

Language Policies in the Philippines

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The Language provision in the 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines which are embodied in Article XIV, Sec. 6 and 7 provide the legal basis for the various language policies that are being implemented in the country.

The ratification of the above-mentioned constitution resolved the issue on what the national language is, since the 1935 and 1973 Philippine Charters were not clear about this.

The provision are as follows:

1. Section 6. The national language of the Philippines is Filipino. As it evolves, it shall be further developed and enriched on the basis of existing Philippine and other languages.
2. For purposes of communication and instruction, the official languages of the Philippines are Filipino and, until otherwise provided by law, English.

The Philippine Bilingual Education Policy (BEP)

Consistent with the 1987 constitutional mandate and a declared policy of the National Board of Education (NBE) on bilingualism in the schools (NBE Resolution No. 73-7, s.1973) the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) promulgated its language policy.

The policy was first implemented in 1974 when DECS issued Dept. Order No. 25, s. 1974 titled, "Implementing Guidelines for the Policy on Bilingual Education."

Bilingual education in the Philippines is defined operationally as the separate use of Filipino and English as the media of instruction in specific subject areas. As embodied in the DECS Order No. 25, Pilipino (changed to Filipino in 1987) shall be used as medium of instruction in social studies/social sciences, music, arts, physical education, home economics, practical arts and character education. English, on the other hand is allocated to science, mathematics and technology subjects. The same subject allocation is provided in the 1987 Policy on Bilingual Education which is disseminated through Department Order No. 52, s. 1987.

The policy is as follows:

The policy on Bilingual Education aims at the achievement of competence in both Filipino and English at the national level, through the teaching of both languages and their use as media of instruction at all levels. The regional languages shall be used as auxiliary languages in Grades I and II. The aspiration of the Filipino nation is to have its citizens possess skills in Filipino to enable them to perform their functions and duties in order to meet the needs of the country in the community of nations.

The goals of the Bilingual Education Policy shall be:

1. enhanced learning through two languages to achieve quality education as called for by the 1987

Constitution;

2. the propagation of Filipino as a language of literacy;
3. the development of Filipino as a linguistic symbol of national unity and identity;
4. the cultivation and elaboration of Filipino as a language of scholarly discourse, that is to say its continuing intellectualization; and

the maintenance of English as an international language for the Philippines and as a non-exclusive language of science and technology.

Filipino and English shall be used as media of instruction, the use allocated to specific subjects in the curriculum as indicated in the Department Order No. 25, s. 1974.

The regional languages shall be used as auxiliary media of instruction and as initial language for literacy, where needed.

Filipino and English shall be taught as language subjects in all levels to achieve the goals of bilingual competence.

Since competence in the use of both Filipino and English is one of the goals of the Bilingual Education Policy, continuing improvement in the teaching of both languages, their use as media of instruction and the specification of their functions in Philippine schooling shall be the responsibility of the whole educational system.

Tertiary level institutions shall lead in the continuing intellectualization of Filipino. The program of intellectualization, however, shall also be pursued in both the elementary and secondary levels.

The Department of Education, Culture and Sports shall cooperate with the National Language Commission which according to the 1987 Constitution, shall be tasked with the further development and enrichment of Filipino.

The Department of Education Culture and Sports shall provide the means by which the language policy can be implemented with the cooperation of government and non-government organizations.

The Department shall program funds for implementing the Policy, in such areas as materials production, in-service training, compensatory and enrichment program for non-Tagalogs, development of a suitable and standardized Filipino for classroom use and the development of appropriate evaluative instruments.

Guidelines for the implementation of the 1987 Policy on Bilingual Education are specified in the DECS Order No. 54, s. 1987. Among these are the need to intellectualize Filipino and the concrete steps suggested towards its realization.

Executive Order No. 335

On August 25, 1988, then President Corazon Aquino signed Executive Order No. 335 enjoining all departments/bureaus/offices/agencies/instrumentalities of the government to take such steps as are necessary for the purpose of using the Filipino language in official transactions, communications, and correspondence. The order was

issued on the belief that the use of Filipino in official transactions, communications and correspondence in government offices will result to a greater understanding and appreciation of government programs, projects and activities throughout the country, thereby serving as an instrument of unity and peace for national progress.

All departments/bureaus/offices/agencies/instrumentalities of the government are enjoined to do the following:

1. Take steps to enhance the use of Filipino in official communications, transactions and correspondence in their respective offices, whether national or local;
2. Assign one or more personnel, as maybe necessary, in every office to take charge of communications and correspondence written in Filipino;
3. Translate into Filipino names of offices, buildings, public edifices, and signboards of all offices, divisions or its instrumentalities, and if so desired, imprint below in smaller letters the English text;

Filipinize the "Oath of Office" for government officials and personnel;

Make as part of the training programs for personnel development in each office the proficiency in the use of Filipino in official communications and correspondence.

The Commission on the Filipino Language, formerly Institute of Philippine/National Language, is ordered to formulate and implement programs and projects for the full and effective implementation of the objectives expressed in the Executive Order.

The Language Policy of the Commission on Higher Education

In 1994, Republic Act No. 7722, creating the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) was signed. This Act which is know as the "Higher Education Act of 1994" provides that the CHED shall be independent and separate from the DECS and attached to the Office of the President for administrative purposes only. Its coverage shall be both public and private institutions of higher education as well as degree-granting programs in all post-secondary educational institutions, public and private.

One of the first steps undertaken by CHED was to update the General Education Curriculum (GEC) of tertiary courses leading to an initial bachelor's degree covering four (4) curriculum years. This was done to make the curriculum more responsive to the demands of the next millenium.

The requirements of the new GEC are embodied in the CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 59, s. 1996. Listed under miscellaneous of this CMO is its language policy which is as follows:

In consonance with the Bilingual Education Policy underlined in DECS Order No. 52, Series of 1987, the following are the guidelines vis-a-vis medium of instruction, to wit:

1. Language courses, whether Filipino or English, should be taught in that language.
2. At the discretion of the HEI, Literature subjects may be taught in Filipino, English or any other language as long as there are enough instructional materials for the same and both students and instructors/professors are competent in the language.

Courses in the Humanities and Social Sciences should preferably be taught in Filipino.

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Ref.: <http://www.ncca.gov.ph/about-culture-and-arts/articles-on-c-n-a/article.php?igm=3&i=217>

Look also here: www.languages.philippineculture.ph