

The Philippines MTB-MLE Program: Reconciling Its Utilitarian and Ideological Rationales

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ABSTRACT

This paper explored the literature on the implementation of "Mother Tongue Based-Multilingual Education" in the Philippines using the Postcolonial lens expressed by Constantino and Osias. It argues that the program is misunderstood among its stakeholders, and there have been lapses in its planning and implementation. This paper attempts to reconcile ideological and pragmatic principles that underly the MTB-MLE program in the Philippines. It was argued that the failure of the program was not due to it being theoretically ungrounded. Still, on the implementation side, as evidenced by the lack of reference materials and instructional materials, the skill gap between the teachers and the necessary language skills is also apparent, aside from the unforeseen challenges concerning the multilingual classroom contexts.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of Multilingual Education has been an area of scientific inquiry in the past years. For the past decades, researchers worldwide have given attention to this issue. There is overwhelming empirical data that proves the effectiveness of using the Mother Tongue in communicating the lesson and as an effective springboard in learning a second language and learning a foreign language (Education Development Center, 2017; Hitotuzi, 2006; Kadtong, 2018; Leighton, 2021; Madriñan, 2014; Mbaleka, 2014; Namanya, 2017a; Oda & Vizconde, 2021; Reonal, 2016; Saneka, 2016; Tsagari & Georgiou, 2016; Turin, 2017; Yadav, 2014).

While the research evidence has shown that the use of the Mother Tongue is an excellent approach to communicating lessons with the students and promoting literacy in a second language, it could be argued that the public does not well understand this concept. The "public" in this context refers to the individual actors outside the academic spheres concerned with the research conceptualization of the MTB-MLE program. While the latter was understandable, what may come as a surprise is that even in academic circles, language educators and language teachers who happened to have published researches tend to have at least evidence of a negative perception of the principle of the said program.

A good place to start with this paper is to give context on the relevant events in the Philippine congress when this paper was written. As early as 2020, the MTB-MLE controversy started with the filing of House Bill 6125. The said bill aimed to suspend the implementation of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education as a subject from kindergarten to grade 3. Representative Mark Go, the proponent of the legislation, has cited the result of the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), wherein the Philippines has scored significantly low compared to other countries (Department of Education, 2019). Pasig representative Roman Romulo, the panel Chairman for Education, has expressed support for this initiative. The news report by Luci-Atienza (2020) quoted the proponent as he cited that the program could have created a certain degree of confusion among children in all areas, particularly in multilingual learning contexts such as in National Capital Region and other multicultural places.

In addition to this, just recently, representative Roman Romulo filed another House Bill 2188 with essentially the same purpose and rationale. This legislative move has faced criticism from organizations such as the Linguistics Society of the Philippines, the University of the Philippines Department of Linguistics, and others organizations. Such criticisms were expressed by means of releasing official statements. This appeared in the news report by Bautista (2022) and also by means of participating in the hearings in the house of representatives.

The actions of these legislators reflect how the Language Education program of the country (although theoretically grounded in sound research-based evidence) is (mis)understood by the public. In the case that was presented earlier- the legislators. This is an important context because this is only a small

portion of the "public sphere." Although one could argue that this phenomenon is an isolated case to the lawmakers, it could point toward the reality that indicates gaps in science-communication and science-based policy-making in the Philippines. In this research, it could be argued that even inside the scientific sphere, there are still existing debates relating to the effect of the MTB-MLE program in the Philippines, particularly its effectiveness. Thus, this paper aims to examine the following questions:

1. Describe the current trajectories in the implementation of the MTB-MLE program in the Philippines
2. Relate the issues and concerns and the perception of education stakeholders of the Philippines to the utilitarian and ideological rationales of the MTB-MLE program.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

MTB- MLE as a Basic Right

In the opening paragraph, the fact that use of the Mother Tongue as a tool for effective communication of lessons such as science and math was regarded as a bridge for learning new languages. In these examples, it was demonstrated practical reasons why MTB-MLE is being advocated. Before proceeding further in the main arguments of this paper, to be able to capture the larger picture of why the said program is being advocated, it is worth mentioning that the use of the Mother Tongue as a language for instruction is also a move towards the realization of the commitment of countries to the Education For All (EFA) goals of providing a quality and inclusive education program. The program's implementation is especially relevant to the members of minority groups. In the Philippine context, for example, the Muslim and the Indigenous people population.

This program is attached to the rights of members of minority groups to have an accessible and quality education relevant to their culture. For the Indigenous People learners, it is embedded in the principles embedded in the Republic Act 9155 or the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act. It is also consistent with the right of the Indigenous People declared by the 2005 United Nations Declaration on the rights of the Indigenous People. Thus, it could be said that the use of the Mother Tongue is an act of recognizing the fundamental human rights of minority and marginalized learners. By Philippine law and international conventions through the United Nations, there should be no question on the idea that using indigenous languages is a realization of the commitment of human society to such rights.

Utilitarian and Ideological domains of MTB-MLE

The Teaching of the Mother Tongue is also grounded on the efforts of Decolonizing Education. To start the discussion in this section, the statement made by professor Renato Constantino (1966) that the Filipino is an uprooted race. He believed that the educational policy of making English the medium of instruction functioned as a wedge that separated Filipinos from the past. He also expects that it will separate educated Filipinos from the masses. For him, the use

of English as a medium of instruction is the start of what he calls the "miseducation" of the Filipino people as we not only learned a new language but a new way of life that we are educated to be colonials rather than Filipino.

These words are echoed by San Juan (2007) when he talked about U.S. imperialism. He said that language had become the instrument of the bondage of the Filipinos by the Americans as it was used as an instrument used by the Americans to strengthen their hegemony; it contributed to our political, social, cultural, and economic domination.

Another valuable work in this discourse is written by Claudio (2015). This paper presents a good critique of the arguments presented by Constantino, pointing out that the concept of "nationalism" is born within the traditions of western liberalism and socialism. This work has examined the writings of Camilo Osias (1929-1931), arguing that the pedagogy of the latter was anchored on nationalism, which is more encompassing than Constantino. It was argued that such work was written for a "nation-in-waiting," syncretic, civic, future-oriented, experimental, and anchored on internationalism and the recognition of different borders outside and within the Filipino nation.

Although the works of Osias have provided good critiques of the works of Constantino (which were written even before the time of Constantino), the concerns of Constantino and later echoed by San Juan have still remained to be valuable in the sense that language still plays a role in subjugating minds and functioning as a wedge that separates the Filipino people from their past and between the educated few and the masses. On the other hand, the works of Osias provided good critique by giving a broader perspective and historical notes relating to the decisions to use English as a medium of instruction during the American period, a thing that could still be true today in the context of a more globalized world and a more culturally diverse creation of the concept of nationhood. While Constantino's position is a very Filipino-centric tendency, at least according to the critique of Claudio (2015), the critiques of the former on the use of English as a medium of instruction and as an instrument of subjugation is still an important concept to reflect on.

These narratives draw the line between the medium of instruction and decolonization, as expressed by Constantino decades ago, are now becoming part of the discourse in other countries, particularly in those that experienced colonization (Agbedo et al., 2012; Agyekum, 2018; Altobai, 2020; Brinkman, 2022; Dascomb, 2019; Decena, 2014; Degraff, 2019; Iseke-Barnes, 2008; Khepera, 2020; Lemberg, 2018; Msila, 2019; Pennycook & Makoni, 2020; Posada-Ortiz & Castañeda-Peña, 2021; Poudel et al., 2022; Rashid, 2021; Rodrigues et al., 2019; Salaün, 2013; Sellin, 1991; Shakib, 2011; Smith, 2016; Thiong'o, 1998). It is interesting to note that a consensus is being established that argues the critical role being played by the language used in formal education setup in the attempt at decolonization.

While it is good to start with the language Narratives by Constantino and Osias (as discussed by Claudio, 2015), the problem of "language imperialism" is not applicable only in Filipino vis-à-vis English or another foreign language context. The Philippines is an island archipelago of 7,017 islands, islets, and a host

of 172 coexisting languages (Cunanan, 2013). Focusing only on the major languages of the Philippines could lead to dominance and disempowerment among the minority group. Here the concern of Constantino on the use of language to educate and colonize the mind of Filipinos is also applicable in the use of not only English but also the use of Major Filipino languages could also be used to colonize the minds of minority groups which is detrimental to the goal of achieving a true sense of identity and to widening the gap between language users furthering the disempowerment of minority populations making our Filipino version of linguistic imperialism on top what we already have as a result of our association with English language hegemony.

Table 1. The Table Shows the Positions of Osias and Constantino in Their Works.

Utilitarian (Osias)	Ideological (Constantino)
• Educational language is a vehicle for internationalization	• Foreign language is an impediment to learning
• Supports multilingual and multicultural context of education (within and outside the Philippines)	• Educational language is a vehicle for decolonization and imperialism. Thus, the use of the Native language is an attempt to liberate minds to achieve freedom
• National identity should be situated in a multicultural and global context	• Natural identity should start by looking inside by means of decolonizing
• Supports the use of Mother Tongue as well as common languages	• Supports the use of "<i>native tongue</i>" as a medium of instruction to liberate minds

In the coming sections, it will be discussed that the results and interpretation of research relating to MTB-MLE are grounded on the arguments. These two different but related positions will be used to discuss the different positions of the different individuals' organizations and specializations in relation to the language policy of the Philippines. Both of these frameworks have provided valuable insights. Thus it is part of the intention in writing this paper to attempt to reconcile these two positions to develop a more comprehensive framework in looking at language programs and policies related to MTB-MLE.

The Current Language Education Policy

Just to give context, it would be meaningful to review the legal foundations of the MTB-MLE in the Philippine Education context. The Philippines, through the Department of Education, have crafted and implemented policies and programs concerning language teaching. Through the Department Order 36. s, 2006, they declare their intent to strengthen the teaching and the use of the English Language both as a second language and, simultaneously, as a medium of instruction in major subjects such as English, Mathematics, and Science. In 2008, another memorandum was released through

the D.O. 60 s 2008, which mandated that although English remains the medium of instruction, the use of Mother Tongues was recognized as an effective way to bridge the learning of the second language better and faster. Mother Tongue was also recognized as a language for instruction for basic literacy in alternative learning systems.

One significant development in the language teaching program of the Philippine Basic Education department is outlined by Department Order 74. S, 2009 which has institutionalized Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE). This policy is implemented instead of the findings of international research publications and the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA). One of which is the Lubuagan project which demonstrated the effectiveness of using the Mother Tongue as a platform for efficient learning of a second language. This report is later published by Walter and Dekker (2011).

Issues in the MTB-MLE implementation

The published literature provided enough empirical data on the MTB-MLE implementation issues. The philosophy of the program, as expressed in its policy, is good, but the implementation is a different story as it is subject to different shortcomings because of limitations in resources (Cabansag, 2016; Cansino et al., 2022; Cardenas, 2018; Cruz, 2015; Dimaculangan & Gonzales, 2020; Eslit, 2017). These issues could be summarized as the following (1) Issues related to the multilingual settings of school environments, (2) the availability of teaching and learning materials, and finally, (3) the skills of the teachers in handling MTB-MLE are insufficient.

Multilingual Environment

Cabansag (2016), in the study on the implementation of MTB-MLE in Ilocano communities, highlighted that the classroom setup, as mentioned by one of the participants, wherein the teacher used Tagalog as a medium of instruction because the class is composed of learners who have Ilocano, Yoganad and Ibanag mother tongues. Tagalog, in this case, was used not as a mother tongue but as a common language where the learners and the teacher could communicate. The same was also observed in the study conducted by Cansino et al. (2022) in the multilingual context of classrooms in southern Palawan has also emerged to be an issue in the implementation of Mother Tongue. In this case, Tagalog was used as a medium of instruction because it is a common tongue among the students who mix Jamma Mapun, Pala'wan, and other ethnolinguistic groups. This is also mentioned as a justification in the proposed legislation by Representatives Go and Romulo. This issue is more common in urban setups like big cities where the diversity of culture is apparent. The case of Palawan, as mentioned in the paper of Cansino (2022), is a special case, though, because it is a known fact that the island province is culturally diverse as it has become a melting pot of many cultures in the Philippines.

This cultural diversity is indeed a challenge in implementing the MTB-MLE program, and in this exact situation where the arguments presented by Osias can give an essential insight that the concept of nationhood should be seen in a pluralistic view. Even then, the use of the work of Osias would not support

the removal of the MTB-MLE program because part of the foundation that he laid in his works is the recognition of the multicultural situation of the Philippines as the basis of creating Filipino nationalism. At the very least, the pragmatism found in Osia's works would give a theoretical foundation for using common tongues, such as Tagalog, English, Cebuano, etc., as the medium of instruction stipulated in D.O. 60 s, 2008.

On the other hand, offering a Mother Tongue subject is a different story. While it also aims to serve as a bridge that a learner could use to learn a new language, ideologies also play an important role in its conception. Mother Tongue instruction should also function as a vehicle for preserving and enriching minority cultural groups in the country. More than a vehicle for language learning, the teaching of the MTB-MLE subject for grades K-3 is a vehicle of empowerment among minority groups and the preservation of the richness of cultural diversity of the country.

Aside from the previously mentioned arguments that are mainly ideological, the study of Gempeso and Mendez (2021) has provided important quasi-experimental evidence on the effectiveness of the Mother Tongue in learning a new language easier. However, one criticism has emerged in the form of code-switching, wherein the learners could not master one language. One good counterargument is that code-switching should not be seen as a problem because studies have found that it positively impacts students' language development. It is a regular phenomenon in multilingual conversations (Ijudin et al., 2021). The same is also said by Algarin-Ruiz (2022). She even went on to say that code-switching could be used as a teaching technique that could improve language enhancement and could be used to improve vocabulary. The same sentiment was also advocated in Belvis, and Morauda-Gutierrez's (2019) works, expressing the potential of having an amorphous language framework in language teaching.

Insufficient Materials

Another issue raised by the legislation proposed by representatives Go and Romulo is the shortage of materials for the local languages. This claim is supported by a good amount of research literature (Anudin, 2018; Bernardo et al., 2018; Bongco & David, 2020; Cabansag, 2016; Cansino et al., 2022; Cruz, 2015; Valerio, 2015). However, this problem regarding the availability of materials is not a manifestation of the failure of Mother Tongue as a principle but a failure to implement the program in the first place. The Department of Education was not ready, logistically speaking. It lacked the necessary instructional materials and teacher technical knowledge in the first place. This happened because the Philippine educational system has just realized the value of Multilingual Education in the country's educational context.

For the longest time, like the arguments of Constantino, the Americans used the English language to colonize our minds so that it came to a point where we happened to glorify our colonizers. In an attempt to promote nationalism, Tagalog was used as a base language for the creation of the Filipino language. Although this was a good move, this would later create or at least mirror the

effects of the English-centered American system of education- that the imperialism associated with the use of the English language could also happen to Tagalog as it could be an instrument of marginalization to the minority languages and of course the people who speak the language. To demonstrate this point, Tolentino (2017) mentioned that aside from the fact that the Aeta indigenous language is already fleeting, language has become an instrument of bullying and discrimination. It was mentioned that the Aeta students only use their indigenous language only when communicating among themselves, and they did so with awkwardness. It was noted that they are the ones who adjust when communicating with non-IP students. While using the common tongue is sensible when speaking with non-IP students, the feeling of "awkwardness" when speaking their mother tongue is the real issue because it could be an indicator of racial-based prejudices and discrimination.

Thus, the lack of material could be a manifestation of the same form of imperialism manifested in the relationship between the different languages in the country. This time using Tagalog and English language against the minority language. The lack of written materials about the different Mother Tongues is the real problem, not the implementation of MTB-MLE. The poor implementation of the program is just an effect of our long history of subscribing to colonial and imperialist education wherein the monolingual, and later the Bi-lingual framework of language teaching was encouraged. The "blind" focus on dominant and minority languages has provided little space for developing other languages that would eventually kill these small languages.

Skills and Readiness of Teachers in handling MTB-MLE

Another theme in the literature is that teachers lack the skills necessary to teach Mother Tongue. Anudin (2018) mentioned this wherein the diversity of linguistic backgrounds of teachers became a challenge because they lack the necessary skills to speak Chavacano and, more so, the skills needed to teach the language.

The teachers who participated in the study of Cansino et al. (2022) in southern Palawan have also expressed the same sentiments. The different linguistic background of the teacher (migrant languages) and the students (Pala'wan and Jamma Mapun) has served as a challenge. The teachers are not able to speak the local language, and it has an impact on the educational outcome.

The issue presented by the works of Espada et al. (2017) is another unique manifestation of the issue. In addition to the previously mentioned things, the limitations of Mother Tongues in describing scientific concepts have become a challenge. The use of archaic words in the Mother Tongue was also a problem for the teachers and the learners. This is said to be a burden for the teachers because this will require them to have additional preparations, and for the learners, this would be an additional burden because it is another subject they would need to pass.

Unlike the study of Anudin (2018) and Cansino (2022), the result of the study conducted by Rubi and Molina (2020) is that the teachers are ready for the implementation of the MTB-MLE program. This is at least according to the Likert

scale rating of the respondents. The limitation of the instrument should also be taken into account for this. The perceived readiness of the teacher could be explained by the fact that the study was conducted in Bicol, where the linguistic context is not as diverse as in Zamboanga or Palawan.

The skill gaps between teachers and the language taught in the MTB-MLE program are very nuanced. The previous section discussed how different schools' linguistic contexts exhibited different challenges in implementing the program. There were school contexts where there were smaller language gaps. For example, the mother tongue and the common tongues are the same or at least closely related as in Bicol (Rubi & Molina, 2020); as mentioned earlier, another language gap manifestation is when the Mother Tongue of Teachers and the Mother Tongue of students is different as demonstrated in the study of Cansino et al. (2022) in Palawan and Cabansag (2016) in Northern Luzon. Another manifestation of the language gap is documented by Espada et al. (2007) in the context of using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction, wherein archaic words from the Mother Tongue become a challenge for the teachers and the learners. The limitations of Mother Tongue vocabulary refer to scientific and mathematical concepts.

Perceptions of Teachers on MTB-MLE

As for teachers' perceptions regarding the MTB-MLE, the answer is not simple. The works of Cansino et al. (2022) have revealed that although teachers appreciate the value and the intention of the program, the practical shortcomings, such as the lack of training of the teachers as well as the shortage of relevant teaching and learning materials, give the program a negative impression among the teachers as this program served to be an additional burden for them. Eslit (2017) also mentioned similar sentiments and argued the necessity of tangible reforms and improvements in the quality of school facilities, teachers' training, learning materials, and community and government support. These researches still echoed the earlier findings by Wa-Mablenka (2014), Valerio (2015), and Eslit (2017), wherein it was seen that the Philippines is still not ready for its implementation.

In one case that was mentioned in the study of Cansino et al. (2022), a teacher who, like her students, belongs to the Jamma Mapun Cultural group (which is the local language of the learners) observed that using the Jamma Mapun language dramatically improves the engagement of the learners. Another research done in Southern Palawan by Villarus and Perez (2020) observed that the medium of instruction influences learners' academic performance in science and mathematics. On the other hand, there is no observed relationship between the use of Mother Tongue and language subjects except the Mother Tongue subject. This result is contrary to the result of the study (Uayan, 2020), where it was mentioned that the use of MTB-MLE in teaching grade 3 mathematics does not affect the perceived effects on the performance of the learners. However, it should be noted that the use of the Mother Tongue in teaching mathematics is not extensive. This could explain this negative result. Regardless, this remains to be an interesting result that needs to be investigated.

These perceptions by the teacher are important because they are the ones who are on the frontline. Ideologically and practically speaking, the mentioned research findings do not claim that the program is theoretically unsound. In the next section, three works attempted to challenge the theoretical grounding of MTB-MLE.

METHODOLOGY

This paper explored the literature on the implementation of "Mother Tongue Based-Multilingual Education" in the Philippines using the Postcolonial lens expressed by Constantino and Osias. It argues that the program is misunderstood among its stakeholders, and there have been lapses in its planning and implementation. This paper attempts to reconcile ideological and pragmatic principles that underly the MTB-MLE program in the Philippines.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For Dimaculangan and Gonzales (2020), the teachers that participated in the study are undecided in their perception and attitude toward the program. This study aimed to understand the relationship between implementing the MTB-MLE program and ESL (English as a second language instruction). Results have shown that the teachers who took part in the interview are undecided whether using their mother tongue positively affects learning English as a second language.

Another interesting result was revealed by Namanya (2017), where an experimental study was conducted among 68 public elementary school students in Silang Cavite in Southern Tagalog Region. The goal of such a study is to compare how grade 3 learners perform in language literacy lessons using their Mother Tongue and English language. The results have shown that children who were taught using their Mother Tongue saw a decline in English literacy. Apolonio (2022) also expressed a similar position after presenting arguments grounded on the idea that learning second languages and foreign languages can be learned by children best by using the second language itself. From the non-rural and non-remote learning communities, it was mentioned that media is expressed in English, and on top of that, mentioned learning theories underscore foreign language acquisition.

Namanya (2017) could have been strong empirical evidence that challenges the pragmatic assumptions stated in the rationale of the MTB-MLE program. However, it was misunderstood that the Mother Tongue would be a good bridge to learning a new language, not with the use of the Mother Tongue to teach the second language but by establishing a strong foundation on the mother tongue so that it could be a tool for the learner or a resource through which they can use consciously and subconsciously arranging second language data so that the learning process could be more efficient. This is exactly the idea being presented in rationalizing the MTB-MLE program, where it was stated that:

"Pupils who have learned to read and write in their first language learn to speak, read and write in their second language (L2) and third language (L3) more quickly than those who are taught on a second or third language first (D.O. 74 s, 2009)."

The policy is clear with its guiding principle aside from the success of the Lubuagan project (Dekker & Young, 2007), which is cited as a basis for the MTB-MLE policy; a body of research worldwide supports this claim (Hitotuzi, 2006; Leighton, 2021; Madriñan, 2014). Thus, the method of measuring the effectiveness of using the Mother Tongue (Namanya, 2017) as a medium of instruction for learning a second language or a foreign language would not be theoretically sound and could indicate a certain amount of misunderstanding of the role of the mother tongue in second and third language acquisition.

The problem with the position of Apolonio (2022), on the other hand, is perhaps the tendency to lean towards the purely utilitarian function of the Mother Tongue in language education. Utilitarian in this context refers to the function of the Mother Tongue as a tool to learn science and math skills; in the case of Apolonio (2022), he sees MTB as a tool for learning the English language. While it was recognized in the paper that Mother Tongue could be used as a bridge for learning consistent with the literature, it was suggested that it should not be taught as another subject but as an auxiliary language in teaching. Apolonio missed that the benefit of MTB-MLE is not limited to its utilitarian function in developing mathematical, scientific, and language learning. On top of this, the program is also banking on ideological principles underlying its formulation. As mentioned in the introductory part of this paper, the MTB-MLE is a means for decolonizing education, and empowering minority cultural groups, thus a vehicle for achieving social justice and human rights and developing the Philippine national identity.

This paper attempted to look at the implementation of the MTB-MLE program through the different published papers by different scholars. The works of Osias through Claudio (2015) and the seminal paper by Constantino were used as a lens to understand the MTB-MLE as a policy. Now by looking at the discussions presented in this paper, the utilitarian and ideological concerns presented by different researchers are valid. It is a good place to start by reconciling the Filipinist positions of Osias and Constantino regarding language education programs and policies by stressing that both their positions recognize the important role of local languages in education- which is something that does not need much thought.

What needs more reflection is to reconcile the different thoughts on empowerment through education using language. For Constantino, he sees it as empowerment in the sense that it will promote patriotism by means of challenging the colonialist education we received from the Americans, discouraging the use of the English language as a medium of instruction. For Osias, by looking at the multicultural nature of the Philippines and recognizing the situation of the Philippines as part of the global community, the English language should not be seen with much disdain. From what I see, the middle ground for both positions is that both of them see language as a means of empowering people.

The position of Constantino is relevant because it reminds us to look inward and look at the past. On the other hand, Osias' position is valuable in helping us look outwards and in the future as part of the global village. I believe

that both utility and ideology are important considerations in our reflections on language programs and policies of the country. It is important to note that research results and narratives by policymakers and educational stakeholders that challenge the MTB-MLE are only worried about the apparent trend that the student's performance at present reflects the dulling of the competitive edge of the Philippines in terms of the English language.

However, this position of Constantino is still valid as the educational system of the Philippines has remained heavily influenced by the colonial past and remained un-inclusive and unempowering for the member of minority communities. The middle ground we can get is to adopt the pragmatism of Osias in using the English language as a tool for equipping the country for globalization. However, I believe that we can't go as far as removing the offering of the MTB-MLE subject in the K-3 curriculum. While it is agreeable that we can't call the program implementation a total success, this still would not be a sufficient reason for it to be halted. First, the program lacked the necessary preparation and resources for it to be implemented properly.

The ideological rationales presented by Constantino and the pragmatism of Osias support the development of local languages for the development of Philippine nationalism and promoting social justice. The program can also be used in decolonizing and developing an inclusive education program for the country.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper presented different research evidence regarding the implementation of MTB-MLE. It showed that more than a decade since it was implemented, the program still needs more reworking. Critical factors needed to be addressed in teacher training, the development of educational materials, and comprehensive linguistic studies dedicated to documenting the different minority languages. The supposed "shortcomings" of the program are not due to it not being well-grounded theoretically. The criticisms expressed on it are due to the lapses in implementation and preparedness of the implementing individual actors and institutions.

It must be emphasized that MTB-MLE is not the problem but, rather, a solution that has not been given enough preparation while experiencing a huge logistical challenge emanating from the multicultural and multilingual context of the Philippines. The program is both a challenge and an opportunity for the Philippine education system. In the end, both utilitarian and ideological rationales could provide good points of reflection for academicians, education practitioners, and policymakers regarding language programs and policies.

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