

# Statement of Plurilingual Philippines against a Mandatory Language of Instruction in Higher Education

Faced with intense opposition—and accusation of being anti-Filipino and anti-nationalism—for removing the “national” language as a separate subject in the general education curriculum (GEC) and making it one of the language options in GEC, the Commission on Higher Education is proposing to require 9 units of the 36 units of the GEC to be taught in the “national” language.

Plurilingual Philippines strongly opposes the proposed requirement.

While Section 6, Article XIV of the Constitution provides that “the Government shall take steps to initiate and sustain the use of Filipino as a medium of official communication and as language of instruction in the educational system,” this provision must be interpreted in conjunction with other provisions of the Constitution, following the long-established precedence that the provisions of the supreme law of the land must not be interpreted in isolation but in consideration of other provisions. Section 5(2), Article XIV of the Constitution provides that “[a]cademic freedom shall be enjoyed in all institutions of higher learning.” Academic freedom includes not only the freedom to choose what to teach, but also the freedom to choose how to teach such. The latter includes choice of language of instruction.

Interpreting the provisions together, requiring 9 units of GEC to be taught in the “national” language, if the proposal would be approved, shall be an act beyond its powers and a blatant and flagrant disregard and violation of the Constitution.

We thus call upon CHED to abandon any prospect of approving and enforcing its proposal to require that the “national” language be the language of instruction in 9 units of GEC, and instead stand by its original memorandum-order, CMO No. 20, which retains English and the “national” language as options for language of instruction.

Furthermore, to align education in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with that in basic education, to enforce the provisions of paragraph 2, Section 7, Article XIV of the Constitution that “[t]he regional language... shall serve as auxiliary media of instruction therein,” and of Section 9, Article XIV that “development, propagation, and preservation of Filipino and **other languages**” be undertaken, we call upon CHED to also recommend in a memorandum-order the inclusion of regional languages as options for language of instruction in GEC.

Finally, for the same provisions cited in the preceding paragraph, we call upon CHED, that if there be a non-foreign language requirement in the GEC, to not limit the said language requirement to the “national” language, i.e., the said language requirement may be fulfilled by taking any course in Filipino languages offered by an HEI or a combination of languages. For example, a student may fulfill the said language requirement by taking courses only on the “national” language or only courses in (a) regional language(s) or some courses in the “national” language and some courses in (a) regional language(s).

Academic freedom has a purpose: it allows students to be exposed to varied ideas and media to the end that they become critical thinkers and life-long learners capable of civic efficiency and of fulfilling their role in nation building.

  
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Chairperson

  
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