



EDCOM2

The Second Congressional
Commission on Education



BASIC EDUCATION

Curriculum and Instruction

PRIORITY AREA #7



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The Green Paper aims to stimulate discussion on priority areas being considered by the Second Congressional Commission on Education. It hopes to invite concerned stakeholders and the general public to participate in the debates surrounding specific areas, and to submit relevant research, as well as specific comments and suggestions.

Cover Photo courtesy of the Office of Senator Win Gatchalian.

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1. Introduction

This Green Paper is an opportunity to comment on the *Curriculum and Instruction of Basic Education*. The goal is to review whether the proposed new curriculum has

- refined and reduced the amount of content across the learning areas to focus on essential content or core concepts,
- proposed an appropriate language of instruction policy, and
- suggested pedagogical approaches that encourage flexibility and innovation.

2. Priority

Implementing the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum is considered one of the most significant educational reforms in the country (DepEd Order 21 s. 2019). Shifting the school curriculum from a 10-year to a 13-year system aims to provide enough time for learners to “master concepts and skills, develop lifelong learning, and prepare for higher education, middle-level skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship” (Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013; Robertson, Rickards, et al., 2021).

However, as with any curricular reform, the K to 12 Program has its challenges (DepEd, 2023). Results of both national and international standardized assessments reveal no improvement in the academic performance of Filipino learners (Schleicher, 2018; Mullis et al., 2020; UNICEF & SEAMEO, 2020; as cited in DepEd, 2023). This academic performance includes content knowledge and some 21st century skills (DepEd, 2023).

The Department of Education, with the Assessment Curriculum and Technology Research Centre (ACTRC), has reviewed the curriculum to verify claims about it and solve gaps in the document (DepEd, 2023).

Apart from students not attaining skills and knowledge at expected levels (Robertson, Kheang, et al., 2021), teachers had difficulties implementing the intended curriculum (Robertson, Rickards, et al., 2021). These challenges were due to 1) not having adequate time to teach all learning competencies; 2) a mismatch between the prerequisite skills and knowledge assumed by the learning competencies within the curriculum and the current skills and knowledge of the students who were expected to learn them; and 3) the lack of readiness of students for the learning competencies impacts the time it takes to teach the curriculum (Roberston, Rickards, et al., 2021).

3. Current Situation

Last April 19, 2023, DepEd shared its new draft Curriculum Guides (CGs) with the public. **Given the results of the curriculum review, the proposed curriculum focuses on big ideas, articulating the 21st Century Skills Framework, redefining the interplay among languages in the Philippines, and emphasizing the development and mastery of foundational skills and competencies.**

The curriculum and instruction issues are discussed below, **with the proposed DepEd improvements to the curriculum already highlighted.**

4. Issues Under this Priority



ISSUE #1: Language of instruction

According to studies looking at MTB-MLE implementation (DeStefano, Gertsch, Gove & Shrestha, 2023; Metila & Williams, 2016; Monje, Orbeta, Francisco-Abrigo & Capones, 2019):

- DepEd’s MTB-MLE policy is consistent with research showing that using the language the learner knows best benefits the learner in several ways. The most critical question regarding MTB-MLE in the Philippines is not whether the policy is well grounded.
- Implementers in multilingual contexts (such as the Philippines) face the additional impact of linguistic diversity, which makes thorough program implementation more difficult. Apart from the challenge of program design in multilingual contexts, mother-tongue based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) implementation is challenged by a lack of teaching-learning materials and procurement issues (see *Green Paper on Learning Resources*).

Questions of the Standing Committee on the matter:

1. How is MTB-MLE done in areas with several mother tongues in a classroom (e.g., in CAR and Region 5, where there are several MTs)? What is the availability of storybooks, textbooks, and other teaching-learning materials in the different MTs in these areas?
2. How widespread is the use of Tagalog/Filipino among students? Is the impression that almost all younger Filipinos know and use Tagalog/Filipino as a spoken language accurate?

Given these implementation challenges, the language framework in “the revised curriculum espouses **a mother tongue-based compound coordinate bilingualism** design, which aims for a type of bilingualism in which an individual is proficient in two or more languages, Filipino and English in this case” (DepEd, 2023, p. 25). While the new curriculum recognizes that an individual may have one or more native languages or mother tongues and must achieve oral language proficiency in this language before developing language and literacy skills in Filipino and English, the new curriculum no longer has Mother Tongue as a separate subject. Instead, **the new curriculum has “Language and Literacy” and “Reading” taught in L1 (or the language the learner knows best) in Grade 1. The school will determine the L1 based on the data gathered from language mapping.**



ISSUE #2: Validation of the revised K to 10 (eventually, 11 and 12) curriculum towards decongestion, flexibility, and innovation, including a review of the spiral curriculum

Decongestion

- One of the salient findings of the review is **the congestion of the curricula**, which is overcrowded with content (Robertson et al., 2021; DepEd, 2023). This means that learners need help to grasp and understand various concepts fully.
- The revised curriculum focuses on **big ideas, or key concepts in different learning areas**, to provide transferable concepts to other topics, contexts, or inquiries, thereby preventing information overload” (DepEd, 2023).

Reviewing the spiral curriculum and encouraging flexibility and innovation

- The original K to 12 curriculum uses the spiral progression approach across subjects. The spiral progression approach is designed to build on the same concepts in each grade level and develop in increasing complexity from Kinder to Grade 10 (DepEd Order 21 s. 2019; Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013).
- Unfortunately, it is not easy to implement the spiral progression approach:
 - Teachers have many criticisms towards the spiral curriculum, such as repetition of content across grade levels, lack of depth and concentration for each area in science, the omission of some fundamental concepts, challenges in their content expertise, and provision of resources (de Ramos-Samala, 2018; Montebon, 2014).
 - Some students reported difficulty learning the topics and adjusting to science concepts per quarter when introducing the

- spiral progression approach (Cabansag, 2014; de Ramos-Samala, 2018; Montebon, 2014;).
- In the revised curriculum, a more flexible pedagogical approach is recommended. Teachers are advised to utilize the appropriate pedagogical approach or set of approaches that considers the diversity of learners, subject matter, the classroom situation, and other essential factors (DepEd, 2023).

Questions of the Standing Committee on the matter:

1. Is the new curriculum decongested? Does it encourage flexibility and innovation? Does it address the issues related to “spiral progression” adequately?
2. Can the teachers deliver the prescribed curriculum? How about teachers in multi-shift schools?
3. How can instruction time be optimized to improve learning outcomes (e.g., schedule, modality)?

5. How to Take Part in the Consultation

This green paper launches a 12-week public consultation. Submissions should be received by **August 10, 2023**. The Commission invites concerned stakeholders to submit their contributions using the electronic form, which can be found here: <https://bit.ly/EduKonsultasyon7>

The Commission will consider all contributions in its future work and provide feedback on the results. All submissions will be made publicly available by the Commission unless the respondent indicates otherwise, or requests that part of the submission be kept confidential and acceptable reasons are provided.

The directions outlined in this paper are for consultation purposes only, and the Government has made no final decisions on the reforms presented.

The Commission is subject to the Freedom of Information law, and submissions may be required to be disclosed in response to requests made under that Act. The Commission reserves the right not to publish any submission or part of a submission that contains potentially defamatory material or for confidentiality reasons.

6. References

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SCAN TO PARTICIPATE!




About EDCOM 2

The Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II) is a national commission tasked to undertake a comprehensive national assessment and evaluation of the performance of the Philippine education sector.



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