Language is not only a means to communicate; it also conveys tradition and a way of life.

Even after its first implementation in School Year 2012-2013, many still question the effectiveness and efficiency of the K-12 Program. The K-12 program, as opposed to the Revised Basic Education Curriculum (RBEC), required an extended timeline for the students to finish. In return, a number of groups and citizens doubted and even opposed the new curriculum.

One aspect of K-12 Program that raised many questions was its Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE). This feature of K-12 was prioritized over the English as Second Language (ESL) format, which is the more popular option amongst many other nations. MTB-MLE pushes the teacher to teach the ‘Mother Tongue’ or, in laymen term, the native dialect, of the student.

One of the arguments in the matter is the fact that MTB-MLE includes additional subjects for the students. In this setting, a subject dubbed Mother Tongue will be included in the curriculum of the student. The subject will last from the 1st Grade up to Senior High School. In turn, incremental workload and study hours will be placed in the shoulder of the learner.

Moreover, the Philippines is gearing towards globalization as evidenced by the different meetings and gatherings by international leaders in the country. And in the global industry, there is a much higher need for professionals who speak foreign
language fluently. Some of these languages are English, Mandarin, French or Spanish. International businesses have no need for workers who speak Tausug, Kapampangan, Chavacano or Meranao. Perhaps, training the children with various languages rather than teaching different dialect could prove to be a better investment.

However, as much as there are opposing opinions, there are also solutions and counter arguments. MTB-MLE provides additional workload; however, this supplementary subject could be the key to enhanced comprehension and communication skills. Felicitas E. Pado PhD of the University of the Philippines stated in her published presentation that “One does not learn in a language that he does not understand”. Indeed, a child will be able to solve logical, mathematical or even social problems more proficiently if it is presented in a manner that he is accustomed with. Rather than making a student tackle a question which requires him to translate it beforehand, MTB-MLE directs the problem to its very essence and does not encrypt it in foreign linguistics. The setting slowly integrates other languages into the student instead of forcing it early on.

Globalization might have no need for the Philippines’ native dialects, but the citizens of the country do. By learning their distinct dialects, communicating with one another becomes more advanced. It may seem illogical as the curriculum will be teaching ancient language, but it also goes far beyond the normal Tagalog dialect. Not much country can say that their people could speak more than two or three language. Also, even though international businesses need employees that can understand their own language, it does not mean that they cannot be impressed by other dialects. In fact, many nationalities such as the British or Japanese are known to place high value for nationality. One way of showing nationality is mastering the country’s varying dialects.

More importantly, MTB-MLE preserves the culture of the Filipino people. By teaching the native dialect to the younger generation, the tradition becomes secured. Many civilizations that had crumbled to the dust became extinct along with its language and literature. A nation that has forgotten its mother tongue could be compared to a bird
that cannot sing, a wolf that cannot howl, and a soldier who cannot shout his battle cry. This aspect of the K-12 Program does not only enhance the knowledge of the Filipino children, it also teaches them to pay tribute and respect to the Filipino culture.

In the end, though many still have doubts about the K-12 Program, specifically its Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education, it cannot be denied that it could potentially produce outstanding professionals and excellent Filipino citizens. Through published documents, practical applications and logical reasoning, it can be shown that MTB-MLE can be the optimal educational setting when it comes to language and communication. Indeed, language is not only a means to communicate; it also conveys tradition and a way of life.

References:
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