if the adult is highly motivated.
How long does it take to acquire Basic Literacy?

- These skills of Basic Literacy can be taught to children fairly fast 1) if the child knows the language (it is her mother tongue or an extremely well known other language), 2) if the writing system is fairly simple; 3) if there is high correspondence between what one hears and what one writes; 4) if the teacher knows what to do; and 5) if the child is highly motivated. Mauritius?
<table>
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<th>Language</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child knows lg (Mother tongue)</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple writing system</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High correspondance hear/write</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher knows what to do</td>
<td>?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child highly motivated</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<td>Language</td>
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How long does it take to acquire Basic Literacy?

• **Reading**, with understanding, can be taught to 2-3-year-old children in less than a year, with, for instance, 10-minute sessions twice a week (and they **ENJOY** it!).

**Writing** (especially handwriting) takes more time because small children’s motor coordination is not yet developed enough.
Different kinds of literacies

- The concept of literacy has [since Basic Literacy] evolved to embrace multiple skill domains, each conceived on a scale of different mastery levels and serving different purposes (EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009: 410).

- “Functional literacy” takes minimally 6 years of formal education to be learned and sustained; literacy needs to be used, at home or in work, to be sustained). A “literate environment” is needed.

- Computer literacy, etc are literacies for specific domains.
What is “a literate environment”?

Literate environment. The term can have at least two meanings: (a) the availability of written, printed and visual materials in learners’ surrounding environment, enabling them to make use of their basic reading and writing skills; and/or (b) the prevalence of literacy in households and communities, enhancing the prospects of successful literacy acquisition by learners (EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009: 411).
High-level literacy defined

**Literacy** (continued). Many today view literacy as the ability to identify, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials in various contexts. Literacy is a process of learning that enables individuals to achieve personal goals, develop their knowledge and potential, and participate fully in the community and wider society (*EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009: 410*).
High-level literacy as an outcome of formal education - a human right?

Many universal human rights instruments guarantee access to education as a human right. The goals of education are also specified in many of them.

It is possible, when combining these two types of HRs instrument, to claim that achieving high-level literacy through formal education is a human right.
Reading for details on human rights instruments related to the right to education and language

5. In what kind of programmes is it best to acquire high-level literacies (multiliteracy) under various circumstances? Subtractive submersion programmes? Early-exit transitional programmes? Late-exit transitional programmes? Mother-tongue-based Multilingual Education (MLE) programmes?
First I will summarise earlier and present ITM (Indigenous/Tribal and Minority/Minoritised) education and its results internationally and also relate it to the situation in Mauritius.
The most important PEDAGOGICAL reason for the world’s ”illiteracy” is the wrong medium of teaching.
Subtractive teaching in submersion programmes is the most common way of educating ITM children today.

Most Indigenous/Tribal and Minority children (with some exceptions, e.g. Saami, Māori), and Minoritised children from dominated groups (ITMs) are taught through the medium of dominant languages, subtractively, in submersion programmes.
**Subtractive teaching**

**SUBTRACTIVE** teaching through the medium of a **dominant** language replaces Indigenous/Tribal, Minority and Minoretised (ITM) children’s mother tongues. It subtracts from their linguistic repertoire.

**SUBMERSION** (sink-or-swim): ITM children are forced to accept teaching in a dominant foreign language; it is often taught as if it was their first language. The teacher mostly does not know the ITM pupils’ mother tongue.
ITMs are taught their own languages as subjects.
”Language shift programmes” (Hansegård)
How many language groups in Mauritius study their mother tongues as subjects in schools?
Most ITM children are in **SUBMERSION** (sink-or-swim) programmes where their mother tongues (MTs) are not used as teaching languages, or they are in **EARLY-EXIT TRANSITIONAL** programmes where the MTs are used as teaching languages during the first year or two only, and the children are then “exited” to dominant-language-medium programmes where, at the most, their MT is a (voluntary) subject.
At the most, some ITMs have (very) early-exit transitional programmes.

Also ”Language shift programmes” (Hansegård)

How many children from the various mother tongue groups in Mauritius have early-exit programmes?
Today's ITM education is contrary to solid research evidence, genocidal, and a crime against humanity

a) most of this education has been and still is organised contrary to solid research evidence of how it should be conducted;

b) it represents linguistic and cultural genocide educationally, sociologically and psychologically, according to the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (E793, 1948; 78 U.N.T.S. 277, http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/x1cppcg.htm); and

c) most of it can legally be seen as a crime against humanity,
Some results of SUBTRACTIVE SUBMERSION programmes for ITM children
Subtractive dominant-language medium education for ITM children is organized against solid research evidence about how best to reach high levels of bilingualism or multilingualism and how to enable ITM children to achieve academically in school.
Educational goals for ITM children

A good educational programme leads to the following goals from a language(s), identity, labour market and life chances point of view

• 1. high levels of multilingualism, including high-level multiliteracy)
• 2. a fair chance of achieving academically at school,
• 3. strong, positive multilingual and multicultural identity and positive attitudes towards self and others, and
• 4. a fair chance of awareness and competence building as prerequisites for working for a more equitable world, for oneself and one's own group as well as others, locally and globally.
Prototypes in multilingual education

• Non-models
• Weak models
• Strong models
Non-models (do not reach goals)

- Submersion or sink-or-swim programmes for linguistic minority children and other minoritized children
- Dominant linguistic majority children also have non-models: mainstream monolingual programmes, maybe with some foreign language teaching
Dominant-language-only submersion programmes “are widely attested as the least effective educationally for minority language students” (May & Hill 2003: 14, large-scale international study commissioned by the Māori Section of the Aotearoa/New Zealand Ministry of Education).

http://www.minedu.govt.nz/
The worst results, were with students in regular submersion programmes where the students' mother tongues (L1s) were either not supported at all or where they only had some mother-tongue-as-a-subject instruction. This is known as a subtractive learning situation.
What does subtractive teaching do?

- **Subtractive teaching is sociologically, educationally and psychologically genocidal, according to 2 of UN Genocide Convention’s definitions of genocide.**
- It replaces mother tongues and kills languages.
- **It prevents profound literacy.**
- It prevents students from gaining the knowledge and skills that would correspond to their innate capacities and would be needed for socio-economic mobility & democratic participation.
- It wastes resources.
Subtractive teaching does not lead to the high-level multiliteracies needed today.

- This kind of high-level multiliteracies are needed in today’s complex urban world, for the labour market and for being able to participate in and influence wider society. To achieve sustainable high-level multiliteracy may take up to 12 years of good formal mother-tongue-based schooling; high-level literacies are CALP-based.

- WHAT IS CALP????
Cognitively undemanding vs Cognitively demanding language

Cognitively undemanding language is easy to understand, deals with everyday language and occurrences and uses simple language structure.

Cognitively demanding language relates to abstract concepts, has specialized vocabulary and uses more complex language structure.
Cognitively undemanding vs Cognitively demanding
Context embedded vs Context reduced

CUMMINS’S QUADRANT FOR BICS AND CALP
Two different theories on how to learn languages

Theory of common underlying proficiency

This theory is closer to our present-day knowledge

Theory of separate underlying proficiencies

Separate proficiencies WRONG!!!
Separate underlying proficiency

Common underlying proficiency

L1
BICS
CALP
L2
BICS
L3
BICS
L1 + L2 + L3
CALP
L1 channel
L2 channel
L3 channel

Common underlying proficiency
Separate underlying proficiencies
On water surface, we see **two icebergs** - but under the surface they have a lot in common

Two icebergs, but a **partially common underlying basis** for all our languages
The two icebergs metaphor of common underlying proficiency

Common underlying proficiency, L1+L2 CALP

CALP for L1 not shared with L2

CALP for L2 not shared with L1

L1 BICS

L2 BICS
Three tasks for parents (Pa), school (S), politicians (Po) in enabling children to become high-level bilingual or multilingual.

1. Organise conditions for kids to learn BICS together with other kids: use the language (Pa, Po)

2. Enable kids to differentiate what in CALP is common for both/all languages (the lined part under the surface) (S - bilingual teachers!)

3. Teach the children what is specific for each language’s CALP (the non-lined parts under the surface) (S - bilingual teachers!).
This kind of teaching (especially 2 and 3) develop the child’s metalinguistic awareness.
Metalinguistic awareness is probably the most important causal factor in all the benefits that high-level bilingual or multilingual children have at a group level, when compared to otherwise similar monolingual children (such as divergent thinking, cognitive flexibility, learning additional languages faster and better, sensitivity to feedback cues, better results in some parts of verbal IQ tests, etc).
Subtractive teaching does not lead to the high-level multiliteracies needed today.

This sustainable high-level multiliteracy may never be reached:
- if the formal education is in a dominant foreign language, and
- if it happens AT THE COST OF DEVELOPING HIGH COMPETENCE IN THE MOTHER TONGUE (subtractively). (High competence in the MT here means high cognitive-academic language proficiency, CALP, including excellent writing skills).

At the same time, the benefits of oracy (that the child might have had in the MT) may not be developed either. Likewise, MT CALP is at risk.
(Physical) stunting rate (EFA)

The EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009 uses as one of the indicators in child care and education the concept of Stunting rate: “Proportion of children in a given age group whose height for their age is between two and three standard deviations (moderate stunting) or three or more standard deviations (severe stunting) below the reference median established by the National Center for Health Statistics and the World Health Organization. Low height for age is a basic indicator of malnutrition” (p. 412).
Cognitive and emotional education—and literacy-related stunting, caused by subtractive schooling.

It is also possible to talk about stunting a child’s cognitive and emotional development.

Example: Zambia and Malawi, Ed Williams
Zambian pupils had all education in English) ‘Large numbers of them have very weak or zero reading competence in two languages’.
The Malawi children were taught in local languages during the first 4 years, with English as a subject). They had slightly better test results in the English language than the Zambian students. In addition they read and wrote their own languages.
Conclusion: ‘there is a clear risk that the policy of using English as a vehicular language may contribute to stunting, rather than promoting, academic and cognitive growth’. This fits the UN genocide definition of “causing mental harm”.
Weak models of bilingual education are more humane for ITM children than non-models, BUT do not reach the goals either.

- early- and late-exit transitional programmes
- segregation programmes
Early transition to the international language of wider communication/ILWC across Africa (from Heugh, Kathleen, 2009) is accompanied by:

- **Poor literacy** in L1 and L2
  - SACMEQ 11 2005; UIE-ADEA study 2006; HSRC studies in S Africa 2007

- **Poor numeracy/mathematics & science**
  - HSRC 2005; 2007

- **High failure and drop-out rates**
  - Obanya 1999; Bamgbose 2000

- **High costs/ wastage of expenditure**
  - Alidou et al 2006
Forms of Education of Indigenous Children as Crimes Against Humanity?

Both Expert papers contain sociological and legal argumentation where we show that to educate ITM children through a dominant language in a submersion or even early-exit transitional programme violates the human right to education. This right is in many international human rights documents, also in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Art. 29). The Convention has been ratified by ALL other UN member states except two: Somalia and the USA...
Subtractive dominant-language medium education for ITM children

- prevents *access to education*, because of the linguistic, pedagogical and psychological barriers it creates. Thus it violates the right to education.
Subtractive dominant-language medium education for IM children often curtails the development of the children’s capabilities, and perpetuates thus poverty (see economics Nobel laureate Amartya Sen).
Subtractive education through the medium of a dominant language causes/contributes to language shift. It has

- effects on the ITM languages themselves
- effects on ITM parents’ and children’s attitudes
- effects on the use of ITM languages
Most ITM education fits Genocide Convention’s definitions of genocide

• Especially the non-models for ITM children but to some extent also many early-exit transitional weak models fit educationally and sociologically two of the definitions of genocide that are in the UN International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (E793, 1948)

Two of the five definitions of genocide

- Article II(e): 'forcibly transferring children of the group to another group';
- Article II(b): 'causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group'; (emphasis added).
Subtractive education through the medium of a dominant language can have (and has had) harmful long-term social, psychological, physical, economic & political consequences:

Serious physical harm, e.g. in residential schools, and in health-related issues: no or poor maternity care, high infant mortality, under-nourishment, dangerous work (e.g. mines, logging, chemicals in agriculture) or unemployment, child labour, poor housing and health care. Health and other physical effects from alcoholism, abuse of women and children in families, incest, and overrepresentation in suicide and crime statistics are also instances of physical harm.
Subtractive education through the medium of a dominant language can have (and has had) harmful consequences.

- Very serious mental harm: social dislocation, psychological, cognitive, linguistic and educational harm, and, partially through this, also economic, social and political marginalization.
What are the recommendations about the medium of education for ITM children on the basis of research results?
Only STRONG models of bi/multilingual education give children a possibility of reaching the educational goals.
Strong models for both ITM and dominant group children

- Immersion programmes for majorities
- Language maintenance (language shelter) programmes for ITMs
- Revitalisation programmes for language-dispossessed Indigenous peoples
- Two-way programmes and the European Union Schools model for both ITMs AND majorities
“the strongest predictor of L₂ [ITM] student achievement is the amount of formal L₁ [mother tongue medium] schooling. The more L₁ [MTM] grade-level schooling, the higher L₂ [dominant language] achievement.”
Solid research results are counterintuitive and against common sense (e.g. early start & maximum exposure are fallacies). In fact...

... the longer ITM children in a low-status position have their own language as the main medium of teaching, the better they also become in the dominant language, provided, of course, that they have good teaching in it, preferably given by bilingual teachers.
The length of mother tongue medium education was in Thomas & Collier's (and other, e.g. Ramirez) studies more important than any other factor in predicting the educational success of bilingual students.

It was also much more important than socio-economic status, something extremely vital in relation to dominated/ oppressed ITM students.
There are hundreds of smaller studies showing similar conclusions, with many different types of groups and many languages, and from many countries. And the knowledge is not new...
All these studies show both the **positive results** of additive mother tongue medium maintenance education, and the mostly **negative results** of subtractive dominant-language medium education.
Educational conclusion, based on massive research evidence worldwide

If we want Indigenous/Tribal /minority/ minoritised children to “succeed” in school (learn 2-3 languages, and the subjects), **they must have their own language** as the main teaching language for at least 6-8 years, preferably longer. It must also be taught as a subject throughout their schooling.
Agreement with human rights documents

This kind of teaching would also live up to the recommendations in OSCE’s Hague Recommendations on the Educational Rights of National Minorities (1996)


and

The Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities from OSCE's High Commissioner on National Minorities (<http://www.osce.org/hcnm/>)

For minorities, mother tongue medium education is recommended at all levels, also in secondary education. This includes bilingual teachers in the dominant language as a second language (Art. 11-13).

'Submersion-type approaches whereby the curriculum is taught exclusively through the medium of the State language and minority children are entirely integrated into classes with children of the majority are not in line with international standards' (The Explanatory Note, p. 5).
UNESCO published in 2003 an Education Position Paper: 
Education in a multilingual world.

Principle I

UNESCO supports mother tongue instruction as a means of improving educational quality by building upon the knowledge and experience of the learners and teachers.
Principle I

(I) Mother tongue instruction is essential for initial instruction and literacy and should "be extended to as late a stage in education as possible"
UNESCO supports bilingual and/or multilingual education at all levels of education as a means of promoting both social and gender equality and as a key element of linguistically diverse societies.
Education in a multilingual world
UNESCO Education Position Paper, 2003

Principle III, (II)
- the implementation of "the right to learn in the mother tongue" and the "full use of culturally appropriate teaching methods of communication and transmission of knowledge";
Principle III

(III) Education should raise "awareness of the positive value of cultural [and linguistic] diversity..."
Question: Why do states not act rationally in ITM education?

ITM education is today organised AGAINST scientific evidence in most countries of the world. The problem is not lack of knowledge but the fact that the knowledge is not being used. WHY?
‘California’s “reading problem” includes policy makers who don’t read the research.’

Stephen Krashen

(Oakland Tribune 6 January 2006)

Is this true for the Mauritius too? And other parts of the world?
Linguistic Human Rights (LHRs) in education are ONE necessary (but not sufficient) prerequisite in the struggle to prevent linguistic genocide and crimes against humanity.
Linguistic Genocide and lack of LHRs in education is co-responsible for

- “illiteracy”, lack of school achievement, educational waste, poor life chances;
- disappearance of groups/nations/peoples (through forced assimilation);
- homogenising knowledges and ideas and preventing optimal multicreativity
- killing of the world’s languages and linguistic diversity, and TEK (Traditional Ecological Knowledge), as prerequisites for the maintenance of biodiversity.
Linguistic Human Rights might be one way of

- preventing linguistic genocide;
- promoting integration and defending people against forced assimilation;
- promoting positive state policies towards ITM languages;
- promoting the maintenance of the world’s linguistic diversity;
- promoting conflict prevention; and
- promoting self-determination.
ITMs lose out on lack of LHRs in education, and so do the states.

- Creativity, new ideas, are the main assets (cultural capital) in a knowledge society. They are a prerequisite for humankind to adapt to change and to find creative solutions to the catastrophes of our own making. Multilingualism enhances creativity, monolingualism and homogenisation kill it.
Education is the most crucial input in fighting poverty

The question, if we are interested in more equity in the world, in reducing the gaps, is, in Misra & Mohanty's view: "What is the most critical (and cost effective) input to change the conditions of poverty, or rather [in Amartya Sen’s sense], to expand human capabilities?"

There is "a general consensus among the economists, psychologists and other social scientists that education is perhaps the most crucial input" (ibid., 265).
But the question is: **WHAT KIND OF EDUCATION?**

For ITM children, subtractive education through the medium of a dominant language prevents access to education.
States follow emotional common sense and harm the children - and themselves – for short-sighted and wrong political reasons.

To under-educate or mis-educate children, to prevent them from reaching the potential that they have, is economically enormously costly both for the individuals concerned and for the states.

Quite apart from moral and ethical human rights arguments (which are compelling), this wastage is what states should be concerned about if they want to follow any kind of economic rationality.
“Every child in the world has the right to education through the medium of their mother tongue”
SUMMING UP:
WHY MLE??
IN MAURITIUS??

Often asked questions and doubts that school authorities and politicians might have - and even parents...
Why should children be taught mainly through the medium of their mother tongue (MT) in school for the first 6-8 years? They know their MT already? 1

When children come to school, they can talk in their MT about concrete everyday things in a face-to-face situation in their own environment where the context is clear: they can see and touch the things they are talking about and they get immediate feedback if they do not understand (“I didn’t mean the apples, I asked you to bring bananas”). They speak fluently, with a native accent, and they know the basic grammar and many concrete words. They can explain all the basic needs in the MT: they have *basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS)*.
Why should children be taught mainly through the medium of their mother tongue (MT) in school for the first 6-8 years? They know their MT already? 2

This BICS may be enough for the first grades in school where teachers are still talking about things that the child knows. But later in school children need abstract intellectually and linguistically much more demanding concepts; they need to be able to understand and talk about things far away (e.g. in geography, history) or things that cannot be seen (e.g. mathematical and scientific concepts, honesty, constitution, fairness, democracy). They need to be able to solve problems using just language and abstract reasoning, without being able to do concrete things (“if I first do A, then either D or E happens; if I then choose K, X may happen but Y may also happen; therefore it is best to do B or C first”). They need CALP.
Why should children be taught mainly through the medium of their mother tongue (MT) in school for the first 6-8 years? They know their MT already?

The cognitive-academic language proficiency (CALP) that is needed to manage from grade 3 on in school, in higher grades, upper secondary school and later in life, develops slowly. Children need to develop these abstract concepts on the basis of what they already know in their mother tongue. If the development of the mother tongue CALP (which mainly happens through formal education) is cut off when the child starts school, s/he may never have an opportunity to develop higher abstract thinking in any language.
Why should children be taught mainly through the medium of their mother tongue (MT) in school for the first 6-8 years? They know their MT already?

If teaching is in a foreign power language that a Kreol-speaking child does not know (e.g. English), the child sits in the classroom the first 2-3 years without understanding much of the teaching. S/he may repeat mechanically what the teacher says, without understanding, without developing her capacity to think with the help of language, and without learning almost anything of the subjects that she is taught. This is why many Kreol-speaking children leave school early, not having learned much English, not having learned properly how to read and write, not having developed their mother tongue, and almost without any school knowledge.
Why should children be taught mainly through the medium of their mother tongue (MT) in school for the first 6-8 years? They know their MT already?

If the child has the mother tongue (MT), here Kreol, as the teaching language, s/he understands the teaching, learns reading and writing properly in a language she knows (and can later transfer this skill to other languages), learns the subjects, develops the CALP in the MT, and has very good chances of becoming a thinking, knowledgeable person who can continue the education.
Parents want children to learn English (and French). If children are taught mainly through their MT the first many years, how do they learn English (and French)?

All MLE (Mother-tongue-based MultiLingual Education) programmes should teach English as a SECOND language subject from grade 1 or 2. The teachers know both the children’s MT and English. In the CALP part of language, much is shared in the MT and English (and other additional languages such as French).
Parents want children to learn English (and French). If children are taught mainly through their MT the first many years, how do they learn English (and French)?

The child needs to learn reading and writing only once in life, and it is easiest to learn it in a language that one knows well. When the child has understood the relationship between what one hears and speaks, and the reading/writing system, in the MT, this can easily be transferred to other languages (even if the script may be different).
Parents want children to learn English (and French). If children are taught mainly through their MT the first many years, how do they learn English (and French)?

When the child has learned many abstract concepts in the MT, s/he just needs to learn the “labels”, new words for them in English; s/he already knows the concepts (even if there are, of course, cultural differences in nuances). In this way, only parts of the language (English) is new; the child already knows the content in various subjects (e.g. in mathematics). All languages share a common underlying proficiency.
Parents want children to learn English (and French). If children are taught mainly through their MT the first many years, how do they learn English (and French)?

When the child develops this proficiency in the language she knows best, the MT, it is easily transferred to other languages. And when the child is already high-level bilingual in the MT and English, she learns French and other languages faster and better than if she starts French learning as monolingual in the MT. She needs fewer years of and less exposure to French, to learn it well.
Parents want children to learn English (and French). If children are taught mainly through their MT the first many years, how do they learn English (and French)?

All research studies in the world show that the longer the child has the MT as the main medium of education, the better the child learns the subjects and the better s/he also becomes in the dominant language of the country and in additional languages. The number of years in MT-medium education is also more important for the results than the parents’ socio-economic status. This means that MLE also supports economically poor children’s school achievement.
Isn’t it enough if children have the first 3 years in the MT and then the teaching can be in English? 1

3 years of MT-medium teaching is much better than having all the teaching in English, but 3 years is NOT enough. The CALP development is nowhere near a high enough level in the MT after 3 years. 6 years in the MT is an absolute minimum, but 8 years is better.
Isn’t it enough if children have the first 3 years in the MT and then the teaching can be in English?

Ethiopia, one of the poorest countries in Africa, has a decentralised education system where 8 years of mother-tongue-based MLE is recommended. Some districts have chosen to have only 4 or 6 years of MT-medium.
Isn’t it enough if children have the first 3 years in the MT and then the teaching can be in English? 3

Comparing results from the whole country, a large study shows that those who have had 8 years of mainly MT-medium and who have studied Amharic (the dominant Ethiopian language) and English as subjects, have the best results in science, mathematics, etc, and also in English.
Isn’t it enough if children have the first 3 years in the MT and then the teaching can be in English? 4

Those with 6 years are not as good, and those who have switched to English-medium already after grade 4, have the worst results, also in English.
Parents want English-medium schools. What are the likely results? 1

Many studies in India show that children in English-medium private schools initially know English better than children in MT or regional language medium government schools.
Parents want English-medium schools. What are the likely results? 2

But at the end of grade 8, the knowledge in the various subjects of the students in English-medium schools is lower than in government schools, and their English is no better.
Parents want English-medium schools. What are the likely results? 3

In addition, they do not know how to read or write their MTs and do not have the vocabulary to discuss what they have learned in any Indian languages.
Parents want English-medium schools. What are the likely results? 4

In order to learn English, they have sacrificed knowledge of Indian languages and much of the knowledge of school subjects. But they only get a proficiency in the English language that is not at a high level.
Parents want English-medium schools. What are the likely results? 5

The poor English results are partly because the English language competence of teachers is generally not very high. But an important reason is also that these children who have not studied through the medium of their own languages, have not been able to develop a high-level CALP, neither in the MTs nor in English.
CONCLUSION

Mother-tongue based MLE for the first 6-8 years, with good teaching of English as a second language and French as a foreign/second language, and possibly other languages too, with locally based materials which respect local knowledge, seems to be a good research-based recommendation for Mauritius.
Supply and demand theories predict that when many people possess what earlier was a scarce commodity (near-native English), the price goes down. The value of ’perfect’ English skills as a financial incentive decreases substantially when a high proportion of a country’s or a region’s or the world’s population know English well.

(T: NY long, 86-92)
Monolingualism is a curable illness

English is not enough!
Neither for "native speakers", nor for those with other mother tongues. Voluntarily monolingual English speakers are dangerous dinosaurs.

In 50 years’ time, we might find voluntarily monolingual English speakers (who COULD have learned other languages but chose not to), in pathological museums.