Bilingual medium of instruction has been implemented since the 1970s as a product of a political compromise. The national language was utilized to teach all subjects with the exception of Mathematics and Science, which were to be taught in English. Come 2013, the Mother Tongue-Based-Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) sprung to function under the Enhanced Basic Education Act signed by former Pres. Benigno Aquino III. The aforementioned law stipulates the adaptation of mother tongue (MT) as the principal medium of instruction (MOI) in kindergarten and the first three years of elementary education. Meanwhile, English and Filipino are to be presented via a transition program from the 4th to 6th grade until they can be employed as primary MOI during the secondary years.

Linguistic diversity, a conventionally admirable quality of the Philippines, ironically serves as a hurdle to the country’s steady implementation of MTB-MLE. The study of Metila et al. (2016) found that MTB-MLE in the Philippines, regardless of programmatic choices, raised concerns on the accommodation of children who are not capable of speaking the implemented MT and the use of multiple languages in the classroom. To add, the bilingual medium of instruction has dominated the educational system for decades. Hence, reversing the transition from MTE-MLE to English and Filipino instead of vice-versa could be exhausting.

Despite the program implementation’s clear need for fortification, MTB-MLE is advantageous in the sense that it indeed welcomes linguistic diversity. According to Tupas & Martin (2016), the utility of English in instruction serves as a wedge between the
educated and the underprivileged mass. Walter & Dekker (2011) also concluded that minority language students who acquired literacy in their first language exhibited higher academic achievement than those who learned in second or third language. Therefore, benefits on students’ cognitive development at the use of MTB-MLE was also taken into consideration.

In this manner, Caliwanagan (2018) suggest the use of the national lingua franca as the medium of instruction. However, the regional lingua franca should be used during the time allotted for the speakers of other languages. She also recommends parent-teacher cooperation in translating lessons and crafting learning resources in the student’s mother tongue. This, along with the incessant training of teachers in linguistic and cultural analysis, could ease the burden that comes with the MTB-MLE implementation.

References:
