

## **Updated Position Statement: Languages in the General Education Curriculum (GEC)**

***We are in favor of a language policy that:***

- I. is inclusive and non-prescriptive;
- II. gives HEIs the freedom to select the language or languages of instruction to be used in the GEC, as appropriate to the specific context.

***We do not support a language policy that:***

- I. limits the teaching of GEC subjects to just English and Filipino;
- II. stipulates any minimum number of subjects that must be taught in a particular language.

The above position is founded on, but not limited to, the following reasons:

### **Educational**

- a. Medium of instruction should be a contextualized choice depending on the needs and interests of a particular learning community.
- b. Numerous factors should be considered in selecting an appropriate medium of instruction for an HEI, department, or even a particular subject, such as research thrusts, economic forces, the competencies of the instructor(s) and students, learning materials, and public approval.
- c. In addition to English and Filipino, several Philippine languages have been effectively used as mediums of instruction by HEIs, such as Negros Oriental State University (Journalism), University of Northern Philippines (Communication), Ateneo de Naga (Philosophy), Catanduanes State University (Engineering), Bohol University (Engineering), UP Tacloban (Literature), and more. Being institutions of higher learning where the operative mode is exploration and discovery, they should not be restricted to just teaching in Filipino and English but instead be given the freedom to innovate in teaching in other languages and contribute in the intellectualization of languages in their region.
- d. General Education is supposed to be general. Requiring subjects of only one particular language or the use of one particular language in a number of subjects does not qualify as general education. If the GEC is to have a language requirement, it should be a flexible one whereby the student has a choice as to what language he/she would like to take to fulfil the language requirement.

### **Social**

- a. The Philippines is a multilingual country. Privileging English and the national language in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has i) reinforced class divisions based on language, whereby fluent speakers of these languages enjoy advantages, privileges, and prestige not afforded to other Filipinos; ii) undermined access and innovation; iii) hampered awareness, tolerance, sensitivity, and appreciation of the true diversity of the country; iv) threatened the vitality and existence of dozens of Philippine languages and associated cultures; Schools should not reproduce such inequitable conditions in our society but instead become an agent for social change. Moreover, any language to be taught or used should be presented in the context of a multilingual society.
- b. Diversity is not a threat to national unity. It is the disrespect and ignorance of diversity—manifested in exclusionary policies and attitudes—that is far more dangerous. The Philippines has been identified among the countries with the highest risk of educational, economic, and social problems due to its restrictive language-in-education policies.

### **Linguistic**

- a. Efforts have been made to intellectualize various Philippine languages by groups like *Akademiya Binisaya*, *NAKEM*, *GUMIL*, *Sumakwelan* Writers' Association, *Katig Waray* Writers, and *Uluhan na Pansiansay Salitan Pangasinan*, and many more. We have

also existing university-based research hubs like the Center for Capampangan Studies (Holy Angel University), University Center of Bicol Studies (Ateneo de Naga University), the Ilokano Language and Literature program of the University of Hawaii. Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education teachers have started teaching and thus intellectualizing the mother tongues of their pupils. The potential of Philippine languages to facilitate intellectual discourse should not be dismissed. Regional and local languages may be particularly suitable for GEC core subjects like Understanding the Self, Readings in Philippine History, Purposive Communication, and various General Education Electives.

- b. The 1987 Philippine Constitution declares that Filipino shall be further developed and enriched on the basis of existing Philippine and other languages. In the more than 20 years since, very few features from other Philippine languages other than Tagalog have been incorporated into the Filipino used in school and media. Excluding native Philippine languages (besides Tagalog in the form of Filipino) from various domains, particular higher education, will continue to hamper the enrichment of Filipino. Pushing the national language without any practical mechanisms to make it more representative, will likewise undermine its public acceptance.

### **Legal**

- a. The right to learn and use one's mother tongue, and the right to a pluralistic, equitable education system are promoted in international legal instruments such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities, and the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. These rights are not limited to basic education.
- b. The 1987 Philippine Constitution recognizes Filipino as the national language. The Constitution, however, does not declare it as the sole medium of official communication and instruction—English is an official language and the regional languages are recognized as auxiliary official languages and media of instruction. Any policy therefore on language use should always reflect such combination – Filipino, English and regional languages.
- c. The Constitution espouses “unity in diversity”, freedom of speech and expression, and academic freedom for all institutions of higher learning. The Philippines is a democratic country and freedom of speech and expression should include what language a person or persons would like to use, while academic freedom should include what languages a teacher would like to use and teach.
- d. The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 (RA 8371) recognizes the rights of indigenous cultural communities and indigenous peoples to determine their education systems by providing education in their own language and in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.

In light of the above, we earnestly request that the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) uphold the existing Commission Memorandum Order 20 s. 2013 regarding the new General Education Curriculum, with only a minor revision necessary: to allow the use of other Philippine languages besides English and Filipino as mediums of instruction.

CHED and other concerned government agencies are also requested to announce concrete plans on the retooling and deployment of affected GE instructors (not just Filipino but also Math, Humanities, English and PE) when CMO 20 2013 comes into effect.

Finally, as advocacy group for MTBMLE, we ask CHED to expedite the revision of Teacher Education Curriculum so that it will respond to the language and pedagogical requirements of MTBMLE.

**170+ Talaytayan MLE and other concerned Filipinos**

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<http://mothertongue-based.blogspot.com/>

Sign our online petition: <http://bit.ly/no-interference-HEI>