FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINES: CONTEXT, INITIATIVES, AND DIRECTION

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Abstract: Today’s knowledge economy demands globally competent workers who possess 21st century skills including the ability to communicate across cultures. For ASEAN countries to meet this demand, foreign language education (FLE) has been offered which needs to be revisited. This paperpresents the context, direction, and initiatives of FLE in the Philippines focusing on the public sector. A country whose official language is English along with Filipino being the national language and the last country to adopt K-12 in the ASEAN region, the Philippines started FLE in 2009to prepare graduates to be linguistically and culturally competent in the global workplace. The Department of Education (DepEd) issued Order No. 55 series of 2009 directing FL offeringsas elective courses without credit to third and fourth year secondary students. With the revised curriculum in the implementation of K-12, FLE has been offered to Grades 7-10 pursuant to DepEd Order 46 s. 2012. DepEd partnered with training providers, namely Goethe Institut (German), Embassy of Spain (Spanish), Japan Foundation (Japanese), Confucius Institute (Chinese/Mandarin), and Embassy of France (French) to provide teachers’ trainingincluding immersion in thecountry of language origin. Still in its pilot stage, Philippine FLE is yet to conduct program evaluation; no standardized FL proficiency test yet to measure the effect of DepEd’s Special Program for Foreign Language (SPFL). Nevertheless, SPFL has now 10,526 students nationwide, 3,531 (28.7%) of whom are taking Spanish in 83 schools in all 18 regions. Japanese has 3,020 students in 38 schools in four regions (1, NCR, 7, 11) while Chinesehas 2,280 students in 76 schools nine regions (1, 3, 4B, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, NCR). French has 1,112 students in two regions (NCR, 7) and German has 583 students in nine schools only in NCR. This school year, Korean was added to these five FLs making the total number of FLs offered to junior high six, and teachers receive training from the Korean Cultural Center. All six FLs are elective courses offered only to interested students. Still in its infancy stage, FLE in the Philippines is yet to be assessed to see its impact and outcomes.

Keywords: Foreign language; ASEAN; immersion; multilingualism.