



Linguistic Society of the Philippines

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Statement of the LINGUISTIC SOCIETY OF THE PHILIPPINES (LSP) Against House Bill No. 6405

“AN ACT TO ABROGATE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MOTHER TONGUE-BASED MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS IN KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 3, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10533 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘ENHANCED BASIC EDUCATION ACT OF 2013’”

The Linguistic Society of the Philippines (LSP), the premier professional organization of linguists and language scholars in the country, reiterates firmly its support towards the expansion of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) in the country.

The principles and framework of the MTB-MLE is guided primarily by the well-established facts of the role of mother tongue(s) in basic education and in child development: that children taught in their first language (L1) are able to learn and understand concepts more effectively and that they also develop a whole set of other essential skills in the process.

The adoption of the MTB-MLE framework in the Philippines under the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (RA 10533)—in spite of the numerous challenges in its implementation—has paved the way for millions of Filipino children to finally be able to enjoy their linguistic human rights—particularly the right to education through the language(s) that they are most familiar with. It inspires them to value their language—no matter how “small” it may be—and to form a deeper bond with their culture, their community and its collective past.

The LSP is cognizant of the various challenges in the implementation of the MTB-MLE—including the difficulties faced by multilingual classrooms, the lack of instructional materials, and the need to capacitate teachers. But these are rather anticipated concerns, reason why immense efforts at various levels are being made to address them from the onset of the MTB-MLE implementation. What we need now are committed and competent leadership, concerted efforts, and evidence-based measures supportive of these collective actions. We also need mechanisms that could further advance research and help accelerate intervention programs aimed at addressing these problems.

Instead of finding ways to respond to the aforementioned challenges, House Bill No. 6405 introduced in the 18th Congress proposes to abrogate the MTB-MLE framework for basic education.

WE DEEM THE PROPOSED ABROGATION UNACCEPTABLE BY ALL MEANS.

It is perversely retrogressive. It will revert us to the state when children, especially those of indigenous minorities, go to schools where no teachers understand their language and where it is never used. It will not only make us lose our momentum in our pursuit for quality education—it will also further narrow down the domains where smaller languages could be used productively. It could also turn futile all the efforts made by the stakeholders for the past eight years—not to mention the time and the resources poured into this undertaking by both the government and the private sectors.

The implementation of the MTB-MLE policy is a significant milestone in the linguistic history of the country. It has drawn our attention back to our local languages and has significantly underlined the richness of our country’s ethnolinguistic diversity. The MTB-MLE framework inspires community-based initiatives and grassroot participation in the formulation of context-appropriate guidelines and instructional materials. We cannot afford to abandon it due to mere “inconvenience”. For many decades, these “smaller” ethnolinguistic groups have suffered more than just “inconvenience”—they have been deprived of resources and have been compelled to assimilate to the more dominant groups in educational settings. The MTB-MLE framework has at least given them a fair chance to survive—something that every ethnolinguistic group in the country, however big or small, rightfully deserves.



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