

## STATEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS OF THE ILOKANO LANGUAGE ON THE ILOKANO ORTHOGRAPHY ISSUE

We applaud the decisive move of the present government to include Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTBMLE) as a main component of the new K-12 Law (RA 10533). Such education reform initiative recognizes the learner's language and knowledge system as effective starting points for further learning. We also affirm how RA 10533 and other existing policies, especially those that address the educational needs of marginalized learners, value contextualized and culturally-responsive materials developed through a dialogical process among local stakeholders. This upholds not only our democratic values but also research-based and additive MTBMLE practices all over the world.

As writers, educators, scholars and advocates of the Ilokano language we see that MTBMLE provides us opportunities to help provide a literate community for our own children. We have more than a hundred years worth of Ilocania materials written by notable Ilokanos like Isabelo de los Reyes and the tradition has continued and has been sustained even in places where the Ilokano people have immigrated. We have formed writers guilds and organized forums, conferences and workshops to intellectualize Ilokano and other languages in Ilocandia. We have working existing traditions in orthography, stylized writing, and a vibrant literary tradition that came about through experimentation, dialogue and debates among our members. We want to transmit the same love and respect for the Ilokano language, including our discursive processes and bodies of knowledge to our children. We have this mind unconditionally: that our Ilokano language is the residence of our four Ilokano souls, and thus, this, by all means, ought to remain with us as this contributes to our sense of being and becoming.

We are thankful that some of us were given the chance to partake in the crafting of the policy and programs of MTBMLE. As a result, dictionaries, grammar book teachers guides, storybooks have been developed.

And so we were taken by surprise that all of a sudden we received a copy of the "Ispeling ng mga Salitang Ilokano Alinsunod sa Ortograpiyang Pambansa" written by Joel Bagain Lopez. Such spelling guide which will be used by our children, and was said to be implemented in Ilocos Norte, deviates from our existing traditions in language development. We likewise ask the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino to make public the process involved in coming up with the KWF-endorsed Ilokano Orthography. Many of us are not aware of this consultation, who conducted it, and who participated in it. Many of us have questions on the usefulness of this KWF-endorsed Ilokano Orthography in the development of a more intellectualized Ilokano discourse as required in key areas of our educational agenda such as sciences, technology, humanities, engineering, and mathematics.

We wish to quote here certain passages of the Lopez "Ispeling" to prove our point:

1. "Ti agdama nga (sic) Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino iti panangidaulo ni Dr Virgilio S. Almario ket suportaran na (sic) daytoy a wagas ti pannakaisurat ti pronoun ken pronominal adjective." (page 2)
2. "Pinapatunayan ng KWF na ang mga nilalaman ng akdang ito ay alinsunod sa Ortograpiyang Pambansa." (page 6)

What authority does one or two people from the KWF have over the issue about how the

Ilokano pronoun and the pronomial adjective, among others, are to be written? Why is there a need for Lopez to hide behind the approval of the KWF chair and the KWF Ilokano Commissioner?

There is claim that such spelling guide is keeping with the KWF's idea of "ortograpiyang pambansang (OP)." The idea of making all Philippine languages conform to the orthography of one dominant language is an outdated practice, reminiscent of language planning done by fascist governments in the past. Research shows and as recommended by UNESCO, that for orthography to be owned and used widely, it should be crafted jointly through a participatory process among its speakers and stakeholders. In some instances they are guided by an expert but he/she must be a legitimate linguist and knowledgeable of the language.

We are concerned that apart from the mistakes of the Lopez proposal, the author of the 8-page booklet reworks an existing working orthography and argues that what he does is in keeping with the OP so that instead of looking into the merit of the existing working Ilokano orthography, he hides behind the idea of a misguided top-down language planning. What Lopez lacks is a fuller understanding of participatory orthography development, history of the Ilokano language, and how that history has provided a variety of contexts in its development.

More so, in the drawing up of 'a working orthography' of a language, the implementing guidelines of the MTB-MLE is clear on the role of 'stakeholder participation,' a requirement that we think has been violated in the KWF-endorsed Ilokano orthography and the Lopez spelling proposal. IRR 10.5 states: "To achieve an enhanced and responsive basic education curriculum, the DepEd shall undertake consultations with other national government agencies and other stakeholders including, but not limited to, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), private and public schools associations, national student organizations, national teacher organizations, parents-teachers associations, chambers of commerce, and other industry associations, on matters affecting the concerned stakeholders."

The signatories of this Statement are all stakeholders of the Ilokano language. We wish to participate in all aspects of this MTB-MLE and not to be used as pawns at the service of some narrow views or agenda.

The Joint National and International Committee for the Protection of the Ilokano Language,  
25 January 2014

Organizational Stakeholders: Nakem Conferences Philippines, Nakem Conferences International, Guild of Ilokano Writers Philippines, Guild of Ilokano Writers America, Guild of Ilokano Writers Global, Timpuyog ken Saranay Dagiti Ilokano, Chavacano Ethnolinguistic Group, and Timpuyog Dagiti Mannurat nga Ilokano-Hawaii