

Multilingual Education in the Philippines: Conflicting Objectives, Confused Implementation, and Considerable Challenges¹

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Abstract

This paper examines the Philippine Department of Education's (DepEd) implementation of the mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) program. It reviews and summarizes the findings of almost twenty MTB-MLE assessment studies that were conducted and completed in the last four (4) years. It focuses on the implementation challenges that were documented by local and foreign researchers who looked into the program's implementation in different parts of the country. Among the significant implementation challenges identified by the studies were the lack of useful instructional materials and references; the lack of trainings for actual teaching using the MTB-MLE method and for the production of relevant materials; the teachers' lack of confidence to teach using the MTB-MLE method; the additional workload that accompanied the adoption of the program; the preference of many teachers and parents for English as medium of instruction (MOI) and for school children to be exposed to English as a subject at an early stage; the issue of identifying the mother tongue (MT) of pupils; and, a host of problems related to the MTB-MLE's implementing guidelines. The most glaring problem of the MTB-MLE program, however, are its implementing rules and regulations (IRR), issued on 4 September 2013, and the implementing guidelines, specifically Department Orders 16, s. 2012 and 28, s. 2013, whose issuance has led to confusion in program implementation. The paper argues that the IRR and guidelines, as formulated, are undermining the foundations of the MTB-MLE program.

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