



## SEAMEO News Clipping

**Headline:** Bahasa in schools? DepEd eyes 2nd foreign language

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**Education Secretary  
Armin Luistro**

HANOI — Filipino school children will be encouraged to take up a second foreign language in the two-year senior high school under the K-12 basic education curriculum (BEC) reform program.

Education Secretary Armin Luistro told The STAR that studying a second foreign language will make Filipinos truly multilingual.

“We start with the mother tongue in kinder up to Grade 3, and then Filipino and English, and in senior high school, they should take up another foreign language, hopefully another ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) language or Mandarin,” he said.

Luistro said the study of a second foreign language will be optional.

“We should promote Bahasa Indonesia or Malay,” he said. “Actually, the two resemble each other.”

Luistro said the two Malay languages are easier to learn for Filipinos since they resemble the Filipino language. Both are written in the Latin script, not like in Thai, Mandarin, Japanese and Korean, he added.

Knowing a language of another ASEAN country will allow Filipinos to benefit more from the expected tremendous growth of the ASEAN in the coming years, he said.

Mandarin and Arabic were taught in selected public high schools in school year 2011-2012.

The Department of Education has been teaching other foreign languages in selected public schools. DepEd has also offered Spanish, French, German and Japanese in select public schools.

The Special Program in Foreign Language was designed for schools whose students have demonstrated competence in English before starting to learn another foreign language.

DepEd piloted foreign languages in selected high schools starting with Spanish, Japanese and French in school year 2009-2010. The following year, German was introduced.

Spanish is being taught in 54 high schools nationwide, Japanese in 13 high schools, French in 12 high schools and German in nine high schools.

The program is being piloted in public secondary schools – particularly those with speech laboratories – for students who are in the last two years of high school. They are allotted four hours weekly to learn a language.

DepEd has made arrangements with Instituto Cervantes, Japan Foundation Manila, Alliance Française, and Goethe Institute to prepare teachers to handle classes in Spanish, Japanese, French and German.

The DepEd's K-12 BEC program seeks to transform the 10 year BEC with six years of elementary and four years of high school to a 12-year BEC with a mandatory kindergarten and a Grade 1 to 12 path.

The current first year will be turned into Grade 7 and fourth year will become Grade 10, with the additional two years of senior high school becoming Grade 11 and 12.

The MTB-MLE program was one of the education programs Luistro believes was worth sharing with other education ministers in the SEAMEO 47th Council Conference in Hanoi.

Luistro said the United Kingdom had become an associate member in the Southeast Asian Nations Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) 47th Council Conference held in Hanoi this week.

It is the ninth non-ASEAN member country to do so, he added. Other associate members in SEAMEO are Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, and Spain.

“They know that Asia, in this case ASEAN, is very forward looking and has a lot of promise,” he said.

“They want to be part of whatever is happening in SEA... If they are not part of the developments here, they will be left behind.”