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Republika ng Pilipinas
Kagawaran ng Edukasyon
Tanggapan ng Pangalawang Kalihim

AIDE MEMOIRE
25 January 2021

CORDILLERA ADVOCATES FOR REAL EDUCATION (CARE)

From information gathered, Cordillera Advocates for Real Education (CARE) is a group whose **signatories are residents of Tabuk City, Kalinga**.

The group is very vocal not only on education but also on other local and national issues (Greening Program, Pantawid Program, new Chico River project, Kalinga rattan/broom industry, others).

Particularly, CARE urges the rejection/abolition of the Mother Tongue policy (Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education or MTB-MLE) saying that it has failed and is ineffective. The group argues that MTB-MLE is one of the major causes for the decline in reading competence and increase of non-readers (in high school) which in turn has affected students' performance in math and sciences. The group cites data, findings, scores, reports to support its claims (Philippine International Student Assessment, PISA; UNICEF, SEAMEO; Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics, SEA-PLM; Philippine Institute of Development Studies, PIDS; National Achievement Test, NAT; Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, TIMMS).

Some reasons forwarded by the group for the overall erosion of quality education are the following:

- the scrapping by DepEd of the “No Read, No Move” policy for Grade 1 back in 2001;
- the performance rating of teachers based on the failure rate, thus teachers pass even those underserving so that no failures are recorded;
- frequent changes in curriculum and system, especially each time there is a new Education Secretary— now more confused, unlike the time when curriculum only revolved around the 3Rs (Reading, Writing, Arithmetic) and children were more proficient;



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[Administrative Service (AS), Information and Communications Technology Service (ICTS), Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Service (DRMMS), Bureau of Learner Support Services (BLSS), Baguio Teachers Camp (BTC), Central Security & Safety Office (CSSO)]

Department of Education, Central Office, Meralco Avenue, Pasig City
Rm 519, Mabini Bldg; Mobile: +639260320762; Tel: (+632) 86337203, (+632) 86376207
Email: usec.admin@deped.gov.ph; Facebook/Twitter @depedtayo

- delay of teaching reading in English from Grade 1 to 2nd semester of Grade 2— Unlike in private schools where bilingual education policy (BEP) is implemented; and,
- reading is not emphasized because of reduced time in teaching it (memorization, spelling drills, theme writing).

Year in, year out, **CARE has been lobbying both houses of Congress (through their respective education committees) to investigate and confront issues on Mother Tongue policy and the alleged decline of public basic education as a whole.**

Other details/info:

Of the signatories, **Mr. Estanislao Albano, Jr. is the prime mover** with regards the language policy and non-reader issues, according to local sources. He is **a local journalist** who has been writing about the observed increase in non-readers in high school, and is strongly advocating for a return to the bilingual policy and the teaching of English as early as Grade 1. His views about the bilingual policy and the English language are heavily influenced by the particular historical experience of the Cordillera region where the colonial experience was largely with the Americans.

Rev. Luis Aoas belongs to the **Fasaw Indigenous Cultural Community found in the Municipality of Tinglayan. He has acted as Kalinga Provincial Peace and Order Liaison Officer and Chairman of Kalinga Anti-pollution Action Group (KAPAG).**

Other signatories are Mr. Albano's neighbors who are retired government employees of the provincial branches of national government agencies.

The group has very limited influence locally; Mr. Albano's being a member of media facilitates his reaching media outlets and various offices.

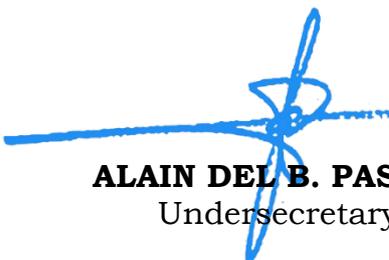
Articles on education are listed below that may give one a general feel of CARE's thrust/agenda.

- Cordillera advocacy group urges rejection of Mother Tongue policy (December 3, 2020)
- Senior high students score lowest in national assessment history (November 26, 2020)
- How Kalinga's biggest high school copes with its reading woes (March 12, 2020)
- Cordillera group calls for release of nationwide reading data (February 27, 2020)
- DepEd-CAR reaffirms 'No Read, No Pass' policy (January 16, 2020)
- Group calls for end to 'mass promotion' in Cordillera (January 9, 2020)
- Congress urged to act on non-reader problem (December 12, 2019)
- DepEd-Cordillera bares non-reader problem (November 14, 2019)



- Grade 6 NAT scores at 'low mastery' level (September 26, 2019)
- Handwriting, spelling skills in public schools degenerating (September 12, 2019)
- DepEd urged to stop sending non-readers to high school (June 6, 2019)
- High school nonreaders a failure of division and elementary schools (March 14, 2019)
- Seriousness of DepEd textbook review doubted (February 28, 2019)
- Tabuk elderly educator bewail non-reader phenomenon (February 14, 2019)
- Mother Tongue program hampers English, reading progress – teacher (Dec. 20, 2018)
- Cheating in national test bared by DepEd (September 9, 2018)
- Some Grade 7 students in PH could barely read (May 10, 2018)
- We have Grade 7 students who could hardly read (April 29, 2018)

For information and reference.



ALAIN DEL B. PASCUA
Undersecretary



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CORDILLERA ADVOCATES FOR REAL EDUCATION (CARE)

32 Balacang St., Casigayan, Tabuk City, Kalinga

cordilleraadvocates@yahoo.com/CP 09162850581

January 11, 2021

Hon. Leonor M. Briones
Secretary
Department of Education

Madam Secretary:

Relative to the Department of Education's review of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy, our organization registers its objections to the extension or continuing implementation of the policy on the following grounds:

1. Contrary to the MTB-MLE promise of quickening the learning of reading contained in DepEd Order No. 74, series of 2009, the population of non-readers in both elementary and high school rapidly expanded during its implementation.

1.1 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) finding that 27 percent of our Grade 5 pupils who took the 2019 Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) assessment could not read based on the SEA-PLM definition of reading literacy (*"SEA-PLM 2019 Main Regional Report,"* Page 42-44).

This data from the SEA-PLM demolishes your denialist defense on the issue of non-readers that our problem is not literacy but comprehension because the UNICEF and SEAMEO report states that the subject pupils are "still at the stage of matching single words to an image of a familiar object or concept" and the SEA-PLM defines reading literacy as "understanding, using and responding to a range of written texts, in order to meet personal, societal, economic and civic needs." The data also clearly proves that the MTB-MLE policy is failing to make more than a quarter of its products to read indicating total failure in delivering its promise to hasten the learning of reading.

1.2 Documentary "Pag-asa sa Pagbasa" aired by I-Witness, GMA 7 on September 1, 2018 featuring the 29 Grade 7 non-readers in the Sauyo High School in Novaliches, Quezon City

1.3 Bicol Mail news report "DepEd Bicol launches 5Bs to improve reading proficiency" (February 22, 2020) informing that DepEd Regional Director Gilbert Sadsad had "admitted during a press conference that there are 76,000 students from Grade 1 to Senior High School across the region who are either struggling to read or unable to read"

For comparison with the UNICEF and SEAMEO figure stated in Item 1.1, a national reading profile data from the Bureau of Elementary Education of the DepEd published in the UNESCO Digital Library (*"The Philippines country case study" by Rhona B. Caoli-Rodriguez 2007*) shows that the national non-reader incidence in 2006 was 2.56 percent which means the percentage of our non-readers grew ten times from 2006 to 2019. It can be safely assumed that the larger part of the increase took place during the implementation of the MTB-MLE because DepEd only broke its silence on the reading issue in November 2019 with the initiation of the program "Bawat Bata Bumabasa."

2. It is utterly absurd that under the MTB-MLE, children only learn to read in English, the eventual medium of instruction, in Grade 3 as the teaching of the competency begins only in the

second semester of Grade 2 in the K to 12 Curriculum. First, under the previous language policies, Filipino children read in English in Grade 1. Second, because private schools follow the old Bilingual Education Policy (BEP), their pupils continue to read in English and Filipino in Grade 1. And of course, other countries teach their children to read in the language of instruction in Grade 1 or even earlier. That invites the question how our children could be competitive globally if they only read in the test language two years after their counterparts in other countries already know how to read in their test language.

3. The MTB-MLE promise to facilitate the learning of new languages also mentioned in DepEd Order No. 74, series of 2009, is a myth. In fact, we have never seen Filipino school children weaker in English than we do since the MTB-MLE started turning out products in 2015.

3.1 According to the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) study "Starting Where the Children Are": A Process Evaluation of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Implementation," public schools have lost their competitiveness in regional contests conducted in English because private school pupils understand the questions better. According to the study, private schools do not implement the policy as they *"claim that the use of English for delivering content is successful, evidenced by their consistent winning in regional competitions over public schools where English, and not the MT, is used."*

The quality of products are proofs of the superiority or inferiority of systems and clearly, in imparting English proficiency, the BEP puts the MTB-MLE to shame, according to the study.

3.2 In 2018 when the first batch of MTB-MLE products took the Grade 6 National Achievement Test (NAT), the national mean percentage score in English went down by 5.71 or 14.14 percent loss which was unprecedented the previous record being the 5.26 or 8.89 percent setback experienced in 2006 with the second highest the 2.70 or 3.98 percent incurred in 2011. It is very telling that in 2017 when elementary products of the 2002 Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) took the test for the last time, the English MPS gained 0.57 or 1.53 percent. (We excluded the 32 points loss in 2016 in the reckoning because that was an extraordinary occurrence.)

The case of the CAR, the top in Grade 6 English in both 2016 and 2017 NATs and No. 3 in Reading Literacy in a tie with Region 4A among local regions in the 2018 PISA (*"PISA 2018 Philippine National Report"*) is compelling. The region lost a massive 9.91 or 20.4 percent of its Grade 6 English MPS in 2018. This is more than thrice the 2.99 loss it incurred in 2011, the highest before 2018.

4. Given its record in imparting reading competency (Item 1) and its effects on English proficiency (Item 3), the MTB-MLE does not embody the purpose of the Enhanced Basic Act of 2013 or Republic Act No. 10533 to "Give every student an opportunity to receive quality education that is globally competitive based on a pedagogically sound curriculum that is at par with international standards." In fact, because of these failures, the MTB-MLE is incompatible with this provision of law. It cannot be denied that our global competitiveness whether in education or employment rises and falls with the level of our English proficiency given the facts that our assessment language and the international lingua franca is English.

5. The results of the 2019 Trends in International Mathematics and Science (TIMSS) destroys the claim of MTB-MLE exponents including the DepEd that our low marks in Mathematics and English is due to the usage of English as medium of instruction in the said subjects citing the findings of the TIMSS that countries which instruct their children in the two subjects in their own tongue lead in the survey. This was emphatically repudiated by the results of the 2019 TIMSS as the MTB-MLE products scored 61 points or 17.03 percent less in Mathematics and 83 points or 25 percent less in Science than their counterparts in 2003, the only other time the country joined the TIMSS Grade 4 test. They also placed last of 58 countries versus the third to the last finish of the 2003 batch.

With the failure of the claim that our showing in the TIMSS will improve if we use our own language as medium of instruction, all the alleged benefits of MTB-MLE listed in DepEd Order No. 74, series of 2009, have turned out to be mere illusions. So Madam Secretary, what for should the MTB-MLE be extended since it is a total failure?

The claim that newly introduced educational programs take time before they could deliver does not apply here because not only have the promised benefits not being fulfilled but the old level of performance has also slipped. With regards to reading, not only has the MTB-MLE failed to deliver on its promise of easier learning of the skill but during the implementation of the MTB-MLE, the reading crisis escalated like we proved in Item 1 above. Public school pupils have lost their competitiveness in contests given in English because private school pupils understand the questions better their schools not having adopted the MTB-MLE. As we have already mentioned, the first outputs of the MTB-MLE obtained unusually low English MPS in the Grade 6 NAT which clearly means the BEP is better in teaching English.

Clearly, in the nearly nine years, the MTB-MLE did not benefit our school children but had in fact prejudiced them. Going by what already happened, there is no guarantee that even with radical changes, the policy will deliver in the end. We therefore urge the DepEd to base its decision on the fate of the MTB-MLE on these cold evidences. The country cannot afford a language policy which pulls down instead of raises the quality of our education.

If the DepEd insists on recommending the retention of the MTB-MLE fully aware of its futility and the serious damage it has already wrought, it will have no one else to blame if the alarming and rapid decline in the quality of our basic education will continue.

We will greatly appreciate it if you would allow us the opportunity to present our position in a consultations on the MTB-MLE.

Very truly yours,



Rev. Luis Aoad

Bulanao Norte, Tabuk City, Kalinga



Dr. Bruce Ande

Magsaysay, Tabuk City, Kalinga



Jinky Ande

Magsaysay, Tabuk City, Kalinga



Eleonor Malindom

Dagupan Centro, Tabuk City, Kalinga



Noblito Bascellano

Casigayan, Tabuk City, Kalinga



Estanislao Albano, Jr.

Casigayan, Tabuk City, Kalinga

Copies furnished:
President Rodrigo R. Duterte
Basic Education Committees of both houses of Congress
DepEd regional offices