

Nothing has stirred our national consciousness more effectively than the recent shifts in the overall language education policies implemented in the country—and rightly so. For an archipelago like the Philippines, acquiring a third and fourth language is a way to survive—a way of life so to speak. Refusing to acknowledge this, in favor of an official and national language only, has evidently laid down the foundations for what this century would call the “inequalities of multilingualism”—challenges that ultimately deter the successful implementation of language policies (Tupas, 2015) that essentially bear affinity with this archipelagic identity. True enough, when the *Mother-Tongue Based, Multilingual Education* (MTB-MLE) policy was implemented in the Philippines in 2009, the entire educational landscape proved to be vulnerable—exposing, in the process of implementation, the various “structural and ideological” (Tupas, 2015) mechanisms that do not represent much of who we truly are, most of all, *how* we truly are.

The Language Study Center (LSC) is the University’s arm, located in the Faculty of Arts and Languages of the College Teacher Development, in language related policies that relate directly to the language of the academe. As an institution of higher learning, the Philippine Normal University (PNU), also the National Center of Teacher Education (NCTE), plays a significant role not only in terms of steering the ship toward dialogue, but more importantly toward interrogation of age-old ideals and practices that do not resonate in the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world of the 21st century. PNU is in the best position to interrogate policies and practices that need re-examination, empowering stakeholders to enact a participatory attitude towards an *emancipatory pedagogy*.

Rebirth of the Language Study Center

The role of language in literacy was formalized beginning the 1940’s, when Pilipino (or Tagalog) was elevated to national language status and when English was upheld as the medium of instruction (Ramos, 1979). Since then, language policies have become integral to the goals of literacy development and nation-building, and LSC has become active in these goals. The LSC is currently strong in its desire to contribute to the on-going review of the MTB-MLE curriculum in the country. The issues that have now surfaced as regards the implementation of MTB-MLE constitute birth pains that will ultimately reposition the Language Study Center as a relevant and active agent toward embracing the various multilingual landscape of the Philippines through research, dialogues, reforms, and

Guided by the very mandate of the University as a NCTE, the LSC capitalizes on the role that language education plays in national development and over-all literacy through research and development projects and programs that support strengthening the country’s archipelagic identity and reinforcing multilingualism in language education policies. Central to all the programs and policies of LSC is the intent of producing timely and relevant responses to the needs and gaps in the shifting educational landscape in the Philippines. LSC also puts premium on the potential of the PNU Campuses to provide support in these programs and policies, gifted as they are with their own linguistic pluralisms.

The LSC Guiding Principle

Guided by various research that document the sociological and sociolinguistic function of language in education, and also by studies that give legitimacy to multilingual education as a tool for social justice, LSC looks at language education policy beyond the scope of fluency but within the framework of overall literacy. This means examining the extent by which specific language education policies account for the sociological dimensions that inhibit learners from minority groups to fully participate and to fully realize their potentials. In a much broader sense, this entails sustaining literacy engagement with the “oral and written repository of a community’s cultural knowledge” (Cummins, 2013) that is limited in the Bilingual Education Policy of the 1970s, and is replete in the MTB-MLE policy of 2009 (all conditions being equal in the latter). LSC thus, in its current programs and policies, operate within the larger principle of social justice, and upholds multilingualism in education for such purpose.

Through this principle, LSC also forwards a more collaborative approach to the interfacing of past and present language policies implemented in the country, enjoining stakeholders and institutions of higher learning in advocating for the cause of the marginalized sectors in education. LSC looks at the relations of power that further disenfranchises the minority and which pushes them further away from the center. This is the impetus which LSC, PNU’s arm in language education policy and research, takes at the core of its projects and programs. Because we are talking about language education policy that dates back to the implementation of the vernacular in the 16th century, much of what confronts the LSC and all other institutions investigating the implementation of MTB MLE requires a reversal of historical patterns of social injustice enacted in years and years of linguistic discrimination.



LSC acknowledges that reversing historical patterns of social injustice, through multilingual education, requires empirical studies that would inform policy-makers with data on how to proceed with the implementation of MTB-MLE. Admittedly, the colossal barrier that marks social injustice in the current implementation of the MTB-MLE is the absence of a culture that supports the use of vernacular in education. LSC argues that the way toward an intellectualized view of vernacular languages in the academe begins by addressing the *inequalities of*

“From the Ground Up” is a holistic approach towards embracing multilingualism within the University. This gives shape to the on-going programs and projects that primarily involve students, staff and faculty in language study, as well as build linkages and network with prospective language planning institutes and organizations.

At the core of this approach are inquiries through research and language studies that center on issues relevant to current educational landscape. In particular, these inquiries aim to gather a baseline data that could inform pre-service teaching institutions and contribute to the on-going review of multilingualism in education. The pursuit of multilingualism (Figure 1) is believed to be crucial in leveling the playing field, not only in terms of overall literacy but also in terms promoting equitable opportunities for all.

The role of the Language Study Center is always pivotal in forwarding, intervening and contributing to matters that aspire to the national consciousness. Historically, LSC is notable for the contributions of some of the country’s influential language educators, led especially by Dr Bonifacio P Sibayan. Where former studies focused on bilingual education policies, current educational landscape warrants assessment and evaluation of a decade-long implementation of the MTB MLE policy in education. This primer and policy brief aims to inform the PNU community and its stakeholders of the programs and plans LSC is currently undertaking to respond to the much-needed input and language reforms in the country.

First among the many agenda of this policy brief is to communicate a need for a highly evolved attitude—characterized by emancipatory practices—towards the Philippines as a multilingual nation. This entails the burdensome task of embracing the issues that hinder this attitude from becoming who we are—including, among others, our own biases against the other languages in the Philippines. To begin, we propose a constant interfacing of past and present language policies implemented in the country through research, dialogues, reforms, and trainings, starting, evidently within PNU.

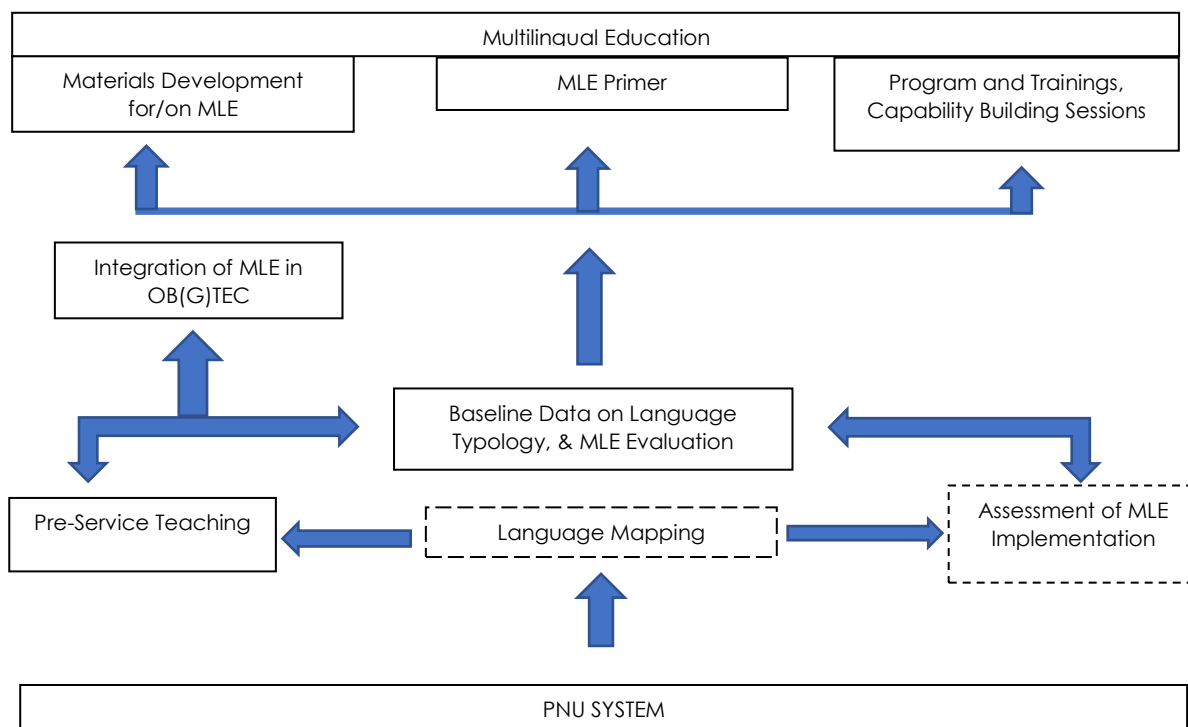


Figure 1 From the ground up: Way towards Multilingualism in Education

Inputs to Policy-Making Across the PNU Campuses

1. Addressing the *Inequalities of Multilingualism* through Equitable Language Planning

To facilitate the entry of the LSC, whose contribution to the field formerly centers on bilingualism, e.g., the use of English as medium of instruction from the time of Dr Sibayan, and to effectively respond to the current crisis, LSC rebrands itself as a center that first and foremost advocates multilingualism in language education policies, including MTB-MLE, whether as a curriculum/course/subject, or as a medium of instruction. Crucial in this endeavor is acknowledging the hegemony of state languages—mainly English and Filipino, that remains enforced in actual school settings—a condition that persists under the influence of various socio-economic factors. For one, the dearth of instructional materials on effectively teaching under the framework of MTB-MLE silently pushes teachers to use materials that are in the language that is not the declared mother tongue. This is a massive issue when one thinks about how much of the country was not prepared for the demands of MTB-MLE.

This illuminates one important gap for which the LSC intends to come in through *equitable* language planning mechanisms. Studies have previously underscored that ensuring equity in education entails protecting local languages and using them as mother tongue, while at the same time preserving multilingualism (Trudell, 2016). Equitable language planning is paradoxical—if not entirely ambitious. The paradox lies in the very desire to come up with a language plan that works fairly amidst the panoply of *lingualisms* in a multilingual society. It rejects a one-size fits all language planning approach that essentially elects a school language (Lx) as the mainstream language of instruction. The first step toward overcoming this seeming paradox is out in the open: explore the use of *mother tongues* in education. The caveat: no one wants it. This may be reconciled with decades of colonial rule which sanctioned other Philippine languages as detrimental to individual progress in a globalizing world which in turns favors a more mainstream national language or a decreed official language. Evidently, this system has also produced unequal opportunities and pushed the minority further outside the margins. To this day, part of the issues MTB-MLE faces have to do with parents not wanting to send their children to schools that do not use English as a medium of instruction. By and large, this scenario also constitute what Tupas identifies as an ideological challenge to a successful MTB - MLE implementation. It is therefore imperative to undo institutional practices that reinforce ideologies, beliefs, attitudes against the mother tongue, or against approximately 75 -150 other languages in the Philippines.

The following undertaking sum up LSC's on-going efforts to promote multilingualism in a formidable institution such as PNU. Fortunately, PNU, consist of diverse multilinguals, is a viable microcosm for the macroscopic Philippines. The unequivocal way forward is to embrace this language diversity within PNU as the very foundation of its strength as a higher institution of learning, as a Teacher Education Institution, to be very specific.

2. Maximizing Opportunities: PNU as a Multilingual Society

PNU's presence in four other regions in the Philippines, apart from the Main Campus in Manila, is a treasure trove of opportunities in language study. The four campuses strategically located in North Luzon, South Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao paint PNU as a microcosm of the multilingual Philippines. It is worth examining not only the linguistic diversity in these places, but also the structures that allow each campus to relate to each other and to the main campus—as well as within their own stakeholders.

LSC is at the opportune center of this multilingual setting (Figure2). Through it, the Campuses will take part in projects where the interest is multilingualism in education. This takes on different forms, including translation projects, foreign language instruction, among others.

One of LSC's intentions is to take advantage of this geopolitical landscape in which PNU and the Campuses are situated. The first thing that must be established is an empirical basis for how languages are chosen in these geopolitical spaces. For this purpose, LSC, initiates language mapping within and across the Campuses. Language mapping, is an essentially familiar research activity that aims, as the term suggests, to come up with a visual presentation of linguistic diversity, often useful in areas like language typology and dialectology (Rabanus, 2019).

The data could either attest to the language diversity of the PNU community—plausibly inherent in its geopolitical character, or, as in most cases, illustrate institutional linguistic determination, typically at the expense of vernacular languages.

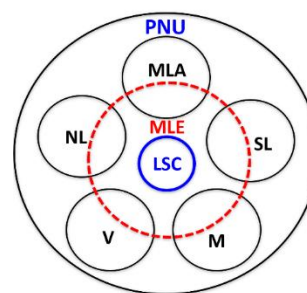


Figure 2: LSC as the central unit in MLE related projects.

3. Minding the Gap: Exploring the Role of Pre-Service Teaching in MLE

Most of the research studies on MTB-MLE center on the aspects of implementation in the field, revealing problems that relate to instruction and instructional materials and a need for more teacher training for teachers in the K-12 (Nolasco, 2016). There is little in the way of discussion on the role of pre-service teaching preparation as a support to the implementation of MTB MLE. For this purpose, LSC proposes a 15–30-hour training for pre-service teachers taking up language education in the country. This training aims to supplement on-going trainings in the field by providing a course that run adjacent to the prospective teachers' areas of specialization as well as parallel to the identified needs in the present-day implementation of MTB MLE. Through these trainings, LSC will gather inputs that could inform future trainings and even reshape policy implementation.

4. Bridging the Gap: From Pre-Service to In-Service

Informed and driven by data from the language map as well as the impact of the pre-service teacher training, LSC advances to explore the prospect of advocating for the use of the mother tongue as a Medium of Instruction (MoI) in K to 6 by providing instructional materials for immediate use in the field. This is a research and production endeavor that principally looks into the structures of MTB MLE implementation in classrooms across the country. Inquiring into best classroom practices, quality and quantity of instructional materials and various forms of sustainable assessments in the K to 3, this research would explore how Mother Tongue Education (MLE) might work in different contexts.

Final and Interim Outcomes

The final and interim outcomes of the LSC should include the following:

1. Strong integration of multilingualism in education through PNU's mandate as NCTE;
2. Clear articulation of the multilingual culture in PNU's teacher education curriculum, across its Campuses;
3. Timely and relevant responses to the issues and needs of the Department of Education's implementation of the MTB-MLE curriculum through research, intensive MLE trainings for both pre- and in-Service teaching

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

1. Stronger Curricular Integration of Multilingualism in the Teacher Education Curriculum

The dearth of research discussing the role of pre-service preparation directs studies and investigations on the state of mother-tongue instruction in the field. This highlights problem relating to lack of instructional materials, strategies in teaching MTB-MLE (Lartec et al, 2014), and inadequate teacher preparation (Anudin, 2015; Trujillo, 2020), among others. This underscores a much needed intervention emanating from the pre-service stage of teacher preparation. The study of Tonio and Ella (2019) reports that as far as the pre-service student teachers are concerned, Mother Tongue instruction is good *in principle*. The same study highlights the favorable attitude of pre-service teachers towards Mother Tongue as a medium of instruction and are willing to undergo training. Their curriculum needs to be supported with courses that provide foundational tools and strategies on integrating Mother-Tongue (MT) instruction through a formal study of the different languages of the Philippines.

2. Stronger Research and Training Collaborations between Universities and TEIs

TEIs are in the best position to inform policy through research and training collaborations that respond to immediate needs in their respective contexts and localities. The issue of MT instruction and multilingualism should no longer be treated in a *one-size-fits-all* approach. These research and training collaborations could, among many others:

- 2.1. explore the ways in which their unique contexts and cultures could profit from the collaboration through specific endeavors e.g., developing pedagogies for beginning reading and literacy using the MT, etc.;
- 2.2. engage the pre-service teachers with additional training programs that would augment their current knowledge and practice with what is immediately required in the field; and
- 2.3. exchange ideas and best practices that specifically articulates the value of multilingualism through classroom and other academic pursuits through joint fora, symposia or similar venues.

3. Pursue Evidence-Based Considerations for Language Reforms in Basic Education

It cannot be stressed further how current and available data on the country's performance in global standardized exams provide significant implications to the country's pursuit of literacy. They provide useful evidence on the nature and role of a carefully-crafted language policy and communicate an empirical basis for future directions of the basic education as far as medium of instruction and overall language policy is concerned. There are a number of crucial studies that could already facilitate and inform on-going discussions on the issue of MTB-MLE, to wit:

- Orbeta Jr, A. (2022). *Challenges in Implementing MTB-MLE*. Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS).
- Assessment Curriculum and Technology Research Center (ACTRC) (2021). *Review of the Tested Curriculum*. ACTRC.
- Monje, J, Orbeta Jr, A, Francisco-Abrigo, KA, & Capones, E. (2019.) *Starting Where the Children Are: A Process Evaluation of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Implementation*. PIDS.
- Fillmore, N. (2019). *MTB MLE Model Building Activity: Baseline Report*. VSO International Nepal.

Conclusions

The road towards honing a multilingual mindset rest on a concerted effort to acknowledge all forms of bias, including the unconscious ones. Tumultuous and winding, the road is only accessible when the link between language use, education and human rights is clearly articulated in policies that have lasting impact in the lives of our learners. There is no small step in reaching the desired destination. Where do we want to take our education system? What steps should we take to make sure no one is left behind? The answer may be varied, but it rests on who we truly are as a nation.

At best, LSC intends to offer whatever insight or finding is worth recommending to policy-makers. This primer concludes with a call for cooperation and participation from every stakeholder who could give shape to the above-mentioned intentions.

LSC is looking at a very challenging future as far as language policy in education is concerned— and the only way forward, is from the ground up.

References

- Anudin, A. (2018). Six years of MTB MLE: Revisiting Teachers' Language Attitude towards the Teaching of Chavacano. *Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*.
- Balingit, R. CC BY-SA 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>, via *Wikimedia Commons*
- Cummins, J. "Multilingual Education for Social Justice: Form Coercive to Collaborative Relations of Power." Presentation delivered at the 4th International Conference on Language and Education: Multilingual Education for All in Asia and the Pacific—Policies, Practices, Processes. Bangkok, Thailand, November 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-P2cJa92vg8>
- Nolasco, R. (2016, February 28). Language(s) my mother gave me. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. Retrieved from <https://opinion.inquirer.net/93279/languages-my-mother-gave-me>
- Rabanus, S. (2020). Language Mapping Worldwide: Methods and Traditions. In: Brunn, S., Kehrein, R. (eds) *Handbook of the Changing World Language Map*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02438-3_151
- Ramos, T. (1979). Studies in Filipino Second language acquisition. First Summer Institute for Educational Research on Asian Americans sponsored by the Asian American Bilingual Center at the University of California, Berkeley
- Tupas, R. (2015). Inequalities of multilingualism: challenges to mother tongue-based multilingual education, *Language and Education*, 29:2, 112-124, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2014.977295>
- Trudell, B. (2016). Language choice and education quality in Eastern and Southern Africa: a review. *Comparative Education*. 52. 281-293. [10.1080/03050068.2016.1185252](https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2016.1185252).
- Robertson, P., Cagasan, L., Guanio, K., Nepomuceno, J., Kheang, T., Bustos, T., Rickards, F. & Ferido, M. (2021). Review of the Tested Curriculum. Assessment Curriculum and Technology Research Centre (ACTRC).

About the Authors

Ryan Dennis B Callueng (callueng.rdb@pnu.edu.ph) is currently the Head of the Language Study Center and a faculty of Filipino and Linguistics at the Faculty of Arts and Languages (PNU).

Erly S Parungao-Callueng (parungao.es@pnu.edu.ph) is a faculty of language and literature at the Faculty of Arts and Languages (PNU).



The PNU Educational Policy Research, and Development Center

The EPRDC is a specialized research center in the University focused on policy research and studies on teacher education. It is established to provide research-based policy recommendation to policy makers. It also serves as the clearing house for all data relevant to teacher education in the Philippines and beyond.

Vision

The Philippine Normal University through the EPRDC aims to be innovation hub of teacher education research and educational policy studies.

Mission

To strengthen the culture of excellence in teacher education research and educational policy studies.

Objectives

The EPRDC shall manage the University's research production, enhance human resource capabilities, and share expertise to other Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) in the area of teacher education research

Strategies

1. Establish and maintain a web-based university research portal that facilitates automated research management system and which also serves as the database of teacher education policies and teacher education research in country and Southeast Asia.
2. Share research expertise and competence in teacher education research with other TEIs throughout the country;
3. Develop and disseminate the University research agenda
4. Design and implement the research capability program for faculty and staff;
5. Manage University's research production particularly the conduct of educational policy studies in education and teacher education; and
6. Serve as the implementing arm for research incentives and research ethics review.

Values

SYNERGY (Working collaboratively as a team)
 EFFICIENCY (Delivering research services efficiently)
 EXCELLENCE (Achieving high quality research outputs)
 PRODUCTIVITY (increasing research production of the University)

The **Policy Brief Series** aims to provide observations, analyses, and insights by PNU faculty and researchers on various educational policy issues. The views contained in the policy briefs are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the University.

The **Policy Brief Series** is published monthly by the **Philippine Normal University Educational Policy Research and Development Center** (PNU-EPRDC). The PNU-EPRDC oversees the editing, compiling, and printing of the policy brief.

Editors

Term 2, SY 2022-2023

Allen A Espinosa, PhD

Director

Edna Luz R Abulon, PhD

Tito C Baclagan, PhD

Ma Victoria C Hermosisima, PhD cand

Ma Arsenia C Gomez, PhD

Praksis A Miranda, PhD

Nina Christina L Zamora, PhD

Faculty Researchers

Lorephil P Carloman

Maria Luz V Rantael

Support Staff

PNU Educational Policy Research and Development Center

Room 204, Pedro Orata Hall

Philippine Normal University, Manila, Philippines 1000

<https://www.facebook.com/pnueprdc>

