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## **Evolving Dynamics of Language Policy and Chinese Language Education in the Philippines: Future Direction and Challenges**

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### **Abstract**

This paper presents a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of language policy in the Philippines, with a particular emphasis on the status, challenges, and future prospects of Chinese language education within the national framework. The study is structured into five distinct sections. Firstly, the historical development of language policies in the Philippines is explored, tracing the transitions from colonial to contemporary eras and assessing their implications for language education. Secondly, an in-depth exploration of the present landscape of Chinese language education is provided, evaluating its integration into the Philippine education system and the effectiveness of existing programs. Thirdly, a critical examination of the current state of local Chinese language teacher training is conducted, analyzing the approaches used to foster a sustainable local teaching workforce. Fourthly, strategic pathways for the next decade are outlined, focusing on the localization of Chinese language education in alignment with the plans of the Philippine Department of Education and broader educational objectives. Finally, the concluding section synthesizes insights garnered from the preceding sections, reflecting on the significance of these developments for the future of Chinese language education in the Philippines. It underscores the pivotal role of Chinese language education in promoting cultural and educational exchanges and facilitating the modernization processes in both China and the Philippines. By addressing these dimensions, the paper offers a comprehensive overview of the intersection between language policy and Chinese language education in the Philippines, providing valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers engaged in language education and policy planning in multilingual and multicultural contexts.

Keywords: Language policy; language planning; Chinese language education; Chinese teacher training; localization of language teaching; Chinese language teaching

## Introduction

The essence of language policy is the resolution of socio-economic and political issues through policy regulations or interventions concerning the languages used by the nation's own people. This serves as a means to maintain national unity, enhance the country's economic competitiveness, promote ethnic integration, and improve the quality of its citizens (Zhang & Chu, 2021). Furthermore, through comprehensive language planning, the preservation of the endangered indigenous and immigrant languages will be ensured (Bianco, 2010). Recognizing the importance of both the promotion of globalization and preservation of one's national identity, Zeng & Li (2023) asserted that countries shall continuously develop their language planning and policies to promote inclusivity and initiatives that honors linguistic diversity. Despite the growing interconnectedness of the world, multicultural and multilingual countries face the challenge of continuously adapting their language policies and planning to ensure that part of their national identity, their languages, will not be compromised or will come to time that it will face extinction. The Philippines, being a culturally diverse and multilingual nation, faces similar circumstances. Furthermore, its extensive history of colonization by countries such as Spain, the United States of America, and Japan adds complexity and diversity to its language planning and policies.

The Commission on Filipino Language (KWF), the government agency responsible for conducting, coordinating, and advocating research aimed at advancing, disseminating, and safeguarding Filipino as the official language of the Philippines, as well as other languages spoken in the country, initiated its language mapping project in 2016 and has currently mapped around 130 languages throughout the nation (Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino, 2016). According to data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023), approximately 82% of the total population converses in ten (10) ethnic languages, while the remaining 18% communicates in over 100 other languages. Among the most prevalent languages are Tagalog (26%), Bisaya/Binisaya (14.3%), Ilocano (8%), Cebuano (8.0%), Ilonggo (7.9%), Bikol/Bicol (6.5%), Waray (3.8%), Kapampangan (3.0%), and Maguindanao (1.9%) and Pangasinan (1.9%). Among them, Tagalog was recognized as the national language by the Philippine government in 1937; it was designated as the official language during the Second World War by the Japanese occupation government; in 1959, the national language was renamed Pilipino, to distinguish it from the Tagalog dialect of the capital region; the 1973 Constitution formally established Pilipino and English as the official languages; and the 1987 Constitution officially changed the name of the national language from Pilipino to Filipino (Zhang & Fan, 2013).

The language policy and planning of the Philippines has been continuously evolving since the colonial period up to the present time. In addition to its rich history, the country is facing a phase characterized by language convergence, evident in significant borrowing from major languages like English and Tagalog, as well as from locally significant languages within various regions (McFarland, 2004). In addition to the language convergence, the country has included foreign languages in the curricula of both the secondary and tertiary education. Alongside this linguistic convergence, foreign languages have been incorporated into the secondary and tertiary education curricula over the past fifteen (15) years, necessitating a review of their impact on language policy and planning in the country.

There is a substantial literature that investigated the language policy and planning of the Philippines; however, not much scientific work has been done to provide an in-depth analysis of

how language policy and planning have shaped the implementation of foreign language learning in the country, specifically the Chinese language. Therefore, to contribute to the literature, this study aims to describe the evolving dynamics of language policy and Chinese Language Education in the Philippines. Specifically, the study pursued to achieve the following study objectives:

- To trace the historical evolution of the Philippines' language policy;
- To depict the current landscape of International Chinese Education in the Philippines;
- To explore the training of local Chinese teachers in the Philippines; and
- To propose recommendations for advancing the localization of Chinese education in the Philippines.

The findings of this study offer valuable insights for language policy-makers and prospective researchers interested in exploring the influence of language policy and planning on the implementation of foreign language teaching and learning in the Philippines. Additionally, this study presents crucial data on the evolution of Chinese language education in the country, serving as foundational information for future investigations. Lastly, by engaging with the ongoing discourse surrounding the localization or internationalization of Chinese language teaching, this study contributes to broader discussions in the field.

## **Research method**

### **Research design**

This study employed a qualitative systematic review design. According to Seers (2015), qualitative systematic review consolidates research on a particular topic by methodically searching for evidence from primary qualitative studies and synthesizing their findings. This study brings together the studies, government issuances, documents, and articles related to the language policy and planning and Chinese language education in the Philippines. Through consolidation of the findings of previous studies and contents of relevant documents, this study recounts the evolution of the country's language policy and planning and at the same time describe how Chinese language education is being implemented.

### **Materials**

To narrate the historical progression of language policy and planning and describe the implementation of Chinese language education in the Philippines, the study gathered data by accessing official websites and public databases of relevant government bodies and organizations. Data sources encompassed news articles, government issuances (laws, policies, memorandum orders), conference proceedings, and relevant presentations. Additionally, prior studies were revisited to offer a comprehensive perspective on the state of Chinese language education in the Philippines.

## **Results and discussion**

### **Language policies in different periods in the Philippines**

A comprehensive overview of the evolution of language policy in the Philippines shows a progression from colonial language policies to national language policies, bilingual language policies, and then to the 21st-century multilingual language policies. In general, the language policies of each period reflect the ruling intentions of the government or administrative authorities, as evidenced in laws, constitutions, presidential decrees, administrative orders, departmental documents, and memoranda.

*Colonial period language policy**The Spanish colonial period's language differentiation policy*

In 1565, Spanish explorer Miguel López de Legazpi arrived in Cebu, Philippines, initiating Spanish colonization and evangelization through Catholicism. In 1596, King Philip II of Spain instructed the colonial governor that it was insufficient for missionaries to learn indigenous languages for evangelization; instead, they should teach Spanish to the locals (Kawahara, 2015). The expanding territory under Spanish rule exposed the Spaniards to various dialects in the country, rendering the training of clergy ineffective. Consequently, the promotion of Spanish language teaching emerged as a solution to establish a common language (Frei, 1959). Spanish gradually became the official language of the Philippines. In the process of religious dissemination, missionaries translated Catholic classics and doctrines into various Philippine ethnic languages, optimizing and reforming them according to religious doctrine, inadvertently promoting the evolution and development of Philippine ethnic languages.

Due to the ethnic discrimination and oppressive policies of the Spanish colonizers, Spanish was regarded as a "noble language" and was not widely mastered by the Filipino populace. However, the long-term colonial rule significantly influenced the Philippines with Spanish, persisting even after the American occupation in 1898. The Malolos Constitution of 1899 stipulated that the use of languages in the Philippines should not be compulsory and monitored, but Spanish would temporarily be used in legal and judicial affairs (The Philippine Government, 1899). To this day, Spanish remains an elective subject in the Philippine Department of Education's Special Program in Foreign Language.

*American colonial period's "English only" policy*

In 1898, following victory in the Spanish-American War, the United States became the new colonial power in the Philippines. Under the new colonial imperialism, the U.S. implemented a policy of "linguistic imperialism" with an "English only" approach, enforcing English language and American education and values throughout the Philippines, quickly making English a common language. According to the 1901 Act No. 74 by the American colonial authorities (The U.S.-Philippine Commission, 1901), a public education system was established, with English education rapidly disseminated in all public schools and American teachers introduced. The chief of the Department of Education had the authority to decide where to send English teachers and favored towns loyal to America. The act also recognized the freedom of private education, laying the foundation for Chinese schools (Jiang, 2014).

*Emergence of Chinese language education under colonial language policy*

During the Spanish colonial period, the government implemented restrictive and persecutory policies towards Chinese and overseas Chinese, limiting the use of and spreading Chinese language. The American colonial government adopted a more relaxed policy towards private education. At the same time, the late Qing government began to recognize and value the legal status of overseas Chinese, promoting the development of overseas Chinese education to awaken their sense of identity with the motherland (Jiang, 2014). In April 1899, Chen Gang, the first Chinese consul in the Philippines, founded the Tiong Se Academy, pioneering Chinese education in the Philippines. Subsequently, with the support of the Nationalist Government and the Chinese overseas community, a series of Chinese schools were established across the Philippines, leading to the systematic development of Chinese education.

*Development of national language policy during the autonomous government period*

In 1935, under American rule, the autonomous government of the Philippines was established. The same year, the February Amendment to the Constitution, Article XIV, Section 3, clarified: "Congress shall progressively develop and adopt a common national language based on one of the existing mother tongues. English and Spanish shall continue to be official languages unless otherwise provided by law"(The Philippine Government, 1935). Subsequently, Federal Act No. 184 was enacted in 1936, establishing the National Language Institute responsible for developing a common national language (The Philippine Government, 1936). Several decrees followed, such as Executive Order No. 134 in 1937, indicating that the national language would be based on Tagalog (The Philippine Government, 1937). Executive Order No. 263 in 1940 authorized the printing of national language dictionaries and grammar and determined the dates for the use and teaching of the above language in public and private schools in the Philippines (The Philippine Government, 1940a). Federal Act No. 570 in 1940 declared Filipino as one of the official languages of the Philippines. All primary school textbooks written in Filipino or necessary for disseminating the national language through public and private schools and other institutions and methods should be compiled under the supervision of the Bureau of Education, and anything related to the language form should be approved by the National Language Institute (The Philippine Government, 1940b). The 1943 Constitution, Article IX, Section 2, stipulated that the government should take measures to develop and disseminate Tagalog as the national language (The Philippine Government, 1943).

This period primarily emphasized the development of national languages, with the establishment of national language policy still in an exploratory stage. The outbreak of World War II brought a large number of Chinese, including scholars, to the Philippines for refuge, injecting vitality into Chinese education. By 1941, before the Japanese invasion, the number of Chinese schools reached 126, with 21,000 students, the highest record before the war (Dai, 2010).

*Bilingual education policy after independence*

On July 4, 1946, the Philippines gained independence from American rule, and a wave of nationalism quickly rose within the country. The Philippine government began to value its own culture and sought to cultivate national consciousness among its people. In 1957, the Philippine National Education Commission decided: "The teaching language for the first two grades of elementary school should be the local dialect; at the same time, the national language (renamed Filipino in 1959) shall be taught informally from the first grade and as a subject in higher grades; English shall be taught as a subject in the first and second grades and used as the teaching language from the third grade." Local dialects were used as auxiliary teaching languages in elementary schools, while Filipino was used as an auxiliary teaching language in junior high and high schools. (Espiritu) In 1973, the amended 1973 Constitution stated: "The National Assembly shall take steps to develop and formally adopt a common national language called Filipino; unless otherwise provided by law, English and Filipino shall be the official languages" (The Philippine Government, 1973). Based on the above constitutional provisions, in 1974, the Philippine Department of Education and Culture and Sports issued Order No. 25, s.1974, titled "Guidelines for the Implementation of the Bilingual Education Policy," marking the first implementation of a bilingual education policy. The 1987 Philippine Constitution, Article XIV, Sections 6 and 7, provided the legal basis for various language policies being implemented in the country: "The national language of the Philippines is Filipino. As it develops, it shall be further developed and enriched on the basis

of existing Philippine languages and other languages." "For purposes of communication and instruction, the official languages of the Philippines are Filipino and, until otherwise provided by law, English" (The Philippine Government, 1987a). The same year, the Philippine Department of Education issued Order No. 52, s.1987, revising the 1974 "Guidelines for the Implementation of the Bilingual Education Policy": "Filipino and English shall be used simultaneously as mediums of instruction and for specific subjects in the curriculum, as described in the 1974 Order No. 25; Filipino and English shall be taught as language subjects in all grades to achieve the goal of bilingual competence" (The Philippine Government, 1987b).

The most significant impact on Chinese education during this period was the 1973 Presidential Decree No. 176 issued by then-President Marcos, the "Filipinization" decree for Chinese schools, marking a watershed in the development of Chinese schools in the Philippines. From 1973-1976, all Chinese schools in the Philippines were transformed from overseas Chinese schools to Chinese schools, with a significant reduction in Chinese language courses, leading to a gradual decline in students' Chinese language proficiency and greatly affecting the inheritance and development of Chinese education (Jiang & Li, 2013).

### *21st century multilingual language policy*

#### *Strengthening English policy*

In 2003, the Philippines issued Executive Order No. 210, s.2003, "Establishing the Policy to Strengthen the Use of English as a Medium of Instruction in the Education System"(The Philippine Government, 2003): a. From the first grade, English shall be taught as a second language. b. At least from the third grade, English shall be used as the medium of instruction for English, Mathematics, and Science. c. All public and private secondary education institutions, including laboratory and/or experimental schools, as well as non-formal and vocational or technical education institutions, shall use English as the primary medium of instruction. The allocation of time for English learning areas is expected to be no less than 70% of the total time allocation for all learning areas at the secondary level. This order also stipulated, "To ensure and promote the evolution, development, and further enrichment of Filipino as the national language, Filipino shall continue to be used as the medium of instruction for Filipino and Philippine Humanities and Geography subjects." As a complementary policy to Executive Order No. 210, the Philippine Department of Education also issued a series of documents and implementation guidelines to support the "Strengthening of English as a Language of Education" policy.

#### *Mother tongue-based multilingual education policy*

In 2009, the Philippine Department of Education issued Order No. 74 (DO 74, s.2009), implementing a Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Policy (MTB-MLE) (The Philippine Government, 2009). The 2011 Republic Act No. 10533(The Philippine Government, 2011a), also known as the "K-12 Law," integrated the K-12 system into Philippine basic education and incorporated the provisions of MTB-MLE in Sections 4 and 5. The core of this policy involves using the learners' regional mother tongue for instruction, materials, and assessment in kindergarten and the first three years of basic education (K-3), with a transition plan for grades 4-6 to gradually shift to Filipino and English as the medium of instruction until these languages become the primary mediums in secondary education. The policy underscores the importance of regional mother tongues in early basic education to enhance students' comprehension and acceptance of educational content and develop their cognitive and reasoning

abilities. This policy has become a prominent feature of the Philippine K-12 basic education, marking a mature phase in the country's language policy development (Wang, K. 2019).

*Implementation of the special program in foreign languages in the 21st century language policy*

In 2008, the Philippine Department of Education issued Memorandum No. 560 (Memorandum No. 560, s.2008), initiating the Special Program in Foreign Language (SPFL) in both public and private secondary schools (Andaya et al, 2020). Within the K-12 education framework, students in grades 7-12 with proficiency in English and the ability to learn other foreign languages could enroll in SPFL courses. This offered students opportunities to acquire a second foreign language communicative ability, beyond their regional mother tongue, Filipino, and English, and to develop capabilities for interaction in a globalized environment characterized by linguistic and cultural diversity, thereby preparing them for higher education and employment. This initiative further deepened and developed the mother tongue-based multilingual policy and led to the incorporation of Chinese into the Philippine national education system, rapidly becoming one of the most swiftly developing foreign languages taught.

In 2003, 17 Chinese Volunteer Teachers from Fujian Normal University, as the first batch of Chinese Volunteer Teachers sent overseas since the establishment of the People's Republic of China, arrived in the Philippines. Since then, China has annually dispatched a significant number of Chinese Volunteer Teachers to Philippine Chinese schools and mainstream institutions, forming the backbone of Chinese language instruction in the Philippines and greatly influencing Chinese language education in the country.

The current state of international Chinese education in the Philippines

*Development of Chinese education in the national education system*

In November 2010, the then Senate President of the Philippines, Enrile, suggested to President Aquino III a reassessment of international situations and policies, gradually shifting the focus from the United States to China. Following this, the relationship between China and the Philippines improved. In 2011, the Philippine Department of Education officially included Chinese in the Special Program in Foreign Language (SPFL) and appointed the Confucius Institute at Angeles University Foundation (hereinafter referred to as "CI-AUF") as the official partner for the SPFL-Chinese Mandarin. According to the Philippine Department of Education's document No. 94 of 2011 (No. 94 s.2011) (The Philippine Government, 2011b), pilot projects were initiated in three public high schools in the northern, central, and southern parts of the Philippines (Paoay Lake National High School, Mabolo National High School, Zamboanga West High School). In April and May 2011, CI-AUF trained five local Chinese language teachers from these schools for a month, marking the official inclusion of Chinese in the Philippine national basic education system and heralding a "golden opportunity" for Chinese education in the Philippines.

By 2022, 153 public high schools in the Philippines offered Chinese courses, covering 15 of the 18 regions nationwide. The rapid development of Chinese courses within the Philippine national education system is attributed to the policy support of the Philippine government, recognizing the significant role of Chinese in the global multilingual environment and highly affirming the Chinese teaching efforts in recent years. The inclusion of Chinese as an elective course with credits in public high schools not only provides legal protection in mainstream society but also indicates its gradual emergence as an important language within the Philippine mainstream society.

Furthermore, the Philippine Department of Education has been exploring the incorporation of Chinese into public elementary and high school curricula. In 2021, the Department held a policy formulation forum with the AUF Confucius Institute to develop a policy for integrating Chinese into the public elementary curriculum, ensuring alignment with the national K-12 education system. The forum also discussed the legal basis for introducing Chinese in public elementary schools, ensuring compliance with the existing policies and regulations of the Department. At the high school level, the Department plans to initially implement Chinese courses as extracurricular activities, aiming to provide more employment and advancement opportunities for high school graduates, with the AUF Confucius Institute offering necessary support and assistance in policy formulation, curriculum development, and teacher training.

The outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 led to a shift to online education in the Philippines, including for Chinese courses in public high schools. However, due to limitations in internet infrastructure, issues such as lag and disconnection often occurred, compromising the effectiveness of online instruction. Natural disasters like typhoons, earthquakes, and heavy rains, causing power and internet outages in some areas, further hindered students' participation in online learning. They had to rely on self-study using materials distributed by schools, significantly reducing the effectiveness of learning. Regarding online educational resources, the AUF Confucius Institute, relying on Fujian Normal University and the Great Wall Chinese Smart Cloud Platform, developed and launched a comprehensive online platform for Chinese teaching in the Philippines, which has been promoted to teachers and students in public high schools. However, this platform is still in its initial stage, offering limited learning resources and language tools. The learning of Chinese by public high school students is greatly influenced by factors such as time, space, and technology. In a predominantly English-speaking Philippine society, learners of Chinese have little exposure to the Chinese language environment outside the limited classroom setting. Unless they continue their studies through offline courses and rich Chinese language environments provided by various Chinese education institutions, it is challenging to consolidate their learning achievements and improve their proficiency in Chinese.

#### *Chinese education in mainstream universities and the development of Confucius institutes*

In 1971, Silliman University in the Philippines started offering Chinese courses. However, due to the intensifying "Filipinization Movement" in education, Chinese courses in universities completely stalled from 1971 to 1980. It was not until 1981, when the Philippine Normal University began offering Chinese as an elective course, that mainstream universities restarted Chinese language instruction. According to incomplete statistics, as of 2021, 9 universities in the Philippines offer Chinese language courses (Zhang, 2022). In 2001, with the support of then-President Arroyo, the Philippine Commission on Higher Education signed Memorandum No. 22 (CMO-No.22 s2001) (Commission on Higher Education of the Philippines, 2001), encouraging the introduction of Chinese courses in undergraduate and doctoral degree programs. In 2003, the Commission and the then National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language of China signed a "Memorandum of Cooperation on Chinese Language Teaching in Universities between China and the Philippines." Subsequently, the Commission sent Filipino university teachers to China for a series of Chinese language training programs.



Table 1. Overview of existing confucius institutes in the Philippines (2023)\*

Establishment Date	Name	Chinese Partner Institution	Number of Confucius Classrooms	Teaching Points
October 2006	Confucius Institute at Ateneo de Manila University	Sun Yat-sen University		21
February 2009	Confucius Institute at Bicol University	Northwest University		3
January 2010	Confucius Institute at Angeles University Foundation	Fujian Normal University	3	153
October 2015	Confucius Institute at the University of the Philippines	Xiamen University		12
December 2019	Confucius Institute at Ateneo de Davao University	Huaqiao University		2

\*Some data is sourced from the 2019 statistical information of the Confucius Institute Headquarters in the Philippines. Data from Angeles University Foundation is derived from internal materials, and data from the Confucius Institute at Davao Athenaeum University is sourced from interviews.

Since 2006, with the support of the Philippine government, the former Hanban (Headquarters of Confucius Institutes) adopted a collaboration model between Chinese and Philippine universities to establish five Confucius Institutes in Philippine universities (see Table 1). These Confucius Institutes, based in their respective universities, actively serve the community and integrate into mainstream society. Currently, all five Confucius Institutes offer Chinese courses or electives integrated into the credit system at their respective universities. The Confucius Institutes at Ateneo de Manila University and Angeles University Foundation have established dual major undergraduate programs in Chinese and English and Master's programs in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, training a large number of local Chinese teachers for mainstream society schools. Bulacan State University has also established a dual major undergraduate program in Chinese and English, providing professional talent support for the local Chinese service system. Moreover, these Confucius Institutes actively collaborate with government departments and enterprises to conduct Chinese language training, further expanding the influence of Chinese education in mainstream Philippine society.

#### Current state of local Chinese teacher training in the Philippines

One of the most effective approaches to promoting Chinese language education abroad is the cultivation of local teachers, rather than relying solely on teachers from China. The development of local Chinese teaching talent must transition from a model of "receiving support" to one of "self-sustaining." Compared to volunteer teachers or teachers from China, local teachers have irreplaceable advantages, such as a better understanding of local students, local language and culture, and the ability to integrate Chinese language more deeply into the basic education system.

#### *Undergraduate education in Chinese and English dual majors or Chinese language teacher training*

Under the current legal system in the Philippines, mainstream universities are yet to establish standalone undergraduate programs in Chinese. The Chinese and English dual major model is a method adopted by universities to cultivate Chinese language talents, leveraging their English language programs. Currently, the Confucius Institutes at Ateneo de Manila University

and Blacan State University have established undergraduate programs in Chinese using this model, contributing significantly to the pool of Chinese language talents in mainstream Philippine society.

Chinese language teacher training programs at the undergraduate level, relying on English teacher training programs of host universities and joint training with foreign universities, aim to cultivate local Chinese language teachers for the Philippines. With the approval of the Philippine Commission on Higher Education, in 2010, the Confucius Institute at Angeles University Foundation initiated an undergraduate program for Chinese language teacher trainees. The first cohort enrolled 44 students, propelling the training of local Chinese language teachers in the Philippines and paving the way for sustainable development in Chinese language teaching. In 2014, the former Hanban (Headquarters of Confucius Institutes) collaborated with Angeles University Foundation to establish the first Chinese language teacher training undergraduate program in a mainstream university in the Philippines. This program, a dual major in Chinese and English education, adopts a 4+1 model (4 years in the Philippines, 1 year in China). The students are outstanding graduates of the Special Program in Foreign Language – Chinese of the Philippine Department of Education's public high schools, recommended by schools and selected through entrance exams and interviews at the Confucius Institute. They receive scholarships from Hanban/Confucius Institute Headquarters and Angeles University Foundation and commit to at least five years of teaching Chinese post-graduation. To date, the program has enrolled 78 students across four cohorts, with 28 currently studying and 50 graduates.

The establishment and development of dual major programs or Chinese language teacher training programs have become a crucial focus for Confucius Institutes in the Philippines. The establishment and sustainable development of Chinese language teacher training programs are key to resolving the challenges of local Chinese language teacher training in the Philippines. However, limited scholarship support in terms of duration and intensity poses challenges, particularly for private universities, in offering full scholarships for five-year Chinese language teacher training programs, leading to a decline in the attractiveness of these programs. In 2022, the Confucius Institute at Angeles University Foundation planned to enroll 20 students but only admitted 13. Furthermore, potential students, mainly from public high schools' Mandarin Chinese programs, are opting for other “prestigious schools” or “popular majors,” missing the opportunity for higher-level Chinese language education. The suspension of admissions for three years for the Chinese language teacher training program at the Confucius Institute at Angeles University Foundation results in a lack of student support for key national Chinese language activities and a gap in local high-quality Chinese language teachers and talents.

#### *Masters in Chinese language teacher education*

In 2019, the former Hanban (Headquarters of Confucius Institutes) and the Philippine Department of Education signed an agreement to jointly train Masters in Chinese Language Teacher Education, relying on Angeles University Foundation and Fujian Normal University, to address the professionalization of local Chinese language teachers. The program targets local Chinese language teachers in public high schools, offering a two-year, six-semester curriculum split between the Philippines (four semesters) and China (two semesters). It aims to provide systematic advanced knowledge and skills training, with scholarship support from Hanban and joint implementation and teaching by Angeles University Foundation and Fujian Normal University. The Department of Education offers policy support to applicants, ensuring adequate study time and a return to their original Chinese teaching positions post-graduation. To date, the program has enrolled 88 students across three cohorts: 52 in 2020, 25 in 2021, and 10 in 2022.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the enthusiasm for program enrollment, with students unable to travel to China for immersive learning since 2020. The program planned to enroll 60 students in 2022 but admitted only 10. The Chinese language foundation of the applicants, primarily local Chinese language teachers in public high schools, has been found to be inadequate during the enrollment interviews, conducted online over the past three years. With the gradual resumption of face-to-face teaching in the Philippines and adjustments to China's entry and exit policies, these issues are expected to ease to some extent. However, due to the backlog of students worldwide waiting to study in China and the limited capacity of Chinese universities, it is anticipated that it will take at least 3-5 years to adequately address these issues.

### *Training of local Chinese language teachers in public high schools*

Entrusted by the Department of Education, the Confucius Institute at Angeles University Foundation is responsible for training and monitoring local Chinese language teachers to further strengthen their professional skills and cultivate Chinese language teaching talents suited to the Philippine context. The current training mainly adopts a summer intensive training plus follow-up training model. For teachers with some Chinese language foundation, batch-wise immersive training sessions in China are organized.

**Summer Training.** Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Confucius Institute at Angeles University Foundation developed a one-month intensive training plan for newly selected local Chinese language teachers with no prior knowledge, covering detailed explanations of basic Chinese language knowledge, including phonetics, vocabulary, grammar, and an introduction to Chinese traditional culture. Post-training, teachers return to their public high schools for Chinese language instruction.

**Follow-up Training.** Since 2013, Chinese language teaching volunteers dispatched to various public high schools have provided training during designated work evenings and weekends, consolidating and improving Chinese language knowledge and teaching levels. From 2011 to 2022, 11 summer training sessions have been held, training 581 local Chinese language teachers, covering 153 public high schools (see Figure 1).

Post-pandemic, summer and follow-up training shifted to an online format due to the unavailability of Chinese volunteer teachers. The effectiveness of the training has been compromised due to infrastructural issues, leading to a loss of some Chinese language teachers and a regression in language proficiency among most local teachers. In the 2022 summer training, despite many public high schools actively applying to join the Chinese teaching project, the lack of prior exposure to Chinese among some teachers presented significant challenges, leading to some abandoning the program before completion.

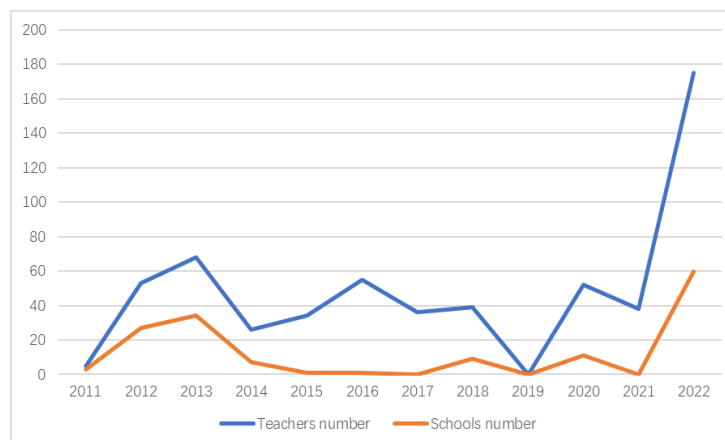


Figure 1. Overview of the number of local Chinese language teachers trained in the Philippines

Pathways for the localization of international Chinese education in the Philippines in the next decade

*Aligning with the Philippine department of education's Chinese language policy planning, and strengthening Chinese courses in the national education system*

In June 2022, the Philippine Department of Education released the "Basic Education Development Plan 2030." Correspondingly, a research team from the Department initiated the Strategic Blueprint (2022-2032) for the Special Program in Foreign Language-Chinese Mandarin, aiming to implement Chinese language instruction from elementary to high school levels. They believe that the current Special Program in Foreign Language-Chinese Mandarin should undergo regular assessments and updates to ensure it meets the evolving needs of students and society; innovative methods should be developed to enhance the learning experience of students in the Special Program in Foreign Language-Chinese Mandarin, such as creating contextualized print and electronic materials to make Chinese more relevant to Filipino learners; effective and innovative methods should be employed for the capacity building and professional development of local Chinese language teachers, equipping them with essential skills for effective teaching in the 21st century; and involvement and collaboration of administrators at different levels (grade, department, school, district, regional, and national) in Special Program in Foreign Language-Chinese Mandarin should be strengthened to ensure high-quality implementation of the Special Program in Foreign Language-Chinese Mandarin.

CI-AUF, as the official partner of the Philippine Department of Education's Special Program in Foreign Language-Chinese Mandarin and the authorized "Philippine Local Chinese Teacher Training Center," has been committed to strengthening and deepening long-term cooperation between the Philippines and China in the field of Chinese language education. By training local Chinese teachers, developing Chinese courses for public high schools in the Philippines, formulating Chinese language syllabi, creating contextualized teaching materials, assessing the Chinese proficiency of students and teachers, etc., it has taken a leading role in the integration of Chinese language courses into the Philippine national education system and in the localization of Chinese education in the Philippines. Currently, CI-AUF operates 3 Confucius Classrooms and 153 public high school teaching sites across 15 regions in the Philippines, registering over 10,000 students annually. Following the Strategic Blueprint (2022-2032) of the Philippine Department of Education's Special Program in Foreign Language-Chinese Mandarin, the Institute will further provide comprehensive alignment and resource support. Additionally, by further integrating existing resources and strengthening cooperation with the Chinese International

Education Foundation, the Language Exchange and Cooperation Center of the Chinese Ministry of Education, and relevant universities, it aims to provide greater support in the evaluation and update of Chinese courses in the Philippine basic education system, updating the local teacher training system and resource support, developing localized and contextualized teaching materials, and supporting the digitization of teaching materials and resources.

*Optimize the functions of various Chinese education institutions and jointly promote the localization of Chinese education*

Chinese language education institutions in the Philippines should cooperate and give full play to their strengths to build a comprehensive Chinese language education system in the Philippines and promote its healthy development. As far as the Confucius Institutes in the Philippines are concerned, the Confucius Institute at the University of Angeles University Foundation can make full use of the advantage of being an official partner of the SPFL-Chinese Mandarin to provide comprehensive support for the teaching of Chinese language courses, the development of teaching materials and resources, and the training of teachers in the Philippine national education system. The Confucius Institute at Ateneo de Manila University can take advantage of its location in the core business district of Makati, Manila, and its many years of experience in business Chinese language training to undertake business Chinese language training, develop Chinese language + vocational education, and cultivate specialized talents. The Confucius Institute at Bulacan State University makes full use of the advantages of a state university, attracts more high-quality students with high-quality teaching resources and low fees, and relies on the advantages of the emerging local e-commerce industry in Bulacan to recruit and train more Chinese and English double majors, and to set up a regional base for the training and cultivation of medium- and high-level Chinese language talents. The Confucius Institute at the University of the Philippines Diliman can rely on the advantages of the University of the Philippines Diliman and Xiamen University, which are respectively top universities in China and "World-Class" universities with broad academic coverage and strong scientific research foundation. With the international Chinese education discipline as the core, it radiates scientific research in politics, economy, culture, education, Chinese and overseas Chinese, religion and other fields, and builds a solid disciplinary foundation for international Chinese education, comprehensively enhance the research level and application promotion of international Chinese education in the Philippines. The Confucius Institute at Davao Athens University can fully utilize its geographical advantages and the existing foundation of Huaqiao university in the southern Philippines to carry out Chinese language education. Based on Mindanao Island and radiating to the southern region, it actively builds a Chinese language teaching and cultural dissemination center in the southern Philippines.

Other Chinese language educational institutions in the Philippines should also be fully based in the Philippines, give full play to their own advantages, actively strive for various types of resources to support, focus on the construction of high-quality local teacher training system, such as undergraduate and master's degree programs in Chinese language teacher training, to build a firm foundation for the construction of the hardware and software of the professional foundation and produce a clustering effect, so as to make the Filipino local Chinese language teachers to really produce their own ability to create their own blood and form a virtuous cycle; at the same time, it should also be actively committed to the development and application of the local teaching and to promote the continuous improvement of the ecological system of the Chinese language education in the Philippines to improve the quality of the quality and increase the efficiency of the healthy development.

*Advancing the development of online teaching resources*

Post-pandemic, the wealth of online resources for Chinese education has significantly increased. For example, the “Chinese Plus” cloud service platform currently offers over 300 courses with more than 18,000 classes (Ma, 2022). CI-AUF, relying on the Center for Language Education and Cooperation (CLEC) and Fujian Normal University, has developed and launched a comprehensive online platform for Chinese teaching in the Philippines, enabling live lectures, AI interactive practice, micro-lessons for teaching, and support for teacher training and online classroom management for secondary school students. It has also established an electronic resource library for Filipino high school students based on the new curriculum syllabus, providing teaching resources, Chinese character and vocabulary materials, etc., aimed at providing more suitable teaching resources and services for Chinese education in the Philippines. The platform is promoted for use in teacher training for 153 public high schools across the Philippines, significantly enhancing the digital level of Chinese teaching in the country. Additionally, the Institute has initiated projects such as teaching micro-lessons and the production and dissemination of cultural short videos in the series "Telling China's Stories," broadcasted on social platforms like Facebook and WeChat, which are frequently used by Filipino students and Chinese learners, thereby continuously increasing viewership, sharing, and interaction. In the future, Chinese education institutions in the Philippines can further focus on the development of online teaching resources, further promoting the contextualization and localization of Chinese educational resources, providing high-quality and diverse online resources to meet the varying needs of learners.

**Conclusion**

Students' paragraph writing skills vary widely, ranging from advanced to fundamental. In recent years, Chinese education in the Philippines has received attention and appreciation from political figures including the President, Vice President, and Minister of Education of the Philippines, affirming the positive contributions of Chinese education and Confucius Institutes in promoting educational and cultural exchanges between China and the Philippines, and in enhancing mutual understanding and trust among the people, and friendship between the two countries. Particularly, the inclusion of Chinese courses in the Philippine national education system in 2011 marks a milestone in the history of Chinese education in the Philippines. In recent years, cooperation between China and the Philippines in various fields has rapidly developed, with China becoming the Philippines' largest trading partner for six consecutive years and one of the main sources of foreign investment. Looking ahead, under the leadership of the new government, the Philippines has embarked on its second modernization process. As interactions between China and the Philippines become increasingly frequent, the construction of the Chinese language service system as one of the important support systems urgently needs to be improved and enhanced. Based on the analysis and recommendations of the Philippine language policy and the development path of Chinese education, it is beneficial to comprehensively enhance the construction of the international Chinese education system in the Philippines and promote its continuous high-quality development. This will further contribute to the shared progress and cooperative success of China and the Philippines in their respective modernization processes, achieving new heights together.

**Declaration of conflicting interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in this work.

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