EDCOM2
The Second Congressional Commission on Education

TURNING POINT

A Decade of Necessary Reform (2026-2035)

EDCOM II ▪ FINAL REPORT





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“Unless reforms are carried out with consistency and permanence, the same deficiencies will reappear.”

—Paul Monroe. (1925).
A Survey of the Educational System of the Philippine Islands.
Manila: Bureau of Printing. 1925.



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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
4Ps	Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program
A&E	Accreditation and Equivalency
AACCUP	Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and University of the Philippines
ABET	Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology
ACPFA	Accreditation Council for Programs in Engineering in Asia
ACSCU-AAI	Association of Christian Schools, Colleges and Universities Accrediting Agency, Inc.
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADM	alternative delivery mode
ALCUCOA	Association of Local Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation
ALIVE	Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education
ALS	Alternative Learning System
AO	administrative officer
APIS	Annual Poverty Indicators Survey
AQAF	ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework
AQRF	ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework
ARAL Program	Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning Program
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASP	Adopt-a-School Program
AUN-QA	ASEAN University Network – Quality Assurance
AUS	Australia
AY	Academic Year
BAC	Bids and Awards Committee
BAE	Bureau of Alternative Education
BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao
BEA	Bureau of Education Assessment
BEC	Basic Education Curriculum
BECEd	Bachelor of Early Childhood Education
BEDP	Basic Education Development Plan
BEEd	Bachelor of Elementary Education
BEFF	Basic Education Facilities Fund
BHROD	Bureau of Human Resources and Organizational Development
BHW	Barangay Health Worker
BIR	Bureau of Internal Revenue
BKD	Barkada Kontra Droga
BLE	Bureau of Local Employment
BLEPT	Board Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers
BLGF	Bureau of Local Government Finance
BLP	Basic Literacy Program
BLSS	Bureau of Learner and Support Services
BNC	Barangay Nutrition Committees
BNS	Barangay Nutrition Scholar
BOC	Bureau of Customs
BOR	Board of Regents
BOSY	beginning of school year
BTVE	Bureau of Technical and Vocational Education
CAP	Classroom Building Acceleration Program
CAV	Certification, Authentication and Verification
CBMS	Community-Based Monitoring System
CBT	Community-Based Training
CDC	child development center
CDT	child development teacher
CDW	child development worker
CDW/T	child development worker/teacher
CELLS	Comprehensive Education and Leadership Learning System
CEMMT	Centers of Excellence in Modern Manufacturing Technology
CHED	Commission on Higher Education
CHEDRO	Commission on Higher Education Regional Office
CICA	Congress-Initiated Changes/Adjustment
CLC	community learning center
CMO	CHED Memorandum Order
CO	Central Office
COA	Commission on Audit
COC	Certificate of Competency
COCOPEA	Coordinating Councils of Private Education Associations
COD	Center of Development

Abbreviation	Meaning
COE	Center of Excellence
COPC	Certificates of Program Compliance
CPC	Child Protection Committee
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CPU	Child Protection Unit
CRLA	Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment
CSC	Civil Service Commission
CSO	civil society organization
CT	Career Teacher
CTECS	Community Training and Employment Coordinators
DA	Department of Agriculture
DAP	Development Academy of the Philippines
DBM	Department of Budget and Management
DCCs	Day Care Centers
DECS	Department of Education, Culture, and Sports
DepDev	Department of Economy, Planning, and Development
DepEd	Department of Education
DepEd EFD	Department of Education Education Facilities Division
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DHSUD	Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development
DICT	Department of Information and Communications Technology
DILG	Department of the Interior and Local Government
DMW	Department of Migrant Workers
DO	Department Order
DOF	Department of Finance
DOH	Department of Health
DOLE	Department of Labor and Employment
DOST	Department of Science and Technology
DOST-FNRI	Department of Science and Technology–Food and Nutrition Research Institute
DOST-SEI	Department of Science and Technology - Science Education Institute
DOST-STS	Department of Science and Technology - Scientific and Technical Services
DPRP	Disaster Preparedness and Response Program
DPWH	Department of Public Works and Highways
DRRM	Disaster Risk Reduction Management
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
DSSC	Discipline and Sector Skills Councils
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
DTS	Dual Training System
EBET	Enterprise-Based Education and Training
EBT	enterprise-based training
EBEIS	Enhanced Basic Education Information System
EBETO	Enterprise-Based Education and Training Office
E-CAIR	Education Center for AI Research
ECCD	early childhood care and development
ECCDC	Early Childhood Care and Development Council
ECP	Expanded Career Progression
ECE	early childhood education
EEAS	Excellence-Equity Admissions System
EGAC	Enrolled–Graduates–Assessed–Certified
EGMA	Early Grade Mathematics Assessment
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
ELLNA	Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Assessment
ENNS	Expanded National Nutrition Survey
EO	Executive Order
EOSY	End-of-School-Year
EPA	Early Procurement Activities
EPB	Employment Planning Board
EQAAs	External Quality Assurance Agencies
ES	Elementary School
ESC	Education Service Contracting
eSF7	Electronic School Form 7
ESP	Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao
ETEEAP	Expanded Tertiary Education, Equivalency and Accreditation Program
EVs	electronic vehicles
EWDG	Education and Workforce Development Group
FAAP	Federation of Accreditation Agencies of the Philippines
FAPE	Fund for Assistance to Private Education
FHE	Free Higher Education
FIES	Family Income and Expenditure Survey

Abbreviation	Meaning
FLEMMS	Functional Literacy, Education, and Mass Media Survey
FLO	flexible learning options
FY	fiscal year
GAA	General Appropriations Act
GAD	Gender and Development
GASTPE	Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education
GASWAD	Guidance Assistance to Students with Academic Deficiency/ies
GC	Guidance Counselor
GDP	gross domestic product
GE	General Education
GEEAP	Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel
GER	Gross Enrollment Ratio
GIDA	geographically isolated and disadvantaged area
GIDCAs	Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged and Conflict-Affected Areas
GII	Global Innovation Index
GMIS	Government Manpower Information System
GNP	gross national product
GPPB	Government Procurement Policy Board
GPPB-TSO	Government Procurement Policy Board–Technical Support Office
GSIS	Government Service Insurance System
HEDF	Higher Education Development Fund
HEEG	Health Employment and Economic Growth
HEI	higher education institution
HRH	human resources for health
HRIS	Human Resource Information System
HRM	Hotel and Restaurant Management
IBACS	Industry-Based Assessment and Certification System
IC	independent contractor
ICE	Institution of Civil Engineers
ICT	information and communications technology
IEP	Individualized Education Program
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILRC	Inclusive Learning Resource Center
IMPACT	Instructional Management by Parents, Community, and Teachers
INSET	In-Service Training for Teachers
IP	Indigenous People
IPCR	Individual Performance Commitment and Review
IPCRF	Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form
IPEd	Indigenous Peoples Education Program
IPMAS	Integrated Performance Management and Accountability System
IPR	intellectual property rights
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
IRR	implementing rules and regulations
ISA	Institutional Sustainability Assessment
ISAL	Islamic Studies and Arabic Language
IT	information technology
IT BPM	Information Technology and Business Process Management
ITB	Industry TVET Board
IU	implementing unit
JDVP	Joint Delivery Voucher Program
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JMC	Joint Memorandum Circular
JPO	Job Placement Offices
KPA	Key Priority Area
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
LAC	Learning Action Cell
LCP	Learning Continuity Plan
LCPC	Local Council for the Protection of Children
LCSFC	Longitudinal Cohort Study on the Filipino Child
LDF	Local Development Fund
LEDAC	Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council
LEPT	Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers
LET	Licensure Examination for Teachers
LIAC	Local Industry–Academe Council
LFS	Labor Force Survey
LG	Learner Government
LGA	Local Government Academy
LGSF	Local Government Support Fund
LGSF-FA	Local Government Support Fund–Financial Assistance

Abbreviation	Meaning
LGU	local government unit
LIS	Learner Information System
LLDF	Lifelong Learning Development Framework
LLL	lifelong learning
LMI	labor market information
LMICs	low- and middle-income countries
LMIS	Labor Market Information System
LMS	Last Mile School
LNS-SQ	Lipid-Based Nutrient Supplement - Small Quantity
LSA	Learning Support Aides
LRMS	Learning Resource Management Section
LRN	Learner Reference Number
LRP	Literacy Remediation Program
LRPO	Learner Rights and Protection Office
LSB	local school board
LSEN	Learners with Special Educational Needs
LSS	Learner Support Services
LTE	Learning Tools and Equipment
LUCs	local universities and colleges
LWDs	Learners with Disabilities
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MAFAR	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Agrarian Reform
MBHTE	Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education
MDT	Multidisciplinary Team
MEP	Madrasah Education Program
MFBM	Ministry of Finance, Budget and Management
MFAT	Multi-Factored Assessment Tool
MILG	Ministry of the Interior and Local Government
MIPA	Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs
MISOSA	Modified In-School, Off-School Approach
MNP	Micronutrient Powder
MSME	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOOCs	Massive Open Online Courses
MOOE	maintenance and other operating expenses
MORPHE	Manual of Regulations for Private Higher Education
MPSS	Minimum Performance Standards and Specifications
MSSD	Ministry of Social Services and Development
MT	Master Teacher
MTB-MLE	Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education
NACR	National Academic Content Repository
NAFMIP	National Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization and Industrialization Plan
NAP	National Archives of the Philippines
NAR	Nutritionally-At-Risk
NAS	National Academy of Sports
NAST	National Academy of Science and Technology, Philippines
NAT	National Achievement Test
NatPlan	National Education Plan
NBDB	National Book Development Board
NC	National Certificate
NCAE	National Career Assessment Examination
NCAIR	National Center for Artificial Intelligence Research
NCC	National Coordinating Council
NCCA	National Commission for Culture and the Arts
NCCE	National Coordinating Council for Education
NCIP	National Commission on Indigenous Peoples
NEAP	National Educators' Academy of the Philippines
NEDA	National Economic and Development Authority
NELC	National Early Learning Curriculum
NEP	National Expenditure Plan
NETRC	National Education Testing and Research Center
NGAs	National Government Agencies
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NHA	National Housing Authority
NHRHMP	National Human Resources for Health Master Plan
NIC	National Innovation Council
NITESD	National Institute for Technical Education and Skills Development
NLC	National Learning Camp
NLRP	National Learning Recovery Program

Abbreviation	Meaning
NMYC	National Manpower and Youth Council
NNC	National Nutrition Council
NNQAA	National Network of Quality Accrediting Agencies
NOSA	Notice of Salary Adjustment
NQESH	National Qualifying Examination for School Heads
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSBI	National School Building Inventory
NSI	National Student Index
NSLP	National Student Loan Program
NSTP	National Service Training Program
NTCTESD	National Training Center for Technical Education and Staff Development
NTESDP	National Technical Education and Skills Development Plan
NTTA	National TVET Trainers Academy
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OER	Open Educational Resources
OFW	Overseas Filipino Worker
OIC	officer in charge
OPCR	Office Performance Commitment and Review
OPCRF	Office Performance Commitment and Review Form
OPT +	Operation Timbang Plus
OOSC	Out-of-School Children
OSCYA	out-of-school children, youth, and adults
OSF	Other School Fees
OSY	Out-of-School Youth
OUA	Office of the Undersecretary for Administration
OUCT	Office of the Undersecretary for Curriculum and Teaching
OWWA	Overseas Workers Welfare Administration
PAASCU	Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, College and Universities
PACUCOA	Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation
PAGASA	Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration
PAPS	Programs, Activities, and Projects
PASUC	Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges
PBIS	performance-based incentive system
PCB	Program Convergence Budgeting
PCR	pupil-classroom ratio
PCTS	Philippine Credit Transfer System
PD	Presidential Decree
PD	Professional Development
PDIS	Professional Development Information System
PDO	project development officer
PDP	Philippine Development Plan
PE	Physical Education
PEIS	Public Employment Service Office (PESO) Employment Information System
PEPT	Philippine Educational Placement Test
PES	Parent Effectiveness Service
PESO	Public Employment Service Office
PHEIs	Private Higher Education Institutions
Phil-IRI	Philippine Informal Reading Inventory
PhilSCA	Philippine State College of Aeronautics
PhilSys	Philippine Identification System
PhilTER	Philippine Teacher Education Registry
PHIVOLCS	Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology
PhQuaR	Philippine Qualifications Register
PICAB	Philippine Information and Communications Technology Accreditation Board
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PMES	Performance Management and Evaluation System
PMNP	Philippine Multisectoral Nutrition Project
PMMA	Philippine Merchant Marine Academy
PNA	Philippine News Agency
PNSL	place with no SUCs or LUCs
POEA	Philippine Overseas Employment Administration
PPAN	Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition
PPP	public-private partnership
PPSSH	Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads
PPST	Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers
PQF	Philippine Qualifications Framework
PRB	Professional Regulatory Board
PRC	Professional Regulation Commission
PS	Personal Services

Abbreviation	Meaning
PSA	Philippine Statistics Authority
PSC	Philippine Sports Commission
PSDS	Public Schools District Supervisors
PSF	Philippine Skills Framework
PSF	Program Support Fund
PSG	policies, standards, and guidelines
PSGC	Philippine Standard Geographic Code
PSHS	Philippine Science High School
PSIP	Public-Private Partnership for School Infrastructure Project
PSOC	Philippine Standard Occupational Classification
PTA	parent-teacher association
PTC	Philippine Technological Council
PTC	Provincial Training Centers
PTC-ACBET	Philippine Technological Council-Accreditation Commission for Engineering and Technology
PTR	pupil-teacher ratio
PTTQF	Philippine TVET Trainer Qualifications Framework
Q-BEDP	Quality Basic Education Development Plan
QA	quality assurance
QRF	Quick Response Fund
R&D	research and development
R&I	research and innovation
RA	Republic Act
RD	Regional Director
RDC	Regional Development Council
RDO	Revenue District Office
REI	recommended energy intake
RIE	research, innovation, and enterprise
RITQ	Research Institute For Teacher Quality
RMA	Rapid Mathematics Assessment
RPCPPE	Report on Physical Count of Property Plant and Equipment
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RPMS	Results-Based Performance Management System
RQA	Registry of Qualified Applicants
RQPS	Real Quality Public Service
RR	Revenue Regulation
RSEs	Research Scientists and Engineers
RTC	Regional Training Centers
RTD	roundtable discussion
RTICs	Regional TVET Innovation Centers
s.	series
SALN	Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Worth
SAPSR	Skills Anticipation and Prioritization of Skills Requirements
SARDO	Students at-risk of dropping out
SBCC	Social Behavior Change Communication
SBFP	school-based feeding program
SBM	school-based management
SCP	Special Curricular Programs
SDO	Schools Division Office
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDS	schools district superintendent
SEA-PLM	Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics
SEF	Special Education Fund
SEL	Socioemotional learning
SELG	Supreme Elementary Learner Government
SETG	Study on the Employment of TVET Graduates
SFCR	School Forms and Checking Report
SFP	Supplementary Feeding Program
SF7	School Form 7
SG	salary grade
SGA	Special Geographic Area
SGC	School Governance Council
SHDP	School Head Development Program
SHS	senior high school
SHSVP	Senior High School Voucher Program
SIKAP	Staff and Instructors' Knowledge Advancement Program
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SIPTVETS	Supporting Innovation in the Philippine Technical and Vocational Education and Training
STEP Bill	School-to-Employment Program Bill
SLM	self-learning module

Abbreviation	Meaning
SMAW	Shielded Metal Arc Welding
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
SNEd	Special Needs Education
SNP	supervised neighborhood play
SOSSS	School Organizational Structure and Staffing Standards
SP	Special Provision
SPED	Special Education
STAR Program	System for TVET Accreditation and Recognition Program
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
STEP	Special Training for Employment Program
STI	Science, Technology, and Innovation
StuFAPs	Student Financial Assistance Programs
STVEP	Strengthened Technical-Vocational Education Program
SUCs	state universities and colleges
SY	school year
TAF	The Asia Foundation
TAS	TESDA Administered Schools
TaRL	Teaching at the Right Level
TDF	TESDA Development Fund
TDP	Tulong Dunong Program
TEACH	Therapy, Education, and Assimilation of Children with Handicap
TEC	Teacher Education Council
TechPro	Technical Professional
TF	Tuition Fee
TEI	Teacher Education Institution
TEMIS	Tertiary Education Management Information System
TES	Tertiary Education Subsidy
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
TETOS	Tertiary Education Technological Operationalization System
TIC	teacher in charge
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TLE	Technology and Livelihood Education
TNA	Training Needs Assessments
TNE	Transnational Education
TNHE	Transnational Higher Education
TOP	TESDA Online Program
TOSF	Tuition and Other School Fees
TPTE	Technical Panel for Teacher Education
TR	training regulation
TSS	Teachers' Salary Subsidy
TTI	TESDA Technology Institution
TVET	Technical-Vocational Education and Training
TVI	technical-vocational institution
TVL	Technical-Vocational-Livelihood
TWG	technical working group
TWSP	Training for Work Scholarship Program
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UAQTEA	Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCO-UNEVOC	UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UniFAST	Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education
UniTVET	Unified TVET of the Philippines, Inc.
UP	University of the Philippines
UP ACTRC	University of the Philippines Assessment, Curriculum and Technology Research Centre
UP CIDS	University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies
UPCAT	University of the Philippines College Admission Test
UPRI	University of the Philippine Resilience Institute
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USAID ILO-PH	United States Agency for International Development Improving Learning Outcomes for the Philippines
UTPRAS	Unified TVET Program Registration and Accreditation System
VAT	value-added tax
VAWC	Violence Against Women and Children
WASH	water, sanitation, and hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization
WIDE	World Inequality Database on Education
WIFA	Weekly Iron Folic Acid



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Executive Summary

The Philippine education system is at a decisive moment, defined not only by the sobering evidence of a learning crisis, but also by an unprecedented convergence of alignment, momentum, and collective action.

Over the past three years, The DepEd, CHED, TESDA, and Congress have moved hand in hand, leading to one of the most productive legislative periods for education in decades. Most recently, the highest education budget in Philippine history was approved. Major reforms have also moved forward addressing decade-long ills, while universities, civil society organizations, local governments, and partners have formed a broad coalition in support of systemic renewal.

This Final Report consolidates, integrates, and updates the findings of the EDCOM Year 1 and Year 2 Reports to present a coherent account of the state of Philippine education. Drawing on three years of study and consultation, EDCOM II synthesizes its key learnings and sets out the National Education and Workforce Development Plan—a 10-year roadmap for addressing the learning crisis and rebuilding coherence, capacity, and capability across the entire system.

The challenges ahead remain immense, but the momentum is singular and historic. With aligned political leadership, stronger institutions, record investments, and a nation united in its commitment to its learners, the Philippines can finally build an education system where every child learns, succeeds, and thrives.

EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT (ECCD)

The brain is most malleable in the earliest years of life, when inequality strikes first, deepest, and hardest. Long before a child enters kindergarten, the foundations of learning are already laid. For millions of Filipino children, these foundations are severely compromised: 23.6% are stunted, impairing cognitive development; 42% among the poorest are chronically undernourished; and more than 140,000 nutritionally-at-risk pregnant adolescents begin motherhood already facing lifelong disadvantages.

More than 200,000 malnourished children aged 2-4 are not served by DSWD's Supplemental Feeding Program. Currently, DSWD reaches only 43% of nutritionally-at-risk two-to-four-year-olds, out of the universe of around two million children that are supported through its program. This is due to two factors: first, feeding programs are only conducted in daycares and exclude malnourished children that are not enrolled; second, a gap in the law leaves children aged two to three years of age uncovered by either Republic Act No. 11148 or Republic Act No. 11037. Compounding this, the effectiveness of interventions remains inconclusive, partly due to the amount allocated for the Supplementary Feeding Program—a mere PHP 25 per meal.

Despite these, most resources continue to be titled towards feeding programs for older children. While the DOH and DSWD jointly implement the PMNP, this only covers 491,776 of 1,406,957 estimated malnourished children, and only 580 out of 742 LGUs. This is due to the lack of coordination and proactive leadership atthe Department of Health (DOH) and the National Nutrition Council (NNC), both explicitly mandated under national laws to coordinate and ensure the implementation of nutrition programs across government.

Access to early childhood education remains low and inequitable. Participation rates for three-to-four-year-olds is at 21%, with poorer and rural LGUs least served. Over 4,600 barangays lack a Child Development Center (CDC), and only 14.2% of existing centers have been upgraded in the past 10 years, between 2013 to 2023. Meanwhile, alternative modalities (community and home based options) are unavailable children not living in central areas.

Only 48% of households with young children own educational toys while only 40% have children's books. With limited stimulation at home, children depend heavily on centers—yet resources there also fall short. Regional inequities in Child Development Centers are also stark: some LGUs invest robustly, while others operate on extremely thin budgets, aggravated by slow procurement and weak oversight. This leaves both homes and centers unequipped to provide the early stimulation children need to learn and thrive.

The passage of Republic Act No. 12199 or the "ECCD System Act" is a key reform that is expected to address these gaps by mandating a single national database for nutrition and development indicators, requiring LGUs to allocate dedicated ECCD budgets, and setting minimum compensation and qualification standards for Child Development Workers and Teachers.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Nutrition in the Early Years (0–5)

1. Empower and hold the NNC accountable to enforce joint planning and monitoring among the DOH, DSWD, DepEd, DILG, and other agencies, ensuring shared accountability for results.
2. Establish a unified national–local ECCD governance and accountability framework.
3. Ensure the efficacy and sustainability of feeding programs.

Expand Access to Early Childhood Education

4. Prioritize conversion of daycares to child development centers.
5. Strengthen and professionalize the ECCD workforce.
6. Integrate ECCD NC III into Senior High School to expand the pool of qualified CDWs.
7. Improve data systems and resource coordination.
8. Strengthen ECCD–DepEd linkages for continuity of learning.
9. Design and implement sustained, community-based awareness campaigns that normalize early learning for ages 0–4.
10. Engage fathers, grandparents, siblings, and kasambahays.
11. Accompany awareness efforts with parallel investment in low-cost, high-impact learning materials that enable households to translate knowledge into daily practice.
12. Leverage existing community programs to reach caregivers where they are.
13. Explore incorporating developmentally appropriate ECCD competencies into MAPEH's health component, particularly within family health content areas.

Governance and Finance of ECCD

14. Rationalize the legal framework of NNC (Presidential Decree No. 1569, Republic Act No. 11148, and Republic Act No. 11037).
15. Provide funds to low-income LGUs through the Local Government Support Fund (LGSF) as mandated by Republic Act No. 12199.
16. Fully implement program-convergence budgeting for the early years.
17. Study service-delivery complementarities at the community level, and provide support for BHWs and BNS.
18. Integrate ECCD into the DILG's Local Government Academy Training.

BASIC EDUCATION

Most Filipino learners are not mastering foundational competencies—literacy and numeracy— leading to lifelong handicaps. The Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) shows limited progress in literacy from Grades 1 to 3, with 48.76% of learners not reading at their respective grade levels at the end of SY 2024-2025. By age 15, this early disadvantage has hardened: nine in ten Filipino learners cannot read with understanding (World Bank, 2025), and over 70% do not meet minimum proficiency in mathematics, placing the country at the bottom globally in the PISA 2019 and 2024.

SEA-PLM data suggests that low proficiency in reading and mathematics is driven by overlapping disadvantages that shape what learners experience at home and in school. The Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) 2024 findings indicate that the lowest performing Grade 5 Filipino learners disproportionately come from poor households and live in homes where the language spoken differs from the language of instruction. These learners are also more likely to be in under-resourced and congested schools, in rural contexts, with outdated materials, limited ICT access, and teachers with limited training or support. Meanwhile frequent class disruptions, bullying, and broader safety concerns further weaken their readiness to learn.

> *DepEd must end "mass promotion" practices without delay, and amend its policies to ensure genuine support for vulnerable learners.*

National Achievement Test results show worrying declines in proficiency across key stages, with the proportion of "non-proficient students" rising from 30% in Grade 3 (ELLNA) to as high as 74% in Grade 12 (NAT). Consistent with EDCOM II's call for focusing on the foundations, DepEd data on the results of the standardized assessments conducted from 2023-25 for Grades 3, 6, 10, and 12, highlight worrying declines in proficiency. At Grade 3, the ELLNA depicts at least 30.5% considered proficient to highly proficient, compared to 69.5% non-proficient (or those scoring 74 and below). Notably, "nearly proficient" is what DepEd considers as students meeting the "minimum skills" for that key stage. However by the time they finish Grade 6, steep declines are observed, with only 19.56% considered proficient. This further worses in Grades 10 and 12, with only 0.74% and 0.4% reaching proficiency as they progress in secondary schooling. These findings underscore the severe challenges faced by learners as they move across grade levels: highlighting the possible consequences of "mass promotion" practices", and once again, stressing urgent reforms demanded to ensure mastery of foundational literacy.

As much as 88% of students across all grade levels are not "grade-level ready" in reading at the beginning of the school year. Following DepEd's critical adoption of BOSY tests (CRLA and Phil-IRI) across Grades 1 to 10 in SY 2024-25, the data has highlighted how the majority of students, particularly among Grades 4 to 10, are struggling readers, with proportions ranging from 67% in Grade 5 to as high as 88% in Grade 7. Critically, the data likewise shows that 40-52% of students across Junior High School are at least two grade levels down in reading based on the Phil-IRI assessment. Again, these evince the urgency of addressing "mass promotion" and the rolling out of well-designed interventions to address literacy gaps at the secondary level, understanding that literacy is the gateway to learning numeracy, and other competencies across subjects. The findings similarly underscore the value of administering literacy assessments at higher grade levels (notably, including Grades 11 and 12), and the need to refine both CRLA and Phil-IRI to better inform intervention designs.

DepEd learning recovery initiatives have shown great success, with the 20-day summer remediation equating to 1.3 years of schooling (BBMP), and 96% of learners moving at least one level (LRP). DepEd remediation efforts like the Bawat Bata Makababasa Program (BBMP) and the Literacy Remediation Program (LRP) in May 2025 have demonstrated that structured, targeted, and time-bound interventions can move the learners that are furthest behind. Moving forward, gains can be sustained and scaled through the ARAL Program by ensuring readiness in implementation, as well as continued refinement of targeting and learner profiling, to improve intervention design.

DepEd must end "mass promotion" practices without delay, and amend its policies to ensure genuine support for vulnerable learners. The system currently sends contradictory signals when assessments indicate very low mastery but learners are still routinely advanced to the next grade level. This weakens incentives for early remediation, undermines the integrity of progression, and impedes teachers from addressing learning gaps as they emerge. This is further aggravated by the challenges faced by teachers—often with little support or reason— in getting their students to return to class, persist further in studies, or justify to school officials why the students must not be promoted. DepEd must urgently revisit its policy on grade transmutation and retention, and revise targets that unintendedly promote "mass promotion."



There has been significant progress in improving the availability of textbooks, reversing years of chronic shortages. DepEd reports delivering 87.27 million textbooks and procuring over 100 new titles in 2024 alone, compared with only 27 new titles procured in the preceding decade, representing a 289% increase. Sustaining these gains requires procurement reforms for more predictable lead times, stronger quality assurance across textbooks, teacher's manuals, and self-learning modules, and distribution systems that ensure schools open the year with usable and instructionally aligned resources.

Reforms under the revised K to 10 curriculum (MATATAG) provide relief through decongested content, and stronger alignment with learning standards and global benchmarks. Moving forward, implementation quality will determine impact: teacher preparation, coherent pacing guidance, timely delivery of aligned learning resources, and assessments that reinforce the intended focus on mastery rather than coverage. Notably, its implementation should be accompanied by continued assessment and refinement at the school-level, to ensure that mastery in foundational skills are attained, and not overlooked due to breadth. In parallel, Senior High School (SHS) requires a thorough review and refinement, jointly with TESDA and CHED, to strengthen quality provision, align competencies and pathways, and improve the credibility and coherence of provision across tracks.

Instructional time remains heavily diluted by an overcrowded school calendar, frequent non-instructional activities, and suspensions that disrupt sequencing and reduce engaged time-on-task. While Republic Act No. 11480 recommends no more than 220 days in the school calendar and DepEd Order No. 9, s. 2005 prescribes 205 school days devoted to "engaged time-on-task," EDCOM II's review of recent DepEd school calendars indicates that public schools operate with an average of only about 191 actual class days per year.Over 120 legislated activities, celebrations, and observances crowd the school year, often requiring preparation, documentation, and excused absences that displace core instructions. Competitions such as the National Schools Press Conference, Palarong Pambansa, and the National Festival of Talents involve multi-level elimination rounds (i.e. division-level and regional-level), and extensive training or rehearsals during the school year. Testimony from school leaders indicates that sometimes these competitions are conducted during periodic tests, compounding disruptions in sequencing and reducing engaged time-on-task, especially in already disadvantaged contexts.



Assessment practices require rationalization: the system administers many assessments, yet too few consistently inform curriculum improvement and classroom instruction in a timely manner. The Philippines conducts far more system-level assessments than many peer countries, but the instructional value is limited when results are delayed, fragmented, or weakly linked to actionable support from schools and teachers. Streamlining the assessment system and strengthening data-to-decision loops are thus essential to ensure assessments serve learning recovery and differentiated instruction.

Mounting classroom backlogs, ageing and condemned classrooms, disasters, and delayed repairs continue to impact learning for millions of students. The system faces an estimated backlog of 165,443 classrooms for decongestion, replacement, and repair, while DepEd also projects large-scale condemnation needs over the coming decades, with EDCOM II estimating total backlog to reach 219,000 by 2028. This underscores how the response must cover both backlog reduction and accelerated replacement. DepEd's initiatives to diversify construction efforts through PPPs, LGU counterparting, and partnerships with CSOs, will complement the slow progress of DPWH. These efforts need to be sustained for at least the next 10 years for meaningful progress to be made. The agency should also target voucher expansion and allocation more strategically, to meaningfully address congestion.

Disasters exacerbate learning loss and strain school capacity, reinforcing the need for resilient infrastructure and flexible, school-level learning continuity measures. Recent typhoons, earthquakes, and other natural phenomena have caused widespread damage and displacement, as research links disaster exposure and prolonged disruption to meaningful learning losses. For instance, the magnitude-6.9 earthquake in Cebu on September 30, 2025 alone damaged over 7,500 classrooms, including 1,187 destroyed and 803 with major damage, displacing more than 19,000 learners and nearly 1,000 personnel. Addressing this loss requires stronger education-in-emergencies readiness, quicker rehabilitation, and targeted catch-up supports that respond to localized impacts rather than uniform national approaches.

Finally, learning proficiency is shaped not only by curriculum and resources, but also by safety and well-being in schools and households. SEA-PLM 2024 finds that half of Grade 5 learners (50%) report being bullied at least once a month, while school heads continue to cite frequent incidents of harassment and conflict (SEA-PLM, 2024). Longitudinal evidence from PIDS shows that more than one in three Filipino children experience parental violence in late childhood, and exposure at age 10 is associated with 52–57% lower odds of school enrollment by age 14 (Manuel, Casas, and Ulep, 2025). Strengthening child protection systems, school climate interventions, and family support programs is therefore integral to learning recovery and equitable outcomes.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Learning Resources

1. Implement a two-year runway for textbooks and teacher's manuals to ensure timely delivery before the start of classes.
2. Strengthen DepEd's Quality Assurance System across textbooks, teacher's manuals, self-learning modules, and supplementary learning resources.
3. Strengthen DepEd–NBDB collaboration to address capacity gaps among regional publishing companies.
4. Capacitate schools to manage and provide supplementary learning resources that can be borrowed and brought home by learners, and monitor usability of learning tools and equipment (science, math, TLE).

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

5. Establish an independent assessment body to strengthen governance and accountability.
6. Rationalize the assessment system by streamlining key-stage tests and shifting to computer-based testing where feasible.
7. Enhance institutional capacity of the Bureau of Education Assessment for assessment design, implementation, analysis, and use.
8. Strengthen alignment between classroom, diagnostic, and system-level assessments, and accelerate the timely release and transparent dissemination of results to enable action by schools, LGUs, parents, and civil society.

Curriculum and Teaching

9. Strengthen MATATAG implementation through coherent teacher support, pacing guidance, timely delivery of aligned learning resources, and assessments that reinforce mastery rather than coverage.
10. Integrate learning recovery interventions (i.e. ARAL) into a coherent, diagnostic-driven approach that supports differentiated instruction.
11. Reform grading and promotion policies to address systemic practices contributing to mass promotion and to strengthen mastery expectations.
12. Protect instructional time by reducing overload from non-instructional activities and improving governance of school calendar disruptions.
13. Review and refine SHS jointly with TESDA and CHED to strengthen quality provision, align learner competencies, and improve pathway coherence and credential credibility.

School Infrastructure

14. Sustain multi-year implementation to address classroom backlogs alongside accelerated replacement of ageing and condemned facilities.
15. Strengthen governance, planning, monitoring, and transparency for infrastructure delivery to enable risk- and demand-informed allocation and oversight.
16. Institutionalize climate- and disaster-resilient standards and reduce reliance on classrooms as evacuation centers through dedicated facilities and protocols.

Alternative Learning System

17. Expand and strengthen ALS toward functional literacy and clearer progression pathways, supported by improved delivery modalities and implementation feedback loops.
18. Rationalize ALS financing and improve access through stronger outreach, learner tracking, and risk profiling to support participation, retention, and completion.

Home and School Environment

19. Fully implement the strengthened Anti-Bullying IRR through practical tools, staffing support, and monitoring and accountability mechanisms.
20. Address shortages in guidance and mental health personnel and strengthen parenting, family support, and school-based referral systems to reduce violence at home and improve learner well-being (including minimum service packages aligned with Republic Act No. 12080).



HIGHER EDUCATION

Participation rate is high, and dropout has declined from 39% in 2022 to 29% in 2025. Participation rate in tertiary education, currently at 47%, is only second in ASEAN next to Singapore. Attrition rates are declining, previously reported at 39% in 2022 to 29% in 2025. However, regional attrition rates vary, with the lowest in CALABARZON (18%), and the highest in Davao Region (40%). CHED has yet to collect student-level data that will enable a better understanding of precursors to non-completion, in the interest of designing more effective and responsive interventions for improved completion.

Republic Act No. 10931 has had a progressive effect, with participation of the poorest improving from 4.6% to 19.7% between 2014 and 2022. Meanwhile household expenditures on higher education among the poorest also declined substantially by 84%. When comparing pre-FHE (2014) and post-FHE distributions (2022) of students by income decile, it was found that the participation of the poorest households in SUCs and LUCs has improved from 4.6% to 19.7% for the 1st decile, and 9.5% to 21.7% for the 2nd decile. Further, the difference of the gross enrollment rate of the 1st decile and the 10th decile decreased substantially from 18.2 to 1.6 percentage points. Household expenditure on tertiary education reduced nationally by 57.6%, with the largest reductions seen for the poorest at 84%, when compared to the richest at 37%.

Since 1994, 129 laws have significantly expanded CHED's responsibilities without providing the manpower needed for effective implementation. Various measures including financial aid (e.g. scholarships, other financial assistance, implementation of the UniFAST and the UAQTEA), has stretched the capacity of CHED, leading the agency to rely on staff engaged through Contract of Service. Monitoring and enforcement of minimum standards also remains weak, with only 63 (13%) of 489 programs monitored.

Ten years on, many of the main functions of UNIFAST under Republic Act No. 10687 remain unfulfilled. Despite its passage in 2015, the mandates of UniFAST have largely been unimplemented. This includes the evaluation and harmonization of all publicly-funded national government programs for Scholarships, Grants-in-Aid and Student Loans, to the mechanisms for the identification of beneficiaries from bright and talented students or the marginalized and disadvantaged sectors. This has impeded government from improving targeting, and ensuring efficacy and efficiency of resources and support for learners.

> *Ten years on, many of the main functions of UNIFAST under Republic Act No. 10687 remain unfulfilled.*

Following EDCOM interventions, access of the poorest to the TES has improved from 23% in 2022 to 61% in 2024. This is following the findings of EDCOM in 2023, that the share of the poorest (Listahanan and 4Ps) dropped from 70.73% in 2018 to 22.89% in 2022, with most slots going to PNSL students. Further, based on 2024 data, only the 1.23% (4.726) of 4Ps SHS completers in AY 2023-2024 were able to access the TES as first year beneficiaries in AY 2024-2025. Moving forward, the passage of the amendatory measure (to explicitly prioritize the poorest) is critical.

There is a need to institutionalize affirmative action (AA) policies and practices. Despite the imperative Republic Act No. 10931 for SUCs and LUCs to implement AA policies, only 77% of SUCs and 40% of LUCs report having a formal policy in place. Meanwhile, most policies address socioeconomic inequities (71% of LUCs; 67% of PHEIs, and 75% of SUCs), with less support provided to students from ethnic or cultural minorities, and learners with disabilities.

89 out of 91 Technical Panels (TPs) were finally reconstituted after 7 years of delay. Despite the indispensable role of TPs in the design and implementation of minimum standards through the Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSGs), the majority of the TPs were on holdover status since the reconstitution of the same since 2018. Following the swift action of the new CHED leadership, as of October 2025, the CHED reports only two (2) existing TPs for reconstitution. CHED has likewise committed to establish new TPs in line with the EDCOM identified priority sectors, and in alignment with the TESDA Industry Boards.

PSGs are revised every 11 years only, mostly reactive to basic education curriculum reforms. Meanwhile, higher education programs are found to be "GE-heavy, internship light", in part due to legislated subjects. Analysis of the PSGs highlight stark contrasts against international benchmarks, especially in the number of units required for GE (greater than benchmarks), and internship (less than benchmarks). GE in this context includes the subjects regarded as "required by legislation", such as the Life and Works of Rizal (3 units), Physical Education (8 units), and the National Service Training Program (6 units).

Overlapping mandates between CHED, TESDA and PRC have resulted in confusion on policies. Legislation covering the practice of profession, passed both before and after the passing of the CHED and TESDA charters in 1994, show significant overlaps in mandates. This includes overly-prescriptive provisions on the duration of associate and bachelors programs, faculty qualifications, topics in licensure exams, and duration of internships, among others. The blurred delineation of authorities among the three agencies translates to operational disruptions for institutions, and inconsistent/ contradictory guidance, ultimately affecting students in terms of licensure eligibility and transition from education to work.

Most Centers of Excellence (COEs) are concentrated in NCR, and in the fields of Teacher Education, Engineering, and Science and Mathematics. Meanwhile, little progress has been seen in accreditation. Republic Act No. 7722 mandates CHED to designate COEs for world-class scholarship, nation building, and national development. Despite this, CHED has not designated new COEs for the past 10 years. Likewise, accreditation of private HEIs only modestly increased, from 16% to 22% in the past 34 years (from 1990 to 2024), with accreditation support from CHED not always provided to HEIs.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Access to Quality Higher Education

1. Continue to prioritize the poorest of the poor in the implementation of the UAQTEA.
2. Ensure adequacy of financial support.
3. Urgently and fully implement the deliverables and mandates of UniFAST, including the formulation and establishment of policies and mechanisms for Grants-in-Aid for poor families and marginalized sectors.
4. Develop programs to address dropouts in college, and forge exits to work or pathways to TVET.

Quality Assurance

5. Conduct programmed review and updating of PSGs while providing ample space for higher education institutions to innovate.
6. Complete the establishment/reconstitution of the remaining Technical Panels, especially for ETEEAP and Lifelong Learning following the passage of the laws.
7. Build the organizational capacity of CHED, to complement and truly support the work of the Technical Panels.
8. Formulate a responsive typology or classification to inform differentiated approaches in regulation and development of HEIs.
9. Resolve statutory overlaps between CHED, PRC and TESDA.

INSIGHTS FROM THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Five Priority Clusters:

1. **Healthcare**—encompassing the talent for our domestic local healthcare system, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, and medical tourism; and emphasizing the importance of creating high-productivity domestic jobs;
2. **Digital Technology**—including scientific and professional services such as IT-BPM, artificial intelligence, gaming, animation, and digitally-enabled creative industries, as well as other emerging technologies;
3. **Financial Services**—covering traditional banking, fintech, insurance, and pensions;
4. **Advanced Manufacturing**—including manufacturing for semiconductors and electronics, renewables, and electric vehicles (EVs); and
5. **Tourism**—approached through a full value chain lens, primarily considering workforce needs for the hospitality industry (including relevant creative industries), but also acknowledging needs for the enabling industries of logistics and construction.

Moving forward, to forge a systems-level response to workforce development, there is a need to pursue a package of reforms, under three themes:

6. **Fixing the foundations**—expanding and strengthening career guidance in schools; Accelerating industry-led curriculum development, as well as the Philippine Skills Framework;
7. **Investing in our system**—pursuing strategic ladderization of NCs to produce higher credentialed graduates; Invest in the training of industry practitioners; Improve reintegration of returning migrants;
8. **Placing big bets for the future**—establishing model polytechnic universities focusing on high-level TVET programs that ladder to college degrees; Build a centralized LMIS; Build healthcare/biotech cities and an advanced manufacturing "capital" with shared laboratories and networks of industry-to-school partnerships.



TEACHER EDUCATION

Passing rates in the BLEPT have been perennially low (average of 62.9%) due to poor coordination between CHED, PRC and TEC since 1994. Passing rates in BLEPT have remained persistently low from 2010 to 2024, in large part due to the weak coordination of CHED, PRC, and the Teacher Education Council (TEC). While the April 2025 Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) between PRC and CHED marks a critical corrective step (introducing specialization-based licensure aligned with CHED PSGs), the amendatory law to Republic Act No. 7836 is needed to address the many challenges faced by the sector since 1994.

Weak licensure exam design further undermines professional standards. A 2025 UP CIDS–PBEd–DFAT study highlights how the BLEPT itself suffers from substantial technical deficiencies. This includes limited empirical validation, incomplete specialization coverage, and inconsistent documentation. While the PRC has committed to undertaking reforms beginning September 2025, it is imperative to see through the necessary improvements to address quality and credibility of the BLEPT.

Pre-service education is lacking in practice teaching and field study. Teacher education programs in the Philippines require some the shortest practicum durations globally. CHED PSGs mandate only six units each for Field Study and Practice Teaching—roughly 360 hours—less than half of international benchmarks and far below OECD norms of around 800 hours of supervised practice. Laboratory schools, as currently structured, are poorly aligned with public school realities, limiting graduates' readiness for actual classroom conditions. The absence of sustained, mentored clinical immersion weakens novice teachers' instructional confidence and effectiveness.

62% of high school teachers teach subjects outside their college major, with the highest mismatch in Physical Science, ESP, and Biology—fields where graduate supply is critically low. Consistent with this, a recent Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) study provides strong empirical evidence on the scale and consequences of teacher–subject mismatch in Philippine basic education (Mejia et al., 2025). The study

> *The DepEd and CSC requirement for masteral degrees for promotion has contributed to the proliferation of diploma mills.*

finds that nearly three-quarters (74.69%) of surveyed teachers experience some level of specialization mismatch, with 42.86% teaching entirely outside their pre-service field and only 25.31% fully matched to their area of preparation. This misalignment contributes directly to uneven instructional quality and learning gaps, particularly in science, mathematics, and early childhood education. It is critical that DepEd, CHED, and TEC work together urgently to address supply and demand gaps in teacher education, and enjoin teacher education institutions to offer specializations where they are most needed.

The implementation of the Localization Law has improved teacher retention and community linkage but continues to face tensions with specialization and merit-based hiring. Successive DepEd issuances have applied residency requirements inconsistently, while some divisions struggle to recruit qualified local candidates in shortage subjects. Political interference and administrative delays further constrain effectiveness, revealing unresolved trade-offs between equity, access, and instructional quality.

The DepEd and CSC requirement for masteral degrees for promotion has contributed to the proliferation of diploma mills. Policies that reward possession of graduate degrees without discriminating by quality have unintentionally fueled low-quality master's and doctoral programs in education. Education-related graduate degrees account for over half of national graduate enrollment, driven largely by promotion incentives rather than instructional rigor. While CHED has begun closing chronically underperforming TEIs, diploma mill dynamics persist, diluting professional standards and weakening specialization depth.

Teachers continue to be burdened by administrative tasks but reforms are on the way, with the reduction in administrative tasks and required school forms. In 2024, DepEd mandated the removal of administrative tasks from teachers, while in 2025, the Department reduced required school forms from 174 to 75 (57%). This is paralleled by the aggressive hiring of administrative officers per school, which will reach 1:1 by 2026. Implementation however remains a challenge, especially for larger schools with greater administrative volume.

Limited access to in-service training programs, and needed coherence with the Expanded Career Progression (ECP) guidelines, and its alignment with PRC's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements. In-service training and career progression systems remain misaligned. Access to in-service training remains limited, with less than 20% of teachers reporting they participated annually. Many likewise noted how offerings are often generic, compliance-driven, and poorly aligned with actual classroom needs. Meanwhile, the CPD system remains rigid and disconnected from the Expanded Career Progression (ECP) framework, failing to differentiate learning requirements by career stage or role.

Performance management systems generate compliance, not improvement. The current RPMS–PPST, OPCR, and IPCR architecture is characterized by indicator proliferation and weak instructional feedback loops. Teachers and school leaders report that the volume of objectives and reporting requirements obscures priorities and limits developmental use of performance data. The absence of standardized tools for school heads further fragments accountability and support systems.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Alignment of CHED, PRC, and DepEd (including TEC)

1. Strengthen regulatory oversight of the teaching profession through evidence-based modernization of licensure and quality assurance mechanisms.
2. Enhance quality assurance of Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) and address regional disparities.

Preservice Education

3. Strengthen recruitment strategies to attract high-performing students into the teaching profession.
4. Enhance Practical Training through extended and structured practicum.
5. Bridge the gap between laboratory school training and public school realities by mandating clinical partnerships with diverse school settings.
6. Shift to specialization in preservice education and hiring, even for Key Stages 1 and 2.
7. Urgently establish a DepEd Teacher Information Database that projects granular demand for teacher specializations to inform teacher education institution offerings.
8. Address teacher supply and demand through targeted pathways and transparent hiring.
9. Amend DepEd HR practices to reduce misplacement and reward fit.
10. Reorient NEAP toward early-grade reading for KS1 and strengthen content supports for secondary teachers.
11. Consider extending or institutionalizing Section 8 of Republic Act No. 10533 which allows for the exemption for both elementary and secondary.
12. Review Localization Law in a way that balances community-based teacher recruitment with subject specialization needs.

In-Service Training and Development, Including Teacher Welfare

13. Reduce administrative burden and protect instructional time through streamlined staffing, automated processes, and strict regulation of ancillary tasks.
14. Further reduce and digitize school forms to eliminate redundant reporting, automate records management, and standardize data workflows.
15. Institutionalize clear and equitable career progression pathways through the full implementation of Republic Act No. 12288 or the Career Progression System for Public School Teachers and School Leaders Act.
16. Require DepEd and CSC to revise the master's degree requirement for Master Teacher 1 to support alignment with career-track selection and professional competency needs.
17. Urgently establish a centralized DepEd HRIS to inform supply and demand interventions, and professional development directions
18. Require CHED, PRC, and TEC to together to address and prevent the proliferation of diploma mills in graduate education.
19. Ensure that the over 21,800 schools without a principal have a dedicated school head; align leadership deployment to actual school needs.
20. Formulate an Instructional Leadership Framework to delineate the roles and responsibilities of Schools Division Superintendents, Public Schools District Supervisors, and school principals.
21. Revise the OPCRF to prioritize instructional leadership functions.
22. Implement revised staffing standards to replace the 1997 guidelines which no longer reflect system-wide needs and specialized school contexts.



TECHNICAL–VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET)

The Philippine TVET system has expanded participation substantially since 1994, but remains skewed toward low-level training. The Philippine TVET sector is one of the largest education subsectors in the country, with thousands of public and private Technical-Vocational Institutions (TVIs) delivering skills training nationwide. More than half of all private TVIs however offer only a single qualification and are heavily dependent on government scholarships for financial viability. This dependence constrains system resilience and reinforces short-term, low-level training provision, ultimately limiting the expansion of offerings, investment and upgrading of facilities, or improvements in quality.

Program offerings remain concentrated at NC I–II, with limited pathways to higher skills. Most TVET programs are clustered at the foundational levels—National Certificate (NC) I (8.13%) and NC II (56.63%)—while higher qualifications remain scarce. Fewer than one in eight institutions offer NC III (28.31%), NC IV (6.93%), or PQF Level 5 programs, which are critical for middle-skill occupations. Higher-level provision is largely confined to TESDA-run Technology Institutions (TTIs), reflecting their access to direct government funding, infrastructure, and technical support. This imbalance limits learner progression and weakens TVET's role as a pathway to higher productivity and wages.

Returns to TVET are substantial only at higher qualification levels and in matched occupations. An EDCOM II–commissioned analysis of the 2024 APIS–LFS shows that secondary graduates with NC III–IV earn PHP 96 per hour, a 40% premium over peers with no TVET (PHP 69 per hour) (Ballar, 2025). Matched employment further raises returns, with workers in construction, automotive, and personal care earning PHP 8–14 more per hour than mismatched counterparts. In ICT, returns are realized through credential signaling rather than occupational placement: ICT completers earn PHP 87.3 per hour in higher-paying non-technical roles, PHP 17 more per hour than those in ICT-specific jobs (PHP 70.1 per hour). By contrast, NC I–II and mismatched pathways yield limited gains and higher underemployment, underscoring that TVET effectiveness depends on progression, alignment, and quality—not access alone.

PQF Level 5 pathways and TESDA Diploma Programs remain weakly defined. Although diploma programs are intended to function as short-cycle tertiary education under the PQF, their implementation remains constrained by nascent quality assurance mechanisms, little articulation with higher education programs, and narrow sectoral offerings. This evident absence of a clear, standardized Level 5 pathway weakens learner mobility and undermines TVET's role as a bridge between basic skills training and higher education.

> *The rapid expansion of TESDA scholarships have been accompanied by persistent risks of leakages, weak beneficiary selection, program duplication, and limited outcome monitoring.*

Enterprise-based training offers a critical opportunity to rebalance the system. The passage of Republic Act No. 12063, or the Enterprise-Based Education and Training (EBET) Framework Act, provides a timely opportunity to shift TVET toward industry-led, higher-value training. However, its impact will depend on streamlined implementation, digital systems, and effective coordination across agencies to ensure enterprise participation translates into recognized qualifications and jobs.

Scholarship allocation lacks sufficient targeting, transparency, and integrity safeguards. Financial analysis by Neri (2025) shows that TESDA's scholarship spending expanded sharply over the past decade, rising from 24% of the agency's budget to as much as 75–80% in recent years. Significant increases followed the rollout of STEP in 2014 and UAQTEA in 2019, positioning scholarships as the dominant expenditure item. However, this rapid expansion has been accompanied by persistent risks of leakages, weak beneficiary selection, program duplication, and limited outcome monitoring. Absent stronger transparency mechanisms and outcome-based allocation criteria, scholarship growth risks entrenching low-level training provision rather than supporting learner progression to higher-skill qualifications.

Quality assurance mechanisms remain underutilized and weakly incentivized. TESDA's STAR Program, intended to signal institutional quality, has limited uptake—particularly among private TVIs—and remains concentrated in public institutions. A four-year assessment of the STAR Program (2019–2023) by Rosales et al. (2025) shows that accreditation remains heavily concentrated among public TESDA Technology Institutions (TTIs), which consistently meet baseline standards under TESDA Circular No. 048, s. 2018 due to mandatory participation, stronger government financing, and better infrastructure and technical support. In contrast, private TVIs—whose participation is voluntary and resource-constrained—are significantly underrepresented: only five private institutions achieved 1-Star status, four attained 2-Star, and none reached 3-Star accreditation. Overall, the distribution of STAR ratings reveals a system skewed toward minimum compliance, with 74 programs rated 1-Star, only 15 achieving 2-Star, and none reaching the highest tier. As a result, the system lacks credible quality signals to guide learners, employers, and funders.

Lifelong learning and decentralization reforms remain largely unimplemented. Despite the establishment of the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF), the Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP), and the Lifelong Learning Development Framework (LLDF), these systems are not yet fully operationalized. Learner mobility, recognition of prior learning, and credit transfer remain limited. Meanwhile, the devolution of training delivery to local governments—mandated decades ago—has yet to materialize in practice, constraining local responsiveness and innovation.

Devolution of TVET remains largely unimplemented more than three decades after it was mandated. Although the devolution of training functions to local government units (LGUs) has been mandated for over 30 years, meaningful decentralization of TVET delivery has yet to occur. In practice, TESDA continues to centrally plan, regulate, and implement most training programs, while LGUs play a limited and uneven role in skills development. Many LGUs lack the technical capacity, financing mechanisms, and institutional incentives to assume responsibility for workforce planning and TVET provision, resulting in weak alignment between local labor market needs and training supply.

Institutional constraints within TESDA continue to limit reform. Over the past three decades, TESDA's mandate has expanded substantially through successive legislation—including the Dual Training System Act (Republic Act No. 7686, 1994), Ladderized Education Act (Republic Act No. 10647, 2014), Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act (Republic Act No. 10931, 2017), Philippine Qualifications Framework Act (Republic Act No. 10968, 2018), Tulong Trabaho Act (Republic Act No. 11230, 2019), Enterprise-Based Education and Training Framework Act (Republic Act No. 12063, 2024), and the Expanded ETEEAP Act (Republic Act No. 12124, 2024). Despite this expanded policy scope, TESDA's charter has not been comprehensively updated to reflect its evolving functions in regulation, quality assurance, enterprise-based training, qualifications governance, and lifelong learning. This structural misalignment between mandate and institutional design constrains organizational capacity, fragments accountability, and slows the implementation of system-wide reforms critical to improving TVET quality, relevance, and responsiveness.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Needs-Based System Projecting Demands in Workers' Upskilling

1. Establish a Unified Labor Market Information System (LMIS) that consolidates fragmented datasets across the PSA, DOLE, and TESDA, via the Education and Workforce Development Group (EWDG).
2. Ramp up the development of higher-level skilling programs in Priority Areas.
3. Conduct a comprehensive review of its scholarship programs to ensure they are equitable, responsive, and sustainable.
4. TESDA's institutional capacity must be expanded.

Industry Involvement and Investment in Upskilling

5. TESDA must immediately establish the Enterprise-Based Education and Training Office (EBETO) as mandated under Republic Act No. 12063.
6. Establish a one-stop online portal for accessing EBET incentives.
7. Rationalize and expedite the development of Training Regulations (TRs) to support the scaling-up of EBET programs.
8. Prioritize the pilot implementation of EBET programs across strategic sectors and regions.
9. Strengthen the integration of TVET within rural development strategies through institutional reforms, LGU-enabled delivery systems, and market-responsive programming.

Ensuring Quality in the Provision of TVET

10. Expand and deepen industry participation and leadership in TVET.
11. Upgrade the quality assurance ecosystem and address institutional disparities between public and private TVIs— balancing regulation and development.
12. Implement a programmed review of training regulations, and continuous industry alignment.
13. Enhance data systems and performance monitoring for a more efficient trainee tracing system and funding mechanisms.
14. Update scholarship guidelines and allocations to be more responsive to trainee needs, and incentivize higher skills training in priority fields

Framework for Equivalency and Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning

15. Fully operationalize the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) and strengthen its implementation.
16. Accelerate the development and coherence of national skills frameworks to keep pace with rapidly changing labor market demands.
17. Institutionalize the ETEEAP and strengthen recognition of prior learning (RPL) systems.
18. Operationalize the Lifelong Learning Development Framework (LLDF) at the local level.

GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE

A historic 1.37 trillion education budget has been proposed for FY 2026, with PHP 961 billion for DepEd alone—the largest allocation to any national government agency. Education spending as a share of GDP was historically at 3.6%, below the UNESCO benchmark of 4–6%and behind regional peers. However, the proposed education budget for FY 2026 has reached its highest yet at 4.3% of GDP. Nevertheless, foundational years remain critically underfunded: ECCD and early grade programs receive a fraction of what later stages get, despite evidence that returns on investment are highest in the first years of life.

The establishment of the Education, Workforce, and Development Group (EWDG) provides a coordinating mechanism across DepEd, CHED, and TESDA under a unified cabinet cluster. This addresses longstanding fragmentation in policy direction across education subsectors. The challenge now is ensuring EWDG translates into operational coordination with joint planning, aligned budgets, and shared accountability, rather than remaining a convening body.

The education sector operates with overlapping interagency councils, committees, and task forces, many with unclear deliverables and redundant memberships. DepEd alone is part of at least 261 of these bodies, around twenty-one of which are jointly attended with TESDA and CHED. At the same time, DepEd, CHED, and TESDA have absorbed expanded mandates (i.e., K-12, free higher education, TVET reforms) without corresponding increases in staffing or field capacity. A systematic review should eliminate redundant bodies and reallocate personnel to implementation functions.

Current performance targets cascade inconsistently: the Philippine Development Plan sets broad goals, the GAA attaches budget to different indicators, and individual performance commitments often track compliance outputs (e.g., trainings conducted, reports submitted) rather than student learning. This fragmentation diffuses accountability. Targets from national plans to teacher IPCRs should converge on a core set of learning outcome metrics.

Per-learner MOOE allocations have long been constrained by the Boncodin formula since 2013 which distributed funds based on components tied to enrollment, classrooms, teachers, and graduates without taking into account needs-based parameters (i.e., LGU income classification, special curricular program offerings, school remoteness). A new normative formula is set for full implementation in FY 2026 which provides schools with more discretionary resources for day-to-day operations. Nonetheless, only 5.9% of public schools are designated as Implementing Units (IU) with direct fund access, and the remaining 94.1% must process expenditures through SDOs, creating bottlenecks that delay even routine purchases.

The Joint Memorandum Circular issued by DepEd, DBM, DOF, and DILG clarified SEF utilization and addressed longstanding ambiguities in allowable expenditures. Key fixes include: (1) updating allowable expenditures to explicitly cover ECCD, ALS, and inclusive education as mandated by recent laws; (2) enabling inter-local cooperation so that resource-rich LGUs can share SEF with disadvantaged municipalities; and (3) allowing the establishment of a Local Education Office or LSB Secretariat to strengthen planning and coordination capacity. However, JMCs can be rescinded or revised by succeeding administrations. Legislative amendment of the SEF provisions in the Local Government Code is needed to permanently institutionalize these reforms and ensure consistent application across all LGUs.

The Adopt-a-School Law of 1998 has mobilized private sector resources for school improvement, but the enabling law has not been updated in over 25 years. Current provisions limit flexibility in partnership modalities and do not reflect contemporary CSR practices or emerging forms of public-private collaboration. Amending Republic Act No. 8525 would expand eligible interventions, streamline approval processes, and incentivize broader private participation.

Republic Act No. 9155 institutionalized a uniform SDO structure regardless of school population or geographic coverage. The result: Davao City SDO supervises 542 schools while some SDOs oversee as few as two. This reflects a 271-fold disparity operating under identical staffing frameworks. Amending the law to allow differentiated SDO configurations based on actual supervisory load would improve resource allocation and field support capacity.

LGUs are critical partners in education delivery. They fund CDCs, manage SEF, and maintain local infrastructure yet coordination with national government agencies (e.g., DepEd, DOH, DSWD, and other relevant agencies) remains inconsistent. The DILG's Local Governance Academy and the Seal of Good Education Governance offer ready platforms for capacity-building and incentivizing LGU investment in learning outcomes. Proactive engagement through these channels can institutionalize education as a shared accountability between national agencies and local governments.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Education Financing

1. Sustain the historic budget increase and progressively raise education spending toward the UNESCO benchmark of 4–6% of GDP.
2. Rebalance allocations toward foundational years, where returns on investment are highest.
3. Improve budget execution by addressing procurement bottlenecks in MOOE and Capital Outlay.
4. Amend the Local Government Code to institutionalize SEF reforms introduced by the recent JMC.
5. Amend the Adopt-a-School Act of 1998 to expand partnership modalities and incentivize private sector engagement.

Governance and Institutional Reform

6. Rationalize interagency bodies in the education sector, eliminating redundant committees and consolidating functions.
7. Right-size DepEd, CHED, and TESDA staffing to match expanded mandates under K-12, free higher education, and TVET reforms.
8. Operationalize EWDG as a mechanism for joint planning, aligned budgets, and shared accountability, and not just for coordination.
9. Align performance targets from the PDP to the GAA to individual IPCRs around a core set of learning outcome indicators.

Decentralization and Local Engagement

10. Amend Republic Act No. 9155 to allow differentiated SDO configurations based on actual supervisory load.
11. Expand the designation of schools as Implementing Units to enable direct fund access and reduce SDO bottlenecks.
12. Strategically deconcentrate functions where school-level discretion improves responsiveness: local procurement, non-teaching staff hiring, and minor repairs.
13. Engage LGUs through the DILG Local Government Academy and the Seal of Good Education Governance to institutionalize shared accountability for learning outcomes.



BANGSAMORO AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO

BARMM has recorded the highest stunting rate in the country at 34.3%, alongside the highest anemia prevalence (16.9%) and most severe household food insecurity (48.2%). These nutritional deficits translate directly into learning gaps: the region's functional literacy rate stands at just 64.7%, with Tawi-Tawi at 32.7%, Basilan at 52%, and Lanao del Sur at 58.6%. A 2024 UNICEF study found Grade 4 students in BARMM performing 3–4 years behind curriculum expectations in literacy and 2–3 years behind in mathematics.

Forty-four percent of children aged 3–5 in BARMM are not enrolled in any ECCD program. Only 1,903 functional Child Development Centers exist out of the 9,042 needed to meet the BARMM 3-5 year old population. The CDC workforce numbers are just 2,732—meeting only 15% of the estimated 18,084 workers needed regionwide. Governance is also fragmented across three ministries creating coordination failures and service gaps: MOH for ages 0–2, MSSD for ages 3–4, and MBHTE for ages 5–6.

Teacher education institutions in BARMM face regulatory ambiguity. MBHTE has authority over basic and higher education within the region, but CHED continues to exercise oversight over higher education program standards, while PRC controls licensure examinations. This creates friction in curriculum recognition, program accreditation, and pathways to teacher certification. Graduates of BARMM-based TEIs encounter uncertainty about whether their credentials will be recognized nationally.

> *Republic Act No. 11054 mandates that BARMM's education system operates as a "subsystem of the national education system," but interpretation remains in question.*

Republic Act No. 11054 mandates that BARMM's education system operates as a "subsystem of the national education system," but interpretation remains in question. National programs (e.g., DepEd's learning recovery initiatives, CHED scholarships, and TESDA training programs) are sometimes unavailable or delayed in BARMM due to unresolved questions about funding channels, eligibility, and agency jurisdiction. This leaves Bangsamoro learners without access to resources available to their peers elsewhere.

No formal coordination mechanism currently governs the relationship between MBHTE and DepEd, CHED, or TESDA. Engagement happens ad hoc, dependent on personal relationships rather than institutional protocols. This hampers joint planning, data sharing, and policy alignment. Without a regularized platform for coordination, BARMM's education reforms risk diverging from national standards or missing opportunities for technical and financial support.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Nutrition and Foundational Learning

1. Fast-track implementation of integrated nutrition and early learning interventions in BARMM, prioritizing the provinces with the highest stunting and lowest literacy rates.
2. Expand the First 1,000 Days program in coordination with MOH, MSSD, and MBHTE with dedicated funding and unified monitoring.
3. Prioritize Key Stage 1 learning recovery with contextualized materials and intensive teacher support.

Early Childhood Care and Development

4. Accelerate CDC construction and conversion in the nearly 700 barangays currently without centers.
5. Unify ECCD governance under a single coordinating body within the Bangsamoro Government to eliminate fragmentation across MOH, MSSD, and MBHTE.
6. Launch an aggressive CDW recruitment and training program to close the 78% workforce gap.

Teacher Education and Licensure

7. Convene MBHTE, CHED, and PRC to issue a joint memorandum clarifying program recognition, accreditation pathways, and licensure eligibility for BARMM-based TEI graduates.

National-Regional Coordination

8. Issue a Joint Memorandum Circular among DepEd, CHED, TESDA, and MBHTE establishing a formal coordination framework for planning, budgeting, and program implementation.
9. Clarify through an interagency issuance how national programs apply within BARMM, including funding flow, eligibility, and reporting requirements.



EDCOM II TOP 20 PRIORITIES FOR REFORM (2026–2035)

Consistent with the mandate of EDCOM II under Republic Act No. 11899, The National Education Plan 2035 sets out a clear, long-term roadmap to rebuild the foundations of Philippine education and align learning with national development over the next decade.

Drawing from the findings of the Commission in the last three years and the urgent reforms required to decisively address the learning crisis, the Commission underscores the need for aggressive action on the following key areas:

KEY PRIORITY AREA 1: Supporting Early Childhood Development

1. Increase investments in early childhood nutrition (First 1000 days, Supplementary Feeding Program, School-Based Feeding Program)
2. Provide scholarships for the training of Child Development Workers and Child Development Teachers
3. Expand access to early childhood education through center-based and alternative delivery modes

KEY PRIORITY AREA 2: Developing the Functional Literacy of Early Learners

4. Address classroom backlog and congestion in schools, utilizing different modalities (LGU and CSO partnerships, PPPs, voucher program)
5. Revise procurement guidelines and DepEd policies to ensure complete and timely delivery of textbooks
6. Provide equitable internet connectivity and digital resources for schools, teachers, and learners
7. End “mass promotion” in schools (Fully implement ARAL; Revise RPMS, OPCR and GAA targets; Rescind grade transmutation policy)
8. Reduce administrative burden on teachers

KEY PRIORITY AREA 3: Developing critical thinking, digital skills, and graduate readiness for employment, education, and TVET

9. Address teacher subject-specialization misalignment
10. Improve quality and relevance of SHS TechPro program
11. Institutionalize school-to-employment pathways and strengthen industry-academe coordination

KEY PRIORITY AREA 4: Promoting Inclusive Learning

12. Expand programs for learners with disabilities
13. Invest in teachers and professionals in inclusive education

KEY PRIORITY AREA 5: Equitable Access to Quality Tertiary Education

14. Expand access and supports to tertiary education, especially the poorest
15. Build relevant and seamless TVET and college pathways

KEY PRIORITY AREA 6: Enhancing Governance & Resource Allocation

16. Invest at least 5% of GDP on education, focusing on the foundations
17. Recruit and develop quality school leaders and administrators (from basic education to higher education)
18. Implement phased decentralization and devolution to enable targeted and contextualized services
19. Strengthen inter-agency alignment and data integration
20. Update the charters of DepEd, CHED, and TESDA and optimize agency capacity



EDCOM's work over the past three years shows that real reform requires more than isolated programs. It demands competent, accountable leadership, continuity beyond political cycles, and a system that can examine itself and improve with intention.

The learning crisis facing the country is deep and longstanding, but it is neither inevitable nor irreversible. EDCOM's work over the past three years shows that real reform requires more than isolated programs. It demands competent, accountable leadership, continuity beyond political cycles, and a system that can examine itself and improve with intention. When learners advance without mastering foundational skills in reading, writing, and reasoning, the consequences accumulate across a lifetime, turning a learning crisis into a skills, citizenship, and national development crisis that constrains economic growth and weakens social cohesion.

Learning outcomes must therefore be the singular, non-negotiable focus of reform. This requires disciplined prioritization—investing first in nutrition, early childhood development, and foundational literacy—while supporting learners left behind through pragmatic catch-up measures. It also requires institutionalized curriculum and policy review cycles, independent and credible assessment of learning outcomes, and a strong knowledge ecosystem that links research, data, and policy. Above all, reform demands sustained commitment over the coming decade to protect instructional time, reduce non-essential activities, rigorously evaluate what works, and hold leaders accountable for impact—so the education system once again becomes a credible engine of opportunity for every Filipino child.



Preface

TO HARNESS THE FILIPINO TALENT

The Commissioners of the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II), established under Republic Act No. 11899, present this Final Report, the culmination of three years of unwavering dedication to a comprehensive national assessment and evaluation of the Philippine education sector. Our journey began in January 2023 with the stark realization that the Philippine education system was in crisis.

This crisis, however, was not merely a deficit; it was a critical juncture demanding a determined and systemic response to unlock and harness the talent of the Filipino—the boundless potential within every Filipino learner. Indeed, the title of this report, Turning Point, reflects our profound conviction that a robust and equitable education system is the indispensable cornerstone of national progress and survival.

Our mandate led us to embark on a rigorous journey of diagnosis, supported by at least 95 studies from 13 research partners, representing one of the largest bodies of work ever assembled to understand Philippine education. This involved extensive consultations, hearings, and site visits, ensuring we heard the voices of stakeholders across the nation. Our initial findings,

detailed in the Year One Report, *Miseducation: The Failed System of Philippine Education*, exposed deep fractures such as underinvestment, disjointed governance, and inequitable access. The subsequent Year Two Report, *Fixing the Foundations: A Matter of National Survival*, built upon these, refining our understanding of the persistent impediments to learning. Across early childhood care and development, basic education, higher education, teacher education, technical-vocational education and training, and education governance and finance, we uncovered a system riddled with fragmented interventions, critical resource shortages (such as textbooks and adequately trained personnel), misaligned financial aid, and a pervasive lack of coordination among agencies. These issues are rooted in decades of neglect and a highly centralized governance structure that constrains local innovation and accountability, ultimately limiting the full development of Filipino learners.

> *This Final Report represents not a conclusion, but a crucial turning point in our collective journey to equip every Filipino with the knowledge and skills to thrive.*

Despite the magnitude of these challenges, our work has yielded tangible progress and renewed hope. We have put forward 61 policy recommendations and 118 bills, of which 10 have been passed into law (as of December 3, 2025). Likewise, we commend the swift action of government partners, in their critical collaboration with EDCOM, resulting in crucial reforms backed by empirical data from the field, as well as consultations with public servants who experience these challenges firsthand. Meanwhile, with the support of the President, significant budget allocations have been secured for key interventions in early childhood education and nutrition, administrative support for schools, and strengthening upskilling programs to align enterprise-based training with industry demands. Finally, our advocacy led to the presidential approval of an Education and Workforce Development Group to ensure system-wide planning and coordination.

This Final Report represents not a conclusion, but a crucial turning point in our collective journey to equip every Filipino with the knowledge and skills to thrive. As mandated by Republic Act 11899, we also present in this Report a Ten-Year National Education Plan from 2025 to 2035, laying out the groundwork for calculated reforms in education. Recognizing the need to prepare our country for the future world of work, we have also mapped out a Workforce Development Plan, with recommendations for strategic investments in five (5) priority industries in the country.



















Along with these roadmaps, we also renew our call to action for everyone to do their part. We must focus on the urgent and the foundational—early childhood education, nutritional support during a child's first 1,000 days in school, and literacy by the end of Grade 3.

As we enter our third and final year, our tasks grow clearer and more urgent: to integrate these findings, identify critical interventions, and chart a roadmap for sustainable improvement. Together, these efforts must converge to build an education system that is resilient, adaptive, and capable of meeting future challenges with confidence.

Across the world, Filipino talent is indisputable, often flourishing despite systems that have fallen short of supporting our aspirations. In every field and discipline, there is a Filipino whose quiet tenacity sustains the long struggle for better education. As we build a system that works for every Filipino over the next decade, we must transform the constraints of our circumstances into the means by which we rise. With this Final Report, we affirm our hope that, through collective action, we can fully realize the promise and potential of the Filipino people.

Together, we must ensure that our education system truly excels at harnessing the Filipino talent to fulfill their fullest potential. Together, let us build a system that is inclusive, equitable, and capable of meeting the demands of a rapidly changing world.









At the end of it all, the true success of EDCOM II lies not in solving all problems, but in clearly defining their scale and roots, and proposing a cohesive way forward in building a working Philippine education system. Our work over the past three years demonstrates that it is possible to present balanced accounts of the truth, free from politics and blame; that the legislative and executive branches can work in lockstep when fueled by the same aspiration; and finally, that it is possible for our agencies—the Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA)—to break down the silos that have divided the education sector.

Together, we must ensure that our education system can truly harness Filipino talent and fulfill its true potential. Together, let us build an inclusive and equitable system that can meet every demand of our rapidly changing world.

Sen. Bam Aquino
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Sen. Joel Villanueva
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Rep. Zia Alonto Adiong
Commissioner

Rep. Steve Solon
Commissioner

Rep. Anna Veloso - Tuazon
Commissioner



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More than just a Congressional Commission, EDCOM has in many ways become a collective movement of advocates, whose singular aspiration and collective effort has spurred the manifold changes in our education system in the last three years.

We thank the Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) for their collaboration and support. Their active participation in consultations and their openness in sharing their data and insights have been most critical in this work.

We also wish to express our thanks to the many government agencies who have journeyed with us as we studied the range of issues faced by the country, from early childhood to higher

education: the Early Childhood Care and Development Council, the Teacher Education Council, the Department of Health, the National Nutrition Council, the Department of Labor and Employment, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Education Center for AI Research (E-CAIR), the BARMM Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education, the Department of Budget and Management, the Department of Finance, the Civil Service Commission, the Professional Regulation Commission, the Office of the President of the Philippines, the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development, the Department of the Interior and Local Government, the Department of Science and Technology-Science Education Institute, the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development, the Philippine Statistics Authority, the National Museum of the Philippines, the National Academy of Science and Technology, Philippines, and the Private Education Assistance Committee.

The past three years have also ushered one of the most productive periods in research on Philippine education. Truly, the depth and rigor of the analysis conducted by the Commission hinged on the support, patience, and generosity of our partners:

- Philippine Institute for Development Studies
- University of the Philippines, including the Center for Integrative and Development Studies, the UP President Edgardo J. Angara Fellowship Program, the Assessment, Curriculum and Technology Research Centre, UP Los Baños, and the UP Population Institute
- De La Salle University, including De La Salle–College of Saint Benilde, and De La Salle University–Dasmariñas
- Ateneo de Manila University
- Philippine Normal University, including the Research Institute for Teacher Quality.
- The Asia Foundation
- Private Education Assistance Committee (PEAC)

In a special way, we also thank our fellows and volunteers from the Asian Institute of Management, Ateneo de Naga University, Ateneo Graduate School of Business, Far Eastern University, Jose Rizal University, St. Paul College of Makati, St. Paul University Manila, the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Philippine Science High School, and Quezon City Science High School.

The work of the Commission was also enriched greatly and amplified substantially by the support and expertise of partners from local and international organizations, industry, and civil society, ensuring that our research and analysis were the most updated, grounded, and benchmarked with global best practices. We are greatly indebted to the Australian Government, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the United States Agency for International Development Philippines, United Nations Children's Fund Philippines, IDInsight, The Asia Foundation, Teach for the Philippines, Philippine Business for Education, Innovations for Poverty Action, British Council and the British Embassy Manila, Fulbright Commission in the Philippines, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization – Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO INNOTECH), WeSolve Foundation, and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

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We would also like to thank partner institutions who have contributed greatly to our initiatives in nutrition and teacher education, namely: Angeles University Foundation, Ateneo de Zamboanga University, Bicol University, Bukidnon State University, Cebu Normal University, Centro Escolar University, De La Salle University Manila, De La Salle—College of Saint Benilde, Leyte Normal University, Mariano Marcos State University, Metrobank Foundation, Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology, Miriam College, Pangasinan State University, Partnerships for Sustainability Education, St. Louis College, St. Louis University, St. Mary's University, St. Paul University Philippines, University of Nueva Caceres, University of the Philippines Diliman, University of the Philippines Los Baños, University of the Philippines Manila, West Visayas State University, and Zuellig Family Foundation. Their earnestness and zeal in pushing forward important initiatives in early education is emblematic of that well-worn phrase, "It takes a village to raise a child".

We also wish to acknowledge the contributions of respected scholars whose insights and critique have enriched this Final Report: Dr. Jayeel Cornelio, Dr. Elma Laguna, Dr. Jethro Calacday, Dr. Nicola Nixon, and Ms. Myn Garcia for serving as section reviewers, and to Anthony Garciano from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Camille Ungco from the University of Washington–Seattle, College of Education in Language, Literacy, and Culture for authoring the Epilogue.

We would also like to thank our colleagues from the Senate of the Philippines, without whom our work would not have been possible. Our deepest gratitude goes out to the Committee Secretaries of the Senate Committee on Basic Education, the Senate Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education, and the Senate Committee on Finance. Special thanks go out to the Legislative Budget Research and Monitoring Office (LBRMO).



Likewise, our work would not have been possible without the support of our colleagues from the House of Representatives. We would like to thank the Committee Affairs Department, the Committee on Accounts, and the Committee Secretaries of the Committee on Basic Education and Culture and the Committee on Higher and Technical Education. We would like to thank the House Finance Department, Accounting Service, and Budget Service. Special thanks go out to the House Procurement and Supply Management Service, Bids and Awards Committee, and the Commission on Audit.

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Introduction

A CENTURY OF WARNINGS, AND A MOMENT OF RECKONING

In its final year, the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II) returns to the same image that opened our first report: the Filipino learner standing tall in the face of long odds, their talent undiminished even as the system around them falters. What began in Year 1 as a stark diagnosis of miseducation—a recognition that our system has blunted the promise of generations—has grown into a national effort to repair the foundations of learning and chart a long road to recovery.

But as we conclude this phase of our mandate, we confront a sobering truth: for almost a century, successive reviews of Philippine education have raised alarms that echo across time.

The 1925 Monroe Survey warned that only 40% of Grade 4 children could read at the expected level, and pointed to weak teacher preparation, an overcrowded curriculum, and the persistent disadvantage of rural communities. In 1960, the Swanson Survey uncovered deep inequities and observed that the system endured largely because of the dedication of teachers—"often underpaid and overextended." In 1991, the first EDCOM declared the system "in a state of crisis," noting that "mere tinkering will not suffice; fundamental reforms are necessary." It recommended the trifocalization of DECS into DepEd, CHED, and TESDA—an attempt to bring order to a fragmented system.

> *The learning crisis we now confront is therefore not an inevitable fate, but a historically recent decline shaped by fragmented governance, chronic underinvestment, and the gradual erosion of the systems that once sustained excellence.*

And yet, in 2024, a century after Monroe, the FLEMMS revealed that almost 30% of Filipinos aged 10 to 64 remain functionally illiterate—including nearly 1 in 3 high school graduates and 1 in 5 college graduates. The absolute number of Filipinos struggling with functional literacy today is greater than in 1991 during the first EDCOM (11.8 million in 2025 vs. 10.3 million in 1991).

The full extent of the learning crisis is further underscored by the 2022 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which showed the Philippines' continued struggle in foundational literacy and numeracy—results consistent with the equally low performance in 2018. This deep, contemporary erosion in learning outcomes formed a crucial impetus for the renewed national mandate given to EDCOM II.

The warnings have been clear, and the findings have been consistent. What has been missing is the sustained national resolve to act. But before accepting the present crisis as an enduring condition, we must recall that this has not always been our national story.

For much of the 20th century, the Philippine public school system stood as the country's benchmark for quality. Public schools recruited some of the best-trained teachers, implemented a coherent national curriculum, and were trusted by families across income levels. In many cities and provinces, the strongest schools were public ones—institutions where merit, professionalism, and public service converged.

The learning crisis we now confront is therefore not an inevitable fate, but a historically recent decline shaped by fragmented governance, chronic underinvestment, and the gradual erosion of the systems that once sustained excellence. Our task today is not to imagine a future the country has never known, but to rebuild the coherence, capability, and continuity that once allowed Philippine public education to thrive.

Remembering this history clarifies what has been lost—and why EDCOM II's mandate has been urgent. If the system once excelled under conditions of coherence and competent leadership, then its current failures demand not resignation but explanation. Understanding how a world-class public system steadily weakened requires looking beyond symptoms to the deeper fractures that have accumulated over decades.

MISEDUCATION AND THE SEARCH FOR ROOT CAUSES

With this recognition in mind, EDCOM II embarked in 2023 on a comprehensive diagnosis of the system's most fundamental weaknesses. Our Year 1 Report, Miseducation: The Failed System of Philippine Education, concluded that the failures were not episodic but systemic: fragmented governance, misaligned mandates, severe inequities, weak foundations in the early years, and decades of reforms implemented without coherence.

It revealed an education system overburdened by responsibilities it was never equipped to carry, and underpowered in the areas that matter most for learning: nutrition, early childhood development, quality teaching, basic infrastructure, and coherent governance.

FIXING THE FOUNDATIONS: A MATTER OF NATIONAL SURVIVAL

Year 2 marked a turning point. Our second report, Fixing the Foundations, demonstrated that no reform can succeed unless the earliest and most essential building blocks are strengthened. We emphasized the primacy of early childhood nutrition and education, as well as targeted support for literacy and numeracy in Key Stage 1 (Kinder to Grade 3).

The report revealed how classroom congestion, delayed textbooks, weak teacher specialization, and fragmented governance compound these deficits—while teachers heroically shoulder burdens the system was never designed to support. It argued unequivocally that no downstream reform—whether in SHS, TVET, or higher education—can succeed unless these foundations are addressed.

TURNING POINT AND THE NATIONAL EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

This Final Report is a declaration that the cycle of crisis must end. It draws together the full breadth of evidence gathered over three years of inquiry—synthesizing newly released studies, refining earlier findings, correcting outdated data, and capturing the insights drawn from hundreds of hearings, consultations, and site visits nationwide. It does not simply restate earlier warnings; it sharpens them, and lays out the interconnected reforms that must be implemented from 2026 to 2035 if we are to decisively address the learning crisis and bring our young people, and our country, forward.

At the center of this Report is the National Education and Workforce Development Plan (NatPlan) for 2026–2035—the first unified decadal roadmap for education in modern Philippine history. For decades, reforms proceeded in isolation, advancing in short bursts only to stall in the absence of coordination or sustained leadership. The NatPlan replaces this fragmentation with coherence: sequencing reforms, aligning the mandates of DepEd, CHED, and TESDA, and anchoring performance squarely on learning outcomes.

The National Education Plan offers the first real chance in a century to move beyond diagnosis and into a sustained era of reconstruction. But this turning point is not self-executing. It requires a decade of unwavering commitment, institutional discipline, and political courage. While this Report brings EDCOM II's initial mandate under RA 11899 to a close, the work it sets in motion has only begun. The systemic reforms identified across three years will require continuity, follow-through, and a shared sense of purpose across the whole of society—national and local governments, teachers and school leaders, families, the private sector, civil society, and development partners.

> *No downstream reform—whether in SHS, TVET, or higher education—can succeed unless these foundations are addressed.*

> *The National Education Plan offers the first real chance in a century to move beyond diagnosis and into a sustained era of reconstruction. But this turning point is not self-executing.*

A DECADE OF NECESSARY REFORM AHEAD

With the passage of EDCOM II's two-year extension, this Commission will become the first education commission in Philippine history not to end at diagnosis, but to accompany the country through the first steps of reconstruction. **It signals a new era—one defined not by recurring cycles of alarm and inaction, but by deliberate, sustained, and coherent reform.**

We stand today in a historic moment for Philippine education: one marked by unprecedented national attention, rare alignment across the Executive and Legislative branches, and deep engagement from local governments, development partners, civil society, universities, and the private sector. For the first time in decades, education priorities are shared across agencies and administrations. Reforms in DepEd, CHED, and TESDA are moving in concert with Congressional action. A broad coalition of actors is now aligning its expertise, resources, and political capital behind a common set of goals.

This convergence—political, institutional, and societal—creates the most favorable conditions in a generation for addressing what has long impeded our learners from succeeding. It is a moment of uncommon possibility: a chance not merely to analyze problems well understood, but to transform them through coordinated, long-term action.

Still, this window of opportunity is fragile. Sustaining it will require continuity across election cycles, discipline across administrations, and steadiness through shifting political winds. If we choose to stay the course—if we refuse once more to allow reform to dissipate in transition—the Philippines can break from a century of warnings and finally move toward the learning future our children have long been owed.

Karol Mark R. Yee, PhD
Executive Director
EDCOM II


NG AKING MGA MAGULANG
SUSUNDIN KO ANG TUNTUNIN
NG PAARALAN
TUTUPARIN KO ANG TUNGKULIN
NG ISANG MAMAMAYANG MAKABAYAN
NAGLILINGKOD, NAG-AARAL AT NAG
DARASAL NG BUONG KATAPATAN
IAALAY KO ANG AKING BUHAY, PANGARAP
PAGSISIKAP SA BANSANG PILIPINAS
Filipino
Pag-ugnayin ang sanhi at bunga
A.
1. Kumain ng maraming kendi si Roy
a. dahil hindi niya ginawa ang kanyang assignment.
ATTENDANCE
M - 18
F - 16
T - 34
Reading Well 3

RECLAIMING *the* SOUL *of* PHILIPPINE EDUCATION

Lessons *from* EDCOM II

Rep. Jude Acidre



John Tewell CC BY-NC 2.0

It has often kept me wondering whether the past architects of our nation's educational system would be proud of how we ended up today. From the Dominican founders of the University of Santo Tomas—the oldest university in Asia—which once exercised oversight over public education during the Spanish colonial period, to the American Thomasites who brought the promise of free and universal schooling to every Filipino child, to the modern-day teachers who continue to serve in the farthest and poorest communities of our country—each generation built upon the same conviction that education is the most powerful equalizer in society.

Even in the early years of the American period, education reform had its champions. One of them was Isauro Gabaldón, whose name would later grace the iconic public elementary school buildings erected across the country through the law he authored—the Philippine Assembly Act No. 1801, or the Gabaldon Law of 1907.

These schools, sturdy and dignified in their simplicity, stood as monuments to a nation's faith in learning as the foundation of democracy. They remain visible reminders that long before us, others already saw education as the surest path to freedom, progress, and nationhood.



And yet, despite this proud heritage, we find ourselves confronting what may be the greatest learning crisis in our history. Our test scores remain low, our learning poverty unacceptably high, and our education system struggles to keep pace with the demands of a changing world.

Still, to say that the system has failed would be unjust. For within it remain three enduring strengths that no crisis can erase: the high value Filipinos place on education, the quiet dedication of our teachers, and the resilient learning capacity of our students. These are the very foundations upon which reform must stand—and the same strengths that EDCOM II sought to nurture and systematize.

OVERSIGHT THAT LISTENS, LEARNS, AND LEADS

When we began our work at EDCOM II, we faced an inconvenient truth. While our education laws had multiplied, our legislative oversight had not matured at the same pace. Oversight over our education agencies—DepEd, CHED, and TESDA—was often reactive, fragmented, and event-driven. We called hearings when controversies arose, probed policies when crises erupted, and scrutinized performance only when public concern demanded it. What we lacked was a sustained, strategic, and evidence-based engagement that connected lawmaking to learning outcomes.

EDCOM II changed that. It represented a different kind of oversight—one that listens before it legislates, learns before it leads, and acts only after understanding the depth and complexity of the problems at hand. Through its research-driven and consultative approach, EDCOM II demonstrated how Congress could use its oversight power not merely to question but to understand, not merely to monitor but to improve. It modeled an approach where listening became the first act of leadership and learning became the foundation of lawmaking.

True accountability, we realized, is not about assigning blame but ensuring that every reform achieves what it promised to do: improve learning for all. This shift in perspective—from reaction to reflection, from supervision to stewardship—was transformative. Oversight was no longer about fault-finding; it became about future-building.

SHIFTING FROM REACTION TO REFORM

In our early consultations, we discovered that effective oversight begins not with reports but with listening. We asked difficult questions: How well do our agencies align with one another? Why do programs overlap while schools remain under-resourced? Why do some reforms flourish while others falter? The answers

> *Oversight grounded in empathy is not weakness; it is wisdom. We cannot fix what we do not understand, and we cannot understand what we do not take time to hear.*

did not come from paper reports or presentations. They came from voices in the field—teachers, parents, students, local leaders, and industry partners.

Across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, we saw what statistics often hide: that learning happens because people care, even when systems fail. We met teachers who carried the weight of their schools on their shoulders, principals who turned scarcity into creativity, and students whose hunger to learn overcame hunger itself. Each story we heard grounded our work in compassion and reality, turning our data into human experience.

These encounters reminded us that every statistic debated in Congress represents a real story, a human face, and a dream waiting to be fulfilled. Oversight grounded in empathy is not weakness; it is wisdom. We cannot fix what we do not understand, and we cannot understand what we do not take time to hear. Listening is not just an act of courtesy; it is a discipline of care and a tool for reform.

A LIVING MODEL OF SYSTEMATIC OVERSIGHT

EDCOM II became, in many ways, the prototype of a systematized legislative oversight framework for education. Far from being simply an ad hoc undertaking, it became a living platform for collaboration and accountability, a continuing space where legislators, education agencies, researchers, and stakeholders could work together toward shared goals. It bridged the often-isolated islands of policy, planning, and implementation, transforming oversight into an enduring process of learning and shared responsibility.

By establishing key result areas and measurable indicators, and supported by a technical secretariat and an independent research consortium, EDCOM II gave the legislature its own capacity to collect, verify, and analyze data independently from the agencies it oversees. This autonomy allowed Congress to see beyond the official narrative—to measure progress not only by outputs but by outcomes, not by compliance but by impact.

Through regular hearings, technical sessions, and field consultations, EDCOM II built a culture of continuity that transcends changes in leadership or administration. It proved that oversight can be strategic rather than episodic, constructive rather than adversarial. It also demonstrated that reform is not a series of events but a process that must be sustained, nurtured, and protected.

BUILDING CAPACITY AND INSTITUTIONALIZING CONTINUITY

Another lesson from EDCOM II is the importance of strengthening the institutional capacity of Congress to perform evidence-based oversight. For too long, oversight has relied heavily on data and reports provided by the very agencies we are meant to evaluate. This dependence limits both objectivity and depth. EDCOM II changed that by cultivating partnerships with universities, think tanks, and research organizations. It created a bridge between governance and scholarship, between policy and evidence.

The process also revealed a deeper truth: that reform requires institutional memory. Without continuity, even the best policies lose their momentum. That is why Congress must now build structures that sustain education reform beyond individual terms or transitions. Oversight must evolve from episodic inquiry into a sustained national discipline.



This experience points the way forward. Congress should consider establishing an Education Caucus—a dedicated, cross-party, and cross-committee group of legislators committed to sustained, coordinated, and informed engagement on education reform.

Such a caucus would serve as a permanent platform for dialogue, learning, and collaboration among lawmakers who share the conviction that education is the nation's most strategic investment. The Education Caucus could regularly convene members from both Houses to review data, monitor reforms, and assess progress on national learning goals. It would ensure that education remains a shared national priority across administrations, providing continuity and coherence in policymaking.

More importantly, it would preserve the institutional memory of EDCOM II, transforming its lessons and insights into a living, working network within Congress.

BEYOND EDCOM II: CO-RESPONSIBILITY, COLLABORATION, AND COMMUNITY

As we look beyond EDCOM II, three courses of action must define the future of Philippine education: co-responsibility, collaboration, and community. These three values are not mere ideals; they are the foundation upon which the future of education must be built.

Co-responsibility means that the work of education is not the task of one institution alone. It is a shared calling that binds teachers and parents, schools and communities, agencies and legislators alike. The success of every learner is everyone's concern. When we recognize that education belongs to all of us, we move from the language of "yours" and "mine" to the spirit of "ours." Oversight, in this sense, becomes stewardship—a shared moral duty to ensure that no child is left behind.

More importantly, it would preserve the institutional memory of EDCOM II, transforming its lessons and insights into a living, working network within Congress.

Collaboration calls for the integration of efforts across the public and private sectors, and among all education stakeholders. DepEd, CHED, TESDA, SUCs, and private institutions must see themselves not as separate systems but as parts of one national learning ecosystem. When government, academe, industry, and civil society work together, supported by an active and engaged Congress, the result is synergy rather than redundancy, innovation rather than fragmentation.

Finally, community reminds us that reform will only take root if it grows from the ground up. Education does not happen in isolation; it happens within families, in barangays, in workplaces, in parishes, in every corner of the nation where learning becomes life.

Communities are not just beneficiaries of education policy—they are co-authors of it. When education reform becomes a collective endeavor, transformation is no longer a dream; it becomes a shared journey.

THE PROMISE WE MUST KEEP

If EDCOM II will be remembered for one thing, it should be for proving that good governance is the foundation of good education. When oversight is inclusive, patient, and evidence-based, the system itself becomes capable of learning. The structures we have built, the partnerships we have created, and the trust we have earned have shown that reform is possible when we work together with humility and perseverance.

Our vision is clear: a Philippine education system that is responsive, equitable, and world-class—guided not by reaction but by reflection, not by self-interest but by service. A system where teachers can teach with joy and students can learn with hope. A system that honors its past while courageously shaping its future.

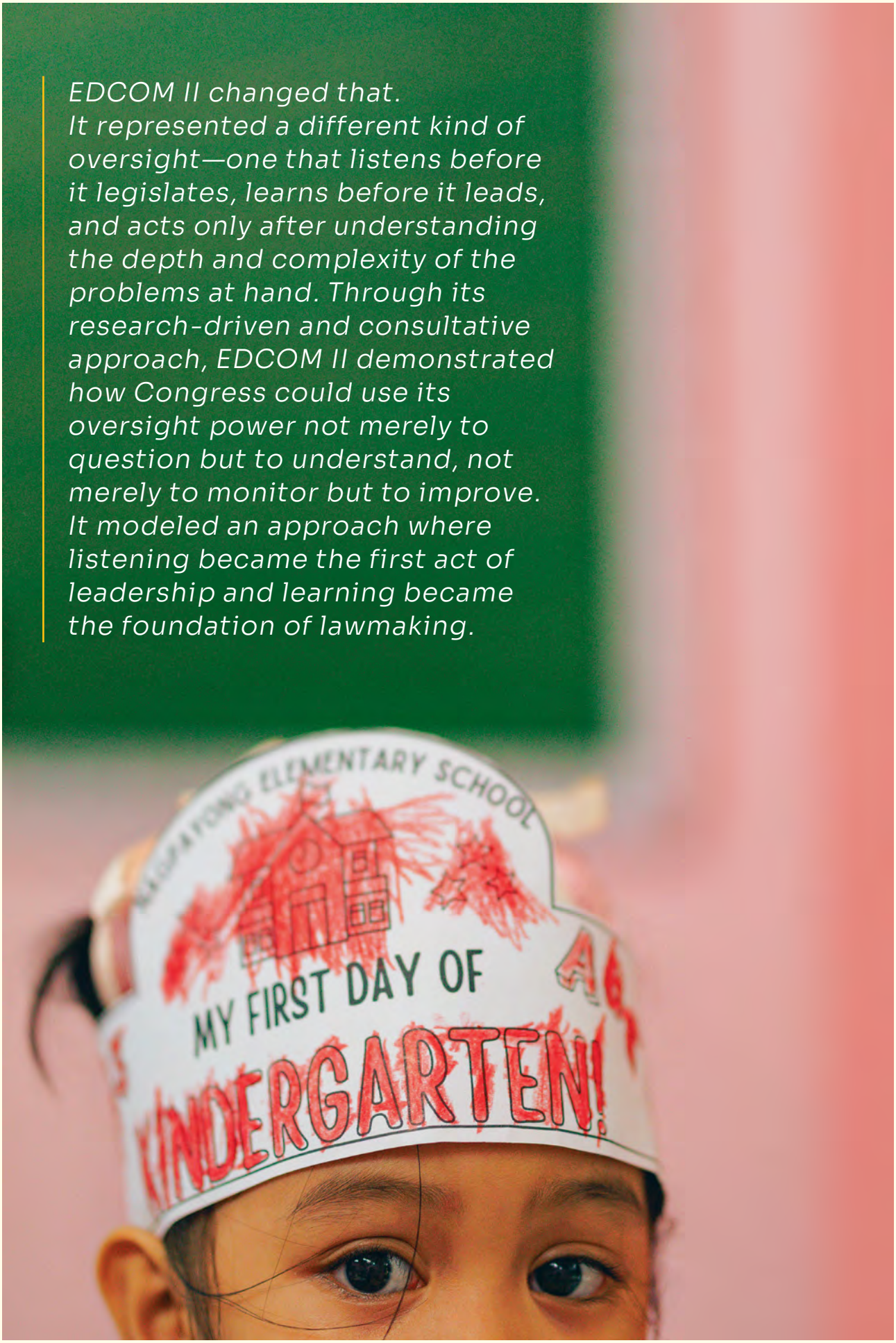
In many ways, the work of EDCOM II is a continuation of what the early architects of Philippine education began centuries ago. The Dominican educators who established UST believed that education was a moral duty. The American Thomasites taught that it was a right. Isauro Gabaldón proved that it was a public trust. Today, through EDCOM II, we affirm that education is a shared responsibility—a covenant of co-responsibility, collaboration, and community.

As we conclude the work of EDCOM II, we do not end a project—we carry forward a tradition. The same faith that once built classrooms from churches and schoolhouses from hope now calls us to rebuild a system worthy of our people's promise. Oversight must now become a habit of governance, a discipline of service, and a covenant renewed by every generation that chooses to care.Education has always been more than policy. It is an act of faith in our people and in our future.

From the work of the Dominicans, to the mission of the Thomasites, to the enduring legacy of Gabaldón, we inherit a sacred trust: to keep learning, to keep leading, and to keep building. Through EDCOM II, we have learned that this bond of trust, when guided by evidence and grounded in empathy, can move not only institutions but entire generations. That is the promise we must keep.

If EDCOM II will be remembered for one thing, it should be for proving that good governance is the foundation of good education. When oversight is inclusive, patient, and evidence-based, the system itself becomes capable of learning.

EDCOM II changed that. It represented a different kind of oversight—one that listens before it legislates, learns before it leads, and acts only after understanding the depth and complexity of the problems at hand. Through its research-driven and consultative approach, EDCOM II demonstrated how Congress could use its oversight power not merely to question but to understand, not merely to monitor but to improve. It modeled an approach where listening became the first act of leadership and learning became the foundation of lawmaking.





Collective Accomplishments and Reforms Across Priority Areas

In 2023, EDCOM convened for the first time to deliberate on the top priority areas the Commission will look to diagnose incisively for the next three years. This anchored the work of EDCOM and informed the researches commissioned, the hearings and consultations conducted, and policy targets it aimed to achieve.

In the past three years, through the hard work of the EDCOM Commissioners and champions in Congress, as well as the proactive leadership of no less than the President, as well as the Secretaries of DepEd, CHED, TESDA, and DBM, many policy targets have been collectively achieved from 2023 to 2025 ushering in a period of productive legislation and responsive policymaking to improve access and quality of education. For the 20th Congress, several more legislative measures underway—many included in the list of priority measures of the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC)—to see through the major reforms required to address the learning crisis.

Priority Areas, Issues and Imperatives	Collective Accomplishments (2023 to 2025)
Early Childhood Care and Development	

1. Nutrition and feeding
▪ Challenges in governance, implementation, and resourcing of health and nutrition programs
▪ Aligning incentives to address challenges / look into quality
	▪ Building on the EDCOM findings on stunting, Sen. Alan Cayetano **filed Senate Bill No. 416 or the "Anti-Stunting Action Plan (ASAP) Council Act of 2025"** on July 10, 2025 to institutionalize a strategic national action plan and roadmap in stunting reduction and prevention.
	▪ On December 3, 2024, President Bongbong Marcos has instructed to enrol nutrition programs under the DBM's Program Convergence Budgeting (PCB) requiring the DOH, NNC, DSWD and DepEd to annually target and propose funding in a strategic and complementary way
	▪ Increased budgetary support for First 1,000 Days in FY 2024 (PHP 240 million) and FY 2025 (PHP 977 million) to support comprehensive nutrition-nutrition specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions in non-PMNP (Philippine Multisectoral Nutrition Project) sites
	
	LEDAC PRIORITY: Bill amending Republic Act No. 11037 or the "Masustanstang Pagkain Para Sa Batang Pilipino Act" to expand coverage to: 2-3 year old children in the DSWD Supplementary Feeding Program (SFP), and nutritionally-at-risk pregnant adolescents in the DepEd School-Based Feeding Program(SBFP) filed in both houses of Congress
	▪ **Filed in the House of Representatives**
	  ▪ House Bill No. 5046 by Rep. Roman Romulo
	  ▪ Legislative Status: Pending with the House Committee on Basic Education and Culture
	▪ **Filed in the Senate**
	  ▪ Senate Bill No. 1145 by Sen. Joel Villanueva
	  ▪ Senate Bill No. 1312 by Sen. Bam Aquino
	  ▪ Legislative Status: Pending with the Senate Committee on Basic Education

2. Supply-side factors ▪ Lack of child development centers to attain universal coverage of ECCD ▪ Producing high quality child development workers/teachers ▪ Materials and resources for ECE	**Establishment and conversion of Child Development Centers (CDCs), and piloting of alternative modes of delivery** ▪ Allocation of PHP 1 billion in 2025 for the establishment of 238 child development centers low-income LGUs nationwide, including BARMM; in 2026, budget has been allocated for the conversion of day care centers (DCCs) to CDCs and the hiring of Child Development Workers (CDW) in 4th-5th income class municipalities, including the piloting of innovative alternative delivery modes via the ECCD Council. ▪ Increased budgetary support to existing daycare centers in low-income class municipalities from PHP 100,000 to PHP 275,000 for their rehabilitation/ conversion to CDC standards. ✓ **Passage of Republic Act No. 12199 (ECCD System Act)** included equity mechanisms for low-income municipalities. **Support for Child Development Workers and Teachers** ✓ **Passage of Republic Act No. 12199 or the "ECCD System Act"** last May 2025 which included a provision to finally provide plantilla positions for all Child Development Workers and Teachers (CDWs and CDTs), as well as provide funds for their professionalization and upskilling through TESDA and CHED

Bills filed
Bills passed

Priority Areas, Issues and Imperatives	Collective Accomplishments (2023 to 2025)
	▪ Creation of Training Regulations for an National Certificate (NC) III in ECCD Services by TESDA ▪ Creation of an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education program by the CHED Technical Panel on Teacher Education [ongoing proposal] ▪ Since 2023, TESDA has successfully allocated PHP 240 million in funding for the scholarships for 9,796 incumbent CDWs to attain the NC III in ECCD Services—PHP 80 million from the 2025 GAA and an additional PHP 160 million from TESDA's scholarship programs.
3. Demand-side factors ▪ Understanding barriers that relate to parental perceptions and engagement in ECCD	▪ Publication of PIDS study, commissioned by EDCOM II, titled Beyond Parents and Guardians: Mapping and Mobilizing the 'Significant Others' in Early Childhood Care and Development in the Philippines which examined how Filipino parents approach early childhood development. The study emphasized the central role of various actors—parents, siblings, grandparents, domestic helpers (i.e., yayas, kasambahays), and community members (e.g., barangay health workers)—in shaping children's early experiences and education. ▪ Given the findings and policy recommendations of the study, TESDA was requested to include competencies in early childhood care and development in the Training Regulations for Caregiving and Barangay Health Services National Certifications (NCs). These proposed competencies address the study's findings about the communal nature of Filipino childcare and the importance of acknowledging and empowering the various caregivers in the community who contribute to early childhood care and development.
4. Governance and financing of ECCD ▪ Mechanism of finance ▪ Addressing governance challenge	✓ **Passage of Republic Act No. 12199 or the "ECCD System Act" which included a provision to ensure resources to support lower-income LGUs:** Allocations from the Local Government Support Fund under the annual GAA shall include a line-item allocation to support the establishment of CDCs and the hiring of CDTs and CDWs, including addressing other human resource needs, in fourth (4th) and fifth (5th) class municipalities. ▪ **Under the 2026 budget, PHP 2.46 billion has been allocated for the initial implementation of this provision under the law.** ✓ Amendment of the existing JMC on the Special Education Fund (SEF) (JC 1, s. 2025) to explicitly indicate various ECCD funding requirements such as salaries/ allowances of locally-hired CDW/Ts, continuing professional development of ECCD public service providers, facilities for the conduct of ECCD programs. ✓ **Republic Act No. 12199 or the "ECCD System Act" has finally included the DILG as Co-Chair of the ECCD Council to focus on "local government mobilization and overall implementation"** which was the primary challenge faced by the Republic Act No. 10410 or the "Early Years Act of 2013". The same law has likewise included CHED and TESDA as members, given their role in supporting CDWs and CDTs.
Basic Education	
5. Learning Resources ▪ Textbook development, production, and distribution ▪ Using media to enhance learning	▪ DepEd amendment of previous policy which bundled procurement of textbooks, issuing DepEd Memorandum No. 49, s. 2024 mandating Early Procurement Activities (EPA) to expedite processes and budget utilization, including the procurement of textbooks, e-learning carts, science and mathematics equipment, modules, and other learning tools. ▪ This has resulted in the increase of textbook titles procured from just 27 from 2013 to 2023, to 60 in 2024 to 2025 alone.

Priority Areas, Issues and Imperatives	Collective Accomplishments (2023 to 2025)
6. Measurement of learning outcomes ▪ Adequacy of the assessment system to track learners' progress and inform system reforms ▪ Reporting and utilization of assessment results for improving learning outcomes	▪ DepEd has committed to review and rationalize its assessments policy, and has initiated efforts to ensure transparency of learner outcomes through its landmark effort, Project Bukas, which makes school-level results available to the public. ▪ DepEd has also fully implemented CRLA (Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment) and Phil-IRI (Philippine Informal Reading Inventory) for all grade levels to assess literacy and reading skills of students from Kinder to Grade 10, to enable targeted interventions. ▪ Through EDCOM's advocacy, the 2024 FLEMMS questionnaire and definitions for basic and functional literacy was revised (to include comprehension), enabling the country to get a granular understanding of where we stood in relation to literacy.
7. Curriculum and instruction ▪ Medium/language of instruction ▪ Validation of the K to 10 (and eventually 11 to 12) curriculum toward decongestion, encouraging flexibility and innovation, and reviewing the spiral curriculum	**Streamlining of the curriculum and reforms in SHS** ✓ **Passage of Republic Act No. 12027 or the "Act Discontinuing the Use of the Mother Tongue as Medium of Instruction from Kindergarten to Grade 3".** ▪ **Filing of bills to amend the mandatory nature of spiral progression and allow alternatives** ▪ **Filed in the House of Representatives** ▪ House Bill No. 5939 by Rep. Roman Romulo, Rep. Zia Alonto Adiong, Rep. Anna Veloso-Tuazon, et al. ▪ Legislative Status: Approved on Third Reading on December 3, 2025 ▪ **Filed in the Senate** ▪ Senate Bill No. 530 by Sen. Loren Legarda ▪ Senate Bill No. 624 by Sen. Win Gatchalian ▪ Legislative Status: All bills pending with the Committee on Basic Education ▪ Issuance of language mapping policy of DepEd last October 31, 2025 through Department Order No. 35 s.2025 ▪ Ongoing full implementation of the revised K to 10 curriculum and being monitored by DepEd for further refinements ▪ Piloting and eventual rollout of the Strengthened Senior High School (SSHS) Curriculum, which features the rationalization of tracks from 4 (Academic, TVL, Sports, Arts and Design) to 2 (Academic and Technical Professional), core courses from 15 to 5, and the strengthening of TVL options towards TechPro, with a sharpened focus on priority areas to soon include Barangay Health Services (NC II), Dental Lab Tech Services (NC I), Health Care Services (NC II), and Pharmacy Services (NC II). ▪ DepEd and TESDA have also signed a Memorandum of Agreement agreeing to jointly quality assure all SHS-TechPro programs to be compliant with TESDA Training Regulations ▪ CSC issued Resolution No. 2500229 last March 2025, finally recognizing Grade 10 and Grade 12 graduates as eligible for first-level government positions **Learner Recovery** ✓ **Passage of Republic Act No. 12028 or the "Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program Act" to initiate learning loss recovery** ▪ DepEd has initiated an interagency effort together with EDCOM, DOST, CHED, DILG, DENR, DOST-PHIVOLCS, DOST-PAGASA, DOH, TESDA, and LCP, to amend and update Executive Order No. 66 to ensure that class suspensions are science-based and ensure learning continuity

Bills filed
Bills passed

Priority Areas, Issues and Imperatives	Collective Accomplishments (2023 to 2025)
	▪ Recalibration of DepEd's National Learning Camp to its Summer Literacy Remediation Program (including its Bayang Bumabasa Initiative) which focused on targeted interventions for Grades 1 to 3 ▪ Results of the BBMP show outstanding gains in literacy, with the 20-day intervention equivalent to up to 1.3 years worth of schooling ▪ Phased implementation of the ARAL Program in SY 2025-26, with an initial focus in reading, currently supporting 6.7M learners identified as struggling readers ▪ Increased budgetary support for ARAL program teachers, volunteers, and learning materials, with 8.9M budgeted for 2026 **Learners with Disabilities** ✓ **Passage of Republic Act No. 11650 or the "Inclusive Education Act"** which was signed into law in March 2022. Its Implementing Rules and Regulations were published on December 12, 2024 and it was fully implemented on January 11, 2025. **Supporting the best and brightest** ✓ **Passage of Republic Act No. 12310 or the Expanded Philippine Science High School (PSHS) System Act"** was passed and signed into law on October 3, 2025 .

8. School infrastructure
▪ Inventory of facilities (public and private)
▪ Strategies to address the gaps
▪ Housing developments impacting classroom congestion
	Proposed measures to fast-track classroom construction:
	▪ **LEDAC PRIORITY: Classroom-Building Acceleration Program (CAP) Act Bills**
	  ▪ **Filed in the House of Representatives:**
	  ▪ House Bill No. 5577 by Rep. Jude Acidre, et al.
	  ▪ Legislative Status: Pending with the Committee on Basic Education and Culture
	  ▪ **Filed in the Senate**
	  ▪ Senate Bill No. 1482 by Sen. Bam Aquino
	  ▪ Legislative Status: Approved in the Senate on Second Reading with Amendments on December 16, 2025
	▪ **Emergency Classroom Building Act**
	  ▪ Bill granting emergency powers to the President to address classroom crisis
	  ▪ House Bill No. 4904 by Rep. Roman Romulo
	  ▪ House Bill No. 5103 by Rep. Jude Acidre
	  ▪ House Bill No. 5302 by Rep. Veloso-Tuason and Rep. Solon
	  ▪ Legislative Status: All bills pending with the Committee on Basic Education and Culture
	
	▪ **LEDAC PRIORITY: E-GASTPE amendments to address congestionin public schools through vouchers**
	  ▪ **Filed in the House of Representatives**
	  ▪ House Bill No. 4744 or the "Private Basic Education Vouchers Assistance Act" by Rep. Roman Romulo, Rep. Jude Acidre, et al.
	  ▪ Legislative Status: Approved on Third Reading on October 13, 2025
	  ▪ **Filed in the Senate**
	  ▪ Senate Bill No. 128 by Sen. Bam Aquino
	  ▪ Senate Bill No. 309 by Sen. Loren Legarda
	  ▪ Senate Bill No. 364 by Sen. Win Gatchalian
	  ▪ Senate Bill No. 422 by Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano
	  ▪ Legislative Status: All bills pending with the Committee on Basic Education

Priority Areas, Issues and Imperatives	Collective Accomplishments (2023 to 2025)

	Last Mile Schools Act
	▪ **Filed in the House of Representatives**
	  ▪ House Bill No. 4745 by Rep. Roman Romulo, Rep. Zia Alonto Adiong, Rep. Anna Veloso-Tuazon, et al.
	  ▪ Legislative Status: Approved on Third Reading on October 13, 2025
	▪ **Filed in the Senate**
	  ▪ Senate Bill No. 1412 by Sen. Loren Legarda
	  ▪ Legislative Status: Pending with the Committees on Basic Education and Finance
	✓ Increased budget of DepEd in the 2026 General Appropriations Act for basic education facilities from P39,028,800,000 to P65,931,205,000, with the inclusion of a special provision to allow DepEd to work with LGUs and CSOs to ramp up classroom construction
	▪ DepEd has also initiated the construction of classrooms through Public Private Partnerships (PPPs): to date, 105,000 classrooms are projected across PSIP (PPP for School Infrastructure Project) 1, 2, and 3 expected to be completed by 2028
	▪ Memorandum of Understanding signed by DepEd and DHSUD, to address the impact of housing developments on school congestion

9. Alternative Learning System (ALS) ▪ Access and delivery ▪ Curriculum content, quality, and assessment toward preparing learners for employment	▪ JMC on SEF finally including ALS (Joint Circular No. 1, s. 2025 - Omnibus Guidelines on the Use of the Special Education Fund). ▪ Revision of the DepEd formula in providing resources for ALS, from being divided equally across regions to a per-capita and demand-sensitive funding formula, so that ALS budgets reflect actual enrollment, prevalence of OSCYAs, and area-specific delivery costs for materials and equipment.
10. Home and school environment ▪ Safe, secure, conducive, and supportive learning environment ▪ Improved mechanisms for partnerships and shared accountability between families, schools, and communities	✓ **Passage of Republic Act No. 12080 or the "Basic Education Mental Health and Well-Being Promotion Act."** ✓ Issuance of DepEd Memorandum No. 90, s. 2025 or the "Dissemination of the Revised Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 10627, otherwise known as the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013," was finalized and promulgated on October 9, 2025. This important issuance aims to address the many challenges which surfaced during EDCOM consultations, hearings, and studies. ▪ Initial allocation of 10,000 school counselor associates in DepEd schools for 2026.
Higher Education	

11. Access to quality higher education
▪ Develop CHED's regulatory framework to enhance its developmental and regulatory function
	Access and equity
	▪ **LEDAC PRIORITY: Filed bill amending Republic Act No. 10931 or the "Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act" focusing on Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) reforms**
	  ▪ Students from 4Ps families shall be automatically guaranteed TES, conditional on successfully completing high school, and gaining admission in a CHED-recognized higher education institution
	  ▪ **Filed in the House of Representatives**

Bills filed
Bills passed

Priority Areas, Issues and Imperatives	Collective Accomplishments (2023 to 2025)
	▪ House Bill No. 683 (Private Higher and TechVoc Education Voucher Assistance Act) by Rep. Roman Romulo ▪ House Bill No. 4270 by Rep. Jude Acidre, et al. ▪ Legislative Status: Approved in the Committee-level on December 2, 2025 ▪ **Filed in the Senate** ▪ Senate Bill No. 130 by Sen. Bam Aquino ▪ Senate Bill No. 514 by Sen. Loren Legarda ▪ Senate Bill No. 1604 by Sen. Joel Villanueva ▪ Legislative Status: All bills pending with the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education ▪ Special Provision in the 2024 and 2025 GAAs to explicitly prioritize the poorest of the poor, leading to increase in the share of 4Ps grantees from 0.22% to 28%. ▪ The President in his SONA last July 2025 committed that among his administration's primary aims will be to ensure that all "first generation" students will be able to attend college or TVET. ▪ CHED, DepEd and TESDA, has also jointly organized efforts beginning December 2025 to increase access of the poorest to higher education through locally organized sessions for SHS students targeting those from 4Ps families. **Quality and relevance** ▪ **Bills filed to address overlaps and/or interconnectedness between the mandates and functions of the PRC Boards, as well as the need for increased collaboration between the two bodies.** ▪ **Filed in the House of Representatives** ▪ House Bill No. 4959 by Rep. Jude Acidre, et al. ▪ Legislative Status: Approved in the House at the Committee level on December 9, 2025 ▪ **Filed in the Senate** ▪ Senate Bill No. 1426 by Sen. Loren Legarda ▪ Senate Bill No. 1604 by Sen. Joel Villanueva ▪ Legislative Status: All bills pending with the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education
12. Efficiency of public and private higher education provision ▪ Developing a framework for the establishment and sustainability of existing HEIs, especially LUCs ▪ Clarifying the complementarity principle and developing a framework to guide its implementation to address the substantial challenges faced by private HEIs ▪ Building leadership capacity in SUCs and LUCs	▪ **Bill filed to amend and update Republic Act No. 7722, or the "Higher Education Act of 1994" balancing CHED's Regulatory Framework to not only be regulatory but also developmental** ▪ **Filed in the House of Representatives** ▪ House Bill No. 4958 (Higher Education Development and Innovation Act of 2025) by Rep. Jude Acidre, et al. ▪ Legislative Status: Approved in the House at the Committee level on November 18, 2025 ▪ **Filed in the Senate** ▪ Senate Bill No. 1427 (Higher Education Development and Innovation Act of 2025) by Sen. Legarda ▪ Legislative Status: Pending with the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education

Priority Areas, Issues and Imperatives	Collective Accomplishments (2023 to 2025)

	▪ **Bills filed to update Republic Act No. 8292 or the "Higher Education Modernization Act of 1997."**
	  ▪ **Filed in the House of Representatives**
	  ▪ House Bill No. 4799 by Rep. Jude Acidre and Rep. Andrew Julian Romualdez
	  ▪ House Bill No. 5042 by Rep. Zia Alonto Adiong
	  ▪ Legislative Status: All bills pending with the Committee on Higher and Technical Education
	  ▪ **Filed in the Senate**
	  ▪ Senate Bill No. 1414 by Sen. LorenLegarda
	  ▪ Legislative Status: Pending with the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education

13. Digital transformation and educational technologies (crosscutting) ▪ Establishing the infrastructure for digital transformation, research clouds, and educational technologies ▪ Enhancing access to educational technologies and mechanisms for sharing resources ▪ Establishing smart campuses aligned with sustainable development goal (SDG) targets	▪ Senate Bill No. 122 or the "E-Textbook Para Sa Lahat" by Sen. Bam Aquino mandates that all textbooks and instructional materials approved for basic education be made available in a free digital format to promote accessible and equitable education for all learners. The requirement covers materials used in both public and DepEd-recognized private schools. ▪ A draft bill on Digital Tertiary Education Transformation shall be proposed, with the goal of strengthening the digital readiness of tertiary education institutions. The draft bill seeks to institutionalize a comprehensive framework by upgrading digital infrastructure, building capacity in digital literacy for faculty and students, establishing national standards for digital learning, and ensuring equitable access, aligning with the recommendations of the EDCOM II.
14. Graduate education, research, and innovation ▪ Enhancing the quality and uptake of graduate education in the country ▪ Addressing the constraints to quality research, innovation, and entrepreneurship in research universities ▪ Building capacity for research translation into innovations/ technologies and supporting S&T parks, start-ups, and social enterprises	▪ EDCOM studies on diploma mills in graduate education programs in the country. ▪ CHED and PRC commitment to jointly undertake and complete quality assurance of all graduate programs in teacher education (initially) to address findings on diploma mills, from December 2025 to March 2027. ▪ Amendments to the Procurement Law. ✓ **Submitted inputs to Republic Act No. 12009 New Government Procurement Act** which now includes provisions to support the science community through the streamlining of procurement processes and reduction in excessive bureaucracy that has previously limited productivity in research, development, and innovation.

Bills filed
Bills passed

Priority Areas, Issues and Imperatives	Collective Accomplishments (2023 to 2025)
15. Internationalization of higher education (crosscutting) ▪ Addressing constraints to the internationalization of students and faculty ▪ Reviewing the country's transnational education policy in Republic Act No. 11448 ▪ Reviewing and addressing the issues related to global rankings	▪ **Bill filed allowing dual citizens to be engaged by public HEIs as faculty and researchers** ▪ **Filed in the House of Representatives** ▪ House Bill No. 5019 by Rep. Jude Acidre, et al. ▪ Legislative Status: Approved in the House in the Committee-level on November 18, 2025 ▪ **Filed in the Senate** ▪ Senate Bill No. 531 by Sen. Loren Legarda ▪ Senate Bill No. 626 by Sen. Win Gatchalian ▪ Legislative Status: All bills pending with the Committee on Justice and Human Rights
Teacher Education and Development	
16. Alignment of CHED, PRC, DepEd (including TEC) on teacher education and development	▪ **CHED and PRC signed CHED-PRC Joint Memorandum Circular 1 s. 2025 to bridge the gap in teacher licensure examinations (LEPT) and teacher education programs,** following a sectoral meeting with President Marcos in Malacanang last March 2025. This agreement introduces distinct examinations, beginning September 2025 BLEPT, for each teacher education program specialization as outlined in the 2017 CHED PSGs, particularly in ▪ Elementary Education, including but not limited to Early Childhood Education and Special Needs Education ▪ Secondary Education, including but not limited to English, Filipino, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Values Education, Technology and Livelihood Education, Technical-Vocational Teacher Education, Physical Education, and Culture and Arts Education ▪ **LEDAC PRIORITY: Bills filed to amend Republic Act No. 7836 or the "Philippine Teachers Professionalization Act of 1994"** ▪ **From 19th Congress:** ▪ Filed in the House of Representatives ▪ House Bill No. 9979 by Rep. Mark Go, Rep. Roman Romulo, Rep. Khalid Dimaporo, Rep. Pablo John Garcia, Rep. Kiko Benitez, et al. ▪ Legislative Status: Approved on Third Reading on March 19, 2024 ▪ Filed in the Senate ▪ Senate Bill No. 2830 by Sen. Loren Legarda ▪ Senate Bill No. 2840 by Sen. Win Gatchalian ▪ Legislative Status: Initial hearings and TWG meetings conducted by the Subcommittee on Amendments to the Philippine Teachers Professionalization Act *(Committee on Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation)* ▪ **From 20th Congress**: ▪ Senate Bill No. 52 by Sen. Win Gatchalian, ▪ Senate Bill No. 308 by Sen. Loren Legarda, and ▪ Senate Bill No. 547 by Sen. Joel Villanueva ▪ Legislative Status: All bills pending with the Committee on Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation ▪ **Full operationalization of the Teacher Education Council following the assumption into office of Secretary Angara**

Priority Areas, Issues and Imperatives	Collective Accomplishments (2023 to 2025)
17. Pre-service education ▪ Gaps in preservice training ▪ Quality of teacher education institutions ▪ Encouraging more students to enter the teaching profession ▪ Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers (LEPT) / licensing of teachers	▪ **Ongoing review by the TEC of the Teacher Education curriculum with increased hours for practice teaching, following global best practice** ▪ **PhilTER launched jointly by CHED, PRC, TEC and EDCOM** to serve as a quality assurance mechanism that *will address diploma mill programs from being used for teacher licensure, appointment, and promotion by publicly making available in one official registry the performance of TEIs in licensure examinations, and providing indicators for excellence (Center of Excellence, Level of Accreditation) ▪ PRC has committed to the review and enhanced quality assurance of the LEPT
18. In-service training and development ▪ Teacher welfare ▪ Training and development of teachers and school heads	✓ **Passage of Republic Act No. 12288 or the "Career Progression System for Public School Teachers and School Leaders Act" last September 12, 2025.** ▪ **Implementing Rules and Regulations for the Executive Order No. 174, s. 2022 signed** last August 1, 2024 by DepEd Secretary Sonny Angara,, Former DBM Secretary Amenah Pangandaman, Chairperson Karlo Alexei B. Nograles of the Civil Service Commission, and Chairperson Charito A. Zamora of the Professional Regulation Commission ▪ **DepEd Secretary Angara has slashed the number of forms filled out by teachers from 174 to 75** (5 regularly completed forms, 70 ancillary and teaching related forms) via DepEd Order No. 006, Series of 2025 ▪ ▪ By 2026, all schools will have 1 administrative officer; ▪ Additional 10,000 AO items approved by the DBM for 2025, now totaling 33,313. ▪ The remaining 11,268 AO items are to be filled by DepEd by 2026. **School Leadership** ▪ **DepEd has committed to providing 1 school principal per school,** addressing the challenge identified where 48% of all schools—lack principal items and depend on teachers-in-charge, while another 12,057 schools are assigned incorrect school head items, contrary to DepEd policies last updated in 1997 ▪ For 2026, 6,000 plantilla positions have been allocated for creation.
Technical-Vocational Education & Training (TVET) and Lifelong Learning	
19. Needs-based system projecting the demands in workers' upskilling ▪ Understanding current and future "middle-skill" needs of the country ▪ Understanding the future generation of the Filipino workforce	✓ **Passage of Republic Act No. 12063 or the "Enterprise-Based Education and Training (EBET) Framework Act"** institutionalizes a unified framework for industry-led skills development in the Philippines which specifically rationalizes and harmonizes previous programs, such as apprenticeship, learnership, and the dual training system, under the new EBET framework ▪ **Implementing Rules and Regulations of the EBET Framework Act issued last November 2024** ✓ **Revenue Regulations to enable accessing of incentives under the EBET Law promulgated last February 20, 2025** ▪ The establishment of a Unified Labor Market Information System (LMIS) is provided in the LMI in the study on the LMI in TVET on the establishment of a unified LMIS, which shall be spearheaded by the Department of Labor and Employment to provide the supply needed that the education agencies shall facilitate.

Bills filed
Bills passed

Priority Areas, Issues and Imperatives	Collective Accomplishments (2023 to 2025)
20. Industry involvement and investment in upskilling ▪ Understanding the labor market outcomes of TVET graduates ▪ Encouraging companies to invest in upskilling of workers and offer enterprise-based training and apprenticeship programs ▪ Reconsidering rural industry development	▪ Studies on labor market outcomes of TVET graduates conducted and published (Generalao; Dacuycuy; Ballar). ▪ EDCOM also initiated the inclusion of TVET rider questions to the 2024 APIS-LFS to enable granular analysis of the returns to TVET by level of certification and by industry. ▪ On rural industry development, regional and provincial offices have established industry TVET boards in the agri-fishery sector.
21. Ensuring quality in the provision of TVET ▪ Ensuring quality assurance in TVET ▪ Rationalizing TVET provision and support (by TESDA, LGUs, and private TVIs)	▪ Based on the submitted NatPlan output targets for 2028, a total of 229 registered programs with NC III-NC V (NCIII-IV = 103; NC V = 126) ▪ 8 additional National TESDA Industry Boards established. ▪ TESDA has committed to establish 8 Industry Boards in Aeronautical and Aviation, Fintech, Accountancy, Business Administration, Legal Management, Electric Vehicles, Renewables, and Chemical Engineering ▪ TESDA has committed to develop 103 higher-level qualifications (NC III–V programs) in the next 3 years, focusing on the six EDCOM II priority industry clusters—Advanced Manufacturing, Digital Technology, Healthcare, Financial Services, Tourism, and the Creative Economy. ▪ As of 7 January 2026, TESDA offers 155 Level III and IV courses, including Trainer's Methodology (TM) programs. To support these offerings, TESDA has developed 110 competency standards for Level III and IV qualifications, reinforcing the pipeline for advanced and higher-level skills development. To expedite the development of courses and competency standards, TESDA procured an AI-powered Course Builder for Philippine TVET under the 2025 General Appropriations Act (GAA). ▪ TESDA has developed 110 competency standards for Level III and IV qualifications, strengthening the pipeline for higher-level skills development. ▪ To accelerate course and standards development, TESDA procured an AI-Powered Course Builder for Philippine TVET under the 2025 General Appropriations Act (GAA).
22. Framework for equivalency and recognition of non-formal and informal learning ▪ Lifelong learning framework	✓ **Passage of Republic Act No. 12313, also known as the "Lifelong Learning Development Framework (LLDF) Act,"** which was passed into law on October 23, 2025, aims to institutionalize and broaden the mandate of the Philippine Quality Framework-National Coordinating Council (PQF-NCC) to promote lifelong learning for all citizens and ensure a productive and fulfilling life. ✓ **Passage of Republic Act No. 12124, also known as the "Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP) Act,"** institutionalizes a comprehensive alternative pathway for obtaining a tertiary education degree in the Philippines ▪ **JMC among CHED, PRC, and TESDA on the Rationalization and Harmonization of Professional and Technical Education and Skills Development Standards** ▪ Strengthening of the PQF NCC Secretariat in DepEd–a multi-agency body composed of DepEd, TESDA, CHED, DOLE, PRC, and industry representatives—to oversee implementation, quality assurance, pathways, and equivalency arrangements.

Priority Areas, Issues and Imperatives	Collective Accomplishments (2023 to 2025)
Governance and Finance	
23. Ensuring seamless and integrated delivery of education ▪ Lack of a coherent plan/road map/vision for the education sector ▪ Lack of effective coordination among education agencies toward agreed-upon goals ▪ Using measures of quality to ensure attainment of agreed-upon goals	✓ **The President issued Administrative Order No. 36 last August 13, 2025 establishing the Education and Workforce Development Group (EWDG)** to serve as the central coordinating body on all matters relating to education and workforce in the country. ✓ **Concurrent Resolution adopted by both houses of Congress urging the President to create a cabinet cluster for education last June 16, 2025.** ▪ **Bills filed amending Republic Act 7796 or the TESDA Act of 1994** ▪ **TESDA Modernization Act of 2025** ▪ **Filed in the House of Representatives** ▪ House Bill No. 4798 by Rep. Jude Acidre, et al. ▪ House Bill No. 5043 by Rep. Zia Alonto Adiong ▪ Legislative Status: Approved by the Committee on Higher and Technical Education on November 18, 2025 ▪ **Filed in the Senate** ▪ Senate Bill No. 1413 by Sen. Loren Legarda ▪ Senate Bill No. 1449 by Sen. Joel Villanueva ▪ Legislative Status: All bills pending with the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education ▪ **Bills updating the CHED Charter / strengthening the Commission on Higher Education, repealing Republic Act No. 7722 or the "Higher Education Act of 1994"** ▪ Filed in the House of Representatives. ▪ House Bill No. 4958 by Rep. Jude Acidre, et al. ▪ Legislative Status: Pending with the Committee on Higher and Technical Education **Filed in Senate** ▪ Senate Bill No. 1427 by Sen. Loren Legarda ▪ Legislative Status: Pending with the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education ▪ **Last October 3, 2025, DepEd, CHED and TESDA signed a Joint Memorandum Circular, agreeing to make their data systems interoperable,** adopting a unified learner reference number, as well as the targeting of learners for differentiated supports
24. Complementarity between public and private education ▪ Lack of clarity on the government's primary roles ▪ Education delivery strategy informed by public and private absorptive capacity across all levels of education ▪ Expanding Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education (GASTPE)	▪ **Complementarity in Education Act** ▪ **Filed in the House of Representatives** ▪ House Bill No. 4921 by Rep. Jude A. Acidre, et al . ▪ Legislative Status: Pending with the Committee on Basic Education ▪ **Filed in the Senate** ▪ Senate Bill No. 167 by Sen. Loren Legarda ▪ Legislative Status: Pending with the Committee on Basic Education ▪ **Private Basic Education Vouchers Assistance Act** ▪ **Filed in the House of Representatives** ▪ House Bill No. 4744 by Reps. Roman Romulo, Jude Acidre, et al. ▪ Legislative Status: Approved by the House on Third Reading on October 13, 2025

Bills filed
Bills passed

Priority Areas, Issues and Imperatives	Collective Accomplishments (2023 to 2025)

	▪ **Filed in the Senate**
	  ▪ Senate Bill No. 128 by Sen. Bam Aquino
	  ▪ Senate Bil No. 309 by Sen. Loren Legarda
	  ▪ Senate Bill No. 364 by Sen. Win Gatchalian
	  ▪ Senate Bill No. 422 by Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano
	  ▪ Legislative Status: All bills pending with the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education
	▪ **Secretary Angara has also, for the first time in 8 years, increased the Teacher Salary Subsidy amount from PHP 18,000 to PHP 24,000**
	▪ ECAIR, EDCOM and DepEd conducted analysis of carrying capacity of private schools, to identify further opportunities for private sector engagement in basic education

25. Integrated performance management and accountability system ▪ Lack of integrated ecosystem performance management system where funding is tied to performance versus student outcomes	▪ Revision of DepEd's OPCR pushed. ▪ Letter sent to DepEd, DepDev and DBM to reconsider targets that unitendedly reinforce mass promotion practices on the ground

26. Efficiency and equity in financing, resource mobilization, and delivery of education
▪ Efficiency in education finance and resource mobilization
▪ Equity in the delivery of education and the extent that the needs of vulnerable sectors are addressed
	▪ Through the leadership of EDCOM Commissioners, particularly Sen. Win Gatchalian as Chair of the Committee on Finance, education has received the highest budget allocation in history, reaching 4.5% of GDP.
	▪ DepEd-DBM-DOF-DILG JMC Revised SEF Guidelines.
	  ▪ This includes updated list of allowable expenditures and resource-sharing between national government and LGUs and among LGUs for education-related expenses. [for signing of final revised guidelines]
	▪ To address funding challenges of schools DepEd has also:
	  ▪ Implemented the revised school MOOE formula (30% in 2025 and 100% in 2026), poised to provide significant additional resources for schools.
	  ▪ Pioneered the provision of school based innovation grants targeting under-resourced and marginalized public schools, particularly those in 4th- and 5th-class municipalities, to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes through DepEd Order 73 s. 2025.
	▪ **Bills filed for the Amendment of Republic Act No. 8525 or the "Adopt-a-School Act of 1998"**
	  ▪ **From the 19th Congress**
	  ▪ Filed in the House of Representatives
	  ▪ House Bill No. 11179 by Rep. Eduardo Villanueva
	  ▪ Legislative Status: Remained Pending with the House Committee on Basic Education and Culture
	  ▪ Filed in the Senate
	  ▪ Senate Bill No. 2731 by Sen. Sonny Angara
	  ▪ Senate Bill No. 2809 by Sen. Loren Legarda
	  ▪ Senate Bill No. 2852 by Sen. Joel Villanueva
	  ▪ Legislative Status: Remained Pending with the Senate Committee on Basic Education

Priority Areas, Issues and Imperatives	Collective Accomplishments (2023 to 2025)
27. Decentralization and participatory governance ▪ Highly centralized governance structure results in limited participation of local government and stakeholders in education governance, and lack of agility and innovation in the system ▪ Participation of education stakeholders (students, parents, community, NGOs, CSOs, business sector and industries, LGUs, NGAs, and development partners) in education governance	▪ DepEd has committed to review SDO establishment and staffing to be more responsive to the needs of schools ▪ DepEd has initiated decentralization pilots in Region I, III, VIII, IX, and CAR and has adopted a Decentralization Plan ▪ DepEd aims to have 100% schools as implementing units by 2031 (QBEDP) ▪ EDCOM2 actively promotes the implementation of DILG memorandum Circular 2022-083, which encourages Local Governments to fully expand citizen participation in Local School Boards through the membership of representatives from CSOs, NGOs, IPs, PWDs, ALS, and ECCD.

Bills filed
Bills passed

Learning pathways form the architecture of an inclusive lifelong learning ecosystem—one that enables every Filipino, regardless of their circumstances, to enter, progress, exit, and re-enter learning throughout their life.



PATHWAYS *for* LIFELONG LEARNING:

Toward *a* Seamless *and* Inclusive Philippine Education System

Dr. Cynthia Bautista

Across the world, education reform has shifted from designing systems that *teach* to building systems that *enable* learning. In this paradigm, learning pathways form the architecture of an inclusive lifelong learning ecosystem—one that enables every Filipino, regardless of their circumstances, to enter, progress, exit, and re-enter learning throughout their life.

In policy terms, pathways are linked and flexible routes that enable individuals to move across formal, non-formal, and informal learning spaces while receiving recognition, validation, and accreditation for existing knowledge and skills. They depend on mechanisms such as institutionalized alternative learning systems, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), credit transfer, modular and stackable micro-credential programs, multiple learning modalities, bridging courses, learner guidance systems, and accessible information systems about qualifications, skills, job roles, and labor market opportunities that learners, educators, and employers can easily navigate.

Resting on the premise that learning is continuous, cumulative, and diverse, **pathways redefine education as a circular rather than linear ecosystem—one where learners can move in multiple directions throughout their lives.** Yet for the Philippines, where rigid structures and social inequities constrain educational mobility, creating a system of pathways that enables Filipinos to design their own learning journeys is not only an economic necessity but also a moral imperative.

For these pathways to take root, they must begin with a clear understanding of who our learners are and the diverse realities that shape their journeys.

LEARNERS AND LEARNING IN CONTEXT

Pathways presume a deep understanding of who our learners are. Filipino learners are not a single archetype but many: children who fall behind, youth at risk of dropping out, adults re-entering school, displaced workers seeking reskilling, persons with disabilities, women returning to education after caregiving, indigenous peoples navigating dual worlds of knowledge, and individuals who pursue learning for changing labor arrangements or self-actualization.

However, the social and regional contexts in which they learn are profoundly unequal. Learners from disadvantaged areas often face limited access to schools, poor internet connectivity, and inadequate support networks. To help them achieve higher levels of education, pathways must be paired with targeted interventions such as community-based re-entry programs, local learning hubs supported by Local Government Units, scholarships and stipends for completion, mentoring networks, and digital infrastructure in underserved regions.

Equity also requires flexible learning options such as distance, blended, and modular programs—so that learners can continue studying while working or caring for their families. Pathways that ignore social context risk becoming roads that only the privileged can travel.

Yet even when opportunities exist, learners can only benefit if the system can recognize them, follow their progress, and acknowledge the learning they acquire across different settings. This brings us to the challenge of visibility and recognition.

MAKING LEARNING VISIBLE THROUGH DATA AND RECOGNITION

A learning system can only be inclusive if learners are visible as they move within it. The current data landscape fragments their journeys—DepEd, TESDA, and CHED each maintain separate systems, and transitions between them are barely tracked. To institutionalize coherent learner progression, the country needs interoperable learner data systems that integrate academic histories, equivalency records, and credential information across all relevant agencies.

A unified Learner Pathways Registry, linked to the Philippine Qualifications Register (PhQuaR) and Labor Market Information Systems, could provide the backbone for this reform. The institution of a learner

Equity also requires flexible learning options such as distance, blended, and modular programs—so that learners can continue studying while working or caring for their families. Pathways that ignore social context risk becoming roads that only the privileged can travel.

or citizen identification number to track participation in all mapped programs is a logical starting point. Such a system would enable real-time monitoring of who progresses, who exits, and who re-enters, allowing for inclusive planning and responsive policymaking. It would also make prior learning portable, allowing credits and competencies to follow the learner rather than remain trapped in institutional silos.

Visibility also implies recognition. When RPL and credit-transfer mechanisms are institutionalized, experience—whether gained through work, community service, or self-directed learning—earns the same respect as classroom instruction. Recognition, data interoperability, and guidance together transform the notion of lifelong learning from rhetoric into lived mobility.

But visibility and recognition can only take learners so far; they need a system sustained by coherent governance, coordination, and accountability.

GOVERNANCE, COORDINATION, AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SEAMLESS PATHWAYS

Systemic fragmentation remains a major barrier to creating clear learning pathways. DepEd, TESDA, CHED, and LGUs each oversee parts of the learner's journey but rarely coordinate in design or accountability. In this context, a fully institutionalized Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) provides the most straightforward reform route to unify fragmented systems by establishing national standards and levels of learning outcomes achieved through formal, non-formal, and informal learning modes. Like other National Qualifications Frameworks, a PQF can support the development of pathways and equivalencies that enable access to quality-assured qualifications and help individuals move more easily between education and training sectors—and between these sectors and the labor market.

The Philippines already has several pathway components: the Alternative Learning System (ALS) for basic education, RPL in TVET, and the Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP) in higher education. Yet these remain fragmented and poorly connected. Bridges are still thin, with learners struggling to transition from ALS to formal schooling, from TVET to higher education, and from work back to learning. Information on re-entry options and equivalencies is scarce, and digital systems remain siloed.

Strengthening these pathways through an institutionalized credit-transfer system across DepEd, TESDA, and CHED under the PQF would enhance recognition of learners' achievements. Translating inclusive programs into institutionally recognized pathways—through targeted community-based centers linked to the PQF—would further expand learning options. Developing modular, stackable credentials and transition programs at chokepoints (ALS to Senior High, TVET to higher education, and adult re-entry) is equally crucial. Integrating humanistic learning outcomes—civic, cultural, and digital literacies—would ensure that progression is not only vertical but also horizontal, across roles, communities, and life purposes.

Visibility also implies recognition. When RPL and credit-transfer mechanisms are institutionalized, experience—whether gained through work, community service, or self- directed learning—earns the same respect as classroom instruction.

> *In the end, pathways are more than policies; they are expressions of a nation's belief that learning should never end—and that every Filipino's journey, however circuitous, still leads forward.*

At the local level, LGUs can anchor regional learning and employment hubs that link education providers, industry, and public employment services. These hubs would operationalize pathways by connecting schooling, training, and work within local development plans.

Beyond alignment among agencies, the system must also empower learners to navigate it.

ENABLING LEARNER NAVIGATION AND STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY

Learners cannot traverse a system they cannot see. A Pathways Information Portal, integrating data from DepEd, TESDA, CHED, and industry, could guide learners through available programs, scholarships, and re-entry routes. Coupled with a well-developed Philippine Skills Framework (PSF), with job and skills maps, required competencies, and PQF-level alignments, it would help individuals design their own personal learning trajectories.

At the same time, accountability mechanisms must ensure that reforms translate into results. Integrating pathways indicators such as re-entry rates, credit-recognition success, and regional inclusion metrics into agency performance scorecards would institutionalize shared responsibility.

In higher education, incentive systems can reward institutions that implement bridging programs, flexible admissions, and equitable completion rates. Performance-based funding and competitive grants could encourage HEIs to recognize micro-credentials, collaborate with TVET institutions, and contribute to national upskilling priorities.

When coordination, information systems, and accountability converge, pathways cease to be bureaucratic constructs and become lived experiences of mobility. Yet what ultimately gives these reforms coherence is a shared philosophy about the nature and purpose of learning.

TOWARD A HUMANISTIC AND COHERENT LEARNING SYSTEM

For the Philippines, building pathways that are both systemic and personal affirms that education is a public good. We must adopt a national structure that is grounded in social justice, capable of recognizing the smallest act of learning and turning it into a step forward. The nation must ensure that every Filipino—regardless of their starting point—can move forward, outward, and upward in their learning.

Filling the gaps in learner progression is not just about employing a collection of discrete reforms, but gathering a single vision of an education system that values mobility, recognition, and equity. When pathways are designed for all learners, supported by interoperable data, governed through coherent policy, and reinforced by accountable institutions. The promise of lifelong and lifewide learning becomes tangible.

In the end, pathways are more than policies; they are expressions of a nation's belief that learning should never end—and that every Filipino's journey, however circuitous, still leads forward.

What We Learned:

A Three-Year Synthesis of Evidence



Introduction

After decades of missed reforms, chronic underinvestment, fragmented governance, and persistent inequities (Department of Education [DepEd], n.d.; Philippine Institute for Development Studies [PIDS], n.d.), **the Philippine education system continues to face a profound crisis. EDCOM II (2024) characterizes this as miseducation—a system that reaches millions of learners yet delivers uneven and often incomplete learning.**

At the same time, the past three years have brought a clearer diagnosis and early reforms across basic, technical–vocational, and higher education. This emerging clarity places the sector at a turning point, ready to translate evidence and initial gains into sustained, system-wide reform.

Achievement data tells a similar story. Proficiency in reading, mathematics, and science remains low. Regional disparities persist, and accountability for learning outcomes has been weak. Each missed opportunity has accumulated, leaving children who advance without mastery, teachers who work with limited support, and families who bear the cost of a system that has not kept its promises.

This emerging clarity places the sector at a turning point, ready to translate evidence and initial gains into sustained, system-wide reform.

This chapter synthesizes (1) the most important findings of the Commission in the last three years, (2) updates figures and findings when relevant, (3) highlights accomplishments of the legislative and executive branches, and finally, (4) specifies the necessary reforms still needed to forge a working education system that fulfils its promise to every Filipino learner.

Transformative action is now unavoidable, and the forces that produced weak results are structural. Budgets are spread too thinly, governance is divided across agencies, and compliance is rewarded more often than genuine learning gains. Repairing these weaknesses requires a sense of coherence: Public investment must target areas with the highest potential for measurable improvement. Incentives should reward programs that show evidence of impact and sustained change. Accountability must rest on improvement that learners, teachers, and communities can recognize in their daily experience.

EDCOM II's Year Two Report (2025) identifies early childhood as the system's most critical bottleneck. It stresses that public resources must be redirected toward the earliest years, particularly nutrition in the first 1,000 days of life, where the country continues to face severe deficits. Despite large budget increases for nutrition programs, most notably the Department of Health's allocation rising from Php 234.5 million to Php 977 million, EDCOM II finds that funding still falls short of what is required to address persistent child malnutrition. This gap is reflected in the 2023 National Nutrition Survey, which shows that 23.6% of Filipino children under five are stunted and 5.6% are wasted, with the burden concentrated in the poorest households.

The report applies the same urgency to early childhood care and development (ECCD). While EDCOM II underscores that the period from birth to age eight is decisive for cognitive and social development, participation rates remain extremely low at just 18%. International and regional assessments point to the long-term consequences of this gap. Filipino students who attended pre-primary education perform better in mathematics by age 15, a pattern consistent with findings from the 2019 SEA-PLM, where preschool attendance is associated with higher scores in reading, writing, and mathematics.

These early disadvantages compound in the primary grades. EDCOM II sets universal foundational literacy by the end of Grade 3 as a clear national goal, yet assessments show that learners were already about a year behind expected levels before the pandemic, with learning losses widening to two or three years after COVID-19. Revised functional literacy estimates from the Philippine Statistics Authority corroborate this decline. Taken together, the evidence shows how poor nutrition, limited access to early learning, and weak early-grade literacy reinforce one another—shaping who arrives in school ready to learn and who is left behind before formal schooling can take hold.

More than programs, fixing these foundations requires steady funding, a robust pipeline of capable teachers, local systems that deliver support, and a responsive national government policies and programs that move away from one-size-fits all, to context-specific solutions that befit the different needs of learners of our country.

This chapter synthesizes (1) the most important findings of the Commission in the last three years, (2) updates figures and findings when relevant, (3) highlights accomplishments of the legislative and executive branches, and finally, (4) specifies the necessary reforms still needed to forge a working education system that fulfils its promise to every Filipino learner.


I WANT TO BE A TEACHER
No one
is ever too young
or too old
to read a good story.
Jesus said,
"Let the little children
come to me,
do not hinder them,
Kingdom of Heaven
to such as these."
OSWD

I. EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT

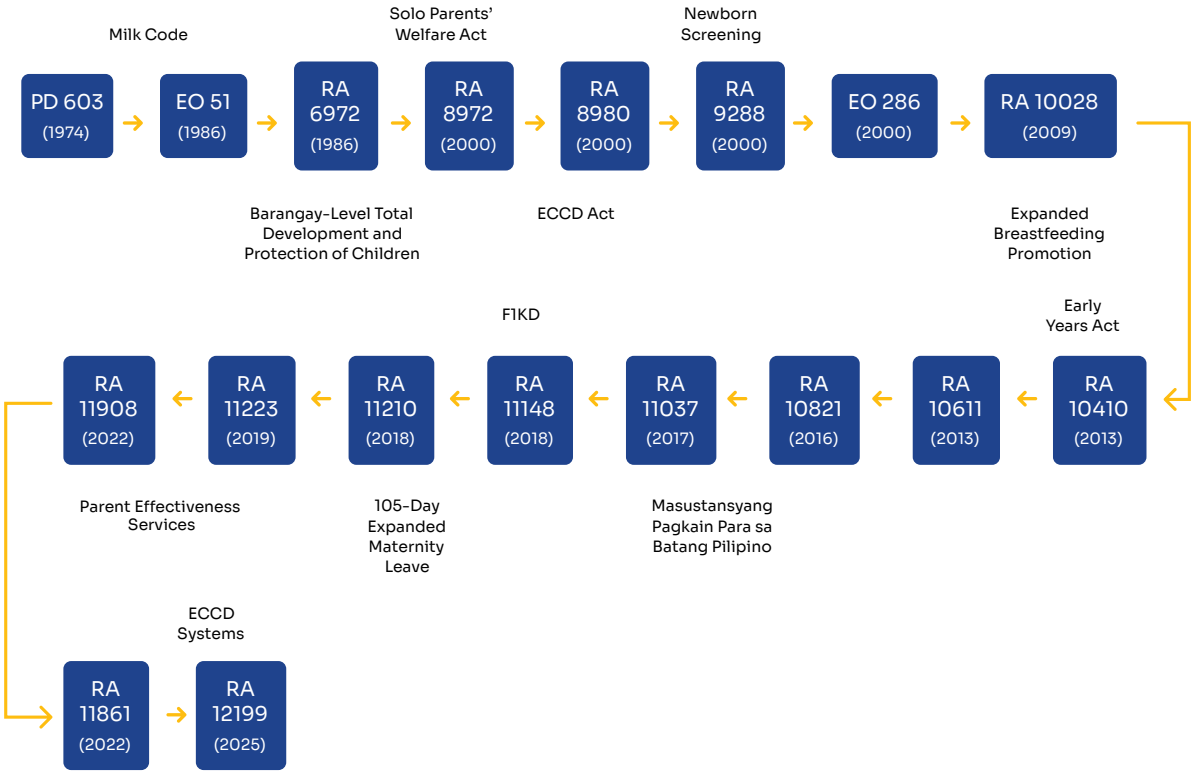
Keeping the Window Open: Sustaining ECCD Momentum for National Development

The EDCOM II Year One and Year Two Reports have underscored how the earliest years of life determine how far learning can go (EDCOM II, 2024; EDCOM II, 2025). From birth to age 8, the brain forms more than a million neural connections every second, laying the groundwork for language, reasoning, and emotional regulation (Seeman et. al, 1987; Corel, 1975) . Studies have underscored how Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) represents a critical juncture at which developmental trajectories are established and socioeconomic inequalities become manifest (World Bank, 2024; Daelmans, et al., 2017; Lo, et al., 2017).Yet this decisive window—when care and stimulation yield the highest lifelong returns—remains unattended, marked by fragmented governance and underinvestment (EDCOM II, 2024; EDCOM II, 2025).

Republic Act No. 8980 (2000) first established a national ECCD system for children aged 0 to 6, followed by Republic Act No. 10410 (2013) which expanded the coverage of ECCD from 0 to 8 years as the foundational stage of development and mandated a national system of integrated health, nutrition, and early learning services. Twelve years later, Republic Act 12199 (2025) renewed this mandate through the passage of the ECCD System Act— a key reform advocated by the EDCOM, to address the longstanding impediments in ECCD— primarily, the active involvement of LGUs, resource constraints faced by those in 4th to 5th class municipalities, as well as supports for the professionalization and proper compensation of child development workers and teachers.

Republic Act No. 12199 (2025) renewed this mandate through the passage ECCD System Act—a key reform advocated by the EDCOM, to address the longstanding impediments in ECCD.

FIGURE 1.
Nurturing Care in the Philippines: enabling laws and policies for nurturing care have existed across multiple sectors for over five decades.



Source: Conjares, et al. (2025)

Together, the evolution of these laws signals the similarly evolving national commitment to reconceptualize early childhood care and development as a comprehensive, multisectoral system that establishes the foundation for lifelong learning, health, and productivity rather than merely as an initial phase of formal education. This holistic approach recognizes that the developmental processes occurring during the first thousand days and early childhood years fundamentally shape human formation and require coordinated investments across multiple sectors rather than siloed educational programming alone.

Still, institutional progress has yet to reach many households. Services for children below five remain fragmented across agencies and uneven among local governments (Ulep, et al., 2024). Data provided by the ECCD Council to EDCOM II exhibited inconsistent coordination between child-care centers, health stations, and LGUs, as well as sparse data on attendance and outcomes. Despite growing public investment—over PHP 1 billion allocated in 2025 for new Child Development Centers, and PHP 240 million for scholarships for Child Development Workers— the fulfilment of the aims under Republic Act No. 12199 and as detailed in the National Education Plan requires a substantial increase in investment for the early years; one that is sustained at least in the next decade until 2035.

This section examines strategies for bridging the persistent gap between legislation and implementation in early childhood development . It traces cascading effects of early deprivation (i.e., stunting, malnutrition, and missing infrastructure in ECCD) compound into learning disparities later on.



PRIORITY AREA 1: NUTRITION AND FEEDING

FINDINGS

ISSUE 1: STUNTING IS AN EDUCATION ISSUE.

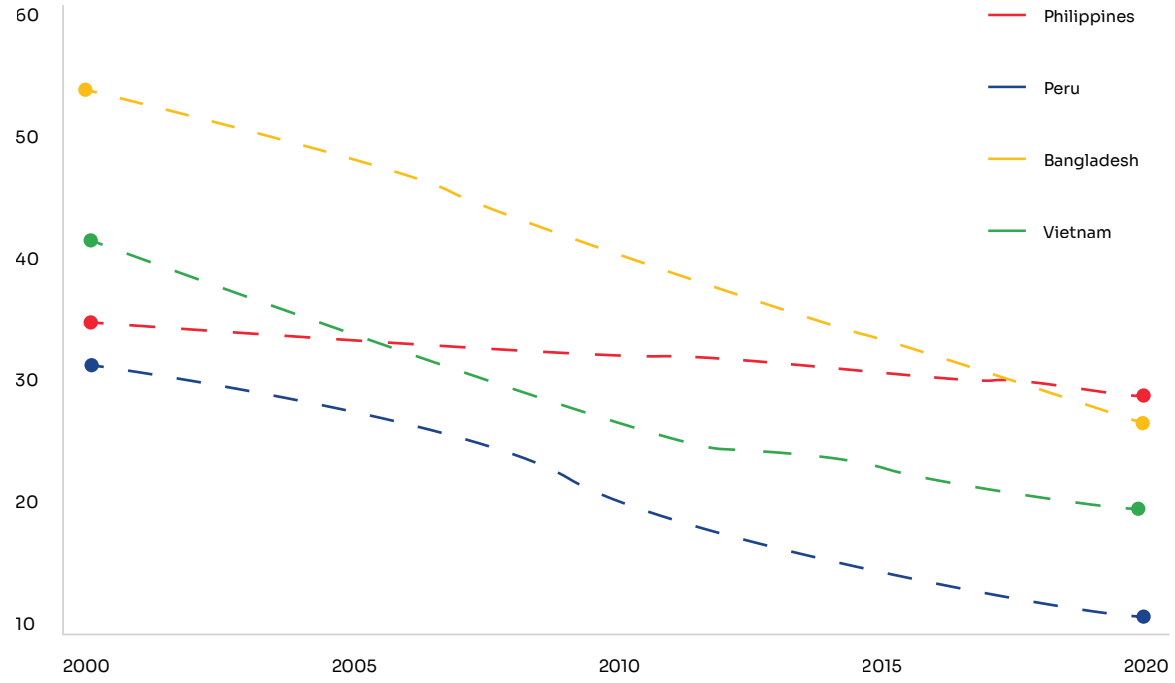
As highlighted in the EDCOM II Year One and Year Two Reports, the relationship between nutrition and cognitive development establishes stunting as fundamentally an educational issue. The irreversible neurological damage occurring during the first 1,000 days—from conception through age two—directly impacts learning capacity with children experiencing stunted growth at age two demonstrating significantly poorer educational outcomes throughout their academic trajectories (Martorell, et al., 2010; Grantham, et al., 2007). Brain imaging studies starkly illustrate compromised neural architecture that cannot be remediated through later interventions (World Bank presentation to EDCOM II, October 2023, ECCD Symposium).

> *"We intervene on stunting in order to ensure that a child's brain, and growth and development is optimal—to allow them to become productive citizens in the future… and sometimes [I think] when we talk about stunting, we tend to be focusing on… height and age but really* ***it's about the damage to a child's brain.****"*
>
> *-**Dr. Joan Matji, Global Director**, Child Nutrition and Development, UNICEF Government Partners Meeting and Roundtable Discussion, November 5, 2025, Pasig, Philippines*

ISSUE 2: THE PHILIPPINES CONTINUES TO FACE A SERIOUS CHILD NUTRITION CRISIS.

The Philippines confronts a persistent stunting crisis that undermines its developmental aspirations. With one in four Filipino children experiencing stunted growth or 23.6% (2023 National Nutrition Survey, DOST-FNRI, 2025), the nation's prevalence rate has remained stubbornly resistant to intervention since 2000 which contrasts sharply with regional comparators who have achieved substantial reductions from similar baseline levels (Figure 2).

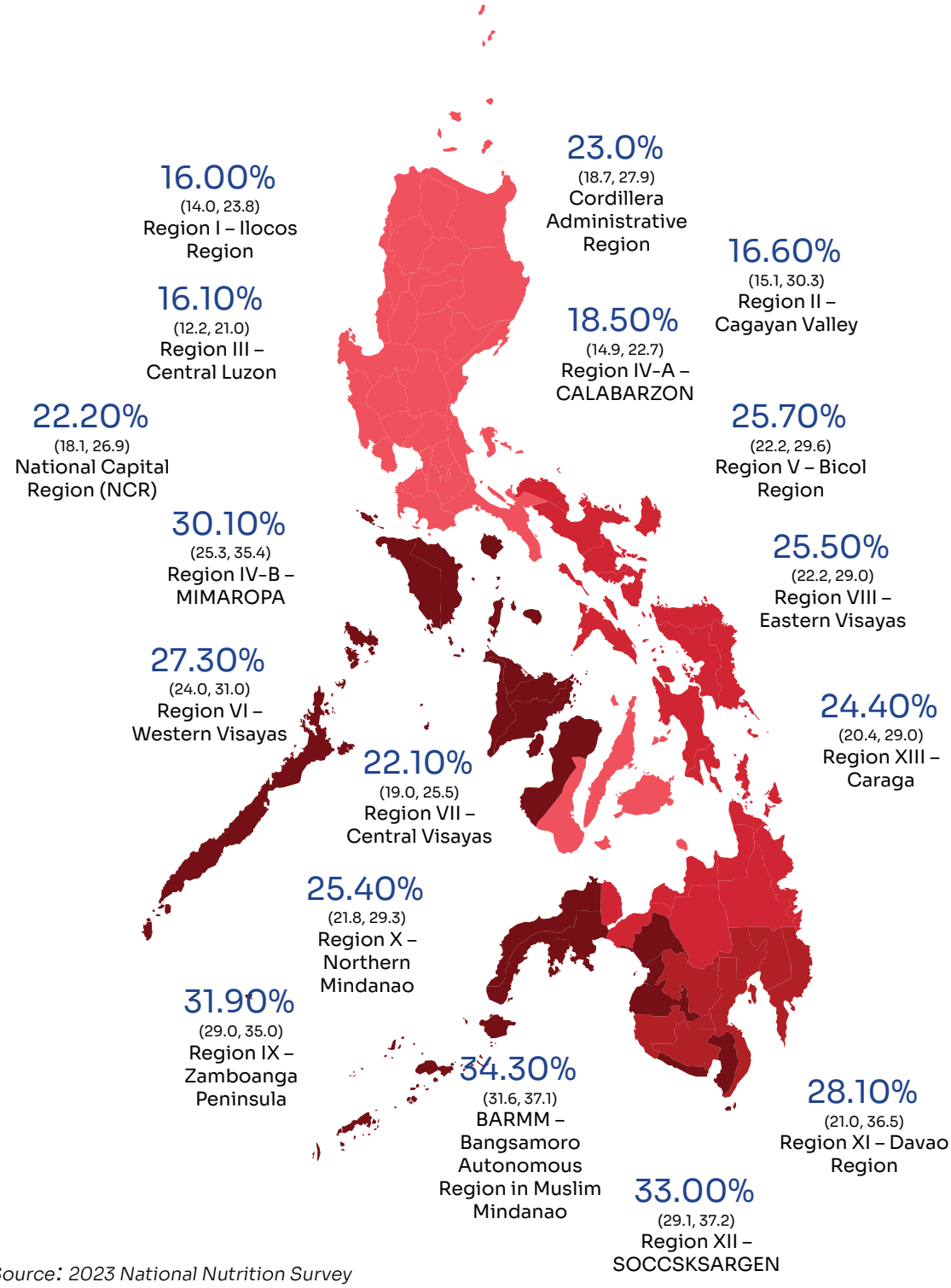
FIGURE 2.
Stunting Prevalence in the Philippines With Comparator Countries (2000–2020)



Source: EDCOM II Year Two Report (2024); Ulep et al (2024). Behind the Slow Start: An Assessment of Early Childhood Care and Development in the Philippines. PIDS Discussion Paper Series 2024-04. Quezon City:PIDS.

The data demonstrates that the Philippines faces a significant challenge in reaching its Department of Health (DOH) target of 13.5% stunting prevalence by 2025 with the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) consistently exhibiting the poorest nutritional indicators across multiple metrics including stunting rates, household food insecurity, and childhood anemia prevalence (DOST-FNRI, 2025). Conversely, regions such as Central Luzon and the Ilocos Region demonstrate relatively better nutritional outcomes which suggest that targeted interventions in high-burden areas particularly BARMM and SOCCSKSARGEN are imperative for achieving national health objectives.

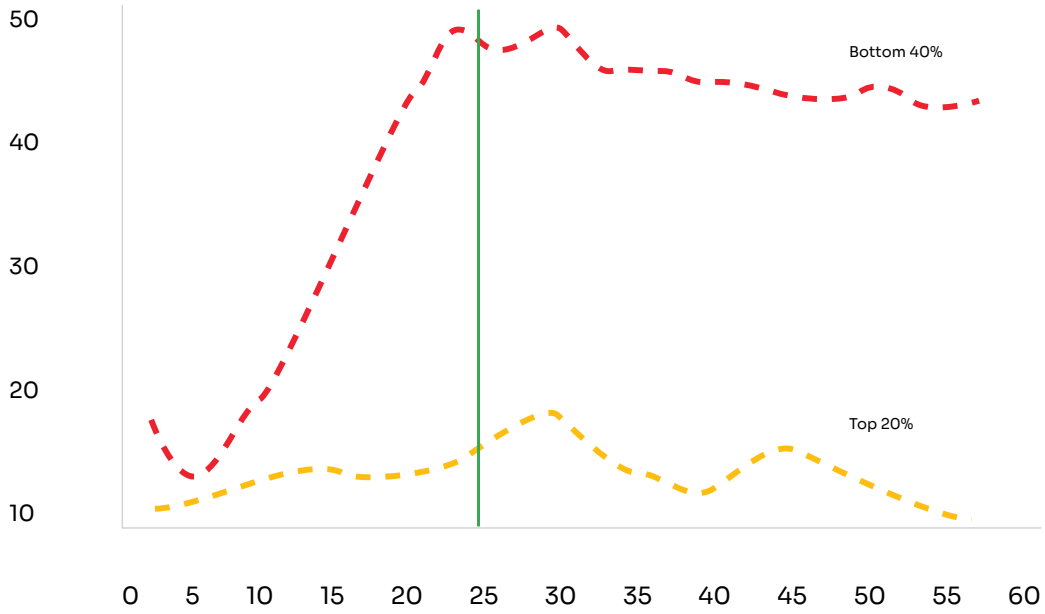
FIGURE 3.
Nutritional Status of Children Under Five: Prevalence of Stunting



Source: 2023 National Nutrition Survey

> *The data also reveal stark socioeconomic disparities: by 25 months of age, stunting prevalence reaches 42% among the poorest quintile compared to 11% among the wealthiest (Ulep, et al., 2024)*

FIGURE 4.
Prevalence of stunting of 0-60 month old Filipino children, by wealth quintile

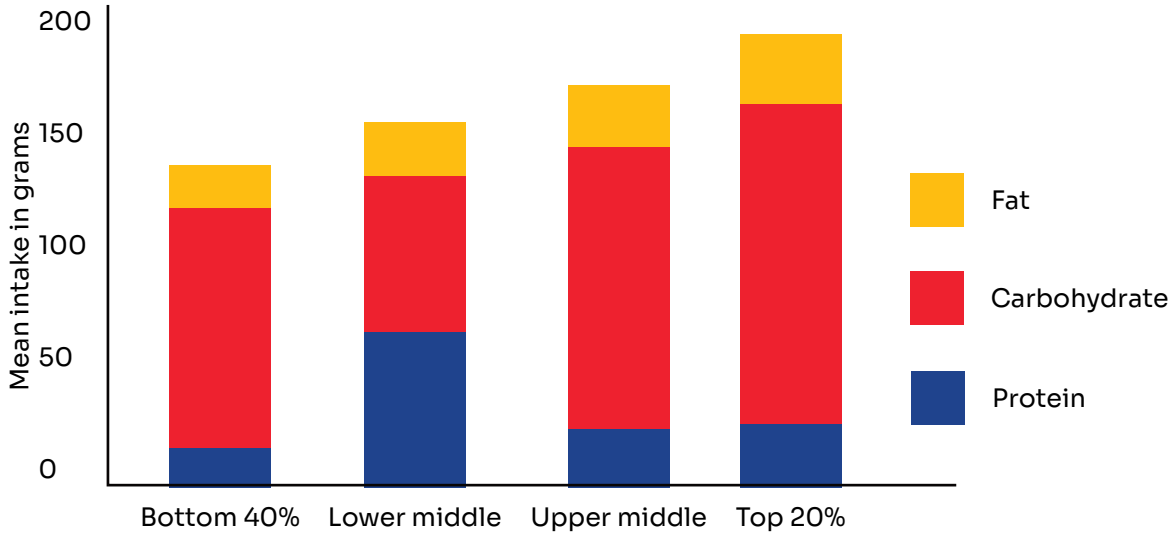


Erratum: This figure provides a corrected update of Figure 5 of the EDCOM II Year Two Report (p. 69).

Source: Ulep et al (2024). Behind the Slow Start: An Assessment of Early Childhood Care and Development in the Philippines. PIDS Discussion Paper Series 2024-04. Quezon City:PIDS.

Evidence reveals that only a quarter of Filipino children meet recommended energy intake levels with severe deficiencies in critical macronutrients (Ulep, et al., 2024). Children aged 3-5 consume 20% less protein, 40% less fat, and 35% less carbohydrates than recommended dietary reference intakes (Figure x). Particularly concerning is the protein deficit among children from lower socioeconomic quintiles as protein constitutes an essential nutrient for growth and stunting prevention (Endrinikapoulus, et al., 2017).

FIGURE 5.
Prevalence of Stunting Among Filipino Children Aged 0–60 Months, by Wealth



Erratum: This figure provides a corrected update of Figure 6 of the EDCOM II Year Two Report (p. 70).

Source: Ulep et al (2024). Behind the Slow Start: An Assessment of Early Childhood Care and Development in the Philippines. PIDS Discussion Paper Series 2024-04. Quezon City:PIDS.

ISSUE 3: CURRENT SUPPLEMENTAL FEEDING PROGRAMS DEMONSTRATE SYSTEMIC IMPLEMENTATION FAILURES.

Despite Republic Act No. 11037 establishing a legislative framework for the Supplemental Feeding Program (SFP), implementation remains profoundly inadequate. Participation rates in the SFP range from merely 10-30% across regions with only 23% of children benefiting from any government feeding program according to the 2022 Annual Poverty Indicators Survey (PSA, 2024).**This limited coverage stems primarily from the program's restriction to child development centers and Supervised Neighborhood Play programs (DSWD Memorandum Circular No.26 Series of 2024), effectively excluding the majority of vulnerable children who lack access to these facilities, contrary to the intent of the law.**

TABLE 1.
Historical Budget Allocation of the SFP (2022- proposed 2026)

DSWD SUPPLEMENTARY FEEDING PROGRAM			
Year	**Target**	**Allotment**	**Cost Per Hot meal**
2022	1,936,868	4,161,542,000	PHP 15
2023	1,833,505	5,200,416,000	PHP 15
2024	2,020,927	4,084,485,000	PHP 15
2025	1,583,316	5,182,950,000	PHP 25
2026 (NEP)	1,899,415	6,113,551,000	PHP 25

N.B. In 2023, an additional PHP 6 per hot meal was supplemented through Congressional insertion, raising the cost of each meal to Php 21.

Source: DSWD Presentation during the Joint Senate Committee Hearing last November 25, 2025; EDCOM II Year Two Report

EDCOM II estimates show that based on the 2024 Population Census, out of 6,671,183 2-4 year old children, there are about 373,586[1] who suffer from wasting. However, for the same year, only ~159,884 malnourished children in CDCs/DCCs/SNPs were covered by the DSWD SFP. This equates to just 43% of 373,586. Meanwhile, 213,702 children are unable to receive the intervention.

Further, research by PIDS reveals that current SFP implementation fails to achieve meaningful nutritional impact (Ulep, et al., 2024). According to the PIDS (2024) study, no significant differences exist in the proportion of children aged 3-4 meeting total energy and protein intake requirements between program participants and non-participants. The DSWD acknowledges that this ineffectiveness persists due to an insufficient cost per hot meal–PHP 15.00 since 2011 to PHP 25.00 in 2025–an adjustment that remains insufficient given sustained food price inflation.

> *In 2024, 213,702 children were unable to receive the intervention via the DSWD Supplemental Feeding Program.*

1 Based on 2024 Population Census 2-4 year old estimates and 2023 National Nutrition Survey results on prevalence of wasting for under-5 years old

The National Nutrition Council (NNC), tasked primarily by law to lead multiagency nutrition initiatives, operates with limited accountability measures and overlapping mandates among agencies. NNC has not fully delivered on its core responsibilities.

Based on the IRR of Republic Act No. 11037, a supplementary meal should provide at least one-third of the daily recommended dietary intake for children aged 3-5 years, equivalent to 420 kcal of energy and 5.7 g of protein for females, and 450 kcal of energy and 6 g of protein for males (DOST-FNRI, 2018). In a study by Ikeda et al. (2023), the supplemental food provided in daycare centers averaged 222 ± 61 kcal which falls short of the energy requirements for preschoolers aged 3-5 years (Table 2). Although protein intake met recommended levels, the meals demonstrated significant nutritional gaps particularly in vegetable and fruit servings (Ikeda, et al., 2023). **For nutrition challenges to be addressed in the early years, it is imperative for the government to ramp up investments in terms of both quantity and quality.**

TABLE 2.
Energy and Nutrient Content of Sample Menus in Select Daycare Centers

NUTRIENTS PER SERVING	REI (reference values)	DCC 1 (Pork Menudo) Malunggay with rice)	DCC 2 (Beef sinigang with rice)	DCC 3 (Pork nilaga with rice)	DCC 4 (Pork Menudo with rice)	MEAN ± SD
Energy (kcal)	420-450	253	173	143	318	222 ± 61
Protein (g)	7.0	8.9	18.7	5.6	8.6	10.4 ± 4.4
Fat (%E)	(15~30)	8.0	3.6	5.4	7.4	6.1 ± 1.5
Carbohydrate (%E)	(55~79)	35.0	16.6	18.2	54.3	31.0 ± 13.7
CrudeFiber (g)	3~4	0.8	0.4	0.9	1.4	0.9 ± 0.3
Calcium (mg)	184	49	34	33	53	42 ± 8
Phosphorus (mg)	167	116	142	73	122	113 ± 22
Iron (mg)	3	1..7	2.2	1.0	2.2	1.7 ± 0.4
Vitamin A (ug)	133	37	169	14	109	82 ± 54
Vitamin B_1 (mg)	0.2	0.11	0.08	0.07	0.11	0.09 ± 0.02
Vitamin B_2 (mg)	0.3	0.11	0.13	0.07	0.10	0.10 ± 0.02
Vitamin C (mg)	15	4	1	5	5	4 ± 2

Source: Ikeda, M., Agne, J. P., Lalap, B. A., & Felix, A. R. (2023). Survey on the feeding program in childcare learning centers in selected villages in Laguna, Philippines. Journal of Home Economics of Japan, *74(5), 254–264.*

ISSUE 4: GENUINE INTERAGENCY COORDINATION REMAINS NON-EXISTENT.

Despite policy attention through *Kalusugan ng Mag-Nanay Act* (Republic Act No. 1148) and *Masustansyang Pagkain Para Sa Batang Pilipino Act* (Republic Act No. 11037), nutrition interventions for children below five years old remain fragmented, poorly coordinated, and weakly targeted (Ulep, 2024). As articulated in the EDCOM II Year One Report, **government agencies operate as isolated programs rather than as part of an integrated early childhood care system, limiting both reach and effectiveness.** Without a coherent and fully-supported framework for early nutrition, the promise of holistic early development will remain out of reach for most Filipino children.

The National Nutrition Council (NNC), tasked primarily by law to lead multiagency nutrition initiatives, operates with limited accountability measures and overlapping mandates among agencies (EDCOM II Year One Report, 2024), themselves operating a Tutok Kainan Program that is divorced from efforts of the DOH itself. Under Section 14 of Republic Act No. 11148, the NNC is mandated to formulate national nutrition policies, integrate agency programs, coordinate and monitor implementation across sectors and LGUs, and lead joint planning and budgeting. The law also empowers NNC to ensure policy alignment, track funds, and call on agencies to fulfill their obligations. However, despite these mandates, hearings and consultations with NNC have revealed that the agency has not fully delivered on several of its core responsibilities, such as: (1) consolidating national nutrition data, (2) integrating DOH–DSWD–DILG reporting systems, (3) enforcing unified program standards for F1 KD implementation (4) coordinating agencies to ensure proper targeting and budgeting of nutrition programs, and (5) conducting monitoring and evaluation required to assess program efficacy and guide corrective action.

Without clear coordination among DSWD, DepEd, and the Department of Health (DOH), nutrition programs remain vulnerable to duplication, inconsistent targeting, and unaddressed gaps. While Section 14(e) of RA 11148 mandates the National Nutrition Council (NNC) to coordinate inter-agency planning and budgeting, facilitate fund release for approved programs, and monitor their implementation and public spending, financial support from both the national government and LGUs remains insufficient to ensure full coverage. The result is an uneven landscape in which some LGUs operate model programs, while others struggle to meet even basic nutrition requirements.

It is against this backdrop that former Co-Chairperson Alan Cayetano filed Senate Bill No. 416, or the Anti-Stunting Action Plan.

Critical policy gaps leave vulnerable populations without essential nutritional support. Notably, EDCOM II has also foregrounded a critical policy gap in nutrition interventions: while the First 1,000 Days are covered under Republic Act No. 11148, and Republic Act No. 11037 covers children aged 3 to 12 (Grade 6), leaving behind those between ages two to three—the same period during which nutritional outcomes between the richest and poorest diverge. With 51,494 two-year-olds enrolled in daycare centers requiring support, this legislative oversight represents a significant missed opportunity for early intervention (ECCD Provincial Monitoring Sheet as of 02 February 2025).

In addition, an estimated 127, 033 female adolescents were pregnant (FHSIS, 2024) but received no feeding nor micronutrient supplementation support from DepEd due to limitations in Republic Act No. 11037 which limits support only to students in Kinder up to Grade 6 (*Masustansyang Pagkain para sa Batang Pilipino Act*). These young mothers face heightened risks of delivering low birth weight and premature infants which perpetuate cycles of malnutrition and developmental delays (Marshall, et al., 2022).

In addition, an estimated 127, 033 female adolescents were pregnant (FHSIS, 2024) but received no feeding nor micronutrient supplementation support from DepEd.

EXPANSION OF NUTRITION PROGRAMS

EDCOM II has recommended critical reforms to strengthen the amendments to the *Masustansyang Pagkain para sa Batang Pilipino Act* (Republic Act No. 11037), emphasizing early and proactive intervention against stunting:

1. **Expanding the DepEd School-based Feeding Program (SBFP) to include nutritionally-at-risk pregnant adolescent mothers** given that stunting is rooted in the first 1,000 days and is strongly linked to maternal health and nutrition.

2. **Expanding the DSWD Supplemental Feeding Program (SFP) to cover children aged 2–3**, widening program modalities beyond after-school settings, and ensuring strategic targeting so that all malnourished children receive appropriate support.

To improve nutrition outcomes, both SBFP and SFP must also reform their meal standards to meet age-appropriate Recommended Energy Intake and ensure that young children achieve Minimum Acceptable Diet and Minimum Dietary Diversity. These reforms should be supported by nutrition counseling and food assistance initiatives for families.

TABLE 3.
National Government–Led Dietary Supplementation Programs

PROGRAM	TARGET BENEFICIARIES	INTERVENTION
Tutok Kainan	Nutritionally-at-risk pregnant women and underweight-for-age infants and young chilldren 6-23 months old (who are not wasted) in priority LGUs	**Duration:** 90 days (*pregnant and lactating women)* and 180 days *(infants and chilldren 6-23 months old)*
Supplementary Feeding Program	Children enrolled in public/LGU-run Child Development Centers (3-5 years old) Children enrolled in Supervised Neighborhood Play (2-3 years old)	**Duration:** 120 days; 5-7 days a week Provision of at least one fortified meal*
School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP)	Undernorished public school children from Kindergarten to Grade 6	**Duration:** 120 days Provision of at least one fortified meal*

Source: Authors' tabulation based on desk review

Note: This list of programs is only based on desk-review of existing laws and policies for national government-led supplementary feeding programs.

** A fortified meal refers to a meal that has been intentionally enhhanced withh essential micronutirients to improve its nutritional quality, meeting the level of calories and prottein prescribed by the National Nutrition Council (1/3 of thhe daily requirement as prescribed in the Philippine Dietary Reference Intake) (Republic Act No. 11037)*

Regional experience shows that integrated approaches work. Indonesia's experience demonstrates how community-based nutrition interventions can reduce chronic malnutrition. Between 2013 and 2018, the country's stunting rate fell from 37.2% to 27.7% following targeted local feeding, sanitation, and parental education initiatives (Ladia, Tiara, & Tarigan, 2025; Lameky, 2024). Studies performed in Africa and South Asia also reveal that Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) counseling combined with lipid-based nutrient supplements and WASH improvements effectively reduced anemia, iron deficiency, and vitamin B-12 deficiency among target populations (Stewart, et al., 2019). These gains highlight what can be achieved through convergence and local empowerment—principles already recognized in the Philippines' own policy framework but not yet fully operationalized.

Community-based nutritional interventions that integrate both nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programming offer a promising path toward reducing child stunting (Bhutta et al., 2008). Launched in 2023 and spearheaded by the DOH and DSWD in coordination with LGUs, the Philippine Multisectoral Nutrition Project (PMNP) adopts this integrated, whole-of-government approach. Its design incorporates evidence-based elements: geographic convergence in high-burden areas, combined supply- and demand-side strengthening, standardized behavior change communication, performance-based incentives for LGUs, and equity-focused targeting.

While the PMNP's design is sound, its coverage remains limited and slow to scale. The initial phase covers 275 LGUs from 2022 to 2026, with the subsequent PMNP Connect expanding to 580 LGUs from 2027 to 2031. Together, these phases will reach only 63% of all LGUs over a decade-long implementation period. This still leaves more than a third of local governments without access to integrated nutrition support.

Progress against stunting is possible when communities are mobilized, responsibilities are shared, and resources flow where they matter most.

ISSUE 5: STUNTING DATA ACROSS AGENCIES ARE INCOMPATIBLE AND FRAGMENTED.

Effective nutrition interventions require accurate, timely, and accessible data, yet current programs operate on fragmented and belated information, as well as incompatible systems. The DOST-FNRI conducts the National Nutrition Survey every five years only with regional updating surveys in between. The NNC oversees the annual Operation Timbang Plus (OPT+) which is implemented by barangay nutrition scholars to measure stunting, wasting, and underweight among children 0–59 months. Meanwhile, the DOH collects health facility data and DILG tracks barangay functionality through its governance indicators. **A PIDS study reveals that data from OPT tends to underestimate the stunting problem (Herrin, et al., 2018), and significant differences between OPT+ data and DOST-FNRI local surveys could misguide program implementation** leading to potential misclassification of children and misallocation of resources (Ramirez, et al. 2019).

These datasets are defined inconsistently, collected at irregular intervals, and even more critically, not shared across agencies or made accessible to LGUs. This leaves local implementers without the information they need to identify at-risk children and allocate resources effectively. The Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) reports in their final evaluation of the PPAN 2017-2022 that at the barangay level, local policymakers and implementers did not readily identify stunting concerns or understand it as a key preventable and reversible nutrition issue, and as such, nutrition action plans demonstrated less alignment with national priorities (IPA, 2019).



RECOMMENDATIONS

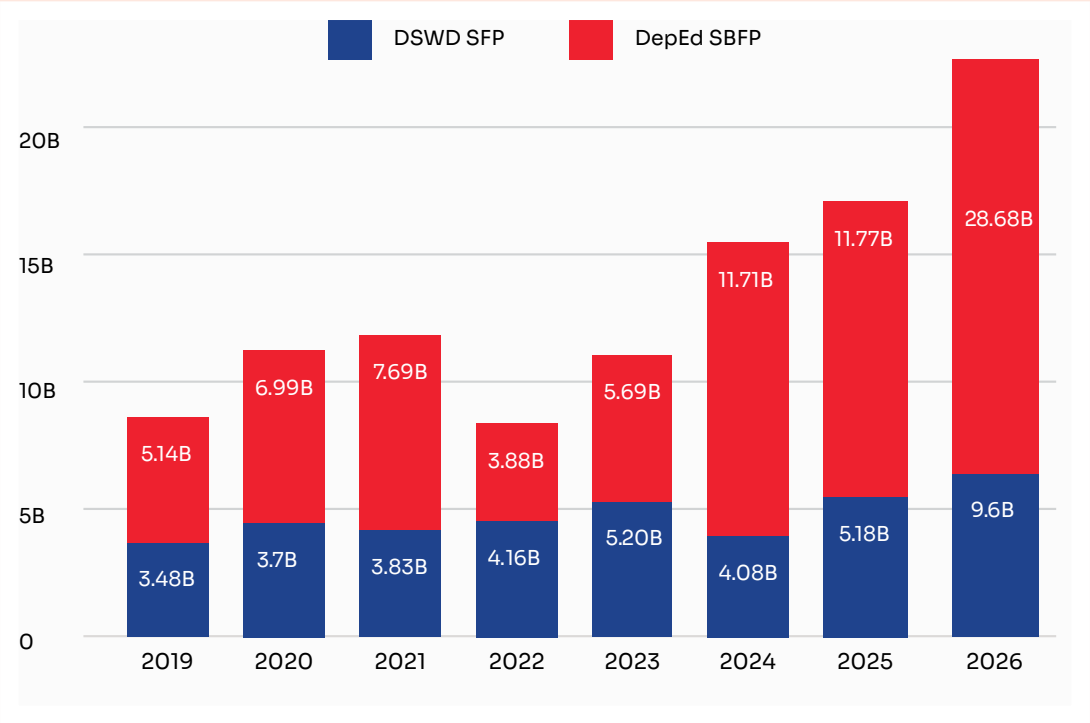
1. **Empower and hold the NNC accountable to enforce joint planning and monitoring among the DOH, DSWD, DepEd, DILG, and other agencies, ensuring shared accountability for results.** Complementarities between the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps)* and the *Food Stamp Program* should be explored to create an integrated approach that addresses both maternal and child nutrition. Implementing robust monitoring and evaluation systems would also generate evidence for continuous program improvement and resource allocation decisions. Effective coordination and planning requires establishing unified planning frameworks, synchronized implementation timelines, and integrated monitoring systems that track beneficiaries across programs. Joint targeting mechanisms would ensure that vulnerable children receive complementary interventions rather than fragmentary services. In addition, harmonizing nutritional assessment tools across agencies would improve targeting accuracy and program coordination.

2. **Establish an integrated ECCD data system to enable evidence-based targeting and resource allocation.** While Republic Act No. 10410 mandated the establishment of a National ECCD Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, and the ECCD Council has been developing a National ECCD Monitoring and Evaluation Accountability System (NEMEAS) since 2020 with UNICEF support, which aims to serve as a centralized repository of data on ECCD indicators collected by the Council's member agencies progress has been slow. The passage of Republic Act No. 12199 strengthens monitoring and evaluation through the inclusion of ECCD-related indicators in the Seal of Good Local Governance to recognize LGUs championing ECCD services. The ECCD Council, in coordination with DILG, DOST-FNRI, DOH, NNC, and DSWD, must prioritize the urgent operationalization of an interoperable nutrition data system that consolidates child-level data across health, nutrition, and education domains, and ensures that LGUs have direct, real-time access to barangay-disaggregated information. Without such a system, local governments will continue to operate blind, unable to identify which children are malnourished, where they are located, and what interventions are reaching them.

While the PMNP's design is sound, its coverage remains limited and slow to scale.

3. **Ensure convergent budgeting of nutrition programs in the early years.** National and local budgeting must adopt an equity lens to reach nutritionally at-risk children in lower-income municipalities. Programs should be guided by evidence from poverty maps, malnutrition data, and household surveys. Current budget allocations reveal misaligned priorities with the Department of Education's School-Based Feeding Program receiving PHP 11.78 billion compared to DSWD's PHP 6.11 billion for younger children in the proposed FY 2026 budget (Figure 6). This inverse relationship contradicts evidence emphasizing early intervention's superior cost-effectiveness (Heckman, 2008). Redirecting resources toward the first 1,000 days, followed by enhanced support for ages 2-4, would maximize developmental returns on nutritional investments. Strengthening program convergence budgeting represents a critical mechanism for maximizing nutritional investments through enhanced multisectoral harmonization and coordination.

FIGURE 6.
DSWD SFP and DepEd Budget Allocation 2019-2026



Sources: General Appropriations Act 2019-2026

4. **Ensure the efficacy and sustainability of feeding programs.** First, amending Republic Act No. 11037 to include two-year-old children in supplemental feeding programs would close a critical coverage gap during a sensitive developmental period. Second, expanding program modalities beyond center-based delivery would enable reaching children lacking access to formal childcare facilities. Third, extending school-based feeding programs to pregnant adolescents with coordinated DOH support for micronutrient supplementation would address intergenerational malnutrition transmission. Reframing the "Milk Feeding Program" as a "Supplementary Milk Program" would permit alternative dairy products when fresh milk proves logistically infeasible.

From Daycare to Child Development Center



Barangay Magsaysay Daycare Center, Bohol



Barangay Cambagui Child Development Center, Bohol

Photo Credit: ECCD Council Secretariat

PRIORITY AREA 2: SUPPLY-SIDE FACTORS

FINDINGS

ISSUE 1: INFRASTRUCTURE GAPS CONTINUE TO LIMIT UNIVERSAL ECCD COVERAGE.

The country's supply of Child Development Centers (CDCs) remains far below what is needed to achieve universal access. *Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS)* and 2024 *APIS* data show that around 4,600 barangays do not have an established CDC or 11% of the total number of barangay in the country (Table 4). The conversion process—upgrading facilities, improving sanitation, and ensuring age-appropriate spaces—has progressed slowly across low-income municipalities. Since 2015, only 2,241 daycare centers out of the 16,430 target, or a mere 14.2%, have been converted into model CDCs. These still operate only basic day care centers rather than fully compliant CDCs that meet the minimum center standards set by the ECCD Council after the passage of Republic Act No. 10410. Regional disparities also exist with accomplishments ranging from 0% (0 out of 2,777 centers in BARMM) to 6.7% (218 out of 3,280 centers in Region 9) (see Figure 7). In low-income class LGUs, resource constraints hamper compliance with ECCD standards.

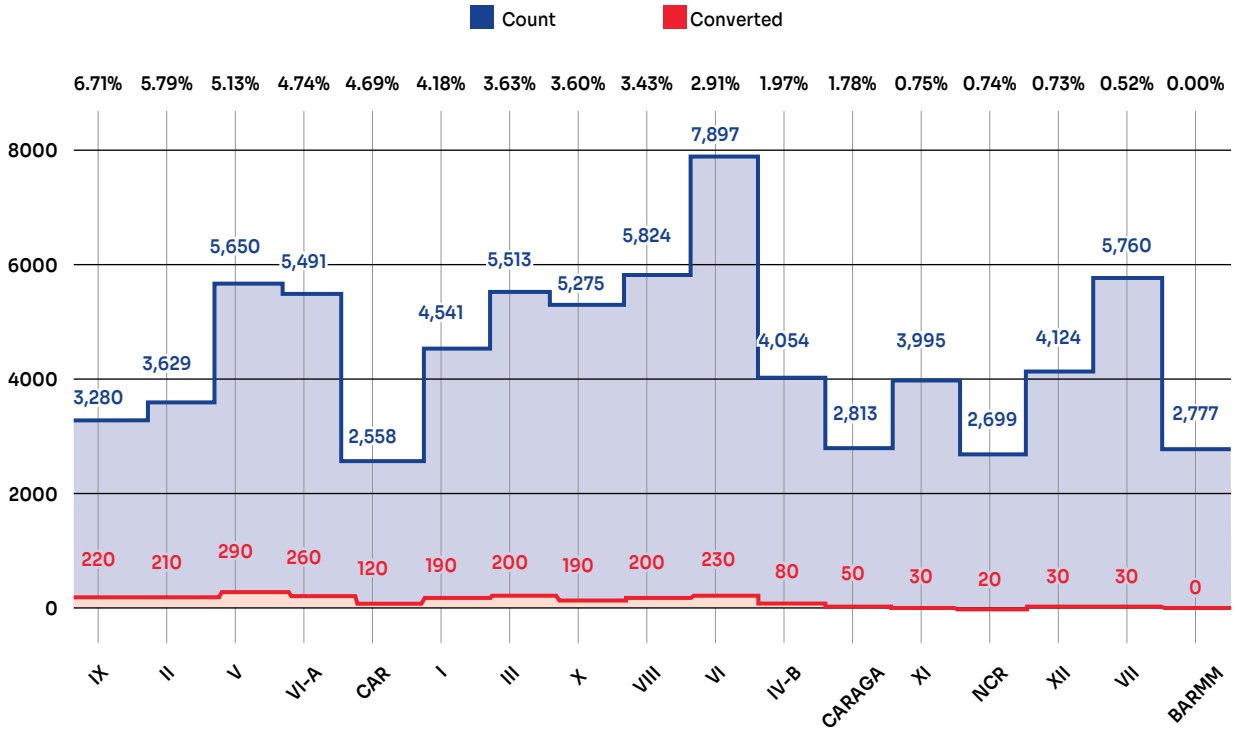
TABLE 4.
Barangays without CDCs, 2024 APIS

Region	Count of Barangay w/o CDC	Total No. of Barangay	Percent
National Capital Region (NCR)	761	1710	44.5
Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)	870	2595	33.53
Region IV-A (CALABARZON)	635	3993	15.9
Region VIII (Eastern Visayas)	491	4365	11.25
Region VI (Western Visayas)	337	3450	9.77
Region X (Northern Mindanao)	153	2022	7.57
Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR)	86	1178	7.3
Region V (Bicol Region)	245	3471	7.06
MIMAROPA Region	96	1460	6.58
Region III (Central Luzon)	199	3105	6.41
Region I (Ilocos Region)	209	3267	6.4
Negros Island Region (NIR)	78	1292	6.04
Region VII (Central Visayas)	138	2312	5.97
Region II (Cagayan Valley)	125	2311	5.41
Region XI (Davao Region)	53	1162	4.56
Region IX (Zamboanga Peninsula)	67	1904	3.52
Region XIII (Caraga)	37	1311	2.82
Region XII (SOCCSKSARGEN)	24	1096	2.19
Grand Total	**4604**	**42004**	**10.96**

Source: Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS); APIS 2024

> *Since 2015, only 2,241 daycare centers out of the 16,430 target, or a mere 14.2%, have been converted into model CDCs.*

FIGURE 7.
Number of DCCs receiving Financial Assistance vs. Total Number of Centers (2025-present)



Source: ECCD Council Accomplishment as of August 2025

Notably, Philippine ECCD legislation has long recognized the importance of diverse service delivery modalities beyond the traditional Child Development Center. As early as Republic Act No. 10410, the law explicitly provided for home-based programs—including neighborhood-based play groups, family child care programs, and parent education and home visiting programs—as legitimate ECCD delivery mechanisms (Sec. 4 of Republic Act No. 10410). This mandate was retained and even expanded under Republic Act No. 12199, which further allows for "innovations and alternative modalities" in ECCD service delivery (Sec. 4 of Republic Act No. 12199). Despite this clear statutory basis, the operationalization of home-based and alternative delivery modes remains largely unfulfilled with the national ECCD system continuing to prioritize center-based approaches at the expense of more flexible, community-responsive alternatives.

PROGRESS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- In 2025, the President allocated P1 Billion to support the establishment of more than 300 child development centers in the poorest barangays without functional CDCs, including BARMM
- Under the 2026 GAA, a total of PHP 37.5 billion has been allocated to the LGSF, which includes, for the first time, funding support for converting the remaining day care centers to standard CDCs in 4th-5th income class LGUs, and for hiring of CDWs in 4th-5th class municipalities.

ISSUE 2: THE ECCD WORKFORCE PIPELINE IS INSUFFICIENT AND UNEVENLY PREPARED.

A strong ECCD system depends not just on buildings, but on people who can bring learning to life. As of 2022, only 6,788 Child Development Workers (CDWs) hold valid accreditation, and no national certification system exists for their professional advancement (*ECCD Council Annual Report*, 2022). Through the efforts of EDCOM II, a National Certificate Level 3 in ECCD Services was created through TESDA, as well as an ongoing effort to create a diploma program in early childhood education through CHED. Many workers serve without standardized training or clear career pathways, making quality inconsistent across LGUs. Furthermore, the latest dataset from the ECCD Council reveals that 17.6% of the incumbent CDW population only have a high school diploma as their highest educational attainment (Table 5) (ECCD-IS 2023 data as of May 2025). Regional disparities also exist in the pool of CDWs who are only high school graduates—ranging from just 4% in Region 1 to as high as 31.6% in Region 9.

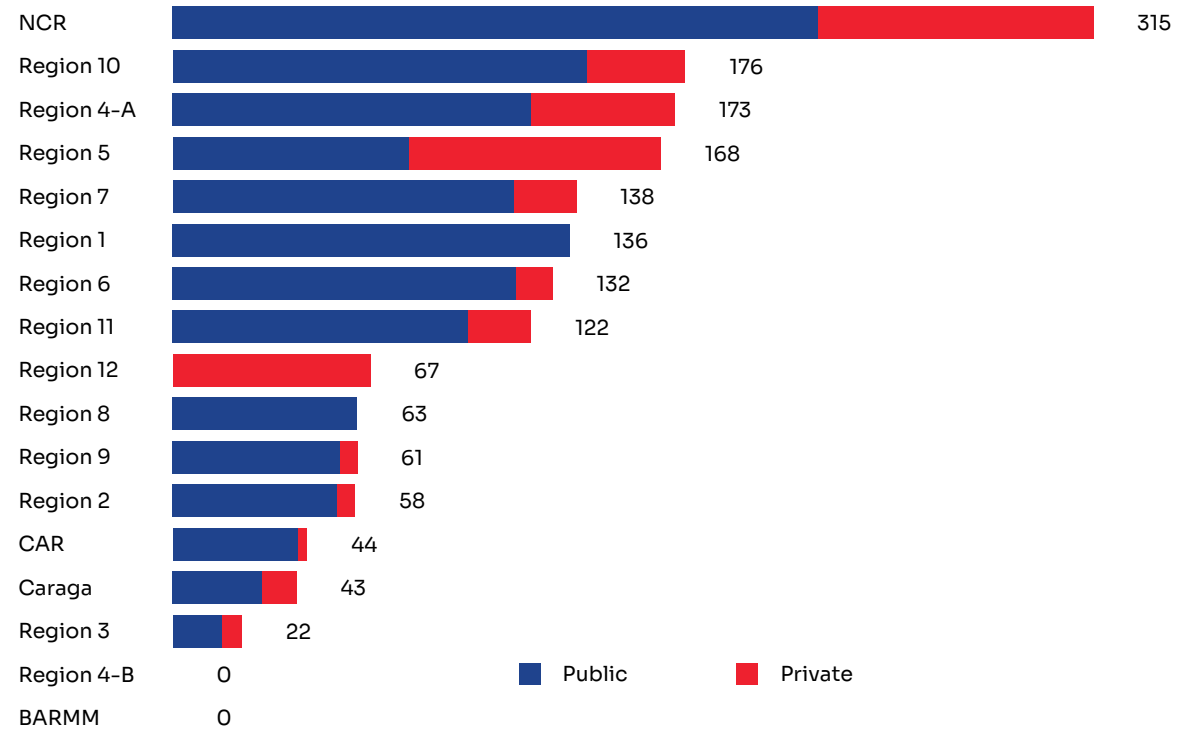
TABLE 5.
Child Development Workers Profile From ECCD-IS (as of May 2025)

REGION	WITH GRADUATE DEGREES (Phd, MA, MS)	COLLEGE GRADUATE	4TH YEAR COLLEGE	3RD YEAR COLLEGE	2ND YEAR COLLEGE	1ST YEAR COLLEGE	VOCATIONAL	SHS OR 4TH YEAR HS GRADUATE	SUBTOTAL
BARMM	4	1,489	107	140	250	160	45	652	2,847
CAR	6	1,658	84	148	297	221	149	430	2,993
CARAGA	2	1,411	50	151	288	168	154	470	2,694
CO	0	37	2	2	5	2	5	7	60
I	9	3,243	139	222	249	83	250	176	4,371
II	7	2,514	100	150	249	70	156	198	3,444
III	14	3,642	199	314	442	179	453	322	5,565
IV-A	16	2,737	235	356	665	264	489	528	5,290
IV-B	4	1,363	108	256	489	367	388	962	3,937
IX	5	1,364	96	237	426	417	117	1,227	3,889
NCR	9	1,737	118	205	263	84	117	66	2,599
V	12	2,933	243	343	569	357	361	1,327	6,145
VI	8	3,882	190	365	601	306	644	1,011	7,007
VII	16	2,802	135	390	864	632	193	1,877	6,909
VIII	3	3,026	139	382	760	381	209	1,514	6,414
X	4	1,957	192	329	526	400	223	1,085	4,716
XI	8	2,105	123	258	316	305	211	572	3,898
XII	7	1,609	111	224	339	181	207	986	3,664
SUBTOTAL:	134	39,509	2,371	4,472	7,598	4,577	4,371	**13,410**	**76,442**

Source: 2023 ECCD-IS [Dataset as of May 2025], ECCD Council

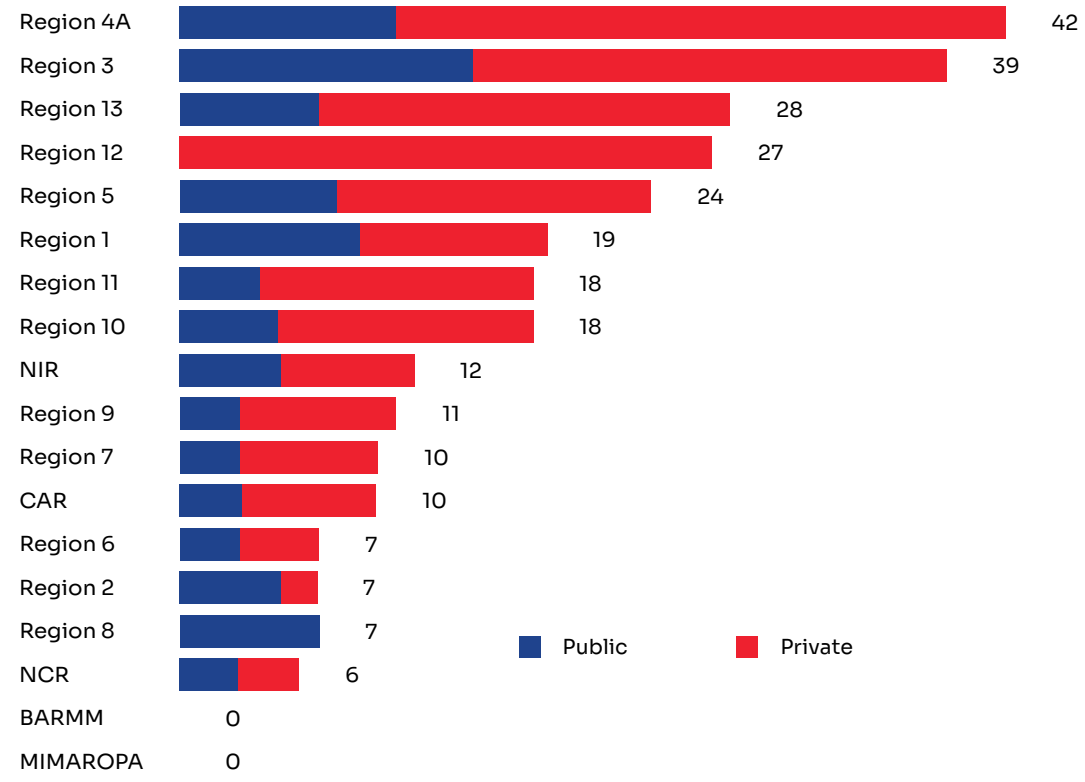
The limited pool of Bachelor of Early Childhood Education (BECEd) graduates cannot meet nationwide demand especially in remote and low-income areas (*Diaz*, 2023). In SY 2021-2022, there were only 1,718 ECE graduates in SY 2021-2022, but only ~723 were estimated to pass the LET (SY 2021-2022 CHED data). However, there are about 22 million children from age 0-9 that fall under early childhood education. Regional disparities also exist with the number of early childhood education graduates with NCR producing the most number while Region 4-B and BARMM producing zero in SY 2021-2022 (Figure 8). Moreover, BECEd programs are misaligned with ECCD competency standards: graduates are prepared for teaching Grades 1–3, while ECCD work centers on ages 0–4 (*UP ACTRC presentation to EDCOM II*, 2023).

FIGURE 8.
Number of ECE Graduates in SY 2021-2022, by region



Source:CHED-OPRKM, AY 2021-2022 Enrollment Data, submitted September 2025

FIGURE 9.
Active ECCD Bachelors Providers in SY 2024-2025, by region



Source: CHED-OPRKM, AY 2024-2025 Enrollment Data, submitted September 2025

The chronic undercompensation of Child Development Workers has long undermined the quality and sustainability of ECCD service delivery. Prior to Republic Act No. 12199, EDCOM II found that 89% of CDTs and CDWs remained in non-permanent positions with average monthly salaries of only PHP 5,000—and in many cases, honoraria as low as PHP 1,000. The passage of Republic Act No. 12199 in May 2025 directly addresses this by mandating minimum salary grades (at least SG 8 for CDWs and SG 11 for CDTs) and requiring LGUs to create plantilla positions for at least one CDT and one CDW per Child Development Center. The law further professionalizes the ECCD workforce by establishing qualification standards, certification requirements in collaboration with CHED and TESDA, and scholarship pathways for CDWs to complete bachelor's degrees and pursue licensure. These provisions represent a significant policy shift from treating CDWs as informal community volunteers to recognizing them as professional educators deserving of commensurate compensation and security of tenure.



PROGRESS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The *TESDA–ECCD Council Joint Memorandum Circular* signed on 11 June 2025 now provides for standardized training and assessment for CDWs in line with TESDA's new Training Regulations for an NC III in ECCD Services. These cover competencies in managing center operations, tracking child development, and implementing ECCD curricula (*EDCOM II, 11 June 2025*).

Furthermore, TESDA has successfully allocated PHP 240M in funding for the scholarships for 9,796 incumbent CDWs—80M from the 2025 GAA and an additional 160M from TESDA's scholarship programs. Funding for another batch of nearly 10,000 incumbent CDWs have also been sustained for FY 2026.



The most effective age for intervention among Learners with Disabilities (LwDs) is between two and five years old (IDInsight, forthcoming). Yet the Child Find System under Republic Act No. 11650—mandated to identify and support these learners early—has not been fully operationalized. Meanwhile, in the *DepEd Learner Information System*, about two-thirds of LwDs are tagged without formal diagnosis, relying only on teachers' observations. Field reports note that screenings through tools like the *Multi-Factored Assessment Tool (MFAT)* and *Early Childhood Development (ECD)* checklists are often administered by untrained teachers and used reactively rather than proactively (IDInsight, forthcoming). This compromises accuracy and delays early intervention.

Transitions from early childhood programs to kindergarten must be made systematic. The progression from day care or CDC to kindergarten remains disjointed. During EDCOM II field visits, focus group discussions and interviews reveal that in many LGUs, there are no standardized protocols for sharing child records, assessment results, or developmental profiles between ECCD centers and public schools. Without coordinated profiling and assessment, gains made during early learning are easily lost, and opportunities for timely and targeted interventions are missed. ECCD Council consultations highlight that a smooth transition requires not only physical readiness but pedagogical alignment—curricula that recognize what children have already learned before entering formal schooling. **A strong start in ECCD should naturally lead to a strong start in school—but the bridge remains under construction.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Expand access to early childhood education through diversified delivery modalities.** The ECCD Council must prioritize the establishment of at least one CDC in every barangay with a strategic focus on the low-income class municipalities that currently have none. Targeted infrastructure support should be directed toward fourth- and fifth-class LGUs through capital grants or shared financing schemes. However, center-based expansion alone will not achieve universal access.

2. **Prioritize conversion of daycares to child development centers.** Many existing day care centers, established under Republic Act No. 6972, continue to operate as holding facilities rather than as learning environments that nurture children's cognitive, socio-emotional, and physical development. The ECCD Council, in coordination with DILG and LGUs, must establish a clear conversion pathway with defined timelines, minimum standards for facilities and learning materials, and technical assistance packages to support barangays in meeting CDC requirements under Republic Act No. 12199. Progress on conversion should be tracked as a key indicator in the Seal of Good Local Governance with LGUs given both the resources and accountability mechanisms to complete the transition.

3. **Strengthen and professionalize the ECCD workforce.** The government must move urgently to close the gap in trained and accredited ECCD professionals. The current TESDA NC III program should expand into a national career framework with scholarships and continuing education through CHED-accredited institutions. Permanent plantilla positions for Child Development Teachers (CDTs) and CDWs as mandated in Republic Act No. 12199 should also be institutionalized to ensure retention and professional dignity.

4. **Integrate ECCD NC III into Senior High School to expand the pool of qualified CDWs.** TESDA, DepEd, and the ECCD Council should jointly design a Senior High School pathway that embeds the ECCD NC III certification within existing curriculum tracks. This alignment would allow learners to gain foundational caregiving and early-learning competencies before graduation, creating a steady stream of trained workers ready to serve in Child Development Centers or pursue higher qualifications in Early Childhood Education.

5. **Improve data systems and resource coordination.** The absence of reliable, consolidated ECCD data limits both planning and accountability. A universal ECCD database must be developed to integrate inputs from DSWD, DepEd, DOH, NNC, and LGUs. This system should track infrastructure, personnel, enrollment, and developmental outcomes to support evidence-based interventions. Collaboration with the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) for data harmonization through CBMS and APIS modules can fill current information gaps. Better data can ensure resources are directed to underserved municipalities and vulnerable populations.

6. **Strengthen ECCD–DepEd linkages for continuity of learning.** DepEd and the ECCD Council should jointly review early childhood assessments, student profiling, and learning resource development to align competencies across ages 0–8. To operationalize this continuity, DepEd and the ECCD Council should issue joint guidance defining a minimum transition package from ECCD to Kindergarten (learner profile and relevant screening results, where applicable), standard handover/referral protocols for children needing targeted support, and aligned learning resources across ECCD and K–3, including offline-ready resources for low-connectivity areas.



PRIORITY AREA 3: DEMAND-SIDE FACTORS

FINDINGS

ISSUE 1: PERCEPTIONS OF AGE AND READINESS CONTINUE TO DELAY ENROLLMENT.

The 2021 Functional Literacy, Education, and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) surfaced a belief among 97% of parents surveyed that children under five are "too young" for structured early learning. Field interviews confirm that many households equate education with formal schooling, not early stimulation. As noted in the EDCOM II Year One and Year Two Reports, this misconception directly suppresses demand for ECCD services which creates a self-reinforcing cycle where low participation rates discourage investment in programs, and further limits community exposure to ECCD benefits.

Conjares et al. (2025) report that in 2024, only about one in ten households—13.4% nationally—with children aged 0–4 attended any ECCD program. Participation also varies sharply by region: Central Luzon reports the lowest rate at 7%, while Ilocos Region records the highest at 22.6%. Based on the 2024 Annual Poverty Indicator Survey (APIS), ECCD participation rate remains low at 29.12% with regional participation being the lowest in Region 3 (11.2%), Region 4A (17.35%) and NCR (19%) (Table 6).

The disparity indicates that even where services exist, demand-generation strategies must address region-specific barriers: agricultural communities may prioritize children's participation in household labor, urban poor families may lack awareness of free programs, and middle-income households may opt for private alternatives they perceive as higher quality. These figures show that perception and awareness still dictate whether families see early learning as necessary which makes demand-side interventions through parent education and community mobilization as critical as expanding service provision.

TABLE 6.
ECCD Participation Rate Among Children Aged 3–4 Years, by Region (APIS, 2024)

REGION	ECCD PARTICIPATION RATE
Negros Island Region	51.44
Region I - Ilocos Region	51.07
Region X - Northern Mindanao	43.06
Region XIII - Caraga	42.57
Region VI - Western Visayas	41.88
Region XII - SOCCSKSARGEN	39.11
Region VIII - Eastern Visayas	35.59
Region VII - Central Visayas	35.41
Region IX - Zamboanga Peninsula	33.67
Region V- Bicol	31.04
MIMAROPA Region	30.05
Region XI - Davao	27.98
BARMM	25.82
Cordillera Administrative Region	25.32
Region II - Cagayan Valley	24.01
National Capital Region	19
Region IVA - CALABARZON	17.35
Region III - Central Luzon	11.21
TOTAL	**29.12**

N.B. Weighted population counts
- For each region and age group, the weighted count (population estimate of children) was computed by summing the survey weights.
- This represents the estimated number of children in the population (not just in the survey sample).

Focus group discussions in 2023 and 2024 by EDCOM II with families in Iloilo and Leyte also reveal that the limited operating hours (around 2-3 hours a day) of daycare centers and CDCs pose a challenge due to logistical difficulties (e.g., travel duration, transportation costs, variable work shifts, etc). The challenges of geographic accessibility and inadequate operating hours are well-documented across countries at varying income levels (Devercelli & Beaton-Day, 2025). In Ghana, only seven childcare centers serve the 42 markets across Accra which leaves market vendors with extremely limited options for proximate care while they earn a living. Even in high-income countries with robust social protection systems, preschool schedules do not fully address working parents' childcare needs. In Sweden, public preschool entitlements amount to 525 hours per year or equivalent to half-day coverage. Similarly, Chile's public preschool system provides only 22 hours of service weekly. These arrangements, while valuable for early learning, leave significant gaps that families must fill through other means, whether informal care networks, private services, or reduced labor force participation (Devercelli & Beaton-Day, 2025).

These examples illustrate that the tension between ECCD program design and the realities of working families is not a uniquely Philippine concern but a systemic challenge requiring deliberate policy attention worldwide.



Child-rearing remains a communal effort shaped by Filipino kinship. As Lasco (2025) observes, "pag-aalaga" in the Philippines is collective. Parents, grandparents, kasambahays, and even older siblings ("panganay") share responsibility for the young. This multigenerational network represents an untapped demand-generation asset: each caregiver becomes a potential advocate for ECCD when properly informed. Teachers in child-development centers, barangay health workers, and church volunteers influence parenting norms in different ways, producing a mosaic of practices that reflect socio-economic and community differences. This distributed caregiving system offers multiple entry points for demand-side interventions (Lasco, 2025). ECCD programs that embrace this ecosystem–training multiple family members, scheduling flexibly for working parents, creating roles for participating grandparents–can convert the Filipino kinship structure from a barrier into a multiplier for sustained demand.

As Lasco (2025) observes, "pag-aalaga" in the Philippines is collective. Parents, grandparents, kasambahays, and even older siblings ("panganay") share responsibility for the young.

> *Only about half (48%) of Filipino households with children aged 0–4 own educational toys, and only two in five (40%) have educational books.*

Parental migration, shifting family structures, and class realities weaken developmental continuity. Roughly one in every four Filipino children will experience a period of parental absence due to migration (Conde, 2008; Lam & Yeoh, 2019). While remittances improve nutrition and material conditions, children left behind often receive limited emotional and cognitive stimulation. Substitute caregivers typically prioritize caretaking over conversation or play. Without guidance, developmental consistency erodes. Responsive ECCD policies require a paradigm shift: away from a singular focus on parents alone, but on inclusive programs that engage parent-substitutes. Efforts may include the integration of ECCD modules in DepEd's curriculum for MAPEH, as well as TESDA training regulations on caregiving and even housekeeping.

Home-learning environments remain thin in resources and stimulation. On average, only about half (48%) of Filipino households with children aged 0–4 own educational toys, and only two in five (40%) have educational books (Ulep et al., 2025; Conjares et al., 2025). Caregiver awareness of recommended positive-parenting practices is similarly limited: just 17–21.8% of households report knowledge of all key behaviors such as daily reading, responsive talk, and positive discipline. This confluence of material scarcity and information gaps means that early learning depends almost entirely on center-based services that many children cannot access. The home is the child's first classroom for over eleven million zero to four year old Filipino children (PSA 2020 Census), however, it remains under-resourced and under-guided.

Learning materials are present in 90% of CDCs, but the quality is inadequate for developmental impact. An EDCOM II-Ateneo study on mapping learning resource materials across all 17 regions reveals that while 90% of Child Development Centers possess some educational resources, serious concerns persist regarding their quality, developmental appropriateness, and curricular alignment (Teves, Sampang, & Candelario, 2025). Numerous centers continue to depend on outdated materials from previous donations, teacher-made substitutes, or rudimentary visual aids such as letter charts that fail to address the integrated developmental domains outlined in the National Early Learning Curriculum.

The deficiency is most severe for infants, toddlers, and children with special needs: developmentally suitable resources for the 0–2 age group are scarce nationwide, while adaptive materials for learners with disabilities are effectively unavailable. The study's classification of regions into six typologies exposes pronounced inequities. NCR and CALABARZON enjoy comparatively robust local government financing and systematic CDW assignments, whereas grassroots-driven but financially constrained regions including Cagayan Valley, Western Visayas, and Caraga function on shoestring budgets and rely extensively on CDW creativity and family contributions. In Cagayan Valley, a provincial allocation of PHP 500,000 must cover 419 centers, yielding approximately PHP 1,200 per facility annually which is far below the estimated PHP 200,000 per center needed for adequate provisioning, a shortfall totaling PHP 83.8 million (Teves, Sampang, & Candelario, 2025).

Compounding supply-side constraints, existing materials often go underused because Child Development Workers receive inadequate preparation and ongoing support. Many CDWs reported feeling ill-equipped to modify resources for different developmental stages or to accommodate learners with disabilities; in areas with severe resource limitations, workers frequently spend their own money on printing costs or fashion teaching aids from household items like plastic bottle caps, wooden clips, and repurposed containers.



Bureaucratic procurement systems further aggravate these difficulties. One region documented waiting periods of nearly half a year for material delivery, while cumbersome bidding requirements and dependence on externally funded kits compromise both quality and supply reliability (Teves, Sampang, & Candelario, 2025).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Design and implement sustained, community-based awareness campaigns, in coordination with LGUs and partner agencies, to normalize early learning for ages 0–4 and reframe ECCD participation as a fundamental investment in child development rather than an optional enrichment activity.** Campaign messaging should emphasize the irreversibility of early developmental windows and the long-term cognitive, socioemotional, and economic returns of quality early stimulation.

2. **Give particular attention to engaging fathers, grandparents, siblings, and kasambahays, who play significant roles in Filipino households but are often excluded from parenting interventions.** These campaigns should be delivered through multiple, reinforcing channels: barangay assemblies and purok meetings, routine health and nutrition contacts (i.e., prenatal visits, immunization schedules, Operation Timbang), religious gatherings, and community radio and social media platforms. Frontline workers including Barangay Health Workers, Barangay Nutrition Scholars, and CDWs should be trained as ECCD advocates equipped with standardized key messages and simple discussion guides.

3. **Accompany awareness efforts with parallel investment in low-cost, high-impact learning materials that equip households to translate knowledge into daily practice.** The ECCD Council should support the development and mass distribution of culturally appropriate, mother tongue-based resources such as illustrated story cards, counting and sorting kits, interactive play guides, and locally printed picture books. Distribution should be integrated into existing touchpoints such as health centers, CDCs, feeding programs to maximize reach and reinforce the link between awareness and action.

LEARNING THROUGH PLAY: BUILDING FOUNDATIONS FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

Young children learn best when they are actively engaged in meaningful, hands-on experiences rather than passive recipients of instruction. Play serves as the primary mechanism through which children make sense of their environment, develop critical competencies, and lay the groundwork for future learning (World Bank, 2025).

What does play-based learning look like?

- Moving - Dancing, running, climbing, and jumping
- Building - Stacking blocks, arranging stones, or constructing with boxes
- Creating - Drawing, singing, and storytelling
- Pretending -Playing house, acting out market scenes, or imitating community roles
- Playing games - Taking turns, following simple rules, and cooperating with others

These activities should reflect local traditions, native languages, and familiar community practices (Jensen et al., 2019; World Bank, 2024).

What are examples of resources that support play-based learning?

- Books - Picture books with simple stories, wordless books for storytelling practice, books in the mother tongue, and books showing familiar local settings
- Everyday items: Pots, spoons, empty containers, fabrics, sponges, cotton buds
- Natural materials -Leaves, sticks, stones, shells, sand
- Recycled materials -Bottle caps, old magazines for cutting, egg cartons, cardboard boxes

Notably, high-quality play experiences do not depend on costly commercial products. Everyday household items, recycled materials, and objects found in nature can all serve as effective learning tools **when accompanied by responsive, intentional adult engagement** (World Bank & UNICEF, 2025).



4. **Strengthen the learning resource ecosystem through financing, training, and coordination**

   - Require LGUs to allocate funds for ECCD learning resources
   - Direct attention to the earliest developmental period by designing resource packages tailored to infants and toddlers that emphasize multi-sensory engagement, caregiver-child interaction, and parenting.
   - In coordination with the National Book Development Board (NBDB), ensure that materials reflect diverse learner needs by requiring that each developmental domain includes disability-accessible resources while incorporating local language content and culturally grounded materials for Indigenous and ethnolinguistically distinct communities.

5. **Leverage existing community programs to reach caregivers where they are.** Partnerships with barangay nutrition scholars, health workers, and the DSWD's Parent Effectiveness Program can integrate ECCD modules into routine family-development sessions. Barangay health centers can distribute take-home learning kits alongside growth monitoring, while religious and civic groups can host parent circles on play-based learning. Coordination through local ECCD offices should ensure that messages on nutrition, health, and early education reinforce one another.

6. **Explore incorporating developmentally appropriate ECCD competencies into MAPEH's health component, particularly within family health content areas.** This would ensure that adolescents, many of whom already function as surrogate caregivers for younger siblings in Filipino households acquire foundational child development knowledge before assuming these responsibilities. TESDA, in coordination with the ECCD Council, could revise relevant modules to incorporate current research on responsive caregiving, stimulation through play, and age-appropriate learning activities.

   DSWD operates an intergenerational program that brings together senior citizens and young children in communities where both day care centers and senior citizen facilities exist (Box x). These existing mechanisms can be adapted to provide grandparents and older relatives with training on contemporary ECCD practices, and acknowledge their central role in Filipino caregiving while honoring their accumulated wisdom (Lasco & Mendoza, 2025).

   Building on trusted community networks will help transform ECCD from an optional service into a shared social norm (Lasco & Mendoza, 2025).

These existing mechanisms can be adapted to provide grandparents and older relatives with training on contemporary ECCD practices, and acknowledge their central role in Filipino caregiving while honoring their accumulated wisdom (Lasco & Mendoza, 2025).



"APO KO: KWENTO NI LOLO'T LOLA, GABAY NG KABATAAN" PROGRAM

The "Apo Ko: Kwento ni Lolo't Lola, Gabay ng Kabataan" program is a DSWD initiative that seeks to enhance older persons' sense of purpose and fulfillment while simultaneously building life skills, social well-being, and values among young children. The program connects seniors residing in DSWD centers and residential care facilities with children ages 4 to 5 who attend early childhood care sessions, aiming to achieve mutual benefit for both age groups (DSWD, 2025). It was launched in February 2025 at the Haven for the Elderly in Tanay, Rizal, as part of DSWD's efforts to address generational disconnection (Philippine Information Agency, 2025).

The "Dream Team" or senior volunteers are trained in child protection and development principles before engaging with children. These volunteers are aged 60 and above and commit their time and capabilities to conduct sessions with young learners (DSWD, 2025). The pilot drew elderly participants from DSWD's Haven for the Elderly and the Golden Reception and Action Center for the Elderly and Other Special Cases (GRACES) in Quezon City (Philippine Information Agency, 2025). Program activities include narrative sessions where seniors lead storytelling for children at child development centers, as well as collaborative workshops where elderly participants and children work together on hands-on creative projects combining traditional crafts with contemporary approaches. The initiative is structured to build a supportive intergenerational community that enables knowledge transfer from older to younger generations while cultivating empathy, mutual understanding, and cooperation (DSWD, 2025).



PRIORITY AREA 4: GOVERNANCE AND FINANCING OF ECCD

FINDINGS

ISSUE 1: FRAGMENTED GOVERNANCE DIVIDES RESPONSIBILITY ACROSS AGENCIES.

The result is a structure that mirrors bureaucracy rather than child development, where policies are well-designed in isolation but rarely synchronized in practice. The implementation of ECCD in the Philippines reveals a complex interagency landscape characterized by overlapping mandates and age-based service divisions (Table 7). The ECCD Council, DOH, and DSWD handle programs for children aged 0–4, while DepEd takes over from ages 5–8 (EDCOM II, 2024, *"EDCOM II calls for unified agency action to fix nutrition programs in early years"*). This segmentation has produced parallel systems—each maintaining its own data, standards, and monitoring processes—with no single body ensuring continuity across early childhood and early primary years.

> *The implementation of ECCD in the Philippines reveals a complex interagency landscape characterized by overlapping mandates and age-based service divisions.*

TABLE 7.
Multiagency Implementation of Early Childhood

	DOH	ECCD COUNCIL	DSWD	DEPED
Scope	0-8 years old; specifically first 1,000 days (F1KD)	Below 5 years old	0-8 years old with additional support to children in daycare centers	5-8 years old
Key ECCD Mandates	▪ Lead implementation of health and nutrition services for 0-8 years ▪ Prenatal and postnatal care for mothers ▪ Immunization programs ▪ Growth monitoring and promotion ▪ Micronutrient supplementation ▪ Management of childhood illnesses ▪ Nutrition education and counseling ▪ Health facility-based ECCD services ▪ Training of health workers on ECCD	▪ Policy formulation and coordination ▪ Development of National ECCD Framework ▪ Monitoring and evaluation of ECCD programs ▪ Capacity building coordination ▪ Resource mobilization ▪ Advocacy and communication ▪ Research and knowledge management ▪ Inter-agency coordination ▪ Development of standards and guidelines ▪ Technical support to LGUs	▪ Supplementary feeding programs ▪ Supervised Neighborhood Play (SNP) ▪ Parent effectiveness service ▪ Social protection for vulnerable children ▪ Implementation of Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) with ECCD conditionalities ▪ Alternative care for children without parental care	▪ Kindergarten education provision ▪ Curriculum development for early learning ▪ Teacher training for kindergarten ▪ School readiness assessment ▪ Transition programs to Grade 1 ▪ Parent education and involvement ▪ Special education for children with disabilities ▪ Indigenous Peoples Education for young learners ▪ Quality assurance for kindergarten ▪ School-based feeding programs
Legal Bases	▪ Republic Act No. 12199 (ECCD System Act) ▪ Republic Act No. 11148 (Kalusugan at Nutrisyon ng Mag-Nanay Act) ▪ Republic Act No. 10410 ▪ Republic Act No. 8980 (ECCD Act of 2000), EO 340 (National ECCD System), DOH AO 2015-0029 (ECCD in Health Facilities)	▪ Republic Act No. 12199 2024) ▪ Republic Act No. 10410 ▪ Republic Act No. 8980 ▪ EO 340 (Reconstituting ECCD Council) ▪ EO 778 (Reorganizing Council for the Welfare of Children) ▪ RA 12199 or the ECCD Systems Act	▪ Republic Act No. 11037 ▪ Republic Act No. 12199 ▪ Republic Act No. 10410 ▪ Republic Act No. 8980 ▪ Republic Act No. 6972 (Barangay-Level Total Protection of Children Act) ▪ PD 603 (Child and Youth Welfare Code) ▪ DSWD AO 11 s. 2011 (Accreditation Standards)	▪ Republic Act No. 12199 ▪ Republic Act No. 10157 (Kindergarten Education Act) ▪ Republic Act No. 10410 ▪ Republic Act No. 9155 (Enhanced Basic Education Act) ▪ DepEd Order 47 s. 2016 (Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten)

Source: Author's visualization and analysis

Multiple agencies share responsibility for critical service areas (see Table 7). This multi-layered approach extends to monitoring functions where individual agencies conduct program-specific assessments with a service delivery structure that follows a developmental continuum aligned with children's ages (i.e., DepEd for 5-8 year old learners, ECCD Council for below five years of age). Throughout this age progression, the ECCD Council is tasked to serve as the cross-cutting coordinating mechanism (Republic Act No. 10410; Republic Act No. 8980).

> *For low-income LGUs, particularly 4th to 5th class municipalities, even the strongest political commitment to ECCD cannot overcome the limited Internal Revenue Allotments stretched across multiple mandates.*

This fragmentation is compounded by the devolved nature of ECCD service delivery. Following the Local Government Code of 1991, basic health and social welfare services including day care and child development programs were transferred to local government units (Manuel & Gregorio, 2015). This is significant because LGUs bear primary responsibility for actual service delivery in approximately 42,000 barangays nationwide. International evidence suggests that decentralization without adequate coordination mechanisms can widen geographic disparities in service access and quality, as local governments vary considerably in fiscal capacity, administrative capability, and political prioritization of early childhood programs (World Bank, 2021; Tselios et al., 2012).

In contexts where local governments lack sufficient resources or technical capacity, decentralization may undermine rather than strengthen service delivery outcomes (OECD, 2025). Comparatively, Tanzania's National Multisectoral ECD Programme, a model that assigns explicit accountability for local-level ECD coordination, positions its President's Office for Regional Administration and Local Government as a central coordinating ministry alongside health, education, and community development (Tanzania Early Childhood Development Network, 2021; Nayanpally, et al. 2024). A more active DILG role in the Philippines particularly in providing technical assistance to LGUs, monitoring local ECCD plan implementation, and integrating ECCD indicators into local government performance assessments could strengthen the coherence between national policy objectives and frontline service delivery.

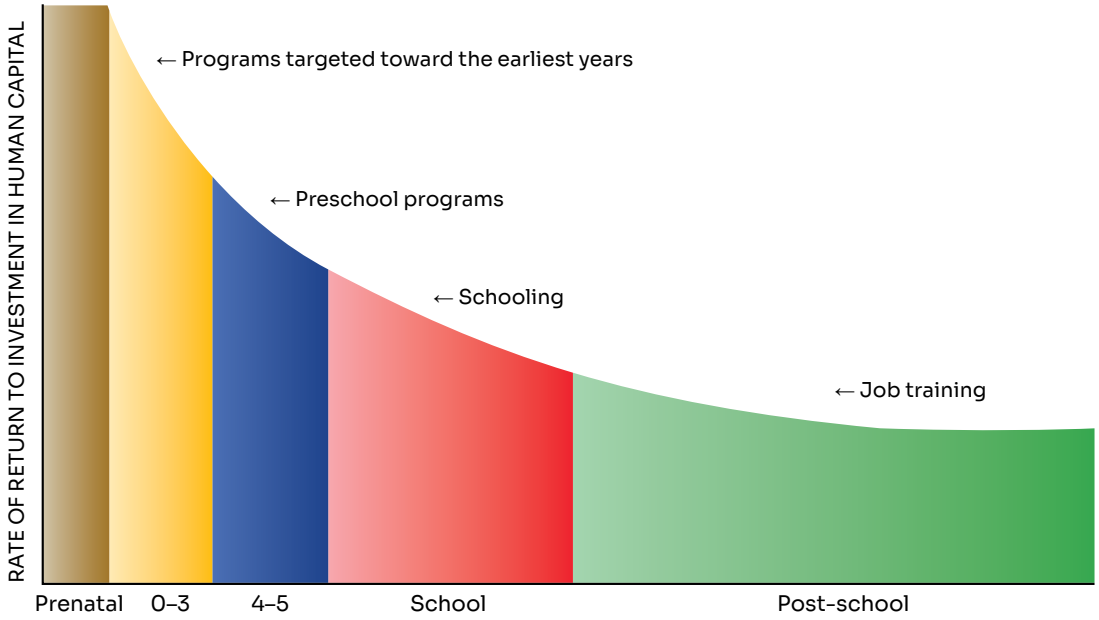
Devolution enables local innovation but requires systematic monitoring, and robust national support to address inequities and technical gaps. Because ECCD operations are largely devolved (Republic Act No. 12199; Republic Act No. 10410), quality and access vary sharply across regions and income classes (DOF BLGF Data, 2022). While high-income cities and municipalities possess the resources to establish comprehensive CDCs and feeding programs, these investments must compete with infrastructure, health, and other pressing priorities in local development plans. For low-income LGUs, particularly 4th to 5th class municipalities, even the strongest political commitment to ECCD cannot overcome the limited Internal Revenue Allotments stretched across multiple mandates. Without integrated data systems linking the ECCD Council, DepEd, DSWD, DOH, and local governments, resources flow unevenly, and depend heavily on local initiative rather than national standards.

ISSUE 2: CHRONIC UNDERINVESTMENT IN EARLY YEARS CONTRADICTS GLOBAL EVIDENCE ON HIGHEST-RETURN EDUCATION SPENDING.

The Philippines allocates only 0.22% of GDP to ECCD, lower than the 0.26% average among low- and middle-income countries, and dramatically below the 1% minimum recommended by UNICEF for comprehensive early childhood services (World Bank, 2023; UNICEF,). This investment gap is particularly austere given Nobel laureate James Heckman's research showing that early childhood programs generate a 7-10% annual return–higher than any other education level (Heckman, 2008) (Figure 10). UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report (2024) identifies countries investing less than 0.5% of GDP in pre-primary education as facing "severe readiness gaps" for achieving SDG 4.2 on quality early childhood development.

> *This chronic underinvestment during the window when children's brains develop fastest represents not just a funding shortfall but a systematic forfeiture of the country's highest-yield human capital investment opportunity.*

FIGURE 10.
Returns to a Unit Dollar Investment (The Heckman Equation Project)



Source: Heckman, James J. (2008). "Schools, Skills and Synapses," Economic Inquiry, *46(3): 289–324*

The World Bank's Human Capital Review (2024) specifically flags the Philippines' "missing middle" in ECCD financing: while the ECCD System Act establishes comprehensive mandates, operational budgets remain tied to outdated staffing ratios and infrastructure standards from the 1990s. UNICEF Philippines' expenditure tracking (2023) reveals that actual per-child ECCD spending varies 40-fold across regions—from PHP 500 to PHP 20,000 annually. This chronic underinvestment during the window when children's brains develop fastest represents not just a funding shortfall but a systematic forfeiture of the country's highest-yield human capital investment opportunity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Clarify the NNC's policy coordination versus implementation functions by addressing ambiguities arising from its dispersed legal mandate across Presidential Decree No. 1569, Republic Act No. 11148, and Republic Act No. 11037.** Congress should enact a unified NNC charter that consolidates these fragmented legal bases, clarifies the Council's convening authority over line agencies, and explicitly delineates its relationship with the ECCD Council on early childhood nutrition matters. This would complement Republic Act No. 12199's strengthening of ECCD governance by ensuring that the nutrition sector's coordinating body operates under equally clear legislative authority, and reducing the duplicative efforts and missed coordination opportunities (Ulep, et al., 2024).

2. **Fund low-income LGUs through the Local Government Support Fund as mandated by law.** Section 19 of the *ECCD System Act* (Republic Act No. 12199) requires that allocations from the Local Government Support Fund (LGSF) include dedicated line items for the construction of Child Development Centers and the hiring of Child Development Teachers (CDTs) and Child Development Workers (CDWs), particularly in fourth-and fifth-class municipalities. Republic Act No. 12199 also exempts these expenditures from the personal-services limits of the Local Government Code which would allow LGUs to hire and compensate ECCD personnel without breaching fiscal caps. Full enforcement of this provision would transform ECCD funding from a discretionary local expense into a guaranteed national obligation that equalizes opportunity for the poorest municipalities.

3. **Fully implement program-convergence budgeting for the early years.** National government agencies should institutionalize unified early-years budgeting by:

    - establishing a joint ECCD-nutrition-health budget program under the Organizational Performance Indicator Framework, with shared outcome targets and pooled resource envelopes;
    - synchronizing planning and fund-release calendars across agencies to enable integrated local service delivery;
    - requiring consolidated early-years investment plans as a condition for LGU access to national ECCD and nutrition subsidies.

4. **Give particular attention to low-income municipalities, which face the steepest barriers to convergence implementation.** DBM and DILG should develop equalization mechanisms for fourth-to-fifth income class municipalities.

5. **Ensure equitable financing for disadvantaged LGUs and GIDAs**. National government support must prioritize the municipalities least able to sustain ECCD services on their own. Fourth- and fifth-class LGUs and geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas should receive equity-oriented grants or matching funds tied to measurable service-delivery milestones—such as the number of operational CDCs, accredited workers, or nutrition programs. This targeted approach converts national resources into local capacity and ensures that the youngest children in the most vulnerable areas benefit first.

6. **Study service-delivery complementarities at the community level, and provide support for BHWs and BNS.** The ECCD Council, DSWD, and DOH should jointly examine how Local Councils for the Protection of Children, Barangay Nutrition Scholars, and Barangay Health Workers interact in practice, and work in close coordination with the LGUs. Mapping overlaps and collaboration points can identify where functions converge or duplicate, guiding reforms that integrate monitoring, referrals, and support for families. Aligning these community networks with the strong and active support of the LGUs will make the delivery of ECCD, health, and nutrition services more efficient, accountable, and child-centered. This also entails providing support for BHWs and BNS through adequate and regularized compensation, rationalized workloads, continuing professional development on ECCD competencies, and formal recognition of their critical role in the community-based delivery of integrated health, nutrition, and early childhood services.



7. **Strengthen the capacity of local chief executives, planning officers, budget officers, and social welfare officers to understand and prioritize ECCD, given that the implementation of ECCD services is largely devolved to local government units under the Local Government Code of 1991 and reinforced by Republic Act No. 12199.** The DILG, through the Local Government Academy, should develop and institutionalize ECCD-focused modules within its existing training programs for local officials—including the Local Legislation Program, the Newly Elected Officials Orientation Program, and continuing education courses for local planning and budget personnel. Systematic training through the LGA would help ensure that ECCD implementation is anchored in informed local leadership and institutionalized planning processes rather than dependent on individual champions.

> *Fourth- and fifth-class LGUs and geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas should receive equity-oriented grants or matching funds tied to measurable service-delivery milestones.*

MOVING COMMUNITIES *to* ACTION

Dr. Milwida Guevara

The teachers sigh in frustration. They recommend decluttering the curriculum year after year. But the changes remain incremental, with the focus still on the subject matter rather than the learners.



The learning cycle continues and does not seem to end—teach, remediate, teach, and remediate again. There are reading camps and learning camps every summer, as well as after-class tutorials. And what a joy to discover children reading well after just a ten-day reading camp. They have the ability to reach their potential if only they are given time to master basic skills. Yet despite this "discovery," the children must move on because there are many other competencies to cover.

The teachers sigh in frustration. They recommend decluttering the curriculum year after year. But the changes remain incremental, with the focus still on the subject matter rather than the learners. There is a visible disconnect between policy and on-ground realities.

The disconnect is not only internal to DepEd. The relationship between DepEd and its constituents—the parents and their communities—is even weaker. Few community members understand the depth of the learning crisis. Asked how many children in their communities can read well, many give vague or uninformed answers. Mayors proudly claim their children are doing fine; others casually say only half can read well. The World Bank's finding that only 10% of ten-year-olds can read independently comes as a shock.



Sec. Rex Gatchalian Facebook Page

Supervisors try to restore calm by presenting tables of CRLA results, but the numbers—spread across nine columns of raw data—are often incomprehensible to parents and local leaders. The reports seem designed more to comply with DepEd requirements than to empower stakeholders.

Communities are left asking: *What do these numbers really mean? And how can they help us move from shock to action?*

Then comes denial. When Mayor Rex Gatchalian of Valenzuela City presented the reading problem, principals replied, "Mayor, *wala namang problema!*" To prove their point, they cited a litany of memoranda and "innovations." This defensiveness has become ingrained in our culture, preventing honest recognition of the problem.

We will be forever chasing our tails if this cycle is not broken. The education system must be open not just to technology, but to the basic processes of listening, sharing, and working together—with clear roles and accountability among stakeholders.

First, equal access to quality education should be embedded in the Local Development and Annual Investment Plans of every city, municipality, and province. Education must be treated as an investment in human capital, the most vital resource of any community. But this

When Mayor Rex Gatchalian of Valenzuela City presented the reading problem, principals replied, "Mayor, wala namang problema!" To prove their point, they cited a litany of memoranda and "innovations." This defensiveness has become ingrained in our culture, preventing honest recognition of the problem.



cannot mean a simple cut-and-paste of the Supervisor's or Superintendent's programs. Local chief executives must understand the true picture—access, retention, survival, and learning quality—before they can lead.

From there, mayors should mobilize support through town hall meetings and education summits. The vision that *all Grade 3 children must be able to read well* must be repeated until it becomes a shared mantra.

Here, the role of both Central and Local DepEd is crucial. School officials must shed the belief that they alone know how children learn best. This requires humility and a willingness to listen actively. Data should then be translated into simple, actionable forms that even a laborer can understand. The 5 x 5 rule is a good start: 5 slides, 5 lines per slide, 5 words per line.

From there, communities must be guided to distinguish between outputs and outcomes. Feeding programs, teacher training, and computer distribution are outputs. The real measure of success is whether these translate into improved reading and learning outcomes. Can frustrated readers drop from 49% to 10%? **Can 100% of enrollees complete the school year? Such hard questions demand hard numbers.**

> *The vision that all Grade 3 children must be able to read well must be repeated until it becomes a shared mantra.*

Finally, there must be regular monitoring and feedback, with School Governing Councils and School Boards empowered as true partners in planning, implementation, and evaluation. This requires:

- Formative assessments by teachers to track children's progress;
- Peer-learning among teachers to spread best practices;
- Summative assessments at the district and division levels to identify gaps;
- Full empowerment of School Boards and Governing Councils from passive listeners and financiers to being co-owners of the education problem and its solution.

Breaking the cycle will not be easy. But if schools, local governments, communities, and DepEd come together—each accepting responsibility and focusing relentlessly on learning outcomes—then the dream of every child being able to read with confidence by Grade 3 will no longer be a dream. It will be the new normal.


MAKABAYAN
MATH
SCIENCE
ENGLISH
JANICE DE SAN AGUIN
Math

III. BASIC EDUCATION
Strengthening Foundations, Addressing Shortfalls

The 2025 Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) provides the most current picture of Filipino learners' foundational skills, at a time when EDCOM II is shaping the National Education Plan and DepEd continues its recovery reforms. The results offer clear, evidence-based insight into where learning outcomes are improving and where inequalities remain entrenched.

SEA-PLM shows that the lowest-performing learners consistently come from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. Poverty emerges as the strongest predictor of low achievement, with gaps between the poorest and richest learners equivalent to roughly two years of schooling. Learners at the bottom of reading and mathematics are far more likely to come from low-income households, rural or remote areas, and homes where the language spoken differs from the language of instruction conditions that significantly hinder early literacy. Boys also continue to lag behind girls in reading, reflecting persistent gender patterns seen across national and international assessments.

These learners are concentrated in under-resourced schools often rural, congested, and chronically strained. Low-performing students are more likely to learn in large classes with outdated materials, limited ICT access, and teachers who receive little training or support. Rural schools face especially unstable learning conditions, reinforcing early disadvantages. Teachers report that many students arrive with weak foundational skills, low confidence, and behavioral difficulties, pointing to delays that compound over time. This suggests not individual failure, but systematic under-provision.

Learning conditions are further weakened by frequent class disruptions from non-instructional activities and suspensions, while bullying and safety concerns—among the highest in the region undermine student well-being and readiness to learn. Addressing these barriers is urgent if the learning crisis is to be reversed.

PRIORITY AREA 5: LEARNING RESOURCES

FINDINGS

Learning resources in basic education comprise a broad ecosystem essential for curriculum delivery and learner achievement. These include core textbooks, teachers' manuals, supplementary reading materials, science and mathematics laboratory tools, technical–vocational equipment, digital learning platforms, assessment tools, and emerging AI-enabled resources for personalized learning. Because different subjects require different forms of material input, such as laboratory science, hands-on mathematics, TVL specializations, and early-grade literacy, gaps in any part of this system directly weaken teachers' ability to deliver the curriculum and constrain students' opportunities to practice foundational skills.

Access to high-quality learning materials is particularly critical for developing reading fluency, comprehension, and numeracy. Research consistently shows that students learn best when they have regular exposure to age-appropriate texts, manipulatives, and hands-on tools, paired with structured instructional guidance (Carbonneau et al., 2013; UNESCO, 2022). The Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel (2025) finds that improving access to books, when combined with strong teaching, yields measurable gains in literacy. Yet SEA-PLM 2025 highlights that Filipino learners have some of the weakest access to textbooks and reading materials in the region, and that these shortages are directly associated with lower reading and mathematics scores. Schools with limited books, outdated materials, or weak ICT access posted score differences equivalent to several months to nearly a full year of learning compared with better-resourced schools, underscoring the profound impact of resource inequity on learning outcomes.

ISSUE 1: DEPED'S PROCUREMENT POLICIES FOR TEXTBOOKS WERE TOO COMPLICATED, LEADING TO UNNECESSARY FAILURES AND DELAYS.

EDCOM II's Year 1 and Year 2 Reports show that textbook procurement suffers from long-standing structural and operational bottlenecks that systematically delay or reduce access to learning materials. These include central pricing below market cost; a compressed six-month manuscript development window, far shorter than the industry standard of 18 months; high participation costs for publishers (going up to PHP 150,000 for one subject) with no guarantee of award; prolonged review processes that push procurement timelines beyond 200 days; and chronic understaffing in curriculum and procurement units. Even when awards are finalized, deliveries are often delayed or incomplete, with some textbooks stranded in warehouses because logistics are procured under separate contracts. These failures have resulted in schools routinely opening the year without the required texts, forcing teachers to rely on photocopies or self-developed materials, conditions directly linked to lower literacy and numeracy outcomes.

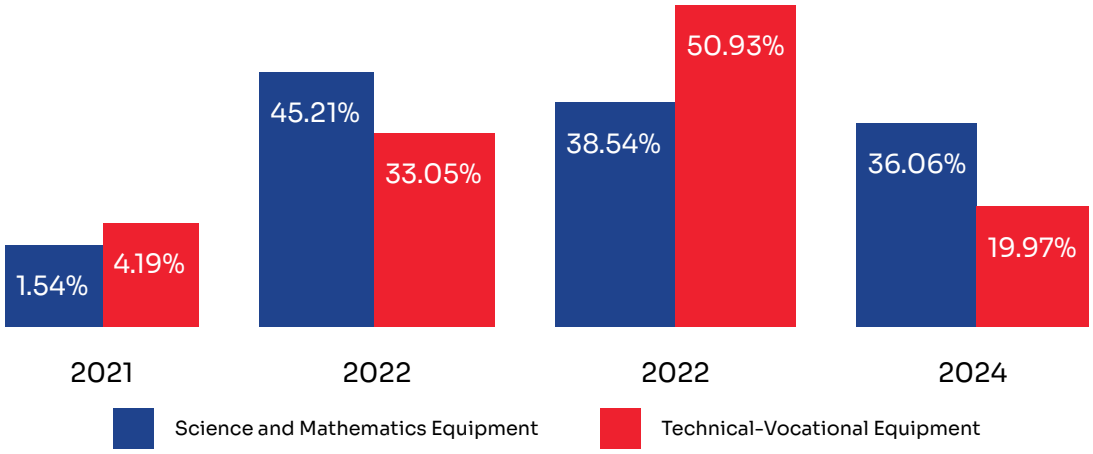
Beyond textbooks, execution rates for Learning Tools and Equipment (LTE) in STEM and TVL have remained extremely low. Over the past five years, only 12.59% of allocated funds have been disbursed annually (DepEd, 2025). Tight procurement timelines, failed biddings, mismatched technical specifications, and supply shortfalls have left 914,589 public SHS-TVL students, over one-third of all public SHS enrollees training without the tools and equipment needed to develop real competencies (DepEd SY 2024–2025 Enrollment, 2025; Malaluan & Maribojoc, 2024). These bureaucratic hurdles have undermined the credibility of the SHS-TVL track and weakened school-to-work transitions for hundreds of thousands of learners.

TABLE 1.
Historical Review of Key Legislation and Executive Issuances on Textbook Procurement in Basic Education

Year	Law / Issuance	Impact on Textbook Procurement
1995	Republic Act No. 8047	▪ Created the National Book Development Board (NBDB), tasked to develop and implement a national book policy ▪ Abolished the DepEd's Instructional Materials Development Center (est. 1982) and transferred its functions to the NBDB
2004	DepEd DM No. 289 s. 2004	▪ Enumerated the DepEd's Textbook Policy which includes providing one textbook per student, overseeing a textbook evaluation process, and setting universal purchase every five years ▪ Interpreted "multiple titles" as the adoption of different titled textbooks per subject nationwide, but only one title within a region, division, or school; specifying that decentralization [of textbook procurement] should only be up to the regional office level (Item 6)
2010	GPPB Resolution No. 01-2010	▪ Approved the DepEd's Customized Agency Procurement Manual Volume V – Procurement of Manuscripts for Textbooks and Teacher's Manuals, which is aligned with Republic Act No. 9184 or the Government Procurement Reform Act ▪ DepEd procures the manuscript separately from the printing and delivery of textbooks, which means a complete procurement cycle for one title can take as long as three to five years (EDCOM II Consultation with NBDB and private publishers, 2023)
2023	DepEd DO No. 25 s. 2023	▪ Implements a single or bundled procurement for manuscript supply, printing, and delivery, hereby integrating delivery into the supplier's contract, ensuring a direct path from producer to school ▪ Empowers Regional Offices to select titles from a central menu and manage their own procurement, allowing for more responsive and localized acquisition of learning materials ▪ Allows for multiple adoption of titles for a learning area and grade level in smaller bid lots, opening the process for smaller publishers to participate ▪ Aims to reduce days for evaluation by transferring the implementation of corrections to the contract implementation stage
2024	DepEd DO No. 24 s. 2024	▪ Requires all procurement activities to include delivery to the end user in the contract, rather than conducting a separate procurement activity for the logistics or forwarding to end users
	DepEd DM No. 49 s. 2024	▪ Mandates the conduct of early procurement activities for FY 2025, from posting of the opportunity until the recommendation as to the award, pending approval of funding sources ▪ Includes early procurement activities for Textbooks and Instructional Materials
2025	DepEd DO No. 8 s. 2025	▪ Instead of developing manuscripts from scratch each year, DepEd now pre-accredits and pre-selects titles developed by the private sector, which speeds up the process and supports the local publishing industry as envisioned by the Book Development Law

Low disbursement rates stem not only from procurement challenges but also from design flaws: many equipment packages do not match the actual conditions of recipient schools (Delos Reyes et al., 2025). Principals report that tools often arrive that cannot be installed due to insufficient electrical load, inadequate classroom space, lack of secure storage, absent consumables, or limited teacher expertise to operate them. As a result, expensive equipment is left idle, damaged, or unused, wasting public funds and depriving learners of meaningful practice. These mismatches underscore a broader point: procurement must be driven by granular school-level readiness and realistic costings, not uniform national specifications disconnected from on-the-ground realities.

FIGURE 1.
Historical Disbursement Rate of Learning Tools and Equipment (2020-2024)



Source: Department of Education, submitted October 2025

Secretary Angara noted that the current procurement system has become so impractical that DepEd experienced seven failed biddings for a single subject (MAPEH) due to requirements, such as integrated, multi-component textbooks, that publishers could not realistically meet (Senate Committee on Finance, 2025). These failures are not isolated; they reflect a deeper pattern in which procurement rules, market readiness, and institutional capacity do not align, resulting in chronic shortages of age-appropriate, high-quality learning resources. This mirrors global experiences in countries where book ecosystems remain underdeveloped and procurement is fragmented, centralized, and unable to respond to market realities.

A useful comparator is Rwanda, which confronted similar constraints by adopting a coordinated, whole-chain strategy for children's book development. Instead of relying on episodic mass procurements, Rwanda implemented an integrated model, spanning author development, manuscript review, quality assurance, local production, and community-level distribution, to ensure that books are not only produced but also reach learners. This approach addressed challenges that closely resemble those in the Philippines: limited publisher capacity, uneven distribution, low availability of local-language books, and the absence of an end-to-end system linking content creation to classroom delivery. By contrast, the Philippines continues to depend on fragmented, highly centralized procurement cycles where delays in any single step can stall nationwide access.

Rwanda's progress underscores what becomes possible when governments invest in sector-wide ecosystem development rather than isolated fixes. By professionalizing its publishing industry, expanding inclusive and culturally relevant titles, supporting print-rich classrooms, and establishing a National Book Policy, Rwanda produced more than 800 new children's titles, distributed over 400,000 books, and reached 650,000 learners, while also stimulating jobs in the local book sector. These gains were

These failures are not isolated; they reflect a deeper pattern in which procurement rules, market readiness, and institutional capacity do not align, resulting in chronic shortages of age-appropriate, high-quality learning resources.

accelerated by partnerships that delivered early-reader books and tactile pre-Braille materials for children with disabilities, areas where the Philippines still faces significant gaps. Rwanda's experience shows that solving chronic textbook shortages requires more than procurement reform; it demands a long-term strategy that develops the entire book ecosystem, from content creation to classroom use, offering a compelling model for Philippine reforms moving forward.

DepEd has finally broken the decade-long gridlock in textbook procurement consistent with EDCOM recommendations since 2023. DepEd has successfully procured and delivered over 100 new textbook titles in 2024 alone, significantly more than the 27 titles procured in the entire preceding decade from 2012 to 2023, as cited in the EDCOM Year 1 Report. This breakthrough addresses one of the most persistent issues in basic education, with only two out of ten grade levels having a complete set of textbooks since the K to 12 curriculum was first implemented.

SEA-PLM findings in 2019 and 2025 underscore the importance of textbooks to learning outcomes. Data shows Filipino learners having some of the lowest access to textbooks and learning materials in Southeast Asia, and this shortage is closely linked to weaker performance in reading and mathematics. Schools with limited or outdated books and few supplementary reading materials, consistently posted significantly lower scores, differences equivalent to several months to nearly a full year of learning compared with better-resourced schools.



ISSUE 2: THE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY REQUIRES STRATEGIC STRENGTHENING.

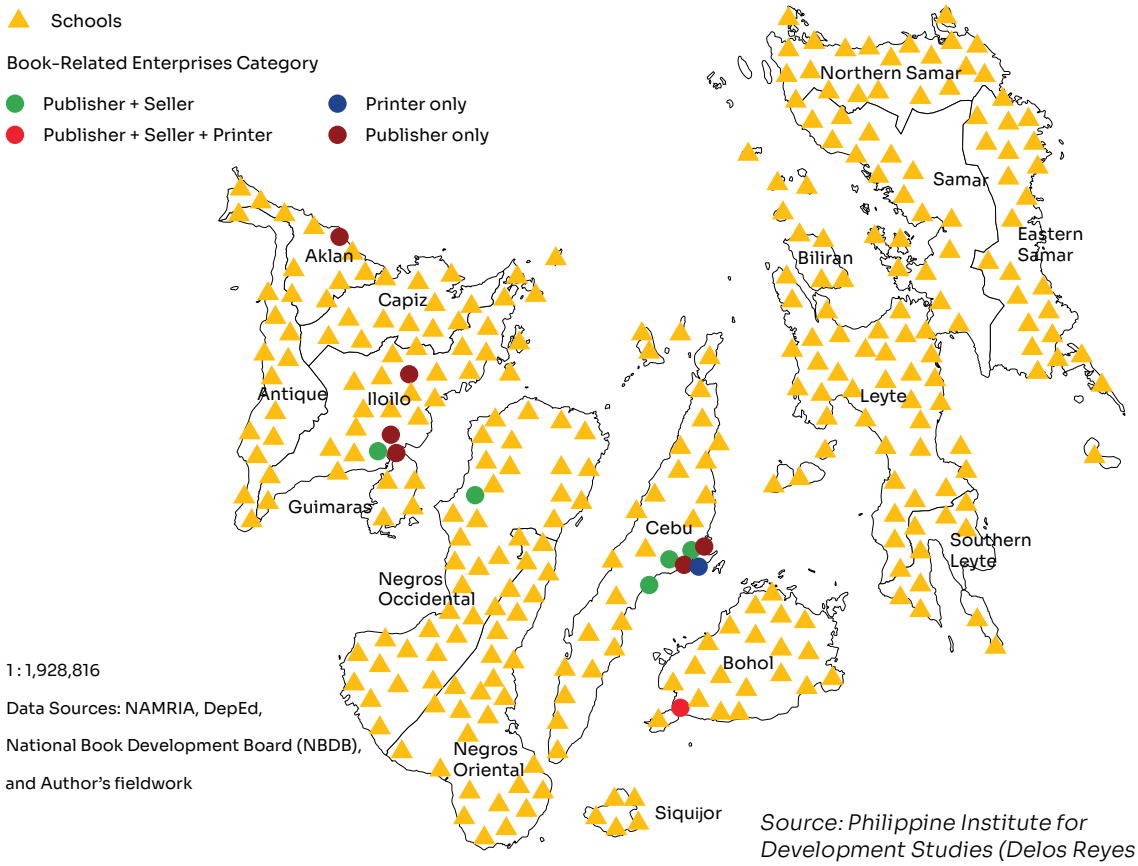
The policy landscape for textbooks and learning materials has evolved over three decades, shaped by persistent efforts to modernize procurement, strengthen quality assurance, and support the domestic publishing industry. This trajectory began with Republic Act No. 8047 (1995), the Book Publishing Industry Development Act, which created the National Book Development Board (NBDB) and articulated a national vision for a vibrant, competitive book ecosystem. The law abolished DepEd's Instructional Materials Development Center (est. 1982) and transferred book development functions to NBDB, with the intent of cultivating a strong local publishing sector capable of producing high-quality, culturally relevant, and pedagogically sound materials.

> *While NBDB lists 328 active publishers, only 10 publishers won all 60 lots in the latest DepEd bidding, evidence of continued concentration and structural barriers to broader participation.*

NBDB was envisioned to lead standards-setting, capacity-building, and the development of a National Book Policy governing the entire value chain from manuscript development to distribution. Yet nearly 30 years later, Senate hearings show this vision remains far from realized: while NBDB lists 328 active publishers, only 10 publishers won all 60 lots in the latest DepEd bidding, evidence of continued concentration and structural barriers to broader participation.

The geographic distribution of publishers and printers across the country significantly exacerbates DepEd's long-standing distribution delays. A 2025 study by Delos Reyes et al. (2025) mapped all NBDB-registered book enterprises and found that they are heavily concentrated in Luzon, with very sparse presence in the Visayas and Mindanao. In the Visayas, most northern provinces have zero publishing-related enterprises, while Mindanao similarly hosts only a handful of publishers and printers. This spatial mismatch forces DepEd to rely on long, multi-stage logistics chains to deliver textbooks across island groups: a process highly vulnerable to weather, port delays, and the archipelagic nature of the country.

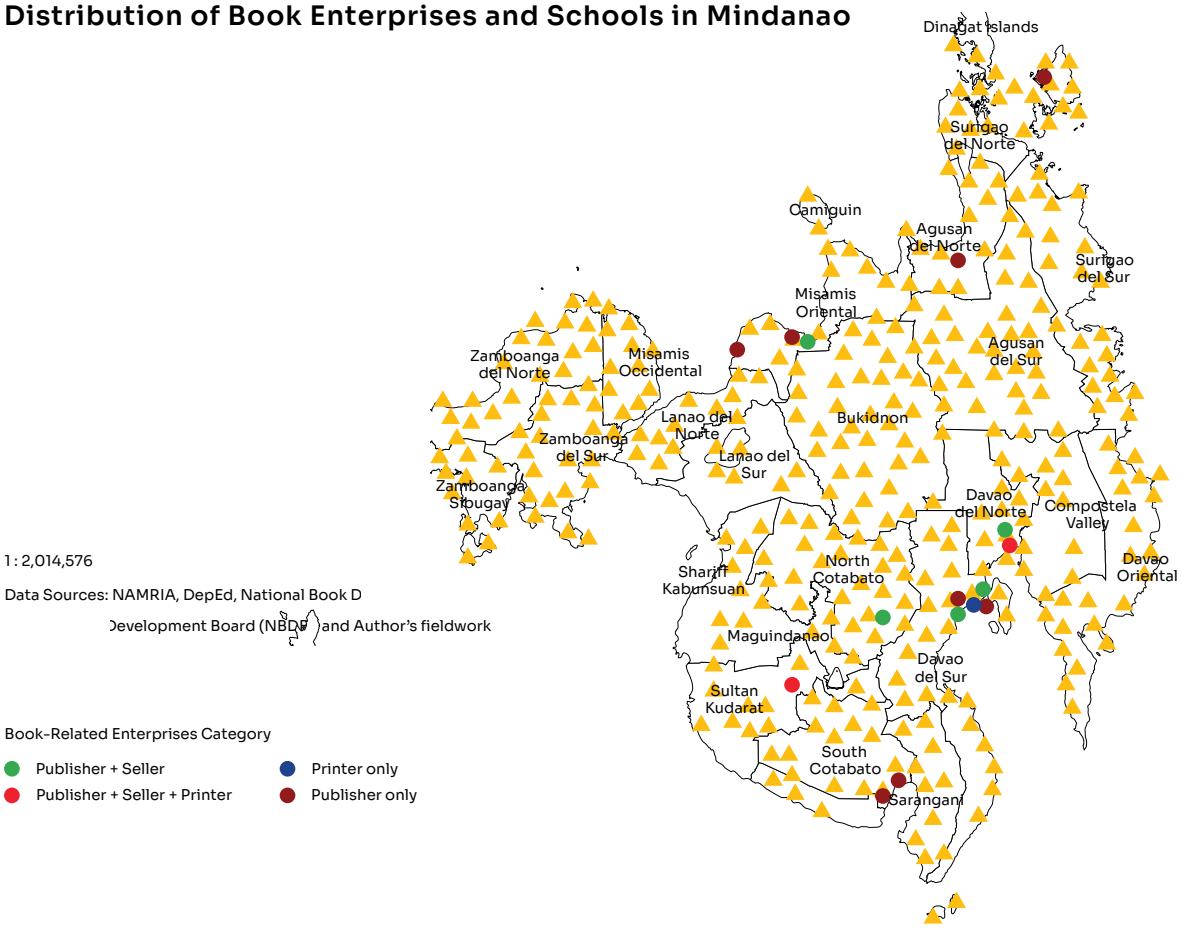
FIGURE 2.
Distribution of Book Enterprises and Schools in Visayas



Source: Philippine Institute for Development Studies (Delos Reyes et al., 2025)

> *All NBDB-registered book enterprises and found that they are heavily concentrated in Luzon, with very sparse presence in the Visayas and Mindanao.*

FIGURE 3.
Distribution of Book Enterprises and Schools in Mindanao



Source: Philippine Institute for Development Studies (Delos Reyes et al., 2025)

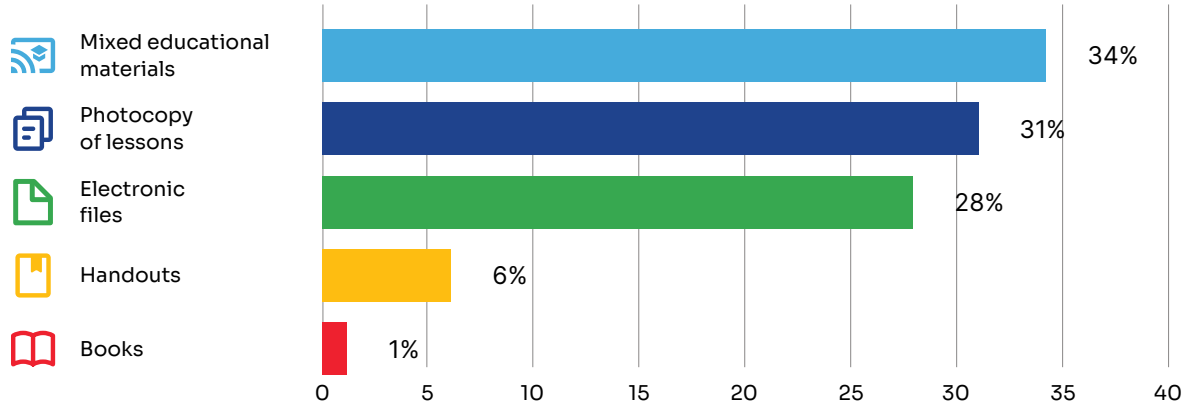
The study notes that despite surviving the hurdles of content development and procurement, textbooks still "fail to reach classrooms when and where they are needed" due to weak warehousing systems, long transport routes, delayed release of budgets, and bottlenecks in supply chain coordination (Delos Reyes et al., 2025). The archipelagic geography magnifies this: materials must often cross two to four islands before arriving at final destinations in remote or upland schools, creating cascading delays that stretch delivery timelines to several months.

PIDS further emphasizes that these delays are worsened by the absence of a coordinated, region-anchored warehousing and logistics strategy (Delos Reyes et al., 2025). Most DepEd regional offices rely on temporary or rented storage facilities that do not meet minimum standards for humidity control, inventory tracking, or security. Delivery scheduling is fragmented across multiple contractors, each responsible only for segments of the logistics chain, and schools frequently report receiving no advance notification of shipment arrival. The study documents cases in which materials sat for weeks in ports or intermediate warehouses because no office had explicit responsibility for onward forwarding. These structural gaps illustrate that distribution failures are not isolated incidents but part of a systemic last-mile problem.

> *Textbooks still "fail to reach classrooms when and where they are needed" due to weak warehousing systems, long transport routes, delayed release of budgets, and bottlenecks in supply chain coordination.*

Teacher reports included in the study corroborate these findings. In a rapid survey of 42 teachers in Camiguin, 42.86% said they received DepEd textbooks but not on time and incomplete, while only 11.9% received complete sets on schedule. Alarmingly, 21.43% reported receiving no textbooks at all, especially in hard-to-reach schools. These accounts confirm that distribution challenges remain a critical barrier to textbook access even when procurement succeeds.

FIGURE 4.
Materials Used by Teachers



Source: Philippine Institute for Development Studies (Delos Reyes et al., 2025)

ISSUE 3: DEPED NEEDS TO EXPLORE OTHER CREATIVE STRATEGIES TO PROVIDE TIMELY AND RESPONSIVE LEARNING RESOURCES TO STUDENTS.

Finally, the study documents how teachers compensate for these shortages: 34% rely on mixed or improvised modules, 31% photocopy lessons, and only 1% actually use textbooks as their primary classroom material. This demonstrates that supply chain inefficiencies directly shape classroom instruction, pushing teachers to shoulder the cost and labor of producing materials that should have been centrally provided. Delos Reyes et al. (2025) note that this reliance on teacher-produced materials also introduces significant equity concerns. Schools with higher MOOE or active local government support can reproduce cleaner, more accurate materials, while disadvantaged schools depend on low-quality photocopies or hand-written modules, leading to wide variation in instructional quality across the system. Moreover, improvised materials are not subjected to DepEd's formal quality assurance process, increasing the risk of errors, misalignment with the curriculum, or the omission of critical content. This dynamic creates a shadow system of learning resources that is highly variable, teacher-dependent, and unevenly funded, disproportionately affecting learners in the poorest and most remote schools.

As of October 2025, DepEd has delivered: 87.27 million textbooks, 11.37 million pieces of Science and Mathematics equipment, and 914,280 pieces of Technical Vocational Learning equipment (DepEd Presentation on FY 2026 Budget, 2025). The textbook procurement process has been streamlined, reducing the timeline from 210 days to just 60 calendar days. By ensuring that quality textbooks and learning resources reach classrooms in a timely manner, the nation moves closer to providing the quality education that every Filipino child deserves.

Teachers compensate for these shortages: 34% rely on mixed or improvised modules, 31% photocopy lessons, and only 1% actually use textbooks as their primary classroom material.

> *The textbook procurement process has been streamlined, reducing the timeline from 210 days to just 60 calendar days.*

Given the challenge faced by DepEd in the timely delivery of textbooks, **Senate Bill No. 122 or the "E-Textbook Para Sa Lahat Act"** by Sen. Bam Aquino, EDCOM II Co-Chairperson, mandates that all textbooks and instructional materials approved for basic education be made available in a digital format free of charge to ensure accessible and equitable education for all learners. This requirement applies to materials used in both public and private schools that are recognized by DepEd.

Under this bill, authors and publishers are obligated to submit electronic versions of their work, such as PDFs or EPUBs, to DepEd without cost and must authorize the department to distribute these copies to students and teachers via official platforms. Compliance with this provision is a strict prerequisite for DepEd approval; consequently, failure to provide a free digital version results in the material being disqualified from official endorsement or procurement.

Furthermore, the bill mandates that DepEd actively encourage and incentivize the development of Open Educational Resources (OER), which are materials that are freely accessible and adaptable, to further reduce financial burdens and foster innovation within the K to 12 curriculum.

Beyond digital access, emerging evidence from the Philippine HEI sector demonstrates the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) to strengthen learning resource ecosystems, particularly for assessment, practice, and adaptive learning. Rodrigo et al. (2024) found that AI-enabled tools can significantly enhance formative assessment by automating feedback, identifying learner misconceptions, and supporting teachers in generating practice items aligned with curriculum standards. The study also notes growing applications of natural language processing for reading diagnostics, mathematics problem-generation, and accessibility features such as text-to-speech, multimodal explanations, and language simplification, which are capabilities directly relevant to DepEd's push for e-textbooks and open educational resources. However, the authors emphasize that these tools improve learning only when integrated within structured instructional systems, supported by teacher training, and paired with safeguards on data privacy, equity, and responsible use. While AI cannot replace high-quality print or digital materials, the study highlights how it can complement traditional learning resources by enabling personalization, accelerating feedback, and increasing the usability of digital textbooks for learners with diverse needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Implement a two-year runway for textbooks and teacher's manuals to ensure timely delivery before the start of classes.** DepEd Department Order No. 8 s. 2025 establishes a four-criteria content evaluation framework for learning resources prior to procurement. Learning Resource Evaluators assess materials for: (1) compliance with the curriculum, including horizontal and vertical articulation of learning competencies; (2) accuracy of content, including detection of errors and plagiarism; (3) conformity to instructional design, presentation, and organization appropriate to Philippine culture; and (4) appropriateness of language and readability for target learners. This framework should be consistently implemented across all learning resources (including SLMs) to ensure quality, educational effectiveness, and accessibility.

2. **Collaborate closely with the NBDB to address gaps in capacity of other regional publishing companies.** Publishers maintain that the previous bidding failures for certain lots in textbook procurement were due to low pricing of the contracts, which do not consider factors such as location of the regions being bid out, capacity of the publishing houses located there, and cost of materials and logistics in those areas (NBDB Report on the Post-Textbook Call Forum with Publishers, 2024). DepEd Department Order No. 25 s. 2023 seeks to address this by empowering regions to select titles from a central menu and manage their own procurement.

   This is also anchored on the Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 8047 or the Book Publishing Industry Development Act, wherein Rule VII Section 3 specifies:

   To ensure equitable decentralization of the textbook procurement and production process, the NBDB can support and help strengthen smaller publishing houses in strategic areas with limited supply, while the DepEd allows for multiple adoption of titles and smaller bid lots.

3. **Continue to strengthen the DepEd's Quality Assurance System for procured textbooks and teacher's manuals.** Department Order No. 8 s. 2025 indicates those that will form the National Pool of Learning Resource Evaluators to assess textbooks and teacher's manuals.

   The DO allocates 85 calendar days for content evaluation, corrections, and review of textbooks and teachers' manuals. Post-publication and distribution, the DO also includes the step-by-step feedback process for social content non-conformance in learning resources, depending on the governance level and the modality of acquisition (i.e. procured by the Central Office, procured locally, or non-DepEd learning resource). It is imperative for DepEd to refine and review this process to ensure that learning resources are quality assured, that reviews are done in a timely manner, and that selected materials are both age-appropriate and relevant to learner goals.

4. **Apply the same rigorous quality assurance to self-learning modules (SLMs) to ensure that all learning resources—textbooks, supplementary reading materials, SLMs, and other materials—are not merely delivered but properly distributed, genuinely accessible to learners, and effective in supporting student learning and literacy development.** Mistakes found in SLMs that were produced amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the Department's Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan necessitated the creation of DepEd Error Watch Initiative to ensure the accuracy, correctness, quality, and relevance of the materials (Office of the Undersecretary for Administration (OUA) Memorandum 00-1020-0138). The DepEd Error Watch exists in the Central Office and at the regional level, with Localized Error Watch Team. This initiative was then reiterated in 2025, through the Office of the Undersecretary for Curriculum and Teaching (OUCT) Department Memorandum CT-2025-3417, due to the rising number of recent errors found in delivered textbooks.

> *"The Commission on Audit (COA) said learning materials of the Department of Education (DepEd) worth PHP 254.253 million for Grade 3 pupils were riddled with errors despite the department's three-step review process."*
>
> ***-COA report: PHP 254M went to 'error-filled' DepEd books, Philippine Daily Inquirer, August 09, 2019***

5. **Capacitate schools to ensure provision of supplementary learning resources, such as printed books, that can be borrowed and brought home by learners.** According to the latest National Readership Survey by the Social Weather Stations and the National Book Development Board (2023), 47% of children aged 8 to 17 read non-school books, mostly printed and borrowed copies. They usually begin reading at age 9, prefer books in Filipino (66%) or English (31%), read in Filipino for less than an hour a day using a borrowed book, and finish about three books a year. Several DepEd issuances specify guidelines on the institutionalization, provision, and procurement of public school libraries and library hubs[3]. Following resolving issues on textbooks, it is imperative for DepEd to likewise review its implementation of library hubs and its resource allocations for supplementary learning resources, in a way that ensures accessibility to target student populations, operational feasibility (e.g. availability of MOOE resources and personnel), and quality of supplementary learning resources, providing the diversity of texts that can support and engage learners in their journey towards literacy.

6. **In line with Republic Act No. 8047, conduct training and capacity-building activities through the National Book Development Board (NBDB) on book development, including the use of alternative learning materials for printing, distribution, and intellectual property rights, among others.** Section 4 of Republic Act No. 8047 specifically mandates the NBDB to ensure "an adequate, affordable, and accessible supply of books for all segments of the population" and to "promote book readership especially among the young and neo-literates, through programs promoting literacy and good reading habits." Moving forward, the NBDB should be more proactive in supporting the development of learning resources for key stages, subjects, and mother tongue languages where such materials remain lacking.

7. **Monitor, evaluate, and ensure usability of learning tools and equipment in schools**. Apart from procuring these tools and equipment, DepEd must conduct regular spot checks on their use once distributed to schools in order to understand, and to measure, its impact on learning outcomes. Regular monitoring will also enable the agency to ensure responsiveness of the tools and equipment it procures, and allows them to provide the necessary support, and changes to policy, if needed.

3 DepEd Order 24 s. 2023: Guidelines on the Provision of Supplementary Learning Resources for Public School Libraries and Library Hubs; DepEd Order 35 s. 2019: Guidelines on the Procurement of Supplementary Learning Resources; DepEd Order 56 s. 2011: Institutionalization of DepEd Library Hub Project in all Regions and Schools Divisions Nationwide; DepEd Order 48 s. 2011: Additional List of Approved Supplementary Reading and Reference Materials; DepEd Order 75 s. 2008: Institutionalization of Maintenance and Operation of Library Hubs; DECS Order s. 1998: Policies and Programs for School Library Development



PRIORITY AREA 6:
MEASUREMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

FINDINGS

A credible and coherent assessment system is essential to resolving the learning crisis, yet EDCOM II's Year 1 and Year 2 Reports show that the Philippines' current system cannot generate the timely, reliable data needed to guide reform. National assessments, meant to diagnose learning and inform instruction, have become irregular, fragmented, and largely compliance-driven. Tools such as the NAT and ELLNA suffer from inconsistent administration, delayed reporting, and limited instructional value for teachers and schools. Moreover, since past test takers were assessed under the previous curriculum rather than MATATAG, alignment should be evaluated against the old curriculum.

EDCOM also found major gaps in coherence across assessment tools and low capacity at the school and division levels to interpret and use results. As a result, the system lacks a dependable feedback loop, leaving policymakers and educators without clear evidence on what learners know, where gaps are widest, and what interventions are needed during the critical early years when learning trajectories are set.

ISSUE 1: THERE ARE TOO MANY NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS.

Currently, DepEd's Bureau of Education Assessment (BEA), administers several national assessments: Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Assessment (ELLNA) at Grade 3, the National Achievement Tests (NAT) at Grades 6, 10, and 12, the National Career Assessment Examination (NCAE) at Grade 9, and the Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) and Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT) for returning learners in special circumstances.

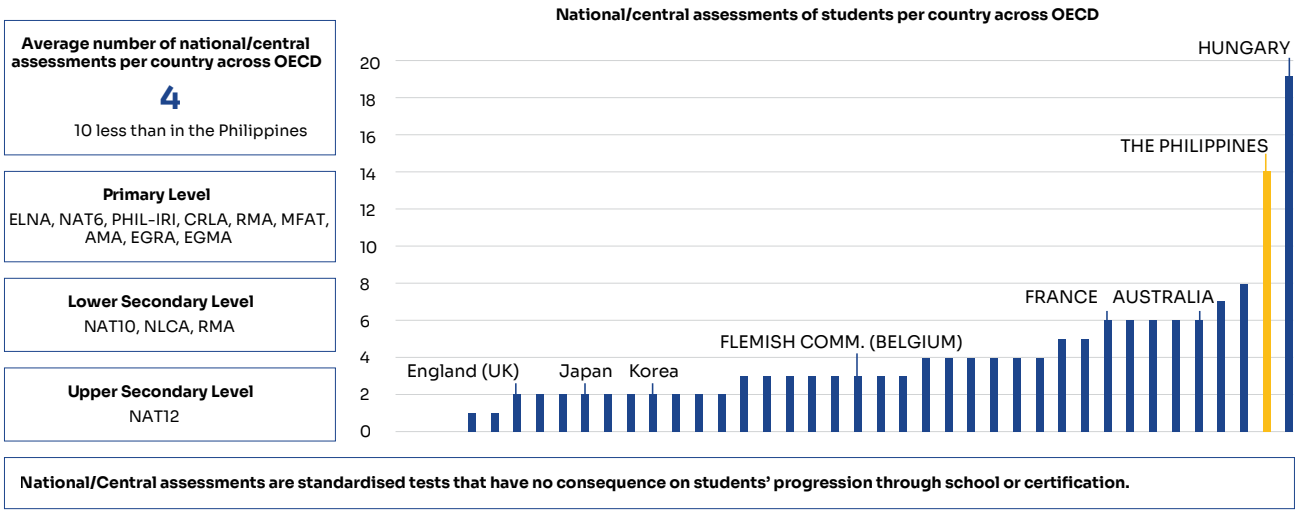
Parallel to these are classroom-based diagnostic tools for key functional literacy skills, such as the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA), the Rapid Mathematics Assessment (RMA), the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), the Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA), and the Amplified Numeracy Assessment (ANA). BEA also coordinates the country's participation in international and regional assessments, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

The national assessment system remains overcrowded, fragmented, and technically unlinked, undermining its usefulness for system monitoring and instructional decision-making. Stakeholders recognize the inherent value of assessments administered across basic education, including tests for literacy and numeracy skills, key stage national assessments, and international large-scale external assessments, but continue to express concern about how these assessments are designed, administered, and utilized within the broader system. This fragmentation becomes evident when examining how assessments cluster across grade levels, revealing substantial overlap in literacy and numeracy tools in the early grades and inconsistent coverage of higher-order domains. Diagnostic, formative, and system-level assessments are likewise intermingled without clear purpose differentiation.

ISSUE 2: THE VOLUME OF REQUIREMENTS HAS NOT LED TO MEANINGFUL REFORMS.

Across OECD countries, the average number of national or central assessments administered at the basic education level is four: a figure far below the 14 assessments currently implemented in the Philippines. Comparative evidence from the OECD Peer Learning Event (2025) highlights how the Philippines' assessment landscape differs significantly from international benchmarks, particularly in terms of volume, purpose, and system design. This stark difference underscores the extent to which the Philippine system has become crowded with overlapping tools, many of which measure similar constructs but are not psychometrically linked or designed within a unified learning progression.

FIGURE 5.
International Comparison of National Assessments Administered Across OECD Countries and the Philippines



Source: Education at a Glance 2023: OECD Indicators

The comparative chart also illustrates that countries typically implement a small set of streamlined assessments anchored on clear system-level objectives and used primarily for monitoring learning outcomes. In contrast, the Philippine assessment suite includes multiple diagnostic, formative, and system-level tools that have evolved in parallel without a common framework. **This reinforces EDCOM II's earlier finding that the national system is over-assessed but under-informed, with volume failing to translate into actionable insights.**

Standardized assessments in the Philippines are overwhelmingly low-stakes, which limits their influence on teaching, learning, and system accountability. Unlike many countries that administer national examinations with formal consequences for student progression or certification, Philippine assessments generally carry no stakes for learners, teachers, or schools. Further, while most OECD countries use national exams to signal mastery, certify competencies, or guide placement, the Philippines relies on a broad suite of assessments that do not always meaningfully affect decisions at any level. Results often arrive late, are not linked to structured interventions, and rarely inform resource allocation or instructional adjustments. In practice, this low-stakes environment contributes to a compliance-oriented culture in which assessments are administered because they are required, not because they drive improvement in learning.

These observations strengthen the case for rationalizing assessments, consolidating overlapping tools, and ensuring alignment under a coherent national assessment framework.

ISSUE 3: THERE IS NO CONCEPTUAL ALIGNMENT ACROSS ASSESSMENTS.

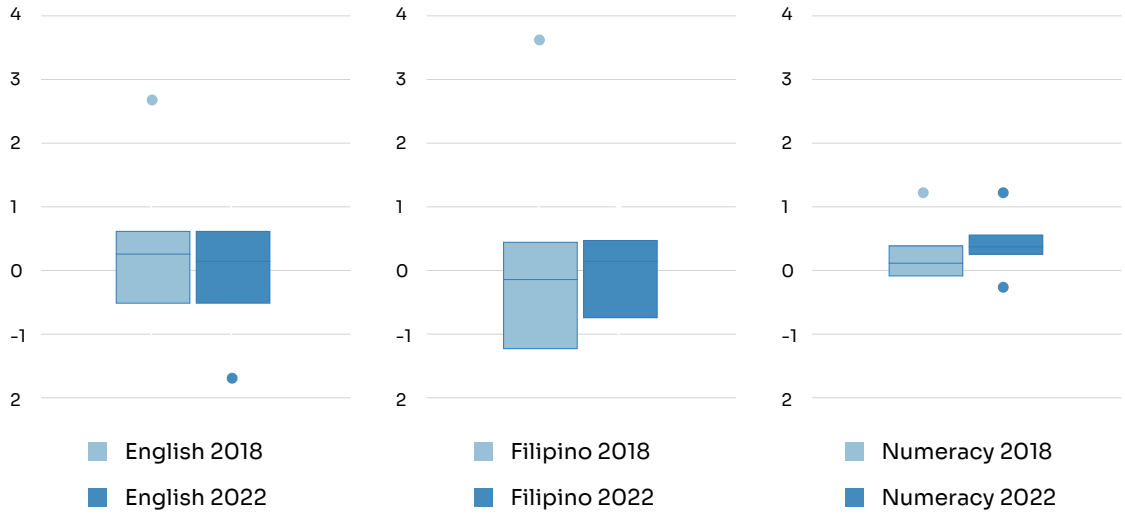
Critically, there is no established correspondence or conceptual alignment across the various diagnostic, national, and international assessments administered by DepEd. Tools such as CRLA and Phil-IRI operate with distinct frameworks and scoring approaches that do not map onto the constructs measured in ELLNA or the NAT series. Likewise, neither ELLNA nor NAT has formal equivalence tables or linking studies that would allow their results to be interpreted alongside SEA-PLM, TIMSS, or PISA. As the PIDS study notes, the absence of a common construct map or anchor proficiency framework means that "results across these assessments cannot be meaningfully compared or used to validate each other" (Santos et al., 2025). Without such alignment, DepEd is unable to determine whether disparities in international results stem from genuine performance gaps, curricular misalignment, or inconsistencies in domestic test design.

The technical quality of DepEd's national assessments remains uneven, with several design and psychometric issues that limit how well the tests measure the competencies they intend to assess. Findings from a recent examination of NAT and ELLNA reveal that many test items do not demonstrate clear construct differentiation (Santos et al., 2025). For example, the intended 21st-century skills measured in NAT Grade 6 show very high correlations with one another, indicating weak discriminant validity. Instead of capturing distinct higher-order skills, the test may be measuring a single underlying general ability, suggesting that the design of items does not align tightly with the competencies they are meant to represent. This lack of clarity at the construct level constrains the interpretation of scores and affects the usefulness of the results for instructional guidance.

Results often arrive late, are not linked to structured interventions, and rarely inform resource allocation or instructional adjustments. In practice, this low-stakes environment contributes to a compliance-oriented culture in which assessments are administered because they are required, not because they drive improvement in learning.

ELLNA results from 2018 and 2022 further illustrate inconsistent item difficulty distributions across cycles. Although some improvements are evident, wide variation across learning areas suggests that the test has not undergone consistent item anchoring or equating. Without stable difficulty profiles, results across years cannot be interpreted as genuine changes in learner proficiency. These technical inconsistencies highlight the need for a more coherent, research-driven approach to test design, calibration, and reporting to ensure that national assessments produce valid evidence about learners' foundational literacy and numeracy.

FIGURE 6.
Comparison of Item Difficulty of ELLNA 2018 and ELLNA 2022



Source: Philippine Institute for Development Studies (Santos et al., 2025)

Item-level analysis further confirms these technical gaps. Across learning areas in the 2022 NAT Grade 6, a substantial proportion of items exhibit problematic parameters when examined through a three-parameter logistic (3PL) Item Response Theory model. Issues include items that are too easy or too difficult, items that fail to discriminate between high- and low-performing learners, and items with high guessing probabilities. Science, for instance, contains the largest number of problematic items, raising questions about the alignment of test design with the intended proficiency standards. Without systematic item calibration and iterative test development, these weaknesses undermine the reliability of score interpretations and reduce the assessment's ability to inform policy and classroom practice.

ISSUE 4: DEPED'S BUREAU OF OF EDUCATION ASSESSMENT HAS LIMITED CAPACITY.

At the systems level, major gaps persist between BEA's current practices and international best practices for national learning assessments. Many global testing agencies provide public access to sample test items, detailed blueprints, proficiency level descriptors, and school-level dashboards that help teachers, parents, and policymakers interpret results. In contrast, BEA's public-facing materials remain limited to primers for selected assessments, with minimal communication to schools and almost no publicly available school-level historical data. The bureau also lacks a governing advisory board, and relies almost exclusively on DO 55 s. 2016 as its reference framework, and continues to use traditional mean percentage score reporting instead of modern psychometric models that enable richer and more accurate reporting. Together, these factors contribute to a system where assessments operate in administrative silos, with limited transparency and insufficient technical grounding.

These findings reveal a national assessment system that is overburdened by multiple instruments, yet still constrained by technical limitations that affect data quality, comparability, and usability.

The sustainability of national assessment reform depends fundamentally on strengthening the Bureau of Education Assessment (BEA)'s technical and organizational capacity. Despite its central role in designing and managing DepEd's assessment system, BEA continues to operate with a significantly undersized workforce relative to its mandate. The volume and complexity of tasks from item development and test administration to psychometric analysis, reporting, and cross-bureau coordination have expanded over the past decade, yet its plantilla and technical structure have not kept pace. As a result, core psychometric responsibilities fall on a very small group of specialists who must simultaneously manage operational demands, limiting the bureau's ability to consistently uphold high technical standards.

These capacity constraints are compounded by a national shortage of trained assessment and psychometrics professionals. Only a handful of higher education institutions offer formal preparation in educational measurement, resulting in a narrow recruitment pipeline for BEA and other assessment-related units. Stakeholders noted that the bureau often relies on short-term training, donor-supported workshops, or external consultants to patch immediate skill gaps measures that provide temporary relief but do not build lasting institutional capability. This shortage undermines BEA's ability to implement more advanced psychometric processes such as test equating, scaling, longitudinal validity studies, and timely, comparable score reporting.

Without deliberate investment in BEA's technical expertise, staffing, and long-term talent pipeline, reforms to the national assessment system will remain limited in impact. Current constraints already contribute to delays in reporting, inconsistencies in year-on-year comparability, and weaker alignment with curriculum standards all of which undermine schools' and regions' ability to use assessment data for instruction and planning. Strengthening BEA's capacity in psychometrics, data analysis, and modern measurement methods is therefore essential not only for improving assessment quality but for ensuring that the entire system is equipped with reliable, actionable evidence to guide teaching, support learners, and inform policy.

ISSUE 5: THE ABSENCE OF LONGITUDINAL AND STUDENT-LEVEL TRACKING OF LEARNERS YIELDS LIMITED INSIGHTS TO INFORM POLICY.

The absence of systematic psychometric test equating prevents results across grade levels and years from being meaningfully compared, as found by the Philippine Institute of Development Studies (2025). Although the Education Assessment Division (BEA-EAD) has begun embedding anchor items in assessments to lay the groundwork for future linkage, these steps have not yet matured into full equating studies. As a result, assessments such as ELLNA, NAT Grade 6, NAT Grade 10, and NAT Grade 12 remain psychometrically distinct, each built on different blueprints, constructs, and reporting scales. Participating stakeholders repeatedly raised this during focus group discussions, noting that "the current reported scores are not straightforwardly comparable to each other" (Santos et al., 2025). This compromises the ability of policymakers, school leaders, and teachers to interpret trends or monitor whether reforms translate into measurable changes in learning outcomes.

Historical initiatives on test linkage reveal that the system has historically demonstrated, but has not fully operationalized, the capacity for longitudinal tracking. In discussions facilitated by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies, the National Educational Testing and Research Center (NETRC), BEA's predecessor, once conducted a longitudinal tracking study in the early 2000s, leveraging the fact that



national assessments were administered on a census basis. NETRC was able to follow learner cohorts over time, demonstrating that longitudinal analysis was feasible within the Philippine assessment architecture. However, this capability was not embedded into permanent systems; after the study concluded, the tracking mechanism was discontinued and no successor structure was developed (Santos et al., 2025).

In the absence of equating and longitudinal tracking, the extensive list of assessments cannot currently function as an integrated learning measurement system. This results in isolated data points that provide only snapshots rather than a coherent picture of student development over time. The combination of overlapping assessments and lack of technical alignment has created a fragmented assessment structure that constrains the country's ability to monitor learner progress over time and evaluate the long-term effects of reforms.

A clearer interpretation of assessment results requires an understanding of the proficiency levels used in DepEd's national assessments. These levels define the range of skills learners are expected to demonstrate, from minimal recall of basic information to the application of complex reasoning and problem-solving. Presenting the distribution of test items across these levels helps illustrate whether an assessment is appropriately balanced, detects the full spectrum of learner performance, and aligns with curricular expectations. The table below summarizes the proficiency levels referenced in this study.

TABLE 2.
Levels of Proficiency: Range and Description (NAT Grade 10)

Level	MPS	Description
Highly Proficient	90-100	At this level, students are highly capable of solving problems, managing and communicating accurate information, and analyzing and evaluating data to create or formulate ideas.
Proficient	75-89	At this level, students are skilled in solving problems, managing and communicating information, and analyzing and evaluating data to create or formulate ideas.
Nearly Proficient	50-74	At this level, students meet the minimum level of skills in solving problems, managing and communicating information, and analyzing and evaluating data to comprehend ideas.
Low Proficient	25-49	At this level, students are able to identify strategies in solving problems, differentiate, and organize information.
Not Proficient	0-24	At this level, students are able to solve simple problems, classify, and identify the source of information.

Philippine Institute for Development Studies (Santos et al., 2025)

Another major gap is the limited use of standardized assessment data to understand the performance of underserved groups, including learners in Last Mile Schools, Indigenous Peoples communities, 4Ps households, ALIVE programs, and geographically isolated areas. Although national assessments collect individual-level data, PIDS (2025) found no systematic mechanism within DepEd to disaggregate, analyze, or report results for these key equity groups. As a result, chronic disparities, such as consistently lower NAT and CRLA performance in disadvantaged or remote contexts, remain poorly understood and are seldom used to guide differentiated support or resource allocation. This constrains DepEd's ability to design targeted interventions, monitor equity, or evaluate whether reforms meaningfully improve outcomes for the learners most at risk.



Up to P2.70/liter fuel price hike seen next week

By BRIX LELIS

November begins with yet another spike at the pumps, with diesel prices expected to jump by over P2 per liter.

Oil industry experts indicated a potential per-liter price hike of P1.50 to P1.70 for gasoline, P2.30 to P2.70 for diesel and around P1.75 for kerosene.

The estimates reflect the trading results in the Mean of Platts Singapore, a pricing benchmark used for refined petroleum products, over the past four days.

Final price adjustments will be announced

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THE PHILIPPINE STAR

TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

CEO SUMMIT KOREA 2025

BBM to CEOs: Phl open, ready, eager to do business

By ALEXIS ROMERO

GYEONGJU – The Philippines is eager to do business with investors and is prepared to build a more competitive regional economy, as it assumes the chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), President Marcos said yesterday.

Speaking at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) CEO Summit in this South Korean city, Marcos said the Philippines has undertaken reforms aimed at improving operational efficiency and transforming the investment landscape.

"As the Philippines takes on the ASEAN chairship in 2026, we stand ready to build a more connected, competitive and sustainable regional economy – driven by deeper cooperation and shared growth," the President said. "We welcome our partners from across the region, and we invite the business community to join us in shaping a connected, resilient and opportunity-driven Asia-Pacific."

Turn to Page 3

President Marcos waves after delivering a speech during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation CEO Summit at the Gyeongju Arts Center in Gyeongju, South Korea yesterday.

Palace workers share ghost encounters

By HELEN FLORES

In this season of "ghost" projects, employees at Malacañang Palace shared their creepy encounters with ghosts – the supernatural kind – while working at the official residence of the president of the republic.

In a Halloween special posted on the social media account of Radio Televisyon Malacañang late Thursday, the video titled "Malacañang Horror Stories" featured the encounters of presidential guard M/Sgt. Ramsan Gordo, chef Katrina Matias and employees Rian Cortel, Rhiza Mullet and Laylanie de Dios while working at the Palace.

A presidential guard since 1998, Gordo recalled hearing voices of children playing at the Rizal Hall at 1 a.m. When Gordo went up to check, he found no one there.

Cortel also had an encounter at the Rizal Hall, with a couple clad in white looking

Functional illiterate Pinoys reach 24.8 M

By BELLA CARIASO

The number of functionally illiterate Filipinos has nearly doubled to 24.8 million in the past 30 years, the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM 2) reported.

In a statement, EDCOM 2 expressed concern over the Department of Education (DepEd)'s involvement in more than 261 interagency bodies, saying this has diverted the agency's focus from its core mandate of basic education.

Trump snubs APEC. Story on Page 9.

The commission recalled that in 1993, EDCOM I had urged the government to allow the department to focus solely

Despite the alarming finding in the NAT SY 2023-2024, that only 0.40% of Grade 12 learners reached even the minimum proficiency level, no corresponding large-scale policy or program shift was initiated to address senior high school learning deficits.

Recent improvements to the Functional Literacy, Education, and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) have strengthened the national ecosystem for monitoring youth and adult learning outcomes. Stakeholders have long noted that previous cycles of FLEMMS relied on broad, self-reported literacy indicators that did not align with the competencies assessed in DepEd's curriculum or national assessments, limiting comparability with school-based measures and reducing the survey's utility for education planning. A technical review of the instrument in 2024 following EDCOM recommendations resulted in updated definitions of literacy and functional numeracy, revised questionnaire items, and closer alignment with the K to 12 learning standards. These revisions allow FLEMMS to generate population-level literacy estimates that are more consistent with DepEd's competency frameworks and provide more meaningful insights into foundational skills among out-of-school youth and adults.

Teachers also expressed that the sheer volume of assessment-related tasks has grown substantially, often without yielding improvements in instruction. During earlier consultations by EDCOM II (2023), teachers reported that administering national and division-level assessments, checking papers, and completing item analyses consume significant instructional time yet rarely inform their teaching strategies. This disconnect is reinforced by policy provisions that exclude system-level assessment results from students' grades, further weakening teachers' incentive to integrate insights from these assessments into classroom practice. Consequently, many teachers view these assessments as compliance activities rather than tools that support classroom decision-making. This further deepens the gap between the purpose of national assessments and their perceived instructional value.

Compounding these technical gaps, national assessment results are released slowly and with limited transparency, a recurring concern raised across testing coordinators, teachers, and school heads. Across multiple consultations, stakeholders consistently cited delays, from procurement to administration to scoring, that often stretch to two or three years, reducing the practical value of the results (EDCOM II Year One Report, 2023; Santos et al., 2025). As one testing coordinator explained, their schools received the SY 2019-2020 results only in 2023, but cited that there has been slight improvement in the last two years: "We do receive them, but they are a bit delayed. [...] That's our issue. It takes quite some time. [...] But last year, we received the 2022-2023 results by December 2023. It's still somewhat delayed, but at least it's not years apart anymore" (Santos et al., 2025). Amid this improvement, results still arrive too late to meaningfully influence planning for the succeeding school year.

Timeliness matters as stakeholders at all levels view assessment data as essential for school improvement. Another testing coordinator emphasized that results should arrive "before the beginning of the next school year so that the division levels and the schools can plan what can be done to improve our competencies and performance." Teachers likewise highlighted that earlier dissemination would allow them to incorporate evidence into lesson planning, remediation, and intervention cycles (Santos et al., 2025).

Given these prevailing challenges, the recent launch of *Project BUKAS* marks a significant shift in DepEd's transparency and data-access practices, with potential implications for addressing long-standing issues in assessment reporting. Announced in September 2025, Project BUKAS is the first initiative in DepEd's history to make school-level education data publicly accessible, including results from national assessments such as ELLNA, CRLA, and NAT Grade 6. Secretary Angara underscored the intent: "Whatever we know at the Central Office and the regional offices, the public will also know." The first rollout, covering Regions I, III, VIII, IX, and CAR, now publishes datasets on assessment results, enrollment, school resources, spending patterns, and teacher-to-student ratios.

While Project BUKAS does not directly resolve delays in the procurement and production of assessment results, it represents a cultural reform in data openness and public accountability, responding to a core systems-level barrier: the inaccessibility of timely, granular, and school-level data. If sustained and paired with improvements in BEA's processing timelines, Project BUKAS could substantially expand stakeholders' ability to use assessment evidence for planning, resource allocation, and policy evaluation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Strengthen system governance and accountability by establishing an independent assessment body.** Multiple studies (USAID, unpublished; Santos et al., 2025) note that the current organizational structure of the Bureau of Education Assessment limits its ability to exercise full technical independence in test development, administration, analysis, and reporting. The integration of assessment design, policy oversight, and program implementation within the same agency creates risks of conflict of interest, weakens quality assurance, and constrains external validation of results. Drawing on international practice, the system would benefit from the creation of an independent assessment body mandated to set standards, oversee technical development, safeguard psychometric validity, and ensure transparent public reporting of national and international assessment results. Such an entity should exercise autonomy comparable to national statistical offices or certification bodies, anchored in clear governance arrangements and legislative authority, while maintaining strong coordination with DepEd and CHED to ensure alignment with

curricular and teacher standards. This institutional reform responds directly to PIDS' observation that "the absence of an independent quality assurance mechanism has contributed to internal inconsistencies in assessment design, implementation, and utilization" (Santos et al., 2025).

2. **Rationalize the assessment system by streamlining key stage tests and shifting to computer-based testing.** The current assessment structure is characterized by overlapping instruments, unclear progression across grade levels, and insufficient alignment with curriculum standards and international frameworks. Several consultations and technical reviews affirm the need to rationalize assessments by focusing on essential competencies at key educational transitions: literacy and numeracy in Grade 3 (Key Stage 1), foundational competencies and scientific thinking in Grade 6 (Key Stage 2), deeper application and reasoning in Grade 10 (Key Stage 3); and readiness for higher education or employment in Grade 12 (Key Stage 4). The PIDS study similarly recommends reducing redundancies in existing tests and redesigning key stage assessments to follow coherent frameworks with cumulative learning progressions. This rationalization should be paired with modernization, including gradual transition to computer-based testing for national assessments. PIDS underscores that pen-and-paper assessments limit test security, timeliness, adaptive capability, and efficiency of scoring. Modernization would require strengthening ICT availability, expanding proctoring protocols, developing accessible test platforms, and building BEA's capacity for data management and automated scoring.

3. **Enhance institutional capacity within the Bureau of Education Assessment.** Improving assessment quality requires significant institutional strengthening within BEA. Expanding technical staffing, particularly in psychometrics, statistics, research, and test development, is critical to meeting the demands of test equating, item banking, digital transition, sampling design, and rapid turnaround of results. BEA should also establish structured professional development pathways, including mentorship programs, certification in psychometric methods, and partnerships with universities and international assessment bodies. Strengthened capacity will better position DepEd to implement the methodological improvements identified in the PIDS review (Santos et al., 2025).

4. **Review and reform the grading system to address systemic practices contributing to mass promotion.** Revisions to the DepEd grading policy should ensure that reported grades reflect learners' actual mastery of competencies. The current transmutation policy (DO 8 s. 2015), which converts very low raw scores into passing grades, obscures learning gaps and contributes to widespread perceptions of automatic promotion. Reform should include phasing out the transmutation table, adopting a more descriptive or criterion-referenced grading approach, and reconfiguring the Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS) and Office Performance Commitment and Review Form (OPCRF) to ensure that neither teachers nor school heads are implicitly incentivized to minimize failures or inflate grades. Clear safeguards should protect teachers' professional autonomy in deciding learner promotion, preventing coercion and ensuring that promotion decisions are based on demonstrated mastery and appropriate interventions.

5. **Enhance alignment between classroom and system-level assessments.** Classroom-based and national assessments should articulate a coherent progression of skills and share common reference points for proficiency. To achieve this, DepEd should develop a unified assessment framework that aligns competencies across CRLA, RMA, Phil-IRI, ELLNA, NAT, and participation in SEA-PLM, TIMSS, and PISA. Clear progression pathways would allow teachers to

use classroom assessments to anticipate performance on national exams and to plan appropriate remediation. Improved alignment would also strengthen the validity of inferences drawn from national assessment results.

6. **Recalibrate the design and use of diagnostic tools through refinement.** Diagnostic assessments such as the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA), and Rapid Mathematics Assessment (RMA) require targeted technical improvements to ensure that they measure literacy and numeracy skills consistently and in a way that aligns with a common learning progression framework. Refinement should focus on clarifying constructs, strengthening scoring rules, and creating shared proficiency levels so that results from different tools can be interpreted more coherently and used to identify learning gaps more accurately.

7. **Embed these assessments in a structured formative assessment cycle, with regular checkpoints throughout the school year that provide teachers with timely information for remediation and instructional adjustments.** To support this, teachers need practical training on interpreting diagnostic results, linking them to instructional decisions, and planning interventions based on learner profiles.

8. **Beyond the school level, reporting formats should be standardized and made more accessible so LGUs, parents, and civil society organizations can use diagnostic data when designing local programs or supporting struggling learners.** Improving feedback loops and incorporating diagnostic results into school improvement planning will help shift these tools from compliance-oriented activities toward meaningful instruments for strengthening early-grade learning.

9. **Enhance the utility of assessments for equity and differentiated support.** Disaggregated reporting for learners in Last Mile Schools, Indigenous Peoples Education programs, 4Ps households, ALIVE schools, and other underserved groups is essential for equity-oriented policymaking. Current systems do not systematically analyze or disseminate assessment data for these groups (Santos et al., 2025). Establishing standardized equity reporting protocols will allow DepEd to monitor disparities, direct resources toward high-need populations, and evaluate the impact of reforms on historically marginalized learners. Clear equity indicators should be integrated into both national assessment reports and local school dashboards.

10. **Accelerate the timely release and transparent dissemination of assessment results.** Mechanisms should be institutionalized to ensure rapid turnaround of assessment data, potentially within the same school year. This includes optimizing procurement, adopting digital scoring systems, strengthening data pipelines, and establishing dedicated data analytics units. The rollout of Project BUKAS provides a promising platform for transparency; linking assessment results to school-level dashboards will improve usability for School Division Offices, Local School Boards, and teachers. However, sustained investment in data infrastructure and the institutionalization of open-data policies are needed for these gains to be fully realized.



PRIORITY AREA 7:
CURRICULUM AND TEACHING

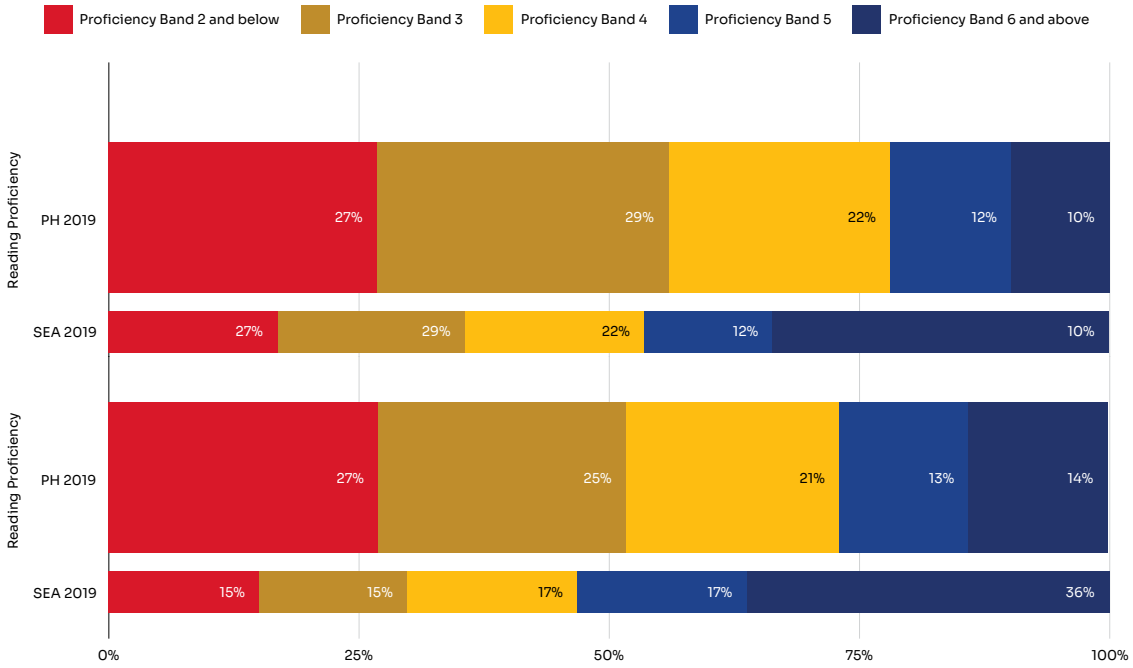
FINDINGS

ISSUE 1: MOST FILIPINO LEARNERS CONTINUE TO STRUGGLE WITH BASIC PROFICIENCIES, AND ARE LAGGING BEHIND MOST PEERS REGIONALLY AND GLOBALLY.

Results from the 2025 Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) reaffirm persistent gaps in foundational literacy and numeracy among Filipino Grade 5 learners, with only modest shifts in performance since 2019. In reading, the proportion of learners in the lowest proficiency bands (Bands 1–2) declined slightly from 56% in 2019 to 52% in 2024, while the share reaching the highest band (Band 6 and above) rose from 10% to 14%. Performance in mathematics demonstrates a similar pattern, with a large concentration of learners still in the lowest bands and only incremental improvements among higher performers. These findings indicate that while some gains have been made at the upper end of the distribution, a substantial proportion of learners continue to struggle with foundational skills expected by the end of primary schooling.

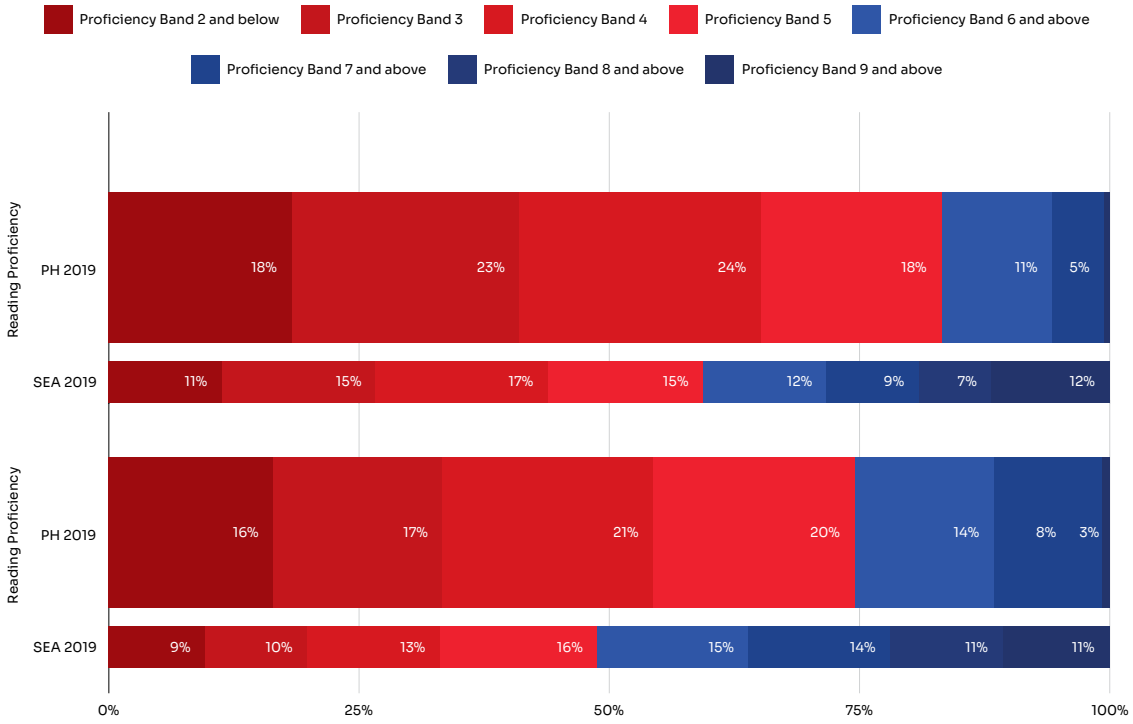
In reading, the proportion of learners in the lowest proficiency bands (Bands 1–2) declined slightly from 56% in 2019 to 52% in 2024, while the share reaching the highest band (Band 6 and above) rose from 10% to 14%.

FIGURE 9.
Grade 5 Reading Proficiency Distribution, Philippines vs. the Southeast Asia Region (2019 and 2024)



Source: SEA-PLM 2024 Main Regional Report

FIGURE 10.
Grade 5 Mathematics Proficiency Distribution, Philippines vs. the Southeast Asia Region (2019 and 2024)



Source: SEA-PLM 2024 Main Regional Report

Grade repetition and access to textbooks are closely linked to student performance. Grade repetition remains particularly high, with 28% of Grade 5 students having repeated a grade in 2024; access to individual reading textbooks declined sharply from 74% in 2019 to 54% in 2024; and average class sizes remained large at 33 learners.

Logistic regression analyses underscore several clear patterns:

1. **Grade repetition consistently emerges as one of the strongest predictors of low proficiency,** with repeaters far more likely to fall into the very low performance bands and substantially less likely to reach high proficiency in either reading or mathematics. Engagement in commercial work outside school likewise increases the likelihood of low achievement, reflecting the learning costs of economic pressures on children.

2. **Home language and language of assessment remain important.** Students who speak the test language at home, particularly English in the 2024 cycle, have lower odds of being low performing and higher odds of reaching high proficiency than peers who use a different main language at home. The Philippines has a relatively small share of learners who take the assessment in a language that is not used at home, and a subsample sat the test in Filipino rather than English, yet gaps still appear between learners whose home language matches the assessment language and those whose home language does not. This suggests that language familiar to the child both at home and in school continues to confer an advantage, and that efforts to strengthen use of familiar languages in early grades and to support language-rich home environments remain critical.

3. **Parental engagement independently reduces the risk of low performance.** Learners who report that parents or caregivers frequently talk, read, or engage with them about schoolwork have lower odds of being in the lowest proficiency bands and somewhat higher odds of reaching higher proficiency levels. These patterns underline that what happens at home, including time spent on learning activities and emotional support, is strongly linked to foundational reading and mathematics outcomes.

4. **Urban and rural location has a more limited association with achievement than might be expected.** Average SEA-PLM scores in reading and mathematics are broadly similar for learners in villages or rural areas, small towns, and cities, and changes in these scores between 2019 and 2024 are not statistically significant in several settings. Once socioeconomic background and other factors are taken into account, simply living in a city or large town does not guarantee substantially better learning outcomes, which indicates that improving school and home learning conditions in all areas is more important than location alone.

5. **Early childhood education is positively associated with higher proficiency when coded as a yes or no variable,** but years of pre primary exposure on their own are not consistently predictive of better performance. This aligns with emerging evidence from national surveys that many young children still have limited access to books, toys, and stimulating learning materials at home and that only a minority of caregivers

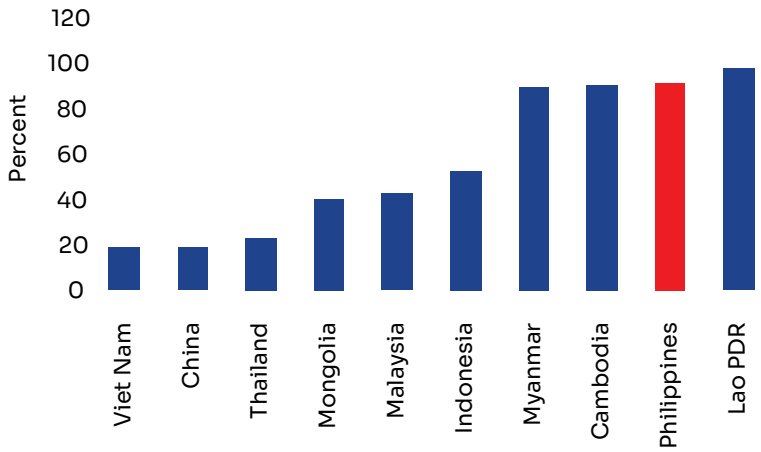
Grade repetition remains particularly high, with 28% of Grade 5 students having repeated a grade in 2024; access to individual reading textbooks declined sharply from 74% in 2019 to 54% in 2024; and average class sizes remained large at 33 learners.

can enumerate all recommended positive parenting practices for children under five. These findings suggest that quality of early learning experiences, both in early childhood centers and in the home, matters more than duration alone and that early childhood reforms must focus on responsive caregiving, language rich interaction, and access to learning materials rather than years of attendance by itself.

6. **School type and gender patterns further reinforce inequities.** Learners in public schools have higher odds of being in the lowest proficiency bands, particularly in mathematics, while boys are more likely to be low performing and less likely than girls to reach high proficiency in reading, consistent with global trends.

Relative to other Southeast Asian systems, the Philippines continues to have one of the highest concentrations of learners in the lowest proficiency bands and one of the smallest shares of students achieving high proficiency. Data from the World Bank East Asia and Pacific Economic Update (October 2025) shows that the Philippines remains among the worst-performing systems in the region in terms of learning poverty, defined as the share of 10-year-olds who cannot read and understand an age-appropriate text. While countries such as Viet Nam, China, Thailand, and Mongolia report substantially lower levels of learning poverty, the Philippines is positioned near the bottom of the East Asia ranking, alongside Cambodia and Lao PDR. This pattern mirrors the persistent gaps seen in SEA-PLM and other learning assessments: a large proportion of Filipino learners remain below minimum proficiency by the end of primary school, and system-wide reforms have not yet achieved the scale needed to shift foundational learning outcomes.

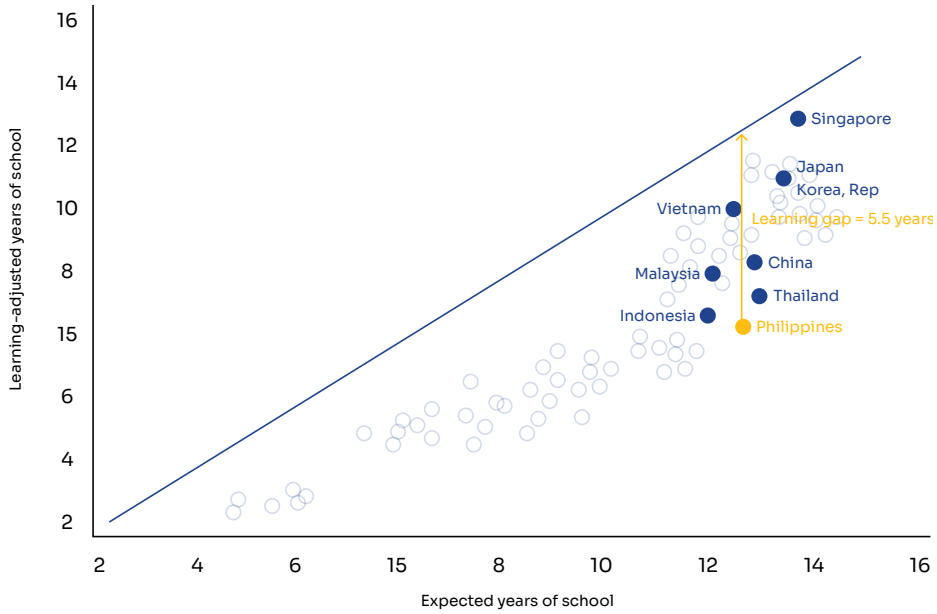
FIGURE 10.
Share of 10-Year-Olds Who Cannot Read or Understand an Age-Appropriate Textbook



Source: World Bank East Asia and Pacific Economic Update (October 2025)

This highlights a structural challenge: despite high school attendance and near-universal early childhood participation, the system continues to struggle with ensuring that years of schooling translate into actual mastery of basic literacy. The World Bank notes that "schooling is an imperfect measure of skills," and the Philippines' position in regional rankings affirms the need to strengthen assessment quality, improve early-grade instruction, and close persistent equity gaps. Other World Bank studies show that Filipino students have a "learning gap" of 5.5 years, with around 91% of children aged 10 unable to read proficiently (2022).

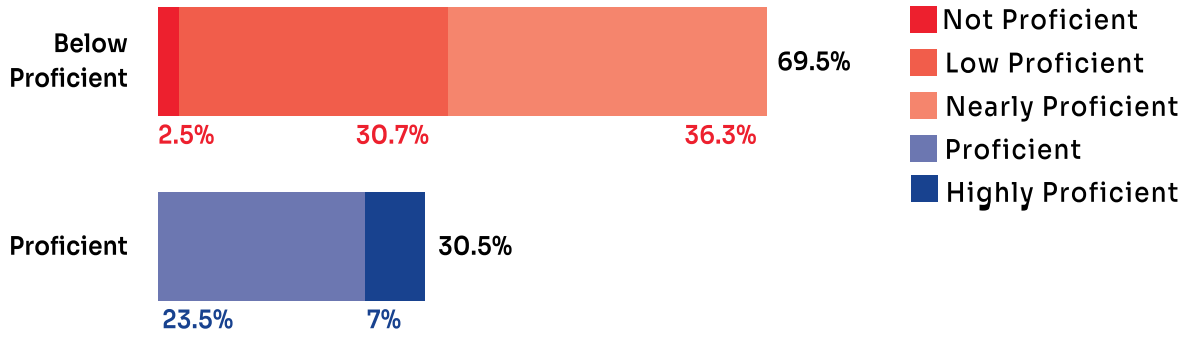
FIGURE 11.
Learning-Adjusted Years of Schooling and GDP per Capita



World Bank (2020). Human Capital Index 2020 Update

National Achievement Test results show worrying declines in proficiency across key stages, with the proportion of "non-proficient students" rising from 30% in Grade 3 (ELLNA) to as high as 74% in Grade 12 (NAT). Consistent with EDCOM's call for focusing on the foundations, DepEd data on the results of the standardized assessments conducted from 2023-25 for Grades 3, 6, 10, and 12, highlight worrying declines in proficiency. At Grade 3, the ELLNA depicts at least **30.5%** considered proficient to highly proficient, compared to **69.5%** non-proficient (or those scoring 74 and below). Notably, "nearly proficient" is what DepEd considers as students meeting the "minimum skills" for that key stage. However by the time they finish Grade 6, steep declines are observed, with only **19.56%** considered proficient. This further worsens in Grades 10 and 12, with only **0.74%** and **0.4%** reaching proficiency as they progress in secondary schooling. **These findings underscore the severe challenges faced by learners as they move across grade levels: highlighting the possible consequences of "mass promotion" practices", and once again, stressing urgent reforms demanded to ensure mastery of foundational literacy.**

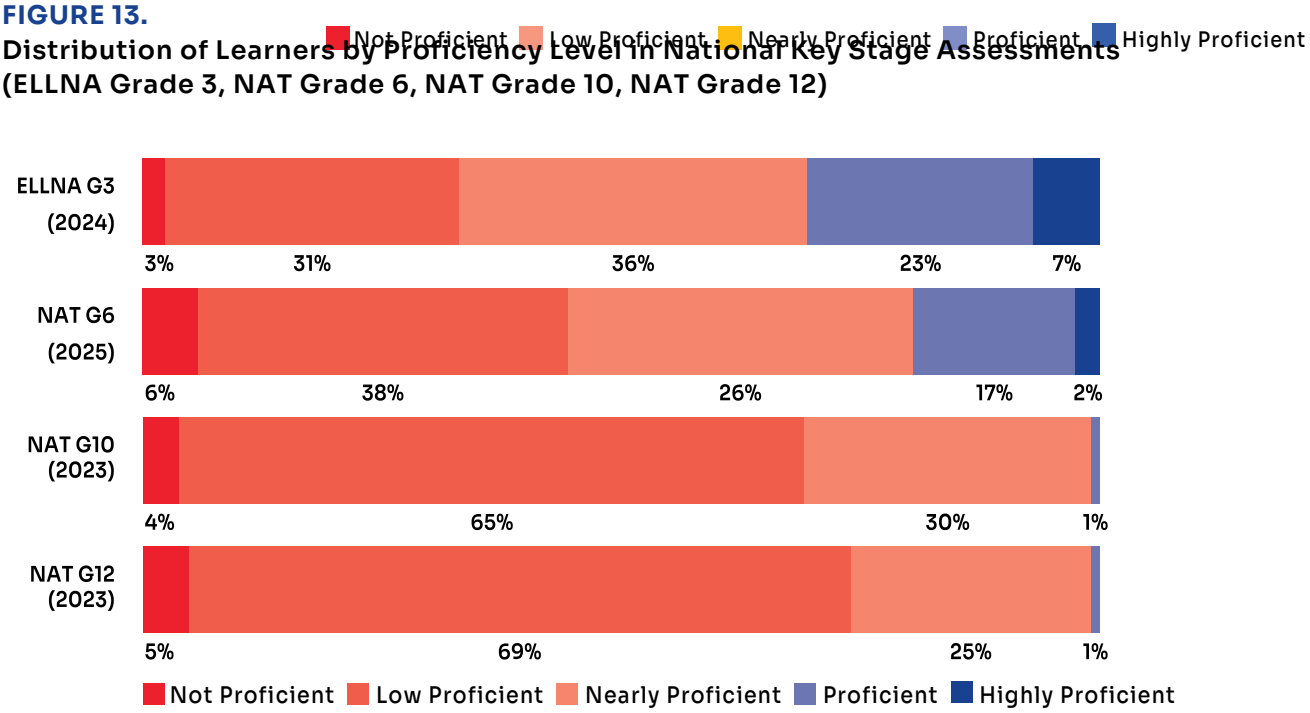
FIGURE 12.
Distribution of Grade 3 Learners by Proficiency Level - Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Assessment (ELLNA) (SY 2023-2024)



Source: Department of Education - Bureau of Education Assessment, as of September 2025

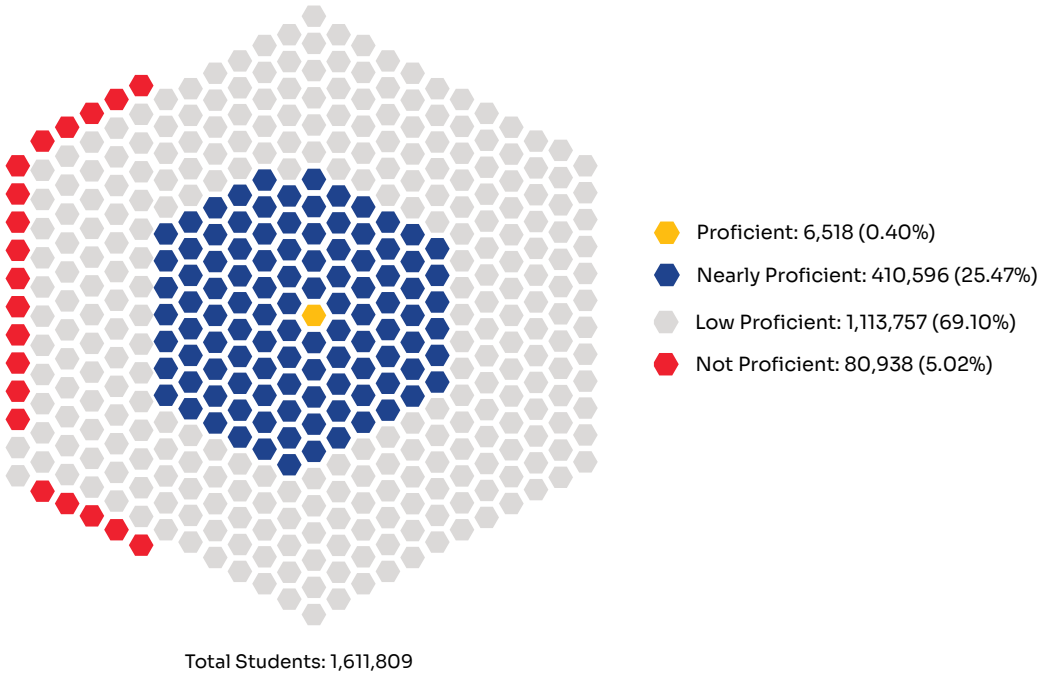
This further worsens in Grades 10 and 12, with only 0.74% and 0.4% reaching proficiency as they progress in secondary schooling.

FIGURE 13.
Distribution of Learners by Proficiency Level in National Key Stage Assessments (ELLNA Grade 3, NAT Grade 6, NAT Grade 10, NAT Grade 12)



Source: Department of Education, Bureau of Education Assessment, as of September 2025[4]

FIGURE 14.
Distribution of Learners Across Proficiency Levels, NAT Grade 12 (SY 2023-2024)



Source: Department of Education, Bureau of Education Assessment, as of September 2025

4 Available data are only for years when the DepEd was able to administer the respective assessments.

ISSUE 2: CURRICULUM REFORMS NEED TO ADDRESS FOUNDATIONAL NEEDS

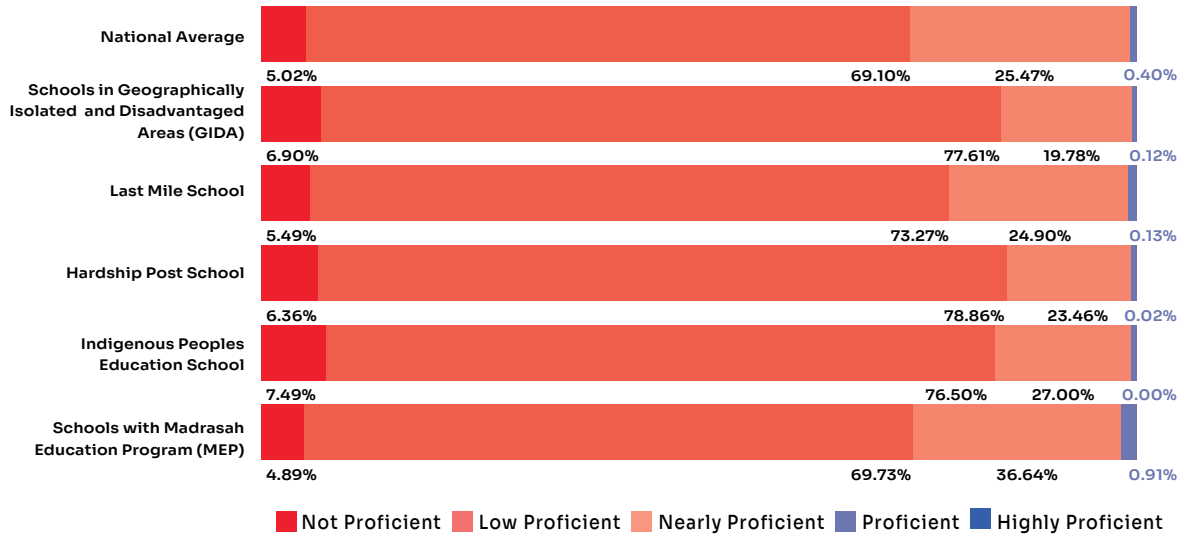
These results make clear that curriculum and instruction reforms must directly confront deep learning gaps rather than simply adding more years or content, a challenge that the Revised K to 10 Curriculum (MATATAG) and the Strengthened SHS (SSHS) curriculum are now attempting to address.

The MATATAG K to 10 curriculum and the proposed Strengthened Senior High School curriculum are DepEd's core curricular response to this persistent learning crisis, aiming to decongest content, clarify progressions, and improve alignment between basic education and post-secondary pathways. Technical reviews commissioned by DepEd and EDCOM II found that the earlier K to 12 curriculum was overloaded, with too many competencies per grade, misplaced prerequisites in mathematics, science, and English, and uneven cognitive demand that made it difficult for learners to master foundational skills before moving on. MATATAG was therefore designed to focus more sharply on reading, writing, and numeracy in the early grades, reduce duplication across subjects, and more clearly map 21st-century skills across key stages, while the strengthened SHS proposal simplifies tracks, trims the number of subjects, and tightens the link between SHS outcomes, higher education general education requirements, and TVET qualifications.

By the time students reach Grade 12, only 0.40% of students were found to be "proficient", while 74% did not meet the minimum level of skills tested based on the National Achievement Test. In 2023-24, DepEd data shows that only 0.40% or 6,518 students out of 1.612 million students were considered proficient, or "skilled in solving problems, managing and communicating information, and analyzing and evaluating data to create or formulate ideas". Meanwhile, the bulk of students were "low proficient" scoring 25-49 in their mean percentage score. These same challenges are faced by learners considered "at-risk" and "vulnerable". Examining the NAT Grade 12 data in SY 2023-24, we find that the national trend was reflected even among learners with unique challenges, including those in Last Mile Schools, GIDA areas, and in hardship posts. Specifically, among 210,350 Grade 12 learners in GIDA, Last Mile Schools, IP Education, Madrasah Education Program, and hardship post schools in SY 2023–2024, only 266 learners (0.13%) reached Proficient and none reached Highly Proficient; 158,739 (75.46%) were Low Proficient and 12,884 (6.13%) were Not Proficient, meaning 81.59% were below the minimum proficiency threshold (DepEd, 2023–2024). This suggests that proficiency gaps are even more severe in structurally disadvantaged school settings, reinforcing the need for equity-weighted learning recovery and school support so vulnerable learners are not left further behind as they complete basic education.

By the time students reach Grade 12, only 0.40% of students were found to be "proficient", while 74% did not meet the minimum level of skills tested based on the National Achievement Test.

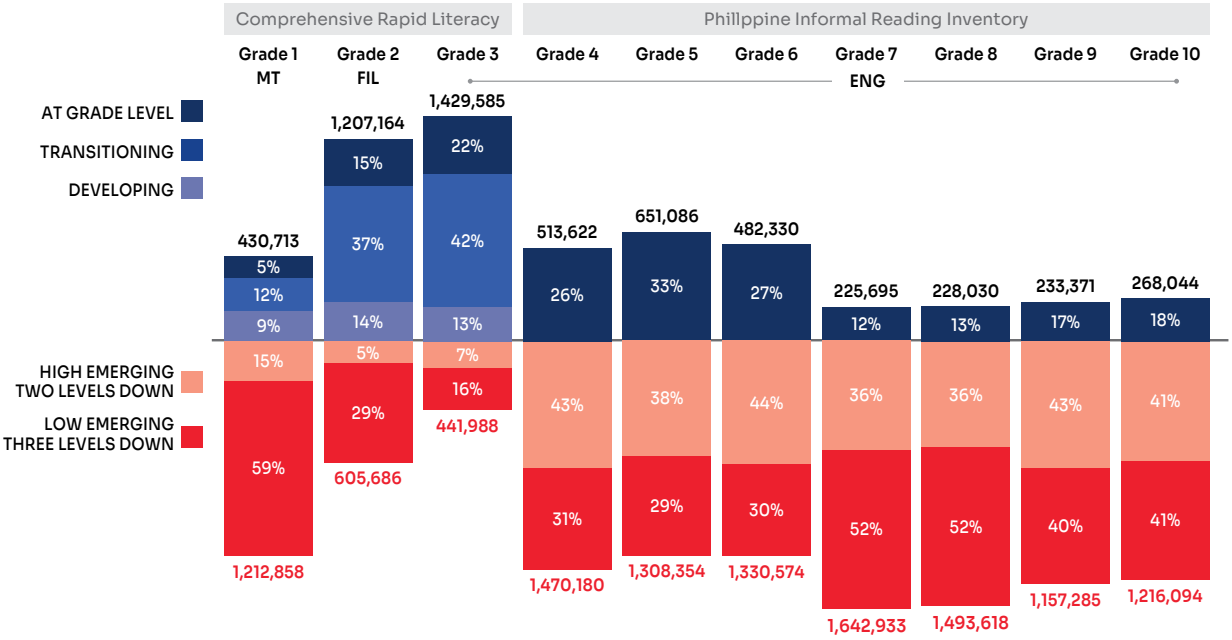
FIGURE 15.
Distribution of Learners from Disadvantaged Groups, Across Proficiency Levels, NAT Grade 12 (SY 2023-2024)



Source: Department of Education, Bureau of Education Assessment, as of September 2025

Corroborating international and national assessments, data shows that as much as 88% of students across all grade levels are not "grade-level ready" in reading at the beginning of the school year. Following DepEd's critical adoption of BOSY tests (CRLA and Phil-IRI) across Grades 1 to 10 in SY 2024-26, the data has highlighted how the majority of students, particularly among Grades 4 to 10, are struggling readers, with proportions ranging from 67% in Grade 5 to as high as 88% in Grade 7. Critically, the data likewise shows that 40-52% of students across Junior High School are at least two grade levels down in reading based on the Phil-IRI assessment. Again, these evince the urgency of addressing "mass promotion" and the rolling out of well-designed interventions to address literacy gaps at the secondary level, understanding that literacy is the gateway to learning numeracy, and other competencies across subjects. The findings similarly underscore the value of administering literacy assessments at higher grade levels (notably, including Grades 11 and 12), and the need to refine both CRLA and Phil-IRI to better inform intervention designs.

FIGURE 16.
Grades 1 to 10: Literacy Profile (Beginning of SY 2025)



Source: Department of Education, CRLA and Phil-IRI KS2 & KS3 Dashboards (as of January 2026)

> *Majority of students, particularly among Grades 4 to 10, are struggling readers, with proportions ranging from 67% in Grade 5 to as high as 88% in Grade 7.*

These findings substantiate the importance of EDCOM II's earlier recommendation to create protected time in the school calendar for intensive remediation and to pursue out-of-the-box solutions to address learning gaps. House Resolution No. 1805 filed in July 2024 during the 19th Congress urged DepEd to suspend the regular academic program for eight to twelve weeks to focus on targeted learning recovery, with pre and post assessments and continuous differentiated support throughout the year, in recognition that small summer programs alone cannot close gaps that span multiple grade levels. Given the severity of the cumulative gaps of learners in higher grade levels, it is imperative for DepEd to consider more aggressive remediation interventions in both the formal school calendar, and in ARAL.

TABLE 3.
Phased Implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum

School Year (SY)	Grade Levels
SY 2024-2025	Kindergarten, Grades 1, 4, and 7
SY 2025-2026	Grades 2, 5, and 8
SY 2026-2027	Grades 3, 6, and 9
SY 2027-2028	Grade 10

Source: Department of Education Memorandum No. 054, s. 2023

The MATATAG K to 10 curriculum reform has allowed curriculum decongestion and has strengthened focus on foundational skills leading to notable gains in Key Stage 1 (Grades 1 to 3). Using a rigorous mixed-methods, cluster-randomized design across seven regions, the evaluation conducted by PIDS shows statistically significant learning gains in the early grades, with Grade 2 students in pilot schools registering large improvements across literacy, numeracy, and values education: an outcome that is notable given that curriculum reforms typically yield limited effects in their initial year. Teachers also reported greater flexibility in lesson delivery, and improved contextualization of content. Meanwhile, curriculum reviews conducted by experts affirmed improvements in content relevance, social grounding, and competency clarity compared to the previous K to 12 framework (Abrigo et al., 2025).

> *"The teachers sigh in frustration. They recommend decluttering the curriculum year after year. But the changes remain incremental, with the focus still on the subject matter, rather than the learners. There is a visible disconnect between policy and on-ground realities."*
>
> *-Dr. Nene Guevarra, EDCOM Advisory Council Member*

Following these initial gains, continued monitoring and refinement by DepEd is necessary in order to ensure that these early wins are monitored and sustained in later key stages (Grades 4 to 10). As DepEd continues to phased rollout of the MATATAG curriculum (Grades 3, 6, 9 for SY 2026-27, and Grade 10 in SY 2027-28), the study also notes the need to review the uneven progression and alignment of competencies across grade levels (Abrigo et al., 2025). This echoes EDCOM findings in the Year One Report, which noted that teachers still found the curriculum congested in some areas, and underscored the need for more time to be allocated for complex competencies: both, underscoring the need to continue the review and improvement of the curriculum. Juxtaposed against beginning of school year (BOSY) assessment results in SY 2024-25, it may be critical for the agency to review the curriculum, and its delivery, in a way that provides a stronger focus on the most essential competencies as well as room for ensuring mastery of foundational skills. This means departing from practices that favor coverage over mastery, unintendedly caused by curriculum guides and prescriptive budgets of work. Moving forward, it is imperative for DepEd to see through the full implementation of the revised curriculum, while also continuing the work of refining its design and implementation, to ensure its responsiveness to the needs of learners.

Spiral Progression Bill

Senate Bills 530 and **624**, alongside **House Bill 5939**, collectively seek to amend Republic Act No. 10533 or the "Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013" by dismantling the statutory mandate for the "spiral progression approach," which has been argued to have failed to ensure the intended cumulative learning across grade levels. Critiques detailed in the explanatory notes of the filed bills highlight that the current framework forces teachers to function as generalists instead of subject experts, particularly in Science and Mathematics, leading to congested instruction where learners fail to achieve mastery of knowledge and skills. To rectify this, the bills propose replacing the specific mandate with language granting the DepEd full flexibility to select the most effective pedagogical approaches. Furthermore, to maintain educational relevance, the proposals also introduced a safeguard requiring the curriculum and its approaches to undergo a mandatory, systemic review at least once every five years. Ultimately, these measures intend to shift the country's education policy from a rigid, centralized prescription to a more adaptable system that allows for mastery-based, context-sensitive instruction suited to the diverse needs of Filipino learners.

In SHS, reforms have expanded participation and diversified learning options, but the current curriculum still functions more as a general preparatory stage for college than as a set of distinct and viable exits to work, skills certification, or entrepreneurship. ACTRC's SHS review and subsequent hearings document that most learners cluster in the Academic Track regardless of intended exit, that strand choice is heavily constrained by what schools can actually offer, and that TVL strands often lack the equipment, consumables, and industry partnerships needed for meaningful technical training and work immersion. CHED panels report that many SHS graduates still require remediation in literacy, numeracy, and scientific reasoning when they enter higher education, while TESDA notes that only a minority

> *CHED panels report that many SHS graduates still require remediation in literacy, numeracy, and scientific reasoning when they enter higher education.*

of TVL learners are actually assessed and certified for National Certificates despite high pass rates among those who do take the assessments. These patterns indicate that SHS has not yet delivered on its promise of four robust curriculum exits, and that the strengthened SHS proposal must resolve persistent tensions between breadth and depth, academic rigor and employability, and flexibility and feasibility for small, under-resourced schools.

MATATAG and the strengthened SHS curriculum provide a necessary but still fragile foundation: they revise what is supposed to be learned, but they rely on complementary changes in learning recovery, instructional time, teacher workload, and support services to translate into large-scale gains in learner outcomes. **Without effective remediation for learners already far below minimum proficiency, enough engaged time-on-task during the school year, and stronger support for teachers and vulnerable learners, curriculum revisions alone cannot close the deep achievement gaps highlighted by SEA-PLM, PISA, and World Bank analyses.**

TABLE 4.
Previous Core Subjects vs. Proposed Core Subjects vs. Teachers for Proposed Core

Previous SHS Core Subjects	Proposed Core Subjects	Teachers for Proposed Core
(1) Oral Communication	**(1) Effective Communication for Filipinos / Mabisang Komunikasyon**	▪ English Teachers ▪ Filipino Teachers
(2) Reading and Writing Skills		
(3) 21st Century Literature		
(4) Media and Information Literacy		
(5) Komunikasyon at Pananaliksik		
(6) Pagbasa at Pagsuri		
(7) Personal Development	**(2) Life Skills**	▪ Personal Development Teachers ▪ Physical Education Teachers ▪ Values Education Teachers
(8) Physical Education / HOPE		
(9) General Mathematics	**(3) General Mathematics**	▪ Mathematics Teachers
(10) Statistics and Probability		
(11) Earth and Life Science	**(4) General Science**	▪ Science Teachers
(12) Physical Science		
(13) Understanding Culture, Politics, Society	**(5) Pag-aaral ng Kasaysayan at Lipunang Pilipino**	▪ Araling Panlipunan / Social Science Teachers
(14) Contemporary Philippine Arts		
(15) Introduction to Philosophy	**(will be an elective)**	

Source: Department of Education



Following the EDCOM II Roundtable Discussion on Senior High School held on July 7, 2025, Commissioners and Advisory Council members agreed on several design principles that should guide the Strengthened SHS Program:

1. Limit total instructional hours and explicitly account for homework, projects, and co-curricular activities so that SHS students have a realistic, developmentally appropriate weekly load.
2. Organize SHS into a small number of clear tracks (e.g., Academic and TVET), each with a limited set of viable specializations and electives that schools can actually offer with quality.
3. Ensure that TVL offerings comply with TESDA training regulations on class size, facilities, equipment, and trainer qualifications, and that work immersion is meaningful, safe, and supported, including transport and allowances for low-income learners.
4. Embed socio-emotional learning, resiliency and stress management, civic engagement, and service learning within core SHS subjects rather than treating them as add-ons.
5. Provide age-appropriate, evidence-based career guidance that considers learner interests, capacities, and actual labour-market opportunities, and that helps students choose tracks and subjects they can complete successfully.
6. Align SHS specializations with TESDA National Certificates and CHED programs so that learners can stack credentials, transfer credits, and move more easily between TVET and higher education.
7. Use a pre-Grade 11 assessment, with appropriate remediation, to ensure that learners possess the basic literacy and numeracy needed to benefit from SHS, especially in more demanding strands.
8. Combine school-based assessment with more consistent external checks (such as common performance tasks or exams) so that the SHS diploma signals a comparable level of competence across schools and strands.
9. Create rigorous “advanced placement” or equivalent pathways through which the highest-performing learners may earn credit or qualify for direct entry to college using recognized external examinations.

ISSUE 3: EMERGING LOCAL EVIDENCE SHOWS POTENTIAL OF MTB-MLE TO IMPROVE LEARNING, BUT ONLY IF IMPLEMENTED PROPERLY, HIGHLIGHTING THE NEED TO BUILD READINESS OF THE SYSTEM.

In October 2024, Republic Act No. 12027 or the Act Discontinuing the Use of Mother Tongue as Medium of Instruction lapsed into law, shifting the policy direction away from a universal MTB-MLE mandate toward a more conditional approach. This pivot responds to long-standing implementation frictions in a highly multilingual country: the Philippines' census-based mapping reports around 245 languages, while MTB-MLE coverage has historically been limited to 19 authorized languages, representing only 8% of all languages listed in the census, leaving many learners in linguistically diverse classrooms without a clear "fit" between home language and the mandated medium of instruction (EDCOM II, 2024). In practice, this has created recurring challenges in instructional delivery, the production and availability of learning materials, and transitions across key stages, as was experienced by the system and its learners following the nationwide implementation of Republic Act No. 10533 of 2013 (Enhanced Basic Education Act, or the K-12 Law).

Historically, MTB-MLE was introduced to reduce comprehension barriers in the early grades by aligning instruction with learners' first language, and it became a major reform implemented nationwide beginning SY 2012-2013. However, the national rollout unfolded in contexts where linguistic environments vary sharply across communities, and where centralized governance mechanisms have struggled to operationalize accurate language mapping and responsive language planning at the school level (Abrigo et al., 2025). These system constraints matter because language is not simply another input: it shapes whether learners can access every other input, such as teachers' explanations, textbooks, tasks, and assessments, in the first place.

In the Year One Report, EDCOM II highlighted that despite MTB-MLE's intent to support learning, weak implementation constrained its potential impact and, in some contexts, may have contributed to poorer outcomes. These constraints included DepEd guidance that effectively pushed schools to select a single mother tongue even in linguistically mixed communities, limited language mapping policies and tools, and system readiness gaps such as procurement and development challenges for mother-tongue learning resources, inadequate teacher training, and difficulties deploying teachers whose language proficiency matched learner needs (EDCOM II, 2024). Such conditions can amplify mismatch risks, especially where the selected medium does not reflect actual learner language profiles.

Local evidence quantifies the stakes and frames linguistic mismatch between learners' home language and the language of instruction as a "learning tax." Each unit reduction in mismatch is associated with large achievement gains, translating to mismatch taxes of 35% in Filipino, 47% in English, and 57% in Mathematics, and implying that under a bilingual regime an average learner could operate 27% to 45% below their learning frontier (Abrigo et al., 2025). The same analysis finds that improved linguistic matching under MTB-MLE reduced potential losses by roughly two-thirds and was associated with 9 to 12 percentage point improvements in continuation from Grade 1 to Grade 6, indicating that linguistic alignment can strengthen both learning and progression when it accurately reflects learner language profiles and is supported by enabling conditions (Abrigo et al., 2025).

At the same time, research also shows that MTB-MLE can generate learning risks when implemented as a language "switch" without adequate supply-side readiness. A quasi-experimental study describes rollout constraints including limited preparation time, shortages of mother-tongue materials, and insufficient teacher preparedness; in the process evaluation it cites, only 9% of sampled schools completed all expected learning-resource development activities (Lloyd and Yang, 2024). Consistent with these constraints, the study estimates negative impacts in some contexts, including declines

of roughly 0.67 standard deviations in Grade 6 test scores and around 0.3 fewer years of completed schooling for fully exposed cohorts (Lloyd and Yang, 2024). Complementary system feedback likewise highlights persistent difficulties in bridging across key stages, including abrupt shifts in the medium of instruction and added time demands on teachers when lessons must be repeatedly explained across languages, alongside chronic scarcity of materials in the relevant mother tongues (EDCOM II, 2024).

As the system operationalizes Republic Act No. 12027, DepEd's current guidance emphasizes managing the transition as an alignment strategy rather than a uniform "end" to first-language support. DepEd Order No. 020, s. 2025 takes effect beginning SY 2025-2026, rescinding prior Key Stage 1 language provisions under the MATATAG policy, and setting expectations for school-level planning, teacher support, and monitoring. It requires schools and community learning centers to adopt context-appropriate language arrangements and integrate a localized language learning strategy into their School Improvement Plan, including targets for literacy in learners' first language, Filipino, and English, and corresponding plans for teacher development and instructional resources. The Order also recognizes compensatory and supplemental use of learners' languages where monolingual instruction is not feasible, alongside classroom strategies such as translanguaging, oral scaffolding, and bridging (DepEd, 2025).

The near-term policy task is therefore to execute a structured transition that protects early-grade literacy and equity, especially for Indigenous and linguistically minority learners who face the highest mismatch risks. This requires credible language mapping and learner placement tools, clear bridging guidance to Filipino and English that is paced and resourced, teacher hiring, deployment, and professional development that accounts for language proficiency, and timely monitoring of early-grade outcomes so the system can identify where default language arrangements are raising comprehension barriers and adjust accordingly (Abrigo et al., 2025; DepEd, 2025).

ISSUE 4: MASS PROMOTION PRACTICES MUST BE DECISIVELY ADDRESSED AND PHASED OUT IMMEDIATELY.

The persistence of de facto mass promotion practices undermines the link between curriculum standards and what learners actually know, even though no DepEd policy formally mandates automatic promotion. Consultations with teachers and parents point to a shared perception that learners are routinely advanced to the next grade level regardless of demonstrated proficiency, with report card grades increasingly diverging from the skills children display at home and in class. Teachers describe strong institutional pressures to keep promotion rates high and retention rates low, because performance management systems and school reputations have historically rewarded high pass rates rather than accurate reporting of learning gaps. Several teachers also noted that assigning a failing grade triggers extensive administrative requirements, including documentation of multiple rounds of remediation and home visits, which function in practice as disincentives to record genuine non mastery. In this environment, formal curriculum expectations under MATATAG and SHS, and the minimum proficiency benchmarks implied by SEA PLM and PISA, are not consistently reflected in classroom grading, weakening the feedback loop between standards, teaching, and learner progression.

> *For the system as a whole, these grading practices inflate reported achievement, distort school and division level data, and weaken the evidence base on which curriculum reform, learning recovery programs, and promotion policies are meant to rest.*

Grading rules such as the transmutation policy under DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2015 further dilutes the diagnostic value of assessment and hinder accurate targeting for interventions. By converting very low raw scores into passing or near passing final grades, the transmutation table allows learners who perform far below proficiency thresholds to appear as if they have met minimum requirements, masking the depth of their learning gaps in school records. Teachers report that this practice makes it difficult to justify additional remediation, to flag learners for referral to ARAL or BBMP, or to explain to parents why a child who appears to be "passing" is still unable to read independently or handle basic mathematics. For the system as a whole, these grading practices inflate reported achievement, distort school and division level data, and weaken the evidence base on which curriculum reform, learning recovery programs, and promotion policies are meant to rest. Without realignment of grading and promotion rules so that reported marks correspond more closely to actual mastery, curriculum improvements and learning recovery investments will continue to operate on an unstable foundation of partial and sometimes misleading information about what learners can do.

Mass promotion is also reinforced by how teacher and school performance are currently measured and managed. Teachers report that retaining a learner often triggers additional layers of approval, close scrutiny from school heads, and the risk of being blamed for a "high failure rate," since promotion, completion, and dropout indicators are still used as headline metrics in many Individual and Office Performance Commitment and Review Forms (IPCRF and OPCRF) and in school report cards. Principals, in turn, feel pressure to maintain high promotion rates, and some explicitly discourage or prohibit failing learners even when non mastery is evident. In this context, accurate grading and honest documentation of learning gaps can be interpreted as poor performance, which creates strong incentives for teachers and school heads to promote learners rather than risk sanctions or negative evaluations. These patterns point to the need to realign performance management frameworks, including the Results-based Performance Management System for teachers and school leaders, so that indicators reward effective remediation and truthful reporting instead of near perfect promotion statistics.

Teachers also highlight that many causes of underperformance lie outside the classroom, yet accountability systems seldom recognize this or provide corresponding support. Frequent absenteeism, child work, unstable caregiving arrangements, and lack of parental support at home are cited as major reasons why learners fall behind, particularly when parents themselves have low literacy and feel unable to help with schoolwork. Some teachers report being confronted or threatened by parents when they assign failing marks or require children to attend remedial classes, with occasional references to the Child Protection Policy being used in adversarial ways. At the same time, teachers are expected to organize home visits, conduct parent conferences, and deliver tutorials during the school year and summer, often using their own time and resources and without clear provisions for transport, safety, or communication costs. Without a structured framework for parental engagement, shared responsibility with social protection programs, and funded time for remediation under initiatives such as ARAL, teachers remain the default "shock absorbers" of wider social and household factors that drive mass promotion.

Grading rules such as the transmutation policy under DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2015 further dilutes the diagnostic value of assessment and hinder accurate targeting for interventions.

TABLE 5.
Transmutation Table from DO 8 s. 2015

Following is the range of Initial Grades and their equivalent Transmuted Grades that will be reflected in the report card.

Initial Grade	Transmuted Grade	Initial Grade	Transmuted Grade
100	100		
98.40 – 99.99	99	66.40 – 67.99	79
96.80 – 98.39	98	64.80 – 66.39	78
95.20 – 96.79	97	63.20 – 64.79	77
93.60 – 95.19	96	61.60 – 63.19	76
92.00 – 93.59	95	60.00 – 61.59	75
90.40 – 91.99	94	56.00 – 59.99	74
88.80 – 90.39	93	52.00 – 55.99	73
87.20 – 88.79	92	48.00 – 51.99	72
85.60 – 87.19	91	44.00 – 47.99	71
84.00 – 85.59	90	40.00 – 43.99	70
82.40 – 83.99	89	36.00 – 39.99	69
80.80 – 82.39	88	32.00 – 35.99	68
79.20 – 80.79	87	28.00 – 31.99	67
77.60 – 79.19	86	24.00 – 27.99	66
76.00 – 77.59	85	20.00 – 23.99	65
74.40 – 75.99	84	16.00 – 19.99	64
72.80 – 74.39	83	12.00 – 15.99	63
71.20 – 72.79	82	8.00 – 11.99	62
69.60 – 71.19	81	4.00 – 7.99	61
68.00 – 69.59	80	0 – 3.99	60

JUNE 7, 2023

DepEd urged to address 'mass promotion' through student intervention programs

MANILA BULLETIN





> *Lahat naman po kasi nag uumpisa sa Grade 1... Dapat bago ipasa sa grade 1 marunong na ng reading comprehension at arithmetic....Hindi po yong "No Child shall be left behind policy" ang paiiralin...." No Child shall be left behind equal to mass promotion.hehe... Tapos pag dating sa high school,high school teachers po ang sisisihin... Ang Elementary po ang foundation of education.Kaya dapat Elementary palang marunong ng bumasa at sumulat...*
>
> *FACEBOOK POST COMMENT*

> *Nope, Ang litanya lagi sa field is "What did you do? Ginawa mo BA ANG LAHAT? Pinuntahan mo ba sa bahay nila?" Wala Kang karapatang mambagsak kung DI MO GINAWA LAHAT....*
>
> *FACEBOOK POST COMMENT*

JUNE 1, 2023

Mass promotion is not mass learning

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS • FEARLESS VIEWS





MAY 9, 2024

EDCOM II tackles issues on education assessment

Research Institute for Teacher Quality
Formerly Research Center for Teacher Quality

> *Anong hindi policy..ano po ung no child left behind. Parang binabalik sa teachers yung problema...tama po ginagawa ng teachers para di sisishin ng principal at supervisor at superintendent..kahit d pde ipasa ipapasa nalng.bakit? Need mo gumawa ng intervention report..mg tatravel k ng malayo..wala namn balik yung expenses mo...pg low ung grades n binigay mo sa mga estudyante, ipapatawag ka sa principal's office.. so wala na po boses teacher..*
>
> *FACEBOOK POST COMMENT*



> *Naexperience ko po yan noong nasa DEPED pa po ako. Kahit may sangkatutak na po ako na evidences (home visitation, remedial session, acknowledgment letters, etc) na ipinakita noon sa dating principal namin, lagi na lng ako pinapatawag dahil may binabagsak pa rin ako sa Math dahil di na bumabalik ng school at di rin gumagawa ng Module. Ang laging pinagtatalunan namin ang grade. Kesyo ang PBB namin ay maapektuhan, kesyo di rin mag abogado o magdoctor mga yan at kung di ko kayang ipasa sila, sya na ang papalit ng grades sa grading sheets.*
>
> *FACEBOOK POST COMMENT*

> *To effectively resolve classroom issues, it's essential to listen to teachers and school leaders—they hold the contextual understanding that many policymakers and so-called 'experts' often lack. We cannot overcome the educational crisis if those in power ignore the insights of those on the ground, yet continue to amplify their disconnected ideas across public platforms.*
>
> *FACEBOOK POST COMMENT*



Excessive paperwork and fragmented reporting requirements further reduce the time and energy teachers can devote to targeted interventions, which again fuels a tendency to pass learners rather than document failure. Case files for struggling learners, multiple school and division forms, and overlapping requirements from different policies all add to the administrative load that follows when a child is not promoted. Addressing mass promotion therefore requires a comprehensive review of grading, retention, and absenteeism policies, and of how classroom assessment results, CRLA type diagnostics, and systems level assessments are used together to guide decisions. It also calls for revisions to OPCRF and RPMS indicators so that teachers and school heads are evaluated on the quality of assessment, remediation, and communication with families, supported with adequate resources, instead of being informally judged by how close they come to "zero failures" each year.



ISSUE 5: LEARNING RECOVERY EFFORTS HAVE BEEN FINALLY STREAMLINED.

The ARAL Program marks a major shift from fragmented learning recovery projects to a comprehensive national system that is evidence-based. Republic Act No. 12028 established the ARAL Program as a free national learning intervention program for kindergarten to Grade 10 learners who are returning after a furlough, are below minimum proficiency in reading, mathematics, and science, or are failing examinations, providing legal basis to structured tutorial support for learners who are being left behind (Republic Act No. 12028, 2024). The law adopts several design features repeatedly emphasized in EDCOM II hearings and studies: targeted tutorial sessions, development of learner centered materials by curriculum and reading specialists, systematic assessment and referral, and attention to nutrition and mental health alongside academics. The Implementing Rules and Regulations were drafted and signed within weeks of the law's effectiveness, signalling that DepEd leadership has taken the learning crisis and EDCOM II's recommendations seriously and is willing to move at an unusual speed for implementation (Department of Education, 2024).

DepEd reorganized previously scattered learning recovery initiatives into an aligned ecosystem. In line with EDCOM II's call for a coherent national strategy, DepEd pivoted the National Learning Camp (implemented in 2023 and 2024) to the foundational years, to become a well-targeted Summer Literacy Remediation Program. Meanwhile, DepEd is in its first year of implementing the ARAL program for SY 2025-26, from Kinder to Grade 10. To ensure coherence in strategy, a national technical working group has been convened to align program designs, reflecting an explicit effort to ensure coherence in intervention initiatives, a key EDCOM recommendation since Year 1.

Implementation experiences from school visits and technical discussions show that the remaining constraints on ARAL and BBMP lie in time, workforce, and family level barriers, rather than in the absence of policy. In schools visited by EDCOM II, including Jose Rizal Elementary School in Pasay, teachers and school heads consistently describe ARAL, BBMP, and other remedial programs as necessary responses to the depth of reading and numeracy gaps, yet they deliver these on top of full teaching loads, multi grade responsibilities, and numerous legislated activities and competitions that already squeeze instructional time.

In Pasay City, the division's long running Special Education Fund supported reading interventions and recent participation in the Literacy Remediation Program illustrate how intensive, level based support can deliver rapid gains when time and personnel are protected. The city has maintained a two decade partnership with the local government to deploy dedicated reading teachers, use CRLA and Phil IRI results to group learners by level, and run daily pull out sessions for the most struggling readers. School heads reported that almost all pupils flagged as non readers at the beginning of the year were able to progress at least one level by the end of the remediation cycle, and that recent summer classes under the Literacy Remediation Program produced measurable improvements in decoding and fluency for the vast majority of participating Grade 3 learners, with around 96% registering some form of progress in their weekly check ins.

Significant improvements in literacy seen among Grades 1 to 3 students following DepEd's Summer Literacy Remediation Program. Under its Bawat Bata Makababasa Program pilot in Region 9, learners, an impact evaluation study by YouthImpact evinced that learners gained up to 1.3 years worth of schooling during the 20-day remediation. Meanwhile, through the national-run of the DepEd Literacy Remediation Program, 96% of "low emerging readers" moved up by at least one proficiency level following the 18-day program. These early gains suggest that short but tightly structured programs that combine clear diagnostics, scripted lessons, and regular progress monitoring can accelerate foundational reading when implemented with fidelity. Moving forward however, CRLA profiles also show that these interventions must extend beyond the very lowest performers: while about 52% of Grades 1–3 learners are not yet grade-level ready, programming has largely prioritized low emerging readers, still leaving more than 1.6 million transitioning readers who need targeted comprehension support and whose outcomes will only be confirmed after multiple ARAL cycles.

The initial implementation of the ARAL Program has shown initial success, but may require recalibration for high school students. In SY 2024-25, DepEd began implementation of the ARAL Program consistent with Republic Act No. 12028, starting with interventions in reading. During EDCOM consultations and observations, teachers emphasised the need for consistent training on teaching reading, access to structured learning resources aligned with CRLA profiles, and the ability to group learners by ability rather than teaching mixed level classes where advanced and struggling readers sit together. They also pointed to chronic attendance problems among learners flagged for intervention, limiting their ability to support students in need. Further, teachers emphasized the importance of parent support and barangay level advocacy to ensure that children actually show up. Going forward, DepEd may need to consider how remediation efforts, during the summer, under the ARAL Program in the school year, and the regular school days, can be used strategically to support secondary students who remain struggling readers.

Tailor-fitted interventions such as DepEd's Bayang Bumabasa Initiative demonstrates increasing focus and targeting by the agency. Following the CRLA results, DepEd launched the Bayang Bumabasa Initiative in December 2025 to translate diagnostic evidence into targeted early-grade literacy support. Building on EDCOM II's Bayang Bumabasa Mayors for Literacy campaign, DepEd used school-level CRLA profiles to identify priority sites, including 131 schools with negative literacy results, with many small,

remote, or resource-constrained. Each priority school may apply for up to PHP 1 million in literacy grants for reading tutors, decodable texts and storybooks, expanded remedial classes, and early literacy teacher training, delivered with technical support from partner teacher education institutions and reinforced through LGU and civil society engagement to sustain reading beyond school hours. Moving forward, efforts which provide targeted support to acutely challenged schools and students will enable DepEd to better reach the most marginalized, and lift literacy outcomes overall.

ISSUE 6: THERE IS A NEED TO PROTECT INSTRUCTIONAL TIME— REORIENTING SCHOOL CELEBRATIONS, CONTESTS, AND OTHER ACTIVITIES.



Even where curriculum and learning recovery programs are well-designed, their impact ultimately depends on how much uninterrupted time learners actually spend on them, yet engaged time-on-task in Filipino schools continues to be eroded by a crowded calendar of legislated activities and school celebrations.

Around 150 legislated activities and school celebrations crowd an already shortened school year, eroding engaged time on task despite long standing policies that sought to protect instructional time. EDCOM II analysis of DepEd calendars since 2018 shows that public schools now operate with an average of around 191 actual class days per year, even as some regions lose up to 42 days to disaster-related suspensions and other disruptions due to legislated activities, leaving teachers to compress an already congested curriculum into fewer learning days. **At the same time, there are at least 28 nationally observed activities, commemorations, and contests each year, ranging from mandated events such as the National Schools Press Conference under the Campus Journalism Act and the Palarong Pambansa under the Palarong Pambansa Act, to institutionalised DepEd activities such as the National Festival of Talents and various reading and literacy celebrations.** Many of these celebrations progress from school to division, regional, and national levels, with corresponding try outs, practices, and documentation, effectively multiplying the time learners and teachers are excused

> *"How can learning happen when every week is interrupted by contests, practices, and programs? Teachers are pulled in all directions, learners lose weeks of class time, and in the end, learning is the first to suffer."*

> "Hindi lang contest day ang nawawala — pati practice weeks, planning days, at walang katapusang meetings. Habang ilang piling bata ang nag-eexcel, libo-libong struggling learners ang lalo pang nahuhuli. Busy ang lahat—pero hindi ibig sabihin may natututuhan."

from regular classes. **These patterns directly contradict the intent of existing DepEd policy, which as early as 2005 already directed that the prescribed 205 school days be strictly devoted to "engaged time on task" and that class suspensions for celebrations or national programs be avoided in favour of simple integration into regular classroom discussions (Department of Education, 2005).**

The proliferation of legislated observances, school based competitions, and DepEd initiated co curricular events often displace core subjects rather than being meaningfully integrated into learning. The compilation of laws, executive orders, and proclamations now linking the basic education curriculum to specific topics and events includes observances such as Buwan ng Wikang Pambansa, National Indigenous Peoples Day, Breastfeeding Awareness Month, National Students Day, Safer Internet Day, and multiple health, peace, environment, and youth themed weeks and months, many with overlapping objectives and no clear guidance on how they should be prioritised relative to the core curriculum. DepEd reports that some events, such as Araw ng Pagbasa, are intended to be simple one hour synchronised activities, yet teachers in the field describe substantial preparation and reporting requirements that extend well beyond the scheduled hour and displace regular lessons. Large scale events such as the National Schools Press Conference, Palarong Pambansa, and the National Festival of Talents, which are meant to showcase excellence and guide learners toward creative and technical career paths, are still largely organised during the school year; learners and coaches are frequently excused from classes for division and regional eliminations, practices, and travel days, despite existing policy that such contests should be conducted outside school hours whenever possible.

Despite DepEd's long standing order to minimise disruptions and keep celebrations within the regular school day, monitoring and accountability mechanisms for engaged time on task remain weak, leaving schools to balance competing mandates without clear guidance on what to deprioritise. DepEd Order No. 9, s. 2005 requires every school to prepare a school calendar detailing day to day activities, discourages suspensions for celebrations, instructs schools to integrate important observances into relevant subject areas, and mandates that athletic meets and competitions be held after class hours, with division and regional offices tasked to report annually on the actual number of school days held and to use this information in the performance appraisal of school heads and superintendents. **However, testimony from teachers and principals on the field during the EDCOM II workshop on legislated subjects and activities indicates that many schools still experience overlapping periodic tests and celebrations, that division level competitions are scheduled during regular class days, and that reporting focuses more on compliance with celebrations than on whether learners actually received the full number of instructional days promised in the school calendar.** Teachers and school leaders stressed that while they recognise the value of many of these observances, the absence of a clear national framework for rationalising activities, aligning them with curriculum priorities, and enforcing time on task provisions has left them to make informal trade offs, often at the expense of sustained time for foundational literacy, numeracy, and learning recovery programs such as ARAL and Bawat Bata Makababasa.

A similar pattern of strong legal and policy commitments outpacing on-the-ground capacity, is evident in inclusive education and learner support systems, where many of the learners furthest from proficiency remain unidentified or unsupported.

TABLE 6.
Select Legislated Activities/Celebrations

Year Legislated	Month	Activities and/or Observances	Other Relevant Details
1954	December	Sight-Conservation Week	PP No. 40, s. 1954
1965	February	Leprosy Control Week	PP No. 467, s. 1965
1965	May	Flag Day	PP No. 374, s. 1965
1966	September	International Literacy Day	UNESCO in its 14th Session in November 1966
1966	March	Fire Prevention Month	PP No. 115-A, s. 1966
1973	February	Philippine Heart Month	PP No. 1096, s. 1973
1973	June	World Environmental Day	PP No. 1149, s. 19731
1974	October	National Scouting Month	PP No. 1326, s. 19741
1974	January	National Cancer Consciousness Week	PP No. 1348, s. 1974
1974	July	Nutrition Month	PD No. 491, s. 1974
1975	January	Food Conservation Month	PP No. 1398, s. 1975
1975	February	Intellectual Disability Awareness Week	PP No. 1385, s. 1975
1975	February	National Intellectual Disability Week	PP No. 1385, s. 1975
1978	August	National Lung Month	PP No. 1761, s. 1978
1979	July	National Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation Week	PP No. 361, s. 2000 | PP No. 1870, s. 1979
1985	December	Education Week	PP No. 2399, s. 1985
1987	April	Commemoration of the Araw ng Kagitingan	EO No. 203, s. 1987
1988	March	Women's Week	PP No. 224, s. 1988
1988	March	Women's Rights and International Day of Peace	PP No. 224, s. 1988
1988	May	World No Tobacco Day	Res. WHA 42.19, 1988
1988	June	Philippine Environment Month	PP No. 237, s. 1988
1988	June	International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking	PP No. 264, s. 1988
1988	December	World AIDS Day	United Nations/UNAIDS
1989	August	Commemoration of the Birth Anniversary of President Manuel L. Quezon	Republic Act No. No. 6741
1989	October	International Day of Disaster Risk Reduction	Sendai Framework
1989	August	White Cane Safety Day	Republic Act No. No. 6759
1991	November	Library and Information Services Month	PP No. 837, s. 1991
1991	November	Deafness Awareness Week	PP No. 829, s. 1991
1991	February	National Arts Month	PP No. 683, s. 1991
1991	November	Deaf Awareness Week	PP No. 829
1991	July	National Schools Press Conference (NSPC)	DepEd Memorandum No. 025, s. 2024
1992	September	Family Week	PP No. 60, s. 1992
1993	September	Literacy Week Celebration	PP No. 239, s. 1993
1993	September	Linggo ng Kasuotang Pilipino	PP No. 241, s. 1993
1993	June	National Kidney Month	PP No. 184, s. 1993
1994	September	National Crime Prevention Week	PP No. 461, s. 1994
1994	October	Linggo ng Katandaang Filipino (Elderly Filipino Week)	PP No. 470, s. 1994
1994	October	National Mental Health Week	PP No. 452, s. 1994
1994	November	Filipino Values Month	PP No. 479, s. 1994
1994	May	Display of the National Flag	EO No. 179, s. 1994
1994	October	World Teachers' Day	UNESCO
1996	January	National Autism Consciousness Week	PP No. 711, s. 1996
1996	February	National Awareness Week for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation	PP No. 731, s. 1996

Year Legislated	Month	Activities and/or Observances	Other Relevant Details
1996	March	Protection and Gender-Fair Treatment of the Girl Child Week	PP No. 759, s. 1996
1997	August	Buwan ng Wikang Pambansa	Proklamasyong Blg. 1041, s. 1997
1997	October	Consumer Welfare Month	PP No. 1098, s. 1997
1997	December	National Children's Day of Broadcasting	Republic Act No. No. 8296
1997	April	Commemoration of the Birth Anniversary of Francisco 'Balagtas' Baltazar	PP No. 964, s. 1997
1997	June	Department of Education Founding Anniversary	Administrative Order (AO) No. 322, s. 1997
1998	November	National Music Week for Young Artists	PP No. 25, s. 1998
1998	March	Women's Role in History Month	PP No. 227, s. 1998
1998	June	National Dengue Awareness Month	PP No. 1204, s. 1998
1999	November	Week of the Gifted and Talented Week	PP No. 199

Many schools still experience overlapping periodic tests and celebrations, that division level competitions are scheduled during regular class days, and that reporting focuses more on compliance with celebrations than on whether learners actually received the full number of instructional days promised.

ISSUE 7: DEPED'S INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICIES AND PROGRAMS NEED URGENT REVIEW TO IMPROVE RESPONSIVENESS.



System-level evidence from recent diagnostic studies reveals deep implementation gaps within the country's inclusive education and learner support architecture. IDInsight's analyses (2025) of the national inclusive education system underscore that the majority of children with disabilities remain unidentified in schools, with official enrollment records capturing only a fraction of the estimated 10–12% disability prevalence in the child population. Across regions, disability identification rates in schools hover between 1% and 2%, indicating that many learners with functional difficulties enter classrooms without being screened, tagged, or provided appropriate accommodations (IDInsight, 2025). Teachers consistently report limited training in identifying developmental, learning, sensory, and behavioral challenges, while school heads acknowledge that existing screening tools are often inaccessible, inconsistently used, or cognitively inappropriate for the Filipino context.

These gaps create a cascade of missed opportunities: learners are misclassified as "slow," discipline issues are mistaken for misbehavior rather than unmet needs, and IEPs are either absent or generic, unable to translate legal mandates into actionable teaching plans.

Republic Act No. 11650, or the Inclusive Education Act, faces similar implementation challenges. The law was signed in March 2022, but its Implementing Rules and Regulations were only signed about two years later, with publication further delayed, so many of its detailed provisions have remained inoperative for several school years. DepEd's 2025 updates show that while the law mandates functional assessment, early identification, inclusive learning resource centers, a multi-sectoral support network, and a multi-year roadmap for progressive realization, the rollout remains uneven and heavily constrained by workforce shortages. Only a limited number of SPED centers have been converted into fully functioning Inclusive Learning Resource Centers, and many still lack assessment tools, psychologists, therapists, or trained SPED teachers capable of meeting the law's requirements. Itinerant teachers, who are intended to support learners in remote schools, continue to cover large geographic clusters with limited transportation or instructional materials, leaving many learners with disabilities without the comprehensive services envisioned in the Act and its multi-year plan.

> *"Mahirap ang mainstreaming kapag isang teacher ang may 40–50 learners tapos may 5–8 pa na may special needs—without training, without a para-teacher, and without the right support system. In that setup, the child becomes displaced, the teacher becomes overwhelmed, and inclusion becomes a promise the system cannot realistically deliver."*

At the school level, the lived experience of learners further illustrates these systemic gaps. In Batino Elementary School, the Commission found that a significant proportion of children exhibit behavioral, emotional, and social difficulties that teachers feel ill-equipped to manage. Teachers consistently reported rising cases of classroom withdrawal, aggression, and prolonged distress episodes, particularly among learners with unaddressed developmental conditions or unstable home environments.

Despite the dedication of teachers and administrators, the school's well-being structures remain overstretched: homeroom guidance sessions frequently substitute for psychosocial intervention, referrals rely on the availability of overburdened guidance personnel, and LAC sessions focus more on classroom management improvisations than systematic socioemotional learning. These findings reflect broader patterns seen in DepEd's national reporting by the Bureau of Learner Support Services (BLSS), which has noted an uptick in mental health–related cases, including self-endangering behaviors, prolonged absenteeism, and conflict-related distress, without parallel increases in trained personnel or evidence-based intervention programs.

These system- and school-level gaps are compounded by structural barriers in data governance and monitoring. IDInsight's 2025 review of learner profiles shows that disability-related information is rarely encoded in a consistent manner in DepEd's LIS and school records. Many learners with identified needs do not appear in official disability categories, while others are labeled inconsistently across grade levels or schools, making tracking and case management nearly impossible. Without reliable identification, the system cannot allocate resources equitably, plan for workforce needs, or deploy differentiated interventions. Schools attempting multi-tiered systems of support lack the data necessary for early warning, stratified intervention, or longitudinal monitoring, which leads to reactive rather than preventive approaches to learner well-being.

These challenges reflect a broader systemic misalignment between legal mandates and operational capacity in inclusive education, as well as persistent weaknesses in teacher preparation, early identification systems, accessible learning resources, and school-based psychosocial support. As a consequence, children with disabilities, Indigenous and Muslim learners, and those experiencing emotional or behavioral difficulties are disproportionately likely to experience school failure, disengagement, and exclusion. These inequities are reinforced not only by demographic and socioeconomic factors but also by geographic disparities, as illustrated in the enrollment patterns of Indigenous learners across regions.

> *"Marami sa amin ang nakakakita ng malinaw na manifestations, pero walang formal assessment at madalas hindi pa matanggap ng magulang. Teachers are left to manage needs we are not trained nor equipped to meet—yet the child suffers the most."*

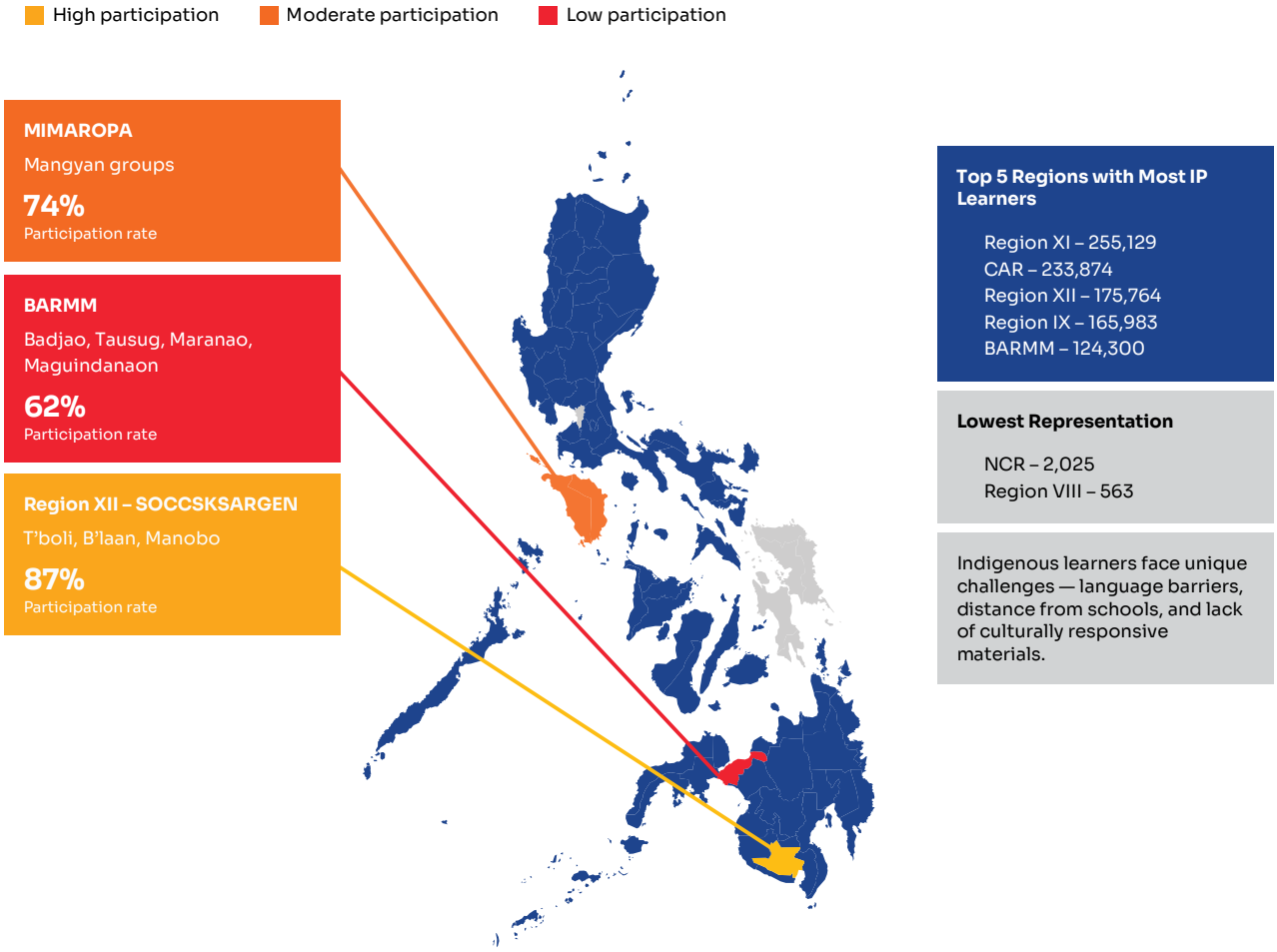
ISSUE 8: EDUCATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES REQUIRES FOCUSED ATTENTION.

Ethnolinguistic disparities compound these barriers. Waray speakers exhibit a disability prevalence of 21%, with women again disproportionately affected (31% vs. 11% among men), highlighting how gender and language status intersect to shape unequal learning conditions (Albert et al., 2025). Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and Muslim learners face additional structural impediments, including higher rates of child labor, geographic isolation, and persistent gender gaps in labor force participation among adult caregivers: factors that diminish household capacity to support schooling. Educational exclusion is also reinforced by administrative barriers: around 20% of Muslim ethnic groups and 10% of IPs lack birth registration, restricting access to school enrollment, social protection programs, and identity documentation required across government services (Albert et al., 2025).

These inequities manifest in stark differences in educational attainment and long-term opportunities. About half of Indigenous and Muslim learners do not progress beyond elementary education, compared to less than one-third among non-Indigenous peers, while more than half of adults in these communities remain concentrated in agriculture and unpaid family work (Albert et al., 2025). Such patterns reflect systemic gaps in early childhood support, inclusive education, and community–school engagement. They also underscore that safe and supportive learning environments cannot be achieved without addressing the broader social and administrative conditions that shape children's daily realities, from documentation barriers to culturally mismatched pedagogy and insufficient accommodations for disability.

The geographic distribution of Indigenous learners further magnifies these inequities, revealing structural barriers that compound the effects of gender, disability, and ethnicity. Participation rates vary sharply across regions, with SOCCSKSARGEN posting relatively high participation at 87%, while BARMM records substantially lower rates at 62%, reflecting persistent challenges related to conflict exposure, mobility constraints, and linguistic marginalization. MIMAROPA's moderate participation levels (74%) similarly underscore how remoteness shapes educational access for Mangyan groups. Regions with the largest Indigenous learner populations, particularly Regions XI and the Cordillera Administrative Region, contend with diverse cultural and linguistic contexts that often remain unsupported by mainstream schooling practices. Meanwhile, NCR and Region VIII have extremely small IP populations, masking the depth of exclusion in high-density urban settings where migration, identity invisibility, and lack of culturally responsive services undermine participation. These spatial patterns make clear that inequities are not only demographic but also geographic: learners' educational opportunities are mediated not just by identity but by the region's capacity to offer culturally responsive, linguistically accessible, and physically reachable schooling environments.

FIGURE 17.
Enrollment and Non-Enrollment Patterns of Indigenous Learners by Region and Major IP Groups (Census-Based Estimates)

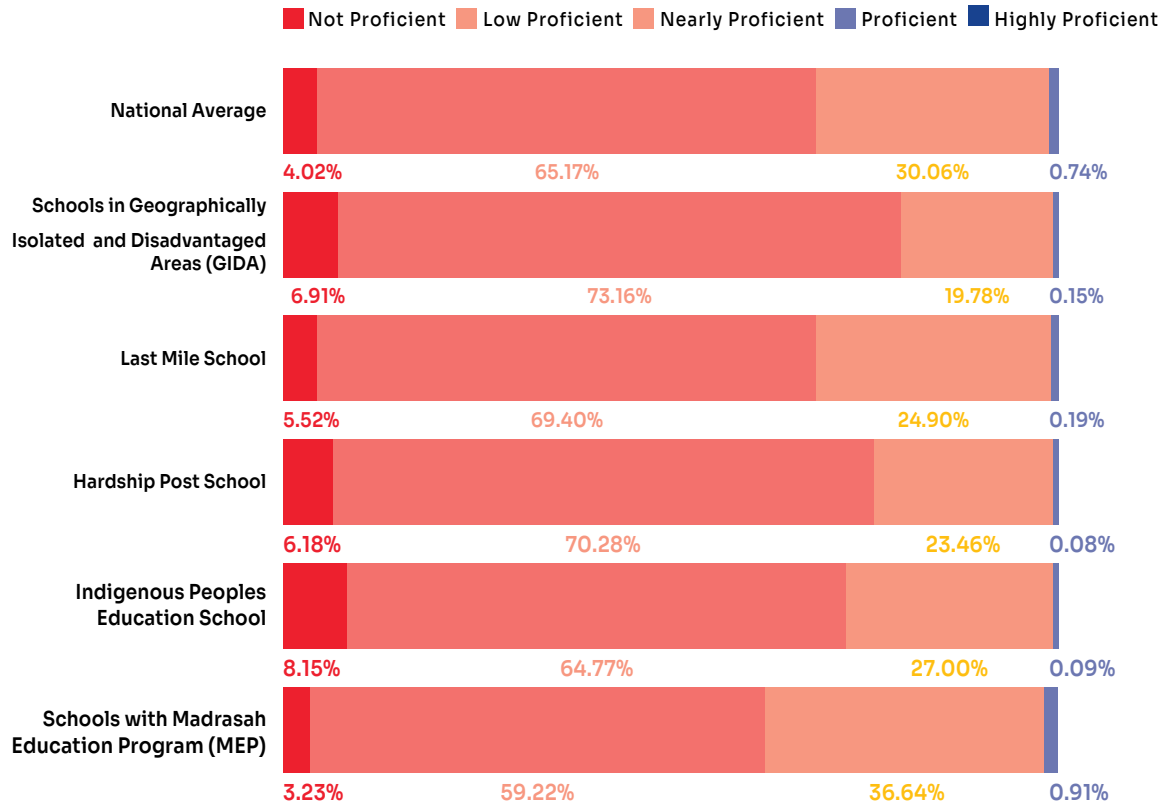


Source: DepEd-LIS SY 2024-2025, as of January 30, 2025

Disaggregated National Achievement Test (Grade 10) results show that even against an already low national baseline, learners in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA, Last Mile Schools, Hardship Post Schools, Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) program, and the Madrasah Education Program (MEP) are concentrated in the low and not-proficient bands, with almost no one reaching proficiency. Across all test takers, only 2,847 students reached the proficient or highly proficient levels, compared with about 250,000 learners classified as low proficient and 15,430 as not proficient. In priority school typologies the numbers are even more stark: just 69 learners in GIDA schools, 42 in Last Mile schools, 18 in Hardship Post schools, 4 in IPEd schools, and 133 in schools with Madrasah Education Programs achieved proficient or highly proficient status, while tens of thousands of their peers in the same schools remained in the low-proficient or not-proficient bands. This pattern confirms that learners served by IPEd, Madrasah, GIDA, Last Mile, and Hardship Post schools are starting far behind the national average, and that curriculum, assessment, and learning-recovery reforms must explicitly address their needs rather than assuming that generic interventions will be sufficient.

> *NAT Grade 10 results show that even against a low national baseline, almost no one from GIDA, Last Mile, Hardship Post Schools, IPEd, and MEP, has reached proficiency.*

FIGURE 18.
National Achievement Test (Grade 10) Proficiency Levels of All Students and Priority Groups/Schools, SY 2022-2023



Source: Department of Education - Bureau of Education Assessment, as of September 2025

Findings from PIDS show that disability prevalence varies sharply by educational attainment, revealing deep structural barriers that begin early in the life course. Severe disability affects 39% of individuals with no formal education, reaching 55% among women compared to 23% among men, but drops to just 6% among those who complete college (Albert et al., 2025). These patterns illustrate how disability both reflects and reinforces cumulative deprivation: children who begin school already facing health and functional challenges encounter classrooms unequipped to accommodate them, teachers without training in inclusive education, and environments that limit their participation and progression. To operationalize inclusive education and address the deep inequities identified across disability, ethnolinguistic groups, and high-need regions, DepEd must establish a fully functioning system for early identification, functional assessment, and individualized support that aligns the mandates of Republic Act No. 11650 with existing child protection and mental health frameworks. This entails deploying standardized and developmentally appropriate screening tools across all schools, accompanied by structured teacher training on disability identification, classroom accommodations, and referral procedures. SPED Centers and Inclusive Learning Resource Centers must be staffed with psychologists, SPED teachers, and itinerant specialists capable of conducting functional assessments and designing tailored learning plans. At the same time, DepEd must scale the production and procurement of adapted learning resources such as large-print materials, tactile books, AAC devices, and Filipino Sign Language–aligned content, to ensure that classrooms are pedagogically and physically accessible to learners with sensory, developmental, or communication difficulties. **A parallel systems reform is needed in the Learner Information System, where uniform disability coding, mandatory tagging protocols, and automated validation rules should be instituted to correct data gaps and enable accurate case management, resource planning, and monitoring of learner outcomes.**



Addressing ethnolinguistic and geographic disparities requires targeted support for IP and Muslim learners, including culturally responsive pedagogy, materials, school–community partnerships, and coordination with PSA and LGUs to resolve documentation barriers such as missing birth registration. These efforts should be integrated into a multi-tiered system of support so that schools can provide universal, targeted, and intensive interventions based on data rather than ad hoc responses.

Beyond these geographic patterns, the capacity of local school systems to support Indigenous, Muslim, and other marginalized learners is further constrained by systemic gaps in service delivery, training, and cross-agency coordination. IDInsight's learner well-being assessments (2025) show that schools serving high-need populations report elevated cases of behavioral, socioemotional, and functional difficulties, but teachers often lack the training and tools necessary to differentiate between disability-related needs, trauma responses, and chronic stress behaviors.

DepEd's Bureau of Learner Support Services (BLSS) likewise documents rising caseloads of mental-health-related incidents, conflict-related distress, and chronic absenteeism in high-poverty and high-risk areas: patterns that outpace available psychosocial personnel and exceed the support capacity of existing child protection structures. At the same time, reporting from DepEd's Republic Act No. 11650 implementation reviews indicate that Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (ILRCs) remain unevenly staffed and under-resourced, limiting their ability to provide functional assessments, therapy services, and parental coaching for learners with disabilities. These gaps collectively illustrate how structural disadvantages, as rooted in geography, identity, disability status, and service capacity, interact to weaken schools' ability to create truly safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments. Overall, these system-level constraints shape school capacity long before family-level interventions come into play.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Prioritize deep mastery of foundational skills under curriculum and instruction reforms, and tightly link MATATAG implementation to realistic instructional time and teacher workload.** Stakeholders should use the MATATAG rollout to rationalize the number of competencies per grade and learning area, distinguish clearly between essential and enrichment standards, and ensure that weekly time allocations in single- and multi-shift schools are sufficient for explicit instruction, practice, and remediation. This requires updating school calendar guidelines,

reinforcing the intent of engaged time-on-task, and aligning teacher staffing and class size policies with the demands of the new curriculum so that teachers are not forced to "rush through" learning areas.

2. **Manage the transition away from compulsory MTB-MLE under Republic Act No. 12027 as a structured, evidence-based reform that preserves the benefits of first-language instruction while clearly defining the roles of Filipino and English.** DepEd should implement robust language mapping, clear school-level language plans, and bridging programs that specify how learners move from L1 to Filipino and English across grades, grounded in the research synthesized under EDCOM II and DepEd's own consultations. The required periodic reviews under Republic Act No. 12027 should be used to monitor impacts on early grade reading and equity, particularly for indigenous and linguistically minority learners, and to adjust the balance of languages in "Language and Literacy" and "Reading" accordingly (Republic Act No. 12027, 2024). This would require earmarked funding for language mapping, local development of materials, and training of teachers and para-teachers who can deliver differentiated language support in classes.

3. **Operationalize the ARAL Program as an integrated component of curriculum and instruction, rather than as a stand-alone remedial project.** DepEd and local school boards can anchor ARAL planning on classroom-based assessments and learning progress data, using these to group learners, select appropriate modules, and schedule sessions without eroding regular instructional time (Abrigo et al., 2025).

4. **Rationalize legislated activities, celebrations, and large-scale co-curricular events through a system-wide review that protects instructional time while preserving high-value learning opportunities.** The DepEd should review all existing mandates using criteria such as relevance to curriculum standards, evidence of impact, equity of participation, and opportunity cost in terms of class days lost. This review should identify activities that can be integrated into existing learning areas without separate celebrations, merged with related observances, or scheduled outside class days, with explicit reference to the time-on-task protections in DepEd Order No. 9, s. 2005. Congress may also adopt a stricter standard for creating new legislated school-based observances so that future laws do not inadvertently erode learning time.

5. **Leverage national events, such as the National Festival of Talents, Palarong Pambansa, National Schools Press Conference, and the Learners' Convergence, as structured extensions of the curriculum or pathways to careers, while systematically minimizing disruptions to regular classes.** Although the majority of the national level events are held at the end of the school year, i.e. during summer break, those that require multi-level competitions at the district, schools division, and regional levels are held during the school year and cause disruptions in classes where some teachers and students are excused to participate. Ensuring continuity should be institutionalized and expanded to regional qualifiers, with clear guidelines on preparation time that can occur within co-curricular periods rather than displacing core subjects. The design of these competitions should be tightened to require explicit alignment with curriculum competencies and career exploration standards, clear inclusion strategies for learners from smaller or disadvantaged schools, and mechanisms to capture and disseminate winning outputs as teaching resources and examples across the system. This will allow the National Festival of Talents and similar events to function not as showcases for a select group of learners but as drivers for curriculum enrichment and creative skills development.



PRIORITY AREA 8:
SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

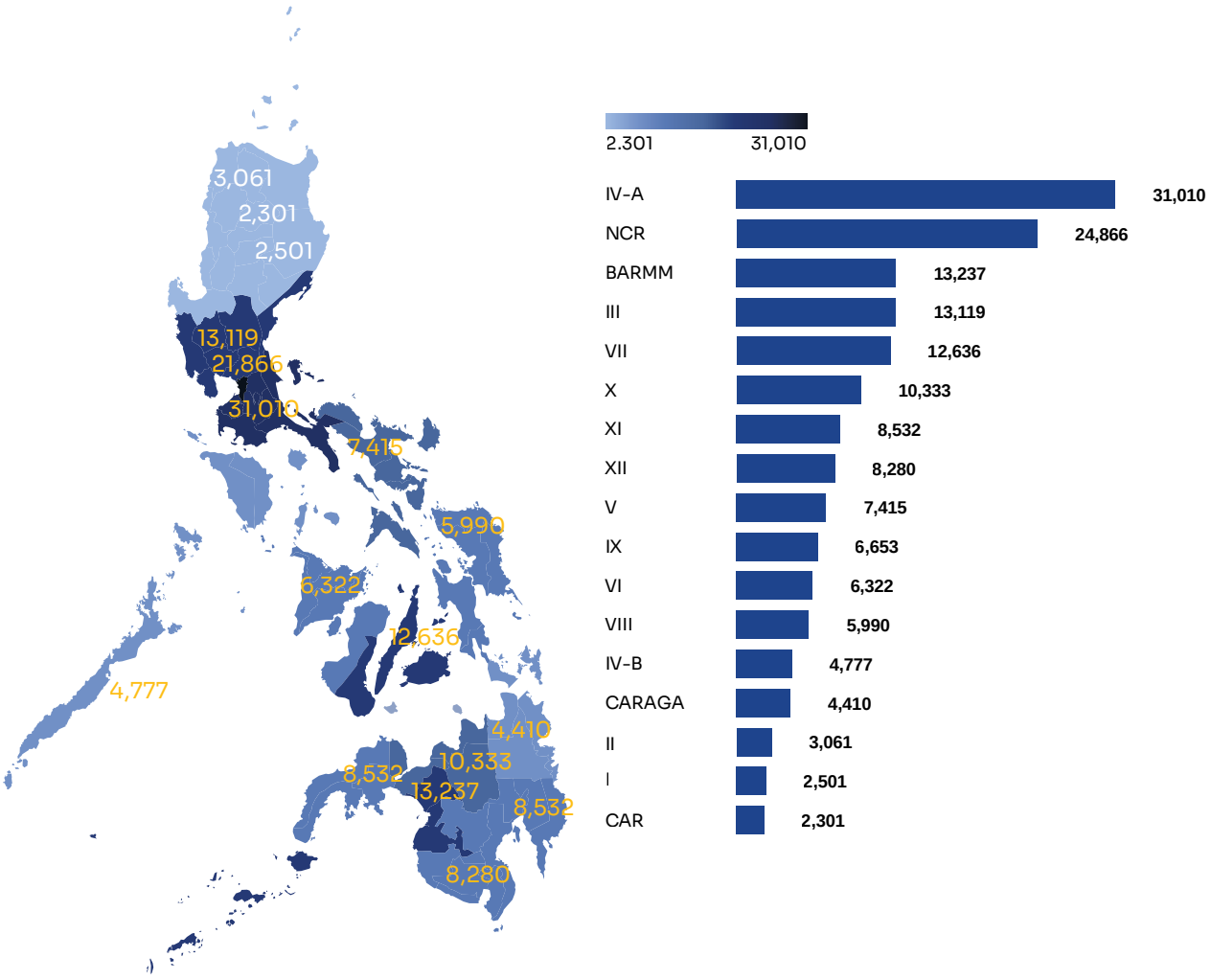
FINDINGS

ISSUE 1: CLASSROOM CONGESTION CONTINUES TO IMPEDE LEARNING FOR MILLIONS.

School infrastructure has impeded learning, as a result of underinvestment, ageing buildings, and weak coordination among agencies. While average learner-classroom ratios have improved nationally since 2010, many schools still run triple-shift schedules, convert non-instructional spaces into makeshift classrooms, and accommodate more than 70–100 learners per room, especially in fast-growing urban and resettlement areas (Navarro, 2022; Abrigo et al., 2025). These conditions are most severe for Kinder to Grade 3 learners, learners with disabilities, and schools serving low-income and hazard-exposed communities, where overcrowding translates into shorter instructional hours higher dropout risks, and poorer learning environments (Paqueo et al., 2025).

Classroom congestion remains widespread and highly unequal, forcing many schools into overcrowded classes and multiple shifts, particularly in urban and migration-receiving regions. Analysis shows that while average classroom–to-learner ratios have improved nationally, congestion persists in specific divisions, with some schools accommodating 75 to more than 250 learners per classroom and 2,233 public schools compelled to operate double or even triple shifts to cope with excess demand (Navarro, 2022; EDCOM II Year Two Report, 2024). The highest congestion is observed in NCR, Region IV-A, and parts of Mindanao, where rapid in-migration, socialized housing projects, and limited school construction have produced chronic overcrowding (Abrigo et al., 2025; EDCOM II Year Two Report, 2025). International and local studies consistently find that large class sizes depress achievement and widen inequities, particularly for low-performing and disadvantaged learners (World Bank, 2019). The 2025 SEA-PLM results echo these findings, as Filipino learners in overcrowded classrooms score significantly lower in reading and mathematics than peers in adequately sized classes, mirroring decades of research connecting class size to instructional quality, teacher attention, and socio-emotional well-being.

FIGURE 19.
Breakdown of Classroom Shortage by Region

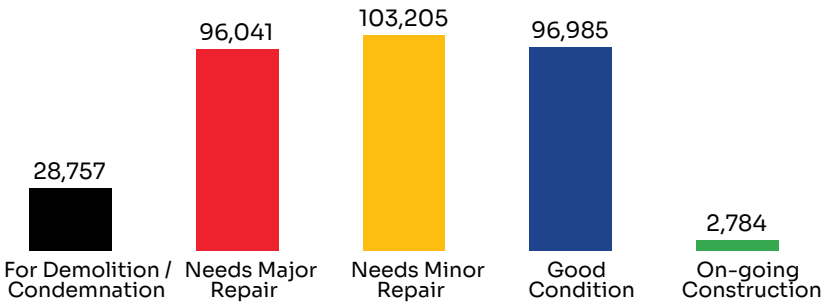


Source: National School Building Inventory (2023), as submitted by the DepEd Education Facilities Division as of June 30, 2023

A significant portion of the country's classrooms now require major repair, replacement, or condemnation, which poses immediate risks to learning continuity and student safety. The National School Building Inventory (NSBI) shows that in almost all regions outside NCR, fewer than 70% of school buildings are in good or minor-repair condition; the remainder require major rehabilitation, are unfinished, or are already tagged as condemned or for condemnation (DepEd NSB,I 2023; Abrigo et al., 2025). These structural deficits often overlap with areas experiencing the worst classroom congestion, forcing learners into overcrowded, poorly ventilated, and physically compromised spaces. Research consistently links poor facility conditions to lower learning outcomes and reduced attendance, especially among disadvantaged learners (World Bank, 2019; Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). In many communities, the erosion of building quality has become a direct barrier to achieving safe, inclusive, and disability-responsive schools.

> *Filipino learners in overcrowded classrooms score significantly lower in reading and mathematics than peers in adequately sized classes.*

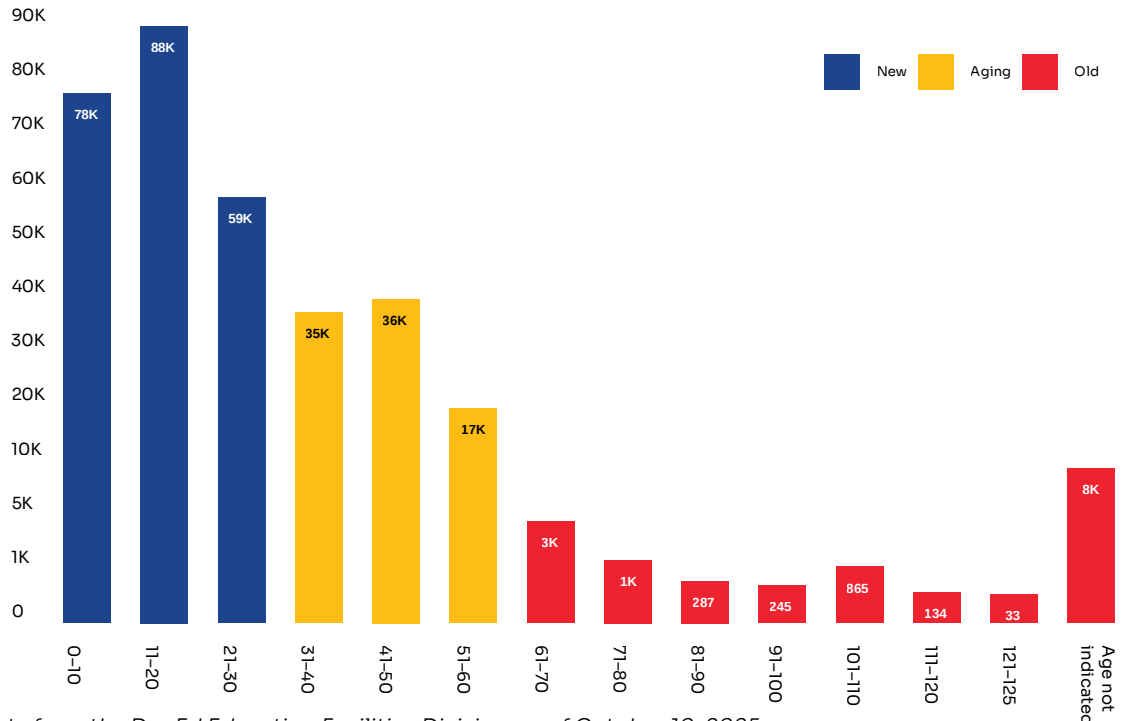
FIGURE 20.
Breakdown of Classroom Shortage by Region



Philippine Institute for Development Studies (Abrigo et al., 2025)

These challenges are intensified by the ageing of the national school infrastructure stock, much of which is reaching or has exceeded its design life under current building standards. DepEd's minimum performance standards specify a 25 year design life for classrooms (DepEd Order 64, s. 2017). Administrative data provided to EDCOM II show that out of roughly 330,000 school buildings nationwide, around 123,000 are already more than 25 years old and almost 24,000 are more than 50 years old. **Using DepEd's planning standards that one 4-storey building has around 20 classrooms, this ageing stock corresponds to an assumed magnitude of roughly 2.5 million classroom equivalents that will need systematic rehabilitation or replacement over the long term, on top of the existing classroom backlog.** DepEd's projections further estimate that about 160,000 classrooms will need to be condemned between 2025 and 2075, including more than 34,000 rooms that are expected to be taken out of service between 2026 and 2035 alone (DepEd submission, 2025). These replacement needs significantly inflate the volume of construction required just to prevent the backlog from worsening, since new classrooms must both close current shortages and offset the loss of ageing rooms. Many buildings constructed during the rapid expansion of the 1990s and early 2000s are now approaching the end of their expected lifespan, yet DepEd's maintenance and repair systems, budget ceilings, and project timelines have not kept pace with the scale of deterioration.

FIGURE 21.
Age Distribution of School Buildings in the Philippines



Data from the DepEd Education Facilities Division, as of October 10, 2025

> *Without a substantial ramp-up in replacement and systematic rehabilitation, an increasing share of classrooms will fall into poor condition by 2040, which will further constrain DepEd's ability to provide safe and resilient learning environments*

The age distribution of buildings illustrates the scale of this looming replacement challenge. As shown in Figure 21, only about one half of school buildings are less than 20 years old, while roughly one third are 25 years and older and a growing share has crossed the 50 year threshold. A small but non-trivial number of structures are more than 70 years old. Without a substantial ramp-up in replacement and systematic rehabilitation, an increasing share of classrooms will fall into poor condition by 2040, which will further constrain DepEd's ability to provide safe and resilient learning environments (Abrigo et al., 2025; DepEd submission, 2025). The result is a growing infrastructure deficit that cannot be addressed through routine repairs alone but instead requires long-term capital planning, faster replacement cycles, and closer alignment with updated national building codes and climate-resilience standards.

ISSUE 2: SLOW CONSTRUCTION BY DPWH HAS LED TO ACCUMULATED BACKLOGS AND UNUTILIZED FUNDS.

The design and implementation of the Basic Education Facilities Fund (BEFF) and its heavy reliance on DPWH have created persistent bottlenecks in translating appropriations into completed classrooms. While the BEFF was conceived as the main vehicle for constructing, repairing, and upgrading school buildings, appropriations have declined sharply from their 2017 peak, partly in response to chronic underutilization (Navarro, 2022; DepEd FAR data, 2017–2025). On average, around 62% of DepEd infrastructure funds are transferred to DPWH for school building construction, but completion rates have fallen in the last five years, with a small fraction of targets completed within the programmed year and many projects spilling over for multiple years (Abrigo et al., 2025). The multi-layered approvals, limited engineering capacity within DepEd, bureaucratic requirements for permits and clearances, and weak integration between national programming and school-level facility plans slow down project preparation and implementation, reinforcing a cycle where backlogs justify large allocations, but poor absorption leads to cuts and further delays in addressing shortages (DepEd Order 18, s. 2023; EDCOM II Year Two Report, 2025).

Construction delays, incomplete projects, and "ghost" or unusable classrooms have eroded public trust and reduced the effective expansion of the classroom stock. Investigative reporting and official submissions show cases where DPWH-implemented classrooms underperform on quantity, timeliness, or quality, including over 1,000 classrooms reported as incomplete and instances where structures have been built but remain non-operational due to missing utilities, permits, or unresolved defects (Cariaso, 2025). Reports of "ghost classrooms", projects reported as completed despite lacking actual structures, further highlight gaps in monitoring and accountability, and these failures disproportionately affect communities already struggling with congestion and hazard exposure (Untalan, 2025). Early experiences under the PPP for School Infrastructure Project (PSIP) demonstrated the potential of alternative delivery modes to fast-track construction but also revealed contractual, monitoring, and coordination challenges that, if not addressed, risk replicating the same delays and quality problems observed in traditional public procurement (Navarro, 2022).

A review of the Public-Private Partnership for School Infrastructure Program (PSIP) indicates that these modalities can deliver large numbers of classrooms quickly when sites are ready and contracts are well designed, but they are highly sensitive to weaknesses in site acquisition, permitting, and risk allocation. PPP Center and DepEd assessments highlight delays arising from unprepared or untitled school sites, land acquisition issues, and the absence of clear arrangements for site development, utilities, and access roads, which in some cases limited the number of schools that could be covered under PSIP I and II (PPP Center, 2019; DepEd, 2025). Disputes over cost variations, maintenance responsibilities, and payment timelines also underscored the need for stronger contract management capacity in DepEd and more explicit performance standards. At the same time, NSBI data show that more than 2,200 PPP-financed school buildings remain in good condition, which suggests that well specified PPPs can contribute durable infrastructure where they are feasible (DepEd, 2025).

These lessons reinforce earlier EDCOM II recommendations to use PPPs and other non DPWH modalities as part of a diversified strategy that includes LGU led construction and counterparting, rather than treating PPPs as a stand alone solution to the classroom backlog. EDCOM II Commissioners have reiterated proposals for a nationwide counterpart program in which the national government and LGUs share the cost of classroom construction, with larger cities able to shoulder up to 50% of costs and fourth and fifth class municipalities receiving higher national support. EDCOM II Co-Chairperson Senator Bam Aquino has also filed Senate Bill No. 1482, which seeks to establish the Classroom Building Acceleration Program (CAP) under the Department of Education, authorizing LGUs and civil society organizations to undertake classroom construction projects that meet DepEd's minimum performance and safety standards. The proposed CAP would require DepEd to publish a national list of priority classroom projects, focusing on schools with Kinder to Grade 3 classes, severe congestion and multiple shifts, condemned or major repair classrooms, high risk or disaster prone locations, low income communities, GIDA schools, and schools with demographic and enrollment pressures. It would create a Program Management Office within DepEd to appraise project proposals, manage contracts, and enforce technical standards, and it would set cost ceilings per classroom design to control prices and guide budgeting (Senate Bill No. 1482). In parallel, recent presidential directives have ordered that Basic Education Facilities Fund resources be downloaded directly to LGUs, and a planned memorandum of agreement among DepEd, DPWH, and LGUs is expected to channel funds for around 2,370 classrooms with a target of completing about 2,000 by the third quarter of 2026 (Gita Carlos, 2025). These initiatives respond to very low completion rates under DPWH implementation, including the admission that only 60 out of 1,7000 classrooms targeted for 2025 had been finished at almost the end of the year; as well as to the estimated shortage of over 165,000 classrooms, and DepEd has begun to incorporate the lessons from PSIP and emerging counterparting programs by validating school sites in advance, defining clearer roles for LGUs in site development and civil works, and exploring ways to combine CAP type counterpart funding, PPP financing, and BEFF allocations within a single, standards based framework for faster and more accountable classroom delivery.

ISSUE 3: UNPLANNED HOUSING PROJECTS AGGRAVATE CONGESTION.

Unplanned housing, resettlement, and urban expansion have aggravated school ongestion by shifting populations faster than school infrastructure can follow. EDCOM II analysis of National Housing Authority submissions to DHSUD shows that 58 government resettlement projects comprising 167,120 housing units were implemented without clearly planned school facilities, which could generate roughly 334,240 school-age children and a demand of about 8,000 additional classrooms if children enroll in public schools, assuming 40 learners per room. This unplanned demand would add around 5% to DepEd's

estimated backlog of 165,443 classrooms for decongesting, replacing, and repairing existing stock and would be concentrated in already congested provinces such as Cavite and other migration-receiving areas. As a result, existing schools in these localities absorb large cohorts of learners without commensurate increases in classrooms or teachers, which leads to long shifts, the use of makeshift rooms, and growing dependence on temporary learning spaces (Abrigo et al., 2025; EDCOM II Analysis, 2024).



Inter-agency discussions convened by EDCOM II confirm that these pressures stem from weak coordination rules, not simply from isolated planning lapses. During the March 2025 coordination meeting on housing development and school congestion, DHSUD, DepEd, DILG, and other agencies acknowledged that existing regulations such as Batas Pambansa Blg. 220 and related subdivision rules treat schools as optional community facilities and do not specify how many school sites or classrooms must accompany a given number of housing units, especially when projects are licensed by phase. Agencies agreed in principle to craft a Joint Memorandum Circular that would institutionalize regular data sharing between DepEd and DHSUD, define standard ratios of classrooms and school sites per number of housing units, and require education impact assessments for large-scale housing and resettlement projects. DILG likewise committed to align its policies on Local Housing Boards so that DepEd or schools division representatives are formally included and that school absorptive capacity is considered when approving local shelter plans and subdivision permits.

TABLE 7.
58 projects without planned school sites

PROVINCE	Count	Starts	Units Completed
Rizal	14	39,028	37,802
Cavite	10	24,049	23,124
Laguna	10	36,021	35,718
Bulacan	18	45,374	45,053
Pampanga	3	11,635	11,635
Metro Manila	3	11,013	9,453
SUM	**58**	**167,120**	**162,785**

Source: Data submitted by the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD), December 16, 2024

Recent agreements between DepEd and DHSUD begin to operationalize this shift but remain at an early stage. A Memorandum of Understanding drafted in April 2025 commits DepEd and DHSUD to identify priority resettlement and socialized housing areas where school sites are required, to determine appropriate mechanisms for providing school lots and facilities for socialized housing beneficiaries, and to develop joint guidelines and pilot projects that will test these arrangements. DHSUD, in its subsequent policy revisions, has indicated that education facilities will be explicitly included in its Department Order on minimum basic service level requirements and that DepEd will be represented in the inter-agency technical working group and in local housing boards that oversee resettlement governance and land-use planning. These reforms, if completed and enforced, would help prevent future housing and resettlement projects from replicating the uncoordinated patterns that have already crowded public schools in Cavite and other migration-receiving provinces.

ISSUE 4: PRIVATE SCHOOL CAPACITY CAN BE LEVERAGED BY EXPANDING EXISTING VOUCHER PROGRAMS.

There is substantial untapped potential to use excess private school capacity and spatial data to reduce congestion in the public system, but current voucher policies and DepEd rules limit this opportunity. Mapping exercises by EDCOM II, PIDS, and ADB, and ECAIR show that tens of thousands of unused seats exist in ESC and non-ESC private schools, many located in high-pressure barangays where public classrooms are most overcrowded (EDCOM II, 2024; Abrigo et al., 2025). Evaluations of GASTPE and the Senior High School Voucher Program consistently find that when vouchers are well targeted, they can improve student-school matching, reduce class size pressures, and expand access to higher-quality options for disadvantaged learners. However, PIDS studies also highlight persistent constraints, including the absence of voucher coverage at the elementary level, rigid eligibility rules that exclude many low-income households, and subsidy amounts that remain insufficient to cover full private school costs (PIDS, 2020; 2022). ADB analyses similarly observe that the existing voucher framework is not sufficiently needs-based and lacks mechanisms to tie subsidy levels to school quality or local congestion severity, which limits its effectiveness as a strategic decongestion tool.

Assessments of the PEAC-implemented GASTPE programs, particularly the Education Service Contracting (ESC) and Senior High School Voucher Program (SHSVP), find that it has served as a cost-efficient way of providing access to basic education. Both programs have reached national scale, expanded access to private education, and helped ease pressure on congested public schools, while enabling learner and family choice. Evidence indicates that they deliver education at a cost that is, on average, lower than public provision, and that they have benefited a substantial number of low-income learners, including Pantawid beneficiaries, with generally high levels of satisfaction among students, parents, and participating schools (Paqueo et al., 2025; EDCOM II, 2023).

However, structural and implementation gaps limit the programs' full contribution to system-wide learning improvement and equity. Subsidy values are not consistently aligned with actual costs or differentiated learner needs, and targeting mechanisms remain weak resulting in risks of leakage and under-coverage of the poorest learners. More fundamentally, the absence of a clearly articulated and consistently understood set of program objectives, particularly the balance between decongestion, equity, and learning improvement, has led to uneven implementation. Addressing these challenges will require clearer policy direction, more rational and transparent subsidy-setting, sharper equity targeting, strengthened data and monitoring systems, and tighter institutional alignment between DepEd and PEAC to ensure that public–private partnerships more decisively support learning recovery and long-term system reform (Paqueo et al., 2025; EDCOM II, 2023).

These systemic gaps are compounded by weak integration of DepEd's own planning datasets. The National School Building Inventory, enrollment data, and external spatial datasets are not fully interoperable, limiting DepEd's ability to identify where private school capacity can absorb "aisle learners." Research partners, such as the ECAIR, have demonstrated that analyzing schools as interconnected networks, rather than isolated units, materially changes targeting precision; for example, network-based estimation in Cavite reduced the estimated private school capacity from 44,436 to 22,053 students, highlighting the importance of accessibility and clustering in realistic planning. At the same time, division-level estimates indicate that private schools' absorptive capacity is not unlimited, and becomes even more constrained when policy restricts eligibility to existing participating schools: one national exercise suggests private schools can absorb only 4.9% of aisle learners at the elementary level, and that absorptive capacity is even more limited when only GASTPE-participating schools are considered (Brodeth, 2024). Unlocking the full value of private sector complementarity requires policy reforms on voucher eligibility, pricing, and data integration, ensuring that subsidies are calibrated and accurately targeted to real congestion patterns, prioritizing localities with the highest congestion.

BILLS EXPANDING THE VOUCHER SYSTEM

Proposed reforms under the amendment of E-GASTPE Program, such as House Bill No. 4744 by EDCOM II Co-Chairpersons Rep. Roman Romulo and Rep. Jude Acidre, and Senate Bill Nos. 128 and 309 by EDCOM II Co-Chairpersons Sen. Bam Aquino and Sen. Loren Legarda, respectively, as well as Senate Bill No. 364, seek to reposition vouchers as a more deliberate decongestion and equity instrument by expanding coverage, strengthening targeting, and tightening accountability to outcomes. This reform direction is grounded in recent congestion mapping, which indicates that high-shift regions have substantial surplus elementary learners in public schools alongside measurable private school capacity, and that the share of "aisle learners" who could realistically be accommodated changes materially depending on whether the policy allows participation beyond ESC-offering schools.

The proposed bill broadens the voucher system to cover all years of basic education, effectively adding Kinder to Grade 6, thereby rationalizing fragmented subsidy arrangements and enabling the program to function as an elementary-level decongestion lever where spatial analysis shows absorptive potential. It also strengthens equity targeting by prioritizing vulnerable and underprivileged learners, including those in the bottom income deciles, and introduces parameters for more strategic allocation, including explicit attention to congestion data and equitable regional distribution.

To improve transparency and performance accountability, the bill proposes an "empowering student choice" mechanism anchored on a registry of participating schools, with comparable information such as location, available slots, student–classroom conditions, tuition fees, and top-up requirements.It likewise directs DepEd to strengthen quality assurance and outcome monitoring for participating private schools, including the use of performance indicators and national assessments to reduce the risk that expanded participation dilutes quality. Finally, the reform package broadens support for participating private schools and teachers and proposes creating a Bureau of Private Education to strengthen governance and oversight of private basic education and government assistance programs.

ISSUE 5: DISASTERS FURTHER AGGRAVATE CLASSROOM CHALLENGES.



Emerging reforms in infrastructure governance and disaster risk management are promising but remain incomplete and require sustained legislative and oversight support. DepEd has begun to strengthen its internal governance for school infrastructure through the creation of the Office of the Undersecretary for School Infrastructure and Facilities and the School Infrastructure Management Office, backed by DepEd Order 18, s. 2023, which clarifies the role of division engineers in site identification, permit processing, and construction monitoring (DepEd Order 18, s. 2023). Disaster-related policies such as Republic Act No. 10121, Republic Act No. 10821, DepEd Orders 64 and 83, and the recent Education in Emergencies directive set out standards for safer school buildings, dedicated DRRM committees, and the use of temporary learning spaces and alternative delivery modes (Republic Act No. 10121, 2010; Republic Act No. 10821, 2016; DepEd Orders 64, 2017; 83, 2011; DM 064, 2024). EDCOM II analyses and hearings have helped sharpen these debates by bringing together DepEd, DPWH, DRRM agencies, local governments, and researchers to examine classroom backlog data, BEFF bottlenecks, the use of schools as evacuation centers, and options for integrating hazard and demographic projections into DepEd's five-year Comprehensive School Facilities and Development Plan, but many of the proposed reforms have yet to be translated into concrete changes in funding mechanisms, project timelines, and enforcement of safety standards.

Disasters are now one of the most disruptive forces shaping the learning environment in the Philippines, repeatedly destroying school infrastructure and interrupting education at scale. The magnitude-6.9 earthquake in Cebu on September 30, 2025 alone damaged over 7,500 classrooms, including 1,187 destroyed and 803 with major damage, displacing more than 19,000 learners and nearly 1,000 personnel. These losses form part of a broader national pattern: from June to October 2025, DepEd recorded over 10,700 schools affected by calamities, reflecting a system under constant strain from typhoons, floods, earthquakes, and extreme heat. As the World Risk Index has named the Philippines the most disaster-prone country globally (2022–2025), these events increasingly undermine learning continuity, safety, and educational equity.

The educational impacts of these disasters are severe and well documented. Provinces repeatedly exposed to hazards experience deeper learning losses, with NAT scores falling by 10 to 20% of a standard deviation, equivalent to 4 to 8 months of lost learning, among students in highly affected areas (David et al., 2018). TIMSS-based analyses likewise show that each additional day of class suspension associated with schools being used as evacuation centers results in a 12 to 14% of a standard deviation decline in Grade 4 mathematics and science scores, or half to a full year of learning (Abrigo et al., 2024). These findings mirror conditions on the ground, as flooding in Laguna, earthquakes in Visayas, and typhoons across Bicol and Eastern Visayas have repeatedly damaged classrooms, destroyed learning materials, disrupted teaching cycles, and reduced student motivation and attendance.

The continued use of classrooms as evacuation centers further compounds learning disruptions. Despite Republic Act No. 10821's mandate that schools serve as shelters only as a last resort and for a strictly limited period, thousands of classrooms remain regularly converted into evacuation centers, and Region IV-A alone accounts for nearly half of such cases in SY 2023 to 2024 (DepEd). Many schools then operate in temporary learning spaces far beyond the recommended six month limit, which worsens congestion and lowers instructional quality. These patterns illustrate that school infrastructure damage is not merely a logistical issue, since it is a direct driver of learning loss and systemic inequity. Strengthening resilience through hazard resistant construction, pre-disaster planning, rapid-repair mechanisms, and strict enforcement of Republic Act No. 10821 is therefore indispensable to any meaningful national learning recovery.

Classroom congestion is now one of the most urgent barriers to learning, safety, and equity in Philippine education. As EDCOM II Co-Chairperson Sen. Bam Aquino warns, unless the backlog is addressed with far greater speed and scale, "it could take not just years but decades, perhaps more than five presidents," before every child studies in a proper classroom. Evidence from SEA-PLM, PISA, and national assessments confirms that overcrowding sharply depresses reading and math achievement, limits teacher attention, and widens gaps between poor and non-poor learners by the equivalent of months to years of schooling. These effects are magnified in schools where congestion intersects with heat stress, bullying, and inadequate spaces for learners with disabilities.

The need for a systematic, hazard-aware national classroom plan is urgent. Ageing buildings are reaching the end of their 25 year design life, large numbers of classrooms are already marked for major repair or condemnation, and disasters such as earthquakes and typhoons continue to erase years of infrastructure gains in a single event. To plan realistically, the country must integrate hazard maps, population projections, and school-level structural data into a unified model that estimates not only how many classrooms to build but also where they will last. As Senate Budget Chair Win Gatchalian emphasized, the current national allocation provides a "historic opportunity," but only if planning keeps pace with risk.

At the same time, decongestion cannot rely on construction alone. Thousands of unused seats in nearby private schools remain an untapped resource. A forward-looking plan must therefore combine building expansion with targeted vouchers and local scholarship schemes, enabling learners to transfer out of overcrowded public schools where safe spaces cannot be built quickly. Unless the classroom strategy incorporates construction, condemnation, disasters, and complementarity, the system will continue to fall behind population growth and hazard exposure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Develop and institutionalize a long-term, risk- and demand-informed School Infrastructure Plan that aligns classroom supply with demographic change, housing development, and hazard exposure.** Building on PIDS projections and administrative data, the government should adopt regular, province- and city-level forecasts of enrollment and classroom demand to guide where new schools and classrooms are built, when existing stock must be rehabilitated or retired, and how to prioritize investments across regions (Abrigo et al., 2025). This plan should be updated every three to five years, integrated into the Philippine Development Plan and DepEd's medium-term expenditure framework, and used as the primary basis for programming BEFF, DRRM, and other capital outlays rather than ad hoc requests.

2. **Rebalance infrastructure spending towards timely rehabilitation, retrofitting, and safe replacement of ageing and condemned buildings, especially in high-risk and high-poverty areas.** With a large share of buildings already beyond their useful life and further degradation projected by 2040, capital outlays should explicitly set envelopes for major repair and reconstruction of unsafe structures, guided by standardized engineering assessments and multi-hazard risk analysis (Abrigo et al., 2025). Priority should go to schools serving Kinder to Grade 3, Last Mile Schools, and communities where classrooms double as evacuation centers, ensuring that repairs and replacements deliver safer, more climate-resilient learning environments rather than piecemeal fixes.

3. **Clarify and streamline governance of school infrastructure delivery by establishing a single line of performance accountability while enabling differentiated implementation models.** Legislation and inter-agency agreements should specify which agency is ultimately accountable for delivering programmed classrooms to a usable standard and timeline, while allowing different execution modes, such as national line-agency, LGU-led, or PPP, where they demonstrably improve speed, quality, and cost-effectiveness. DepEd, DPWH, and NEDA should jointly adopt service-level standards for pre-construction, procurement, and construction stages, publish completion and cost data, and strengthen the role of regional and division engineers in planning and monitoring.

4. **Modernize allocation rules and legal frameworks so that infrastructure resources follow students, risks, and real demand rather than historical patterns.** The Fair and Equitable Access to Education Act and related guidelines should be revisited to incorporate projections of enrollment, classroom condition and age, hazard exposure, and the availability of private school capacity, while tightening provisions that currently treat school facilities in large housing developments as optional (Republic Act No. 7880, 1995; Abrigo et al., 2025). New or amended laws and joint memoranda should require education impact assessments for major housing and resettlement projects, define standard ratios of classrooms and support facilities per number of housing units, and mandate that DHSUD, NHA, DepEd, and LGUs use common planning tools and data.

5. **Institutionalize climate- and disaster-resilient school infrastructure standards, including a gradual shift away from using ordinary classrooms as evacuation centers.** Building codes, DepEd school building standards, and DRRM policies should converge on designs that withstand local hazard profiles, provide adequate ventilation and protection from extreme heat, and integrate water, sanitation, and energy resilience features. In highly hazard-exposed areas, dedicated multi-purpose evacuation centers should be constructed or upgraded so that schools are not chronically repurposed

during disasters, and contingency plans should distinguish between short-term class suspensions and long-term closures, with clear triggers for remote or blended learning modalities (Abrigo, Francisco, & Santos, 2024).

6. **Use vouchers and public–private partnerships more strategically as decongestion tools, anchored on rigorous mapping of where private capacity exists and where it does not.** Reforms to GASTPE and related subsidy schemes should explicitly target congested divisions and grade levels, calibrate subsidy levels based on cost-frontier analyses, and prioritize participation of private schools that demonstrate quality and have spare capacity (Paqueo et al., 2025). In provinces like Cavite, network analyses can be used to identify "hub" private schools connected to many congested public schools and to design transport and subsidy packages that move aisle learners into these hubs without imposing prohibitive top-up fees on poor households (Education Center for Artificial Intelligence Research, 2025). At the same time, policy must recognize "access deserts" where no private partners exist and ensure that infrastructure funding is directed there rather than relying on vouchers that communities cannot use.

7. **Scale up and rigorously evaluate alternative modalities to classroom construction**, **such as well-structured PPPs and LGU-led construction, to complement, not replace, core public investments**. Lessons from PSIP and previous counterparting programs should be codified into a framework that specifies when PPPs are appropriate, how land acquisition and right-of-way are secured, and how performance-based payments and maintenance responsibilities are structured to align incentives. Where LGUs demonstrate technical and fiduciary capacity, they should be allowed and incentivized to implement school building projects under transparent cost sharing formulas, with DepEd providing standard designs, technical guidance, and clear rules for counterpart funding that prioritize schools with severe congestion, ageing or condemned buildings, and high disaster risk. Pilot implementations under prospective measures such as the Classroom Building Acceleration Program and emerging BEFF downloading arrangements should be independently evaluated, with results used to refine counterparting rules, safeguard quality, and scale up models that deliver classrooms faster and at lower cost per learner.

8. **Tackle infrastructure inequality by defining and funding a national "minimum service package" for safe and inclusive schools, with special attention to last-mile and marginalized learners.** This package should specify minimum standards for classroom size and density, toilets and WASH facilities, electricity, connectivity, and accessibility features, with higher per-learner allocations where remoteness, hazard exposure, disability inclusion, or language and cultural programs (e.g., IPed, Madrasah/ALIVE, SPED) require additional infrastructure. Coordination with DOH, DPWH, DOE, DICT, and LGUs is needed so that these standards are met through integrated investments rather than fragmented projects, and monitoring should routinely report how many schools fall below each standard and in which communities.

9. **Strengthen data systems, monitoring, and public transparency so that infrastructure decisions are evidence-based and course-corrected over time.** DepEd should modernize the National School Building Inventory into a regularly updated, geocoded database linked with the Learner Information System, EBEIS, and hazard and housing datasets, capturing building age, condition, usage, and compliance with design standards (Navarro, 2022; Abrigo et al., 2025). Results of engineering assessments, DRRM-related damages, completion rates, and unit costs for all major school building projects, whether publicly funded, LGU-implemented, or PPP-based, should be published in accessible formats to support oversight and independent analysis.

10. **Align legislative and budget reforms with this integrated infrastructure agenda, using EDCOM II evidence to sharpen and prioritize proposals.** Priority measures include updating Republic Act No. 7880 and related laws to reflect risk- and demand-based allocation, strengthening DepEd's mandate and capacity for infrastructure planning under its charter review, clarifying the treatment of vouchers and PPPs under the national PPP Code, and ensuring that DRRM and QRF rules allow timely yet accountable use of funds for reconstruction and retrofitting in schools. Legislative proposals on LGU counterparting and classroom acceleration should be harmonized so that CAP type programs, BEFF downloading, and PPP arrangements operate under a common set of standards for site readiness, cost ceilings, and equity targeting, rather than as parallel and potentially overlapping initiatives. EDCOM II's hearings, commissioned studies, and inter agency dialogues have created momentum for these reforms; the next step is to translate the emerging consensus into a coherent legislative package and accompanying administrative issuances that anchor school infrastructure policy in long term, evidence based planning rather than short term, project driven responses.

PRIORITY AREA 9: ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SYSTEM (ALS)



FINDINGS

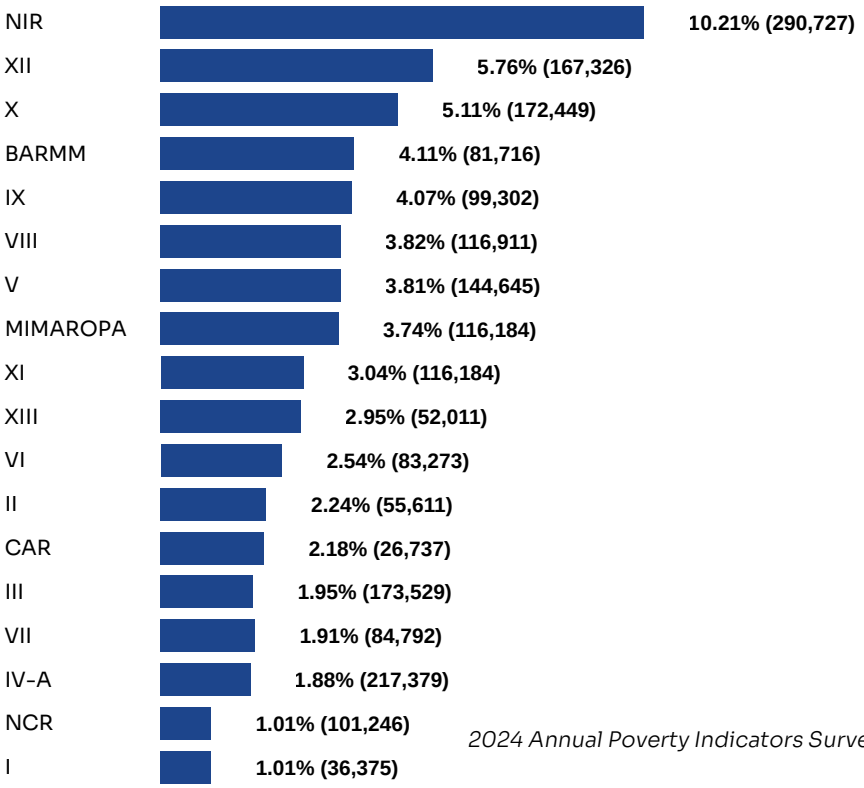
The Alternative Learning System (ALS) was institutionalized under Republic Act No. 11510 passed in 2020, but it has not yet reached or retained most of its potential learners, especially functionally illiterate adults. The enactment of the ALS Act formally institutionalized the Alternative Learning System as a parallel, non-formal basic education system intended to provide access to out-of-school children in special cases, youth, and adults (OSCYAs) whose life circumstances hinder participation in formal schooling or who are unintentionally excluded due to poverty, geography, disability, conflict, emergencies, or socio-cultural barriers. The law mandated the creation of the Bureau of Alternative Education (BAE) as the focal office for ALS, required at least one Community Learning Center (CLC) in every city and municipality, required annual reviews and learner mapping, directed DepEd to hire, capacitate, and promote ALS teachers, and prescribed regular learner assessments, mapping, and annual reviews to ensure that ALS programs are responsive to the needs of diverse learners. Within this framework, DepEd delivers a range of flexible learning programs, anchored in the ALS K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum:

ISSUE 1: LOW ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION IN ALS.

Despite this broad range of programs, ALS continues to face both low enrollment and low completion rates amid a significant untapped demographic. According to DepEd, only 617,712 or 12.6% of the 4.9 million out of school youth are enrolled in the Alternative Learning System (DepEd SY 2024-2025 Data). From those enrolled, less than half of the learners or around 43% were able to complete the ALS program in SY 2024-2025. Survey data from the PSA indicate that a significant share of low-educated, out-of-school adults have limited formal credentials and struggle with functional literacy. Recent PIDS analysis of out-of-school children using APIS, FIES-LFS, and DepEd data likewise finds that although the national OOSC rate has fallen below 5%, exclusion remains concentrated among older adolescents and young adults, underscoring the importance of robust second-chance pathways such as ALS for those who have already left formal schooling (Albert et al., 2025).

The 2024 Annual Poverty Indicators Survey (APIS) estimates that 2,129,178 adults who are no longer in school and have attained at least an elementary education account for 87% of the total adult population, representing a large potential demographic for ALS. Complementing this, the 2024 Functional Literacy, Education, and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) shows that among Filipinos with no grade completed, only 10.8% are functionally literate, and even among those whose highest educational attainment is elementary, just 53.4% are functionally literate. Taken together, these surveys underscore the need to evolve the ALS Basic Literacy Program into a more robust functional literacy program that simultaneously targets adults who never entered school and those who completed only elementary education but remain functionally illiterate, anchoring ALS delivery on real-life skills and applications rather than basic decoding skill alone.

FIGURE 22.
Share of Adults (Aged 18+) With At Most Elementary Education and Not Currently in School, by Region



2024 Annual Poverty Indicators Survey, Philippine Statistics Authority

ISSUE 2: THERE ARE LIMITED SPACES FOR ALS LEARNERS.

Physical learning environments for ALS learners remain highly unequal, with almost half of Community Learning Centers classified as makeshift. As of school year 2023-2024, 58.10%[5] ALS Community Learning Centers (CLCs) or 13,713 out of 23,603 are classified as Type 1, or are only makeshift facilities, or simple, temporary meeting places with tables and chairs or any open multipurpose area or any private property temporarily lent for learning purposes. According to the DepEd's BAE, their goal is to ensure that each municipality or schools division office has at least one Type 5 CLC: a permanent building equipped with ALS and other learning materials, utilized by learners and other members of the community as a resource center where materials can be borrowed or used on-site. However, each Type 5 CLC costs around PHP 14 million to build, and as of the latest available data, 85 out of 228 schools division offices still do not have a Type 5 CLC, even if all regions have at least one. Regions such as Western Visayas, Central Visayas, Davao Region, and the Cordillera Administrative Region have particularly low numbers of Type 5 CLCs, suggesting that the "second chance" system is being delivered in learning spaces that are below the standards envisioned by the law and the department.

ISSUE 3: MORE RESPONSIVE BUDGETING FOR ALS IS NEEDED.

ALS financing has begun to shift from flat regional allocations to a more per-capita and needs-based approach, but overall levels remain low and Program Support Funds need systematic review, with DepEd previously distributing ALS funds almost evenly across regions at PHP 7 million per year (EDCOM II Year Two Report, 2024), regardless of the actual ALS enrollment or the size of the populations of out-of-school children in special cases, youth, and adults. This "equal share" approach resulted in high-need regions receiving roughly the same ALS budget as regions with fewer target learners. **In 2024, EDCOM II recommended that DepEd shift toward a per-capita and demand-sensitive funding formula, so that ALS budgets reflect actual enrollment, prevalence of OSCYAs, and area-specific delivery costs for materials and equipment.**

DepEd has since begun adjusting its allocations, departing from uniform sharing toward initial enrollment-based distribution. For Fiscal Year 2026, DepEd has proposed a PHP 631.84 million ALS budget, of which 86.18% (PHP 556.275 million) is earmarked for subsidies directly related to program delivery, with the rest of the program components sharing the miniscule remains. Based on DepEd's target enrollment of 602,646 ALS learners for School Year 2026–2027, this implies a per capita cost of roughly PHP 1,048 per learner. While this is a significant improvement from the earlier flat allocations, there remains a need to systematically review the use of Program Support Funds (PSF), and benchmark ALS per capita spending against the real cost of providing quality, functional literacy-oriented ALS across different contexts.

> *"The recently signed JMC on the Special Education Fund finally includes and specifies ALS program implementation as a distinct line item expenditure, enabling LGUs to support ALS programs in their localities."*

5 The EDCOM II Year Two reported that 57.5% of CLCs are Type 1 facilities. This calculation was based on a five-year average.

TABLE 8.
Fiscal Year 2026 Proposed Budget Allocations for ALS

Program Component	Proposed Allocation	Percent Share
Provision of Subsidies	556,275,400.00	86.18%
Capability Building	19,017,380.00	2.95%
Learning Resources	11,768,780.00	1.82%
Office of the Director Operational Expenses	11,297,000.00	1.75%
Policy	10,042,593.00	1.56%
Curriculum	7,963,820.00	1.23%
Assessment	6,114,220.00	0.95%
Monitoring and Evaluation	5,336,554.00	0.83%
Data Management	5,228,713.00	0.81%
Program Management	3,996,600.00	0.62%
PQAD Overhead	2,539,880.00	0.39%
Research	2,400,000.00	0.37%
PMSDD Overhead	1,139,200.00	0.18%
BAE Year End PIR (Region V)	1,111,800.00	0.17%
Strategic Planning and Catch-up Plan (Tagaytay)	678,120.00	0.11%
Budget Planning (NCR)	586,940.00	0.09%
GRAND TOTAL	**645,497,000.00**	**100.00%**

Source: Department of Education - Bureau of Alternative Education, as of January 7, 2026

Meanwhile, DepEd issues guidelines on Program Support Funds (PSF) to sustain ALS implementation in the field. Since 2017, PSF allocations to Regions and Divisions have supported program management, capacity building, and learning resources, including reviving over 90 academic-focused bridging modules to prepare ALS learners for Senior High School and college. In 2021, PSF allocation rules were relaxed to give Regional Offices more flexibility, and by 2022 a dedicated amount was set for printing new ALS K to 12–aligned modules and Life Skills materials amid the pandemic. Going forward, PSF use for ALS should be reviewed within a per capita framework to ensure it closes the most binding gaps in learning materials, teacher support, and bridging programs, rather than being spread thinly across low-impact activities.

ALS is now explicitly recognized in SEF guidelines, improving its visibility in local budgets, but this opportunity is only beginning to be used. At the level of local government units (LGUs), implementation has been hampered by the invisibility of ALS spending from the Special Education Fund (SEF). The Bureau of Local Government Finance's (BLGF) reporting tool for the use of SEF previously did not require LGUs to itemize ALS expenditures, making it difficult for the DepEd Central Office and for Congress to track compliance with Republic Act No. 11510. Consequently, ALS was financially treated as peripheral by many Local School Boards. **EDCOM II recommended an explicit listing of allowable ALS expenditures in the amendments to the omnibus guidelines on the use of the SEF, consistent with the mandate of Republic Act No. 11510.**

Joint Circular No. 1 signed on December 3, 2025 by the DepEd, DBM, DOF, and DILG operationalizes this recommendation by clearly authorizing the use of SEF for ALS and specifying ALS program implementation as a distinct line of expenditure. It enumerates a detailed list of allowable expenses, including literacy mapping, identification and mobilization of prospective ALS learners, the hiring and training of Community ALS Implementors, the development and maintenance of ALS Community Learning Centers, and the printing and reproduction of ALS learning resources. By naming ALS in the list of allowable SEF charges and requiring LGUs to report these expenditures separately, the circular begins to correct the earlier invisibility of ALS in local budgets and provides a concrete lever for DepEd field offices and reform-minded Local School Boards to argue for sustained, and potentially expanded, local financing for ALS.

However, revenue regulations to incentivize private sector support for ALS, consistent with Republic Act No. 11510 or the ALS Act, remains non-existent. Section 21 of the law authorizes donor's tax exemptions and income tax deductions for individuals and organizations that provide cash, services, or materials for ALS, positioning private partners as an important source of program resources. In practice, however, the absence of a dedicated Bureau of Internal Revenue revenue regulation for this provision means these incentives remain unclear and underused, limiting the ability of DepEd and LGUs to systematically mobilize private sector support for ALS delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Expand and revise the ALS Basic Literacy Program into a "Functional Literacy Program."** DepEd, through the Bureau of Alternative Education (BAE), should reorient its Basic Literacy Program from a narrow focus on decoding, writing, and basic numeracy toward a broader functional literacy agenda for learners. This means designing and delivering ALS offerings that equip learners, especially those who have never completed elementary education, with the skills needed to function effectively at work, in households, and in their communities. The 2024 APIS and FLEMMS results point to a large pool of adults with elementary education or less, many of whom remain functionally illiterate despite years of schooling. ALS should explicitly target these populations with context-relevant, modular, and work- and life-oriented functional literacy programs, rather than treating them primarily as candidates for re-entry into formal schooling. Findings from the 2025 PIDS study on out-of-school children, which documents persistent exclusion among learners at the extremes of the age distribution even after the pandemic, reinforce the need to position this functional literacy track as a core pillar of the national response to OOSC rather than as a peripheral remedial program (Albert et al., 2025).

2. **Strengthen and rationalize ALS financing through per-capita and needs-based formulas, including a review of Program Support Funds (PSF).** DepEd should institutionalize a transparent per-capita and needs-based financing framework for ALS, building on its initial shift away from equal shares per region. ALS budgets at national, regional, and division levels should be linked to actual enrollments, the prevalence of out-of-school children, youth, and adults (OSCYAs), area-specific delivery costs, and the presence of hard-to-reach groups (e.g., GIDAs, conflict-affected, and high-poverty areas). Within this framework, the use of Program Support Funds for ALS should be reviewed and recalibrated to ensure that PSF is used to close the most binding gaps in learning materials, teacher support, bridging programs, and functional literacy interventions, rather than being spread thinly across many activities with limited impact on enrollment, completion, and literacy outcomes. This would allow DepEd to prioritize PSF-supported printing and reproduction of ALS K to 12 BEC–aligned modules, the restoration and updating of academic bridging modules, and targeted program management and capacity-building that demonstrably improve learner participation and completion.

3. **Maximize and track the use of the Special Education Fund (SEF) for ALS under the revised guidelines.** Under the new omnibus SEF guidelines, DepEd, DILG, DOF–BLGF, and LGUs should move from merely authorizing ALS-related SEF expenses to actively promoting and monitoring their use. DepEd and DILG should issue joint guidance and capacity-building support to Local School Boards (LSBs) to help them identify, budget for, and track specific ALS activities, such as literacy mapping, mobilizing prospective ALS learners, hiring and training Community ALS Implementors, maintaining CLCs, and printing ALS learning resources, as allowable SEF items. BLGF's reporting tools should be fully aligned with this guidance so that ALS-related SEF spending appears

in a separate, identifiable line item. This will allow the DepEd Central Office, Congress, and civil society to monitor LGU compliance with Republic Act No. 11510, benchmark LGUs against one another, and encourage those with ample SEF to invest more systematically in ALS implementation.

4. **Improve access and uptake by building user-friendly information systems and strengthening communication and outreach.** DepEd should make it significantly easier for potential ALS learners to find and enroll in programs. This includes developing and maintaining a publicly accessible, regularly updated master list of ALS delivery points, schools and stand-alone Community Learning Centers, indicating their exact location, class schedules, target learner groups (e.g., adults, working youth, learners with disabilities), available modalities, and enrollment capacity. Alongside this, DepEd and LGUs should invest in sustained communication and advocacy efforts, using radio, social media, barangay assemblies, CSO networks, and local employers to inform OSCYAs and low-educated adults about ALS offerings, enrollment procedures, and benefits. Communication strategies should be tailored to working adults, women with caregiving responsibilities, those in rural and remote areas, and communities with high concentrations of adults with less than high school education, as identified through APIS and other local data.

5. **Facilitate systematic risk profiling of learners using data from students at risk of dropping out (SARDO) forms and other data to prevent dropout and strengthen pathways into ALS.** DepEd should institutionalize systematic, data-driven risk profiling at school, division, and regional levels, building on existing but underused tools such as the Students at Risk of dropping out (SARDO) forms, attendance records, learning assessments, and socio-economic information. DepEd guidelines exist that require schools to routinely identify learners at risk of disengagement and dropout, analyze patterns of risk, and develop structured response plans that may include in-school remediation, referrals to Alternative Delivery Modes (ADMs), or transition to ALS when appropriate (DO 74, s. 2010; DO 21, s. 2019; DO 13, s. 2019). However, there is no explicit policy requiring routine, data-driven risk pattern analysis that determine these risk profiles. These profiles should also be collected at division and regional levels to inform ALS planning, identifying which communities and learner groups are likely to be part of the pipeline into ALS and therefore require targeted slots, CLCs, and tailored functional literacy or bridging programs. Risk profiling tools can draw directly on the Seven Dimensions of Exclusion and cumulative risk analysis used in recent PIDS work, so that ALS planning and ADM deployment are based on a common national picture of which learners are already out of school and which are at high risk of leaving (Albert et al., 2025).

6. **Review and strengthen alternative delivery modalities (ADM) to address context-specific challenges of learners.** Through DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2019, Alternative Delivery Modes (ADM) were institutionalized as one of the two main types of Flexible Learning Options (FLOs), and the prevailing policy categorizes ADMs into five distinct types: Homeschooling, IMPACT, MISOSA, Night High School, and the Open High School Program (EDCOM II Year Two Report, 2025). DepEd should conduct a comprehensive review of its alternative delivery modalities, such as modular, blended, online, radio- and TV-based instruction, to assess whether they are effectively addressing the context-specific constraints of different learners (e.g., working youth, learners in GIDAs, those with disabilities, learners in conflict-affected or disaster-prone areas). This review should be explicitly linked to the risk profiling system, so that ADM is deployed proactively in schools with high dropout risk. The outcome should be a coherent framework that clarifies when ADM is the appropriate intervention to keep learners in the formal system, and when ALS is more suitable, with clear transition protocols, referral mechanisms, and feedback loops between schools, ALS teachers, and division offices.



PRIORITY AREA 10:
HOME AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

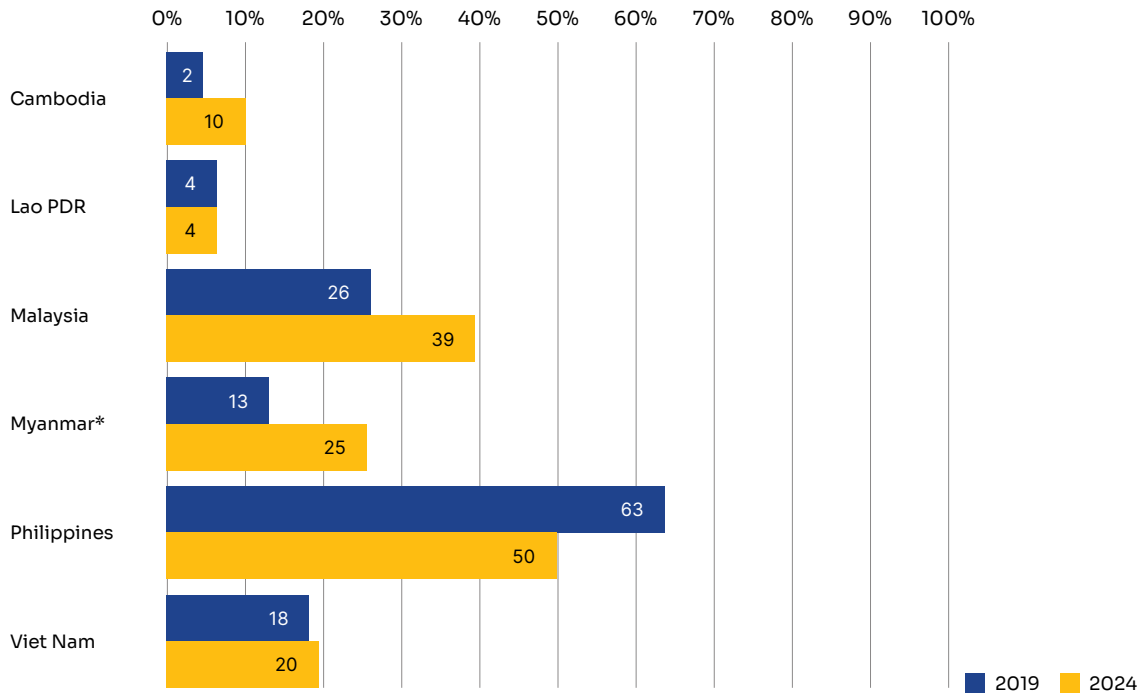
FINDINGS

ISSUE 1: THERE IS WIDESPREAD BULLYING AND VIOLENCE IN SCHOOL.

The home–school environment remains one of the most consequential yet least supported dimensions of Philippine basic education, with bullying and school violence still widespread despite modest improvements. SEA-PLM 2025 shows that half of Grade 5 students (50%) report being bullied at least once a month, down from 63% in 2019 but still far above the roughly 4–20% range in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam. School heads also report frequent incidents of violence, harassment, and serious conflict, and studies link these hostile environments to poorer reading and mathematics performance, weaker sense of belonging, and higher absenteeism among Filipino learners (Bernardo et al., 2024; Herrin et al., 2024).

SEA-PLM 2025 shows that half of Grade 5 students (50%) report being bullied at least once a month, down from 63% in 2019 but still far above the roughly 4–20% range in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam.

FIGURE 23.
Frequency of Bullying Occurring with Students, as Reported by School Heads (2019 vs. 2024)



Source: SEA-PLM Main Regional Report 2024

ISSUE 2: THERE IS VIOLENCE AT HOME.

School-based risks are layered on top of widespread exposure to violence at home, which has measurable long-term effects on schooling trajectories. PIDS evidence shows that around half of children aged 3–4 and one-third of children aged 1–2 experienced physical punishment in the past month, with a smaller but still significant share subjected to severe forms (Conjares et al., 2025; Manuel et al., 2025). Longitudinal analysis from theLongitudinal Cohort Study on the Filipino Child (LCSFC)[6] finds that more than one in three children experience some form of parental violence in late childhood, and that exposure at age 10 substantially reduces the likelihood of being enrolled in school at age 14 (adjusted odds ratio about 0.43), with similar patterns for boys and girls (Manuel, Cases, & Ulep, 2024). Although immediate impacts on test scores are mixed, the evidence is clear that household violence disrupts participation and progression, increasing the risk that learners fall behind or exit the system prematurely.

Risks are further compounded for left-behind children in transnational households and for families with limited access to parenting support. Nearly one in three Filipino children grows up without at least one parent due to overseas work, often relying on elderly or extended kin for daily care (Adarlo & Eustaquio, 2025). Parent Effectiveness Sessions, the main structured intervention for parenting support, frequently face low attendance because caregivers juggle long working hours, while some parents perceive PES as a stigmatizing program "for parents of troubled children." These constraints leave many learners without consistent guidance on non-violent discipline, communication, and socioemotional support at home, even as schools expect families to partner in addressing bullying, attendance problems, and mental health concerns.

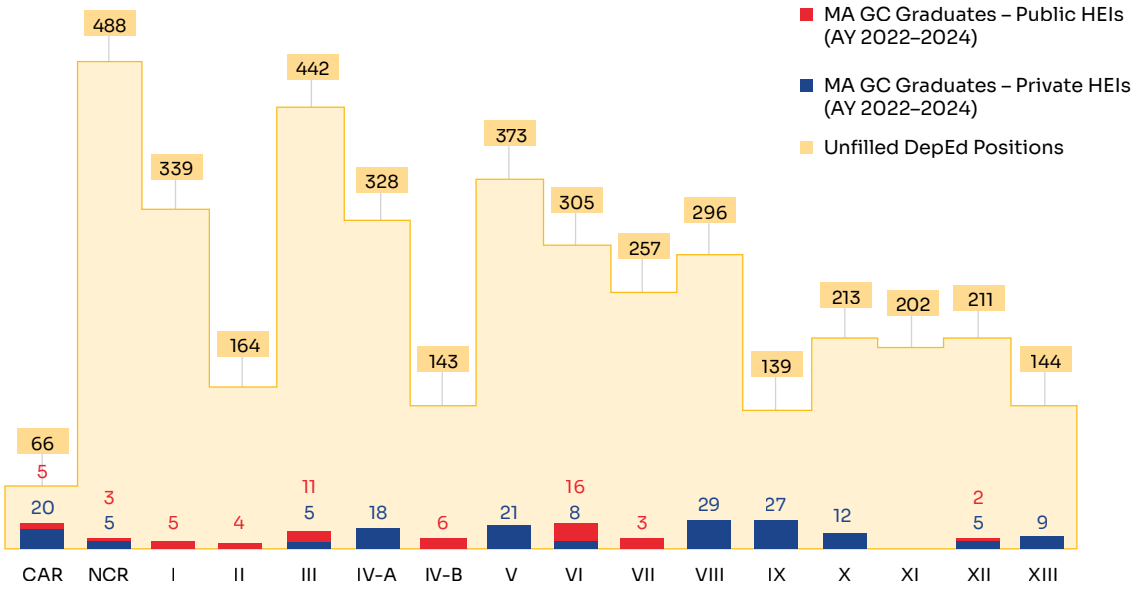
6 The Longitudinal Cohort Study on the Filipino Child (LCSFC) is a 15-year prospective longitudinal study implemented by the University of San Carlos Office of Population Studies Foundation, Inc. (USC-OPS) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Philippines. This study tracks a nationally representative sample of approximately 5,000 Filipino children aged 10 in 2016 until they reach the age of 24 in 2030.

ISSUE 3: THERE IS A LACK OF GUIDANCE COUNSELING DUE TO SUPPLY GAPS NATIONWIDE.

The guidance counseling system faces a severe and longstanding structural shortage that limits schools' ability to respond to these overlapping risks. Around 79% of DepEd guidance counselor posts (4,460 items) remain unfilled, with some regions having vacancy rates above 80% and cases where a single counselor covers multiple campuses. Since 2008, only a little over 3,000 individuals have passed the PRC licensure exam in Guidance and Counseling, far below the demand generated by DepEd, CHED, and TESDA (DepEd; PRC). The rigid requirements under Republic Act No. 9258, which mandates both a specialized master's degree and licensure for all counselor posts, leave little room for tiered roles or supervised practice pathways that could gradually expand the workforce.

Although salary upgrades under recent mental health reforms have improved the attractiveness of counselor positions, schools still lack the staffing depth needed for preventive and responsive services. Past compensation levels (Salary Grade 11–12) made DepEd guidance posts uncompetitive despite the high qualification bar, pushing many graduates toward private institutions and clinical practice. Subsequent reforms under the School-Based Mental Health Act upgraded guidance counselor salary grades and introduced the role of school counselor associates, but these changes are only beginning to address years of underinvestment. In practice, millions of students still have limited access to basic counseling, early intervention, and career guidance, leaving teachers and school heads to manage complex psychosocial cases with few specialized supports (Republic Act No. 11036).

FIGURE 24.
Comparison MA Guidance Counseling Graduates from Public HEIs and Unfilled Guidance Counselor DepEd Plantilla Positions



Source: DepEd - GMIS Data as of June 30, 2025 and CHED-OPRKM, AY 2022-2024 Enrollment Data, submitted September 2025

> *Since 2008, only a little over 3,000 individuals have passed the PRC licensure exam in Guidance and Counseling, far below the demand generated by DepEd, CHED, and TESDA (DepEd; PRC).*



ISSUE 4: CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEES ARE OVERBURDENED.

Institutional structures for addressing bullying and violence remain fragmented, and Child Protection Committees often operate with limited time, training, and authority, which continues to encourage underreporting. In many schools, CPC members already sit on multiple committees and carry heavy teaching loads, so child protection work is treated as an add-on rather than a core function. Field visits show that CPCs are often activated only after serious incidents, receive uneven orientation on procedures, and lack private spaces, forms, and referral tools to handle cases. School heads and CPC members describe strong informal pressure to keep official bullying counts low because high case numbers can be interpreted as poor performance in division monitoring, which leads some schools to resolve cases informally or reclassify them as generic "misbehavior" (Bernardo et al., 2024; Herrin et al., 2024). Official databases continue to show many schools reporting "zero cases" despite international assessments ranking the Philippines among countries with the highest bullying prevalence, revealing a wide gap between learners' experiences and what enters administrative records (OECD, 2023; Abrigo, Lingatong, & Relos, 2025).

The revised Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Anti-Bullying Act, or Republic Act No. 10627, significantly strengthened the policy framework by clarifying definitions, roles, and accountability, but full implementation is still pending. The updated IRR expands the definition of bullying to include psychological, social, gender-based, and cyberbullying, requires all schools to maintain localized anti-bullying policies and programs, and assigns clear responsibilities to DepEd Central Office, Regional and Division Offices, and school heads. Discipline officers and guidance personnel are formally tasked with case management and support functions, and the IRR explicitly states that "zero reporting of incidents of bullying shall not automatically be construed as positive performance," directly countering previous incentives to underreport. The challenge now lies in ensuring that every school can operationalize these provisions with adequate training, staffing, and monitoring.

The passage of Republic Act No. 12080, or the Basic Education Mental Health and Well-Being Promotion Act, is the most comprehensive legislative advancement for learner welfare to date, but its success hinges on overcoming workforce and capacity constraints. The law requires schools to implement mental health promotion programs, conduct early detection of learners at risk, provide structured psychosocial support, and establish referral pathways with LGUs and health facilities, while DepEd is tasked to set standards and align implementation across levels. These provisions move the system

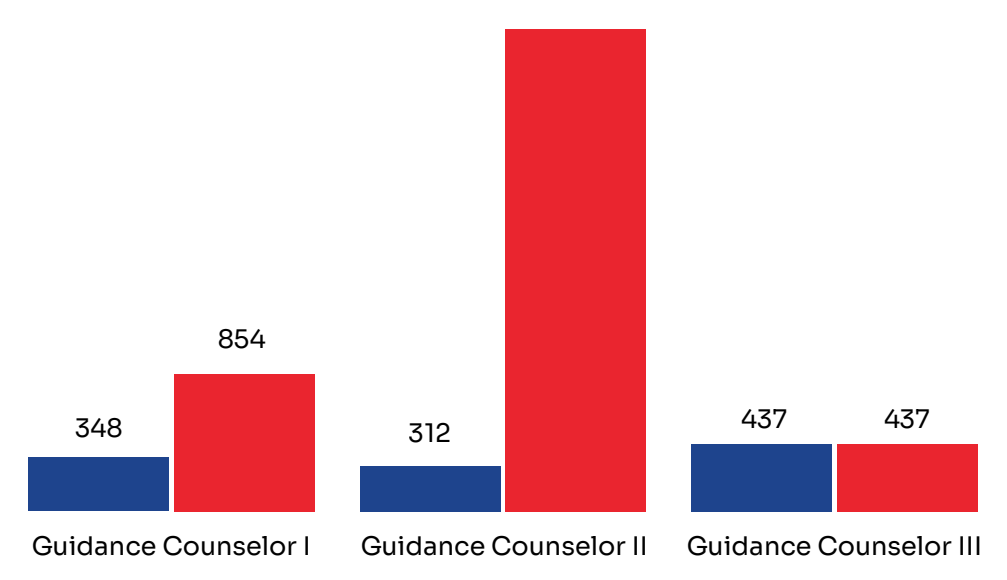
from reactive child protection toward proactive well-being promotion, yet they also expand school responsibilities at a time when guidance counselors, school counselor associates, and external mental health services remain scarce, especially in poorer and rural divisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Fully implement the strengthened Anti-Bullying IRR by providing schools with practical tools, coaching, and monitoring that emphasize accurate reporting over "zero incidents."** DepEd should supply model policies, scripts for class discussions, case documentation templates, and orientation modules so that even small and under-resourced schools can comply. Division offices should actively coach schools with persistent "zero reporting," use spot checks and learner surveys to validate data, and provide targeted technical assistance to CPCs and discipline officers that struggle with case handling.

2. **Address the severe shortage of guidance and mental health personnel through a multi-year workforce strategy that combines salary reforms, expanded training, and layered roles.** Building on upgrades under Republic Act No. 11036, DepEd, CHED, PRC, and TESDA should jointly project counselor needs by region, expand scholarships and graduate programs in Guidance and Counseling, and scale up School Counselor Associate positions to handle preventive programs, basic counseling, and case monitoring under supervision. Adjustments to qualification standards and practicum pathways can help grow the pipeline without compromising professional quality.

FIGURE 25.
Status of Plantilla Positions, Guidance Counselors



Data from Department of Education, as of June 30, 2025

3. **Operationalize Republic Act No. 12080 by defining minimum service packages for mental health support in small, medium, and large schools, and by clarifying how schools will work with LGU-based professionals.** Service standards should specify feasible ratios of counselors and associates to students, outline teachers' roles in psychological first aid and early identification, and detail referral protocols that are consistent with data privacy rules. A phased rollout that prioritizes high-need regions and schools with high bullying or absenteeism rates will help match ambition with capacity.

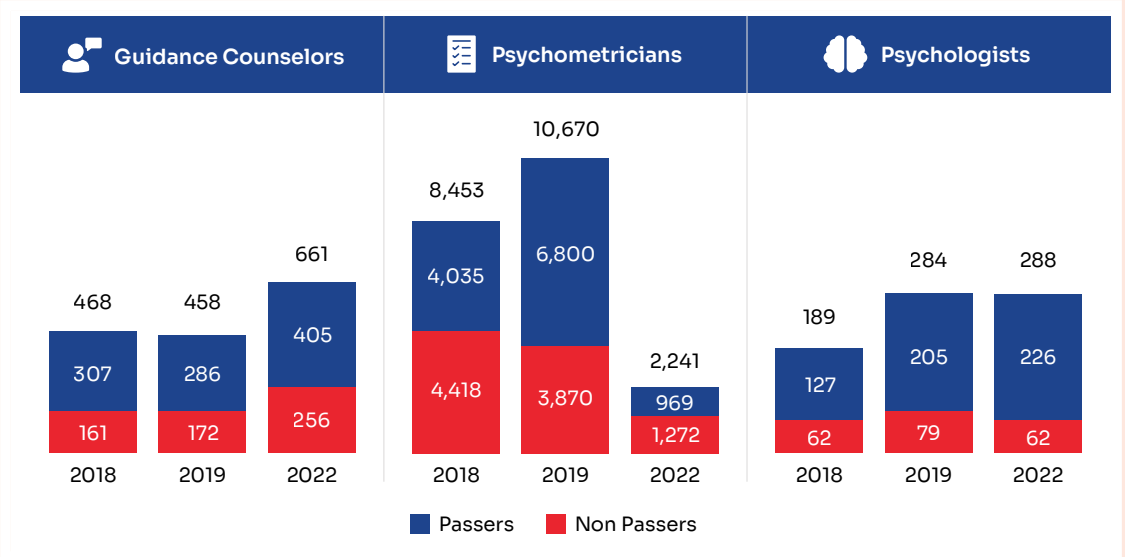
4. **Redesign parenting support programs so they are flexible, stigma-free, and accessible to left-behind and at-risk families.** Parent Effectiveness Sessions should be offered in shorter, modular formats, including barangay-based gatherings, workplace sessions, and online or broadcast modules that caregivers can access outside working hours. Messaging should frame PES as universal support for all parents rather than a corrective intervention, and schools and LGUs can use modest incentives, such as snacks, transport support, or certificates, to reduce opportunity costs for caregivers.

5. **Strengthen school-based monitoring and referral systems for children experiencing parental violence, migration-related stress, or unstable caregiving arrangements**. Homeroom guidance and teacher consultations can incorporate simple, validated screening questions to flag learners at risk, with clear, confidential pathways for referral to barangay VAWC desks, municipal social workers, and protection services. Regular communication with caregivers of left-behind children and school-based peer support groups can help mitigate the effects of separation and violence on attendance, behavior, and learning.

6. **Improve school climate and everyday classroom practice through sustained teacher training on socio-emotional learning, restorative discipline, and trauma-informed approaches.** NEAP and school LAC sessions should integrate practical modules on de-escalation, class meetings, peer mediation, and supportive homeroom guidance, with targeted assistance for schools that report high bullying or absenteeism. These approaches can help teachers manage difficult behavior without relying on punitive or violent discipline.

7. **Build a unified monitoring and reporting system, ideally integrated into Project BUKAS, to track bullying incidents, mental health services, and learner support outcomes.** Consolidating data on bullying reports, counselor availability, referrals, and follow-up actions into a single dashboard would enable DepEd, LGUs, and oversight bodies to identify high-risk schools, allocate resources more effectively, and evaluate whether new laws and policies are improving learner safety and well-being over time.

FIGURE 26.
Board Takers and Passers for Professions Related to Mental Health

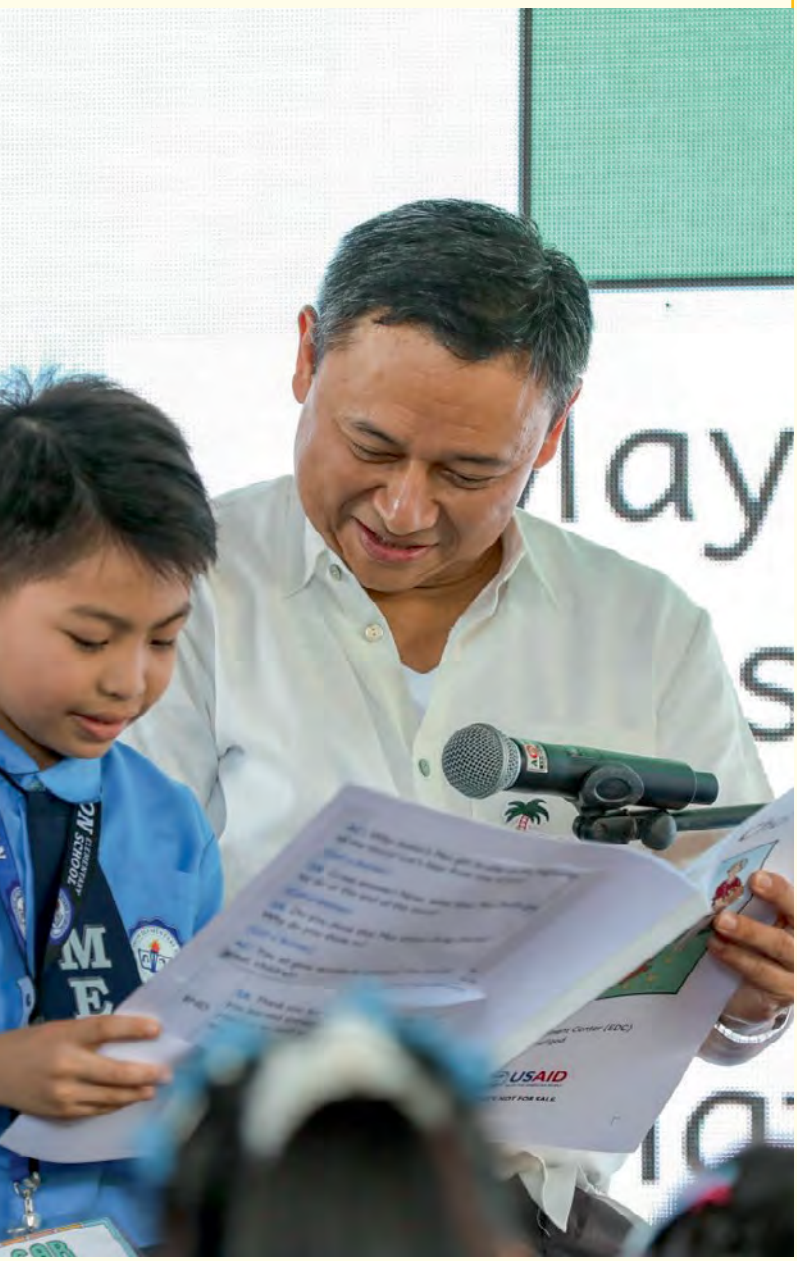


Source: Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) submitted last April 2025

SUCCESS WILL NOT WRITE ITSELF

Confronting *the* Literacy Crisis in the Philippines

Sec. Sonny Angara



Nang tanggapin ko ang responsibilidad na pamunuan ang Kagawaran ng Edukasyon, batid kong napakalaki ng mga hamon na ating haharapin. Many of these cracks in our system were already evident during the time of my father, the late Senator Ed Angara, who tirelessly fought for structural reforms in Philippine education.

His foresight gave us a glimpse of our staggering challenges. The data is sobering.

Ilan sa mga mag-aaral sa Grade 3 ay nahuhuli ng dalawa hanggang tatlong taon pagdating sa foundational competencies *tulad ng* reading *at* comprehension*, ayon sa* Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II).

It means children being locked out of a future that literacy alone can unlock—confidence, curiosity, employment, and upward mobility.

This is not just a statistic. It is a national emergency. And we must treat it as such.



> *We confronted a culture that confuses activity with impact, compliance with competence.*

FROM RHETORIC TO ACTION

Pag-upo natin sa puwesto, agad tayong kumilos. We moved to confront the inefficiencies that have long weighed down our system. And more critically, we confronted a culture that confuses activity with impact, compliance with competence.

Because the algorithm to solve these deeply embedded problems will not write itself. We must code it, test it, refine it, and most importantly, commit to the outcome.

Less than a month into the role, we immersed ourselves in realities often relegated to Senate hearings or committee reports.

Binisita namin ang mga paaralan sa malalayong barangay at mga tinatawag na "last mile communities." *Nasaksihan namin ang paghihirap ng mga bata sa simpleng pagbigkas at pagbasa, at mga patuloy na pagdiskarte ng mga guro dahil luma ang kanilang mga kagamitan sa pagtuturo. May mga paaralan na walang libro, walang guidance counselor, at minsan pa, walang kuryente at tubig.*

The gaps were glaring. The president rightly put it: It is as if education had been left adrift.



CODING THE FIX

Hindi natin tinanggap ang trabahong ito para lang maghanap ng mali sa sistema at magturo ng sisihin. Guided by our 5-Point Reform Agenda, we moved with resolve.

We pushed for Early Procurement Activities (EPA) to address perennial delays in textbook and materials delivery, delays that in the past took up to 451 days to complete.

Under our watch, napababa natin ito sa 60 days na lang at 110 days para matapos ang printing at delivery, ensuring our learners do not lose another year to red tape.

We formed a Technical Working Group on Literacy, which led to the rollout of the DepEd Summer Programs, including the Literacy Remediation Program (LRP) for Grade 3 learners, identified as a crucial transition year from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." *Sa 59,620 learners na sumali sa program, 96% ang nagpakita ng* improvement *sa kanilang* reading profile *matapos ang ilang linggo pa lang ng targeted intervention.*

In the Zamboanga Peninsula, the Bawat Bata Makababasa Program (BBMP) reached nearly 66,000 low-to-developing readers. *Pagkatapos ng 20 araw, hindi lang gumanda ang* fluency *at* comprehension *nila, kundi naibalik pa ang kumpiyansa nilang nawala. Ngayon, plano nating palawakin ang BBMP sa buong bansa.*

But fixing functional literacy is not a task for DepEd alone. This is a whole-of-nation mission.

We need parents as reading champions, local governments as learning investors, and teachers as instructional leaders. We need continuous investment, strategically and creatively funded by our champions.

> *The literacy crisis is not a marginal issue—it is front-and-center. If we fail here, every other reform, no matter how well-intentioned, will collapse under the weight of unread instructions, misunderstood concepts, and unrealized potential.*

HOPE WRITTEN FOR FILIPINO

Our population is among the youngest in the Asia-Pacific. We have the resources. We have the data. We have the momentum to read past these torn pages. With around 27 million learners in the country—giving us 27 million reasons to get this right.

The literacy crisis is not a marginal issue—it is front-and-center. If we fail here, every other reform, no matter how well-intentioned, will collapse under the weight of unread instructions, misunderstood concepts, and unrealized potential.

Utang natin sa susunod na mga henerasyon na pagsikapang tuparin ang kanilang pangarap. Laban ito para sa diwa at dignidad ng lahing Pilipino sa Bagong Pilipinas.

And we will not just write about its victory. We will read it aloud—in the voice of every Filipino child who finally, joyfully, has learned to read.

Sec. Sonny Angara is the Secretary of the Department of Education and a Former EDCOM II Commissioner.



III. HIGHER EDUCATION
Bridging Gaps and Fostering Excellence

Higher education has long been understood as a primary route for social and economic mobility across generations. *Ambisyon Natin 2040* notes that the aspiration for children to obtain a full college education is nearly universal among Filipino families, who view it as the pathway to "a better and independent life" secured through stable and decent work (Ambisyon Natin 2040, 2016).

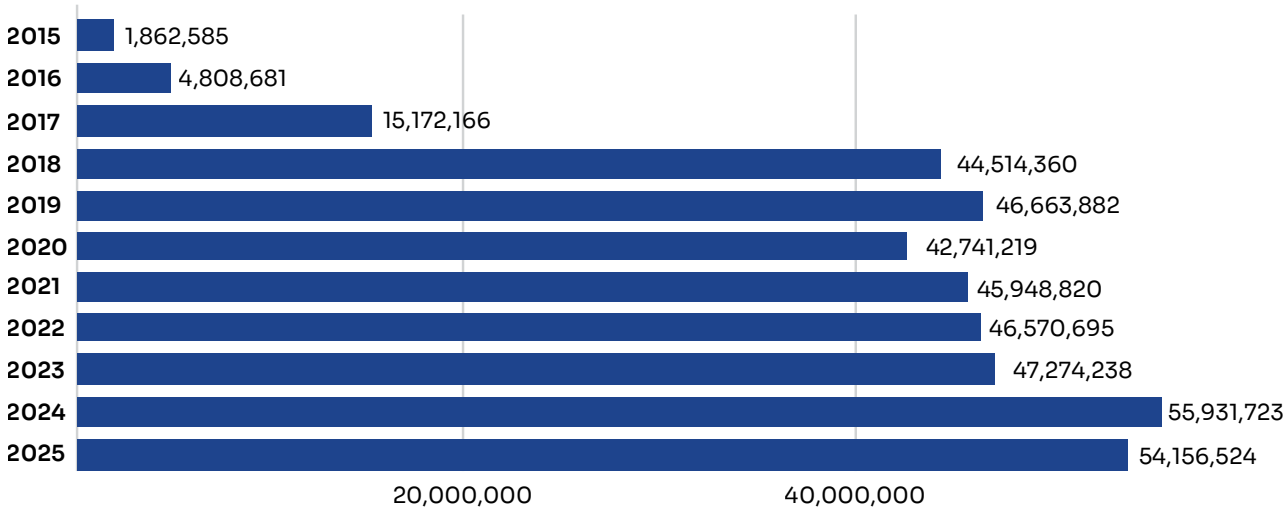
Echoing this national aspiration, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. used his 2025 State of the Nation Address to articulate a bold target: that every Filipino family should have at least one child who completes tertiary education.

This ambition is mirrored in the country's tertiary Gross Enrollment Rate (GER), which has remained comparatively high since the period of EDCOM I—already at 38% in 1985, far outpacing Indonesia (6.5%), Malaysia (6%), Singapore (11.8%), and Thailand (19.6%) at the time (Making Education Work, EDCOM I, 1991). By 2024, the Philippines' GER had risen to 47%, ranking second only to Singapore (97.29%, 2023) and slightly above Thailand (44.98%, 2024) and Indonesia (44.88%, 2023) (World Bank, 2024).This section examines strategies for bridging the persistent gap between legislation and implementation in early childhood development. It traces cascading effects of early deprivation (i.e., stunting, malnutrition, and missing infrastructure in ECCD) compound into learning disparities later on.

The national government has poured substantial investments into higher education. The passage of Republic Act 10931, or the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act allowed the allocation of approximately 50 Billion Pesos a year to sustain programs such as Free Higher Education in SUCs and LUCs, and the Tertiary Education Subsidy. Significant jumps are observed after the inclusion of Free Tuition in SUCs as a special provision in 2017, and the full passage of the UAQTEA the following year.

> *"Kaya mga magulang: sulitin na ninyo ang mga pagkakataong ito. Dahil hangad natin na sa lalong madaling panahon, ang bawat isang pamilya ay may anak na nakapagtapos ng kolehiyo o sa TESDA."*
>
> —***President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr.***, *SONA 2025*

FIGURE 1.
Aggregate spending on StuFAPs, CHED and FHE-SUCs (2015 - 2025)



Source: DBM Website, General Appropriations Act (FY 2015 to FY 2025)

The impact of these major investments however will only be realized if the government ensures that resources are directed toward strategic and well-balanced interventions. Policymakers must remain alert to unintended consequences, among them reforms unintentionally benefiting higher-income families more than those who need support the most. As highlighted by Machin (2004, as cited in Bayudan-Dacuycuy & Dacuycuy, 2018), poorly targeted programs can widen, rather than narrow, inequality.

Further, consistent from the time of EDCOM I, issues regarding the quality of degree programs and imbalances in the concentration of enrollment against national needs plagued higher education (Making Education Work, EDCOM I, 1991). To date, the articulation of a functional system of quality assurance remains to be actualized, enrollment remains concentrated in a few college degree programs, and there still exists the problem of the mismatch between available graduates by discipline, and available jobs in the market.

EDCOM II's Year 2 Report also highlighted the findings of Albert, Punongbayan, and Muñoz (2024), which show that the economic advantage of finishing college has been shrinking. A degree used to give workers more than double the hourly wages of someone with no formal schooling (141.4% more in 2010), but by 2022 this had fallen to 93.7%. Overall, studies indicate that although college completion remains one of the most powerful pathways for upward mobility for most Filipinos, the economic value of a college diploma has been declining. This reduced return is linked to several factors:

(a) the expansion of formal employment and the structural shift from agriculture to services; and
(b) the quality and nature of the jobs being created.
(c) the pressures on educational quality brought about by the rapid expansion of access to higher education.



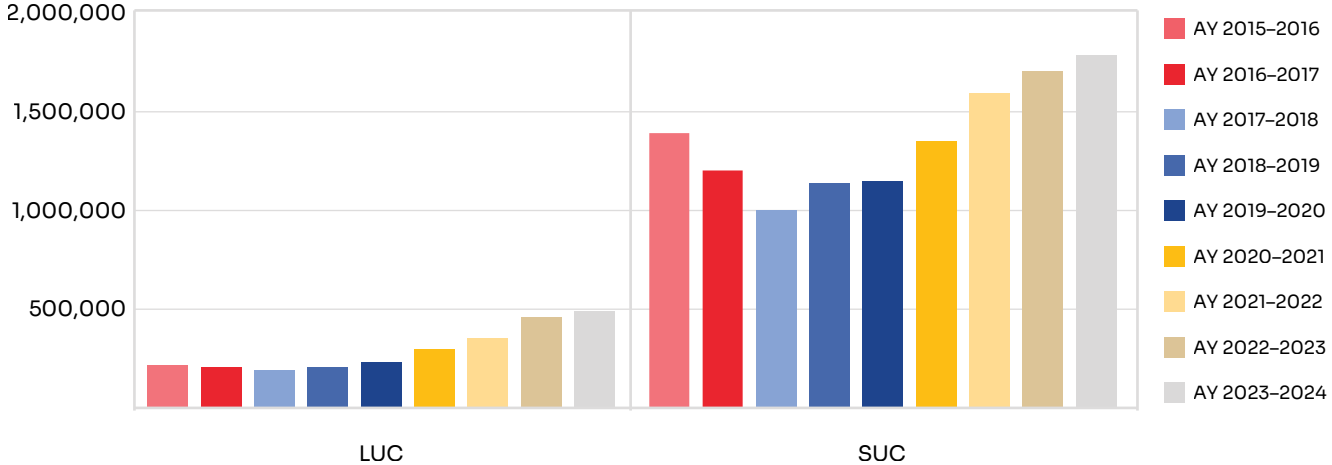
PRIORITY AREA 11: ACCESS TO QUALITY HIGHER EDUCATION

ISSUE 1: RAPID EXPANSION OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION HAS LED TO INCREASED HOMOGENEITY IN COLLEGE PROGRAMS.

Expansions in enrollment in Public HEIs

Based on available data, enrollment in SUCs and LUCs is already above the pre-K to 12 Transition Period levels (AY 2015-2016). However, the percentage increase of enrollment in LUCs between AY 2015-2016 and AY 2023-2024 is significantly higher at 133.5%, when compared to SUCs (28.67%).

FIGURE 2.
Comparison of LUC and SUC Baccalaureate Enrollment (2015-2023)

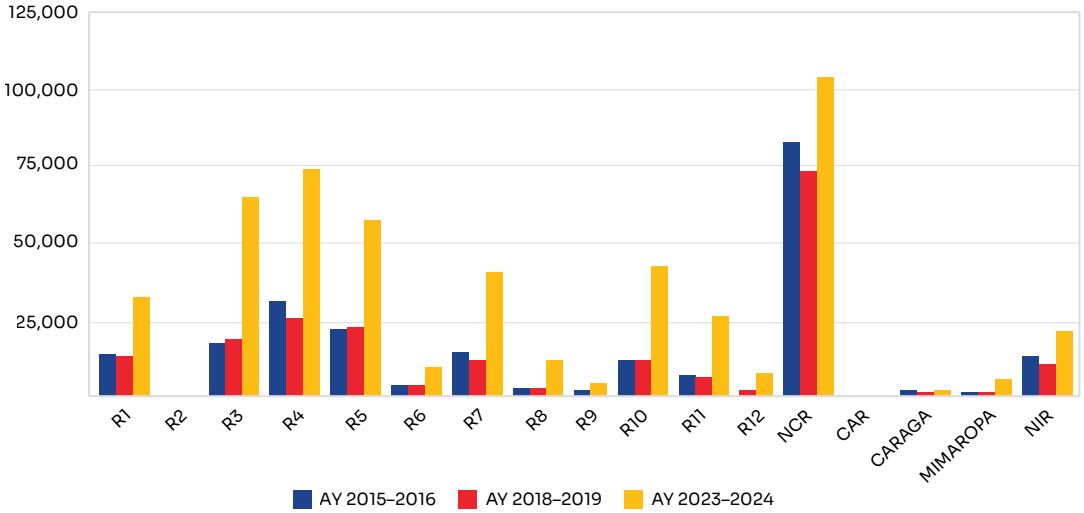


Source: CHED-OPRKM, Enrollment Data submitted as of May 2023 (AY 2015-2016 to AY 2021-2022) and June 2025 (AY 2022-2023 to AY 2023-2024)

FINDINGS

For LUCs, the expansions in enrollment are varied across regions, with some regions recording increases up to 2,301% (Region 9) and as low as 26% (NCR), when comparing AY 2015-2016 to AY 2023-2024 enrollment levels; one region recorded a decrease of 6% (Caraga). To note, only 108 out of 163 LUCs currently have Institutional Recognition (CHED Tanaw, 2025).

FIGURE 3.
Comparison of Baccalaureate Enrollment in LUCs by Region (2015 vs. 2018 vs. 2023)



Source: CHED-OPRKM, Enrollment Data submitted as of May 2023 (AY 2015-2016; AY 2018-2019) and June 2025 (AY 2023-2024)

Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs) Governance Act

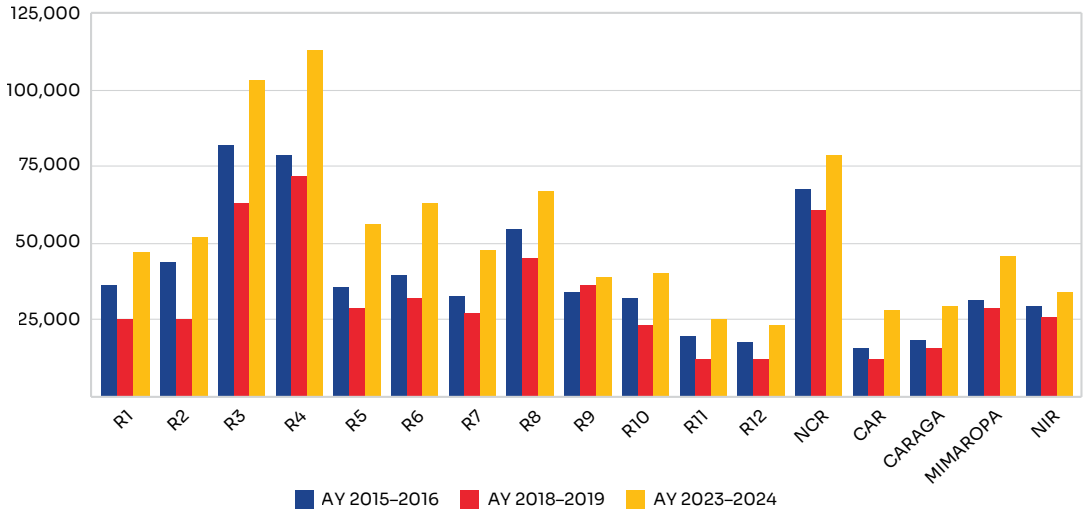
EDCOM II has consistently highlighted the fragmented and highly uneven governance of LUCs. Despite their crucial role in expanding access to higher education, many LUCs were established without a standardized framework for planning, quality assurance, and long-term sustainability. This has resulted in wide variations in institutional capacity, financial stability, program relevance, and student outcomes across LGU-run higher education institutions.

In response, EDCOM II has proposed a comprehensive LUC Governance Framework that establishes mandatory, nationwide guidelines for the creation, conversion, operation, and quality assurance of all LUCs. The proposal introduces a unified regulatory system that is jointly supervised by the CHED and TESDA, where CHED is tasked with overseeing degree programs and TESDA in-charge of supervising diploma, associate, and technical-vocational programs. It institutionalizes labor market-responsive planning, requiring LUCs to align program offerings with local workforce needs through Public Employment Service Offices and labor market information systems. It also promotes the development of ladderized and stackable credentials consistent with the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF), ensuring clearer learner pathways across TVET, applied degrees, and higher-level tertiary programs.

To strengthen governance and accountability, the framework likewise aims to standardize the composition and powers of LUC Governing Boards, guarantees fiscal autonomy with safeguards, and establishes a dedicated LUC Affairs Division within the CHED, with direct coordination from TESDA regional and provincial offices, to oversee the development of LUCs. Furthermore, the measure also provides access to development support such as faculty scholarships, externships, facilities upgrading, and research partnerships. Through these proposed reforms, EDCOM II envisions that LUCs hone a coherent, high-quality, and locally responsive environment that will meaningfully contribute to community development, workforce readiness, and national progress.

For SUCs, the highest percentage increase in enrollment is in CAR (76%), while the lowest was in Region 9 (18%). Notably, there are no LUCs in CAR, and Region 9 recorded the highest increase in LUC enrollment, as earlier mentioned.

FIGURE 4.
Comparison of Baccalaureate Enrollment in SUCs by Region (2015 vs. 2018 vs. 2023)



Source: CHED-OPRKM, Enrollment Data submitted as of May 2023 (AY 2015-2016; AY 2018-2019) and June 2025 (AY 2023-2024)

SUCs with the highest recorded percentage increases are as follows:

TABLE 1:
Comparison of Enrollment in Select SUCs (2015 vs. 2018 vs. 2023)

SUC	2015/16	2018/19	2023/24	2015 vs 2023
Abra State Institute of Science And Technology-Main	2,854	2,702	8,042	181.78%
Davao Del Norte State College	1,173	2,490	6,720	472.89%
Davao del Sur State College-Main	1,991	2,137	5,401	171.27%
Guimaras State College-Main	2,174	1,959	6,497	198.85%
North Eastern Mindanao State University-Main	10,655	10,138	28,012	162.90%
Northwestern Mindanao State College of Science and Technology	1,093	1,693	4,797	338.88%
Southern Philippines Agriculture, Business, Marine and Aquatic School of Technology	1,074	1,434	4,712	338.73%
Zamboanga Peninsula Polytechnic State University	5,337	4,589	15,762	195.33%

Source: CHED-OPRKM, Enrollment Data submitted as of May 2023 (AY 2015-2016; AY 2018-2019) and June 2025 (AY 2023-2024)

While the increase in enrollment in public HEIs points to increase in access, especially considering FHE in SUCs and LUCs, challenges in absorptive and carrying capacity must be addressed to ensure continuing quality education.

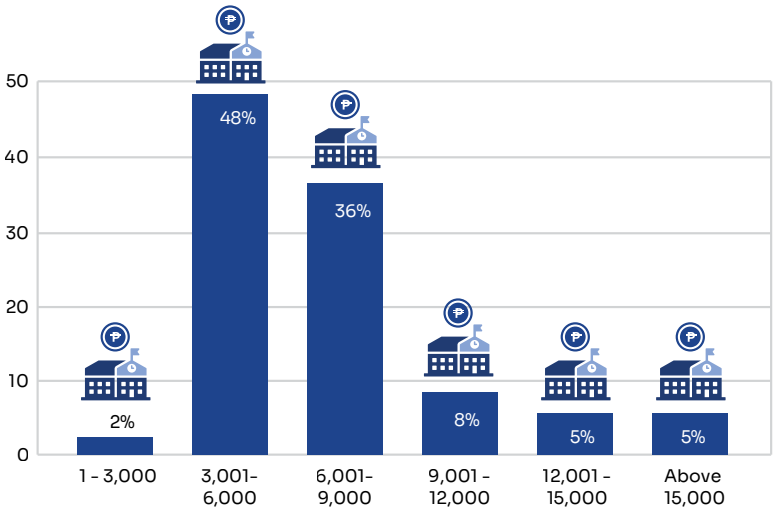
This commitment to ensuring quality was already anticipated in the crafting of the IRR of Republic Act 10931, as reflected in Rule VI, "Quality Standards." The IRR outlines several mechanisms and safeguards, including the requirement that institutions adhere to quality indicators such as enrollment limits and carrying capacities to be determined by CHED. However, despite being mandated since the law's passage in 2018, these indicators have yet to be developed and released.



ISSUE 2: THE COLLECTED TUITION AND OTHER FEES BY SUCS PER STUDENT VARIES GREATLY FROM SUC TO SUC.

Data on tuition and other school fees (TOSF), as provided by the CHED, shows that there is a wide variation in TF and OSF charged across SUCs. Further, while tuition fees in some SUCs remain low, the other school fees, also provided under FHE, are more varied. For example, in the set of SUCs charging TF ranging from 101 to 200, the lowest OSF is 525, while the highest is at 6,705.

FIGURE 5.
Estimated Total Collection per Student



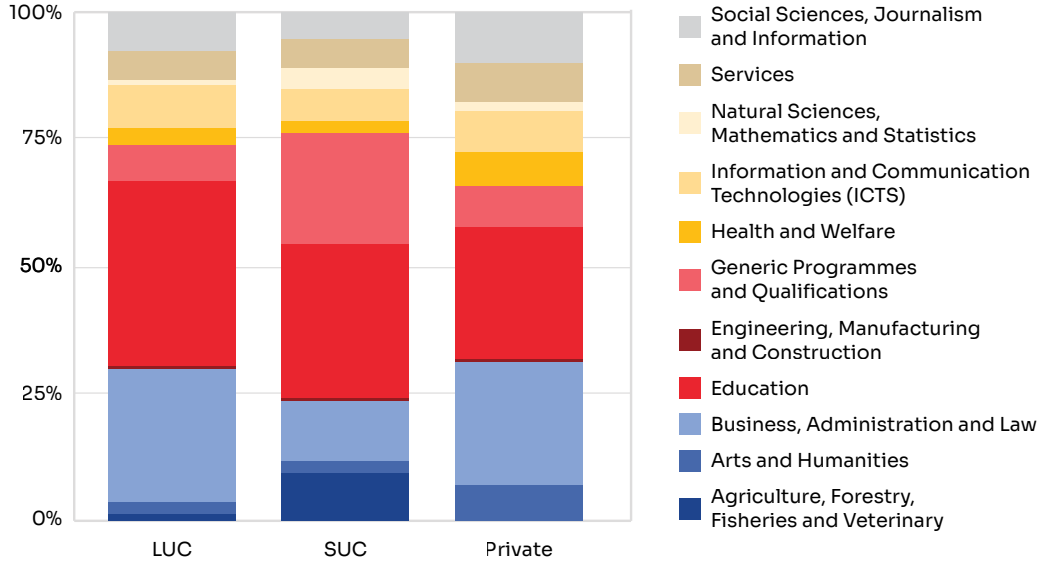
Source: Processed Data from CHED OPRKM; UniFAST on Tuition and Fees submitted April 2025

Section 54 of the IRR of Republic Act 10931 provides that within the period of not more than five (5) years from the effectivity of the Act, the CHED and the UniFAST Board shall work towards the development of a composite fee that will take the place of tuition and other school fees in order *"to establish a more equitable allocation of resources across SUCs, LUCs, and their students."* Seven years after the promulgation of the IRR, UNIFAST has since engaged a consultancy firm to conduct a study on Normative TOSFs. It is expected to be completed in 2026.

Based on CHED Data, the majority of the baccalaureate programs offered across all types of HEIs (SUCs, LUCs, and Private HEIs) are in Education; a significant number are in Business Administration. SUCs, through Republic Act 7722, are mandated to offer

programs which are geared towards national, regional or local development plans. Further, consistent with the Special Provisions of several GAAs and the functions listed in its charter, the CHED was tasked to undertake the rationalization of program offerings of SUCs and LUCs, with particular emphasis on those programs which are 'oversubscribed', and to ensure that the programs offered by public HEIs are aligned to their core mandates.

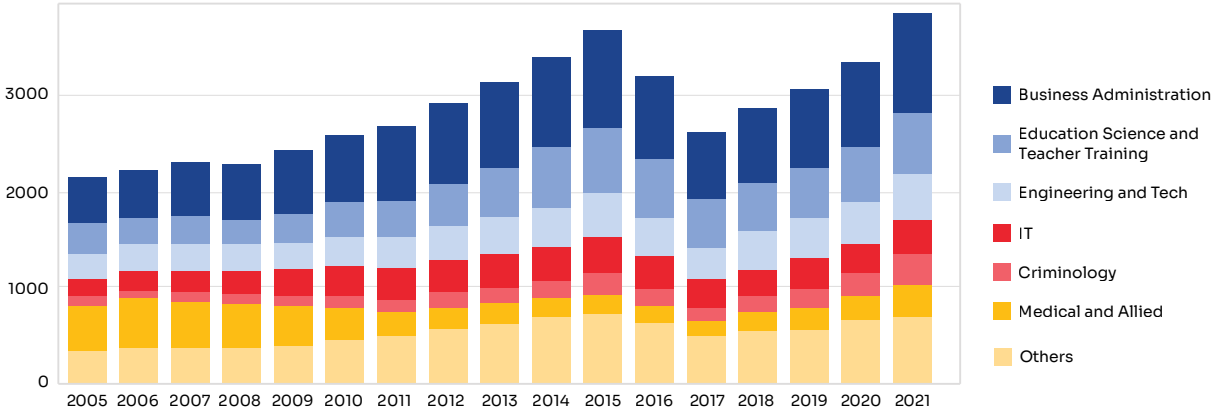
FIGURE 6.
Comparison of Distribution of Baccalaureate Programs by Discipline and HEI Type



Source: CHED-OPRKM, AY 2024-2025 Enrollment Data, submitted September 2025

Trends of enrollment and program offerings remain consistent since the time of EDCOM I, despite already being observed as imbalanced. The EDCOM I reports noted the imbalanced distribution in enrolled disciplines, with concentrations in Business, Teacher Education, and Engineering. 30 years hence, the same trends are observed.

FIGURE 7.
Baccalaureate Enrolment by Discipline ('000s), 2005-2021



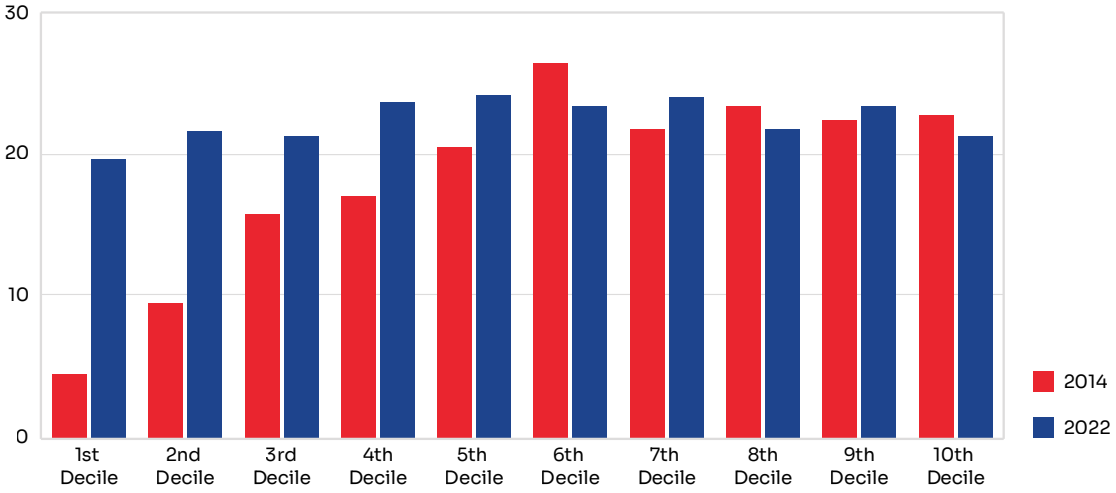
Source: CHED-OPRKM, Enrollment Data submitted as of May 2023

The need for a stronger "system of high-level manpower planning and development" was noted in the EDCOM I report, as a response to the consistent challenge of unemployment and underemployment. Today, the same concerns emerged, as discussed in the Trabaho Para sa Bayan Plan 2025-2034.

ISSUE 3: FREE HIGHER EDUCATION HAS INCREASED PARTICIPATION AMONG POOR HOUSEHOLDS AND REDUCED INCOME-BASED GAPS IN COLLEGE ENROLLMENT.

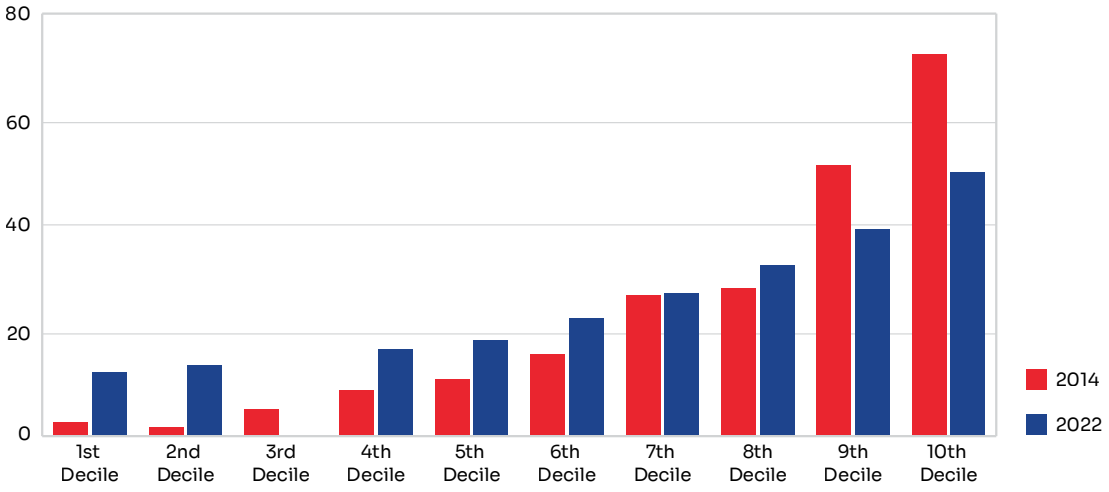
The Free Higher Education component of Republic Act 10931 has had a progressive effect, increasing participation of the poorest households in SUCs and LUCs from 4.6% to 19.7% for the 1st decile, and 9.5% to 21.7% for the 2nd decile. Further, when comparing the 2014 and 2022 Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) figures for college participation by income decile, there is an observed narrowing of the income divide. In SUCs and LUCs, it was found that the difference between the GER in decile 1 and decile 10 decreased substantially from 18.2 (2014) to just 1.6 percentage points (2022). For Private HEIs, the difference decreased from 71 (2014) to 38 percentage points (2022).

FIGURE 8.
Comparison of Gross Enrollment Rate in SUCs and LUCs by Income Decile, 2014 vs 2022



Source: Manasan (2025)

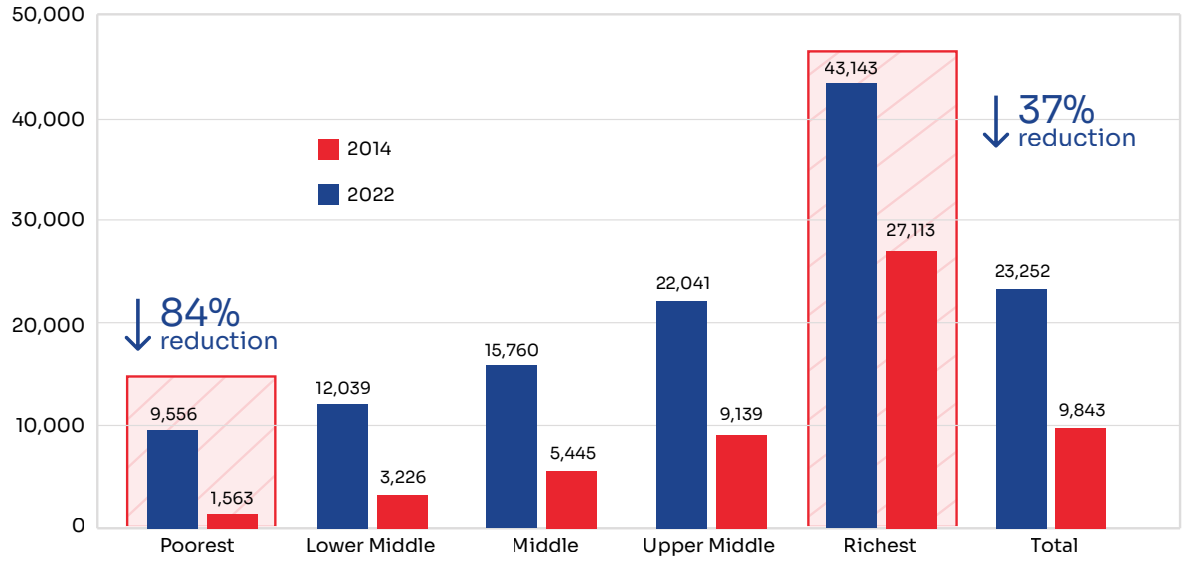
FIGURE 9.
Comparison of Gross Enrollment Rate in Private HEIs by Income Decile, 2014 vs 2022



Source: Manasan (2025)

After the enactment of Republic Act 10931, the total household expenditure on tertiary education reduced nationally by 57.7%, with the largest reductions seen for the poorest at 84%. In comparison, the reduction of total household expenditure for the richest is only 37%. These reductions may point to a possible offsetting of the necessary costs of tertiary education through access to government aid.

FIGURE 10.
Household Expenditure Per Student On Tertiary Education



Source: Manasan (2025)

ISSUE 4: THE TARGETING MECHANISMS ENVISIONED UNDER REPUBLIC ACT 10687 (UNIFAST ACT) AND REPUBLIC ACT 10931 (UAQTEA) REMAIN UNIMPLEMENTED.

The mandates in the Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (UniFAST) Act have only been partially delivered 10 years since its passage. Republic Act 10687, or the Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (UniFAST) Act passed in 2015, aims to "harmonize, reform, strengthen, expand, rationalize and re-focus all legislated or ongoing StuFAPs of government," in the interest of "efficiency, coherence, synchronization and effective funding" of all publicly-funded national government programs for Scholarships, Grants-in-Aid and Student Loans for tertiary education. The measure was seen as a means to increase enrollment and completion rate in tertiary education, across all socio-economic classes, but especially the poor (Sponsorship Speech, Sen. Pia Cayetano, 04 March 2015). This was the government's answer to the status quo of student financial aid programs which were "fragmented and meager," "untargeted" and "unharmonious" (Sponsorship Speech, Sen. Sonny Angara, 09 March 2015). It was found, during the deliberations of the measure, that the national government had largely failed to evaluate its various programs, not in terms of reach, or outcomes such as employment outcomes of graduates (Sen. Sonny Angara, 09 March 2015).

However, a decade after the law's passage, most of the UnIFAST Act's mandates remain partially implemented. Without the intended harmonized guidelines and streamlined systems, the national government is unable to effectively match students to the most appropriate aid programs or to optimize information dissemination, resource allocation, and service delivery.

TABLE 2.
Status of Implementation of UniFAST Secretariat Mandates

	Requirement of the Law	Status	CHED Response as of 12/16/2025
1	**Formulation of policies and mechanisms for the identification of beneficiaries based on objective indicators derived from credible databases:** ▪ For the development of bright and talented students (Sec 6 - Scholarship) ▪ For students belonging to poor families and marginalized sectors (Sec 7 - Grant-in-Aid)	**Pending**	Implementation of the FHE, TES, and TDP
2	Monitor, assess and make **impact evaluation of StuFAPs**, implement changes according to the approved changes based on the comments of the agency.	**Partially Implemented**	In 2024, the UniFAST launched a standardized monitoring tool for the UAQTE programs for data collection on program implementation by the participating HEIs for completed academic years, to be used for impact evaluation. The collection of the AY 2021-2022 and AY 2022-2023 is ongoing.
3	Promulgate minimum guidelines, rules and regulations for determining qualified beneficiaries of student financial assistance for Tertiary Education (Sec 15-e), implement changes according to the approved changes based on the comments of the agency. **Adopt a Qualifying Examination System for Scoring Students** for merit and talent-based StuFAPs and determine the eligibility for Grants-in-Aid and other modalities of StuFAPs (Sec 15-h)	**Partially Implemented**	Harmonization is currently in its final stages of completion to be submitted to the UniFAST Board for review and approval
4	Accounting and Reporting of UniFAST StuFAP Funds. – A separate book of accounts shall be kept by each implementing agency for the UniFAST StuFAP Funds. (...) A mid-year and annual report shall be prepared by all implementing agencies. Xxx These reports shall be submitted to Congress and the Department of Budget and Management xxx (Sec 21)	**Pending**	To be included in the draft guidelines for the harmonized StuFAPs; writeshop in July 2025
5	Performance Monitoring and Impact Assessment. – xxx Performance and progress shall, in addition, be measured with regard to: (i) number of students covered by Scholarships, Grants-in-Aid, Student Loans, or other modalities of StuFAP; (ii) type of study program; (iii) level of HEI enrolled in; and (iv) initial economic status. **Tracer studies and survey data for experimental and quasi-experimental analyses** xxx (Sec 23)	**Pending**	The indicators will be incorporated into the UniFAST's monitoring efforts
6	**Long-term plan for the development of a self-sustaining National Student Loan Program (NSLP)** which shall provide qualified students short-term and long-term financial assistance for Tertiary Education (Sec 8), implement changes according to the approved changes based on the comments of the agency.	**Partially Implemented**	The UniFAST issued the Guidelines for the Student Loan Program in 2018 but the same was halted in 2020, and the funding reverted. The revised Guidelines is expected to be finalized in 2026.
7	Develop an **efficient tracking system of Student-Borrowers**, as well as a system of disbursement and collection of payments of loans (Sec 15-r)	**Pending**	Will be taken into careful consideration once the SLP is established
8	**Design a program of generating funds for the UniFAST** (Sec 15-l)	**Pending**	The UniFAST will coordinate with the DOF-BIR to craft the necessary revenue regulations.
9	**Establish and maintain, on the public websites of the CHED and TESDA, a database containing information on StuFAPs and accredited public and private Tertiary Education programs and institutions** (Sec 15-j). implement changes according to the approved changes based on the comments of the agency. **Set up, maintain and update an official registry of quality-assured academic and research programs** and Tertiary Education institutions in accordance with Section 3 of this Act (Sec-p)	**Partially Implemented**	Initial information on the participating HEIs under UAQTE is available on the UniFAST website. Those under nationally-funded StuFAPs will be included following the harmonization of StuFAPs.

ISSUE 5: ACCESS OF THE POOREST TO THE TERTIARY EDUCATION SUBSIDY HAS IMPROVED, BUT CAN BE BETTER RESOURCED.

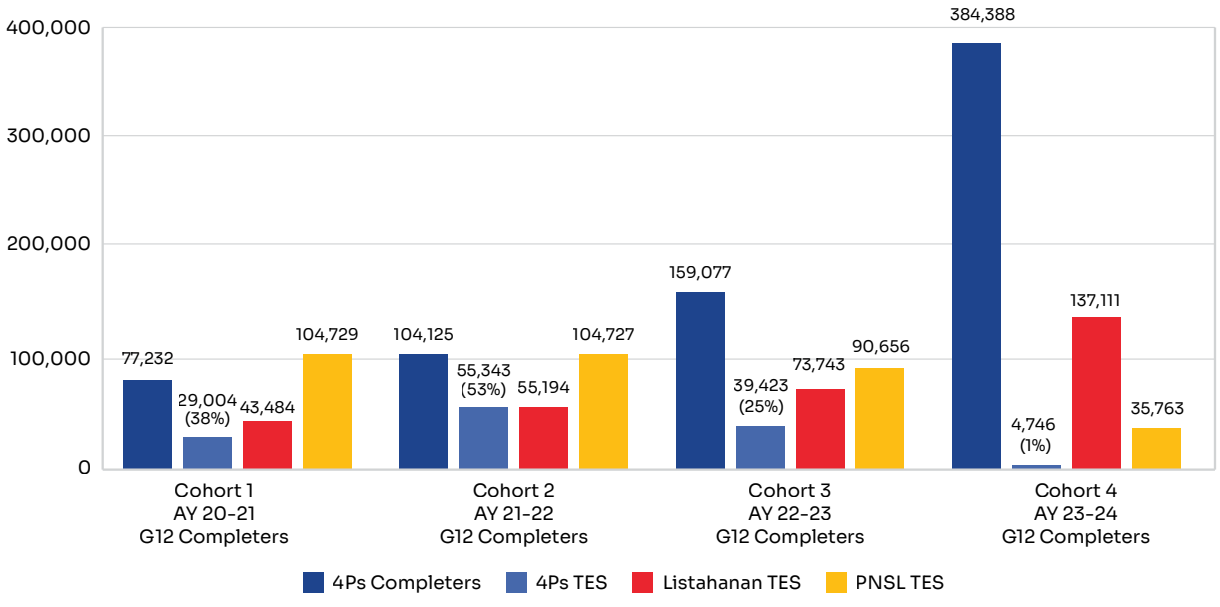
As previously noted in the Year 1 Report, the number and proportion of the poorest of the poor (those under the Listahanan 2.0 and the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program [4Ps]) accessing the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) diminished from 70.73% in AY 2018-2019 to 22.89% in AY 2022-2023. **Following the efforts of EDCOM2, which includes the implementation of a special provision in the 2024 General Appropriations Act, CHED and UNIFAST has since revised its guidelines and reported gains, with the share of the poorest receiving TES increasing from 23% to 36% in 2023, then to 61% in 2024 (CHED, 2025, August 27).**

Based on CHED data, only 1.23% (4,726) of the 4Ps G12 completers of the previous school year were provided with TES grants. Notably, there are more 4Ps beneficiaries in higher year levels. Assuming that each cohort of 4Ps beneficiaries proceeds to college the academic year immediately after their graduation from senior high school, a comparison of the availment of the 4Ps beneficiaries of the TES is as follows:

TABLE 3.
Comparison of 4Ps SHS Completers and 4Ps TES Beneficiaries by Cohort

	Cohort 1 AY 20-21 G12	Cohort 2 AY 21-22 G12	Cohort 3 AY 22-23 G12	Cohort 4 AY 23-24 G12
4Ps Completers	77,232	104,125	159,077	384,388
	AY 2024-2025 4th Year	AY 2024-2025 3rd Year	AY 2024-2025 2nd Year	AY 2024-2025 1st Year
4Ps TES	29,004	55,343	39,423	4,746
% of 4Ps Completers	37.55%	53.15%	24.78%	1.23%
Listahanan TES	43,484	55,194	73,743	137,111
PNSL TES	104,729	104,727	90,656	35,763

FIGURE 11.
Comparison of 4Ps G12 Completers Cohorts and TES Beneficiaries by Type of Beneficiary



Source: UniFAST, DepEd



In an effort to further understand the seemingly low transition of 4Ps beneficiaries to higher education in AY 2024-2025, the UniFAST Secretariat was requested to provide data on the number of applicants by beneficiary eligibility (i.e. 4Ps, Listahanan and TES). However, the UniFAST Secretariat disclosed that such data was unavailable at this time (Letter from the UniFAST Secretariat, dated 24 October 2025).

To note, based on UniFAST MC No. 02, s. 2024, students who are part of the Listahanan, or its equivalent, ranked according to per capita income, are first priority. Noting that 4Ps beneficiaries may also be included in the Listahanan, the current data on beneficiary tagging may need further validation or disaggregation. Specifically, whether the 4Ps beneficiaries are currently categorized as Listahanan beneficiaries, given its prioritization in the selection of the award of the subsidy.

Based on data provided by the DSWD, the estimated number of 4Ps incoming tertiary students is 490,315 by 2026, 354,4888 by 2027 and 771,756 by 2028.

The amount provided for the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) has a major effect on the programs chosen by beneficiaries and the likelihood of completion

As reported in the EDCOM II Year 2 Report, the amount for the TES was reduced significantly in AY 2022-2023 from PHP 60,000 for those studying in Private HEIs and PHP 40,000 for those SUCs and LUCs to PHP 20,000 for both. For the second semester of AY 2023-2024, this was increased slightly to PHP 27,000 and PHP 20,000 per academic year for those studying in Private HEIs and SUCs / LUCs respectively.

> *Based on CHED data, only 1.23% (4,726) of the 4Ps G12 completers of the previous school year were provided with TES grants*

As pointed out in the report, this severely limits the types of programs which may be undertaken by the TES grantees, especially those in Private HEIs whose TES is meant to cover both tuition and other school fees (TOSF) and living expenses. This would increase the likelihood of (a) increasing the preference for SUCs and LUCs, to the disadvantage of private institutions, (b) increase the likelihood of over enrollment in programs which are low-cost, and (c) discontinuation of studies for students who cannot bear the strain of the living expenses.

Nonetheless, studies find that the TES has been able to support a non-trivial number of "first-generation college students". Bayudan-Dacuycuy, Orbeta, Vargas, and Ortiz (2024) sought to evaluate the effectiveness of the TES in achieving its goals. Based on the sample of TES grantees included in the survey, most of the beneficiaries were from families whose parents had completed up to primary or secondary education only. Thus, the TES has been found to be able to "*break the cycle of limited educational attainment within families*". Based on the PIDS Tertiary Education Subsidy Online Survey (2023, as cited in Bayudan-Dacuycuy, et. al, 2024), 81% of fathers, and 81% of mothers of respondents completed only up to post-secondary education.

TABLE 4.
Parents' Highest Educational Attainment

Highest educational attainment	Frequency		In percent	
	Father	Mother	Father	Mother
No grade completed	95	65	8%	5%
Primary education	397	333	32%	27%
Secondary education	449	525	37%	43%
Post-secondary education	54	70	4%	6%
Short cycle tertiary education	57	58	5%	5%
Bachelor level education	133	146	11%	12%
Post-baccalaureate education	3	11	0%	1%
Not applicable	36	16	3%	1%
Total	**1,224**	**1,224**	**100.00%**	**100.00%**

Author's Caveat: Results are not representative of the population of the TES grantees

Source: Philippine Institute for Development Studies [PIDS]. 2023. PIDS Tertiary Education Subsidy Online Survey [dataset]. Quezon City: PIDS.

In their evaluation of the TES program, Bayudan-Dacuycuy et al. (2024) found that one of the challenges of the TES program with regard to the selection of programs is the need to provide information on eligibility earlier, as it is material to the decision to pursue higher education in the first place, and the student's choice of institution. This is consistent with insights from the discussions in Harvard during the US Benchmarking Visit that the timing of when a grant is given is critical to encourage the poorest to pursue higher education. This is also consistent with the findings of de Leon, Ayunon, Balagan and Lara (2025) who concluded that the effect of financial assistance is more effective in sustaining students after enrollment to college, as opposed to before.

In interviews with school officials, Bayudan-Dacuycuy, et. al (2024) found that students may not seek admission to schools, or decide to proceed to higher education if it is not financially viable. For those who do apply to higher education institutions, the selection of schools would most likely be skewed towards low-cost schools, given the uncertainty on whether the grant will be awarded or not. Lastly, if the grant is unfortunately not awarded, some will opt to drop out.

Amendment to Republic Act No. 10931 (addressing issues of the Tertiary Education Subsidy)

The proposed amendments to Republic Act No. 10931 or the Universal Access to Quality Education Act aims to strengthen the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) by sharpening its targeting, expanding its reach, and institutionalizing equity in access to tertiary education. By guaranteeing TES support for Senior High School (SHS) graduates from 4Ps households and establishing a clear ranking system based on per-capita household income for all remaining slots, the bill ensures that subsidies systemically reach the poorest and most financially vulnerable learners. The measure also introduces an equity provision in SUC admissions by requiring that at least twenty percent (20%) of students admitted annually come from disadvantaged groups, such as first-generation college students and youth from low-income households, thereby aligning admissions policies with the Act's broader access and equity objectives.

Beyond targeting, the amendments address longstanding implementation challenges by strengthening the administrative backbone of the TES program. The bill requires the adoption of a single, unified learner reference code from SHS to tertiary education to enable accurate tracking and reduce exclusion and leakages. It will likewise mandate an efficient, timely disbursement system and proactive information mechanisms so that eligible students, especially from 4Ps households, are informed of their TES eligibility before making crucial decisions about college or TVET enrollment. Additionally, the bill ensures that both public and private HEIs deliver learner support services, including bridging programs, tutoring, and career guidance, to improve student retention and completion.

Finally, the proposed reforms reinforce accountability and quality assurance in institutions receiving TES beneficiaries. By mandating periodic evaluations of HEIs and TVIs based on academic performance, compliance with CHED and TESDA standards, and graduate outcomes, the bill ensures that government funds are invested in quality programs that align with national development priorities. The introduction of priority programs—with corresponding incentives for students—further supports workforce development by directing subsidies toward fields where the country needs more graduates. Together, these amendments aim to create a more equitable, efficient, and future-ready TES program that better fulfills the promise of universal access to quality tertiary education.

ISSUE 6: ACCESS BASED ON GEOGRAPHY REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS.

Access based on geography requires further analysis, specifically in the (a) operationalization of the Private HEIs under the "PNSL" Category, (b) in areas with SUCs or LUCs but with limited program offerings, and in (c) areas where there may be no access to any HEI at all, whether private or public.

The EDCOM II Year One report recommended the reassessment of the TES beneficiary category of Private HEIs in Cities or Municipalities without SUCs or CHED-recognized LUCs (PNSL), following findings that there are cities currently categorized as "No SUCs and LUCs," but are adjacent to areas with public HEIs offering FHE.[1] It was noted; however, that further analysis is required to fully determine whether physical or geographical access is viable.

For instance, in the CHED Budget Hearing held last 11 September 2025, Rep. Ferdinand Hernandez of the 2nd District of South Cotabato raised concerns on Koronadal City not being considered as an area eligible for PNSL due to the presence of the University of the Philippines College of Midwifery. This UP Campus, he explained, only offers one course, and focuses on marginalized communities, such as those who are members of Indigenous Peoples communities.

1 In the EDCOM II Year One Report, Koronadal City was reported as categorized under PNSL; however, issue was raised regarding the presence of UP Manila School of Health Sciences (SHS) - Koronadal Campus (UP Koronadal), which eventually disqualified Koronadal City from the PNSL categorization. The UP Koronadal was not included in the AY 2021-2022 list of HEIs provided by CHED used as reference by the EDCOM II Year One Report.

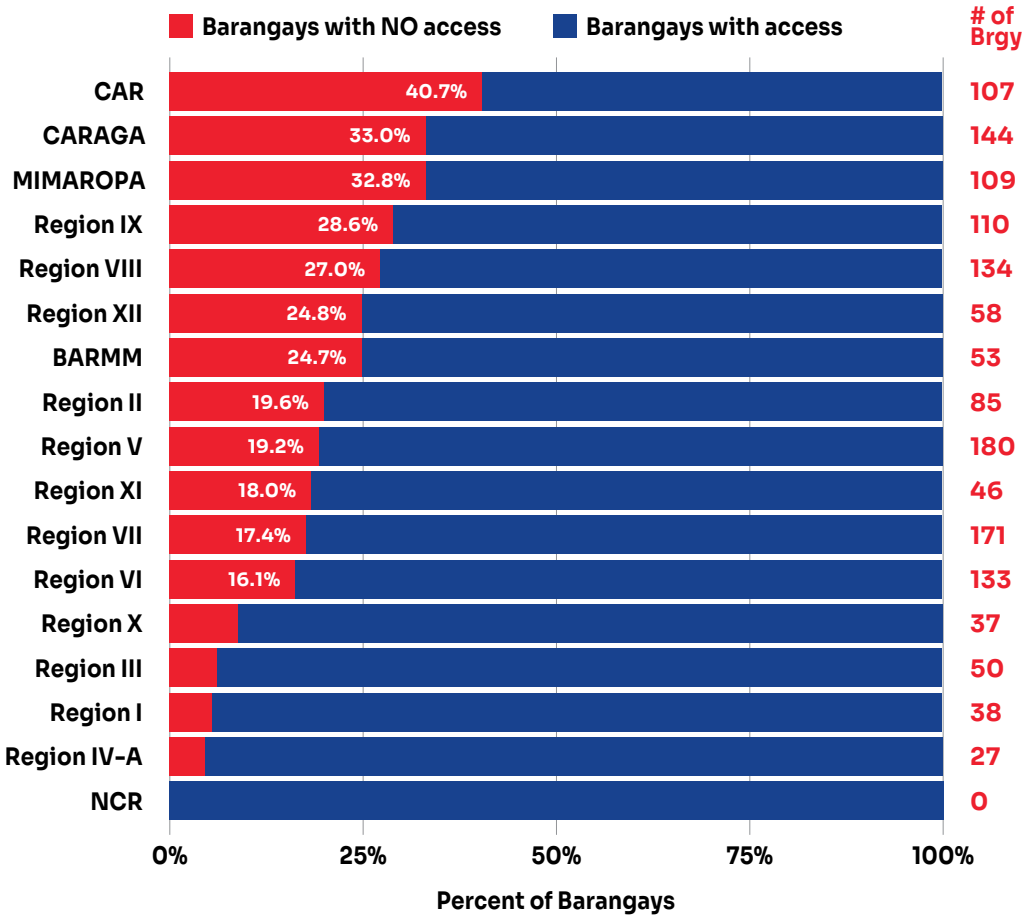
These findings further point to the need for the comprehensive review of the parameters of the PNSL category, as currently defined in the law, vis-a-vis the intention of the law to provide equitable access.

To further the analysis, the Education Center for Artificial Intelligence Research (ECAIR) conducted a mapping study of the barangays with Grade 12 enrollment but were not up to one (1) hour of road travel away from a higher education institution (HEI), whether SUC, LUC or Private. Using this methodology, the CAR emerged as the region with the highest proportion of barangays (40.7%, 107 barangays) with "no access," while Region V has the highest number of barangays with "no access," representing 17.4% of the total number of barangays.

The ECAIR analysis also highlighted areas like Palawan, identified as the province with the highest number of Grade 12 students who could be affected by having no access to HEIs. Because of the area's mountainous terrain, travel would still require crossing mountain ranges even if HEIs were established in currently inaccessible locations.

These three (3) use cases highlight that equitable access, through the lens of geographical access, requires further analysis, intersectionally considered against other

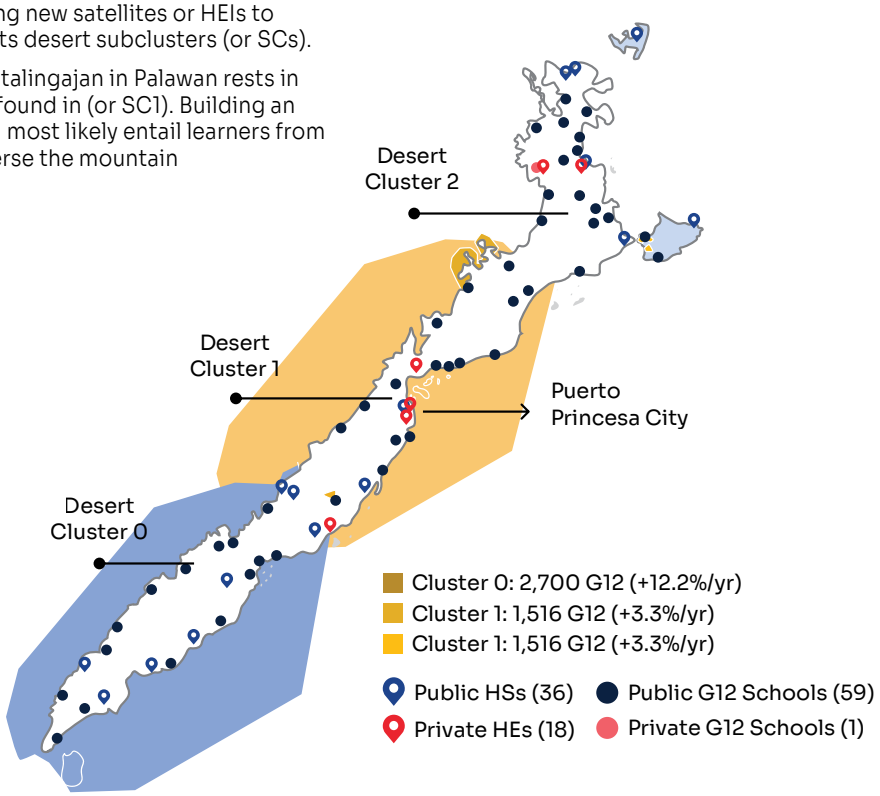
FIGURE 13.
Regional Distribution of Brgys. with G12 Enrollment that Have No Access to SUCs/LUCs



possible levers such as: distance learning, ladderized programs, equivalency programs, or increased student subsidy for on-campus housing such as dormitories.

FIGURE 14.
Palawan Has the Highest Count of Grade 12 Learners With No Access to HEIs

- Palawan's mountainous topology is a primary consideration for building new satellites or HEIs to address access gaps in its desert subclusters (or SCs).
- For example, Mount Mantalingajan in Palawan rests in between the barangays found in (or SC1). Building an HEI within this SC would most likely entail learners from other barangays to traverse the mountain



ISSUE 7: AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICIES MUST BE STRENGTHENED TO COVER BOTH ADMISSIONS AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES.

It is imperative to develop a framework for affirmative action, especially in the context of increased competition for admission in SUCs. Rule II, Section 7 of the IRR of Republic Act 10931 mandates that all SUCs and LUCs "shall formulate and implement affirmative action programs to enhance access of disadvantaged students". Absent clear guidelines from UNIFAST however, Punongbayan and Arapoc (forthcoming) find that 77% of SUCs report to having at least one formal AA policy, 13% report having AA policies in development, and 10% report having no AA policies in place. The same study found that student awareness of such policies remains relatively low, with only 55% reporting knowing of such policies. The figures are even lower in LUCs (40%) and private HEIs (45%). This is despite a relatively high number of SUCs (78%) and LUCs (74%) self-reporting taking proactive measures to reach disadvantaged students prior to admission. In contrast, 1/3 of private HEIs do not practice similar outreach efforts for college admissions.

Definitions of "affirmative action" also differ widely in relation to disadvantaged groups supported. 56% of SUCs surveyed reported implementing four (4) types of AA policies considering (a) socio-economic disadvantages, (b) ethnic or cultural minorities, (c) people with disabilities, or (d) gender-related barriers. In contrast, 27%, 11% and 5% of SUCs report implementing three, two and one type/s.

Socioeconomic disadvantage emerges as the most used basis for AA admissions regardless of institution type, with a large share of the respondents reporting that more than 10% of their student population were admitted through AA policies related to socioeconomic equity (71% of LUCs; 67% of PHEIs; 75% of SUCs). Meanwhile, fewer HEIs have AA policies for ethnic or cultural minorities, as well as learners with disabilities.

TABLE 5.
Percentage of Respondents Reporting on the Proportion of Students Admitted Using AA Policies by Inclusion Type and HEI Type

	Gender Equity			Socioeconomic Equity			Ethnic or CLC			Disability Inclusion		
	LUC	Priv	SUC	LUC	Priv	SUC	LUC	Priv	SUC	LUC	Priv	SUC
Over 10%	100	52	62	71	67	75	40	10	30	29	3	15
5-10%		10	15	29	14	15	20	7	14	0	10	12
1-5%		16	10		17	8		43	23	14	33	29
Less than 1%		23	12		3	3	40	40	32	57	53	44

Having affirmative action policies alone however do not guarantee enrollment of disadvantaged students. Punongbayan's (2021) analysis of UP's affirmative action policy—the Revised Excellence-Equity Admissions System (EEAS)—shows that while up to 30% of slots are reserved for disadvantaged and minority applicants, the impact on student diversity remains limited. Two key barriers explain this: (a) many underprivileged students do not apply due to lack of awareness, confidence, or resources, and (b) formula-based score adjustments provide only modest boosts that are insufficient to offset the high competitiveness of admissions. These findings underscore that affirmative action alone cannot broaden inclusion if too few students from target groups enter the applicant pool or are able to compete with peers from more advantaged backgrounds.

In a meta-analysis of studies on affirmative action, 63% report dominantly positive effects on educational opportunities and other prospects (Schotte, Gisselquist and Leone, 2023). This includes increased representation of disadvantaged groups, as well as improvements in employment and civic participation (Punongbayan and Arapoc, forthcoming). Bayudan-Dacuycuy, Cabuay and Luzon (2024) however note that despite the presence of said policies, disadvantaged students continue to experience high barriers to entry in SUCs. On the other hand, LUCs "demonstrate greater affirmative action," being more intentional and deliberate in the accommodation of disadvantaged students, implementing less academically stringent admission requirements, and putting greater focus on equity markers, such as household income.

Higher education dropout rates improved from 39% in 2022, to 29% in 2025. In 2022, CHED reported that the higher education attrition rate was 39% nationally, partly as a result of the challenges during the pandemic. Since then however, the Commission reports that the average attrition rate nationally has declined to 29% in 2025, effectively lowering dropout rates from 1 in 4, to just 1 in 5 students. For 2025, the highest attrition rate is observed in Davao Region (40%), while the lowest is seen in CALABARZON (18%).

Currently, the CHED computes attrition rate at the cohort level, computing for the percent decrease of the total enrollment of a cohort during its first year, compared to the total enrollment of the same cohort during its fourth year. For example, to calculate the attrition rate for the 2025 cohort (29%) shows the percentage decrease from the total first year enrollment in AY 2021-2022 (1,435,769) to AY 2024-2025 (1,019,955).

> *Many underprivileged students do not apply due to lack of awareness, confidence, or resources.*

This method of calculation is unable to capture nuances such as student shiftees, those who stop temporarily but eventually return to complete their degrees. The CHED notes that these figures should not be conflated with permanent drop out. However, given that CHED currently does not collect student-level data, dropout rates cannot be accurately determined (CHED. Comments to the Draft National 10-Year Education and Workforce Development Plan. October 27, 2025). The current lack of a systematic mechanism to determine key metrics such as dropout hinders CHED from fully understanding the precursors to non-completion, and hinders the design of effective and responsive interventions to address such challenges

We note however that moving forward, the method of calculation of attrition rate must be clarified and addressed. Computed as the proportion of fourth year enrollment to the first year enrollment of the same cohort. The CHED notes that in the absence of student-level data, which is currently not collected, dropout rates cannot be accurately determined (CHED. Comments to the Draft National 10-Year Education and Workforce Development Plan. October 27, 2025) .

TABLE 6.
Attrition Rate by Region for Four (4) Cohorts

Region	2022 Attrition Rate*	2023 Attrition Rate**	2024 Attrition Rate**	2025 Attrition Rate**
National	**39.3%**	**35.20%**	**29.40%**	**28.96%**
01 - Ilocos Region	48.5%	27.59%	20.26%	22.59%
02 - Cagayan Valley	36.3%	11.34%	8.02%	24.80%
03 - Central Luzon	41.0%	30.54%	22.15%	24.38%
04 - CALABARZON	44.2%	34.06%	24.00%	17.65%
05 - Bicol Region	39.4%	25.54%	31.69%	27.52%
06 - Western Visayas	50.2%	33.45%	24.67%	26.93%
07 - Central Visayas	60.7%	42.15%	37.61%	27.74%
08 - Eastern Visayas	47.6%	33.01%	36.89%	35.05%
09 - Zamboanga Peninsula	59.5%	33.04%	38.44%	38.59%
10 - Northern Mindanao	46.3%	34.73%	23.67%	37.30%
11 - Davao Region	46.3%	44.20%	26.64%	39.83%
12 - Soccsksargen	51.2%	46.26%	38.04%	30.32%
13 - Nat. Capital Region	52.4%	32.69%	30.63%	30.70%
14 - Cordillera Adm. Region	54.9%	47.56%	27.13%	32.05%
15 - BARMM	93.4%	95.56%	No Data	No Data
16 - Caraga	38.9%	36.95%	35.27%	36.83%
17 - MIMAROPA	37.9%	35.02%	30.87%	34.33%
18 - Negros Island Region	N/A	34.68%	15.85%	29.05%

*Source: *CPBRD (2024), **OPRKM, CHED (2025)*

Financial aid is the single strongest factor reducing the likelihood that college-age students will leave their studies. Bayudan-Dacuycuy (2025), using APIS data to estimate hazards of student exit, found that being a beneficiary of UAQTEA programs (FHE and TES) reduces the risk of leaving college by 70%. Being single also lowers this risk by 84%. Household characteristics matter as well: students from households where the head has at least some college education face a 33% lower risk, while those with widowed or separated household heads face higher hazards of 45% and 33%, respectively.

The combined effect of risk factors shows how transformative financial aid can be for student persistence. The same study found that students who possess all high-risk characteristics—household head with no college education, senior, separated, non-single, and not receiving aid—face extremely high exit rates: 37%, 47%, and 52% in their first, second, and third years. But when the same high-risk profile includes financial aid, the risk drops dramatically to 13%, 17%, and 20% across the same years. This contrast demonstrates how critical targeted support is in keeping vulnerable students enrolled.

TABLE 7.
Select Profiles from the Table on Cumulative Incidence of Not-Attending School

Time	HH non-college, senior, and separated			
	Non-Recipient and Non-Single	**Recipient** and Non-Single	Non-recipient and single	**Recipient** and single
2	0.37	0.13	0.07	0.02
3	0.47	0.17	0.10	0.03
4	0.52	0.20	0.11	0.03

Source: Bayudan-Dacuycuy (2025)

On the other hand, De Leon, et. al (2025) highlights that decisions regarding investments in education are continuous and iterative. Further, it was found that whether or not to continue schooling involves the consideration of factors beyond financial costs, such as academic progress, psychosocial resilience, and institutional support.

Policies are in place for various learner supports, pointing to an understanding of its importance; however, implementation requires strengthening. CMO No. 09, s. 2013, or the "Enhanced Policies and Guidelines on Student Affairs and Services" provides the following minimum standards for counseling services:

CMO No. 09, s. 2013, or the "Enhanced Policies and Guidelines on Student Affairs and Services" provides the following minimum standards for counseling services:

14.2 Counseling - individual and/or group intervention designed to facilitate positive change in student behavior, feelings, and attitudes.

14.2.1 Gender sensitive individual and group counseling shall be provided by a licensed counselor. The acceptable ratio of counselor to student population is at least 1:1,000.
14.2.2 A counseling room shall be provided to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of counseling sessions. The records and/or counseling notes are maintained and kept confidential.
14.2.3 Appropriate and pro-active intervention programs and strategies may be adopted by HEIs to ensure that every student's need for guidance and counseling and psycho-social services may be provided in a timely manner.

Republic Act 10931 strengthens the mandate for student support services by requiring the UniFAST Board—together with DOLE, DepEd, DOST, CHED, TESDA, and other stakeholders—to establish a nationwide guidance, counseling, and career development program. Under its IRR (Rule VI, Section 43), this program must ensure that students receive comprehensive guidance-related services. These services are funded through billed guidance fees and include student training and seminars, career guidance and counseling, general counseling, psychological testing, career assessment, career development, and employment placement services (IRR Sec. 3[y]).

Complementing this, Republic Act 11306 or the Mental Health Act of 2018 mandates all educational institutions to create policies and programs that address mental health needs and provide accessible support services. CHED is tasked to integrate age-appropriate mental health content into the curriculum, develop standards for evidence-based mental health programs, promote strategies that strengthen student well-being, and ensure that institutions have access to qualified mental health professionals.

Together, these laws outline a clear expectation: higher education institutions must provide holistic, coordinated academic, career, and mental health support to ensure students' well-being and success.

The implementation of both laws however remains uneven, and poorly monitored by CHED. Despite this, 80% of institutions reported having mental health support for their students. Other learner supports indicated were career counseling (90% of LUCS, around 80% of SUCs and Private HEIs), mentorship programs (55% of SUCs and LUCs, around 50% of Private HEIs), and tutoring (50% of LUCs, less than 50% for SUCs and Private HEIs) (Punongbayan & Arapoc, forthcoming).

LACK OF GUIDANCE COUNSELORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

CHED reported in a 19 August 2025 workshop that, using the ideal ratio of 1 guidance counselor (GC) per 1,000 students, the higher education sector would need around 5,170 GCs for the 5.17 million students enrolled in AY 2024–2025. Yet only 1,237 licensed GCs are recorded across public and private HEIs—less than a quarter of what is required.

This shortage mirrors basic education, where DepEd has 4,350 unfilled GC positions (as of June 2025) and plans to create 21,928 more by 2027. However, only 914 individuals passed the Guidance and Counseling licensure exam for the first time between 2022 and 2024 (PRC, April 2025), revealing an extremely limited national pipeline.

Compounding the problem, the Republic Act 12080 of 2024, or the School-Based Mental Health Law, upgraded salary grades for guidance counselors only in basic education, leaving HEIs and TVET institutions without similar adjustments. As a result, higher education and TVET providers continue to struggle in offering competitive compensation, making it even harder for them to recruit and retain qualified guidance counselors.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Review and rationalize mandates and offerings of SUCs, LUCs, and Private HEIs.** This includes developing a diverse set of recognition requirements, as well as pathways to excellence, contrary to the current practice of promulgating one-size-fits all policies.

2. **Ensure adequate budget allocation for the continued implementation of the UAQTEA** through the continued strong coordination and consistency in data sharing between key agencies, such as the DSWD and the DepEd, especially for programs like the 4Ps.

3. **Continue to prioritize the poorest of the poor in the implementation of the UAQTEA.** The EDCOM II has proposed key amendments to Republic Act 10931 to emphasize the targeting of low-income households in the award of the TES. In particular, the EDCOM II recommends the guarantee of the TES subsidy to children of 4Ps families as early as senior high school, contingent on the completion of the same, and admission to a CHED-recognized higher education program, in order to encourage students from low-income families to pursue higher education, without the apprehension or risk of non-acceptance to aid programs later on.

4. **Ensure adequacy of financial support.** Consistent with previous reports, it is recommended that the TES subsidy amounts be restored to its original amounts, and if possible, further adjusted in line with inflation. This shall ensure that financial burdens as a reason for dropouts are minimized, as well as provide each TES grantee the opportunity to choose from a wider variety of program offerings.

5. **Fully implement the deliverables and mandates of UNIFAST without further delay.** As highlighted in this section, scholarships, financial subsidies and other similar interventions are main vehicles for access, especially for the poor. Thus, the accomplishment of the deliverables of the UniFAST Act will ensure the fulfillment of the vision of a system of government financial aid for tertiary education, which is harmonized, efficient, equitable, coherent, and above all, effective.

6. **CHED and DBM must formulate and urgently finalize guidelines on the optimal carrying capacity of SUCs and LUCs, including the computation of the composite fee, consistent with Republic Act 10931.** In 2018, the CHED was tasked with the responsibility of studying and formulating standards on absorptive and carrying capacity of SUCs and LUCs. This coincided with a moratorium on the increase in

tuition fees of all SUCs and LUCs. This remains pending seven years hence, impacting the operations of SUCs and the quality of education received by students. It is thus imperative that CHED and DBM jointly complete these long overdue guidelines in a way that ensures quality education in our SUCs.

7. **The UniFAST must fulfill its mandate to formulate and establish policies and mechanisms for Grants-in-Aid for poor families and marginalized sectors.** A common understanding of the categories of disadvantaged students will aid in nuancing the needs of specific groups, which must, in turn, contribute to the design of truly inclusive policies for affirmative action and provision of student aid and other learner supports. Further, standardized tools for the monitoring and evaluation of the progress of recipients of financial aid (e.g. TES, StuFAPs), and disadvantaged students benefitting from policies such as AA policies should be created and utilized.

8. **Develop programs to address dropouts in college, and forge exits to work or pathways to TVET.** CHED must undertake a systematic study of barriers to retention in higher education and address impediments to completion. . This may include the development of alternative arrangements such as night schools or distance education, or the employment of strategies to reach and engage geographically disadvantaged students (e.g. remote testing centers, dormitories). This must take a systemic approach with DepEd and TESDA, keeping in mind that exits such as employment after SHS, technical-vocational training or entrepreneurship are equally valid pathways.

9. **Student support service programs must be revisited and enhanced.** CHED minimum standards for student services (i.e. CMO No. 09, s. 2013) must be updated to comply with the Mental Health Act of 2018. Monitoring of the adherence of HEIs to minimum standards for learner support programs, such as counseling services should be undertaken, and appropriate corrective measures, or intervention programs should be implemented

PRIORITY AREA 12: QUALITY ASSURANCE

FINDINGS

ISSUE 1: DELAYS IN THE RECONSTITUTION OF TECHNICAL PANELS, AND REVISION OF PSGS MUST BE REEXAMINED.

Quality assurance begins with the design and implementation of minimum standards as published through the Policies, Standards and Guidelines (PSGs) issued by the CHED. Consistent with Republic Act 7722, the CHED, through the Technical Panels, sets the minimum standards for the different degree programs offered by HEIs through the issuance of Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSGs), which encompass program outcomes, resource requirements (e.g. administration, faculty, facilities), and standards for internal quality assurance measures.

89 out of 91 Technical Panels finally reconstituted, after 7 years of delay.
As highlighted in the two previous EDCOM reports, the reconstitution of the technical panels has been underway since 2018, with many being on “hold-over” status despite their critical mandate. Following manifestations of EDCOM however, CHED has since fast-tracked the creation of the remaining Technical Panels, particularly under the leadership of its new Chairperson, Dr. Shirley Agrupis.

As of October 2025, the CHED reports that 89 out of 91 existing technical panels have been reconstituted. The creation of nine (9) additional technical panels have been approved, of which, two (2) have been organized. To date, only two panels remain pending, specifically, Legal Management and Ceramic Engineering. In addition, CHED has likewise committed to establish new Technical Panels in line with EDCOM identified priority sectors, and in alignment with the TESDA Industry Boards. The urgent completion of the reconstitution of the TPs, and the speedy organization of the new technical panels in line with the changing needs of higher education, is essential in ensuring that HEIs are delivering programs which are responsive and relevant to the needs of its stakeholders, and in service of national development goals. Recent gains not just in higher education, such as in the referencing of qualifications, lifelong learning, credit transfer systems, must be taken into account in order to ensure a functional and effective system of education.

TABLE 8.
Remaining Technical Panels for Approval / Reconstitution

Remaining Technical Panel for Approval/Reconstitution		
Discipline		**Technical Panel**
Engineering	1	Industrial Technology
	2	Ceramic Engineering
Business and Management	3	Legal Management
ETEEAP	4	Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Programn (ETEEAP)
Newly-Created Technical	5	Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics
	6	Advanced and Renewable Energy and Green Building Technologies
	7	Nuclear Engineering
	8	Lifelong Learning
	9	Forensic Medicine

Source: CHED (as of October 1, 2025).

PSGs are revised, on average, every 11 years, and mostly in response to reforms in basic education. In an analysis of the PSGs of the most subscribed programs[2], RTI International (unpublished) found that existing PSGs were heavily influenced by— or primarily were in response to— reforms in the basic education curriculum, such as the Republic Act 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (K to 12); Republic Act 10968 or the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) Act of 2018; the adoption of outcomes-based education through CMO No. 46, s. 2012; and the reduction of General Education (GE) subjects through CMO No. 20, s. 2013, anchored on the revised College Readiness Standards, also a result of the implementation of the K to 12.

Despite these policies being the general catalysts of the revisions, its integration– and the quality of PSGs— varied significantly across disciplines. For example, the PSG for Hotel and Restaurant Management (HRM) recognizes the differentiated tracks SHS, thus providing varied units and subjects depending on track completed (e.g. Accountancy, Business, and Management. Others however were generally silent on these matters, despite the introduction of the SHS in 2016-2017. Further, Lagroza, and Fernandez (2025)

2 Top 10 programs in the country in terms of student enrollment, i.e. Business Administration, Criminology, Secondary Education, Hotel and Restaurant Management, Information Technology, Elementary Education, Nursing, Civil Engineering, Accountancy, Industrial Technology

> *Following the K to 12 reforms in 2016–2017, the reduction of GE units from 63 to 36 did not lead to shorter degree programs. Instead, the freed-up space was filled up with additional professional courses*

also found considerable heterogeneity in the adoption of outcomes-based principles across PSGs. Finally,despite efforts to harmonize PRC and CHED policies through the inclusion of Professional Regulatory Board Members in the Technical Panels, actual alignment depended mainly on the level of involvement of individual PRB members in discussions (30 April 2025, Workshop on Legislated Subjects and Activities).

Following the K to 12 reforms in 2016–2017, the reduction of GE units from 63 to 36 did not lead to shorter degree programs. Instead, the freed-up space was filled up with additional professional courses, reinforcing the long-standing pattern of Philippine degree programs being heavier than global norms (Largoza & Fernandez, 2025). The study further notes that, compared with international benchmarks, Philippine programs typically require more total units, even if policy-wise, the country shifted towards outcomes-based education.

Meanwhile, in contrast to the high coursework load, internship requirements less than global benchmarks. Across the board, internship components are often limited to just around 6 units, with no standard equivalency between units and actual hours of immersion prescribed by CHED. In actual practice, 6 units of internship may vary from 200 hours to 600 hours. In comparison, while internships were noted to be not universally required, international benchmarks are varied but are generally greater than the current local requirements, with the highest being 20 units in EUR for a Nursing degree. This imbalance—more classroom time, less guided workplace experience—highlights the need to rebalance degree structures toward deeper and more meaningful professional practice.

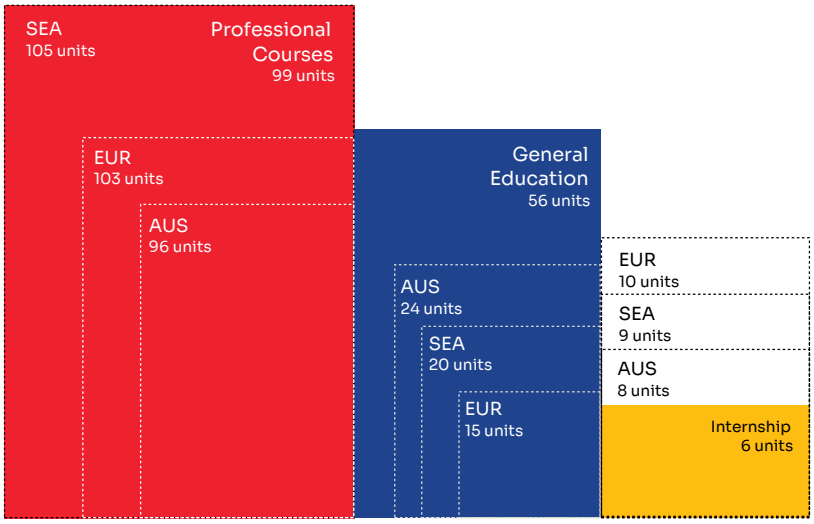
TABLE 9.
Net Changes in Number of Units per PSG Revision of Select Degree Programs

Degree Program	Number of Units for Major Subjects		Change (Majors Only)	Total Net Change[1]	Year of Updated PSG
	Previous PSG	Updated PSG			
Business Administration	87	72	-15	-42	2017
Criminology	104	124	+10	-17	2018
Secondary Education	111	111	No Change	-27	2017
Hotel and Restaurant Management	85	102	+17	-10	2017
Information Technology	72	78	+6	-21	2015
Elementary Education	111	102	-9	-36	2017
Nursing	115	125	+10	-17	2017
Civil Engineering	82	121	+39	+12	2017
Accountancy	145	123	-22	-49	2017

1/ Taking into account the decrease of 27 units due to the reductions in GE

General education subjects and other legislated courses take up more than a year to complete. Currently, all college students are required to take (a) 36 units of General Education (CMO No. 20, s. 2013), inclusive of 3 units on the Life and Works of Jose Rizal, (b) Physical Education (8 units), and (c) National Service Training Program (NSTP, 6 units). Of these requirements, the course on Rizal, PE, and NSTP are regarded as "required by legislation". However, a closer review of the three laws show that these measures (see Table below) did not in fact mandate the number of units required, only the implementing guidelines issued by CHED. Without discounting the intent and importance of these laws, a sharper focus on the learning outcomes thus far observed (albeit not systematically monitored and measured currently) instead of just the number of units prescribed, may inform possible refinements to current policies.

TABLE 16.
Bachelor of Secondary Education Unit Distribution Compared to AUS, EU, and ASEAN Benchmarks



Note: Red indicates the proportion of units devoted to professional or specialist courses, Blue for general education (GE) courses plus free electives, and yellow to internship.

Source: Larzoga and Fernandez, 2025

TABLE 10.
Select Legislated Subjects as Implemented

Law	Requirement of the Law for Tertiary / Higher Education	Provided in Implementing Policies	Policy
Rizal Law (1956)	▪ Course on the life and works of Jose Rizal	3 unit standalone course	CMO 4, s. 1996 / CMO 20, s. 2013
PE (1969)	▪ Program of competitive athletics in all schools; ▪ Program of intramural and inter-unit athletic competition within schools, districts and provinces and ▪ Annual program of athletic cowmpetition within and among regions and in interscholastic or national meets	Four (4) courses, two (2) units each	CMO 39, s. 2021
NSTP (2002)	▪ Academic period of two (2) semesters or one (1) summer program	Two (2) semesters, three (3) units each or one (1) summer program	IRR

ISSUE 2: THE LACK OF A COORDINATED MECHANISM CONTINUES TO LIMIT ALIGNMENT BETWEEN CHED, TESDA, AND PRC.

Through the CHED-TESDA-PRC JMC No. 1, s. 2025, the CHED and TESDA adopted mechanisms for the "coordinated review, alignment and continuous improvement of program standards, policies, and training regulations to ensure alignment with current and future workforce demands," through the establishment of the Board for Curriculum Standards and the Discipline and Sector Skills Councils (DSSCs).

Through this effort, and in line with the work of the established Education and Workforce Development Group (EWDG) through Administrative Order No. 36, s. 2025, it is envisioned that Filipino students will benefit from programs which are harmonized, and will enable them to ladderize, upskill or reskill. This is consistent with Republic Act 10647, or the Ladderized Education Act of 2014, which mandates the educational agencies to establish "equivalency pathways and access ramps allowing for easier transitions and progressions between TVET and higher education" through harmonized guidelines and equivalency competency courses. (Section 4).

Overlaps and disconnects between the CHED, TESDA and PRC charters, and across 45 Professional Board Laws, complicate the governance of tertiary education programs. Consistent with Republic Act 7722, CHED sets minimum academic standards and grants Certificates of Program Compliance (COPCs) for degree programs. Meanwhile, PRC and its Professional Regulatory Boards design licensure exam syllabi and monitor school performance based on the PRC Charter, and their respective board laws. Further, under Republic Act 7796, TESDA and its industry boards likewise prescribe occupational competency standards and accredit technical–vocational institutions.

Although CHED, PRC, and TESDA were created to oversee different stages of the education-to-employment pathway, their enabling laws grant parallel—and at times redundant—regulatory powers. As a result, universities and training institutions may undergo three separate audits for the same curriculum, laboratory, or faculty roster, and receive conflicting directives on program length, internship requirements, or course content. These statutory gaps translate into real operational disruptions: inconsistent enforcement, contradictory guidance, and uncertainty for students whose academic or training progression, as well as licensure eligibility, depend on clear and coordinated regulation.

The problem is rooted in the design of the laws themselves. The CHED and PRC charters (Republic Act 7722 and Republic Act 8981 respectively) assign both CHED and the PRBs responsibilities for curriculum setting, program quality assurance, and institutional standards. At the same time, the TESDA Act (Republic Act 7796) authorizes Industry Boards to set occupational competency standards and accredit TVET providers. The overlaps are most visible where technical–vocational qualifications feed into licensed professions: TESDA may revise National Certificate competencies while a PRB simultaneously revises licensure exam syllabi for related fields such as welding, plumbing, or caregiving. No provision in either statute requires coordination or deference, leaving institutions to navigate multiple standards for the same skill set.

Overlaps and disconnects between the CHED, TESDA and PRC charters, and across 45 Professional Board Laws, complicate the governance of tertiary education programs.

> *These statutory gaps translate into real operational disruptions: inconsistent enforcement, contradictory guidance, and uncertainty for students whose academic or training progression, as well as licensure eligibility, depend on clear and coordinated regulation.*

As a result, colleges and training centers operate in a regulatory environment where three agencies issue overlapping rules on curriculum, assessment, and staffing. PRBs retain authority to audit schools, evaluate curricula, and vet faculty—functions also held by CHED or PRC. This generates regulatory uncertainty, duplicative compliance burdens, and inefficiencies across the higher education and TVET systems.

The earliest laws—such as the Civil Engineering Law of 1950 and the Medical Act of 1959—were enacted decades before CHED existed. In the absence of a national higher education regulator, Congress embedded curriculum design, school inspections, faculty ratios, internship duration, and even hospital-bed requirements directly into these statutes, giving professional boards control over both the classroom and the license.

There are 45 professional laws governing 46 boards/college programs:

- **11** of these laws were passed before CHED
- **34** were passed after the creation of CHED in 1994

Despite this, and contrary to the mandate of CHED to prescribe minimum standards for higher education programs:

- **9** prescribe detailed provisions on program length, structure or facilities hindering CHED from making changes or updates
- **36** are restrictive, detailing what actual topics the licensure exams should cover, while CHED separately governs the units, practicum hours, labs, and faculty ratios without any clause that decides which of the two prevails if there is a divergence in standards
- **6** have set minimum clinical or field practice hours, which CHED may extend but cannot reduce without congressional action

With CHED's creation in 1994 however, newer laws such as the Teachers Professionalization Act and the New Electrical Engineering Law began adding the phrase "in coordination with CHED." Yet these statutes still empowered boards to police curricula and conduct compliance audits, creating a parallel system: CHED issued PSGs while PRBs maintained their own oversight processes. Critically, none of these laws established whose rule prevails when standards diverge.

TABLE 11
Sample Prescriptive Provisions found in Professionalization Laws

Law	Provision
Republic Act 7392 Midwifery (1992)	To be recognized as a duly accredited and legally constituted institution for midwifery training, a school must: ▪ **Have a permit from the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS);** ▪ **Possess at least fifty (50) maternity beds and be affiliated with an accredited hospital;** ▪ **Maintain a minimum ratio of one (1) clinical instructor to twelve (12) students in the hospital and community**
Republic Act 8050 Optometry (1995)	Section 19(c) states that to be eligible to take the licensure examination in optometry, an applicant must be a "holder of a degree of Doctor of Optometry (O.D.) obtained from a school, college, university or institution duly accredited by the government after passing at least a **six-year course** offering the following minimum basic subjects...."
Republic Act 9173 Nursing (2002)	Section 27 outlines the qualifications for nursing faculty, requiring them to be licensed nurses in the Philippines **with at least one year of clinical experience, membership in the accredited professional nursing organization, and a master's degree in nursing, education, or a related health field from a recognized institution.** Additionally, the dean of a college must possess a master's degree in nursing and have at least five years of nursing experience.
Republic Act 9258 Guidance and Counseling (2004)	Section 13. Qualification for Examination. - In order to qualify for the examination, an applicant must, at the time of filing the application be: (c) holder of a Bachelor's Degree in Guidance and Counseling or in other Allied Disciplines and **a master's degree in Guidance and Counseling from an institution in the Philippines or abroad recognized or accredited by the CHED.**
Republic Act 9484 Dentistry (2007)	Dental Hygienists: An applicant for the licensure examination for dental hygienists must have "finished the **two years certificate** in dental hygiene conferred by a recognized and legally constituted college, or school of dentistry registered with the TESDA" Dental Technologists: An applicant for the licensure examination for dental technology must have "finished the **two years certificate** in dental technology conferred by a recognized and legally constituted college, or school of dentistry registered with the TESDA". Additionally, for admission to the licensure examination, dental technologists must have **"undergone on-the-job training in a registered/accredited dental laboratory for at least six months."**

In the 2000s, Congress attempted a hybrid approach. The Nursing Act of 2002 and the Accountancy Act of 2004 created education councils under the PRBs to draft minimum curricula and faculty criteria, but required CHED to formally adopt them. This introduced a new tension: PRBs insisted on active professional licenses for instructors, while CHED continued to require graduate degrees, producing faculty who may meet one regulator's criteria but fail the other's.

Even the newest PRB charter laws show that overlapping authority between CHED and the boards remains unresolved. Recent statutes—such as the Chemistry Act of 2015, Pharmacy Act of 2016, and Speech-Language Pathology Act of 2019—affirm CHED's role by requiring graduates to come from CHED-recognized programs before taking licensure exams. At the same time, these laws continue to vest PRBs with authority over exam syllabi, practicum requirements, and laboratory inspections. Over the decades, this has resulted not in clearer division of responsibilities but in persistent areas of overlap, where CHED oversees the general curriculum framework while PRBs retain influence over clinical exposure and assessment.

> *Out of 489 programs for monitoring, 63 (13%) were actually monitored. Out of the 63 programs monitored, 53 (84%) were noted to have deficiencies; 10 (16%) were noted to be compliant.*

Philippine Professional Standards and Quality Assurance System

The bill has been filed by Senators Loren Legarda and Bam Aquino, EDCOM II Co-Chairpersons, with Senate Bill No. 1426, and House Bill No. 4959 by EDCOM II Co-Chairperson Representative Jude A. Acidre.

The bill seeks to address and mitigate the overlapping functions of the PRC, CHED and TESDA by creating a Board of Curriculum Standards and Skills, as well as the Standards Harmonization Councils. They will aim to ensure the seamless integration of tertiary education, technical-vocational education and professional regulation. That way, there shall be a systematic and coordinated way in regulating and accreditation of professional regulation and education, as well as any concerns on administrative oversight and policy reconciliation.

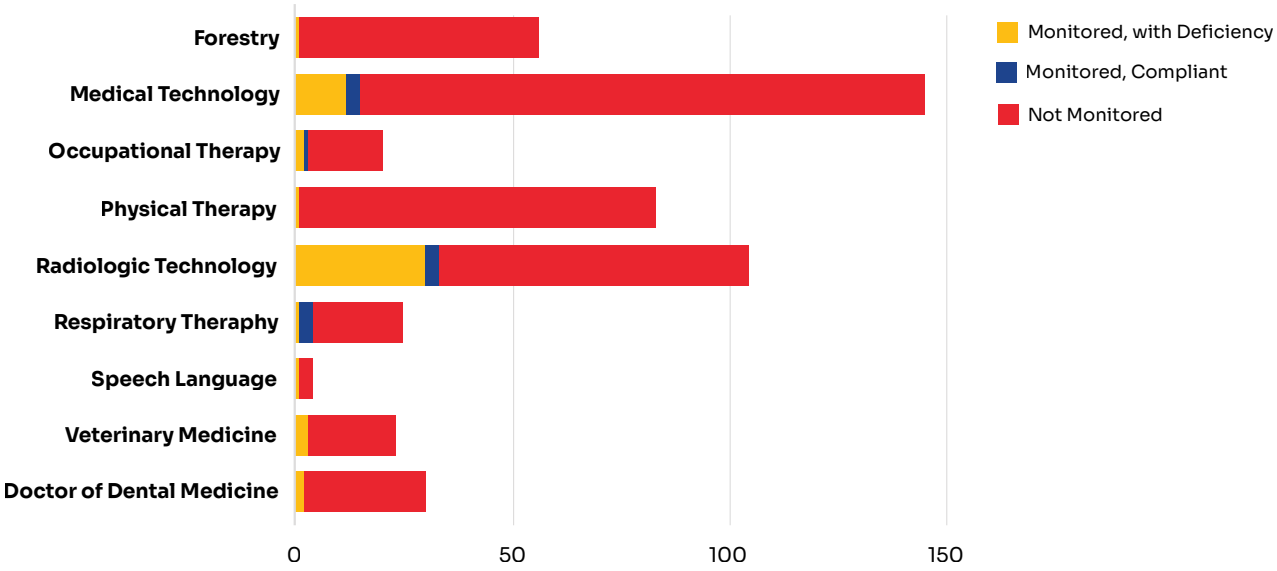
Further, the bill clearly defines and delineates the process and functions as to how CHED, TESDA and PRC manage each of their potentially overlapping jurisdiction. Thus, the bill reconciles and ensures that each department's assessment, recognition and development systems are harmonized and effective.

This bill seeks to ensure that any previous and potential confusion and gaps in applying professional regulation and tertiary education is addressed and remedied.

ISSUE 3: THE RATIO OF NUMBER OF PLANTILLA POSITIONS IN THE CHED REGIONAL OFFICES AGAINST THE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS MONITORED VARIES GREATLY ACROSS REGIONS

While CHED is vested with the authority to regulate and monitor compliance of HEIs to minimum standards, implementation remains weak. Based on submitted data from the CHED, of the select programs which are monitored at the CHED Central Office level, undertaken jointly with PRC from 2022-2025, data shows that out of 489 programs for monitoring, 63 (13%) were actually monitored. Out of the 63 programs monitored, 53 (84%) were noted to have deficiencies; 10 (16%) were noted to be compliant. The data points to the lack of regular monitoring of approved programs, despite indications that majority of programs have deficiencies when evaluated against the minimum standards.

FIGURE 17.
Number of Joint CHED-PRC Monitoring Conducted (CHEDCO) 2022 - 2025



As of AY 2023-2024, CHED data shows a total of 37,443 programs offered nationwide, inclusive of baccalaureate and graduate degree programs. In comparison, there are only 398 total plantilla positions provided for the CHED Regional Offices, inclusive of administrative staff and the CHED Regional Director. In NCR and Region IV, the ratio of programs to plantilla positions is at 223:1 and 191:1 respectively. In comparison, the lowest ratios can be found in MIMAROPA (43:1), Caraga (46:1), and CAR (47:1).

FIGURE 18.
Comparison of Number of Plantilla Personnel vs. Total Programs per Region

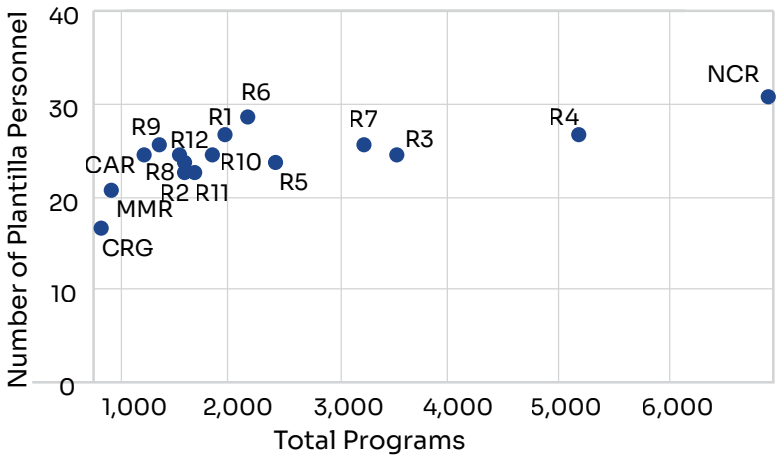


TABLE 12.
Comparison of Number of Plantilla Personnel vs. Total Programs per Region

Region	Baccalaureate	Masters	Doctorate	Total Programs	# of Plantilla Personnel	RATIO
01	1,529	306	62	1,897	27	70 : 1
02	1,141	331	90	1,562	23	68 : 1
03	2,896	481	102	3,479	25	139 : 1
04	4,349	626	180	5,155	27	191 : 1
05	1,978	345	62	2,385	24	99 : 1
06	1,652	391	92	2,135	29	74 : 1
07	2,268	796	144	3,208	26	123 : 1
08	1,167	317	38	1,522	25	61 : 1
09	1,073	228	25	1,326	26	51 : 1
10	1,304	397	98	1,799	25	72 : 1
11	1,263	329	58	1,650	23	72 : 1
12	1,350	168	36	1,554	24	65 : 1
13	4,564	1,821	514	6,899	31	223 : 1
14	871	245	63	1,179	25	47 : 1
16	652	113	25	790	17	46 : 1
17	776	106	21	903	21	43 : 1

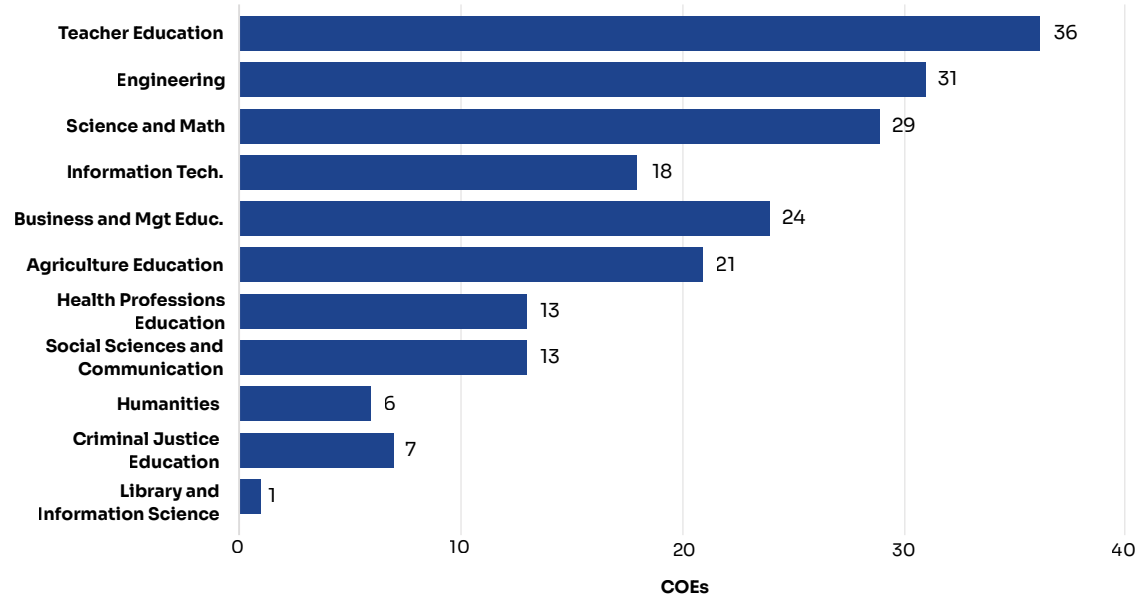
The CHED Regional Offices (CHEDROs) are chiefly responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the performance of HEIs in the region vis-a-vis the minimum standards set for various higher education programs. However, the CHED notes that its manpower complement is unable to keep up with this mandate, often leading the agency to augment its plantilla personnel with those engaged under Contract of Service (CHED Charter Hearing, 03 July 2025).

ISSUE 4: THE DESIGNATION OF CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE, ONE OF THE MANDATES OF CHED, HAS BEEN STAGNANT SINCE 2016.

Centers of Excellence remain few, and concentrated mainly in NCR, and fields such as Teacher Education and Engineering. Under Republic Act No. 7722, CHED is also mandated to identify, support and develop potential centers of excellence which are tasked to undertake the "development of world-class scholarship, nation building and national development". The designation is a result of the demonstration of a "high degree of quality in instruction, research and creative work, and extension and linkage resulting in excellent student outcomes" (CMO No. 10, s. 2025).

Most COEs are concentrated in three disciplines: Teacher Education (36), Engineering (31), and Science and Mathematics (29). Further, the regional distribution of COEs remain highly centralized, with 50% (100 out of 199) found in NCR, while some regions only have one COE program, as in the case of Region 12 and Caraga. This large discrepancy between NCR and other regions,highlights the need for CHED to proactively support programs aimed at developing potential COEs in priority disciplines and geographies. As noted by CHED, COEs "take the lead in uplifting higher education by offering quality undergraduate and graduate degree programs (...)" and "lead efforts towards meeting the requirements of regional and global qualification networks". Moreover, COEs are intended to serve as models to other HEIs, and are key to the creation of "communities of HEIs who will continuously enhance and elevate the reputation of Philippine higher education (...)" (CMO No. 10, s. 2025).

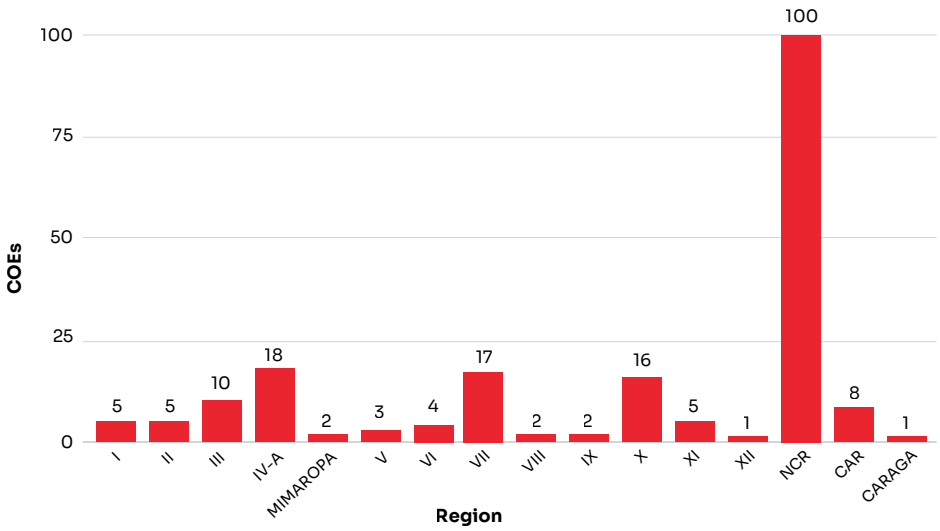
FIGURE 19.
Number of Programs Designated COEs by Discipline Cluster



Source: CHED, 2022

> *"This large discrepancy between NCR and other regions, highlights the need for CHED to proactively support programs aimed at developing potential COEs in priority disciplines and geographies."*

FIGURE 20.
Number of COEs per Region



Source: CHED-OPSD, submitted June 2025

CHED has not designated new Centers of Excellence for the past 10 years. Despite their crucial role in the sector, CHED has not designated new COEs since 2016, despite the five (5) year validity of such designations provided in CMO No. 55, s. 2006. Through CMO No. 03. S. 2019, the validity was extended indefinitely, until new guidelines are formulated— which took six years to release, in June 2025. According to CHED, new Centers of Excellence will be designated by 2026— a full decade after the last COEs were named. In June 2025, the new guidelines were released. As of January 2026, the CHED has yet to complete the process of designating new COEs. The CHED has provided that they hope to complete the process of selection by 2026 (11 September 2025, House of Representatives CHED Budget Briefing).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **CHED must conduct programmed review and updating of PSGs while providing ample space for higher education institutions to innovate.** Higher education curricula must not only be reactive to changes in the basic education curriculum, but must also be responsive to the evolving needs of learners and the workforce. To achieve this, Technical Panels should be duly oriented and aligned with national priorities, must work hand-in-hand with TESDA Industry Boards and Professional Regulatory Boards, and must genuinely engage industry.. Further, CHED-OPSD should provide strong support guidance to the Panels, conduct rigorous quality assurance and benchmarking, and must provide sufficient flexibility, cognizant of the differing types of HEIs.

   CHED must urgently complete the establishment/reconstitution of the remaining Technical Panels, especially for ETEEAP and Lifelong Learning following the passage of the laws.

2. **It is imperative to level up the organizational capacity of CHED, to complement and truly support the work of the Technical Panels.** The building of in-house expertise in the broad array of fields covered (including training in best practices in curriculum design, microcredentials, work-based learning, and higher education pedagogies, among others), and the benchmarking of curricula and innovations in other tertiary education systems, is needed to fully ensure relevance and quality of higher education.

3. **Resolve statutory overlaps.** Under Joint Memorandum Circular No. 01, s. 2025, CHED, PRC, and TESDA agreed to a clear functional hierarchy. CHED holds final authority over curriculum design, instructional sequencing, and faculty academic qualifications, while PRC retains jurisdiction over licensure examination standards but shall refrain from unilaterally prohibiting or suspending academic programs without CHED's concurrence. TESDA retains authority over Training Regulations and competency standards aligned with the Philippine Qualifications Framework to support ladderized education.

   To operationalize this framework, the agencies agreed to establish a Tripartite Council on Education Rationalization within 30 days as the central clearing house for reviewing and approving all future standards and regulatory policies prior to issuance. The agreement further provides for the adoption of a Single Quality Assurance Matrix to consolidate audit benchmarks, the imposition of a moratorium on unilateral policy changes during the transition period, and the integration of data systems to enable the recognition of micro-credentials and the stacking of competencies.

   In support of these reforms, SBN 1426, filed by Senator Loren Legarda, and its House counterpart, HBN 4959, filed by Representative Jude Acidre et al., both entitled "Philippine Professional Standards and Quality Assurance System Act of 2025," were filed in the 20th Congress.

ISSUE 5: THE UPTAKE OF EXTERNAL ACCREDITATION REMAINS LIMITED DUE TO WEAK INCENTIVE STRUCTURES.

Republic Act No. 7722, or the Higher Education Act of 1994, provides that the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) "*shall provide incentives to institutions of higher learning, public and private, whose programs are accredited or whose needs are for accreditation purposes*." To operationalize this mandate, CHED authorizes federations or networks of accrediting agencies whose accredited status is recognized by CHED for the purpose of granting benefits to institutions and programs (CMO No. 01, s. 2005).

The deliberations leading to the creation of CHED explicitly envisioned voluntary accreditation as a mechanism for quality assurance beyond minimum standards, consistent with the constitutional principle of academic freedom (Committee on Education and Culture, December 15, 1992). CHED was expected to promulgate minimum standards, while voluntary accreditation would serve as a means of assessing both the inputs and outputs of higher education institutions (HEIs), thereby encouraging quality improvement beyond the regulatory floor (Committee on Education and Culture, October 19, 1993). In line with CHED's intended developmental role, the provision of incentives for accreditation was seen as central to promoting continuous institutional improvement.

Despite its mandate to provide incentives for voluntary accreditation, CHED data shows that it has only approved 39 applications for financial assistance for accreditation from 2015 to 2025, with the last award in 2020. Meanwhile, no supports were provided for the past five years.

As a result, the uptake of accreditation remains low. Only 353 out of 1,600 private HEIs (22%) currently have accredited programs, representing a modest increase from 16% in 1990 (99 out of 637 private HEIs). As cited in the EDCOM II Year 1 Report, the proportion of HEIs with accredited programs stood at 29% in 2018 (701 out of 2,393 HEIs, including SUC campuses) (CHED, 2019). The persistently low uptake of accreditation may be attributed in part to its voluntary nature, particularly in the absence of meaningful incentives or regulatory weight beyond compliance with minimum standards (Conchada and Tiongco, 2015).

The quality assurance mandate was initially confined to the following peer-based accreditation bodies for public and private HEIs.

TABLE 13.
External Quality Assurance Agencies

Umbrella Organization	Member Organizations
Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines (FAAP)	▪ Association of Christian Schools, Colleges and Universities Accrediting Agency, Inc (ACSCU-AAI) ▪ Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, College and Universities (PAASCU) ▪ Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACU-COA)
National Network of Quality Accrediting Agencies (NNQAA)	▪ Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and University of the Philippines (AACCUP) ▪ Association of Local Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (ALCUCOA)

Over the years, however, CHED has increasingly recognized international program- and institutional-accreditation and quality-assessment agencies as part of its voluntary quality-assurance ecosystem. For engineering programs, for instance, CHED acknowledges the international program-accreditation bodies recognized under the Washington Accord—including the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), the Philippine Technological Council-Accreditation Commission for Engineering and Technology (PTC-ACBET), the Accreditation Council for Programs in Engineering in Asia (ACPFA), and the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE). Likewise, for Hotel and Restaurant Management, CHED recognizes accreditation from the Accreditation Commission for Programs in Hospitality and Tourism Management (ACF), and for Information and Communications Technology, from both ABET and the Philippine Information and Communications Technology Accreditation Board (PICAB), among international accreditation bodies for other disciplines. CHED has also recognized programmatic and institutional quality assessment by the ASEAN University Network – Quality Assurance (AUN-QA).

In addition to accreditation, the usual quality indicators like number of Centers of Excellence and Development, CHED now includes international university rankings—such as the QS Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings, Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings, and the World University Rankings for Innovation (WURI)—among the quality indicators it monitors, as reflected on its Philippine International Rankings and Ratings Performance platform.

Until the early 2020s, accreditation and external quality assessment ratios played a central role in the grant of Autonomous and Deregulated status. Under CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 46, Series of 2012, the evaluation framework was anchored on only two broad criteria: commitment to program excellence and institutional sustainability. Although CMO 46 did not prescribe explicit numerical weights, program excellence clearly carried the greater influence in practice. This was largely determined by accreditation ratios, with institutions having a high proportion of accredited programs—particularly at advanced levels—more likely to qualify for autonomous or deregulated status. Accreditation was treated in an integrated manner, regardless of whether it was granted by local or, in a limited number of cases then emerging, international external quality assurance agencies. At the time, international program accreditation was still relatively new in the Philippine higher education landscape and functioned mainly as supplementary evidence of quality. Centers of Excellence (COE) and Centers of Development (COD) were recognized as indicators of strong program performance and institutional maturity, but were not treated as separate, independently scored components.

> *Only 353 out of 1,600 private HEIs (22%) currently have accredited programs, representing a modest increase from 16% in 1990 (99 out of 637 private HEIs).*

This approach contrasts with the current framework under CMO No. 06, Series of 2023, which adopts a points-based system comprising three explicit criteria: Commitment to Program Excellence (30%), Excellence in Instruction, Scholarly Works, and Community Engagement (40%), and Institutional Quality and Excellence (30%). Under this system, program excellence now accounts for only 30% of the total score. Within it, local accreditation, international accreditation or certification, and COE/COD designations are scored separately, each with its own ceiling. The shift from a largely accreditation-driven assessment to a broader performance-based scoring system has reduced the relative weight of accreditation—particularly local accreditation—in determining institutional status. As a result, accreditation no longer serves as the primary driver of autonomous and deregulated status, but as one of several indicators considered alongside institutional performance and external recognition.

In this context, the limited institutional support for accreditation—both in terms of financial incentives and its reduced weight in the current evaluation framework for Autonomous and Deregulated status—emerged as a key concern raised by local peer-based accreditation bodies during their Roundtable Discussion with EDCOM II on 12 October 2023. Participants noted that, despite the continued policy recognition of accreditation, the absence of consistent incentives and its diminished role in status determination have weakened its developmental function. Beyond this issue, the accreditation bodies also requested EDCOM II's support in facilitating harmonization workshops, aimed at strengthening alignment across accreditation frameworks, reducing duplication, and reinforcing the collective credibility and effectiveness of peer-based quality assurance in Philippine higher education

In 2024, EDCOM II supported a series of five Harmonization Workshops with school-based accreditation bodies, now collectively referred to as External Quality Assurance Agencies (EQAAs), as part of its efforts to strengthen voluntary quality assurance in higher education. Convened under the Sub-Committee on Higher Education, the workshops provided a sustained platform for dialogue among EQAAs on shared concerns and emerging challenges in accreditation practice. Participants reached common ground on a shared understanding of quality as purposeful, exceptional, transformative, and accountable, and reaffirmed accreditation as a voluntary, collegial, peer-based process grounded in academic self-governance that goes beyond minimum regulatory compliance. The workshops also clarified the distinct but complementary roles of CHED as the national authority for qualifications recognition and of EQAAs as peer-based bodies that recognize quality beyond minimum standards, while situating Philippine accreditation within regional and global quality assurance developments, particularly the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF).

Beyond conceptual alignment, the workshops generated concrete areas of agreement toward harmonizing accreditation approaches, criteria, and practices. The EQAAs agreed to pursue a more principles-based quality assurance system, emphasizing improvement, trust, peer judgment, and formative evaluation rather than narrow compliance. They initiated the identification of core accreditation areas that could be standardized across agencies, while allowing justified differentiation based on institutional mission, program type, and clientele. Key issues discussed included faculty qualifications and staffing patterns, the assessment of outcomes-based teaching and learning, and the need to broaden the definition of learning resources beyond traditional library requirements to reflect digital and blended environments. To sustain momentum beyond EDCOM II, the EQAAs agreed to outline priority areas for harmonization, timelines for future workshops, and mechanisms for continued collaboration, including joint accreditor training, peer learning, adherence to shared ethical standards, and engagement with regional QA networks. While the workshops

marked important progress, participants emphasized that harmonization is an ongoing process that requires continued dialogue and institutional support—an effort now complemented by CHED's activation of a collegial forum with accreditation bodies to address quality assurance concerns in a spirit of partnership and constructive engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Sustain policy support and coordination mechanisms** that enable accreditation bodies and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to translate ongoing harmonization efforts into more coherent, credible, and development-oriented quality assurance practices across Philippine higher education.

2. **Build on the gains of the 2024 Harmonization Workshops** by encouraging continued, regular engagement among peer-based External Quality Assurance Agencies (EQAAs) in coordination with CHED. Such engagement should reinforce a collegial, consultative approach to harmonization, clarify roles and expectations, and ensure continuity between EDCOM II-supported initiatives and CHED-convened quality assurance dialogues.

3. **Institutionalize internal quality assurance (IQA)** as a core responsibility of every higher education institution, while strengthening incentives for participation in external quality assurance, including peer-based accreditation.

4. **Provide sustained support for the training and professional development of accreditors,** particularly in learning-outcomes-based assessment and evaluation aligned with outcomes-based education and national and regional qualifications frameworks.

5. **Develop differentiated quality assurance instruments and accreditation approaches** aligned with CHED's forthcoming horizontal classification of higher education institutions, to ensure that evaluation criteria are appropriate to institutional missions, functions, and capacities.

6. **Explore, subject to further dialogue with External Quality Assurance Agencies (EQAAs), the possibility of leveraging Level I accreditation processes**—which already assess institutional and program compliance with CHED's minimum standards—as a complementary input to CHED's monitoring functions for programs under EQAA coverage. Such an approach, if mutually agreed upon and clearly defined, may help streamline quality assurance processes and optimize CHED's limited regulatory resources, while preserving the distinct roles and mandates of the Commission and peer-based accreditation bodies.

ISSUE 6: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A TYPOLOGY-BASED QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM HAS REMAINED SLOW AND LIMITED.

It took the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) nearly two decades to begin implementing the EDCOM recommendation to move away from a one-size-fits-all policy framework in higher education through the establishment of a typology of tertiary institutions. In 2012, CHED issued CMO No. 46, Series of 2012, which introduced a typology- and outcomes-based approach to quality assurance. However, aside from its limited use in the Commission's voluntary institutional sustainability assessment of higher education institutions (HEIs), the CMO has seen minimal implementation. Progress toward the operationalization of quality assurance mechanisms differentiated by HEI type has remained slow.

To address the continued application of one-size-fits-all quality assurance mechanisms—such as institutional and program accreditation or assessment, as well as the designation of Centers of Excellence and Centers of Development—EDCOM II commissioned the development of a horizontal typology. This initiative is aligned with the national objective of cultivating a more diversified higher education sector, one that enables HEIs to adapt to a rapidly evolving global knowledge society; respond to the differentiated needs of students, families, communities, industries, and other stakeholders; enhance institutional effectiveness; foster innovation; and encourage experimentation (Bernardo, 2024).

Given the challenges of operationalizing normative HEI categories—such as universities, professional institutions, and colleges—in a manner that adequately captures the diversity of Philippine higher education institutions, EDCOM II adopted an empirically grounded horizontal classification. This classification is intended not only to inform quality assurance, but also to support related policy functions, including the granting of permits to open schools, the provision of scholarships and faculty development grants, and the allocation of CHED resources for program support.

Using CHED administrative data and non-random responses from EDCOM II's HEI survey, the study employed cluster analysis, which resulted in six clusters that were subsequently grouped into three simplified institutional types.

Cluster 1: Small Focused HEIs
These institutions offer a limited number of bachelor's programs, attract relatively few students from their local communities, and are staffed largely by faculty without post-baccalaureate qualifications. They engage in little to no research or community outreach.

Cluster 2: Focused HEIs
Similar to Cluster 1, these HEIs provide a small number of undergraduate programs, including some post-baccalaureate offerings that are not strongly career-oriented. Their research and community engagement activities remain minimal.

Cluster 3: Comprehensive Undergraduate HEIs
Primarily serving local student populations, these institutions have modest but notable master's-level enrollments. Compared to Clusters 1 and 2, they demonstrate greater involvement in community outreach and international faculty exchanges.

Cluster 4: Comprehensive HEIs (Research and External Focus)
These HEIs offer predominantly bachelor's-level programs in career-related fields, complemented by sizable master's and some doctoral programs. They are significantly engaged in community outreach, cultural activities, and student-focused internationalization, and exhibit stronger research participation among faculty.

Cluster 5: Comprehensive HEIs (Research-Oriented)
These institutions prioritize research, with more favorable growth trajectories in publications and citations. They maintain relatively small but significant master's and doctoral programs and undertake fewer outreach activities compared to Cluster 4.

Cluster 6: Comprehensive State Universities
Distinguished by their broad program offerings and high enrollment, these HEIs demonstrate extensive outreach, strong outbound internationalization for faculty, and a pronounced trajectory of research growth.

TABLE 14.
Characteristics of Proposed Simplified Empirically Based Horizontal Classification (Bernardo, 2024)

	FOCUSED HEIs	COMPREHENSIVE HEIs	CONTINUOUS HEIs
Mission	Professional skills education for regional development needs	Professional skills and holistic development of 21st century skills for broad national and international needs	Specialized technical, professional, and scientific skills education for national and international innovation systems
Degree program offerings	Few selected bachelor's programs aligned with human resource needs of province/region	Broad range of bachelor's programs to develop skilled professional with transversal competencies aligned with national and international human resource needs	Higher proportion of master's and doctoral programs for research and innovation needs of region and country
Student body	Proportionately small enrollment of students from province and region	Proportionately larger enrollment of students from local and surrounding regions	Higher ratio of post-graduate enrollment; students from local and surrounding regions
Faculty profile	Continuous and recent professional experience in relevant industries	Relevant professional experience and/or disciplinal training	Post-graduate (doctoral) education, research experience and outputs
Principal academic degree programs	Professional programs linked to local industry with strong OJT component	Programs linked to local industry & other local organizations, with relevant capstone projects	Programs with research and innovation components

The analysis yielded several key observations regarding the composition and diversity of the higher education system:

- First, the majority of HEIs in the sample are predominantly undergraduate, career-training institutions, with programs oriented mainly toward professional preparation.
- Second, none of the HEIs in the sample would qualify as Research HEIs based on international benchmarks; in Malaysia, for example, research universities are typically defined as institutions with at least 50% of total enrollment at the graduate level.
- Third, the three core functions of HEIs—teaching, research, and community service—are only minimally implemented across the sample. An *extremely small* proportion of HEIs demonstrate strong faculty engagement in research, while only a *minority* maintain active community service programs.
- Finally, student enrollment patterns indicate that most HEIs primarily serve local populations, with limited national diversity, except for select large state universities with multi-campus systems, such as the University of the Philippines and the Philippine Normal University.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Conduct inclusive stakeholder consultations.** CHED, with the support of EDCOM II (should its mandate be extended), should undertake wide-ranging consultations with key stakeholders to refine the proposed horizontal typology and to develop corresponding vertical typologies for each institutional type as part of the final HEI classification framework.

2. **Align policies and resource allocation with institutional types.** CHED should review, refine, and tailor its policies—particularly those related to resource allocation and support for core higher education functions—to ensure alignment with the distinct missions, capacities, and developmental roles of each horizontal institutional type.

PRIORITY AREA 13: DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

FINDINGS

ISSUE 1: THE LACK OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND KEY MANPOWER SKILLS HINDERS DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION.

Digital Transformation of Higher Education

Edcom II Co-Chair Rep. Jude A. Acidre together with other House leaders, filed HB 4930. The bill proposes: (a) free and equitable access to learning resources in SUCs, (b) the creation of a National Academic Content Repository (NACR), (c) campus-wide high-speed Wi-Fi to support research and learning, and (d) the development, digitization, and sharing of locally produced academic content. Together, these measures aim to close persistent digital divides and ensure that all students can participate meaningfully in a modern learning environment.

The potential of digital transformation is limited by the lack of infrastructure, and insufficient access to the appropriate software and hardware. Progress toward true digital transformation in higher education is significantly constrained by unequal access to digital infrastructure, especially among low-income students. The World Bank (2022), citing the 2019 National ICT Household Survey, reported that 82% of households lacked internet access and 76% had no computer at home, with high costs cited as the main barrier. Only 6% of individuals used the internet for learning, compared to 43% for social activities—highlighting both access and usage gaps.

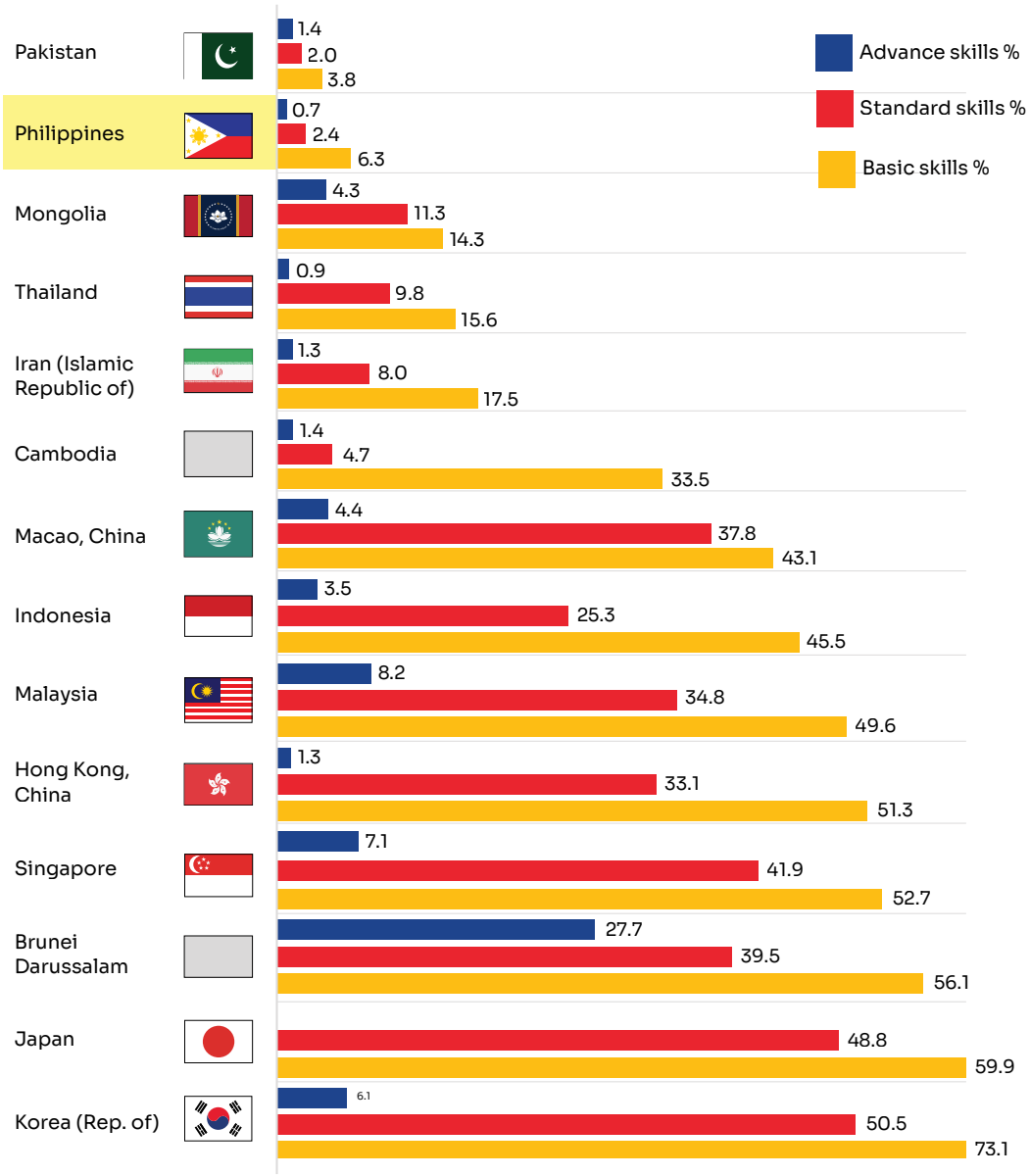
Republic Act 10929, the Free Internet Access in Public Places Act, sought to address these barriers by establishing public internet access points, including in SUCs. Yet, despite its passage in 2017, "students and teachers have yet to fully reap its promised benefits" (Sen. Bam Aquino, August 2025 Press Release). The recently enacted Republic Act 12234 or the Konektadong Pinoy Act aims to accelerate progress by improving the reliability and affordability of internet services, with DICT targeting a 40% reduction in costs by 2026—critical given that the Philippines currently ranks 6th in affordability among ASEAN countries (PNA, 2025).

The Philippines has been observed to have poor digital skills and low level of digital literacy, when compared to neighboring countries. Alongside challenges in infrastructure, equipment, and software, the effectiveness of digital transformation in education also depends on the readiness and confidence of its key actors—teachers, administrators, and students—to adopt new tools and practices. The International Telecommunication Union (2021) notes that the Philippines currently has a relatively small share of individuals with basic, standard, and advanced ICT skills (0.7%, 2.4%, and 6.3%, respectively), highlighting an important area for investment as the sector transitions toward more technology-enabled learning.

Philippine higher education remains insufficiently prepared for the academic, ethical, and governance challenges posed by generative AI, with most institutions lacking clear policies or structured capacity-building. Although emerging tools such as ChatGPT are already widely used by students and faculty, Vergara (2024) finds that HEIs have not established consistent standards on academic integrity, acceptable use, data privacy,

or assessment design. AI adoption is therefore happening informally and unevenly, creating variability in classroom practice and widening disparities in AI readiness across institutions. The absence of CHED-issued templates or sector-wide guidance leaves HEIs to navigate these issues independently, often without the necessary expertise.

FIGURE 21.
Basic, Standard, and Advanced ICT Skills in Selected Asia-Pacific Countries (2017–2019)



Source: Based on the ITU WTI Database

Building AI literacy, ethics, and governance into curriculum and institutional policy is identified as an urgent system-wide need. Vergara (2024) recommends that CHED and DICT jointly define parameters for responsible AI use, develop common learning outcomes related to AI ethics and societal impacts, and provide model syllabi and governance frameworks for HEIs. He stresses that AI competencies should be embedded across all programs—not only technical fields—so students can critically engage with how AI shapes work, knowledge creation, and civic life. Without coordinated standards and support, the Philippines risks falling behind regional systems that have already integrated AI readiness into higher education.

National AI initiatives remain fragmented, with key agencies developing separate strategies but lacking a unified framework for coordination. Both the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) have issued their own AI roadmaps, yet these operate largely in parallel, limiting opportunities for shared planning, joint investments, and coherent national direction. As noted by Vergara (2025), House Bill No. 7983—proposing the establishment of a National Center for Artificial Intelligence Research (NCAIR) with multi-agency representation—offers a potential institutional anchor for aligning policies, research priorities, and workforce strategies. Once enacted, the measure could consolidate standards, strengthen data-governance practices, and provide a single coordinating body to guide AI development across government, industry, and higher education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Designate CHED, in coordination with DICT, to lead the development of a national policy framework on artificial intelligence in higher education, ensuring the sector keeps pace with global shifts in digital and AI-enabled learning.** Many countries have already moved in this direction—for example, the European Union's AI Act guidance for universities, Australia's national principles on AI in education, and the United Kingdom's sector-wide recommendations on academic integrity and AI-assisted learning—highlighting the need for the Philippines to establish its own coherent approach.

   To support this, CHED may issue policy templates and provide structured guidance to help HEIs contextualize AI adoption within their programs and governance systems. These policies may include: (a) standards for the fair, responsible, and transparent use of AI tools, especially in relation to academic integrity; (b) explicit articulation of acceptable AI use in syllabi, student handbooks, and institutional policies; and (c) common learning outcomes that equip students to understand the ethical implications, disciplinary impacts, and opportunities presented by AI (Vergara, 2025). By aligning policy and curriculum reforms with international best practice, CHED can help ensure that Philippine higher education remains competitive and future-ready.

2. **Direct CHED to develop a coherent digital transformation roadmap for higher education, grounded in clear goals, timelines, and investment priorities.** Such a roadmap must account for the full range of requirements needed to modernize the sector—including sustained investments in digital infrastructure and equipment, as well as targeted strategies to close digital skills gaps among faculty, administrators, and students. By aligning these elements, CHED can guide HEIs toward a more equitable, resilient, and future-ready digital learning environment.

PRIORITY AREA 14: GRADUATE EDUCATION, RESEARCH, AND INNOVATION

FINDINGS

ISSUE 1: KEY INPUTS TO RESEARCH AND INNOVATION MUST BE STRENGTHENED.

The Philippines has moved up in ranks in the Global Innovation Index (GII), from rank 59 in 2022 to rank 50 in 2025, out of 139 economies. However, other indicators on research and innovation, such as government spending, and publication rates fall behind ASEAN peers.

The EDCOM II Year 2 Report highlighted the important role of research and innovation as a key driver of economic growth, especially in a knowledge-based economy. Higher education likewise fulfills a significant role in innovation ecosystems, with research being one of its main functions.

Despite its importance, investments continue to be dismal. Based on the most recently available data, the Philippines only allocates 0.32% (2018) of its GDP on Research and Development (R&D), significantly below the 1% benchmark recommended by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In comparison, the world average is at 2.67%; the highest and lowest in ASEAN is Singapore (2.16%), and Myanmar (0.02%) respectively.

TABLE 15.
Comparison of Research Spending as a % of GDP

Country	Latest Available Year	Research Spending, as a % of GDP
World	2022	2.67
Singapore	2020	2.16
Thailand	2022	1.16
Malaysia	2020	0.95
Vietnam	2021	0.42
Philippines	**2018**	**0.32**
Brunei Darussalam	2018	0.28
Indonesia	2020	0.28
Cambodia	2015	0.12
Lao PDR	2002	0.04
Myanmar	2023	0.02
Timor-Leste	No Data	No Data

Source: World Bank

The 2025 Global Innovation Index (GII)[1] ranks the Philippines the 50th out of 139 economies included in the index. This is an improvement from the last four (4) years, and higher than the targeted GII Position in the PDP by 2025.

TABLE 16.
Philippine Ranking in the Global Innovation Index (GII) (2020-2025)

	PDP Target	GII Position	Innovation Inputs	Innovation Outputs
2020	-	50th	70th	41st
2021	-	51st	72nd	40th
2022	59th (Baseline)	59th	76th	51st
2023	57th	56th	69th	52nd
2024	54th	53rd	67th	53rd
2025	52nd	50th	59th	49th

Source: World Intellectual Property Organization (2020-2025); Philippine Development Plan 2022-202

The optimistic outlook in our GII ranking notwithstanding, continued support and investment must be strengthened to boost specific R&D outputs such as research production. As noted by Demetrio, Liwanag, Anastacio, Pada, Unabia, and Naval (2024), the Philippines ranks significantly below the ASEAN Average for Scopus-Indexed papers. Further, projections indicate a widening gap between the country's research productivity against the ASEAN average, should no significant intervention be introduced.

1 GII - ranks world economies according to their innovation capabilities

The Philippines' research challenges stem from system-wide weaknesses that require solutions far beyond individual institutions. The PDP highlights persistent gaps in the country's research and innovation landscape—including insufficient STI and R&D human resources, weak research culture and productivity, low R&D spending, fragmented collaboration among ecosystem actors, limited market-oriented research, and underdeveloped intellectual property and innovation cultures. PAGTANAW 2050 affirms these structural weaknesses, underscoring chronic underinvestment in R&D, the absence of a mission-driven national research agenda, and the country's low density of scientists and researchers. These converging assessments make clear that research interventions must be grounded in a systems view that positions higher education within a larger, interconnected innovation ecosystem.



Human capital constraints severely limit the country's ability to build a competitive research base. Despite the central role of S&T in economic development, the Philippines' scientific workforce remains exceptionally small, and interest in STEM fields continues to lag even as demand increases (Albert et al., 2020). Demetrio et al. (2024) further emphasize that the country lacks functional research universities and has no national strategy to build them, leaving HEIs without the infrastructure, leadership, and research environments required to drive sustained innovation. This thin pipeline of researchers reflects decades of underinvestment in both graduate training and long-term research career pathways—issues that PAGTANAW 2050 identifies as urgent national priorities.

At the institutional and individual levels, faculty are held back by conditions that make research difficult to begin and even harder to sustain. Faculty members face significant barriers to research productivity, including heavy teaching loads, time and financial constraints, limited exposure to research, insufficient training and mentorship, and pressure to publish with minimal institutional support (Marasigan et al., 2025). These challenges—noted repeatedly in national assessments—signal that improving individual faculty performance will remain difficult without structural reforms in workload policies, funding mechanisms, and research infrastructure.

> *The Philippines only allocates 0.32% (2018) of its GDP on Research and Development (R&D), significantly below the 1% benchmark recommended by the UNESCO.*

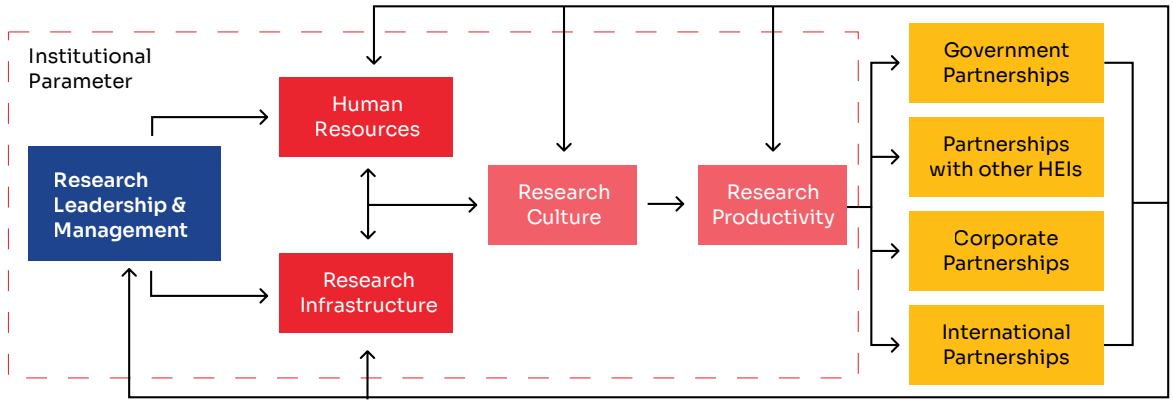
TABLE 17.
CMO No. 52, s. 2016: Substantive Concerns Regarding Research in Philippine HEIs

Input / Technical Concerns	Governance / Administrative Concerns
▪ Improving the research capabilities of faculty, research staff, and graduate students ▪ Instilling a research culture and research vocation among faculty and graduate students ▪ Upgrading physical resources and research infrastructure ▪ Building up, retraining and retaining a sustainable stream of a new generation of researchers ▪ Increasing research productivity, and raising research quality and impact ▪ Having and institutionalizing a research code of ethics that maintains the integrity, openness, and transparency of the research process and safeguards intellectual property ▪ Establishing structured partnerships with community, business and industry stakeholders in order to integrate "formal" research and innovation efforts with "informal" grassroots knowledge and innovation	▪ Inadequate capture among administrators, faculty, research staff and students about the role of universities in knowledge production and the knowledge economy ▪ Heavy teaching and advising loads of faculty on top of administrative, committee and other university assignments ▪ Low public understanding and opinion of university research ▪ Low level of research collaboration ▪ Dispersed or fragmented research interests, if any ▪ Internal barriers to research mobility and exchange ▪ Gender gap ▪ Lack of steady funding for research ▪ Preparedness to engage in research through transnational and global networks

ISSUE 2: SYSTEM-LEVEL FRAGMENTATION FURTHER WEAKENS THE COUNTRY'S RESEARCH ECOSYSTEM AND LIMITS INNOVATION CAPACITY.

PAGTANAW 2050 stresses that weak coordination among academia, government, and industry undermines the ability of the research system to operate as a cohesive whole. Empirical studies point to parallel challenges: outdated institutional systems, bureaucratic delays, insufficient funding, and fragile academe–industry linkages that impede collaborative innovation (Sison et al., 2025). Without addressing this fragmentation, HEIs will continue to navigate disjointed policies and operate in environments that discourage research, preventing the country from building the mission-driven, high-performing innovation system envisioned in both the PDP and PAGTANAW 2050.

FIGURE 22.
Internal and External Components of the Research Machinery of a Philippine Higher Educational Institution (HEI)



Source: Demeterio, Liwanag, Anastacio, Pada, Unabia & Naval (2024)

Persistent governance and regulatory bottlenecks continue to constrain the country's research ecosystem. As highlighted in the EDCOM II Year 2 Report, procurement remains one of the most significant barriers to research implementation. Researchers frequently encounter (a) difficulty sourcing specialized scientific equipment due to limited suppliers, (b) underutilization of procurement provisions specifically designed for research and academic goods because procurement officers are unfamiliar with them, and (c) inadequate capacity-building for procurement units across institutions. These gaps delay research activities and weaken the overall efficiency and competitiveness of higher education and R&D institutions.

The passage of Republic Act No. 12009—the New Government Procurement Act—offers an opportunity to address long-standing barriers in research procurement. The law introduces a more flexible, innovation-friendly procurement framework designed to support science, technology, and research initiatives. As the Government Procurement Policy Board (GPPB) explains, the new provisions enable early market engagement, facilitate the acquisition of pre-commercial goods, and encourage partnerships with startups—while ensuring that intellectual property rights for commissioned goods remain with the procuring entity. These reforms promote a fit-for-purpose approach and are expected to strengthen the entire STI ecosystem once implementing rules and guidelines are fully aligned with research needs.

Beyond procurement, governance concerns also extend to the management and strategic use of the Higher Education Development Fund (HEDF). EDCOM II previously noted that the potential of the HEDF to support innovation, research capability-building, and institutional strengthening remains underrealized. CHED's updated guidelines on Centers of Excellence (COEs), revised through CMO No. 10 s. 2025, reinforce that COEs are expected to "accelerate the development of the discipline" and "create cutting-edge research activities" in emerging fields. However, optimizing COE contributions will require improved governance structures, clearer prioritization of research investments, and more efficient deployment of HEDF resources.

From constraints to ecosystem building. Taken together, the findings point to a central conclusion: while recent gains in global innovation rankings are encouraging, the Philippines' research and innovation challenges are systemic, cumulative, and deeply interconnected. Underinvestment in R&D, a thin and fragile research workforce, weak institutional research cultures, fragmented governance, and limited linkages among academia, government, and industry continue to constrain the country's ability to translate knowledge into social and economic value. Procurement reform, while necessary, addresses only one part of a much larger ecosystem challenge. Building a robust national research and innovation system will require sustained investments in human capital, mission-driven research agendas, institutional capability-building, and coordinated governance mechanisms that position higher education institutions as central actors within a dynamic innovation and enterprise ecosystem. These realities underscore the need for recommendations that move beyond procedural fixes toward long-term strategies for cultivating research culture, strengthening research institutions, and enabling innovation pathways from knowledge creation to application and enterprise.

GRADUATE EDUCATION

ISSUE 2: GRADUATE EDUCATION REQUIRES INCREASED INVESTMENT AND A MORE MATURE SYSTEM.

Graduate education is a critical driver of national development, powering a country's research capacity, innovation productivity, and long-term economic growth. International evidence shows that advanced degrees expand the pool of scientists, engineers, health professionals, researchers, and innovation leaders essential for technological upgrading and competitiveness. OECD analyses (2022; 2023) link higher graduate attainment to increased labor productivity and stronger innovation outputs, while the World Bank (2020; 2022) notes that countries with robust graduate systems generate higher tax revenues and sustain deeper academic talent pools that anchor national R&D. Graduate programs also form the backbone of faculty preparation and research production—making them indispensable to a resilient higher education ecosystem.

Yet in the Philippines, graduate education remains one of the least systematically understood and strategically developed components of the system. The EDCOM Year 1 Report (2023) identified the country's "thin scientific workforce" and "limited research culture" as structural constraints to national development. The CHED Task Force on Graduate Education Review (TFGER), formed in 2013, similarly found that many master's programs had become "extensions of undergraduate work" and lacked the rigor expected of advanced study—issues that persist a decade later. The UP CIDS Policy Brief (2018) reinforced these concerns, showing that **graduate degrees are heavily concentrated in education and business, with insufficient doctoral programs in STEM, agriculture, and other nationally critical fields.** It also documented persistent regional disparities, noting that **"many HEIs outside urban centers continue to operate with minimal graduate-trained faculty,"** limiting both program quality and research capacity.

These longstanding challenges are amplified by systemic constraints that hinder the development of a strong research ecosystem. TFGER (2013) highlighted shortages of qualified faculty, weak mentoring systems, and inadequate research infrastructure—conditions still commonly cited today. Faculty continue to navigate heavy teaching loads, limited opportunities for research exposure, and misaligned incentives that constrain graduate supervision and research productivity. PAGTANAW 2050 (2021) also warned that the absence of functional research universities significantly undermines the country's capacity for scientific discovery and innovation. Meanwhile, national evidence gaps persist: the last comprehensive reviews of graduate education were conducted twelve years ago in 2013, leaving policymakers without current insight on program quality, student pathways, labor-market relevance, or research output.

Recognizing these long-standing gaps, EDCOM and the Ateneo de Manila University commissioned a new nationwide study—conducted by Candelaria et al. (forthcoming)—to update the evidence base and provide the first comprehensive profile of Philippine graduate education in over a decade.

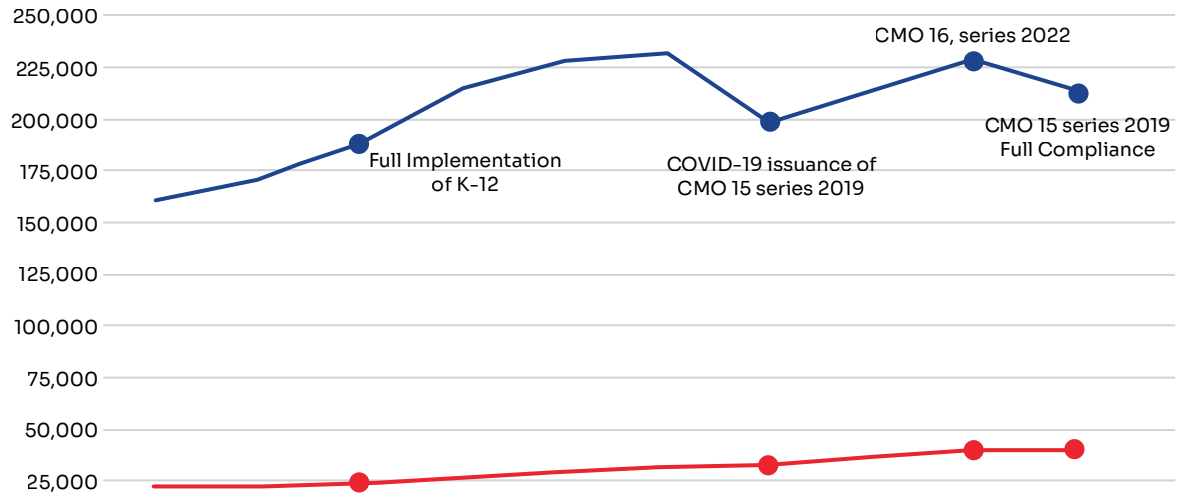
The updated findings from the Candelaria et al. pinpoint specific structural issues—from concentration of programs to low doctoral throughput—that must be addressed to strengthen the country's graduate education and research capacity:

- **Out of the 1,977 higher education institutions (2,410 including satellite campuses) in the Philippines, 876 offered graduate programs in AY 2023-2024**, with 57.6% being private, 39.6% nationally funded state universities, 2.4% locally funded universities.

- **A total of 553 (63%) HEIs offer Masters degrees while 323 of them offer both Master's and Doctorate degrees (37%)**
- In AY 2023-2024, **a total of 214,487 students are enrolled in master's programs while 40,383 students are enrolled in doctoral programs** across the country
- **Eight (8) out of 10 graduate students are not able to complete their degree programs** within the prescribed period based on CHED and DOST scholarship regulations
- **Only 17.19% are able to complete their degrees on time for both cohorts for Doctoral students**

The study also underscores structural challenges that constrain the growth and diversification of Philippine graduate education. Program availability remains heavily concentrated in the NCR, limiting access for students in regions without nearby universities offering advanced degrees. Promotion and qualification policies in both DepEd and CHED have also unintentionally driven disproportionate growth in fields such as teacher education and business administration, while dampening enrolment in specialized and nationally critical disciplines. This creates circular dependencies: regions with limited graduate offerings struggle to build their own pool of graduate-trained faculty, which in turn prevents them from developing new programs and expanding local research capacity. Finally, the highly privatized nature of graduate education raises concerns about affordability and access, especially for students outside metropolitan centers or those pursuing more specialized degrees with limited public provision.

FIGURE 23:
Ten-Year Enrollment Trends (Master's and Doctoral), 2014-2023



	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Master's	16,0572	170,591	187,723	214,540	228145	231,859	19,7819	212,784	228,602	21,4487
Doctoral	22,919	22,470	23,827	26,961	29831	32,333	32,470	37,005	41,012	40,383

Source: CHED-OPRKM, Historical Enrollment Data, as of September 2025

These findings place the Philippine higher education at a crossroad: while demand for advanced skills is rising, the country's graduate education system has not yet evolved at the pace required by national development goals or global shifts. Internationally, higher education systems are strengthening quality assurance for graduate programs, clarifying sustainable funding models and expanding technology-enabled delivery in the wake of the pandemic (Taylor, 2023). These global trends underline the urgency for the country to modernize its own graduate education framework, not only to enable wider access but also to strengthen program quality, sustainable financing, and innovation in delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Strengthen quality assurance in graduate education,** especially in the fields of teacher education. CHED and the DepEd, including the TEC, should closely collaborate on the creation of policies and strategies to deter and curb the patronage of subpar graduate education programs .

2. **Increase and better align public investment in R&D toward a medium-term target consistent with international benchmarks,** with funding strategically directed to mission-oriented research priorities that address national development challenges and support innovation-led growth.

3. **Strengthen the national research workforce pipeline** by expanding support for graduate education, postdoctoral training, and long-term research careers, and by advancing a deliberate strategy to develop functional research universities with the leadership, infrastructure, and institutional environments needed to anchor innovation ecosystems.

4. **Cultivate strong research cultures within higher education institutions** through reforms in faculty workload policies, predictable and competitive research funding, mentoring systems, and access to shared research infrastructure, recognizing that individual research productivity depends on enabling institutional conditions.

5. **Improve coordination across the research and innovation ecosystem**, particularly among higher education institutions, government agencies, industry, and communities, to reduce fragmentation and promote collaborative, problem-oriented research—consistent with NIC calls for stronger whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to innovation.

6. **Strengthen pathways from research to innovation and enterprise**, including support for technology transfer, startup formation, and industry–academe collaboration, and encourage the use of innovation-friendly mechanisms—such as early market engagement and pre-commercial procurement—to connect publicly funded research with societal and economic applications.

7. **Reposition Centers of Excellence (COEs) and the Higher Education Development Fund (HEDF)** as strategic instruments for research capability-building and innovation, with clearer prioritization of research investments, stronger governance arrangements, and outcome-oriented deployment aligned with national innovation goals articulated by the NIC.

8. **Leverage recent procurement reforms under Republic Act No. 12009** to support science, technology, and innovation, while complementing these reforms with capacity-building for institutions and procurement units, and ensuring that implementing rules fully reflect the needs of research, innovation, and startup ecosystems.

PRIORITY AREA 15: INTERNATIONALIZATION

FINDINGS

ISSUE 2: HEIs FACE SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS TO INTERNATIONALIZATION.

The Philippines continues to lag behind its ASEAN peers in internationalization, constrained by long-standing structural and regulatory barriers. CHED's Internationalization Strategies and Roadmap (2016), UP CIDS (2018), and several PIDS analyses highlight fragmented institutional capacity, uneven faculty readiness, and limited global research visibility. Comparative assessments reinforce this picture: Khalid et al. (2019) classify the Philippines only at a "medium" level of internationalization, while more recent work by Bayudan-Dacuycuy, Luzon, and Zambrano (2024) documents Malaysia's rapid rise as a regional education hub—raising the competitive pressure on neighboring systems. These studies underline a dual challenge: internal weaknesses that limit Philippine HEIs' ability to engage globally, and external competitors that are moving faster and in a more coordinated manner.

TABLE 18.
ASEAN Countries by Degree of Internationalization

Degree of Internationalization	Country	Internationalization Trends
High	**Singapore**	▪ Increasing public expenditure ▪ Promoting international academic cooperation within and beyond SEA ▪ Emphasising cutting-edge research and development, and innovation ▪ Emphasising international profile and partnerships ▪ Hosting overseas branch campuses & being the third country for Transnational Higher Education (TNHE) ▪ Promoting image as an educational hub
Medium	**Brunei Indonesia Malaysia Philippines Thailand**	▪ High demand from international students enrolling in HEIs ▪ Emphasizing education quality ▪ Lowering public expenditure by shifting cost to students ▪ Recruitment of international faculty / researchers ▪ Emphasizing international research-oriented policy ▪ Promoting TNHE ▪ Controlled / limited oversees branch campuses, but the number of branch campuses are increasing
Low	**Cambodia Lao PDR Myanmar Viet Nam**	▪ Trying to improve education access, equity, and quality ▪ Under-resourced human capital and financial support for international activities ▪ Low number international faculty and staff ▪ Limited enrolment of international students ▪ Promoting academic and student mobility through a number of (inter) regional initiatives ▪ Promoting research-oriented policy (though with limited success) ▪ More opportunities for private HEIs ▪ Increasing engagement in TNHE

Source: Khalid, et. al (2019) as revised by Lim, Anabo, Phan, Elepanno, and Kuntamarat (2022)

System-level constraints restrict the country's global engagement and narrow mobility opportunities for students and faculty. ADB regional analyses (2019; 2022) show that the Philippines trails ASEAN peers in international research collaboration, cross-border partnerships, and publication output—factors that diminish the global visibility and attractiveness of Philippine institutions. Meanwhile, studies on "internationalization at home" point to gaps in digital readiness, limited foreign language offerings, and curricula that remain insufficiently aligned with global competencies (Bernal, Primera & Soriano, 2020–2023).

HEIs have themselves identified clear needs to strengthen their internationalization capacity: (a) financial assistance for mobility and partnerships, (b) faculty and staff development, (c) stronger collaboration and linkage mechanisms, (d) streamlined regulatory requirements, and (e) improved infrastructure to support physical and virtual mobility (Bayudan-Dacuycuy, Luzon & Zambrano, 2024). These institutional realities are compounded by regulatory rigidity in areas such as transnational education approvals, foreign faculty hiring, and credit recognition, constraining both inbound and outbound mobility.

A report by the ANTENA Consortium, headed by the Ateneo de Manila University (2019) provides the following barriers to internationalization following the survey of 108 institutions:

TABLE 19.
Top 5 Internal and External Barriers to Internationalization

Rank	Internal Barriers	External Barriers
1	Insufficient financial resources	Limited funding to support internationalization efforts/to promote our higher education internationally
2	Administrative / bureaucratic difficulties (e.g. no credit transfer, different academic years)	Difficulties of recognition and equivalences of qualifications, study programs and course credits
3	Lack of exposure to international opportunities	Visa restrictions imposed by our country on foreign students, researchers and academics
4	Limited faculty involvement / interest	Visa restrictions imposed on our students, researchers and academics by other countries
5	Too rigorous / inflexible curriculum to participate in internationally focused programs, including student mobility	Lack of interest in our institution by potential partner institutions

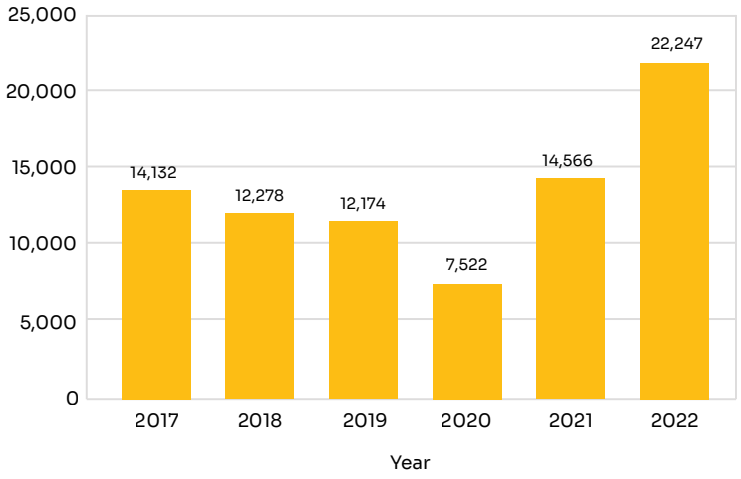
Source: ANTENA Consortium (2019)

These findings highlight the need for a coherent national strategy to strengthen the Philippines' position in a rapidly integrating regional higher education landscape. Experiences from Malaysia and Singapore illustrate what can be achieved when governments invest in research capability, align quality assurance frameworks with international standards, and support institutions in building long-term global partnerships. For the Philippines, expanding internationalization will require modernized regulatory frameworks, strengthened research ecosystems, enhanced administrative capacity for mobility and collaboration, and targeted financing to support global engagement initiatives. Without such reforms, the country risks further marginalization in international academic networks and reduced competitiveness for Filipino graduates in an increasingly interconnected world.

ISSUE 3: SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES CONSTRAIN THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF CROSS-BORDER STUDENT MOBILITY IN THE PHILIPPINES.

The EDCOM II Year 2 Report documented a steady upward trend in inbound foreign students, with enrolment rising by 57% between 2017 (14,132) and 2022 (22,247). Despite this growth, the Philippines remains far behind ASEAN neighbors—particularly Singapore and Malaysia—which attract significantly larger numbers of international students through mature TNE ecosystems, strong research reputations, and tightly coordinated national strategies. This persistent gap highlights both the opportunity and the urgency of leveraging the Transnational Higher Education Act (Republic Act 11650) to improve the country's global positioning, strengthen institutional capacity, and expand mobility pathways for both inbound and outbound students.

FIGURE 24.
Number of Inbound Foreign Students in the Philippines



Source: CHED, as cited by Apply Board, 2023

First, most international students enter the country through educational agencies. While this channel yields high recruitment volume, it also introduces risks: admission requirements may be negotiated, quality assurance may be weakened, and agencies may encourage students to enter as tourists and later convert to student visas because direct visa processing is viewed as burdensome and costly. These practices, though widespread, can undermine institutional control over admissions and expose HEIs to reputational vulnerabilities.

Second, regulatory requirements meant to safeguard quality often function as binding constraints on mobility expansion and program innovation. HEIs noted that rules on PhD faculty–advisee ratios, minimum faculty qualifications, and other accreditation-related provisions limit their ability to scale programs for foreign students—particularly in disciplines where doctoral-qualified faculty are scarce. Institutions must also navigate both Philippine regulations and the home-country rules of inbound students. Because new programs or modified curricula require CHED approval, and because these processes are often lengthy and uncertain, many HEIs hesitate to invest in TNE-linked offerings or expand international enrolments.

Third, some national policies are not aligned with internationalization objectives, reducing the country's competitiveness as a study destination. Restrictions on hiring foreign faculty, limitations on the practice of profession, and the absence of post-study work or residency options all weaken the Philippines' position relative to ASEAN neighbors. Mobility flows are also highly sensitive to policy changes in sending countries. HEI administrators reported that India's 2023 requirement—that medical graduates must be allowed to practice in the country where they studied—has significantly reduced Philippine enrolments, as this is not currently permitted under local regulations.

Beyond regulatory issues, qualitative research underscores that poorly governed mobility programs can produce inequitable outcomes for international students. Ortiga (2025), studying foreign medical students in the Philippines, found that internationalization often reflects the interests and limitations of local institutions rather than global best practice. In a largely laissez-faire regulatory environment, some private HEIs rely on foreign students to offset declining domestic enrolments, resulting in market-driven accommodation rather than academically grounded program design. Her findings surfaced two major concerns: (1) spatial segregation and differentiated treatment



between foreign and Filipino students, which can reinforce prejudice and lead to uneven instructional quality; and (2) logistical barriers in clinical training, where some hospitals do not fully integrate international students into rotations or patient interactions.

Ortiga (2025) cautions that, without strong safeguards, internationalization risks becoming utilitarian and revenue-driven, threatening both student experience and program quality. While many institutions aspire to align with global standards, entrenched practices, limited oversight, and financial pressures may lead to compromises that undermine the broader goal of building a credible and competitive international education sector. Unless governance mechanisms are strengthened, the expansion of student mobility under Republic Act 11448 may deepen, rather than reduce, disparities in quality and student protection.

International research highlights that the Philippines' student mobility challenges stem not only from domestic regulatory constraints but also from weaker enabling conditions compared with regional education hubs. The British Council (2019) and ASEAN University Network (2022) report that the country continues to have limited global visibility, inconsistent implementation of qualifications-recognition frameworks, and underdeveloped national branding as a study destination—factors that place the Philippines behind Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand in attracting inbound students.

PIDS (2020) further identifies slow visa processing, unclear post-study employment pathways, and restrictions on foreign faculty hiring as key deterrents for international students seeking integrated education-to-employment opportunities. These systemic gaps reduce the country's competitiveness at a time when regional neighbors are actively positioning themselves as international education hubs through aggressive policy, regulatory, and marketing strategies.

At the institutional level, studies consistently point to inadequate support systems that limit both inbound and outbound mobility. CHED consultations and PIDS analyses show that only a minority of HEIs maintain dedicated international offices, resulting in

uneven provision of visa assistance, academic advising, housing, and student-integration services. The ASEAN Internationalization Review (2022) finds that high-quality mobility programs require strong student support mechanisms—orientation, advising, and integration activities—that remain inconsistent across Philippine HEIs.

Outbound mobility is similarly constrained: financial barriers, limited scholarship opportunities, and the absence of structured exchange partnerships restrict Filipino students' participation in regional and global programs. Taken together, these findings underscore that scaling mobility under Republic Act 11448 will require not only streamlined regulation but sustained investments in institutional capacity, student support, and national positioning to build a competitive and credible international education system.

These findings point to a clear set of priorities: for student mobility to advance meaningfully under Republic Act 11448, the Philippines must streamline regulation, strengthen institutional capacity, and build the support systems that enable high-quality international programs. Predictable approval processes, clearer rules for foreign faculty and post-study pathways, and dedicated international offices within HEIs would allow mobility to reinforce curriculum improvement and faculty development. With these targeted reforms, internationalization can shift from a compliance activity to a strategic lever for enhancing program quality and positioning Philippine higher education more competitively in the region.

Despite the passage of Republic Act 11448, or the Transnational Higher Education (TNE) Act, the full benefits of internationalization remain constrained by national policies that limit program expansion, institutional partnerships, and the entry of global expertise. As higher education systems worldwide modernize to compete in an increasingly interconnected landscape, the Philippines' ability to attract talent, strengthen its research base, and upgrade program quality depends on a coherent and enabling framework for cross-border education.

The intent of Republic Act 11448 is clear: *"to modernize the Philippine higher education sector, bring international quality standards and expertise into the country, and attract a flow of talented students, faculty, and staff"* (Transnational Higher Education Act). This mirrors regional movements—such as Malaysia's EduCity Iskandar and Singapore's World Class University and Global Schoolhouse initiatives—that position education as a strategic driver of competitiveness (EDCOM II Year 2 Report, 2024). In contrast, Philippine internationalization has remained limited to double-degree programs, distance learning arrangements, and franchised or validated degrees (Ilieva, 2022), while other forms envisioned in Republic Act 11448, such as academic franchising or full articulation models, remain scarce (Crizaldo, forthcoming).

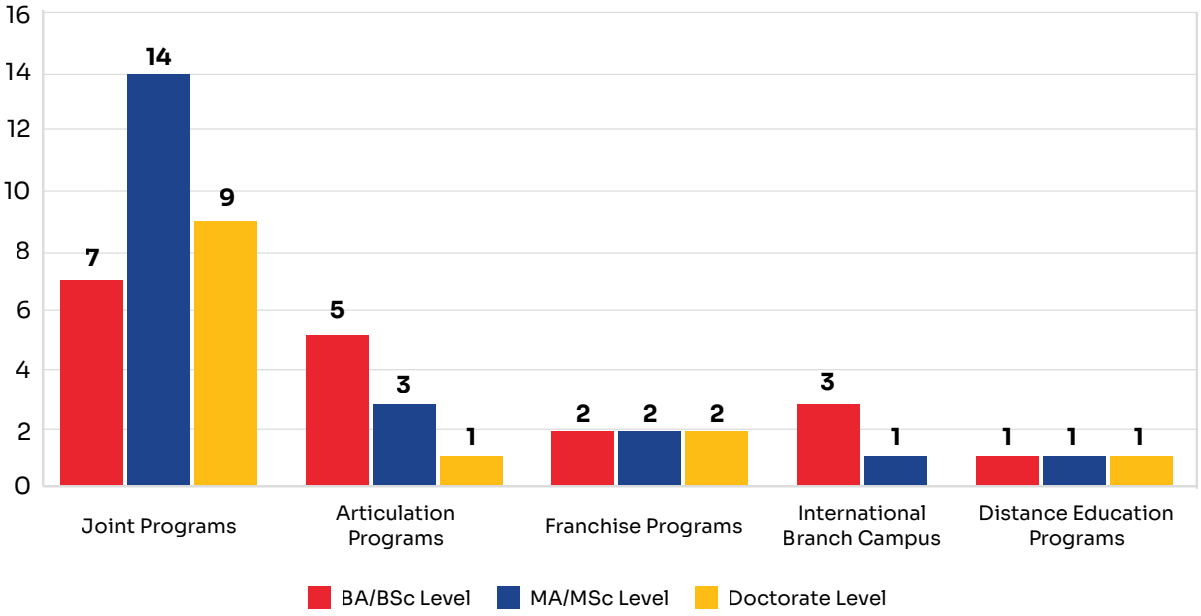
Evidence shows that TNE holds significant potential for system strengthening. Crizaldo (forthcoming) identifies six key motivations for TNE: (a) global recognition and engagement; (b) academic collaboration and research; (c) cultural competence;

> *PIDS (2020) further identifies slow visa processing, unclear post-study employment pathways, and restrictions on foreign faculty hiring as key deterrents for international students seeking integrated education-to-employment opportunities.*

(d) faculty development; (e) financial sustainability; and (f) student employability. Yet these benefits are undermined by persistent regulatory, institutional, and operational barriers—including misaligned rules, limited institutional capacity, and unclear approval pathways—which continue to dampen HEIs' ability to innovate and scale international partnerships. The ANTENA (2019) survey similarly found that only 28.87% of responding Philippine HEIs were engaged in any TNE activity, with most involvement limited to joint or articulation programs at the bachelor's or master's level.

The ANTENA report (2019) provides that only 28.87% of respondents were involved in TNHE, with the majority offering joint or articulation programs at the bachelors or masters level.

FIGURE 25.
Types of TNE Offered



Source: ANTENA Consortium (2019)

At the policy level, constitutional restrictions on foreign ownership remain a structural constraint on deeper TNE partnerships (British Council, 2015; 2016). As highlighted in EDCOM II's Year 2 Report, any future liberalization efforts—whether constitutional or statutory—must be accompanied by strengthened quality assurance mechanisms to safeguard academic integrity and ensure that expanded international participation contributes to, rather than dilutes, educational standards.

Liberalizing eligibility rules for faculty in public HEIs is a critical reform to strengthen the country's academic and research capacity. EDCOM II proposes amending Section 5(3) of Republic Act No. 9225, or the *Citizenship Retention and Reacquisition Act of 2003*, to allow Filipino dual citizens to serve as faculty members, researchers, and administrators in public higher education institutions—including State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs), and the University of the Philippines System—without requiring them to renounce their foreign citizenship.

EDCOM II proposes amending Section 5(3) of Republic Act No. 9225, or the Citizenship Retention and Reacquisition Act of 2003, to allow Filipino dual citizens to serve as faculty members, researchers, and administrators in public higher education institutions

The rationale for this amendment is clear: public HEIs currently face significant shortages of doctoral-qualified faculty and researchers, and the renunciation requirement has long constrained the recruitment and return of globally trained Filipino academics. Removing this barrier would allow institutions to tap into a wide pool of talent with advanced degrees, international research experience, and strong professional networks—capabilities essential for improving instructional quality, accelerating research productivity, and building globally competitive programs.

ALLOW QUALIFIED DUAL CITIZENS TO TEACH IN PUBLIC HEIS

Thus, EDCOM II proposed and assisted its Co-Chairpersons and Commissioners in filing House Bill No. 5019, filed by Co-Chair Congressman Jude A. Acidre and Senate Bills No. 531 and 626 by former EDCOM II Co-Chair Sherwin Gatchalian and current co-Chair Senator Loren Legarda. **The bill seeks to amend Section 5(3) of Republic Act No. 9225 or Citizenship Retention and Re-Acquisition Act of 2003 to accommodate qualified Filipino professionals with dual citizenship to be appointed** as administrators, faculty, or researchers in public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) on a full-time or part-time basis without the requirement of renouncing their foreign citizenship.

In the House, the bill has been approved in the Committee level on November 18, 2025 and is waiting for the submission of the final committee report. Meanwhile, in the Senate, the counterpart bills have been read on First Reading and referred to the Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Revisit and streamline policies affecting faculty and student mobility.** The current policy climate has restricted the development of internationalization through faculty and student mobility. For faculty, the liberalization of current constraints to hiring of foreign nationals in public HEIs would contribute to the growth of our research ecosystem, strengthen delivery of high-quality instruction, and offer globally competitive academic programs. For students, the proper re-evaluation, refinement and streamlining of processes would reduce costs, and prevent the pursuit of alternative routes which may expose students and HEIs to unnecessary risks.

2. **Strengthen safeguards against compromises in student experience and learning outcomes, and credibility of local academic programs,** in light of documented experiences of foreign students in the Philippines. Overly market-driven or revenue-driven strategies leading to compromises in admissions, instruction, or the application of quality standards may compromise the reputation of Philippine higher education, and thus constrain the potential of inbound student intake.

BRIDGING *the* EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM *and the* INDUSTRY THROUGH LIFELONG LEARNING

Chairperson Shirley Agrupis



For years, students in the Philippines have faced challenges when moving between education sectors. Those who have completed high school, or even TVET programs, often encounter barriers when trying to pursue college degrees. Similarly, university graduates sometimes struggle to find employment due to a lack of hands-on skills. These issues have contributed to high levels of unemployment and skills mismatch in the labor market.

In view of these concerns, there is an urgent need to create a seamless pathway for the country's educational system, going through early childhood education, basic education, TVET, and higher education, and towards employment that responds to the demands of the industry.

This call for lifelong learning is at the heart of CHED's ACHIEVE Agenda. Under **A—Advanced and Accessible Lifelong Learning**—CHED gives all Filipinos access to quality higher education and lifelong learning opportunities by strengthening pathways, removing barriers, and aligning policies across the trifocal

education system in support of national development. By embedding lifelong learning within policies and programs, CHED ensures that education is not confined to a single stage in life, but remains a continuing opportunity for growth and empowerment.

The Philippine government is committed to strengthening education and training to ensure that every Filipino learner has opportunities to progress and succeed towards a ***matatag, maginhawa, at panatag na buhay***—a life that is stable, comfortable, and peaceful.

At the center of this commitment is lifelong learning—the continuous pursuit of knowledge and skills that begins in early childhood and extends into adulthood.

Through reforms and initiatives led by the Department of Education (DepEd), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), pathways are being built that connect early childhood care, basic education, technical-vocational training, and higher education with industry. These efforts aim to remove barriers between learning levels, improve employability, and align outcomes with the evolving needs of the labor market.

Lifelong learning begins in the earliest years. Through Republic Act (RA) No. 10533, or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, which institutionalized the K to 12 Program, kindergarten was made compulsory and basic education was extended to 12 years, equipping learners not only with academic knowledge but also practical life skills. Senior High School, as the final stage, provides options through various tracks, allowing flexibility and reflecting the concept of lifelong learning by offering multiple entry and re-entry points to education and work.

One of the tracks that learners may pursue is the technical-vocational education which directly connects to TESDA programs, allowing graduates to earn National Certificates (NCs) aligned with industry standards. This enables them to join the workforce immediately or pursue further training.

Progression from technical-vocational education to higher education is supported by the Ladderized Education Program, institutionalized under Republic Act No. 10647. Jointly implemented by TESDA and CHED, this program recognizes equivalencies between TVET and degree programs, reducing duplication and costs for learners. Complementing this is the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF), strengthened by Republic Act No. 10968. The PQF provides a unified framework of qualification levels, from basic education to postgraduate studies and professiona practice.

To operationalize this, the Philippine Credit Transfer System (PCTS) was developed and formalized under Joint CHED-TESDA Memorandum Circular No. 01, Series of 2023. The PCTS standardizes the recognition and transfer of earned credits across institutions and programs, and between TVET and higher education, enabling smoother transitions between different education levels and ensuring that previously earned credentials are recognized. By aligning outcomes across all levels, these mechanisms ensure comparability, transparency, and industry relevance while promoting lifelong learning and global competitiveness.

In recent years, microcredentials have also emerged as an important component of lifelong learning. These are short, focused learning modules that certify specific skills and competencies, often designed in close collaboration with industry. By allowing learners to upskill or reskill, microcredentials provide flexible and targeted pathways that complement formal education, TVET, or professional practice. Government agencies and higher



education institutions in the Philippines are beginning to pilot microcredential programs to address evolving industry demands, particularly in digital skills and emerging sectors. Integrated within the PQF and linked to initiatives such as the PCTS, microcredentials further expand opportunities for learners to build stackable skills that can lead to formal qualifications while maintaining relevance to industry.

Beyond formal schooling, alternative pathways recognize the value of prior learning and work experience. CHED's Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP) enables employed individuals to earn degrees by demonstrating workplace-acquired competencies. This program highlights the inclusive nature of lifelong learning, ensuring that education is accessible to learners of different backgrounds and stages in life and recognizing that learning can happen even at work in different industries and services.

Industry participation remains vital in linking education with the world of work. Employers are not only the end-users of graduates but also active partners in curriculum development, competency setting, and education delivery. DepEd's Work Immersion Program exposes Senior High School students to the workplace, while TESDA's enterprise-based education and training bring learners into real work environments. In higher education, CHED promotes internships, industry-academe linkages, and recognition of work-based learning. These partnerships ensure that graduates are academically prepared and equipped with the skills, attitudes, and adaptability demanded by employers.

The government recognizes that creating seamless pathways from education to industry requires innovation and sustained effort. Expanding apprenticeship opportunities, strengthening digital credentialing, enhancing recognition of prior learning, and continually updating curricula with industry input are essential steps. The shift toward flexible learning and the integration of technology also highlights the importance of adaptability and lifelong learning in a fast-changing environment.

By bridging early childhood, basic education, technical-vocational training, and higher education, and anchoring these on lifelong learning and industry relevance, the Philippines is laying a strong foundation for a future-ready workforce. These reforms empower Filipinos to adapt, grow, and seize opportunities throughout their lives, while contributing meaningfully to national development. Through the unified efforts of government agencies, academic institutions, industry partners, and communities, the vision of a seamless education-to-industry pathway is steadily becoming a reality, enabling every Filipino to achieve aspirations while driving the nation forward.

Chairperson Shirley Agrupis is the Chairperson of the Commission on Higher Education.


My Teacher, My Hero

V. TEACHER EDUCATION
From Classroom to Career

HISTORY OF REFORMS, PERSISTENT CHALLENGES

The evolution of teacher education in the Philippines reflects a long history of reform. From the earliest normal schools of the American period to the first EDCOM (1991), government reviews have consistently framed the teacher as the system's decisive factor. EDCOM I identified teacher quality as the heart of education reform and called for strengthened pre-service education, fair incentives, and professionalization through licensure examinations and improved compensation. **The idea that "no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers" has anchored every wave of reform since.**

Over the next three decades, legislation sought to translate that principle into practice. In 1994, the Philippine Teachers Professionalization Act (Republic Act No. 7836) institutionalized licensure and formalized the teaching profession. This coincided with the passage of Republic Act No. 7784, establishing the Teacher Education Council (TEC). The latter has since then been amended via The Excellence in Teacher Education Act (Republic Act No. 111713). Yet despite these reforms, long-standing challenges in teacher education, training, and welfare remain.

Teacher preparation often fails to mirror classroom realities, with many graduates entering service lacking exposure to multilingual and multigrade environments. The supply of qualified mentors and assessors remains thin, particularly in low-income municipalities. Fragmented coordination among CHED, DepEd, and PRC has also led to overlapping functions and inconsistent quality assurance across teacher education. Salary standardization improved welfare but did not always correspond to enhanced professional growth or instructional quality.

Today, the primordial challenge lies in enhancing pre-service education, ensuring access to in-service training, and unburdening teachers from excessive administrative responsibilities to enable them to focus on teaching. The next sections of this chapter examine these stages in depth—identifying persistent barriers and mapping pathways to a career that sustains expertise, motivation, and leadership across decades of service.



PRIORITY AREA 16: ALIGNMENT OF CHED, PRC, AND DEPED (INCLUDING TEC)

FINDINGS

ISSUE 1: SYSTEMIC MISALIGNMENT IN TEACHER EDUCATION PERSISTS DESPITE EMERGING REFORMS.

The temporary nonfunctionality of the Teacher Education Council (TEC) for nearly two years, from 2022 to 2024 despite Republic Act No. 11713 created a critical vacuum in the governance of teacher education—aggravating long-standing issues of fragmentation and policy incoherence across CHED, DepEd, and PRC. As documented in the EDCOM II Year One and Year Two Reports, the absence of an active TEC impeded the implementation of much-needed reforms, stalled standard-setting and alignment work, and contributed to continued inconsistencies in teacher preparation, licensure, and deployment. (EDCOM, 2024, 2025).

ISSUE 2: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS, HOWEVER, INDICATE RENEWED MOMENTUM TOWARD ADDRESSING THESE GOVERNANCE GAPS

Since its full operationalization in 2024, TEC has swiftly initiated critical reforms including alignment of teacher education curricula with current and future system needs. This includes the recalibration of preservice programs, the deepening of practice teaching in the curriculum, the expansion of specialization tracks to include ECCD and ALS, as well as the modernization of the Board Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers (BLEPT).

ISSUE 3: CHRONIC UNDERPERFORMANCE IN THE TEACHER LICENSURE EXAM REFLECTS MISALIGNMENT IN PRESERVICE PREPARATION.

Persistent low performance in the BLEPT from 2010 to 2024 underscores a long-standing misalignment between teacher education curricula, competency expectations, and licensure examination content. As highlighted in both EDCOM II Year One and Year Two Reports, BLEPT outcomes have remained consistently poor for over a decade, revealing gaps in foundational knowledge, weak mastery of subject matter, and uneven preparation across Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) (EDCOM 2, 2024, 2025).

TABLE 1.
BLEPT Performance (2010-2024)

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total Passing Rate Elementary	17.7	20.0	46.7	29.8	33.7	29.7	29.5	19.9	21.6	29.6	56.0	54.2	46.1	43.6	51.1
Total Passing Rate Secondary	25.1	29.6	36.7	39.7	32.7	37.6	34.4	38.0	41.2	34.5	57.8	51.3	57.8	51.5%	72.6

Source: PBEd's 2010–2022 BLEPT Performance Analysis (published 2024) and PRC official data for 2023–2025

This pattern strengthens the findings of Ducanes et al. (2018), which point to significant disconnects between what TEIs teach and what the licensure exam assesses, including deficiencies in curriculum coherence, pedagogical training, and assessment literacy.

Such persistent outcomes reflect not only TEI-level challenges but also systemic issues: fragmented governance among CHED, the PRC, and the TEC; inconsistent implementation of program standards; and the absence of robust quality assurance mechanisms for preservice teacher education. The repeated inability of large cohorts to meet licensure standards signals that the problem is structural, not individual—indicating that the current system does not consistently equip prospective teachers with the competencies required for effective classroom practice.

ISSUE 4: SYSTEMIC INCOHERENCE IN TEACHER LICENSURE AND PRESERVICE PREPARATION CONTINUES TO UNDERMINE TEACHER QUALITY AND EXAM CREDIBILITY.

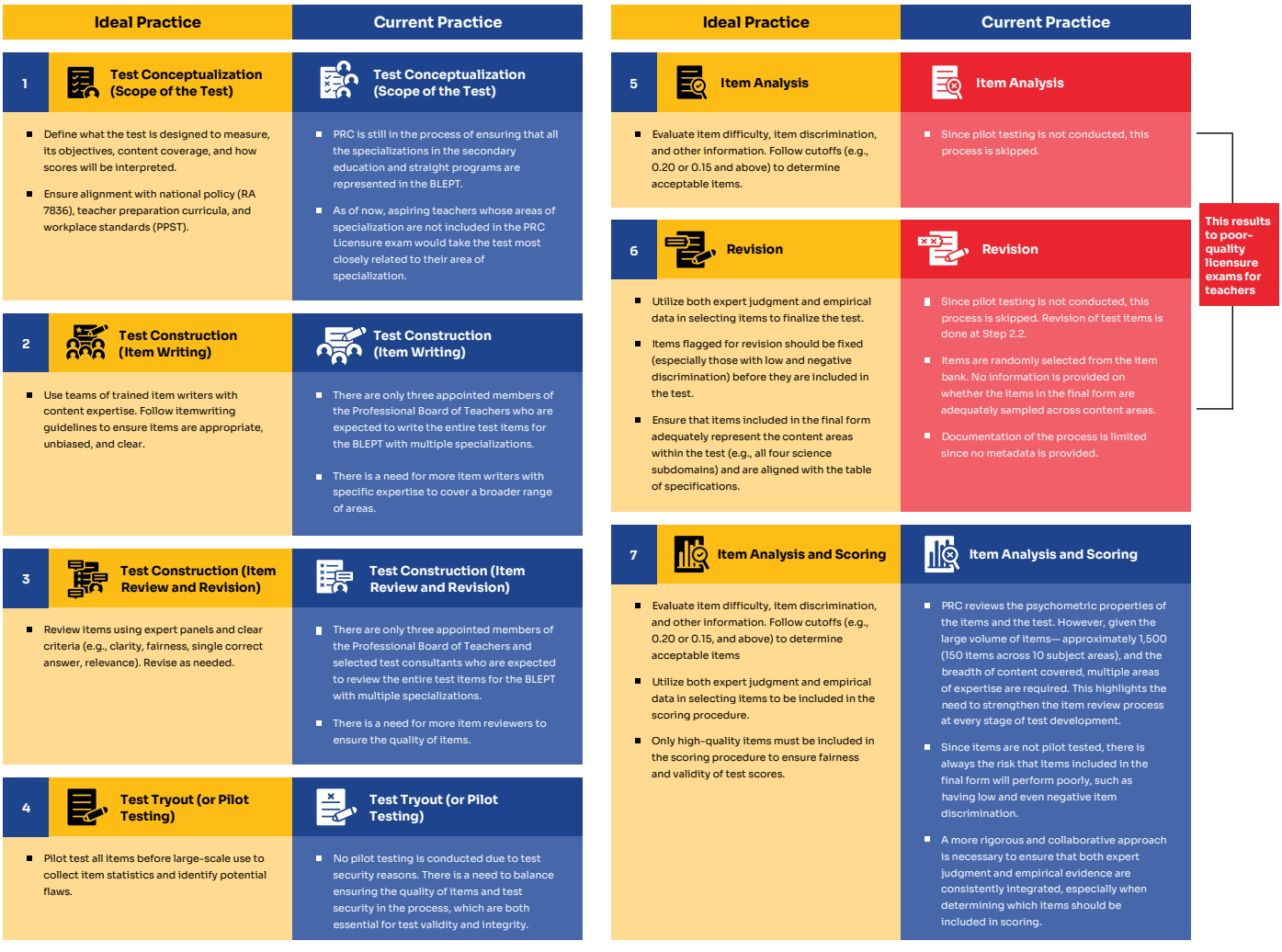
The persistent misalignment between teacher education standards, professional competencies, and licensure assessment reflects long-standing fragmentation across PRC,CHED, TEC, and DepEd. For more than a decade, the BLEPT has remained unchanged—structured only into elementary and secondary categories and failing to expand to cover specialized teacher education programs such as Early Childhood Education, Special Needs Education, or Technical-Vocational Teacher Education. This lack of reform contradicts CHED's 2017 PSGs and reinforced the structural disconnect between education and assessment.

> *The repeated inability of large cohorts to meet licensure standards signals that the problem is structural, not individual.*

> *The study on BLEPT finds substantial deficiencies in item development, insufficient empirical vetting, incomplete specialization coverage, and inconsistent documentation—conditions that diverge sharply from recognized standards for high-stakes assessment systems.*

A recent study by the UP CIDS Assessment, Curriculum, and Technology Research Program (in partnership with PBEd and Australia's DFAT) identifies fundamental weaknesses in BLEPT development and implementation (Bustos et al., 2025). The examination blueprint remains based on individual course syllabi rather than the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), resulting in limited alignment with the actual competencies expected of beginning teachers. This design flaw is one of the major factors contributing to low BLEPT performance and explains why DepEd assigns only 10 points to BLEPT results in hiring decisions, compared to the significantly higher weight given to PPST-based classroom observations (35 points) and teacher reflections (25 points). The study also finds substantial deficiencies in item development, insufficient empirical vetting, incomplete specialization coverage, and inconsistent documentation—conditions that diverge sharply from recognized standards for high-stakes assessment systems.

FIGURE 1.
Comparison of Ideal Practice with the Current Test Development Process in BLEPT



Source: Bustos et al., 2025

BLEPT performance across specializations reveals further systemic weaknesses. EDCOM's analysis of the March 2024 BLEPT found passing rates for MAPEH (34.1%), Technical Livelihood and TVE (33.2%), and Early Childhood Education graduates (42.1%, forced to take the Elementary BLEPT) significantly below the national average of 62.9%. These disparities highlight how specialization-specific competencies are poorly captured by the current two-track licensure structure, resulting in inequitable and inaccurate assessment of teacher readiness.

Signing of the Joint Memorandum Circular aligning the CHED Teacher Education Curriculum to the PRC BLEPT



PRC and CHED signed a Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) on April 10, 2025 to align the Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers (LEPT) with CHED's updated teacher education curriculum and program standards. This alignment is meant to ensure that the examination more accurately reflects the competencies required for effective teaching. Under the JMC, licensure examinations will now be administered separately by program and specialization, consistent with CHED's policies, standards, and guidelines.

The Circular establishes distinct examinations for elementary and secondary education, including Early Childhood Education, Special Needs Education, English, Filipino, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Values Education, TLE, Technical-Vocational Teacher Education, Physical Education, and Culture and Arts Education. All examinations will consist of three parts: Professional Education, General Education, and the relevant Field of Specialization, as early as September 2025.

Meanwhile, pending legislation in the 20th Congresses—House Bill No. 9979 (3rd Reading), Senate Bill No. 52, Senate Bill No. 308, and Senate Bill No. 547—seeks to modernize the Board for Professional Teachers and overhaul licensure pathways.

Proposed reforms include stricter qualifications and broader representation for board members, stronger conflict-of-interest safeguards, empirical validation of exam items, and alternative pathways such as portfolio assessment aligned with the PPST, experience-based accreditation, refresher requirements for repeat takers, bridging programs for non-education graduates, and potential practical exams. Transparency measures would also require public release of exam questions, third-party validation, and full disclosure of TEI performance records.

Across six Senate hearings (February–September 2025), lawmakers repeatedly emphasized the urgent need to redesign the licensure system to reflect actual teaching competencies, not rote recall. PRC admitted delays due to procedural constraints and limited budget for test modernization, while CHED maintained that PPST-aligned curricula had already been submitted for PRC's use. These hearings consistently revealed deep coordination gaps, bureaucratic inertia, and the absence of a unified standards-setting mechanism—issues echoed extensively in EDCOM's Year One and Year Two findings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Strengthen regulatory oversight of the teaching profession through evidence-based modernization of licensure and quality assurance mechanisms.**

   Amendments to Republic Act No. 7836 (Teacher Professionalization Act of 1994) and Republic Act No. 8981 (PRC Modernization Act) must (a) modernize the mandate of the Board for Professional Teachers (BPT), (b) require alignment of licensure examinations with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), and (c) embed mechanisms for empirical item validation, public transparency, and periodic review of the licensure system. These amendments should mandate joint standard-setting among CHED, PRC, TEC, and DepEd to ensure that preservice curricula, PPST expectations, and licensure requirements operate within a single, coherent standards ecosystem.

2. **Enhance quality assurance of Teacher Education Institutions (TEIS) and address regional disparities.** The TEC and CHED must strengthen TEI quality by expanding incentives for COE and COD designations, prioritizing regions with historically low BLEPT performance and limited access to high-quality institutions. Targeted capacity-building programs—such as curriculum mentoring, supervised teaching enhancement, and partnerships between high-performing and underperforming TEIs– must also be implemented. These interventions align with EDCOM II findings on uneven preparation levels and the concentration of COEs and CODs in Luzon, leaving other regions structurally disadvantaged.

The TEC and CHED must strengthen TEI quality by expanding incentives for COE and COD designations, prioritizing regions with historically low BLEPT performance and limited access to high-quality institutions.



PRIORITY AREA 17: PRESERVICE EDUCATION

FINDINGS

ISSUE 1: THERE IS A MISALIGNMENT BETWEEN THE GENERALIST FOCUS OF PRESERVICE EDUCATION AND TEACHER SPECIALIZATION.

The EDCOM II Year One Report (2023) has revealed that the Philippine teacher education system exhibits a fundamental structural contradiction between its generalist curriculum architecture and the specialized pedagogical demands of the K to 12 curriculum reform.

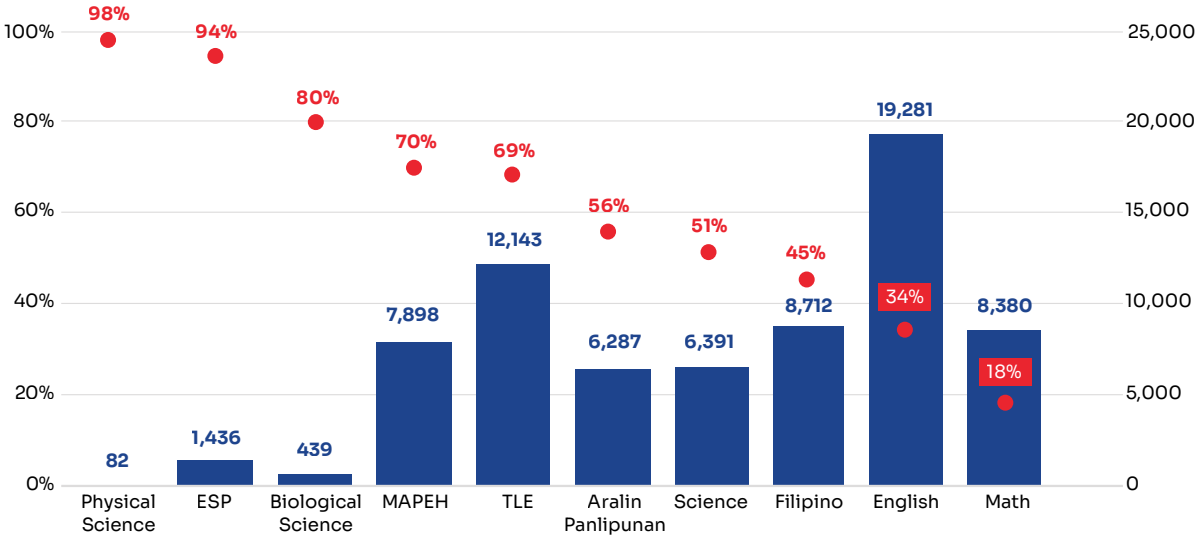
Beyond curriculum design, systemic challenges in hiring and teacher deployment further undermine instructional quality. Consultations and research by EDCOM II has found that 62% of high school teachers teach subjects they did not major in (EDCOM II, 2025)—a problem rooted in hiring and teacher loading practices at the school and division levels rather than in pre-service training content alone.

This fundamental disconnect between teacher preparation programs and actual classroom deployment requirements represents a systemic failure in the teacher education pipeline. Where, despite the emphasis of the K to 12 curriculum on specialized pedagogical expertise particularly in early grades (i.e., Key Stage 1), as well as the high subject matter expertise required in secondary, the pipeline for pre-service education continues to remain detached from the needs of public schools.

62% of high school teachers teach subjects they did not major in (EDCOM II, 2025)—a problem rooted in hiring and teacher loading practices at the school and division levels rather than in preservice training content alone.

It is clear that there is a negative correlation between the supply of specialized pre-service teachers and the rate of subject-teaching mismatch in public schools. For example, in Physical Sciences, 98% of teachers assigned to teach the subject have no disciplinary background in Physics, Chemistry, or Physical Science, while the country produced only 82 teacher education graduates specializing in these fields last academic year 2024-2025 (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2. Teacher Specialization Mismatch vs. Number of Education Graduates with Specialization for SY 2024-2025



Source: DepEd SF7 as of June 2024 and CHED-OPRKM, AY 2024-2025 Enrollment Data as of September 2025

ISSUE 2: LACK OF SPECIALIZED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TEACHERS, ESPECIALLY WITH COMPETENCIES IN EARLY GRADE READING.

Most Grade 3 students were one to two years behind curriculum expectations during the foundational years of learning (UNICEF, *forthcoming*), a deficit that correlates with inadequate teacher preparation in developmental pedagogy and content-specific instruction methods. Despite this, current Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) programs follow generalist models that inadequately prepare teachers for the specialized demands of specific grade bands. The CHED's existing curriculum structure allocates insufficient units to specialization which leaves graduates unprepared for the developmental and pedagogical requirements of their assigned grade levels. This contributes directly to the Philippines' learning poverty rate of 90.9% (World Bank, 2023), as teachers lack the specialized knowledge necessary to address foundational learning gaps in the early years.

This misalignment manifests in three critical dimensions:

1. Content preparation remains superficial with methods courses averaging only 3 units per learning area compared to international benchmarks of 6-9 units for elementary specializations (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2023).
2. Developmental science coursework which is essential for understanding cognitive progressions in early numeracy and emergent literacy, and comprises less than 6% of total program units which is significantly below the 15% recommended by UNESCO's Teacher Task Force (2023).
3. The absence of grade-banded specialization tracks forces graduates to navigate a 13-year span (K-12) without deep expertise in any developmental phase.



In addition, the supply of qualified early childhood education teachers remains critically inadequate to meet system demands. Of the 249 HEIs offering the ECE teaching program, there have only been 3,121 graduates in SY 2023-2024 (CHED SY 2023-2024 Enrollment Data). In contrast, there are 22 million 0-9 year old children in the country (PSA Census 2020). This severe shortage falls dramatically short of the demand for Kindergarten teachers alone, let alone the broader early childhood education workforce needs.

However, the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education (BECEd) program faces multiple structural challenges. First, only 31 of 1,721 Teacher Education Institutions offer BECEd programs. This creates severe geographic maldistribution of training opportunities. Second, the current licensure system undermines specialization: ECE graduates specializing in teaching 0-4 year old children who want to take the Licensure Examination for Teachers need to register for the Elementary Level exam, even if it currently encompasses competencies and learning areas for children beyond the early years (0–4) (EDCOM2, 2025).

The development of specialized tracks in pre-service education needs to be incentivized by DepEd and the Civil Service Commission (CSC) in the hiring of teachers. Currently, the filling of plantilla positions are agnostic to the specialization of graduates especially in elementary (in this case, specific to the needs of ECCD in Key Stage 1). To encourage uptake of ECCD specialization, the hiring of teachers from Kinder to Grade 3 may prioritize those with background/training in this area.

> *The CHED's existing curriculum structure allocates insufficient units to specialization which leaves graduates unprepared for the developmental and pedagogical requirements of their assigned grade levels.*

ISSUE 3: CHED PSGS REQUIRE ONLY A MINIMUM OF SIX UNITS EACH FOR FIELD STUDIES AND PRACTICE TEACHING/TEACHING INTERNSHIPS—WHICH IS AMONG THE SHORTEST GLOBALLY.

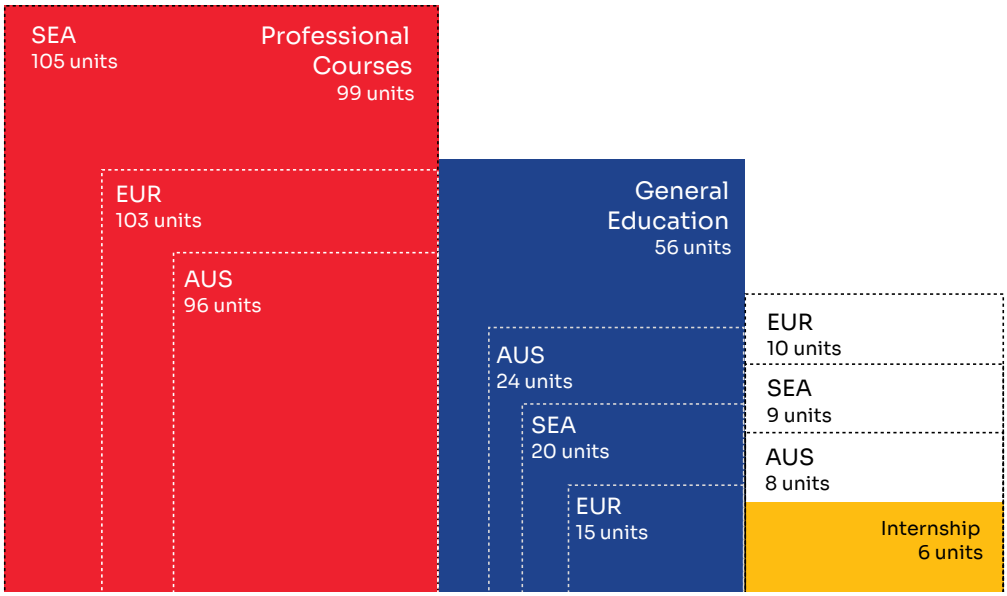
About 75% of OECD and participating countries require around 800 hours of teaching practicum (OECD, 2022). In contrast, Philippine teacher education programs mandate only six units each of Field Study and Practice Teaching—about 360 hours total (EDCOM II Year Two Report, 2024), or less than half of global norms and only 7% of a four-year program.

High-performing systems such as Finland, Canada, Australia, and the United States require substantially more supervised clinical practice, often delivered through training schools with expert mentors. Finland alone allocates 27 credits to guided practicum embedded throughout pedagogical studies (Mullins et al., 2016; Aristorenas, 2017).

These systems follow a structured progression—from observation to tutoring, co-teaching, and eventually lead teaching with intensive coaching. To align with international standards and ensure stronger teacher readiness, the Philippines needs to increase practicum requirements to at least 800 hours distributed across the four-year program.

This critical shift in practice requires that DepEd also ensures that teachers have (1) time to actually observe and provide feedback and support to pre-service students, and (2) that they receive training in providing mentorship.

FIGURE 3.
Treemap of Secondary Education, compared to AUS, EU, ASEAN benchmarks



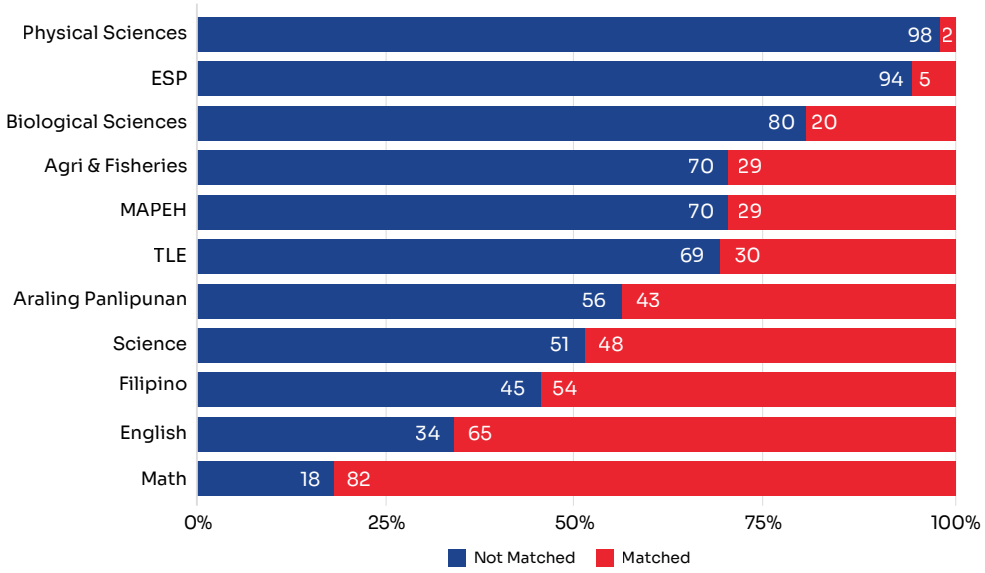
Source: Largoza and Fernandez, (2025). Review of CHED Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSGs) Pre- and Post-K to 12 Reforms.

However, laboratory schools, as currently configured, are poorly positioned to prepare teachers for the public school classrooms they will actually enter. In various consultations and field visits, EDCOM II has observed that current laboratory schools often serve atypical student populations and operate in isolation from public school realities where most graduates will teach. Laboratory schools should be transformed into Professional Development Schools serving as innovation hubs for teacher preparation. Partner schools are increasingly developed as sites for clinical practice with school–university collaboration taking place through shared decision-making about student-teachers (Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2012).

ISSUE 4: DEPED TEACHER SPECIALIZATION MISMATCH.

A recent PIDS study commissioned by EDCOM II provides compelling empirical evidence on the persistence and consequences of teacher-subject mismatch in Philippine basic education (Mejia et al., 2025). The study found that nearly three-quarters (74.69%) of surveyed teachers experienced some level of subject-specialization mismatch, with 42.86% teaching entirely outside their pre-service specialization and only 25.31% fully matched to their area of preparation[1]. Notably, 29.80% of teachers handled multiple mismatched subjects, suggesting that mismatch is not merely a single-instance phenomenon but a compounding challenge for many educators. The study's correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship ($r = 0.36$, $p = 0.023$ between teacher specialization alignment and student examination scores. This correlation indicates that learners taught by specialized teachers generally achieve higher academic outcomes. Qualitative findings reinforced this pattern: teachers reported that mismatched assignments led to decreased confidence, increased preparation time, diminished content mastery, and difficulties addressing student misconceptions, which are all factors that collectively undermine instructional quality.

FIGURE 4.
DepEd High School Teachers' Specialization Mismatch



Source: Department of Education as of June 2024

The study also found that 77.24% of teacher respondents lacked additional teaching certifications beyond their undergraduate degree which suggests limited opportunities for specialization, reinforcement, or expansion after initial preparation. High mismatch rates in Filipino (15.51%), English (15.10%), and Science (14.69%) point to persistent gaps in TEI program supply relative to basic education demand. For Science in particular, the absence of Earth and Space Science as a recognized specialization under CHED's 2017 Policies, Standards, and Guidelines exemplifies the misalignment between teacher preparation frameworks and classroom realities despite its inclusion in the K to 12 curriculum.

> *Teachers reported that mismatched assignments led to decreased confidence, increased preparation time, diminished content mastery, and difficulties addressing student misconceptions*

1 The Mejia et. al (2025) survey includes teachers across grade levels from elementary to secondary. Nevertheless, the survey mirrors the findings in the EDCOM II Year Two Report based on initial analysis of the SF7 that "62% of high school teachers teach subjects outside their college major (EDCOM II, 2025)."

ISSUE 5: INCONSISTENCY IN HIRING PRACTICES TO IMPLEMENT THE LOCALIZATION LAW.

The implementation of Republic Act 8190 or the Localization Law reveals persistent tensions between community-based teacher recruitment and the imperative to maintain educational quality standards. While the law successfully strengthens community-school connections and reduces teacher turnover through proximity-based recruitment, implementation faces critical challenges (Mejia, et al., 2025). The study found that successive Department Orders have inconsistently applied residency requirements (Table 2). Most significantly, many localities struggle with insufficient qualified local candidates particularly for specialized subjects in science, mathematics, and Senior High School tracks. Political interference and nepotism sometimes result in less qualified hires, while bureaucratic delays in approval processes extend vacancy periods (Mejia, et al., 2025). The 2013 amendments in DepEd Order No. 3, s. 2013 broadened "bona fide resident" definitions to address rigid locality restrictions, yet specialization mismatches persist. Despite improving teacher retention and reducing relocation costs, the law's effectiveness remains constrained by the fundamental challenge of balancing community engagement objectives with the need to maintain teaching quality standards across diverse geographic contexts.

TABLE 2.
Historical Shifts in Department of Education Orders on Localization and Teacher Hiring

DO No. 56, s. 1996 **DO No. 11, s. 1997**	▪ Established strict prioritization of bona fide residents in hierarchical order (barangay > municipality > city/province)
DO No. 3, s. 2013 **DO No. 7, s. 2015** **DO No. 22, s. 2015**	▪ Removed the hierarchical ranking system that previously favored barangay resident (equal opportunity for all teachers within a province) ▪ Maintained priority for bona fide residents from the Registry of Qualified Applicants (RQA) ▪ Modified the order of utilizing RQAs from neighboring SDOs when local positions remained unfilled
DO No. 19, s. 2022 **DO No. 2, s. 2023**	▪ Repealed previous orders while retaining Localization Law principles, expanded "bona fide resident" definition to include LSB-hired teachers, Kindergarten Volunteer Teachers, and substitute teachers ▪ Introduced Merit Selection Plan that "favored qualifications like teaching experience, LET scores, and subject specialization over residency, sometimes contradicting the law's intent (Mejia, et al., 2025)"

International research suggests that offering opportunities for industry professionals to work as teachers in schools part-time may help address urgent shortages and provide a pathway into teaching, while allowing some practitioners to straddle both teaching and non-teaching workforces (Kistler & Dougherty, 2024). Several OECD countries have introduced employment-based routes that allow professionals to hold teaching positions while completing training, and recognize prior experience through special certification processes (OECD, 2025).

ISSUE 6: GAPS IN TEACHER WORKFORCE PLANNING.

Teacher workforce planning in the Philippines is hampered by the absence of systematic data on vacancies, specializations, and geographic distribution. **Effective teacher workforce planning requires robust data infrastructure that can identify current gaps and forecast future needs by subject area, grade level, and geographic location.** However, many education systems lack such capacity; the OECD found that only two-thirds of surveyed systems have projections of potential teacher shortages for 2025-2030 at primary and secondary levels, with fewer than half producing projections for other education levels (OECD, 2024).

> *Without granular data on teacher needs from depEd, teacher educ institutions cannot strategically align their program offerings*

In the Philippines, EDCOM II Commissioner Senator Joel Villanueva has urged DepEd to provide a detailed breakdown of unfilled positions disaggregated by grade level, specialization, and locality (EDCOM II, 2023). This underscores the absence of a unified reporting mechanism. Without granular data, teacher education institutions cannot strategically align their program offerings with actual workforce demands. International experience shows that centralized systems linking teacher supply data with district-level vacancy information by certification area are critical for addressing localized shortages (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2021).

ISSUE 7: CHALLENGES IN RECRUITING THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST TO TEACHING

An EDCOM II-Ateneo study found that motivation and self-efficacy were the strongest predictors of students' willingness to teach while students from STEM tracks and higher-income households showed significantly lower interest (Mirasol, 2025). Focus group discussions further highlighted that salary concerns, excessive workload, and perceived lack of government support were primary deterrents, though positive teacher role models served as powerful motivators for those inclined toward teaching (Mirasol, 2025).

> *"Using nationally representative labor force data, the study found that 61% of education degree graduates do not teach, with many ending up in retail, clerical, or elementary occupations that do not require college-level qualifications."*
> *- Alinsunurin, 2024*

These challenges underscore the urgency of adopting deliberate recruitment strategies especially since top-performing school systems such as Finland, Singapore, and South Korea prioritize getting the right people to become teachers as a fundamental strategy (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). **In contrast to challenges facing teachers already in service, a parallel study by Alinsunurin (2024) underscores inefficiencies at an earlier stage of the pipeline: career entry itself.** Taken together, these findings suggest that the TEI system faces a twofold challenge: producing graduates who either fail to enter the profession or, when they do, are frequently deployed outside their area of specialization.

ISSUE 8: ABSENCE OF ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS LIMIT TEACHER ENTRY AND IMPROVEMENTS IN QUALITY.

EDCOM II consultations have also revealed that alternative pathways to teaching remain underdeveloped and lack coherent quality assurance mechanisms, despite multiple laws allowing for such (Republic Act No. 9293, Republic Act No. 10533, Republic Act No. 10647, and Republic Act No. 11713). While said laws acknowledge para-teachers, lateral entrants, and career shifters, operational pathways lack clear competency-based progression frameworks, standardized assessment protocols, and structured professional development requirements (RITQ, 2025). For instance, Republic Act No. 9293 allows those who failed BLEPT to serve as para-teachers on a two-year special permit, but offers no structured development plan or advancement ladder is available later on (EDCOM II Year Two Report, 2024).

Without coherent alternative certification systems, the Philippines cannot tap potential high-quality teacher candidates from other fields or provide advancement pathways for committed para-teachers. **International evidence demonstrates that well-designed alternative certification programs can produce effective teachers, particularly in shortage areas, but require rigorous selection, intensive preparation, and ongoing support** (Blazer, 2012; World Bank, 2011; American Institutes for Research, 2017). Unfortunately, these are elements largely absent from current Philippine approaches.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Strengthen recruitment strategies to attract high-performing students into the teaching profession.** To address the pronounced disinterest among STEM students, the Teacher Education Scholarship Program under Republic Act No. 11713 (Excellence in Teacher Education Act) should be fully funded and expanded to target high-achieving STEM graduates with service obligations in underserved areas. This approach is supported by research indicating that targeted financial incentives can effectively encourage entry into teaching, especially when combined with improved working conditions (See et al., 2020). Beyond scholarships, competitive compensation policies and meaningful career progression structures are essential for enhancing the profession's status and attractiveness (Evans & Beteille, 2019). Finally, given the significant influence of positive teacher role models identified in the study (Mirasol, 2025), DepEd and CHED should collaborate on early exposure programs that immerse high school students in supportive teaching environments and mentorship opportunities to cultivate intrinsic motivation before career decisions are finalized.

2. **Enhance practical training through extended and structured practicum.** The extended practicum should include cycles of planning, teaching, assessment, and reflection with regular feedback from trained mentor teachers who receive load reduction and compensation for their supervisory role. This must be co-developed by TEC with DepEd and CHED to ensure that on-ground realities in supervision and mentorship are also accounted for in the design of these programs.

3. **Bridge the gap between laboratory school training and public school realities by mandating clinical partnerships with diverse school settings.** This requires establishing formal partnerships between TEIs and diverse public schools to ensure student teachers experience authentic classroom conditions including multigrade settings, inclusive education environments, and schools in geographically isolated areas. Laboratory schools should pilot evidence-based interventions in early literacy and numeracy before system-wide implementation.

4. **Shift to specialization in preservice education and hiring, even for Key Stages 1 and 2.** Teacher education programs should be restructured into developmentally-aligned tracks: BECEd for Kindergarten to Grade 3 focusing on early childhood development and foundational literacy/numeracy; BEEd for Grades 4-6 with subject-area specializations; with BSEd maintaining subject specialization for secondary levels. This aligns with UNESCO recommendations that teachers need to be trained and supported through professional development, and motivated and willing to continually improve their teaching practices through specialized preparation pathways (UNESCO, 2016; UNESCO, 2023). This shift however must be tempered with pathways for those who are misaligned but have taught the subject for several years already (recognizing that some may have already built expertise as a result), and be aligned with DepEd hiring policies and practices (in close coordination with CSC).

5. **Urgently establish a Teacher Information Database to project granular demand for teacher specializations and inform teacher education institution offerings.** DepEd should urgently establish a Teacher Information Database integrating workforce demographics, attrition patterns, retirement projections, and enrollment trends to generate demand forecasts by specialization and region. This database should be accessible to CHED and teacher education institutions to enable evidence-based adjustments to program offerings, enrollment quotas, and scholarship allocations under Republic Act No. 11713. This initiative would be able to ensure the teacher pipeline responds strategically to where educators are most needed.



6. **Urgently establish a Teacher Information Database to project granular demand for teacher specializations and inform teacher education institution offerings.** Alternative pathways may help ease teacher shortages and bring into the profession fresh perspectives to address the critical teacher shortages that exist in STEM, special education, and early childhood education. Nevertheless, careful design is needed by establishing competency-based alternative certification programs for high-need fields with selective entry requirements and effective support for new hires (World Bank, 2011; American Institutes for Research, 2017). These programs should include intensive pedagogical preparation, extended supervised practice, and performance-based assessments before certification. CHED should consider creating fast-track post-baccalaureate programs for STEM graduates, alongside entering teaching, with integrated clinical practice and mentorship. DepEd must publish real-time vacancy data by grade level and subject specialization in order to enable targeted recruitment and preparation aligned with system needs.

7. **Amend DepEd HR practices to reduce misplacement and reward fit.** Hiring guidelines must be revised to recognize specialization-aligned qualifications. There is a need to revisit weighted scoring matrices where grade-band and subject specialization alignment contributes a significant portion (i.e., at least 30%) of ranking scores. The DepEd should also heavily consider ECEd graduates should receive priority for Kindergarten-Grade 3 positions, as well as with similar alignment for other specializations. DepEd should also consider innovative practices and mechanisms among SDOs for inter-division mobility for specialized positions when local pools lack qualified candidates.

   DepEd should also institutionalize flexible part-time hiring arrangements that enable qualified industry practitioners, artists, athletes, and technical experts to teach specialized subjects without requiring full licensure. DepEd, in coordination with TESDA and the Professional Regulation Commission, should streamline qualification standards and develop appropriate compensation packages to attract part-time industry experts to ensure that students, especially those in TVL and other specialized tracks, receive instruction from practitioners with current, real-world expertise.

8. **Reorient NEAP toward early-grade reading for KS1 and strengthen content supports for secondary teachers.** The National Educators' Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) must reorient its professional development offerings to address identified learning gaps. For Key Stage 1 teachers, structured literacy should become the core offering, with comprehensive training in phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension based on evidence-based pedagogical practices. For secondary teachers, develop content-deepening institutes addressing identified gaps in mathematical reasoning, scientific inquiry, and academic writing, and structure all programs as competency-based progressions with micro-credentials linked to career advancement. However, pre-service training alone is insufficient without systematic follow-up and application support. The World Bank emphasizes that follow-up visits that include school-based coaching to reinforce training are among the most effective characteristics of professional development programs (Popova, et al., 2018; Darling-Hammond, et al., 2017; World Bank, 2019). Thus, there is also a need to examine how the DepEd can strengthen instructional leadership in schools.

9. **Consider extending or institutionalizing Section 8 of Republic Act No. 10533 which allows for the exemption for both elementary and secondary:**

   To ease challenges in recruiting specialized teachers especially for Secondary, DepEd should consider extending or institutionalizing Section 8 of Republic Act No. 10533: Section 8. Hiring of Graduates of Science, Mathematics, Statistics, Engineering and Other Specialists in Subjects With a Shortage of Qualified Applicants, Technical-Vocational Courses and Higher Education Institution Faculty. — Notwithstanding the provisions of Sections 26, 27 and 28 of Republic Act No. 7836, otherwise known as the "Philippine Teachers Professionalization Act of 1994", the DepED and private education institutions shall hire, as may be relevant to the particular subject:

   > *(a) Graduates of science, mathematics, statistics, engineering, music and other degree courses with shortages in qualified Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) applicants* ***to teach in their specialized subjects in the elementary and secondary education.***
   >
   > *(d) The DepED and private education institutions may hire practitioners,* ***with expertise in the specialized learning areas offered by the Basic Education Curriculum, to teach in the secondary level;*** *Provided, That they teach on a part-time basis only. For this purpose, the DepED, in coordination with the appropriate government agencies, shall determine the necessary qualification standards in hiring these experts.*

10. **Review Localization Law in a way that balances community-based teacher recruitment with subject specialization needs.** The implementation of Republic Act No. 8190 needs to be reviewed to balance local preference with specialization needs especially for STEM subjects where local qualified candidates are scarce (Mejia et al., 2025). Colombia's *Estatuto de Profesionalización Docente* reserves 20-30% of positions for specialized recruitment while maintaining local preference (Ome, 2013). To increase local teacher supply, DepEd in partnership with CHED can establish "grow-your-own" programs with local universities, similar to successful models in Angola, Australia, and China (Mejia et al., 2025; Nsiangengo and Diasala, 2008; Hudson & Hudson, 2019; Zhai, et al., 2020).

PRIORITY AREA 18: IN-SERVICE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING TEACHER WELFARE

FINDINGS

ISSUE 1: PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS FACE AN OVERWHELMING VOLUME OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND COMMUNITY-RELATED TASKS, SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCING THE TIME AVAILABLE FOR LESSON PREPARATION, STUDENT ENGAGEMENT, AND INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT.

This persistent burden has long been underscored by national reviews of teacher workload in both the EDCOM Year 1 and Year 2 Reports, which identify paperwork overload, community service mandates, and compliance-driven reporting as systemic barriers that prevent teachers from fulfilling their primary role as educators. These excessive non-teaching duties not only diminish instructional quality but also contribute directly to stress, exhaustion, and long-term attrition risk.

In the past year, significant strides have been made by DepEd in reducing administrative burdens of teachers, including the deployment of additional administrative officers, and the reduction in forms to be accomplished. DepEd Order No. 002, s. 2024 mandated the immediate removal of administrative tasks from public school teachers, and transferred these responsibilities to school heads and non-teaching personnel. This policy responded to findings from the EDCOM II Year One Report that teachers were burdened with over 50 ancillary and administrative tasks, including serving as canteen managers, 4Ps coordinators, and Gulayan sa Paaralan facilitators (EDCOM II, 2024). **Research conducted by IDInsight in partnership with EDCOM II revealed that nearly half of educators exceed 50 hours of work weekly, with roughly 18 hours spent on ancillary responsibilities and about 8 hours on program-related duties** (IDInsight, 2024).

To support implementation, the 2025 national budget authorized 10,000 new administrative officer and support staff positions within DepEd. Furthermore, the department committed to renewing and recruiting over 7,000 school-based administrative support personnel on contract of service across public schools nationwide to handle clerical functions and allow educators to concentrate on instruction (DepEd, 2025). These are key initial steps forward in unburdening teachers to allow them to focus on teaching.

Recent evidence from Rivera et al. (2025) highlights that teachers experience mounting mental health pressures due to heavy workloads, heightened emotional labor, and inadequate institutional support. The study emphasizes that although policy frameworks acknowledge the need for mental health and psychosocial services, actual implementation remains fragmented, inconsistent, and poorly resourced—mirroring findings in EDCOM's assessment that national mechanisms such as the DRRMS helpline are insufficient substitutes for structured, accessible, and sustained mental health programs. **Teachers report feeling overwhelmed, with many lacking both preventive mental health tools and responsive support systems, particularly in schools with limited resources.**

On March 20, 2025, DepEd released DepEd Order No. 006, s. 2025 which reduced the number of forms to be accomplished by teachers from 174 to 75. This policy operationalizes a major reform in teacher workload by formally restricting the number and type of school forms and reports that teachers must accomplish, and by transferring responsibility for non-

essential, non-teaching reports to other school personnel. The same provides system-wide guidelines to rationalize teachers' administrative burden, reinforce instructional time, and institutionalize workload protections across all governance levels of the Department.

TABLE 3.
Comprehensive List of School Forms and Reports Accomplished by Teachers Before and After the Issuance of DepEd Order No. 006, S. 2025

No.	Forms	No.	Forms
1	Learning Outcome Assessment	16	Supreme Elementary Learner Government (SELG) Action Plan
2	Class Record	17	Learner Government (LG) Commission on Elections and Appointments (COMEA) Monitoring Tool
3	Test Result and Analysis	18	Learner Government (LG) Commission on Elections and Appointments (COMEA) Monitoring Tool
4	Report on Remedial and Intervention Program	19	Election Application Form (Learner Government Election)
5	Individualized Learning Plan	20	Introductory Profile for Elementary Level (Learner Government Election)
6	Learning Area Action Plans	21	Introductory Profile for Secondary Level (Learner Government Election)
7	Learning Resource Management Section (LRMS) Needs	22	Screening Form [Election] (Learner Government Election)
8	Youth for Environment in Schools Organization (YES-O) Calendar of Annual Proposed Activities	23	Screening Form [Appointment]
9	YES-O Registration Form	24	Sample Ballot
10	YES-O Annual Accomplishment Report	25	Election Tabulation Form
11	Intake Sheet/Incident Report	26	Election Canvass Form
12	Quarterly Mental Health Report	27	Registry of Elected Officers
13	SSC 1: School Sports Club Registration Form	28	Registry of Qualified Nominees
14	Updated Sports Form for Athletes	29	School Career Guidance Implementation Report
15	Supreme Elementary Learner Government (SELG) Accomplishment Report	30	Curriculum Exit Tracking
31	Membership Report	54	Narrative Report of SLAC for Intermediate Teachers
32	Five Year Action Plan/Target	55	National Learning Camp (NLC) Attendance Record
33	General Plan of Action	56	Accomplishment Report of LCVs (Learning Camp Volunteer)
34	Communication for Respondent	57	In-Service Training for Teachers (INSET) Report / documentation
35	Grievance Form	58	Report on Learners at Risk of Dropping Out
36	Appointment Form and Certification	59	School Form 1 - School Register
37	Communication for Appointee	60	School Form 2 - Learner Daily Attendance Report
38	Communication for Nominee and Nomination Reply Slip	61	School Form 3 - Book Issued and Returned
39	Nomination Form	62	School Form 5 - Report on Promotion and Level of Proficiency
40	Oath of Office	63	School Form 5A - End of Semester and School Year Status
41	Poll Watcher Authorization Form	64	School Form 8 - Learner's Basic Health and Nutrition Report
42	Minutes of the Meeting (Learner Government Election)	65	School Form 9 - Learner's Progress Report Card

No.	Forms	No.	Forms
43	Notice of Meeting (Learner Government Election)	66	School Form 10 - Learner's Permanent Academic Record
44	Resolution (Learner Government Election)	67	Learner Information System (LIS) Updating, Encoding, and Finalization
45	Kindergarten Progress Report	68	National Achievement Test List of Learners
46	Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) (Individual, Classroom and School Reading Profile)	69	Alternative Learning System (ALS) Form 1 - List of Mapped and Potential Learners
47	Rapid Numeracy Assessment Result	70	ALS Form 3 - Master List of Enrolled Learners and End of Program Assessment
48	Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) Result	71	ALS Form 4 - Master List of A&E Test Registrants
49	Multi-factored Assessment Tool (MFAT) Result	72	ALS Form 5 - Learner's Permanent Record
50	Early Childhood Development Checklist	73	Early Language Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (ELLNA) - List of Learners
51	Learning Action Cell (LAC) Plan and Accomplishment Report	74	School Form 5B- List of Learners with Complete SHS Requirements
52	Instructional Supervisory Plan	75	SHS Tracer Report/Curriculum Exit Tracking System
53	Instructional Supervisory Report		
Prior to the Issuance of DO 006, S. 2025			
76	Certification, Authentication and Verification (CAV) of Basic Education School Records Form 1 - Request Form	81	Certification, Authentication and Verification (CAV) of Basic Education School Records Form 6 - List of Approved CAV
77	Certification, Authentication and Verification (CAV) of Basic Education School Records Form 2 - School Referral Form to SDO	82	Inventory Custodian Form And Slip
78	Certification, Authentication and Verification (CAV) of Basic Education School Records Form 3 - Indorsement for Correction of Entries	83	Inventory Monitoring
79	Certification, Authentication and Verification (CAV) of Basic Education School Records Form 4 - Certification of Enrollment/Completion/ Graduation	84	Inventory Report on Physical Count of Property Plant and Equipment (RPCPPE)
80	Certification, Authentication and Verification (CAV) of Basic Education School Records Form 5 - School Transmittal to ROs	85	National Archives of the Philippines (NAP) Form 3 - Authority to Dispose
86	National Archives of the Philippines (NAP) Form 7 - Authority to Transfer Non-Current Public Records	122	Form 2A - Record of Daily Treatment - Medical
87	National Archives of the Philippines (NAP) Form 1 - Inventory and Appraisal	123	Form 2B - Record of Daily Treatment - Dental
88	Reconstruction and English Translation of Diploma	124	Form 3A - Medical Referral Form
89	Learning Recovery Program/Plan	125	Form 3B - Dental Referral Form
90	Library Inventory	126	Learner Rights and Protection Desk Implementation Narrative Report
91	Annual Inventory Report of Learning Resources	127	Master List Beneficiaries for School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP)
92	NLC Liquidation and Accomplishment	128	Narrative Report on Vaccination
93	SPED/LSEN Support Fund Liquidation	129	National Drug Education Program Accomplishment Report (EBEIS Data Element)
94	MOOE Liquidation	130	Quarterly NDEP Report
95	GAD Accomplishment Report	131	SBFP Form 1 (Master List Beneficiaries for School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP))
96	GAD Plan	132	SBFP Form 2 - SBFP Summary and Start/End of Feeding
97	OPCRF	133	SBFP Form 3 - Record of Daily Feeding

No.	Forms	No.	Forms
98	Teacher Induction Program/IPBT	134	SBFP Form 5 - List of Beneficiaries with/without Milk Intolerance
99	Classroom Need Analysis	135	SBFP Form 6 - Record of Deliveries
100	National School Building Inventory (NSBI)	136	SBFP Form 7C (School) - Program Terminal Report
101	NOSA, SALN, UPDATED PERSONNEL FILES	137	SBFP Form 8 - Parent's Consent for Milk
102	Payroll	138	School Forms and Checking Report (SFCR)
103	Personnel Inventory	139	SDHCP Form 4 - Teachers Health Card
104	DRRM Contingency Plan	140	SDHCP Form 4A - Health Examination Card
105	Quarterly DRRM Report	141	SDHCP Form 4B - Oral Health Profile of T & NTP
106	Report on Elected PTA Officers	142	SDHCP Form 5 - Monthly/Annual Health Services Accomplishment Report
107	Adolescent Reproductive Health Report	143	SDHCP Form 5A - Monthly/Annual Dental Accomplishment Report
108	Barkada Kontra Droga (BKD)	144	Student-Led School Watching and Hazard Mapping Checklist
109	Baseline Nutritional Status Report	145	WASH and WINS Report
110	Career Guidance Program (CGP)	146	Weekly Iron Folic Acid Supplementation Program Report
111	Career Guidance Program Accomplishment Report	147	Canteen Report
112	Cases of Bullying/Incident Reports	148	Inventory of Sports Equipment under SBEEP Program
113	Child Protection Report	149	SBFP Form 4 - List of Authorized Consignees and School Inspection Team for Milk Delivery
114	Deworming Report	150	SBFP Liquidation
115	Form 1 - School Health Examination Card	151	SDHCP Form 1B - Delivery Report (School)
116	Form 1A - Medical History (For Learners)	152	SDHCP Form 2B - Distribution and Acceptance Report (School)
117	Form 1B - Medical/Nursing Findings	153	Brigada Eskwela Form
118	Form 1C - Medical Treatment Record	154	Monthly Adopt-A-School Report
119	Form 1D - Dental Findings K to G3	155	DCP Monitoring Report
120	Form 1DA - Dental Findings G4 to 6	156	Inventory and status of DCP Packages
121	Form 1DB - Dental Findings (Intervention/ Treatment)	157	Report on Students' Access to Internet and Gadgets
158	CSM Report	166	School Improvement Plan
159	Comprehensive Report on Social Media Accounts, Websites, and Information Systems	167	School Report Card
160	Annual Procurement Plan (APP)	168	SMEA reports
161	PPMP	169	Work and Financial Plan
162	Annual Implementation Plan (AIP)	170	School Form 4 - Monthly Learner Movement and Attendance Report
163	EBEIS	171	Daily Enrollment Monitoring/Data Report
164	Enrollment Quick Count	172	School Form 7 - School Personnel Assignment List and Basic Profile
165	PIR (MEA) Report	173	Teacher Needs Analysis
164	Enrollment Quick Count	174	School Form 6 - Summarized Report on Promotion and Level of Proficiency
165	PIR (MEA) Report		

- *The list of school forms and reports accomplished by teachers is based on the mapping conducted by the TWG created to review school forms and reports under DM 37, s. 2024;*
- *DO 6, s. 2025 has streamlined the list to include only those required for teacher ancillary tasks and teaching-related assignments.*



However, teachers continue to shoulder administrative burdens due to chronic shortages in school support staff. Large schools across the country face a persistent shortage of essential non-teaching personnel, particularly Administrative Officer II and Project Development Officer I), leaving teachers to absorb logistics, procurement paperwork, and event administration. These challenges are compounded in larger schools, where the volume of administrative work scales with student and faculty size, yet the absence of sufficient non-teaching personnel means that tasks continue to spill over to teachers despite relief efforts (IDinsight, 2024).

Senior teaching personnel such as Master Teachers and Department Heads are frequently called upon to assist with more complex administrative functions, including budgeting and project financing, further diverting their time from instructional leadership (IDinsight, 2024). In practice, the shortage of clerical and project support translates into hours taken from lesson planning, remediation, and assessment. To meaningfully reduce these burdens, expanding non-teaching personnel deployment beyond Administrative Officers to include Project Development Officers as permanent school-based positions warrants consideration especially given teachers' significant involvement in program coordination activities (IDinsight, 2024).

The DepEd proposed School Organizational Structure and Staffing Standards (SOSSS) updating the long-outdated 1997 policy show significant gaps between required and existing support items—e.g., 12,078 AO II positions and 44,285 PDO I positions still need to be created nationwide—highlighting the scale of administrative functions currently absorbed by teachers. The agency's submission to EDCOM II confirms that insufficient support staffing is systemic, spanning schools of all sizes, and that equitable deployment is necessary to fully unload teachers of operational tasks.

To meaningfully reduce these burdens, expanding non-teaching personnel deployment beyond Administrative Officers to include Project Development Officers as permanent school-based positions warrants consideration.

FIGURE 5.
Proposed Three-Year and Five-Year Phased Implementation of the School Organizational Structure and Staffing Standards (SOSSS)

				Three-Year Phased Implementation			Five-Year Phased Implementation				
Position	**No. of Required Items**	**No. of Existing Items**	**No. of Items for Creation**	**Phase 1**	**Phase 2**	**Phase 3**	**Phase 1**	**Phase 2**	**Phase 3**	**Phase 4**	**Phase 5**
SP I	45,785	23,622	22,163	6,000	8,000	8,163	6,000	6,465	4,849	3,233	1,616
AO II	46,597	34,519	12,078	11,268	810		11,268	810			
PDO I	45,785	1,500	44,285	5,000	20,000	19,285	5,000	15,714	11,786	7,857	3,928
SCA I	51,572	5,844	45,728	10,000	18,000	17,728	10,000	14,291	10,718	7,146	3,573
ADAS II (Clerk IV)	10,704		10,704		10,704			4,282	3,211	2,141	1,070
ADAS II (Disbursing Officer)	45,785	1,378	44,407		44,407			17,763	13,322	8,881	4,441
ADAS III (Senior Bookkeeper)	45,785	6,549	39,236		39,236			15,694	11,771	7,847	3,924
AO IV	4,978	325	4,653			4,653		1,861	1,396	931	465
Registrar	4,978	1,201	3,777			3,777		1,511	1,133	755	378
School Librarian I	18,800	538	18,262			18,262		7,305	5,479	3,652	1,826
Nursing Attendant	45,785	2	45,783			45,783		18,313	13,735	9,157	4,578
CMT I	18,800		18,800			18,800		7,520	5,640	3,760	1,880
ADAS II (General)	46,597		46,597			46,597		18,639	13,979	9,319	4,660

Source: DepEd submission on School Staffing Standards and Teacher Workload as of Oct 21 2025

In the absence of adequate administrative personnel, teachers continue to undertake non-instructional responsibilities, contributing to an unsustainable workload. Based on consultations and workload studies referenced in EDCOM reports, teachers spend an estimated 4–8 hours per week completing, encoding, or recreating school forms, including repetitive submissions of documents that duplicate existing records. These tasks reduce preparation time for lesson planning, assessment design, and individualized learner support—functions central to effective teaching. Teachers in larger schools are disproportionately affected due to higher student volumes, greater administrative complexity, and limited distribution of support staff relative to actual workload demands.

ISSUE 2: PERSISTENT FRAGMENTATION, MISALIGNMENT, AND LIMITED ACCESSIBILITY IN TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONTINUE TO HINDER SYSTEMIC GAINS IN INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY.

Teachers consistently report that INSET activities lack depth in subject matter expertise and provide limited pedagogical guidance, resulting in sessions that do not meaningfully improve instructional practice. Despite the presence of formal Training Needs Assessments (TNAs), there is substantial misalignment between training content and teachers' identified needs. Teachers perceive most trainings as generic, compliance-oriented, and disconnected from everyday instructional realities.

> *"Pag binuhusan mo ng timba, pagdating doon, kutsara na lang eh. And we know that. The message is diluted...And maybe DepEd should stop with this one-size-fits-all approach [to teacher development]."*
>
> *-Dr. Allan B.I. Bernardo, Distinguished University Professor and University Fellow, De La Salle University, Meeting on Learning Resources, Matatag Pilot, Learning Camps & Learning Loss Recovery Program, 11 June 2024*

ISSUE 3: ACCESS TO IN-SERVICE TRAINING (INSET) REMAINS SEVERELY LIMITED NATIONWIDE.

SF7 data indicate that only 17.6% of public school teachers participated in training programs during SY 2022–2023, revealing a system that fails to reach the majority of its teaching workforce (Rivera et al, 2025). Regional disparities are substantial: even resource-endowed regions such as the National Capital Region (NCR) logged an 88% non-participation rate, while Cagayan Valley and Western Visayas reported similarly high non-participation levels at 77% and 78%, respectively (Rivera et al, 2025). Participation gaps are equally troubling across specializations, with non-participation rates reaching 87% in Accountancy, Business, and Management and 86% in Science—areas already facing shortages of qualified teachers (Rivera et al, 2025).

Access constraints extend to the private sector, where teachers often rely on school-based or PEAC-supported initiatives due to limited DepEd-provided training and financial barriers. High teacher turnover in private schools further disincentivizes school owners from investing in sustained professional development, leaving many teachers without opportunities to enhance their practice.

Career advancement for public school teachers remains severely constrained by structural bottlenecks, outdated position systems, and limited pathways for merit-based promotion. Prior to the implementation of the Expanded Career Progression program, evidence shows that progression has been exceptionally slow, with teachers taking approximately 10 to 20 years to move from Teacher I to Teacher III, and an equally lengthy period to advance from Teacher III to Master Teacher I. This stagnation is largely attributable to systemic constraints in promotion schemes, including reliance on natural vacancies, highly stringent requirements for professional development credentials, and the long-standing quota system governing Master Teacher positions. These structural barriers have persisted despite decades of reform efforts, leaving large numbers of qualified teachers without opportunities to move up the professional ladder.

Recent developments in the Expanded Career Progression System offer a promising shift toward a more coherent and merit-based advancement framework. Although the system was first introduced under Executive Order No. 174 (2022), its full institutionalization required legislation. The Career Progression System for Public School Teachers and School Leaders Act (Republic Act No. 12288) law establishes new and higher position levels for teachers and school leaders, creates distinct career lines for teaching and leadership, and reduces reliance on vacancy-based promotion by emphasizing merit, competence, and demonstrated practice. By expanding the number of available promotion points and restructuring the current position system, the law addresses long-standing bottlenecks and provides a clearer, more equitable trajectory for career growth.


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Signing of the IRR for Executive Order (EO) No. 174, s. 2022, "Establishing the Expanded Career Progression System for Public School Teachers," held at DepEd on July 26, 2024.

ISSUE 4: THE MODERNIZATION OF NEAP REMAINS STALLED DUE TO THE ABSENCE OF A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK, CLEAR PRIORITIES, AND SYSTEMATIC MONITORING AND EVALUATION MECHANISMS.

EDCOM II's Year Two Report (2025) has found that NEAP still lacks the core foundations of an effective professional development institution—clear priorities, a strategic framework, and systematic monitoring and evaluation. As a result, earlier reforms have not translated into meaningful progress.

These gaps limit NEAP's ability to design coherent, high-quality in-service programs. Despite its mandate under DO 11, s. 2019, training remains uneven across regions, and many teachers report that offerings are redundant, poorly aligned with subject areas, and disconnected from real classroom needs. Without structured learning pathways or consistent standards, NEAP cannot ensure quality across its regional operations.

The absence of a monitoring and evaluation system further prevents NEAP from assessing whether trainings improve teaching practice or learner outcomes. As highlighted in the Year Two Report, this lack of M&E is a binding constraint that undermines accountability and hinders evidence-based improvement.

ISSUE 5: PERSISTENT GAPS IN IN-SERVICE TRAINING CONTINUE TO LIMIT TEACHERS' CAPACITY TO MEET DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF EARLY-GRADE LEARNERS.

EDCOM II's review (2024) of preservice programs for Key Stages 1 and 2 demonstrates a clear and urgent need for in-service training that is specifically designed for the developmental and pedagogical requirements of younger children. The centrality of foundational literacy and numeracy, in-service programs tailored to the developmental needs of younger learners remain scarce. Early-grade teachers report limited access to structured- literacy training, diagnostic reading assessment, and guided practice with coaching. This is a missed opportunity to compound gains from preservice and to arrest learning loss early, where returns are highest.

The current CPD system requires a comprehensive overhaul to align professional development with teacher career progression and actual practice. The chronic shortage of accredited providers stems from a highly rigid and protracted approval process within the PRC, which constrains the rollout of essential professional learning opportunities needed across regions. These delays impede DepEd's and NEAP's ability to deliver responsive, evidence-based in-service training—particularly in areas where specialized competencies are required—while also limiting teachers' ability to meet the statutory CPD requirements for license renewal under the CPD Act of 2016 (Republic Act No. 10912).

Given these systemic issues, the CPD framework requires not just streamlining but a strategic overhaul to ensure coherence with the Expanded Career Progression System (ECP). First, the CPD point system must be revisited to reflect meaningful learning and actual improvements in instructional practice rather than mere compliance. Second, CPD should formally recognize learning gained through personal professional practice—including action research, instructional leadership, curriculum development, coaching, and community engagement—rather than concentrating credits solely on conferences or structured training events. Third, CPD must be differentiated by position and career stage: the developmental needs of a Teacher I should not mirror those of a Master Teacher or a School Principal, and CPD requirements should explicitly support progression from beginning to proficient, and from proficient to accomplished and distinguished roles.

ISSUE 6: THE CURRENT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EXPANDED CAREER PROGRESSION (ECP) SYSTEM REQUIRES URGENT RECALIBRATION TO ENSURE THAT GRADUATE EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS ALIGN WITH TEACHERS' INTENDED CAREER TRACKS.

A critical implementation gap has emerged in the rollout of the ECP System: teachers are required to obtain a master's degree as a prerequisite for promotion to Master Teacher I (MT I), even though the MT I level is not yet the point at which teachers formally select their professional career track. DepEd Order (DO) No. 24, s. 2025, or the Guidelines on the Implementation of the Expanded Career Progression (ECP) System for Teachers and School Heads, issued pursuant to Civil Service Commission (CSC) Resolution No. 2500471, currently mandates the completion of a master's degree as a prerequisite for promotion to the Master Teacher I (MT I) position. Under the ECP design, teachers choose between the Classroom Teaching, School Administration, or Supervision Career Lines only after reaching MT I. This misalignment creates an unnecessary burden on teachers and dilutes the coherence of the progression system, as the master's program they complete may not correspond to the career pathway they ultimately pursue.

Teachers who later choose the School Administration or Supervision tracks may find that their graduate studies did not prepare them for leadership, management, or systems-level responsibilities. Similarly, those who intend to remain in the Classroom Teaching track may end up pursuing graduate programs that do not deepen their subject-matter expertise or pedagogical practice. This creates inefficiencies for both teachers and institutions, increasing personal financial burdens and weakening the functional purpose of the ECP system as a competency-based progression model. In light of this inconsistency, a policy review is warranted to reassess the placement of the master's degree requirement within the career progression sequence.

NOVEMBER 1, 2025

Address proliferation of teacher education diploma mills, CHED told

THE PHILIPPINE STAR





> *The issue should not be placed solely on teachers, but rather on certain graduate schools that prioritize profit over academic integrity. Many of these institutions are managed by individuals with business-oriented perspectives, often compromising the quality of instruction and scholarly engagement. I once enrolled in a graduate program where, during our first meeting, the professor distributed the course syllabus for critique. I provided my feedback during the second session, and before the class ended, the professor announced that the syllabus would be revised to incorporate my suggestions. Thus, recognizing early signs of weak academic rigor and lack of structure, I decided to withdraw from the program and transfer to another institution that upheld higher academic standards.*

FACEBOOK POST COMMENT

NOVEMBER 1, 2025

EDCOM 2: CHED should crack down on 'diploma mills' for teachers

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS • FEARLESS VIEWS



> *The problem is requiring graduate degrees for promotion leading to the result that advanced studies are taken not to advance research but as compliance for promotion only. Predictably, the outcomes are useless garbage researches. DepEd and CSC should review the graduate studies requirement for promotion, if truly needed, and at what levels.*

FACEBOOK POST COMMENT



> *We know of some schools. No attendance. Theses & dissertations are made by ghost writers for 60 to 120k. Worst, No more Defense also!!!Ched has a lot od monitoring to do if they are truly after the quality of graduate schools!!! Worst, someone also confessed that thesis advisers sometimes just do the writing of a fake research for a fee! No more advising & fee is higher than the legit work!*

FACEBOOK POST COMMENT

NOVEMBER 4, 2025

Functional illiteracy and our diploma mills

The Manila Times

NOVEMBER 1, 2025

EDCOM 2 pushes for quality control on graduate programs amid 'competence imbalance'

GMA INTEGRATED NEWS



> *Reform is urgently needed. Promotions must not be based merely on accumulated certificates but on proven competence and performance. Graduate education must regain its purpose to sharpen expertise, advance critical thinking, and empower educators to lead in their fields. Anything less is a disservice to the teaching profession and to every Filipino learner whose future depends on the quality of education they receive. KAAWA-AWA!*

FACEBOOK POST COMMENT



ISSUE 7: POLICIES MEANT TO PROFESSIONALIZE TEACHING HAVE INADVERTENTLY FUELED THE MARKET FOR DIPLOMA MILLS IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Government policies designed to elevate teacher qualifications have unintentionally created conditions favorable to low-quality graduate programs in teacher education. A research partnership between the EDCOM II and Ateneo de Manila University examined this phenomenon through an analysis of CHED databases spanning SY 2012-2013 to SY 2023-2024, supplemented by focus group discussions with graduate school administrators across Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao, and the National Capital Region (Candelaria et al., 2025).

The study found that education-related graduate programs dominate enrollment nationwide, comprising 55.51% of all master's and doctoral students in SY 2023-2024. This has been a pattern that has persisted for nearly a decade (Candelaria et al., 2025). **This concentration stems largely from DepEd's recruitment and promotion guidelines, which award points for advanced degrees but do not require that such credentials come from accredited or quality-assured institutions** (Candelaria et al., 2025). Specifically, policies such as DepEd Order No. 66 (series 2007), DepEd Order No. 7 (series 2015), and DepEd Order No. 7 (series 2023) allow teachers to earn promotion points regardless of where their graduate units or degrees were obtained (Candelaria et al., 2025). This policy gap has enabled institutions offering substandard programs to thrive, as teachers seeking career advancement prioritize accessibility and convenience over program quality (Candelaria et al., 2025).

FGDs highlight that policies which do not discriminate or differentiate between quality of graduate education received or credits earned have encouraged behaviors which are more utilitarian in nature.

> *"Kahit saan ako mag Master's, mapo-promote naman ako. This explains why we lack teachers who are competent in more specialized fields."*
> *—Interview subject*

The pandemic also opened the doors to the proliferation of unaccredited fully-online graduate degrees, despite being non-compliant to CHED policies on distance education.

CHED has initiated the closure of over 200 TEIs with zero passing rates through an amendment to Section 25 of CMO Nos. 74 to 80 and 82, s. 2017 after the EDCOM II Year One Report revealed that despite recording zero LET passers for an entire decade, 77 elementary education programs and 105 secondary education programs across the country were allowed to continue operating between 2012 and 2022 (EDCOM II, 2024). Through Resolution No. 352-2024, CHED will assess TEIs using two measures: LET performance among first-time takers from 2021 to 2023, and compliance with critical quality indicators under CMO Nos. 74–80 and 82, s. 2017. The new QA mechanism does not immediately mandate closure, but provides for technical assistance to help struggling institutions comply. However, TEIs that remain non-compliant after receiving support will be placed on phase-out status and prohibited from admitting new students to their pre-service teacher education programs.

ISSUE 8: PERSISTENT MISALIGNMENT IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP DEPLOYMENT CONTINUES TO WEAKEN INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACROSS SCHOOLS.

Despite existing policies on principal and head teacher allocations, strategic deployment issues remain widespread and lead to low alignment between leadership assignments and actual school needs. Global evidence underscores the importance of such clarity: hierarchical school leadership structures often impede effectiveness with assistant principals and teachers only able to contribute meaningfully to school goals when provided with well-defined roles, adequate training, and appropriate incentives (UNESCO, 2024).

EDCOM II's Year One and Year Two reports highlight that 18,576 schools (or 48% of all schools) have no principal items, while others rely on teacher-in-charge arrangements that provide limited instructional and administrative support. This misalignment is compounded by outdated organizational and staffing standards (i.e., allocation of Administrative Officers, SDO size), which no longer reflect the scale, complexity, and operational demands of contemporary basic education settings.


SEARCH SUPPORT

EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

'Are you not panicking?' Over half of public schools don't have principals

JAN 28, 2025 7:50 PM PHT

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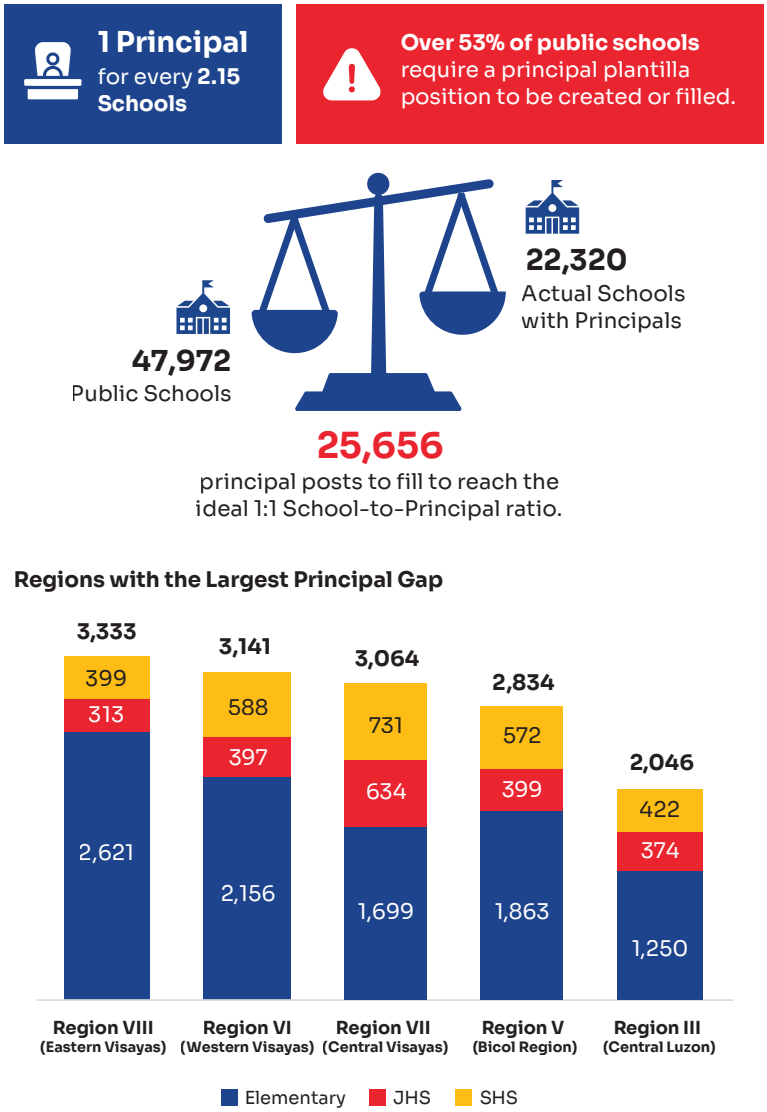
MANY LED ONLY BY HEAD TEACHERS

Edcom: Almost 25,000 public schools have no principals

By: Dempsey Reyes - Reporter / @dempseyreyesINQ

Share:

FIGURE 6.
MOOE Allocation: Before & After DepEd Adjustments



Source: SY 2025-2026 LIS Data; DepEd GMIS, June 30, 2025.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Reduce administrative burden and protect instructional time through streamlined staffing, automated processes, and strict regulation of ancillary tasks.** DepEd should fully operationalize DepEd Order No. 006, s. 2025 by standardizing its implementation across all divisions and regions, ensuring that only essential and teaching-related reports remain assigned to teachers. The Bureau of Human Resource and Organizational Development (BHROD) must serve as the central clearinghouse for all ancillary tasks, with authority to veto or redirect non-teaching duties to appropriate personnel. To address longstanding shortages of support staff, the Department must prioritize the creation and equitable deployment of Administrative Officer II and Project Development Officer I items, consistent with the proposed School Organizational Structure and Staffing Standards (SOSSS) that identify gaps of 12,078 AO II and 44,285 PDO I positions nationwide.

2. **Further reduce and digitize school forms to eliminate redundant reporting, automate records management, and standardize data workflows.** DepEd should accelerate the rationalization and digitization of all school forms by establishing a centralized data collection system that eliminates repetitive submissions and harmonizes reporting across governance levels.

   Digitization of recurring processes (i.e., enrollment, records management, procurement requests, and reporting) should also be scaled to significantly reduce manual encoding hours that routinely displace lesson preparation and learner support. This includes expanding the use of electronic forms (i.e., eSF7) which automates teaching load calculations and has demonstrated efficiency gains in Tarlac's Learning Management System (EDCOM II, 2024, February 8)—and integrating core datasets across DepEd's platforms (e.g., LIS, HRIS, EBEIS, PDIS).

3. **Institutionalize clear and equitable career progression pathways through the full implementation of Republic Act No. 12288 or the Career Progression System for Public School Teachers and School Leaders Act.** DepEd must operationalize the provisions of the law, including the review of qualification standards, recalibration of promotion criteria, and allocation sufficient resources to fund the newly established positions. Career pathways should also be directly connected to HRIS and PDIS data to support transparent and predictable promotion trajectories for teachers nationwide. It is also critical for the Department to expand the number of Master Teacher and school leadership positions in line with revised staffing standards, and to remove outdated quotas that artificially limit advancement opportunities. Promotion criteria should prioritize demonstrable classroom impact (i.e., evidence of student learning growth and documented instructional practice through coached lesson artifacts) over credentials and paper-based compliance alone. To ensure that career advancement reflects genuine professional growth rather than mere documentation, DepEd should provide structured coaching and mentorship for teachers preparing for promotion (EDCOM II, 12 June 2025; RITQ, 2025).

4. **Direct DepEd and CSC to revise the master's degree requirement for Master Teacher I to support alignment with career-track selection and professional competency needs.** Shifting the graduate education prerequisite to MT II or School Principal I would enable teachers to pursue programs that are better aligned with their chosen track (i.e., advanced pedagogical or subject-specialist programs for those remaining in the CT line, and management or leadership-oriented programs for those pursuing SA or Supervision roles). This adjustment will enhance the coherence, relevance, and cost-effectiveness of professional development pathways under the ECP, ensuring that graduate studies contribute directly to the functional competencies required for higher-level positions.

5. **Enjoin DepEd to expedite the development of a centralized HRIS integrated with the PDIS, to ensure accurate profiling of teacher competencies, training needs, and career progression.** This system should consolidate data from e-SF7, RPMS outputs, TNAs, and CPD records to guide targeted planning and equitable distribution of training opportunities. NEAP must in turn institutionalize a standards-based framework for program design, delivery, and evaluation, ensuring that INSET offerings are responsive to subject-specific, grade-level, and developmental needs, with particular emphasis on early-grade literacy and numeracy.

6. **Require CHED, PRC and TEC to work together to address and prevent the proliferation of diploma mills in graduate education.** The reforms at CHED may be further reinforced by DepEd and TEC by considering the quality of HEIs and their graduate programs for career progression purposes, rather than relying solely on whether a degree was obtained from any CHED-recognized institution.

   Additionally, it is recommended that CHED and DepEd jointly assess the effects of the current vertical alignment policy on graduate degrees, taking into account present conditions and inequalities, to better address systemic and structural disparities (Candelaria et al., 2025).

7. **Ensure that the over 21,800 schools without a principal have dedicated school heads and align leadership deployment to actual school needs.** DepEd must update principal and head teacher deployment guidelines to reflect the operational realities of modern schools and ensure compliance across divisions. Every school—regardless of size or location—must have a designated school head with appropriate competencies and adequate support staff. Deployment policies should integrate school size, enrollment trends, and geographical context to avoid overreliance on teacher-in-charge arrangements, which EDCOM II identifies as inadequate for sustaining instructional leadership. Additionally, leadership pipelines should be strengthened through targeted training, mentoring, and succession planning linked to the Career Progression System for School Leaders.

8. **Require DepEd to develop an Instructional Leadership Framework that delineates their respective authorities, establishes accountability mechanisms, and puts in place coordination protocols across leadership levels, in view of ensuring coherent instructional support for teachers and learners.**

9. **Revise the Office Performance Commitment and Review (OPCRF) of principals to prioritize instructional leadership functions—such as classroom observation, teacher coaching, and curriculum implementation—over administrative and compliance tasks that currently dominate their workload.**

10. **Implement revised staffing standards to replace the 1997 guidelines which no longer reflect system-wide needs and specialized school contexts.** DepEd and DBM should jointly adopt and fund the revised SOSSS to ensure adequate support personnel across schools of varying size, and complexity. Adjustments must also account for specialized school contexts, including SPED Centers, ILRCs, Last Mile Schools, and IP Education schools, all of which require differentiated staffing allocations beyond standard ratios. Deployment policies should incorporate workload analytics, student volume, and administrative complexity to rationalize staffing levels and prevent overburdening teachers in large or resource-constrained schools.

The Office Performance Commitment and Review (OPCRF) of principals should be revised to prioritize instructional leadership functions (i.e., classroom observation, teacher coaching, and curriculum implementation) over administrative and compliance tasks that currently dominate their workload.



REDEFINING TEACHER ACCOUNTABILITY

Dr. Jennie Jocson



The quality of education in the Philippines is anchored entirely on the commitment and competency of the Filipino teacher. The Teacher Education Council (TEC) believes that defining teacher accountability requires moving beyond mere performance metrics and individual responsibility. It must be redefined as a synergistic convergence of professional responsibility and a shared, developmental mechanism that drives continuous growth and improved student outcomes across the entire education system.

In the Philippine context, teacher accountability is fundamentally both professional responsibility and a performance mechanism. It starts as a professional responsibility, rooted in the Code of Ethics and formally articulated by the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST).

This responsibility is measured as a performance mechanism through the Performance Management and Evaluation System (PMES), the official successor to the Results-based Performance Management System (RPMS). The PMES links professional adherence to the ultimate objective: improved student learning outcomes.

However, accountability has shifted. It is no longer solely about performing one's individual mandate. The TEC's interagency nature highlights this evolution: accountability is heightened when it is shared across multiple government layers and institutions. Before any framework is implemented, we must collaboratively define what quality education means as a national standard. The primary goal of a national framework must be to promote professional growth that results in improved student learning, backed by necessary compliance.

The PMES provides a clear, standards-based foundation for evaluation. However, its implementation often struggles with "malicious compliance."

The system's requirements often overwhelm teachers. This leads to a systemic pitfall where instructional time is consumed by paper compliance rather than improving instructional quality. The focus shifts from learning to documentation.

A "differentiated accountability" model is essential for fairness. This model adjusts performance targets—for example, targets for schools in low socio-economic or last-mile contexts should include indicators of student growth (value-added), rather than just absolute achievement scores, recognizing their often-lower starting points.

Fair accountability is severely complicated by systemic barriers, particularly in "last-mile" schools:

- Administrative burden, or the time-intensive nature of PMES documentation that competes directly with instructional duties;
- Unjustly holding teachers accountable for high outcomes when they lack essential tools, such as textbooks, functional classrooms, and technology;
- Expecting teacher effectiveness where there are issues beyond their control, such as student malnutrition, poverty, and chronic absenteeism. A fair model must acknowledge these structural barriers.

How do we build a supportive and shared accountability system?

Accountability cannot exist in a vacuum. Before teachers are justly held accountable, the system must guarantee non-negotiable systems of support:

- High-quality professional development (PD) that is continuous, classroom-embedded, relevant to local student needs, and directly linked to PMES goals;
- Effective instructional mentoring and coaching that engages a trained corps of instructional

Accountability cannot exist in a vacuum. Before teachers are justly held accountable, the system must guarantee non-negotiable systems of support.



coaches (Master Teachers) that provide high-frequency, developmental feedback—focused on improvement, not just evaluation;

- Adequate and differentiated resources that prioritize schools with the greatest needs (e.g., multigrade, last-mile schools) to ensure equitable access to instructional tools.

Accountability must be broadened across the entire network, defining the specific responsibilities of each stakeholder:

- Teachers are accountable for their personal growth (owning their PD choices), implementing policy, and driving instructional change. Teachers are also generally accountable for improving student learning outcomes that provide the ultimate measure of their professional effectiveness.
- School leaders are accountable for providing a supportive culture, de-bureaucratizing the PMES, and providing instructional coaching.
- The Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) is accountable for quality assurance, specifically monitoring and providing feedback on the overall quality of graduates from teacher education institutions, not just the Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers (LEPT) mechanism.
- The Department of Education (DepEd) and the Civil Service Commission (CSC) are accountable for maintaining a merit-based system by ensuring the career progression framework is aligned with national qualification standards across government services. DepEd divisions and regional offices are likewise accountable for

providing equitable resource distribution and streamlining administrative processes.

- The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is accountable for ensuring the quality of teacher education pre-service programs, curricula, and faculty development in higher education institutions (HEIs).

- The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) is accountable for aligning the standards and certifications of technical-vocational-livelihood (TVL) teachers and TVL courses within the basic education system with industry demands.

- Community (LGUs, Parents) address structural barriers (health, nutrition, safety) that impact student readiness to learn.

To build an effective accountability system, TEC suggests the following policy recommendations for EDCOM II:

- Shift the focus of PMES to high-value, naturally-occurring evidence. We can invest in a unified digital platform to streamline and simplify documentation.

- Institutionalize a national instructional coaching and mentoring system by mandating a trained corps of instructional coaches to provide mandatory, high-frequency, non-evaluative instructional coaching, especially in struggling schools.

- Enforce resource parity (The "Threshold Rule") by establishing a policy guaranteeing that a minimum threshold of instructional resources and support is met in a school before it is held to the highest accountability standards.

- Institutionalize the value-added model by integrating a student growth model into the PMES for disadvantaged schools. Accountability should measure the learning progress that students make from their starting point, ensuring fairness across varied socio-economic contexts.

Transitioning from a compliance-driven system to one built on instructional support, differentiated evaluation, and shared responsibility is essential to addressing the deep structural challenges in Philippine education. Anchored in a more constructive understanding of teacher accountability as a shared professional duty, these reforms ensure that policies and resource investments translate directly into stronger classroom practice and expanded opportunities for every teacher to thrive.

Transitioning from a compliance-driven system to one built on instructional support, differentiated evaluation, and shared responsibility is essential to addressing the deep structural challenges in Philippine education.

Dr. Jennie Jocson is the Executive Director of Teacher Education Council and a Former Member of EDCOM Standing Committee on Teacher Education and Development.



VI. TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Forging Pathways Forward: A Coherent, Industry-Driven TVET System

Skills determine how far economies can grow. In a rapidly transforming labor market, the ability to learn, unlearn, and re-learn has become the defining currency of national competitiveness. Technical-Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sits at the intersection of education and employment, shaping how individuals transition from schooling to productive work and how industries adapt to technological change. Yet, despite its critical role in building national resilience, the Philippine TVET system continues to face fragmentation, limited vertical progression, and uneven quality assurance—symptoms of a sector long treated as peripheral rather than integral to lifelong learning and development (EDCOM II, 2025, pp. 290–292).

Republic Act No. 7796, or the *Technical Education and Skills Development Act of 1994*, created the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) to unify a disjointed training landscape and promote "relevant, accessible, high-quality, and efficient" skills development. The law declared the State's policy to promote *relevant, accessible, high-quality, and efficient technical education and skills development* in support of national productivity and human-resource advancement (Republic Act No. 7796, 1994, Sec. 2).

Three decades later, automation, demographic transitions, and the green and digital transformations demand a new conception of skills policy—one that connects training not only to employability but to lifelong adaptability (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2025). However, the Philippine TVET system remains largely NC II–heavy, with less than 10% of programs offered at higher levels (NC III–IV), limited diploma offerings, and few progression pathways linking TVET to higher education (EDCOM II, 2025, pp. 293–295). This structural imbalance traps many graduates in low-wage occupations and prevents the development of advanced technical skills needed by industry (Generalao et al., 2025; Daño, 2025).

EDCOM II's three-year assessment identified three persistent systemic constraints: (1) weak labor market intelligence and planning mechanisms, resulting in training supply often misaligned with emerging industry demand; (2) underdeveloped employer engagement and investment, with only a limited number of active Industry Boards and enterprise-based training partnerships; and (3) fragmented quality assurance systems that constrain institutional capacity and learner mobility (EDCOM II, 2024, pp. 207–241; EDCOM II, 2025, pp. 296–303).

International evidence is clear that strong TVET systems are built on deep and institutionalized employer engagement. The OECD (2023) and UNESCO Sub-Regional Study (Choi et al., 2023) highlight the role of Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), co-designed curricula, and joint governance arrangements in ensuring relevance, while work-based learning and employer co-assessment consistently emerge as essential features across Southeast Asia. Global frameworks (World Bank–UNESCO–ILO, 2023) likewise call for treating both enterprises and learners as dual "clients" of TVET—aligning training to industry needs while enabling flexible learner pathways—and encourage incentives such as levy-grant schemes and SME tax offsets. Youth surveys from UNESCO–UNEVOC (2025) further show strong demand for mentorship, internships, and clear employment pathways, reinforcing the need for robust public–private partnerships.

Local research echoes these findings. PIDS studies report persistent gaps in sector-specific skills—particularly in IT-BPM, construction, and health—due to outdated curricula and trainers with limited industry immersion (Generalao et al., 2025). Daño (2025) finds that TESDA scholarships boost assessment outcomes but do not consistently translate to employment when programs are misaligned with labor demand. Weak industry involvement in the SHS TVL track has likewise contributed to mismatches between school offerings and provincial labor markets (Mokher & Mella-Alcazar, 2024). For overseas work, KNOMAD research (Rodriguez et al., 2024) stresses the need for TESDA to co-develop qualifications with foreign employers, integrating international standards and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

Amid these challenges, opportunities for renewal are emerging. TESDA's modernization of its labor market information systems, pilots on Enterprise-Based Education and Training, and new micro-credentials in AI and automation point toward a more adaptive skills ecosystem (EDCOM II, 2025). Global guidance reinforces aligned priorities: strengthening foundational, digital, and green skills; expanding industry immersion for trainers; and creating flexible progression pathways that link NC I–IV and diploma programs to higher education and lifelong learning (World Bank–UNESCO–ILO, 2023; UNESCO–UNEVOC, 2025).

This section examines how the Philippine TVET system can evolve from a programmatic approach to a lifelong learning system anchored on industry partnership, learner progression, and system-wide coherence. It explores how reforms in governance, financing, and quality assurance can transform training into a true engine of mobility—enabling every Filipino not only to find work but to keep learning, advancing, and contributing to an inclusive, competitive, and future-ready economy.

PRIORITY AREA 19: NEEDS-BASED SYSTEM FOR PROJECTING WORKFORCE UPSKILLING DEMAND

FINDINGS

ISSUE 1: A FRAGMENTED LABOR-MARKET INTELLIGENCE (LMI) ECOSYSTEM CONSTRAINS SKILLS PLANNING AND INVESTMENT.

Labor Market Information (LMI) in the Philippines remains fragmented across key institutions—the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). Each agency collects labor market data independently, without a common methodology or shared platform for data consolidation. This results in overlapping, inconsistent, and often outdated projections that weaken coordination between education planners, training providers, and employers. Consequently, policy and budget decisions are often made without real-time data on regional or sectoral skills demand (EDCOM II, 2025).

Internationally, the OECD (2023) underscores integrating skills forecasting into national planning cycles—using employer surveys, big data from online job postings, and regional LMI to align training supply with market shifts. Similarly, UNESCO (Choi et al., 2023) and the World Bank–UNESCO–ILO (2023) emphasize embedding LMIS within financing and program design decisions to prevent oversupply in low-demand qualifications.

Vietnam's model, as cited by UNESCO (Choi et al., 2023), illustrates how employer surveys and tracer studies can support adaptive skills forecasting linked to funding decisions. KNOMAD (Rodriguez et al., 2024) further stresses the need to link domestic and overseas employment datasets—integrating POEA/DMW deployment records and global job orders into a unified LMIS that informs TESDA and DOLE's planning.

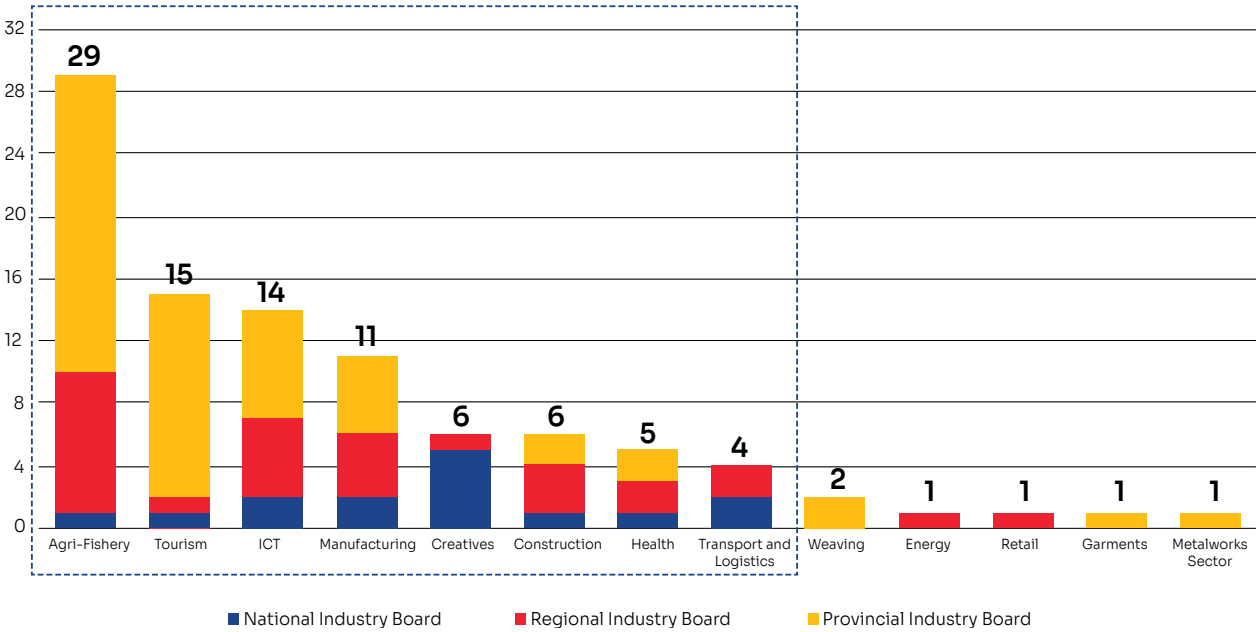
ISSUE 2: EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT IS EPISODIC AND UNEVEN; SECTOR GOVERNANCE IS THIN.

> *"International evidence is unambiguous: vocational systems are most effective when employers co-design curricula, co-host apprenticeships, and co-assess learners."*
>
> *- OECD, 2023*

The OECD Skills Strategy Southeast Asia and the World Bank–UNESCO–ILO guidance both highlight Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) as institutional bridges that translate market signals into standards, qualifications, and training places—provided SSCs have clear mandates, stable funding, and accountability for outcomes (OECD, 2023; World Bank, UNESCO & ILO, 2023). Regional practice synthesized by UNESCO (Choi et al., 2023) shows that structured industry boards and joint curriculum committees (e.g., Malaysia, Thailand) sustain alignment through work-based learning (WBL) and employer co-assessment. Current Philippine arrangements (industry boards/ITBs/IBACS) remain too narrow in coverage and insufficiently performance-linked (EDCOM II, 2025; Choi et al., 2023).

Since 1994, TESDA has established only 15 National Industry Boards concentrated across eight sectors (particularly, agri-fishery, tourism, ICT, and manufacturing, creatives,construction, health, and transport and logistics), alongside 81 regional or provincial boards. Despite progress in the past three years—including boards for digital technology, healthcare, and construction—many critical industries remain unrepresented.

FIGURE 1.
Number of Industry Boards per Sector and Classification



Source: TESDA Submission, October 2025

Moving forward, the agency has committed to establish new Industry Boards in fields of Aeronautical and Aviation, Fintech, Accountancy, Business Administration, Legal Services, Energy – Electric Vehicles, Energy – Renewables, and Chemical Engineering, but sustained monitoring is needed to ensure these translate into curriculum reform and real workplace partnerships. Without these platforms, curricula remain outdated, disconnected from emerging sectors, and misaligned with global standards.



ISSUE 3: SCHOLARSHIP GROWTH HAS NOT GUARANTEED LABOR-MARKET RELEVANCE OR EQUITY, AND HAS BEEN FOCUSED ON LOWER LEVEL QUALIFICATION

TESDA's scholarship allocations rose sharply after 2014 with the rollout of Special Training for Employment Program (STEP) and Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education (UAQTE, Republic Act No. 10931), peaking in recent appropriations. Yet a PIDS study (Daño, 2025) analysis found a decline in the targeting of disadvantaged scholars compared to advantaged scholars between 2018 and 2022.

While TESDA's scholarship programs demonstrate generally positive performance in terms of assessment and certification rates, outcomes vary across learner groups.

> *Among disadvantaged scholars, assessment results remain notably low, with a passing rate of only 56%, even as dropout rates remain minimal at 1%.*
> *- Daño, 2025*

These figures highlight the need to strengthen learner support systems and to improve the quality and relevance of training delivery for disadvantaged groups. The same study also found a significant negative relationship between certification attainment and its necessity in employment, indicating that industry demand for certification remains limited and that many employers continue to hire workers without regard for formal credentials (Daño, 2025).

Recent studies from Ateneo de Manila University further illustrate the structural and operational challenges facing TESDA's scholarship mechanisms.

> *Current policies fall short in ensuring that the most disadvantaged learners are prioritized, that voucher values are regularly adjusted for inflation, and that sufficient wrap-around supports are provided to sustain participation and completion (e.g. transportation, starter kits, and psychosocial services).*
> *- Chua, 2025*

While demand for advanced technical skills continues to rise in the Philippines, the supply of higher-level TVET programs remains structurally constrained. Only a small proportion of Technical-Vocational Institutions (TVIs) currently offer National Certificate (NC) III and NC IV programs, reflecting persistent system-level barriers in upgrading training provision.

As shown in Chua (2025), very few TVIs deliver two or more NC III qualifications with corresponding scholarship slots—an indication of limited institutional capacity to expand into higher-skill training (as seen in the figure below). Publicly-run Regional Training Centers (RTCs) and Provincial Training Centers (PTCs), collectively known as TESDA Technology Institutions (TTIs), dominate the delivery of higher-level qualifications due to direct government support that extends beyond scholarships to include operational subsidies and capital investments. These resources enable TTIs to shoulder the significantly higher costs of equipment, infrastructure, and trainer competencies required for advanced program delivery, placing them in a stronger position compared to most private TVIs (Chua, 2025).

The same study notes that a select group of financially robust private TVIs—particularly those offering college degree programs—have begun expanding their capacity to offer higher-level qualifications. These institutions are typically backed by stronger revenue streams or strategic partnerships that allow them to invest in modern facilities and qualified trainers needed for Level III and IV program delivery.

> *"Over half of private TVIs offering TESDA scholarships provide only a single qualification and rely heavily on voucher allocations for operational sustainability."*
> *- Chua, 2025*

The value of scholarship vouchers has remained stagnant despite the rising cost of training materials and equipment. This has limited the capacity of Technical-Vocational Institutions' (TVIs) to maintain quality while also deterring student participation when additional out-of-pocket expenses are required (Chua, 2025). This dependence underscores the need for TESDA to strike a balance between ensuring access through scholarships and promoting the financial independence and competitiveness of private providers.

Qualitative interviews from Chua's (2025) study also reveal persistent issues in scholarship allocation and transparency.

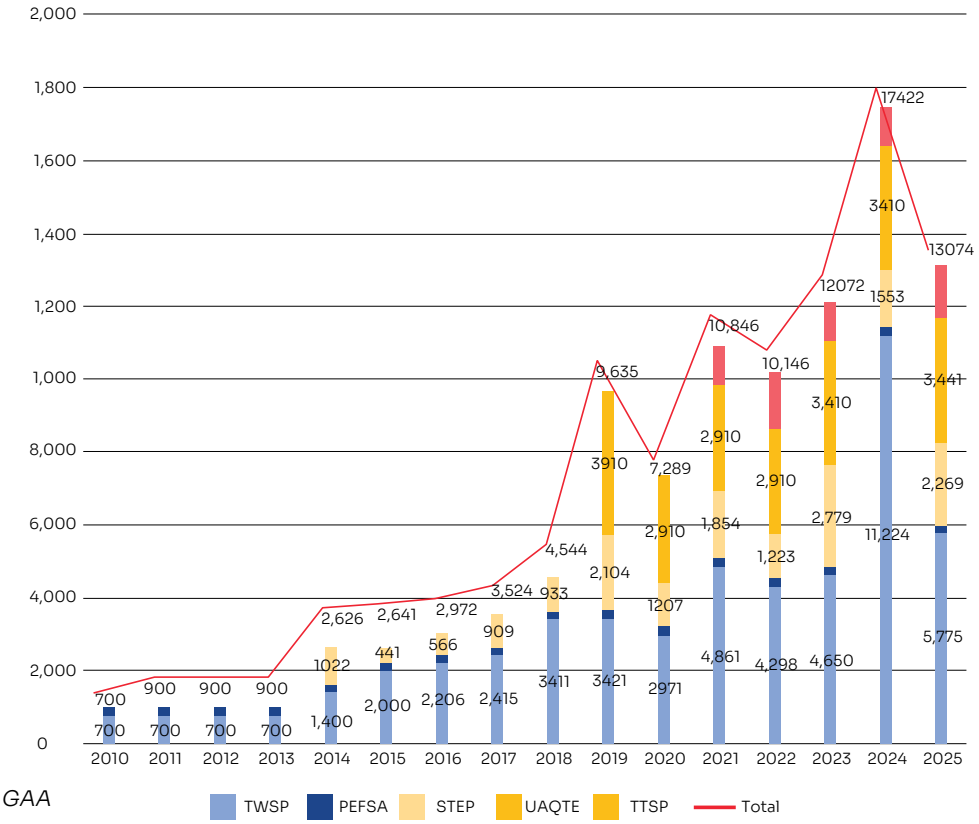
> *"Hindi porke't qualified ka sa criteria ng scholarship allocation ay sure na mabibigyan ka. Limited din kasi 'yang funds... mas ok kung malakas ka or may kilala kang tagaloob."*
> *- Respondent, Chua, 2025*

Such accounts reflect perceived inequities and politicization in scholarship distribution, reinforcing the need for greater digital transparency and accountability mechanisms.

Financial data from Neri (2025) reveal that TESDA's scholarship budget has grown significantly over the past decade, with allocations for scholarships rising from 24% of the total agency budget to as high as 75–80% in recent years. Major spikes occurred in 2014, following the introduction of the STEP, and in 2019, with the implementation of the UAQTE. As shown in Figure 7, the largest scholarship programs by value and enrollment are the Training for Work Scholarship Program (TWSP) and STEP, while UAQTE infused over P3.9 billion during its inaugural year. The significant increase in TWSP funding in 2024 further explains the steep rise in TESDA's total scholarship budget, reaching P13.1 billion by 2025.

> *"There is a general appropriation that is allotted for scholarships to support those students who would want to upskill themselves.* ***But then we know that the structure of distribution of the appropriation has been an issue because there is the congressional insertion. The congressional insertion makes the utilization of the fund for the different districts of the congressional district to fund their own favorable institution to do the program for them.*** *And this is the cause of many complaints, and this is the thing that we have not been able to solve."*
>
> *- Fr. Onofre Inocencio JR, SDB, TESDA Board Member, President of the Unified TVET of the Philippines, Inc. (UniTVET), TVET and Lifelong Learning Standing Committee Member, EDCOM II, TESDA Charter Hearing, July 10, 2025, Taguig, Philippines*

FIGURE 2.
Scholarship Allocations in Millions, 2010-2025



Source: GAA

While this upward trajectory underscores the government's sustained investment in TVET access, it also signals the need for improved targeting efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and impact monitoring to ensure that expanding financial resources translate into measurable gains in employment, productivity, and equity.

It is also essential to strengthen integrity safeguards within government-funded scholarship programs. EDCOM II's consultations and the TESDA Charter Hearing highlighted recurring concerns among training institutions regarding potential corruption issues, irregular beneficiary selection, and weak monitoring mechanisms in certain scholarship modalities.

To enhance public-private complementarity, Chua (2025) recommends that the government ensure a fair distribution of scholarship slots across public and private TVIs and avoid duplication of identical programs within small geographic areas—a concern also raised in prior studies by PCC (2022), Orbeta and Corpus (2021, 2024), and Sia et al. (2011). Private providers have expressed frustration that nearby public institutions offering subsidized courses often divert enrollees, resulting in voucher inefficiencies and reduced sustainability for private training centers.

Dropout rates in selected TESDA programs remain high, particularly among vulnerable and disadvantaged learners (Galban and Maleriado, 2025). Contributing factors include poverty, psychosocial trauma, and entrenched gender bias in male-dominated trades. Returning overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and other marginalized groups also face difficulties completing training due to the lack of psychosocial and reintegration support mechanisms. These findings emphasize that scholarship provision alone is insufficient; targeted interventions addressing mental health, social reintegration, and gender inclusivity are essential for completion and employability outcomes.

ISSUE 4: COMMUNITY-BASED TRAINING (CBT) CONTINUES TO BE ONE OF THE MOST WIDELY IMPLEMENTED MODALITIES IN THE PHILIPPINE TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET) SYSTEM.

> *"Between 2014 and 2022, CBT programs enrolled 3.7 million trainees, accounting for 39% of total TVET enrollment during the period—second only to institution-based programs."*
> *- EDCOM II Findings*

Designed to bring technical and vocational learning closer to communities, CBT is typically delivered in partnership with Local Government Units (LGUs) and targets marginalized sectors that face barriers to formal institutional training.

Despite its reach, quality assurance and certification gaps persist across CBT programs. Most CBT offerings are not covered by official Training Regulations (TRs), which serve as the basis for competency assessment and National Certification (NC) issuance. As a result, graduates generally receive only Certificates of Training rather than NCs, limiting their recognition in the labor market. Those who take the NC assessment, would only be able to get a Certificate of Competency (CoC) because that is what they studied. Moreover, the majority of TVET programs that are covered by TRs remain concentrated at lower skill levels (NC I and NC II), which have shown limited correlation with wage increases or career advancement. These findings indicate that while CBT has expanded access, it has yet to achieve meaningful vertical progression and employability outcomes for learners.

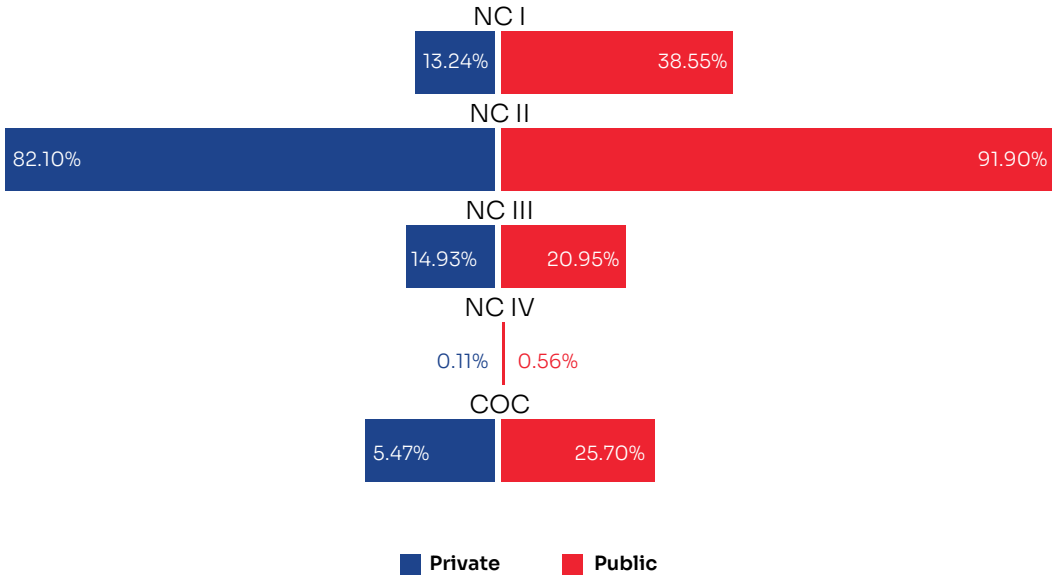
According to Campoamor-Olegario et al. (2025), both CBT and Enterprise-Based Training (EBT) models hold strong potential for rural and inclusive development when aligned with local industry needs. However, current implementation lacks critical post-training mechanisms, such as graduate tracking systems, entrepreneurial pathways, and linkages to employment support services, which are necessary to sustain outcomes beyond the training stage.

Meanwhile, Galban and Maleriado (2025) highlight the adaptive nature of CBT through localized initiatives such as Barangay Health Worker (BHW) certification pilots, which bring training directly to communities rather than requiring participants to travel to TVIs. These examples demonstrate CBT's promise as a decentralized delivery model, particularly for marginalized populations. However, the absence of standardized curricula and quality assurance measures continues to constrain its effectiveness as a strategic driver of national skills development.

While CBT has successfully expanded geographic and social access to training, its limited certification coverage, weak post-training linkages, and low-level skill focus hinder its full potential to contribute to equitable and sustainable workforce development in the Philippines.

ISSUE 5: PHILIPPINE TVET PROGRAMS REMAIN CONCENTRATED IN LOW-CAPITAL, LOW-SKILL QUALIFICATIONS.

FIGURE 3.
Percentage Distribution of Public and Private TVIs Offering Various Levels of Qualification with Scholarship Slots



Source: Findings of Chua (2025) study entitled "Rationalizing TVET Provision and Support for Enhanced Publicc-Private Complementarity

An analysis of national program registration data shows that TVIs in the Philippines continue to prioritize foundational qualifications, with most public and private providers offering NC I, NC II, and CoC programs (Chua, 2025). This pattern reflects both prevailing labor market demand for entry-level skills and deep institutional capacity limitations, particularly among smaller private TVIs.

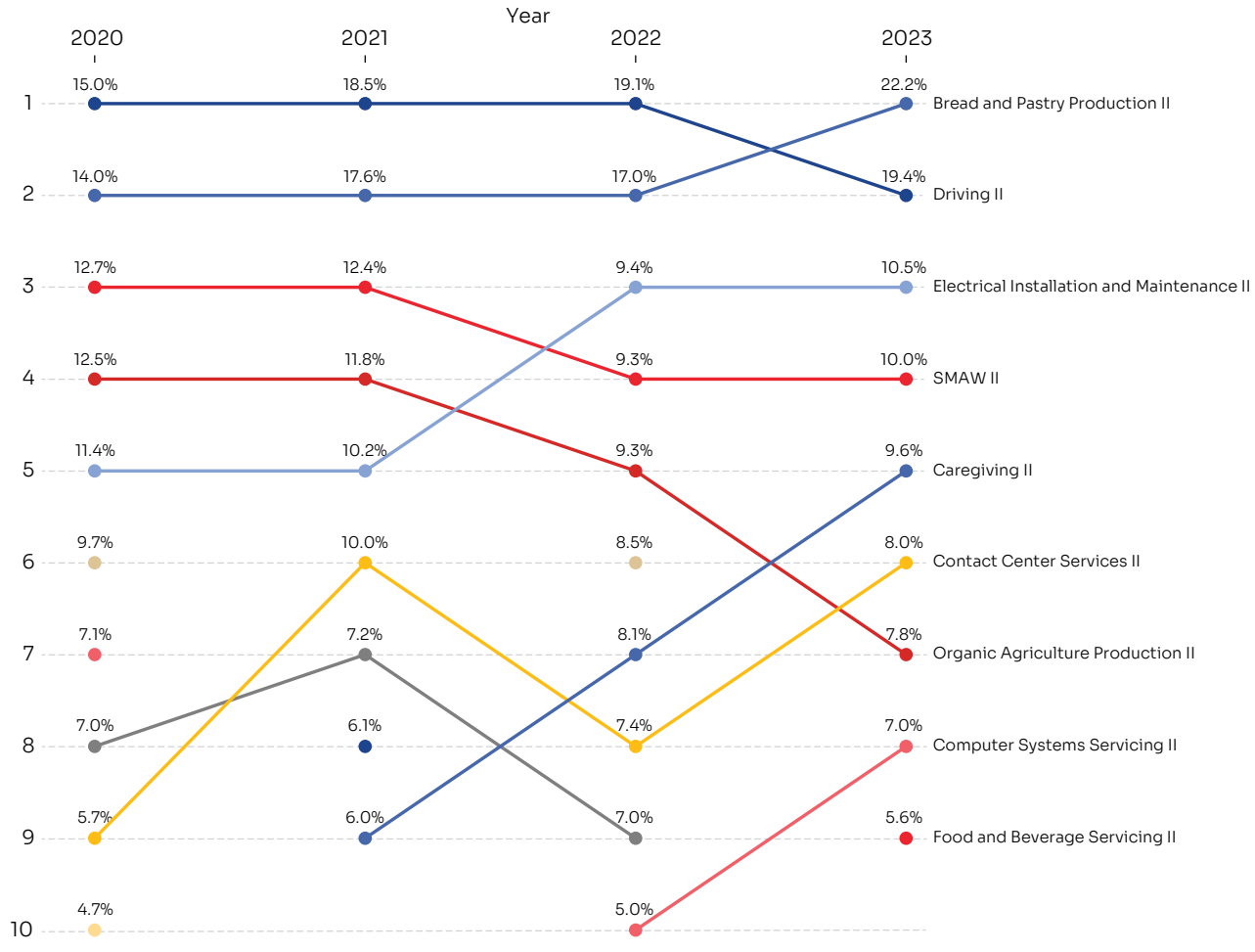
Most Technical-Vocational Institutions (TVIs) in the Philippines remain heavily concentrated in low-level training programs, particularly NC I and NC II courses. This concentration on entry-level qualifications reflects structural limitations in training capacity and regulatory design, which collectively constrain the system's ability to produce a higher proportion of mid- to advanced-skilled workers. The imbalance persists despite growing empirical evidence that higher-level certifications (NC III, NC IV, and Diploma Programs) are associated with greater employability, productivity, and wage outcomes—particularly for learners with limited formal education who rely on TVET as an alternative pathway to upward mobility.

EDCOM II notes that Philippine TVET remains heavily concentrated in a narrow set of low-level programs, constraining its ability to respond to emerging labor market demands and national development priorities. Data show that a significant portion of TESDA trainees have completed only two qualifications—Driving NC II (15%) and Bread and Pastry Production NC II (14%)—indicating a persistent skew toward short-term, low-capital training programs that do not always lead to high-quality or sustainable employment.

Program concentration mirrors institutional characteristics: **private TVIs tend to offer low-capital, service-oriented qualifications such as Bread and Pastry Production NC II, Cookery NC II, and Bookkeeping NC III**, while public TVIs are more likely to provide training in Driving NC II, Shielded Metal Arc Welding (SMAW) NC I and II, and Electrical Installation and Maintenance NC II (*Chua, 2025)*.

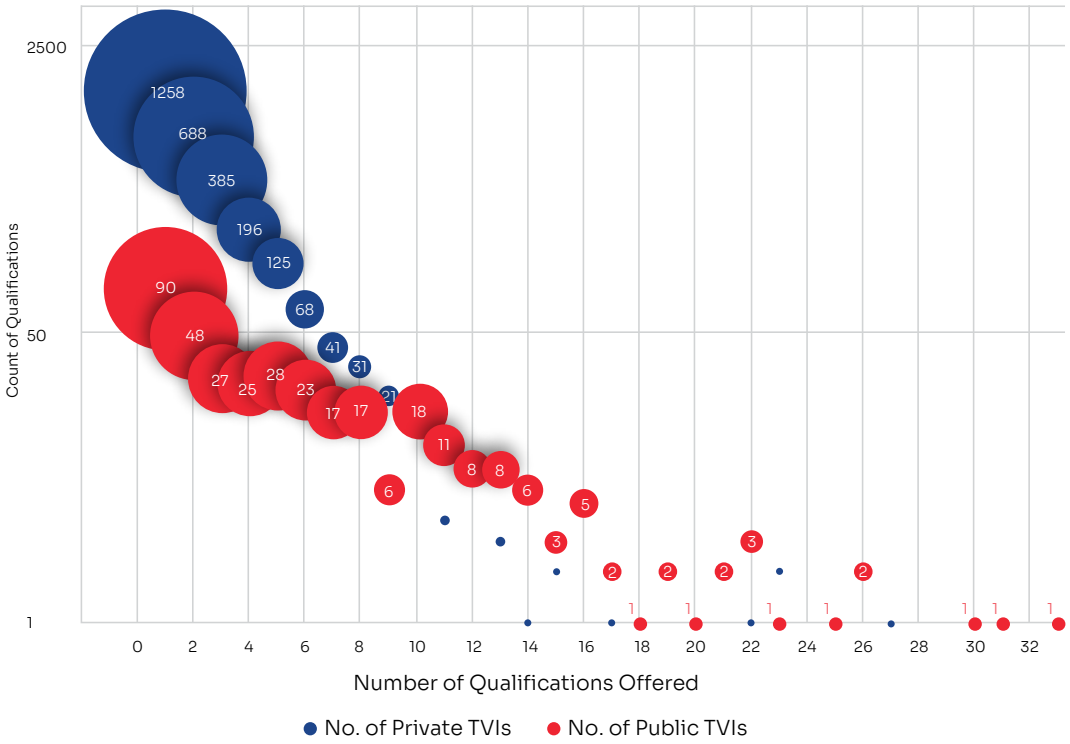
This divide suggests an imbalance in institutional capacity and investment, where private providers gravitate toward financially viable programs with minimal infrastructure requirements, and public providers shoulder higher-cost, equipment-intensive trades. As a result, learners' choices are often constrained by the availability of programs rather than labor market demand or career progression pathways.

FIGURE 4.
Enrollment Ranking per Certification



Source: Data from TESDA Planning Office (2024), processed by EDCOM II

FIGURE 5.
Number of Qualifications offered by Public and Private TVIs with Scholarship Slots



Source: Processed by the Chua (2025) using secondary data from TESDA (https://www.tesda.gov.ph/about/tesda/1279)

As documented by Chua (2025), public TVIs generally present broader and more diversified program offerings, with over half delivering three to sixteen qualifications, whereas 55.98% of private TVIs offer only one qualification area—indicating their narrower operational scope and stronger dependence on scholarship-driven enrollment.

There is also an urgent need for TESDA and its partners to strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems to better assess the long-term outcomes of TVET graduates (Campoamor-Olegario et al, 2025). The absence of a comprehensive graduate tracking mechanism hampers the ability to evaluate job placement, wage growth, and entrepreneurship rates—key indicators of training effectiveness and return on investment. Robust tracer studies and standardized key performance indicators (KPIs) would enable more evidence-informed planning and resource allocation, ensuring that TVET provision aligns with evolving industry and regional needs.

> *"Many offerings are confined to entry-level competencies, lacking advanced qualifications in areas such as electrical systems, plumbing, and heavy equipment operation."*
> *-Campoamor-Olegario, et al, 2025*

Moreover, the same study highlights that while TVET programs in construction and related trades have grown in response to national infrastructure priorities, they remain underdeveloped in specialization and progression. Scaling up construction-focused and higher-level TVET programs could help address the country's skills shortages, enhance rural infrastructure development, and generate more sustainable local employment.

ISSUE 6: MOST OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS (OFWS) REMAIN IN LOW-SKILLED JOBS.

A recent study, Understanding Current and Future "Middle-Skill" Needs of the Country by Galban and Maleriado (2025), underscores a critical challenge in the Philippine labor landscape: **Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs)—who contribute nearly 10% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) through remittances—remain largely concentrated in low-skilled occupations, revealing a persistent misalignment between the nation's upskilling priorities and global labor market demands.**

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, 44.4% of OFWs in 2022 were employed in elementary occupations, while another 15.5% worked in service and sales roles, such as housekeeping, care work, and cleaning services—sectors consistently associated with low wages, limited career mobility, and precarious working conditions. This pattern is echoed in the 2024 Labor Market Intelligence Report Beyond Borders: Bridging Mobility for Domestic Filipino Workers, which shows that domestic cleaners, helpers, and household service workers remain the top newly hired overseas workers in both 2022 and 2023, particularly in destinations such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, Hong Kong, Kuwait, and Qatar (TESDA, 2024).

Further, the *Quick LMI on Qatar (2024)* highlights that Filipino workers in the Gulf remain heavily concentrated in household services, hospitality, and low-tier support roles—occupations characterized by limited transferability of skills and slower wage growth relative to technical and professional categories. The report also identifies that demand for Filipino workers abroad continues to grow in hospitality and domestic services, but mobility into higher-skilled technical fields remains constrained by inadequate matching between Philippine TVET qualifications and employer-required competencies.

This occupational profile suggests that despite the country's growing number of technical-vocational programs and labor export policies, the majority of overseas employment continues to be concentrated in low-value and low-wage job categories. Such a pattern reflects the limited effectiveness of current upskilling initiatives and points to systemic gaps in aligning training programs with the competencies required by international industries and higher-value occupations.

ISSUE 7: TESDA'S INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY MUST EXPAND TO MEET THE GROWING DEMAND FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT.

To effectively fulfill its expanded mandate under recent reforms, TESDA must undertake significant capacity strengthening, particularly through the expansion of its organizational plantilla and regional infrastructure. As of 18 September 2025, TESDA's approved plantilla baseline stands at 5,072 positions, with 4,229 currently filled. However, to support its broadened functions—especially those related to enterprise-based training, regional integration, and training center expansion—the agency projects a need for additional 258 plantilla positions, bringing its total manpower requirement to 5,330.

The largest portion of this expansion will support the creation of the Enterprise-Based Education and Training Office (EBETO), which will serve as the central implementing unit for the newly institutionalized Enterprise-Based Education and Training (EBET) Framework Act (Republic Act 12063). TESDA estimates that 209 positions, to be phased over a three-year period, will be required to operationalize EBETO and oversee coordination with industry partners nationwide. This expansion reflects TESDA's strategic pivot toward industry-led training and private sector partnerships as key drivers of employability and productivity.

Meanwhile, the development of Regional Training Centers (RTCs) remains a core institutional priority. TESDA has identified 22 new plantilla positions—11 for RTC–CARAGA in Butuan City (through the conversion of the Provincial Training Center–Bad-as), and another 11 for RTC–SOCCSKSARGEN in Alabel, Sarangani (through the recognition of PTC–TSOX). These expansions aim to strengthen TESDA's capacity to deliver specialized, industry-responsive programs at the regional level.

Collectively, these measures underscore TESDA's recognition that institutional capacity growth is essential to sustain the increasing demand for TVET programs, particularly under the expanded mandates introduced by the EBET Framework Act and regional development priorities. Strengthening TESDA's human resources and regional infrastructure will be critical to achieving inclusive, industry-driven, and high-quality skills development across the Philippines.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Establish a Unified Labor Market Information System (LMIS) that consolidates fragmented datasets across the PSA, DOLE, and TESDA, via the Education and Workforce Development Group (EWDG).** This LMIS should serve as the central repository for real-time, disaggregated data on skills supply and demand—linking domestic, regional, and overseas labor markets. To achieve this, agencies must adopt common data standards, interoperable digital systems, and regular employer-based surveys to forecast emerging occupations and guide investment in training programs. Skills anticipation should be embedded into national and regional planning cycles, ensuring that education and training institutions respond proactively to economic and technological shifts.

2. **Ramp up the development of higher-level skilling programs in Priority Areas.** TESDA should accelerate the development and expansion of higher-level skilling programs, particularly at NC III to NC IV levels and diploma programs, in alignment with the six EDCOM II priority industry clusters—Advanced Manufacturing, Digital Technology, Healthcare, Financial Services, Tourism, and the Creative Economy. With only 26 NC IV providers nationwide and most training still concentrated at NC II, there is an urgent need to reorient the system toward middle-skill and specialized qualifications that support industry modernization and decent employment. Partnerships with industry boards and sector councils should be leveraged to update training regulations, modernize curricula, and ensure that program offerings are anchored in actual labor market demand.

3. **Conduct a comprehensive review of its scholarship programs to ensure they are equitable, responsive, and sustainable.** Targeting mechanisms should be redesigned to adopt quota- or needs-based allocation, prioritizing high-poverty provinces, geographically isolated areas, and underserved TVIs. Scholarship values must be regularly indexed to inflation and actual training costs to ensure that financial support remains adequate amid rising expenses for materials, assessment, and transportation. In parallel, TESDA should institutionalize wrap-around learner support systems—including starter kits, assessment fee subsidies, and psychosocial services—to enhance participation and completion among disadvantaged learners such as women in nontraditional trades, returning OFWs, and persons with disabilities.

   At the system level, TESDA should also strengthen public–private complementarity by promoting balanced allocation of scholarship slots between public and private TVET institutions. Avoiding duplication of identical programs within the same localities will prevent resource inefficiencies and ensure that scholarship expansion translates into diverse, high-quality training options. This approach will also support

the sustainability of private TVIs, particularly those heavily reliant on voucher funding, while reinforcing collaboration with enterprises under the newly enacted Enterprise-Based Education and Training (EBET) Framework Act.

4. **Expand TESDA's institutional capacity.** The establishment of the Enterprise-Based Education and Training Office (EBETO), new Regional Training Centers (RTCs), and the Negros Island Region (NIR) Regional Office requires additional plantilla positions and strengthened human resource planning. The government should ensure that TESDA's organizational structure, workforce, and regional presence are adequately resourced to deliver enterprise-based, community-based, and higher-level skills programs efficiently.



PRIORITY AREA 20: INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT AND INVESTMENT IN UPSKILLING

FINDINGS

ISSUE 1: ENTERPRISE-BASED EDUCATION AND TRAINING (EBET) PRESENTS A MAJOR OPPORTUNITY TO EXPAND INDUSTRY-LED SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, BUT ITS FULL IMPACT WILL DEPEND ON STRENGTHENED IMPLEMENTATION SYSTEMS, CLEARER INCENTIVES, AND MORE RESPONSIVE PROCESSES.

While earlier enterprise-based training programs—including apprenticeship, learnership, and the Dual Training System (DTS)—have encountered challenges related to procedural rigidity, limited digitalization, and uneven enterprise participation, **Republic Act No. 12063, or the Enterprise-Based Education and Training (EBET) Framework Act, lays a solid foundation for transforming the Philippines' approach to work-based learning**. The EBET Framework Act harmonizes these programs under a unified, industry-led system designed to make skills development more responsive to labor market needs and to promote closer collaboration between enterprises, training institutions, and government agencies.

The law introduces structured compensation arrangements, welfare safeguards, and clear standards for aligning training with the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF). General EBET trainees are ensured allowances for training-related expenses, apprentices receive at least 75% of the applicable minimum wage, and employed upskilling trainees retain full compensation and statutory benefits. These differentiated rules reflect the diverse profiles of EBET learners and aim to broaden participation while protecting trainee welfare.

To strengthen pathways into certification, the law enables EBET trainees to access existing scholarship programs such as TWSP and the Tulong-Trabaho Fund. Trainees may also undergo competency assessments leading to NCs or COCs, ensuring that enterprise-based training remains embedded within national qualifications and industry standards.

A key innovation of Republic Act 12063 is its incentive mechanism to encourage enterprise engagement. The Act authorizes tax deductions for training expenses—up to 50% until 2027 and rising to 75% starting 2028 within established ceilings—and provides donor's tax exemptions for contributions to training institutions. These mechanisms aim to reduce the cost burden on enterprises and stimulate wider participation, especially in sectors where structured work-based learning can significantly improve workforce readiness.

To support transparency and implementation efficiency, the law mandates a one-stop online portal to streamline enterprise registration, reporting, and incentive processing. This digital system, to be jointly developed by TESDA, DOF, BIR, BOC, and DICT, is expected to reduce administrative steps and make incentives far more accessible to participating companies.

Although previous frameworks faced delays—such as the long-standing requirement for a consolidated equipment and materials list under the former DTS Act—the EBET Framework now provides a modernized platform to operationalize these provisions within a coherent and digitalized system.

FOLLOWING THE PASSAGE OF THE LAW, TESDA ISSUED THE IMPLEMENTING RULES AND REGULATIONS (IRR) OF REPUBLIC ACT 12063 ON FEBRUARY 28, 2025, FOLLOWED BY THE PROMULGATION OF REVENUE REGULATIONS (RR) NO. 13-2025 ON MARCH 31, 2025, LAYING THE INITIAL LEGAL GROUNDWORK FOR OPERATIONALIZING THE ENTERPRISE-BASED TRAINING INCENTIVES.

However, as reflected in TESDA's formal communication to the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) dated July 9, 2025, several provisions of the RR require further clarification—particularly on the scope of allowable deductions, treatment of scholarship-covered training costs, limits on non-wage allowances, eligibility of foundation-run institutions, documentation requirements, and treatment of cross-agency incentives (pp. 1–6). TESDA's submitted scenarios highlight areas where implementing enterprises remain uncertain about compliance thresholds, cost ceilings, and interpretation of Sections 4(A), 9, and 7 of RR 13-2025, demonstrating the need for a harmonized, enterprise-friendly approach to tax incentive administration.

Against this backdrop, the release of TESDA Circular No. 069, s. 2025 on June 9, 2025 marks a significant advance in translating Republic Act 12063 into operational practice. The Circular provides the procedural backbone for EBET registration, trainee compensation rules, documentation requirements, and monitoring mechanisms. This was followed by TESDA Circular No. 075, s. 2025, which establishes detailed Operating Procedures for EBET Program Registration, covering requirements for compliance documents, program approval workflows, monitoring mechanisms, and reporting obligations for enterprises and training institutions.

The ecosystem is also expanding through the development of two forthcoming supplemental issuances namely, Guidelines on EBET Support Integrators, and EBET Grievance Machinery.

As of October 2025, TESDA has registered 383 EBET programs—including 246 General EBET, 20 Apprenticeship, and 117 Upskilling programs—indicating early compliance and uptake by enterprises and training institutions.

ISSUE 2: RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES IS SHIFTING TOWARDS MULTISECTORAL GROWTH BUT FACES UNEVEN IMPLEMENTATION AND LIMITED TVET INTEGRATION.

Rural development in the Philippines is undergoing a profound transformation, moving beyond traditional agriculture toward a multi-sector growth model that encompasses construction, food processing, eco-tourism, digital services, and micro-enterprise development. As emphasized in A Study on the Rural Development in the Philippines: Economic Impact, Policy Integration, and the Role of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) by Campoamor-Olegario et al. (2025), this shift reflects an emerging policy consensus that sustainable rural economies must be diverse, resilient, and skills-driven.

Likewise, the National Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization and Industrialization Plan (NAFMIP) 2021–2030 calls for transitioning from resource-based to technology-enabled agriculture, integrating farmers and fisherfolk into more productive, market-oriented value chains.

The study highlights that TVET serves as a critical but underleveraged instrument in advancing inclusive rural development. While national frameworks link TVET with agricultural modernization and regional competitiveness, implementation remains uneven across provinces, largely due to weak inter-agency coordination, inadequate local capacity, and the absence of tailored programs responsive to provincial labor market demands. Many rural communities continue to struggle with limited access to TVET centers, outdated curricula, and insufficient investment in new skill areas such as digital agriculture, green jobs, creative industries, and sustainable tourism. These gaps result in training outcomes that do not always translate into employment, forcing many graduates to remain underemployed or migrate in search of better opportunities.

Global and regional best practices underscore lessons that could inform Philippine rural development strategies. Vietnam's Doi Moi Land Reform demonstrated how integrated land reform, combined with microfinance and infrastructure investment, increased agricultural productivity by 78% (World Bank, 2025). Thailand's industry-driven TVET system, where 80% of graduates are employed in relevant fields, offers a compelling example of how close alignment between training and employer needs can enhance job placement and productivity. Indonesia's model of rural infrastructure development, characterized by strong national–local coordination in road projects, illustrates the benefits of empowered local governments with sufficient technical and financial capacity. These cases suggest that the Philippines could benefit from integrating TVET reforms with local infrastructure programs, strengthening LGU capacity, and aligning curricula more directly with employer and community needs.

> *"Rural development is not just for poverty reduction. It is the second engine of growth for sustainable futures."*
>
> *- Edicio Dela Torre, Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM), Former TESDA Director General, TVET and Lifelong Learning Standing Committee Member, EDCOM II*

Moreover, Salonga (2025) emphasizes that the challenges of rural development stem from limited access to infrastructure, financing, markets, and advanced skills development, all of which shape the growth of MSMEs—the backbone of rural economies. Addressing these barriers requires a combination of hard infrastructure (roads, connectivity, training centers) and soft infrastructure (policy coordination, institutional capacity, and skills systems). Dr. Cielito Habito, EDCOM Standing Committee member, also stressed that agriculture remains the country's most inclusive sector—capable of lifting entire communities when linked to skills, technology, and enterprise development.



IRR Signing of the EBET Law at the TESDA Central Office last February 28, 2025 with Rep. Roman T. Romulo, DOLE Sec. Bienvenido E. Laguesma, TESDA Sec. Jose Francisco "Kiko" B. Benitez, Sen. Joel J. Villanueva, and Sen. Sherwin T. Gatchalian.

Overall, rural development in the Philippines is becoming increasingly multi-sectoral and skills-driven. However, without stronger TVET integration, post-training support, and decentralized governance, the country risks missing the opportunity to transform its rural regions into resilient, innovation-led growth centers capable of driving inclusive and sustained national development.

Despite progress, program convergence remains weak. Graduates of TVET programs often lack access to seed capital, mentorship, and structured job placement pathways, leading to underemployment and migration. To close this gap, TESDA, LGUs, and industry must coordinate not only on course offerings but also on post-training systems that ensure skills lead to sustainable livelihoods. Establishing job-matching platforms, microgrant schemes, and local business incubation programs would improve employment outcomes and ensure that training investments yield tangible economic returns.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **TESDA must immediately establish the Enterprise-Based Education and Training Office (EBETO) as mandated under Republic Act 12063.** This dedicated office should serve as the central coordinating body responsible for policy development, technical guidance, monitoring, and regulatory oversight of all enterprise-based training modalities, including apprenticeship, learnership, and the Dual Training System (DTS). Independent reviews by EDCOM II and PIDS highlight the absence of a specialized EBET unit as a key institutional gap, resulting in fragmented implementation and weak alignment between industry demand and training supply. By operationalizing EBETO with adequate staffing, clear mandates, and modernized digital infrastructure, TESDA can strengthen inter-agency coordination, ensure policy coherence, and expand industry engagement across sectors.

2. **Establish a one-stop online portal for accessing EBET incentives .** TESDA, in coordination with the Department of Finance (DOF), Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), Bureau of Customs (BOC), and Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), should develop a one-stop online portal to streamline documentation, reduce redundancies, and enable real-time verification of tax deductions and other incentives. Transparent and efficient

digital processes, combined with clear guidelines and help desk support, will significantly lower the cost of participation and encourage broader private sector involvement in enterprise-based education and training.

3. **Rationalize and expedite the development of Training Regulations (TRs) to support the scaling-up of EBET programs.** TESDA's adopt-adapt strategies should be taken advantage of to shorten development cycles and align curricula with industry-specific competencies. A faster, evidence-based TR development process, development of competency standards and microcredentials will allow TVIs and enterprises to introduce new programs in high-demand fields, including advanced manufacturing, green technologies, logistics, and digital services. . This approach will make the EBET framework more agile, ensuring that training keeps pace with technological shifts and global labor market trends.

4. **Pilot implementation of EBET programs should be prioritized across strategic sectors and regions.** TESDA, in partnership with industry associations, chambers of commerce, and LGUs, should roll out pilot programs that test scalable models for enterprise-based learning—particularly in rural areas and growth corridors identified under the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023–2028 and the National Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization and Industrialization Plan (NAFMIP) 2021–2030. These pilots can demonstrate the value of EBET in strengthening local economies, enhancing rural employability, and promoting inclusive industrialization. Lessons from the pilots should inform future revisions to policy design, financing arrangements, and monitoring systems.

5. **Strengthen the integration of TVET within rural development strategies through institutional reforms, LGU-enabled delivery systems, and market-responsive programming.** The government must reconfigure how TVET, MSME development, and local economic planning interact. Evidence from Campoamor-Olegario et al. (2025) demonstrates that rural development is increasingly multisectoral—spanning agribusiness, construction, eco-tourism, digital services, and micro-enterprise development—but national–local coordination remains weak, leading to mismatches between training supply and labor market demand. Similarly, Salonga's (2025) MSME–Technical Education Development study highlights that MSMEs—critical engines of rural job creation—continue to face barriers related to infrastructure, market access, skills gaps, and limited access to tailored training programs and government incentives. These findings collectively point to the need for a coherent, place-based TVET ecosystem that supports local value chains, strengthens LGU capacity, and ensures that training leads to employment, entrepreneurship, and sustainable livelihoods.





PRIORITY AREA 21: ENSURING QUALITY IN THE PROVISION OF TVET

FINDINGS

ISSUE 1: PHILIPPINE TVET REMAINS CONCENTRATED IN LOW-LEVEL QUALIFICATIONS DESPITE EVIDENCE OF HIGHER RETURNS FROM ADVANCED SKILLS.

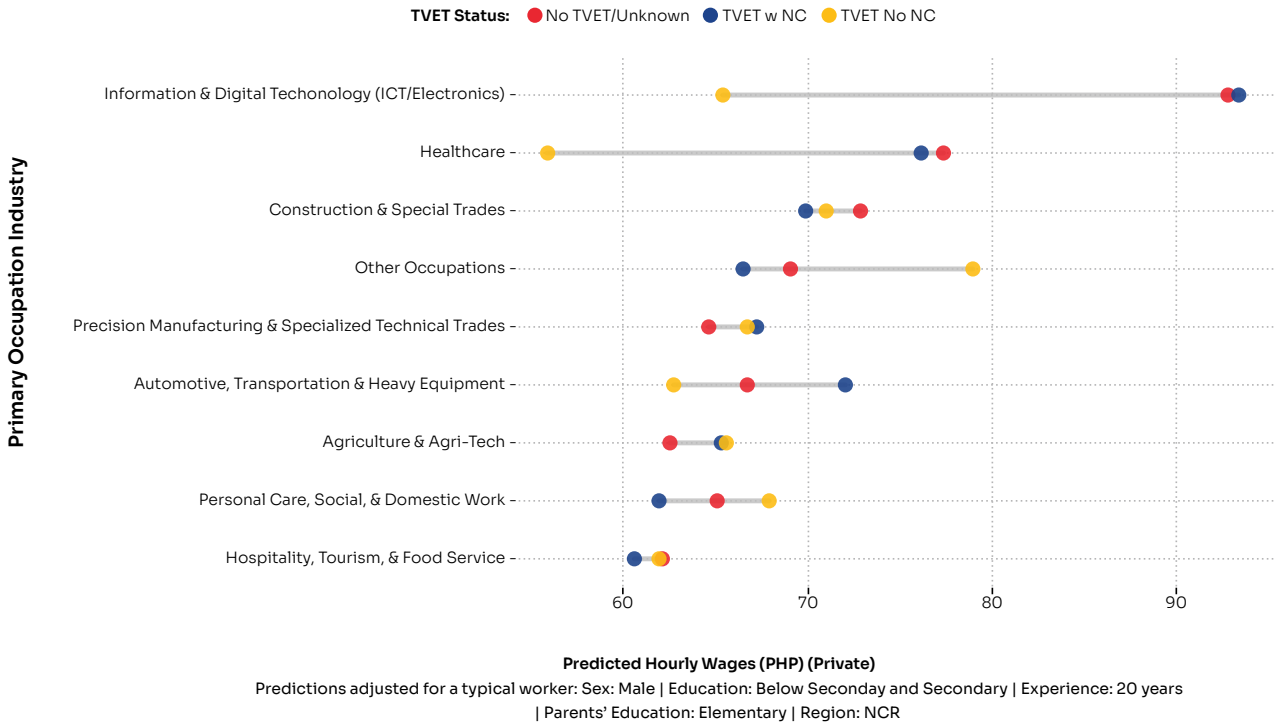
Graduates who complete TVET programs earn higher average wages than those who do not, underscoring the importance of expanding access to and progression within TVET pathways (Monteverde et al 2025). The study further observed that Level 5 graduates—those completing postsecondary, non-degree, or short-cycle tertiary programs—are well-established in the labor market, earning more than senior high school completers and in some cases outperforming even bachelor's degree undergraduates in employment outcomes. These findings demonstrate that advanced TVET qualifications can serve as a viable and sustainable middle-skill pathway, capable of producing competitive and industry-relevant workers in high-demand sectors.

Further evidence shows that wage premiums from TVET completion are most pronounced among individuals with secondary education or below (Generalao et al, 2025). For this group, completing a TVET program serves as a positive labor market signal to employers, resulting in higher wages compared to peers with similar academic backgrounds but without technical training. However, the study also noted that these benefits decline for individuals with higher levels of formal education and are minimal for those who have not completed secondary schooling. This highlights the need to better integrate foundational education with technical training, ensuring that learners possess the literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving skills needed to maximize the impact of their TVET qualifications.

Finally, returns are found to be superior in matched occupations, and for ICT completers. In an EDCOM commissioned study of the recent APIS–LFS 2024 conducted by Ballar (2025), secondary graduates with NC III/IV are observed to earn a 40% higher hourly wage compared to peers with no TVET (PHP 96/hour vs. PHP 69/hour), while those in matched occupations in traditional trades such as construction, automotive, and personal care enjoy additional premiums of PHP 8–14 per hour over mismatched workers. In sectors like ICT, the returns take a different form: ICT graduates who use their certificate as a portable signal of digital literacy earn PHP 17/hour more in high-paying non-technical roles than peers working in ICT-specific jobs (PHP 87.3/hour vs. PHP 70.1/hour). Together, these findings show that TVET yields its strongest returns either through high-level certification or strong skills–job alignment—and, in the case of ICT, when skills function as a powerful signal across sectors.

The study underscores how economic value is neither automatic nor uniform across learners, industries, or certification levels. Instead, wage premiums follow two distinct pathways: (a) a skills–job match mechanism that dominates most sectors, and (b) a skills–portability mechanism uniquely observed in ICT-related programs. These differentiated returns highlight the need for more coherent policy interventions in certification, training quality, foundational education, and labor market alignment.

FIGURE 6.
TVET Wage Outcomes by Primary Job (Predicted Hourly Wages (PHP) from OLSS Model (M2)



Source: Figure from Ballar, K. (2025). For whom, and under what conditions, does Technical-Vocational Education and Training (TVET) boost wages?. Policy Note. [Upcoming Study]

According to the study (Ballar, 2025), higher-level NCs (NC III/IV)—rather than mere TVET participation—drive wage premiums. For a typical worker with secondary education, wages rise from PHP 69/hour (no TVET) to PHP 96/hour when holding an NC III/IV, while NC I/II provides only marginal gains. This corroborates earlier EDCOM II (2024) evidence showing that higher-level certifications yield the strongest private returns.



Critically, the APIS-LFS 2024 (Ballar, 2025) results show a wage penalty for incomplete certification, especially in high-skill sectors. Workers in Healthcare or ICT who took TVET but failed to obtain an NC earn substantially less than those with no TVET at all—implying that non-certification may serve as a negative labor market signal.

Trainers have raised concerns over outdated content and slow curriculum revisions that fail to keep pace with industry innovation. As one trainer pointed out, "The contact center curriculum is extremely outdated. While the industry updates its standards every three months, our curriculum remains unchanged." (Rosales et al., 2025). This curriculum lag undermines TVET's ability to equip learners with current, industry-aligned skills—particularly in fast-evolving sectors such as business process outsourcing, digital technology, and advanced manufacturing.

ISSUE 2: THE DIPLOMA PROGRAM SYSTEM CONTINUES TO EXPAND, BUT UNEVEN IMPLEMENTATION AND PERSISTENT QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ALIGNMENT ISSUES REMAIN.

Diploma programs, situated at Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) Level 5, are designed to bridge the middle-skills gap by offering TVET graduates pathways to advanced technical qualifications or undergraduate degree programs. These function as short-cycle tertiary education comparable to associate degrees and post-secondary technical diplomas in other countries (TESDA, 2017).

TESDA has issued successive policy circulars to institutionalize and standardize these programs. Circular 038-2017 launched the pilot implementation, establishing 17 Program Learning Outcomes aligned with PQF Level 5 descriptors—requiring demonstration of advanced theoretical knowledge, technical-conceptual skills, and capacity for supervisory and non-routine work. Regional Diploma Technical Working Groups were also created to support curriculum development and quality assurance (TESDA, 2017). Subsequently, Circular 086-2019 introduced a Procedures Manual with a four-perspective evaluation framework covering PQF alignment, packaging compliance, learning outcome attainment, and articulation implications (TESDA, 2019).

Building on this, TESDA released Circular 119-2020, the Omnibus Guidelines on the Packaging Rules of PQF Level 5 Diploma Programs. This issuance clarified the minimum requirements for curriculum structure, including general education subjects, core

technology courses, specialized technical courses based on Training Regulations, elective courses, internships, and culminating activities. It also reinforced the need for industry consultation, recognition of prior learning, and the alignment of course outcomes with the 17 PLOs, while providing guidelines on credit transfer consistent with ladderized education pathways. Circular 119-2020 also explicitly linked Diploma Programs to the Philippine Qualifications Register (PhQuaR), identifying them as qualifications that must undergo rigorous quality assurance before national listing.

In 2020, TESDA expanded this framework to international alignment through Circular 150-2020, which established guidelines for engineering-related Diploma Programs to pursue alignment with the Dublin and Sydney Accords. This ensured that engineering technicians (PQF Level 4) and engineering technologists (PQF Level 5) trained under TESDA meet internationally benchmarked graduate attributes, enabling comparability with qualifications in signatory countries and strengthening the global mobility of Filipino skilled workers. The policy also encouraged public and private institutions to seek eventual accreditation through the Philippine Technological Council (PTC) using the CASEE framework, further raising the level of curriculum quality and institutional capability.

Most recently, TESDA Circular 063-2025 amended and consolidated the packaging rules for Diploma Programs to address challenges identified in earlier years of implementation. The Circular updated requirements on curriculum structure, academic policies, and crediting systems, ensuring alignment with other emerging policies such as the Philippine Credit Transfer System (PCTS), Area-Based and Demand-Driven TVET, and joint CHED-TESDA pathways for learner progression. It clarified the minimum requirements for program packaging, delivery, and institutional eligibility, and integrated provisions from multiple circulars to reduce fragmentation. This 2025 issuance now serves as the overarching guideline governing all PQF Level 5 Diploma Programs in the TVET sector.

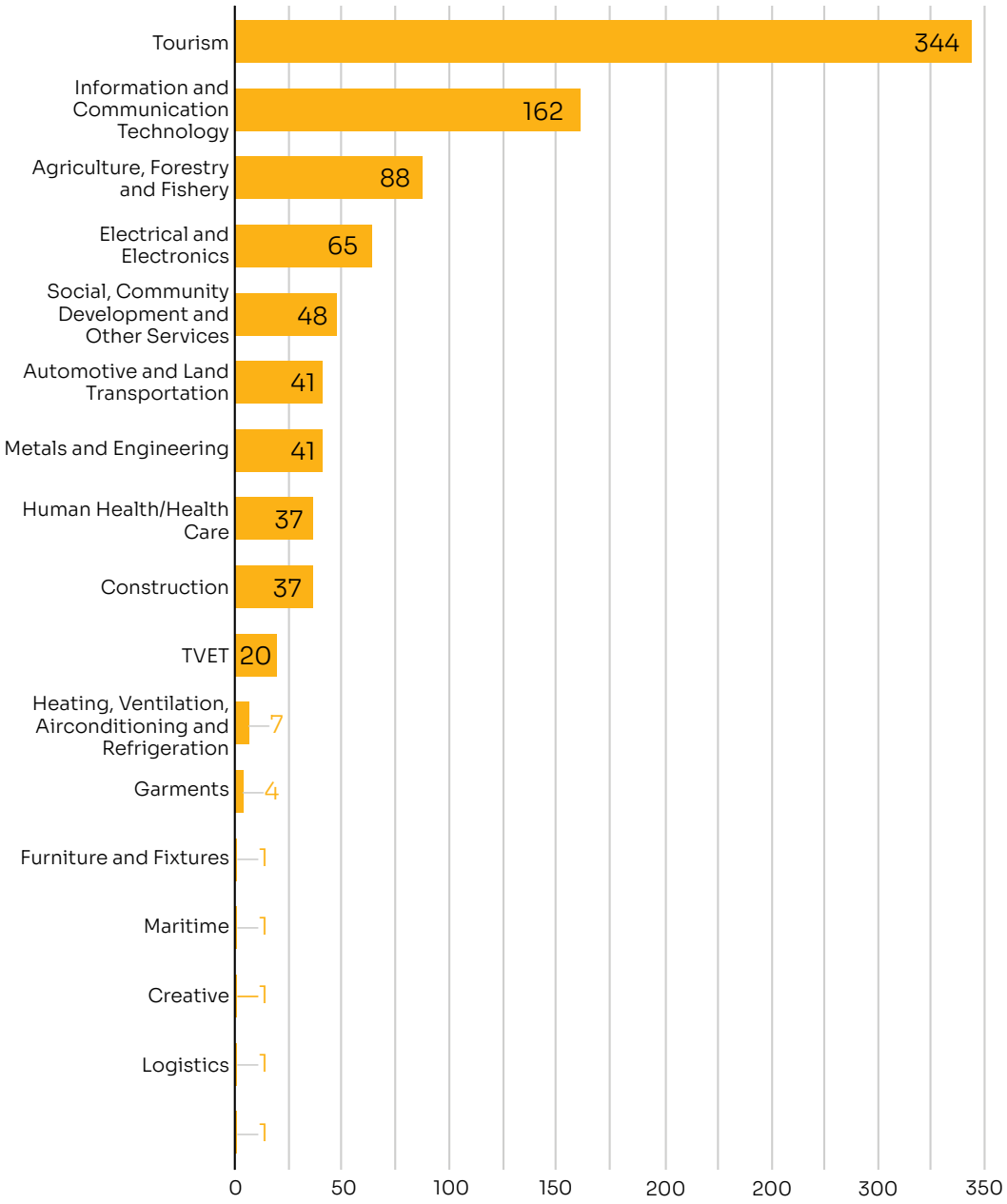
> *TESDA's 2023 Evaluation Study on the Diploma Program found substantial regional variation in the availability and quality of programs, with over 335 recognized Diploma Programs nationwide but uneven capacity and quality across TVIs.*

Key challenges identified include difficulties meeting credit transfer requirements with higher education institutions, faculty qualification requirements (particularly for general education and theoretical courses), inconsistent curriculum documentation, and limited industry partnerships in some regions. Nonetheless, best practices were observed in institutions with strong industry ties, well-developed curriculum maps, and clear articulation pathways leading to bachelor's degree programs. The study recommended updating packaging rules (now addressed through Circular 063-2025), improving faculty development policies, strengthening monitoring systems, and expanding collaboration with HEIs and industry—actions that TESDA has since begun integrating.

Based on TESDA's latest Diploma Program Monitoring Dashboard, the scale of PQF Level 5 implementation has grown substantially since the 2017 pilot.

> *As of November 2025, a total of 899 Diploma Programs have been formally recognized nationwide, with 313 institutions—including TTIs, TVIs, HEIs, and LGUs—actively implementing these programs across 16 priority sectors.*

FIGURE 7.
Number of Diploma Programs by Sector



Source: TESDA's Diploma Program Monitoring Dashboard as of November 4, 2025 (https://lookerstudio.google.com/reporting/db03b081-0b3e-4da5-bb7c-5a9c85b03762)

Notably, 123 of the recognized programs were only recently approved by the TESDA Board, highlighting a significant acceleration in recognition decisions during the last cycle and suggesting that the updated packaging rules and streamlining of requirements under Circular 063-2025 have contributed to faster approvals. Sectoral distribution remains uneven: Tourism (344) and ICT (162) disproportionately dominate offerings, while sectors such as Furniture and Fixtures, Logistics, Creative Industries, and Maritime maintain only one program each, indicating potential misalignment between regional labor market needs, institutional capacity, and program development incentives. This quantitative profile reinforces the need for TESDA to rationalize Diploma offerings through stronger area-based and demand-driven planning, enhanced curriculum quality assurance, and closer coordination with CHED and industry boards to ensure that the rapid expansion of recognized programs translates into actual improvements in graduate competencies and workforce readiness.

> *"We are reviewing the development of diploma programs because we were thinking that bundling is not the best mechanism in order to have a diploma program.*
>
> *Within the year, lahat po ng diploma programs will be reviewed already."*
>
> *-DDG Rosanna A. Urdaneta, Deputy Director General for Policies and Planning, TESDA, TESDA Charter Hearing, July 10, 2025, Taguig, Philippines*



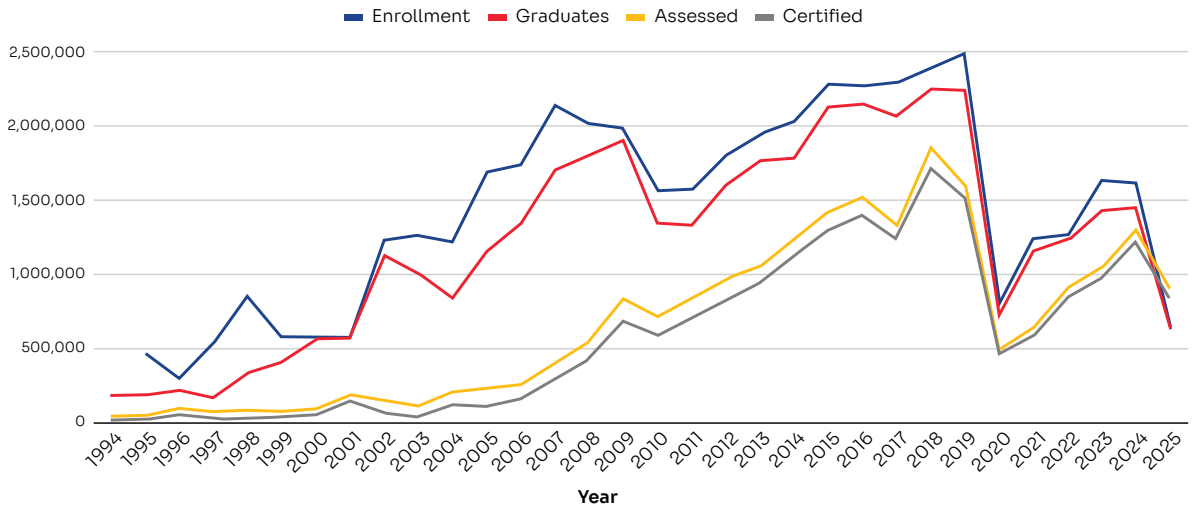
ISSUE 3: TVET ENROLLMENT HAS REBOUNDED BUT REMAINS BELOW PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS.

As of October 2025, TESDA recorded 1,022,884 enrollees, 965,013 graduates, 1,189,286 assessed, and 1,094,868 certified learners—indicating a continued recovery from the steep decline in 2020, when only 802,218 individuals were enrolled. Although enrollment has nearly doubled compared to pandemic lows, it remains below pre-pandemic levels when TVET participation consistently exceeded two million learners annually.

TESDA attributes the slow recovery to several structural factors. The disruption of in-person, hands-on training, limited digital readiness of TVET institutions, and financial constraints among potential trainees collectively constrained program delivery and participation during and after the pandemic. Many institutions lacked the infrastructure to sustain remote training, while others faced closures or reduced capacity due to staffing shortages and health restrictions.

Nevertheless, digital transformation initiatives such as the TESDA Online Program (TOP) helped sustain training continuity. From 2020 to 2025, over 8.8 million Filipinos enrolled in TESDA's online courses, with 5.9 million completers recorded as of October 2025. This digital pivot cushioned the decline in traditional enrollments, though online completers were not fully captured in TESDA's formal EGAC (enrolled–graduates–assessed–certified) statistics.

FIGURE 8.
Total TVET enrollment has been steadily increasing since the pandemic



Source: TESDA Presentation, Senate Budget Hearing, October 22, 2025

The gradual rebound observed from 2021 onward reflects the resumption of face-to-face training and assessment and the renewed confidence of learners and industries in vocational programs. However, the recovery remains uneven across regions and sectors—public training institutions (TTIs) maintained stable operations due to direct government funding, while private TVIs, particularly small and fee-dependent ones, continue to struggle with low enrollment and operational costs.

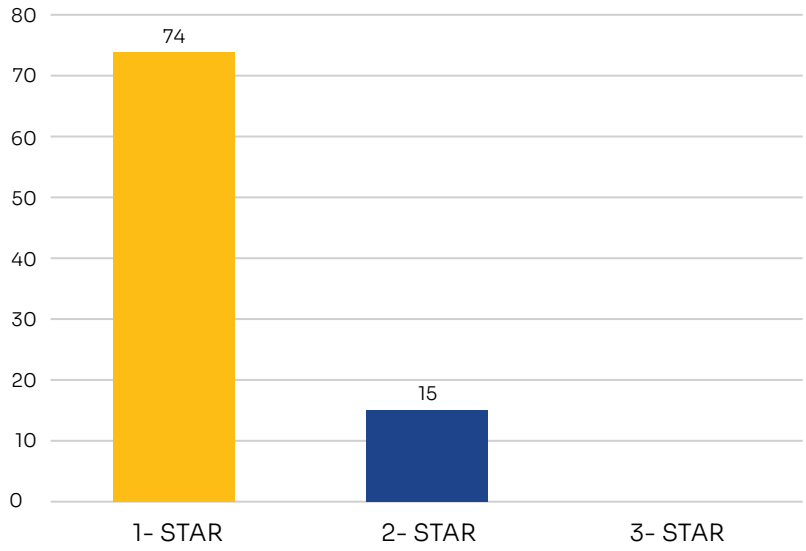
ISSUE 4: THERE IS A NEED TO STRENGTHEN QUALITY SIGNALS IN PHILIPPINE TVET.

TESDA's System for TVET Accreditation and Recognition (STAR) Program reveals persistent disparities in quality signals between public and private TVIs. Despite being a key mechanism for institutional quality recognition, the STAR Program remains largely concentrated among TTIs, particularly Provincial and Regional Training Centers, which are structurally and financially better positioned to meet TESDA's accreditation criteria. Studies by Rosales et al. (2025) and Chua (2025) both highlight that public institutions dominate STAR accreditation across all rating levels, while private TVIs remain underrepresented, underscoring the urgent need for a more inclusive and capability-building strategy to foster public–private complementarity in the TVET system.

A four-year assessment conducted by Rosales et al. (2025) covering 2019, 2021, 2022, and 2023 found that STAR accreditation remained concentrated among public TTIs, which consistently met or exceeded baseline standards under TESDA Circular No. 048, s. 2018. This dominance stems from the mandatory participation of public TVIs and their access to superior government funding, infrastructure, and technical support. In contrast, private TVIs participate voluntarily and often lack the necessary financial and administrative resources to undergo or sustain accreditation. The dataset showed only five private TVIs rated as 1-Star, four as 2-Star, and none at the 3-Star level, revealing a persistent quality gap between the public and private sectors.

The distribution of STAR ratings across accredited institutions underscores this imbalance. As shown in Figure 74, **the vast majority of TVET programs are rated 1-Star (74 programs), with only 15 programs achieving 2-Star and none reaching 3-Star status**. This pattern illustrates that while many institutions can comply with minimum quality standards, very few demonstrate excellence or innovation beyond compliance. It reflects a systemic challenge in institutional capacity, where operational compliance is achieved, but continuous improvement and quality enhancement remain limited.

FIGURE 9.
Distribution of STAR Ratings among TVET Programs (2019–2023)



Source: Rosales et al. (2025)

Further compounding the issue, the 2022 and 2023 cycles recorded no new STAR accreditations, indicating declining participation and potentially reflecting systemic bottlenecks in institutional readiness, documentation, and quality control mechanisms. Moreover, logistical inefficiencies persist—both TTIs and private TVIs identified difficulties in securing assessment venues, tools, and equipment, with some centers reportedly passing audits but failing to ensure operational readiness during actual evaluation. As one assessor noted, "Centers pass audits but aren't ready on the day itself." This disconnect between formal compliance and real-world readiness undermines the credibility and sustainability of TVET quality assurance efforts.

A notable development in 2023 was the conferment of the TESDA Seal of Integrity to one institution from the National Capital Region—the only confirmed awardee across three years (2022–2024)—out of 60 applicants. While this achievement signifies the program's rigor, it also reveals its extreme selectivity, suggesting that many institutions struggle to meet the program's stringent requirements.

To ensure a more equitable and responsive quality assurance ecosystem, Rosales et al. (2025) and Chua (2025) recommend targeted interventions, including: (1) sustained technical assistance for private and underperforming institutions; (2) regionally distributed mentoring and follow-up audit mechanisms; and (3) investments in infrastructure, faculty development, and digital compliance tools. TESDA could enhance its feedback-driven quality management systems, ensuring that audit findings translate into tangible capacity-building outcomes.

ISSUE 5: DESPITE GROWTH IN TVET ASSESSMENTS, GAPS IN ASSESSOR EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING QUALITY UNDERMINE SYSTEM CREDIBILITY.

Between 2020 and 2024, TESDA recorded an 11% net increase in the number of qualifications assessed, signaling continued expansion of the TVET sector (Rosales et al, 2025). However, findings show that this quantitative growth masks persistent systemic weaknesses—particularly in assessor qualifications, logistical readiness, and training quality—that threaten the overall credibility, consistency, and industry relevance of TVET delivery in the Philippines.

Public institutions dominate STAR accreditation across all rating levels, while private TVIs remain underrepresented, underscoring the urgent need for a more inclusive and capability-building strategy to foster public–private complementarity in the TVET system.

Across all three phases of training—pre-training, implementation, and post-training—the study found that while trainers in both TTIs and private TVIs demonstrate a solid foundation of pedagogical competence, they continue to encounter technical, procedural, and resource-related challenges that compromise instructional quality. TVIs, in particular, consistently reported slightly higher mean scores in difficulty across categories such as logistical coordination, curriculum clarity, and equipment availability, suggesting comparatively greater operational strain. These findings underscore the urgent need for systemic reforms to enhance curriculum alignment, strengthen resource allocation, and institutionalize robust post-training evaluation mechanisms to improve overall program quality and learner outcomes.

Sectoral disparities further illustrate these challenges. In Electronics and Information and Communications Technology (ICT), assessors often lack sufficient industry-based experience, resulting in limited contextual understanding of the skills they evaluate. One assessor admitted that "many assessors rely solely on the test package and have never gained real-world job experience." This overreliance on procedural testing, rather than practical application, raises concerns about the authenticity and industry relevance of assessments in fast-evolving technical fields.

Similarly, in Agriculture, Organic Farming, and Pipefitting, assessors were found to depend heavily on theoretical instruction and online resources, with minimal exposure to actual work environments. As another assessor candidly noted, "Some assessors learned basic farming only from YouTube and have no actual exposure." Such accounts reveal a broader issue of insufficient industry immersion and continuous professional development, particularly in sectors that demand hands-on expertise.

Overall, while TESDA's expanded assessment coverage reflects progress in accessibility and participation, the findings from Rosales et al. (2025) highlight that quantitative growth alone does not equate to quality assurance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Expand and deepen industry participation and leadership in TVET .** TESDA should expand and empower Industry TVET Boards (ITBs) and Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) in high-growth and emerging sectors, including advanced manufacturing, ICT, healthcare, construction, green industries, and the creative economy. These boards must be quadripartite in composition, involving government, industry, academe, and labor to ensure that training regulations, competency standards, and assessment methods are industry-led and future-oriented (OECD, 2023; World Bank–UNESCO–ILO, 2023).

   TESDA must also institutionalize formal collaboration between Industry Boards and CHED Technical Panels through mechanisms such as a Joint Board on Curriculum Standards or Discipline and Sector Skills Councils (DSSCs). This alignment will harmonize TVET qualifications and higher education programs, support ladderized pathways, and enable mobility within the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF).

2. **Upgrade the quality assurance ecosystem and address institutional disparities between public and private TVIs— balancing regulation and development.** Quality assurance mechanisms—particularly the System for TVET Accreditation and Recognition (STAR) Program—must be recalibrated to ensure greater inclusivity and capacity-building for private TVIs. TESDA should establish a tiered and supportive accreditation pathway that provides developmental mentoring, phased compliance targets, and technical assistance to help under-resourced institutions progress through the STAR levels. This may require the formulation of a typology of technical vocational institutions in a way that properly establishes nuanced standards and criteria for excellence, to inform developmental supports to be provided by the agency to public and private TVIs alike.

3. **Implement a programmed review of training regulations, and continuous industry alignment.** TESDA should institutionalize a programmed review cycle across all priority qualifications to ensure that training regulations and assessment tools remain current with evolving industry standards. As trainers have emphasized, outdated curricula significantly undermine relevance and employability.

   TESDA must collaborate with industry associations, employer federations, and ITBs to co-develop and validate curricula through live labor market analytics, employer surveys, and regular skills foresight exercises (OECD, 2023). These reforms should be complemented by:

   - Modular and stackable course structures that enable progressive upskilling from NC I–IV to Level 5 (Diploma).
   - Integration of digital, green, and transversal skills (communication, teamwork, critical thinking) across all qualifications.
   - Curriculum innovation grants to incentivize institutions that co-design or pilot industry-endorsed training programs.

4. **Enhance data systems and performance monitoring for a more efficient trainee tracing system and funding mechanisms.** TESDA must enhance its data collection and analytics systems to track trainee progression, employment outcomes, and institutional performance. By establishing an integrated data system, TESDA would be able to track graduates and training providers better to inform scholarship targeting, and curriculum updates. It would also provide evidence-based funding allocation by tying budget decisions to measurable outcomes such as employment, certification, and wage growth.

5. **Update scholarship guidelines and allocations to be more responsive to trainee needs, and incentivize higher skills training in priority fields.** TESDA should reallocate and expand funding toward higher-level qualifications (NC III–IV and Level V (Diploma) programs) shown to yield stronger wage and productivity outcomes (Monteverde et al., 2025; Generalao et al., 2025). Scholarship voucher values should also be indexed to inflation and actual training costs, while institutional funding should be explored to support equipment modernization, quality assurance compliance, and innovation projects, especially in identified priority sectors and programs.

   Additionally, funding mechanisms must incentivize performance and inclusivity, providing differentiated support to institutions serving disadvantaged learners or rural communities to promote equitable access to high-quality training opportunities.



PRIORITY AREA 22: FRAMEWORK FOR EQUIVALENCY AND RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

FINDINGS

ISSUE 1: SYSTEMIC FRAGMENTATION CONTINUES TO UNDERMINE THE PHILIPPINE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK AND TVET QUALITY.

The Philippine Qualifications Framework–National Coordinating Council (PQF-NCC) has remained largely nonfunctional since the passage of Republic Act No. 10968 in 2017, reflecting chronic governance and institutional weaknesses in the country's qualifications and lifelong learning architecture. As reported by EDCOM II (2025), the PQF-NCC's operations have been hampered by the absence of a permanent secretariat, dedicated funding, and a coherent strategic plan, resulting in a lack of coordinated leadership among member agencies such as CHED, TESDA, DepEd, PRC, and DOLE. This institutional paralysis has significantly delayed the full operationalization of the PQF, particularly in aligning education and training systems with labor market demands.

The slow rollout of the PQF is also attributed to limited domestic expertise in qualifications referencing and quality assurance. According to EDCOM II's Year 2 findings, the Philippines continues to rely on external consultants and donor-funded programs to facilitate framework development, indicating a lack of institutional capacity to sustain technical functions locally.

To translate the PQF from a policy framework into an operational system that drives lifelong learning and labor market relevance, three core mechanisms must be developed and synchronized:

1. The Philippine Credit Transfer System (PCTS) provides the foundation for learner mobility by recognizing prior learning and enabling the transfer of credits across institutions and sectors.
2. The Philippine Qualifications Register (PhQuaR) serves as the national public repository of quality-assured qualifications, ensuring transparency, accountability, and comparability of credentials. Meanwhile, periodic referencing of the PQF to the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF) ensures international alignment and strengthens regional labor mobility.
3. Over time, the PQF must also be dynamically integrated with the Philippine Skills Framework (PSF) and the forthcoming national Labor Market Information System (LMIS).

This ecosystem—linking qualifications, skills standards, and real-time labor market intelligence—will enable more coherent curriculum design, targeted training, and improved matching between education outputs and industry needs.

Parallel to this, the discourse on lifelong learning in the Philippines has evolved from a teacher-centric to a learner-centric paradigm, emphasizing learner agency, personalized skills development, and recognition of prior learning. However, the institutional mechanisms to actualize this paradigm shift—such as flexible credit transfer systems, workplace learning accreditation, and community-based lifelong learning programs—remain weakly implemented. This misalignment between vision and capacity underscores the need for systemic reform in how the PQF and TVET systems interface to support lifelong learning pathways.



Recent institutional actions under the leadership of Secretary Sonny Angara, as Chair of the PQF NCC, have begun to address a period of limited institutional momentum by regularizing Council meetings and revitalizing the PQF Secretariat. These developments signal a renewed commitment to advancing a more coherent and seamless education and training system, grounded in the alignment of qualification levels across sectors.

Key operational components of the PQF are now gaining momentum. The PCTS is undergoing review and pilot implementation. The PhQuaR is being populated and plans for an external review of the System is underway to enhance public transparency; and sectoral PSFs are being developed and progressively mapped to the PQF level descriptors. Taken together, these initiatives lay the foundations for an integrated national qualifications ecosystem capable of supporting learner mobility, skills portability, and lifelong learning.

A substantial majority of TVIs in the Philippines remain focused on foundational-level qualifications, specifically NC I, NC II, and CoC. These programs collectively account for over 80% (14,579) of all registered offerings nationwide, reflecting a persistent orientation toward basic occupational proficiency and entry-level skills development.

By contrast, only 12% (2,071) of registered programs offer higher-level qualifications, including NC III, NC IV, and Trainers Methodology (TM I and TM II). This uneven distribution underscores a structural imbalance in the TVET system, where most institutions remain concentrated at the lower end of the skills spectrum.

The delivery of higher-level qualifications is predominantly led by TTIs—notably the TESDA Administered Schools (TAS), Regional Training Centers (RTCs), and Specialized Training Centers—which benefit from direct government funding, superior infrastructure, and stronger linkages with industry partners. As noted by Chua (2025), this institutional advantage allows TTIs to spearhead advanced and specialized training, positioning them as the primary providers of NC III to NC IV programs within the national TVET landscape.

ISSUE 2: THE PASSAGE OF THE ETEEAP ACT INSTITUTIONALIZES ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS FOR EARNING TERTIARY DEGREES IN THE PHILIPPINES.

Republic Act No. 12124, also known as the "Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP) Act," passed in March 2025, institutionalizes a comprehensive system that enables Filipino professionals to obtain academic degrees by recognizing and accrediting prior learning and relevant work experiences. This landmark legislation formalizes an alternative education pathway that bridges the gap between formal schooling and experiential learning, thereby expanding access to higher education for adult learners, returning workers, and non-traditional students.

The ETEEAP establishes a structured mechanism for accrediting, validating, and recognizing learning gained from formal, non-formal, and informal training—including knowledge and expertise acquired through years of professional practice. Through this program, qualified individuals who were unable to complete their college degrees can earn an undergraduate or special graduate degree without undergoing the traditional academic route. The Act reflects the Philippine government's commitment to promoting lifelong learning and skills mobility, aligning educational opportunities with the realities of an evolving labor market.

Under the law, CHED serves as the lead implementing agency, tasked with deputizing qualified HEIs to administer the ETEEAP. Deputized HEIs are authorized to develop standards, assessment tools, and equivalency criteria that measure competencies against established academic and industry benchmarks. CHED is also mandated to ensure the continuing integrity and quality of the ETEEAP through monitoring, accreditation, and inter-agency collaboration with the DepEd, TESDA, and DOLE.

Historically, the access to and benefits of ETEEAP have been unevenly distributed across regions and disciplines. CHED data as of 25 June 2025 show that from 2017 to 2025, a total of 28,136 beneficiaries completed degrees through the program, with participation heavily concentrated in Region IV (27%), Region VII (16%), and Region X (11%). In stark contrast, uptake in other regions remains extremely limited—Region IX recorded only one beneficiary, while Region XI (0.03%) and Region XII (0.10%) show minimal participation. This regional disparity is mirrored in disciplinary distribution, where the majority of deputized HEIs and program completers are clustered in Business Management Education (23%), Teacher Education (19%), and Social Sciences and Communication (17%). These patterns highlight persistent inequities in geographic access and program availability within ETEEAP's implementation.

TABLE 1.
Regional Breakdown of Number of ETEEAP Programs and Student Beneficiaries

Region	Number of Programs	%	Number of Student Beneficiaries (2017 - present)	%
Region 1	39	9.63%	1,974	7.02%
Region 2	44	10.86%	2,716	9.65%
Region 3	20	4.94%	1,610	5.72%
Region 4	58	14.32%	7,561	26.87%
Region 5	35	8.64%	597	2.12%
Region 6	8	1.98%	897	3.19%
Region 7	32	7.90%	4,496	15.98%
Region 8	9	2.22%	1,119	3.98%
Region 9	6	1.48%	1	0.00%
Region 10	27	6.67%	3,082	10.95%
Region 11	11	2.72%	9	0.03%
Region 12	11	2.72%	29	0.10%
CAR	25	6.17%	453	1.61%
CARAGA	3	0.74%	285	1.01%
MIMAROPA	4	0.99%	298	1.06%
NCR	73	18.02%	3,009	10.69%
Total	**405**	**100.00%**	**28,136**	**100.00%**

Source: Data submission to EDCOM II by Office of Programs and Standards Development (OPSD), CHED last June 30, 2025

TABLE 2.
Breakdown of Number of ETEEAP Programs per Discipline

Discipline	Number of Programs	% of Providers
Agriculture Education	22	5.43%
Architecture, Fine Arts & Other Related Programs	4	0.99%
Business Management Education	93	22.96%
Criminal Justice Education	33	8.15%
Engineering and Technology	37	9.14%
Health Professions Education	16	3.95%
Humanities	12	2.96%
Industrial Technology	1	0.25%
Information and Technology Education	38	9.38%
Science and Mathematics	5	1.23%
Social Sciences and Communication	69	17.04%
Teacher Education	75	18.52%
Grand Total	**405**	**100.00%**

Source: Data submission to EDCOM II by Office of Programs and Standards Development (OPSD), CHED last June 30, 2025

The ETEEAP Act signifies a paradigm shift toward a competency-based, inclusive, and lifelong learning framework that values experience as a legitimate form of education. By institutionalizing prior learning recognition and accreditation, the law reinforces the role of higher education in fostering upward mobility, workforce development, and national competitiveness— anchored on the principle that quality education should remain accessible, flexible, and relevant to the needs of every Filipino learner.

ISSUE 3: THE LIFELONG LEARNING DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK INSTITUTIONALIZES A NATIONAL SYSTEM FOR INCLUSIVE AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING.

Republic Act No. 12313, or the "Lifelong Learning Development Framework (LLDF) Act," signed into law on October 23, 2025, institutionalizes a comprehensive national framework for promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all Filipinos. The law expands the mandate of the PQF-NCC, originally established under Republic Act No. 10968 (PQF Act), to integrate lifelong learning principles into national education, employment, and skills development policies.

The LLDF Act establishes lifelong learning as a national policy and mandates government to ensure accessible, flexible, and inclusive learning opportunities across formal, non-formal, and informal settings. It strengthens functional literacy and promotes learning in communities, workplaces, and institutions as part of a broader human capital and employability strategy.

Under the law, the PQF-NCC is tasked to develop and periodically review a National Master Plan for Lifelong Learning—aligned with the Philippine Development Plan—and to designate "learning cities" or LGUs that demonstrate strong commitment to lifelong learning. These LGUs must establish Community Learning Centers, adopt digital and blended learning systems, and deliver literacy, skills development, and upskilling programs for all residents, especially marginalized groups.

The Act encourages private sector participation in providing continuous training and supporting workforce reskilling, and it requires LGUs to allocate part of their Special Education Fund and annual budgets to sustain lifelong learning initiatives. Overall, Republic Act No. 12313 institutionalizes lifelong learning as a core component of national development, ensuring that every Filipino has opportunities to learn and adapt throughout life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Fully operationalize the PQF and strengthen its implementation.** It is important for the PQF NCC to formulate a multi-year strategic plan—detailing milestones for PCTS rollout, PhQuaR expansion, AQRF referencing cycles, and PQF–PSF–LMIS integration—to guide the system's transition from a dormant framework to a functioning national mechanism.

2. **The Philippines must accelerate the development and coherence of national skills frameworks to keep pace with rapidly changing labor market demands.** Reviewing and updating the PQF level descriptors is essential to ensure that they reflect contemporary occupational standards, technological advancements, and shifting industry requirements. However, alignment alone is not sufficient. The government must significantly ramp up the formulation, expansion, and institutionalization of PSFs across priority and emerging sectors. Accelerated PSF developmentis critical for establishing detailed, future-oriented competency maps that can guide curriculum design, assessment, workforce planning, and enterprise-based training.



Integrating the PQF and the rapidly developed PSFs into a unified national skills architecture will strengthen transparency, facilitate learner and worker mobility, and improve recognition of competencies across education, training, and employment systems. Ultimately, this will help position the Philippine workforce to compete effectively in an increasingly technology-driven regional economy

3. **Institutionalize the ETEEAP and strengthen recognition of prior learning (RPL) systems.** Implement the ETEEAP Act (Republic Act 12124) in full by ensuring that CHED-deputized HEIs are adequately capacitated to evaluate prior learning and professional experience. Critically, CHED should proactively ensure that access to ETEEAP, both geographic and disciplinal, are responsive to the needs of learners. Further, the PQF-NCC and CHED should jointly establish standardized equivalency criteria and digital credentialing systems to streamline RPL implementation. This will create seamless pathways between TVET and higher education, promoting lifelong learning and supporting the re-entry of adult learners and working professionals into formal education.

4. **Operationalize the Lifelong Learning Development Framework (LLDF) at the local level.** Following the enactment of Republic Act 12313 (LLDF Act), the PQF-NCC should develop and implement the National Master Plan for Lifelong Learning, detailing operational guidelines for LGUs designated as "Learning Cities," "Learning Municipalities," or "Learning Barangays." These LGUs should establish CLCs that integrate ICT-enabled learning and flexible delivery modes, prioritizing marginalized groups such as women, out-of-school youth, and persons with disabilities. The DILG and DepEd should jointly monitor implementation, while the Special Education Fund (SEF) should be optimized to sustain CLC operations and local lifelong learning initiatives.

EDCOM I envisioned TESDA as the cornerstone of a modern and agile TVET system. It was a bold reform, one that consolidated scattered agencies and pushed for clearer standards, closer ties to industry, and better access to quality training.



UPSKILLING *the* FILIPINO WORKFORCE

TESDA Director General Kiko Benitez

In 1994, TESDA was born out of the recommendations of EDCOM I, which called for the trifocalization of the education system to ensure that each agency could focus on its core mandate.

TESDA was meant to provide focused leadership and direction for the technical education and skills required for workforce development, and address the needs of those who might otherwise not be properly served by the formal education system. Merging the National Manpower and Youth Council with the Apprenticeship Bureau of DOLE and the Technical Vocational Education unit of DECS, TESDA was to ensure the relevance of tech-voc programs, generate post-secondary middle level skills development, and address the fragmented delivery of training to produce an employment-ready workforce. EDCOM I envisioned TESDA as the cornerstone of a modern and agile TVET system. It was a bold reform, one that consolidated scattered agencies and pushed for clearer standards, closer ties to industry, and better access to quality training.

More than 30 years later, EDCOM II has found that many of the same problems identified by EDCOM I persist. Despite good intentions and much institutional progress, the mission envisioned by EDCOM I remains unfinished.

As far back as 1901, TVET in the Philippines suffered from poor social recognition, and that stigma lingers. Many Filipino families still cling to the outdated belief that tech-voc is a second-class option for education, despite the growing demand for skilled workers both here and abroad, and the increasing shift for skills-based hiring in the world of work globally due to the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

EDCOM I also flagged under-resourced institutions, outdated curricula, and weak industry linkages. These issues have not gone away. Many of our training centers still lack future-ready equipment and facilities. We continue to face a shortage of qualified trainers, many of whom are underpaid and often leave for better opportunities abroad. Meanwhile, the process of developing or revising Competency Standards and Training Regulations, the backbone of TESDA's competency-based curriculum, still takes anywhere from six months to two years. In that time, the needs of the industry have already changed.

Enterprise-Based Training, which even EDCOM I recognized as the gold standard for real-world skills development, remains vastly underutilized. TESDA's success in scaling it up has been slow, and few companies have taken on the challenge to undertake the dual training system. Only belatedly has the effort to create diploma programs that address job-ready certifications for middle level qualifications taken root, and the bulk of enrollments are still in institution- or community-based training. Higher-level qualifications (like NC III and IV) remain limited, with 93% of graduates still clustered in NC I and II programs. Admittedly, many industries are also only recently demanding the higher-level NC as entry level or career progression requirements, exposing a tension between industry- or market-driven planning and the weakness of central national development and government industrial policy for workforce development.

Behind these issues are structural flaws that have yet to be resolved. TESDA's mandate has grown, but its manpower has not. Its role as both regulator and implementer creates a conflict and a burden. TESDA sets the standards, implements them, and assesses compliance. A national education and workforce development plan that can set and fund government priorities to balance TESDA's area-based demand-driven framework remains to be fully crafted and implemented with a whole-of-government approach, despite the regular issuance of the National Technical Education and Skills Development Plan. Meanwhile, attempts to devolve training functions to LGUs have been inconsistent, plagued by shifting strategies and political circumstances.

TESDA also remains boxed in by outdated legal boundaries. Not all programs can be offered to non-high school graduates. The agency also has had difficulty delivering degree-equivalent technical education with clear seamless pathways and credit transfer with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) despite the ladderization law, the PQF, and the Credit Transfer System. This has left a gap in the tertiary education ecosystem's capacity to fully address workforce development. The definition of post-secondary lower tertiary and middle level technical skills training no longer fits a lifelong learning framework that the Fourth Industrial Revolution now requires. For example, the definition of skills levels based on autonomy on the factory floor no longer pertains to the technologically complex requirements of the day.

The definition of post-secondary lower tertiary and middle level technical skills training no longer fits a lifelong learning framework that the Fourth Industrial Revolution now requires.

Despite the 1994 law creating a TESDA Development Fund to improve quality, only 2.39% of it has actually been spent for that purpose. Most of the agency's budget now goes to scholarships, which weren't even part of its original mandate.

That is why today, we are acting. We are building Regional Training and Innovation Centers across the country to provide advanced, hands-on training in high-growth sectors, tailored to the specific needs of local economies and identified as key employment growth sectors by the DOLE.

To address the job-skills mismatch, a never-ending problem flagged by both EDCOM I and II, we are ensuring that our TVET offerings are area-based and demand-driven. This ensures that SHS graduates are trained for jobs that exist where they live. **Through the recently launched Micro-credential System, Industry-Based Assessment and Certification System (IBACS), and Adopt-Adapt procedures, TESDA deploys shorter and more responsive industry-driven training plans and certification processes.** TESDA Micro-credentials--a modular and flexible learning system designed around three core principles: speed, stackability, and seamlessness--is being aligned with CHED learning outcomes for greater credit transfer and recognition of prior learning of industry-certified skills. This allows learners to gain job-ready skills faster, build on them over time, and transition easily into jobs or further training for lifelong learning.

We are also scaling up Enterprise-Based Education and Training (EBET) across the entire TVET ecosystem, including Senior High School (SHS), to target emerging and priority sectors such as healthcare services, digital technologies, and the green, blue, brown, and creative economies. We have streamlined the EBET registration process, introduced enhanced tax incentives, and are preparing to launch a one-stop digital portal to increase participation. EBET is designed to be industry-driven to address job-skills mismatches and provide higher employability and career opportunities for upskilling and the dual transition of green and digital skills for economic development.

To build agility into our system, we're launching the TESDABest Skills Passport, a digital registry of certified workers linked to PhilJobNet and the PQF-NCC's PhQuaR. Learners will now be able to match their skills to job openings, and find nearby schools and scholarships aligned with in-demand careers while having globally aligned skills tagged to the Philippine Qualifications Framework for the creation of seamless pathways across the trifocal education agencies from *training to trabaho*.

To expand access, we are upgrading the TESDA Online Program, making it more mobile-friendly, user-centered, and packed with future-ready courses. We're also forging partnerships with private platforms to deliver higher-quality online training across the country.

And to improve the employability of Senior High School graduates, **we have partnered with DepEd to align the Tech-Voc Track with TESDA Training Regulations (TRs).** That includes reformulating learning competencies into skill-based formats, integrating performance criteria into curriculum guides, and strengthening hands-on, practice-based learning from the ground up. This helps assure assessments and certification of SHS graduates, and provides the students with industry-recognized skills.

TESDA is now also building an AI-powered Course Builder to accelerate the development of TRs, assessment tools, and Competency Standards, especially for higher-level qualifications (PQF Level III and above), the credentials that unlock better jobs, higher wages, and improved productivity for our workforce.

Since 1994, only 10 National Industry Boards have been formed. In the past year, just one more was added at the national level,



alongside two from the regions and 10 at the provincial level. Most TESDA enrollees are still clustered in programs like Driving NC II and Bread and Pastry NC II. That ends now. We are partnering with e-learning platforms and more industry boards to co-develop TRs and standards with the employers who will hire our graduates. The Adopt-Adapt and the IBACS processes ensure an industry-driven TVET ecosystem in the country.

We're also expanding public-private partnerships, especially for future-proof programs that require cutting-edge technologies and specialized expertise.

All these reforms are moving us toward a more unified, agile, and future-ready learning ecosystem. But this effort must go beyond TESDA, beyond education agencies, beyond government silos.

We must raise the quality of training by working hand-in-hand with industry, academia, and the rest of the government, so we can co-create solutions that close the job-skills gap.

"Kung Sama Sama, Sa TESDA, Kayang Kaya!" isn't just a slogan. It's a daily challenge we throw down to ourselves, to our partners, and to every Filipino who dares to dream of a better future and is willing to build it.

Upskilling the Filipino workforce to meet everchanging industry demand is not TESDA's mandate alone. It must be our national mission, a mission that demands urgency, bold action, and true collaboration.

The future will not wait. And neither will we.

All these reforms are moving us toward a more unified, agile, and future-ready learning ecosystem. But this effort must go beyond TESDA, beyond education agencies, beyond government silos.

Sec. Kiko Benitez is the Director General of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority and a Former EDCOM Commissioner.



VI. GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE

Addressing Systemic Underinvestment and Fragmented Governance

Three decades after EDCOM I identified chronic underinvestment and administrative weaknesses as root causes of declining education quality, the Philippine education system continues to grapple with these fundamental challenges. This synthesis of EDCOM II's three-year investigation reveals how resource constraints and governance fragmentation have systematically constrained system performance.

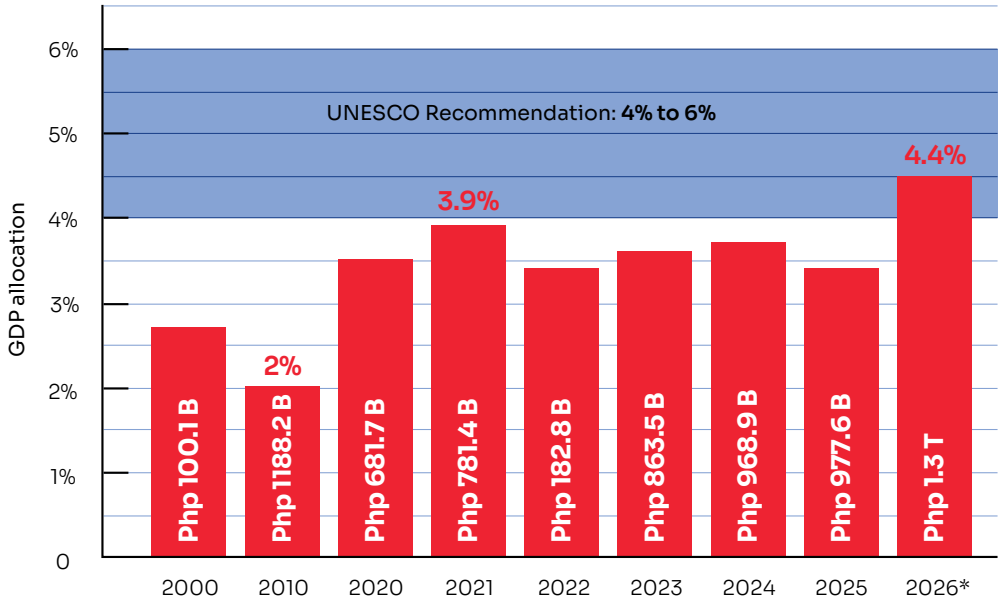
Against a backdrop of increasing student population and deep gaps in resources in schools, government education expenditure averaged 3.6% of GDP from 2014-2022 (Figure 1). This falls short of the UNESCO Education 2030 benchmark of 4-6% and trails behind regional peers such as Malaysia (4.2%) and Thailand (4.1%). The picture sharpens when spending is viewed through the learner's experience, as cumulative outlays per child from ages 6 to 15 stands at approximately $8,474 in 2018 and $11,303 in 2022 (PPP-adjusted), merely 10% of the OECD average of $89,092 in 2018 and $102,612 in 2022, and remain among the lowest in PISA-participating systems (Manasan, 2025).

This spending-performance relationship is not merely correlational. Regression analyses demonstrate that cross-country patterns indicate that higher spending tends to correspond with higher reading and mathematics scores. (Manasan, 2025, p. 14). Supporting evidence from the World Bank's systematic review of education financing in developing countries confirms that countries spending below $40,000 cumulatively per student rarely achieve median learning outcomes (Crawfurd, et al., 2023).

Beyond absolute funding levels, systemic inefficiencies in budget further erode as DepEd's average unobligated allotments reached PHP 27.6 billion per year in 2016 to 2023 (roughly 4% of the agency's average budget), with obligation and disbursement gaps most visible in MOOE and Capital Outlay where goods and facilities are procured for schools (Manasan, 2025, pp. 29, 128).

> *Regression analyses demonstrate that cross-country patterns indicate that higher spending tends to correspond with higher reading and mathematics scores.*

FIGURE 1.
Philippines' GDP allocated for education, 2000-2026



**For FY 2026 budget is based on House Bill 4058, the General Appropriations Act (GAA) of 2026*
Source: UNESCO's Institute for Statistics (UIS); Department of Budget and Management

PROGRESS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Under the leadership of **Senator Win Gatchalian** as Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Finance, and the collective support of our Commissioners and other legislators who have advocated strongly for education the education sector has secured a **historic budget increase** for fiscal year 2026, allocating **PHP 1.3 trillion**—equivalent to **4.4% of the country's GDP**. This marks the first time the Philippines has met the United Nations-mandated benchmark of investing at least 4% to 6% of GDP in education, a pivotal step in addressing the nation's learning crisis.

Moving forward, the Philippines must adopt a comprehensive approach to education financing that views investments across the entire learning continuum. While addressing the critical underfunding of basic education remains paramount, strategic investments must span from early childhood through workforce development. International evidence demonstrates that returns on education investments are highest in the early years, with benefit-cost ratios of approximately 7:1 and annual rates of return of 13% for quality early childhood programs (Heckman, 2013; García et al., 2020).

Simultaneously, technical and vocational education requires urgent attention—current TVET spending at just 0.08% of GDP must increase to at least 2% to match successful skills development systems in Germany (2.1%) and South Korea (2.3%), where robust TVET sectors have driven industrial competitiveness and reduced youth unemployment (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2022; OECD, 2023). This holistic financing strategy recognizes that underinvestment at any stage creates bottlenecks that constrain human capital development and economic growth (World Bank, 2023).

Equally critical to the financing challenge is the governance crisis that undermines system performance. Three interconnected governance failures demand urgent reform:

1. **The absence of effective coordination mechanisms across education agencies results in duplicated efforts, misaligned programs, and wasted resources** exemplified by the sixty-eight overlapping interagency bodies that operate without clear mandates or accountability (EDCOM II, 2025). Evidence from high-performing systems demonstrates that integrated governance structures with clear coordination protocols can improve learning outcomes by 0.3 standard deviations within five years (Pritchett & Viarengo, 2021).

2. **Organizational capacity has not evolved to match expanded mandates.** Agencies operate with staffing structures designed for a pre-K-12 system which leaves critical functions like quality assurance, data management, and procurement severely understaffed. International experience suggests that effective education ministries invest significantly in strategic functions including planning, monitoring, and evaluation—capacities that global frameworks from UNESCO-IIEP, UNICEF, and the World Bank identify as essential for translating policy intent into system-wide improvement (UNESCO-IIEP et al., 2021; World Bank, 2017). Yet Philippine education agencies allocate relatively limited personnel to these functions with organizational structures that prioritize administrative processing over the analytical work required for evidence-based reform.

3. **The hypercentralized governance structure concentrates decision-making authority at national headquarters which leaves schools and divisions powerless to address local challenges.** Research on education decentralization shows that empowering school-level decision-making, when coupled with adequate capacity building and accountability mechanisms, can increase student achievement by 8-12% and reduce dropout rates by up to 25% (Hanushek et al., 2013; Di Gropello, 2016). Meanwhile, Local Government Units remain underutilized partners despite controlling significant resources through the Special Education Fund. International experience from Indonesia and Brazil demonstrates that engaged local governments can accelerate education improvements when given clear roles and responsibilities (Al-Samarrai et al., 2019; Bruns et al., 2012).

These converging challenges call for a comprehensive reform agenda. This demands critical reforms: Financing must increase substantially while improving execution efficiency, the key education agencies must overcome fragmentation to also steer together as a coherent system, learning outcomes must be prioritized above mere compliance to targets and forms, and capacity must be strengthened where it matters most: in schools and classrooms where learners and teachers stand.

This demands critical reforms: Financing must increase substantially while improving execution efficiency, the key education agencies must overcome fragmentation to also steer together as a coherent system, learning outcomes must be prioritized above mere compliance to targets and forms, and capacity must be strengthened where it matters most: in schools and classrooms where learners and teachers stand.



PRIORITY AREA 23: ENSURING SEAMLESS AND INTEGRATED DELIVERY OF EDUCATION

While the trifocalization of the education system in 1994 successfully delineated agency mandates—with DepEd focusing on basic education, CHED on higher education, and TESDA on technical-vocational education—implementation resulted in new coordination challenges.

FINDINGS

DepEd, CHED, and TESDA each gained clearer roles after trifocalization; however, the gains sit mostly within agency boundaries. Evidence from EDCOM II's three years of hearings and technical studies reveals critical gaps in inter-agency coordination. Findings reveal that trunk decisions—teacher pipeline and development, assessment strategy, senior high school-workforce alignment, quality assurance across post-secondary options—require joint sequencing and shared data, but lack formal coordination mechanisms.

During the EDCOM II Charter Hearings[1], a common theme emerged: current staffing levels reflect outdated organizational structures and have not kept pace with expanded responsibilities, many of which have grown since 1994 following the first EDCOM. The hearings also evinced how student enrolment growth and ever growing responsibilities resulted in premature load-bearing, with the agencies struggling to cope with demands on one hand, but also not provided with the sufficient manpower and sustained resources to ensure success on the other. As a result, while access targets have been generally met, quality took a backseat: at best, CHED is only able to monitor 33% of all private colleges and universities annually, while TESDA's assessment of TVET graduates maxes out at 45% (EDCOM II, 2025, *Y3 CHED Mandate Hearing*; EDCOM II, 2025, *Y3 TESDA Mandate Hearing*).

1 July 3, 2025 CHED Charter Hearing; July 10, 2025 TESDA Charter Hearing; October 28, 2025 DepEd Charter Hearing

This fragmentation manifests in concrete failures such as the misalignment between SHS tracks and post-secondary pathways. Previous EDCOM II reports showed that 42% of SHS graduates required remedial courses in college, while only 38% of TVET graduates found employment within six months (EDCOM II, 2024; EDCOM II, 2025). These are clear indicators that parallel efforts proceed without the integrated planning necessary to translate policy into synchronized field action and accountable milestones.

PROGRESS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Recognizing these coordination failures, EDCOM II has catalyzed institutional reform through an executive coordinating group. Last June 16, 2025, upon the initiative of the EDCOM Commissioners, both houses of Congress adopted Concurrent Resolution No. 28 urging the President to create a Cabinet Cluster for Education to ensure the cohesive and coherent implementation of education laws, policies, reforms and regulations among the relevant government entities, as well as to ensure sustained reforms to improve the quality of Philippine education.

In response, the Office of the President issued Administrative Order No. 36 last August 13, 2025 establishing the Education and Workforce Development Group (EWDG) to serve as the central coordinating body on all matters relating to education and workforce in the country. The EWDG is chaired by no less than the Philippine President, with the DepEd and DOLE Secretaries as Co-chairperson and Vice-chairperson, respectively. Its members include the CHED Chairperson, TESDA Director General, DepDEV Secretary, and DMW Secretary (Congress of the Philippines, 2025; Office of the President, 2025). This high-level configuration addresses a critical gap identified by international evidence: successful education systems require apex coordination mechanisms with direct executive authority, as demonstrated by Singapore's Ministry of Education coordination model and Finland's National Board of Education (King, 2024).

In its Year I Report, EDCOM II exposed at least 63 interagency bodies which distract the DepEd from focusing on its core mandates. DepEd has since updated this number to 261 interagency bodies (DepEd Charter Hearing, October 28,2025). These bodies, while important, tackle a broad range of concerns, with significant overlaps, but often without permanent staff. Further, few of these bodies focus on improving learning outcomes, and instead result in additional responsibilities for the education agencies (ultimately the teachers in schools) that aggravate already limited capacity on the ground.

Data interoperability also lags severely with reporting cycles averaging __ months which prevents quarterly course-correction in the field. To strengthen interagency body coordination, there must be a center through a functional EWDG. This requires three critical elements: a sufficiently staffed permanent secretariat equipped with the needed level of expertise, shared indicators that track learning outcomes across all levels, and an operating rhythm that ties planning, budgeting, and delivery to the academic calendar rather than the fiscal year.

> *These data gaps translate into concrete disadvantages: only about two in ten Alternative Learning System elementary completers transition to secondary education*





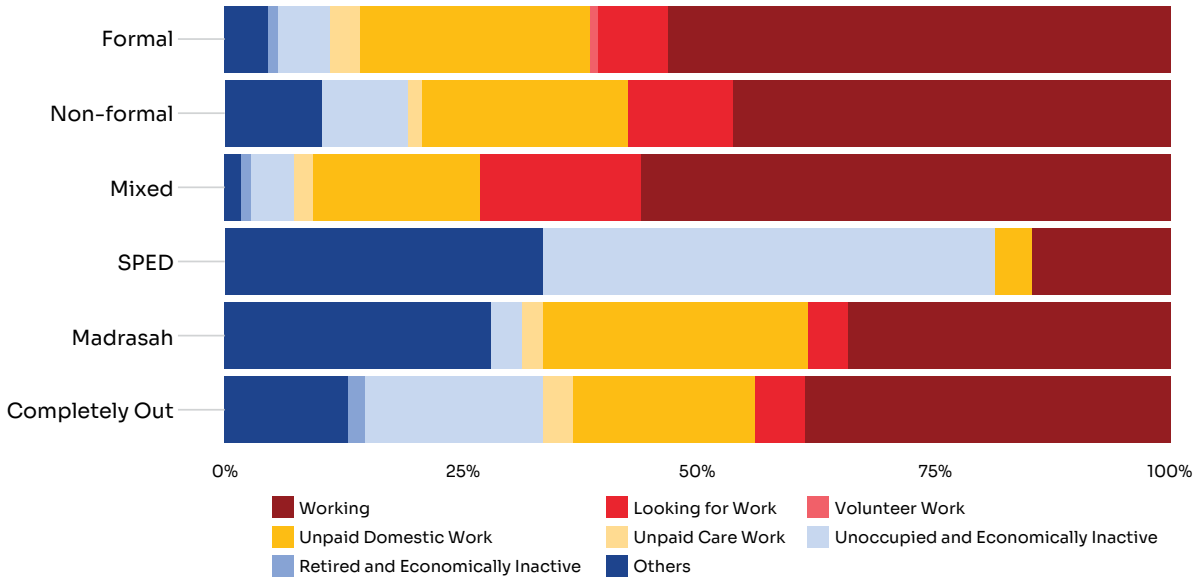
PROGRESS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Last October 3, 2025, DepEd, CHED, TESDA signed a memorandum of agreement to unify data systems. Under the agreement, DepEd, Commission on Higher Education(CHED), and TESDA will harmonize and streamline data systems to provide ready and seamless access to information on all learners across all education levels.

A key commitment involves CHED and TESDA adopting and utilizing the DepEd-issued LRN as the unique identifier for higher education students. DepEd will ensure the continuous issuance of the LRN and make its data accessible to the other agencies, while TESDA will facilitate the provision of its data for the harmonization effort.

The consequences of disconnected data systems are non-trivial: apart from preventing proper targeting and support of students as they traverse the education system, the lack of an interoperable system has led to the further exclusion of learners who drop out, as well those who have special needs. A study on learner pathways found that existing administrative databases rarely contain disaggregated information on key marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and learners from geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (Philippine Business for Education, 2025). These data gaps translate into concrete disadvantages: only about two in ten Alternative Learning System elementary completers transition to secondary education compared to roughly eight in ten formal school graduates, and the majority of learners exiting Special Education programs remain economically inactive (Philippine Business for Education, 2025).

FIGURE 2.
Occupations of Those Who Have Exited the Education System by Education Subgroup



There is a need to rationalize the more than 68 interagency bodies and overlapping councils, fix membership at the Undersecretary level or higher, and define escalation pathways to the EWDG to increase efficiencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Operationalize the EWDG with permanent institutional capacity.** Building on international best practices from Singapore's education coordination model and Finland's National Board of Education, the EWDG should publish an annual work program with a compact set of shared indicators that all agencies use together, and report periodically. This must be anchored on the EDCOM's National Education and Workforce Development Plan.

   The EWDG secretariat should involve senior technical experts from member agencies to ensure institutional memory and technical competence. Following Colombia's successful education coordination reforms which improved student test scores through better inter-agency coordination (King, 2024; World Bank presentation to EDCOM II during the January 29-30, 2024 Complementarity Workshop).

2. **Restructure agency capacities to match expanded mandates in light of increased responsibilities.** There is a need to adopt multi-year staffing plans that prioritize quality assurance, data engineering, procurement, and labor-market alignment in DepEd, CHED, and TESDA specifically for the following:

   - CHED requires an additional 342 quality assurance officers to achieve 100% coverage of HEIs within three years
   - TESDA needs 158 additional assessors and 89 training regulation specialists to update outdated competency standards
   - DepEd must fill all 12,547 vacant school-level administrative officer positions to return time to instruction and leadership.

Build shared services—legal, procurement, analytics—where specialization yields speed and quality. Evidence from shared service implementations in Malaysia's education system shows 35% reduction in procurement cycle times and 28% improvement in compliance rates (King, 2024).

3. **Rationalize all interagency bodies, and streamline governance architecture for decisive and prompt action.** There is a need to rationalize the more than 68 interagency bodies and overlapping councils, fix membership at the Undersecretary level or higher, and define escalation pathways to the EWDG to increase efficiencies. There is also a need to ensure that all cross-cutting reforms—teacher workforce reforms, assessment modernization, digital infrastructure—undergo joint budget review in time for the executive budget calendar (Congress of the Philippines, 2025; Office of the President, 2025). This consolidation follows Brazil's successful education governance reforms which reduced coordination bodies from 63 to 12 while improving implementation rates by 45% (Sammarai, 2022).

PRIORITY AREA 24: COMPLEMENTARITY BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EDUCATION

FINDINGS

ISSUE 1: WHILE ENSHRINED IN LAW, THE CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLE OF COMPLEMENTARITY BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EDUCATION LACKS OPERATIONAL CLARITY WHICH RESULTS IN SYSTEMIC INEFFICIENCIES AND MISSED OPPORTUNITIES.

CHED data reveals that private secondary enrollment declined markedly from 68% in 2000 to 48% 2015 even as public schools became increasingly overcrowded. Meanwhile, SUCs expanded into markets and programs long served by private HEIs. Families face constrained local choice when free tuition policies and funding instruments push them toward public institutions even where nearby capacity exists in the private sector. The result: public tertiary institutions operate at 142% capacity while private capacity utilization has dropped to 67% (Paragas, 2022; EDCOM II, 2025).

ISSUE 2: EXISTING PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP MECHANISMS HAVE DEMONSTRATED PROMISE BUT LACK THE SCALE NEEDED FOR SYSTEM-WIDE IMPACT.

ESC and SHS vouchers currently serve 1.2 million students, successfully relieving some pressure on public schools. However, evidence on learning effects is mixed and poorly documented across settings. Families do not consistently see comparable and timely information on school quality and graduate outcomes at the point of decision, which reduces the ability of portable finance to reward performance and value.

A 2024 systematic review of PPPs in education found that while subsidy models in countries like Pakistan and Uganda were cost-effective in expanding coverage, impact on learning outcomes varied significantly based on design and implementation (Bhutta, et al, 2024). International evidence provides important lessons. The World Bank's analysis of Punjab, Pakistan's Foundation Assisted Schools program and Uganda's Universal Secondary Education partnerships demonstrates that well-designed PPPs can

> *"The State recognizes the complementary roles of public and private institutions in the educational system and shall exercise reasonable supervision and regulation of all educational institutions."*
>
> *Article XVI, Section 4 (1) of the 1987 Constitution*

deliver education at 30-50% lower per-student costs while maintaining or improving quality (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2020; Crawfurd et al., 2023). Chile's experience with its national voucher program shows that eliminating top-up fees and providing higher-value vouchers to disadvantaged students led to measurable improvements in equity and learning outcomes (Crawfurd et al., 2023). In the Philippines, Paqueo et al. (2022) recommended that the government allocate more of its resources towards private school vouchers due to its better economic costs as well as learner performance.

ISSUE 3: PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION, WHILE SUBSTANTIAL IN ABSOLUTE TERMS, REMAINS CONSTRAINED BY BUREAUCRATIC BARRIERS.

Established through Republic Act No. 8525 in 1998, the Adopt-A-School program aims to encourage private initiative to support the upgrading and modernization of elementary, secondary, or tertiary public schools. For SY 2022-2023, most projects involved the provision of equipment and supplies, construction of classrooms and other facilities, and repair and renovation works at the basic education level only. However, roundtable discussions with key philanthropic organizations revealed that Brigada Eskwela mobilized resources faster than the Adopt-a-School Program because schools and communities can act quickly on visible needs, while potential Adopt-a-School Program donors navigate documentation, approvals, and tax-claim procedures that feel costly relative to small donations (EDCOM II, 2024, RTD on Adopt-a-School). The highest recorded amount generated during the Brigada Eskwela program was 7.3 billion in 2019. The signal is clear: when pathways are simple and priorities are visible, support follows.

TABLE 1.
Adopt-A-School Tax Endorsements and Tax Claims vs. Brigada Eskwela Resource Generation, 2018-2023

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Adopt-A-School						
No. of Tax Endorsements	145	120	54	35	56	66
Total Tax Claims	242.2 M	370.2 M	282.2 M	273.6 M	218.4 M	413.4 M
Brigada Eskwela						
Volunteer Man Hours	1.783 B	1.997 B		1.626 B	1.708 B	
Resources Generated	4.665 B	7.331 B	7.135 B	5.149 B	5.595 B	4.772 B

Source: August 2024 submission of the ASP Secretariat to EDCOM2, generated from DepEd Partnerships Database System

1. **EXPANSION OF GASTPE / PRIVATE BASIC EDUCATION VOUCHERS ACT**

   LEDAC Priority Measure
   Bills: House Bill No. 4744 (Romulo, Acidre, et al.); Senate Bill No. 128 (Aquino); Senate Bill No. 309 (Legarda); Senate Bill No. 364 (Gatchalian); Senate Bill No. 422 (Cayetano)

   TOP REFORMS:
   1. Quality-Assured Voucher System: All proposals require DepEd to link subsidies to measurable learning outcomes through a strengthened QA system, including mandatory performance indicators (literacy, national & international assessments).
   2. Universal National Assessments: NAT and other DepEd assessments become compulsory for all voucher-receiving private school students.
   3. Graduate Tracer & School Performance Reporting: Participating schools must track student assessment results (mean/median/mode) and graduate pathways.
   4. Teacher Quality Reforms: Establishment of an INSET Fund; Senate Bill No.s 364 and 422 tie Teachers' Salary Subsidy (TSS) to merit and performance.
   5. Accountability in Use of Funds: Schools raising tuition must allocate 20% of increases to facilities improvement; per-learner subsidies provided for learning materials.

2. **STRENGTHENING PUBLIC–PRIVATE COMPLEMENTARITY IN EDUCATION (COMPLEMENTARITY IN EDUCATION ACT)**
   Bills: Senate Bill No. 167 (Legarda); House Bill No. 4921 (Acidre, et al.)

   TOP REFORMS:
   1. **Shift to Portable Student Financing:** Within five years, 50% of annual budget increases in DepEd, CHED, TESDA should flow through vouchers, grants, or subsidies to expand student choice and decongest public schools.
   2. **Complementarity Governance:** Creation of (a) an Integrated Education Information System across DepEd–CHED–TESDA–ECCD, and (b) a Partnership Board for Education Complementarity to align strategic planning and regulatory functions.
   3. **National QA Framework:** Common learning standards, regular national assessments, and annual school-level performance publication; incentives prioritized for high-performing, quality-assured institutions.
   4. **Flexible Models of Partnership:** Allows PPPs, management contracts, facility leasing, and targeted subsidies to reduce congestion and address regional disparities.

3. **AMENDMENTS TO THE ADOPT-A-SCHOOL ACT (REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8525)**
   Bills: House Bill No. 4555 (Romulo); Senate Bill No. 54 (Gatchalian); Senate Bill No. 129 (Aquino); Senate Bill No. 794 (Legarda)

   TOP REFORMS:
   1. **Expanded Coverage:** Assistance now covers ECCD, TVET, and ALS, in addition to basic and higher education.
   2. **Enhanced Private Sector Incentives:** Donors may choose either a 50% additional tax deduction for program expenses or official public recognition.
   3. **One-Stop Shop Administration:** Establishment of an integrated Adopt-a-School online portal and simplified processes for donations and partnerships

Strengthened Governance: Expansion of the Adopt-a-School Coordinating

Council to include DTI, DOLE, DOF, BIR, BOC, ECCD, and a private sector representative, strengthening planning and accountability.

Complementarity in Education Act (Senate Bill No. 167, House Bill No. 4921)

TOP REFORMS:

1. **Shift to Portable, Student-Centered Financing:** The bills mandate that 50% of annual budget increases in DepEd, CHED, and TESDA transition to portable financing instruments—vouchers, grants, loans, and LGU scholarships—within five years, allowing students to choose schools based on quality rather than capacity or cost.
2. **Institutionalize Public–Private Complementarity:** Establishes a Partnership Board for Education Complementarity to lead strategic planning, oversee implementation, and coordinate DepEd–CHED–TESDA–ECCD policies to maximize sector-wide efficiency.
3. **Integrated Education Information System:** Creates a unified data system across all education agencies to support evidence-based planning, transparent school comparisons, and cost-effective deployment of public funds.
4. **Provider-Neutral Regulation:** Requires that public financing follow learners to the most effective providers—public or private—ensuring neutral, performance-based regulatory treatment that prioritizes learning outcomes over institutional ownership.
5. **Decongestion and Program Rationalization Mechanisms:** Enables per-student subsidies, program rationalization agreements, and partnerships to address overcrowding in public schools, reduce duplication of low-demand courses, and leverage available capacity in private institutions.

RECOMMENDATION

1. **Enact pending legislation to institutionalize public-private complementarity in education financing and delivery.** Congress should prioritize the passage of three interconnected measures currently pending in both chambers: (1) the Expansion of GASTPE/Private Basic Education Vouchers Act (House Bill No. 4744; Senate Bill No.s 128, 309, 364, 422), (2) the Complementarity in Education Act (Senate Bill No. 167; House Bill No. 4921), and (3) Amendments to the Adopt-a-School Act (House Bill No. 4555; Senate Bill No.s 54, 129, 794). Taken together, these bills establish the legal and institutional infrastructure for a coherent public–private complementarity framework by: transitioning toward portable, student-centered financing instruments that follow learners to quality-assured providers regardless of institutional ownership; creating unified governance mechanisms, including a Partnership Board for Education Complementarity and an Integrated Education Information System, to align strategic planning across DepEd, CHED, TESDA, and the ECCD sector; strengthening accountability through mandatory national assessments, graduate tracer systems, and performance-based subsidies; and expanding private sector participation through streamlined Adopt-a-School processes and enhanced fiscal incentives.



PRIORITY AREA 25: INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

FINDINGS

The Philippine education sector's performance management architecture exemplifies a critical implementation anomaly (i.e., Individual Performance Commitment and Review Forms (IPCRFs), Office Performance Commitment and Review Forms (OPCRFs) : while consuming substantial administrative resources through multilayered monitoring systems, it demonstrably fails to translate performance data into learning improvements.

Based on the EDCOM II series of workshops on Priority Area 25, participants across the education sector explicitly identify that having too many objectives, indicators, and targets as a critical gap, and noting that this proliferation means that "everything" is important with limited direction or focus (June 3, 2024 EDCOM II IPMAS Workshop).

The RPMS-PPST system alone requires teachers to be evaluated across all 37 Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers indicators distributed over three school years (2022-2025), as documented in DM No. 8, s. 2023. Additionally, the Basic Education Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (DO No. 29, s. 2022) establishes four intermediate outcomes with multiple performance indicators across access, equity, quality, and resiliency dimensions, while the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028 adds another layer of accountability through its Results Matrices tracking transformative lifelong learning, globally competitive TVET, and employability metrics.

Launched in 2022, the Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2030 is overburdened with an excessive number of indicators and targets (88 in total with only 8 focused on learning outcomes).

Meanwhile, for principals, the OPCR lacks standardization across the system, with SDOs permitted to conduct workshops to contextualize objectives, performance indicators, and other implementation details (DepEd Order No. 2, s. 2015). This decentralized approach creates significant variation in performance expectations and measurement criteria across divisions, perhaps undermining system-wide comparability and coherence. The absence of standardized tools and rubrics for school head evaluation, in contrast to the highly structured RPMS-PPST for teachers, reflects a fundamental inconsistency in the performance management architecture that further complicates accountability and support mechanisms.

Launched in 2022, the Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2030 is overburdened with an excessive number of indicators and targets (88 in total with only 8 focused on learning outcomes). School monitoring focuses on documentary requirements as "means of verification" rather than the quality of instruction. **International evidence from high-performing systems shows that effective performance management focuses on no more than 15 core indicators with at least 60% directly measuring learning outcomes** (OECD, 2023). The comprehensive review of performance frameworks across all three education agencies reveals a systemic problem: when rules expand, forms multiply, time slides away from the classroom.

This has prompted the new DepEd leadership to issue Q-BEDP, which features a streamlined approach to prioritizing quality education outcomes over compliance metrics, and reducing the indicator set to focus on essential learning competencies, teacher development, and resource optimization. The Q-BEDP represents a strategic pivot toward outcome-based performance management, emphasizing measurable improvements in literacy, numeracy, and 21st-century skills while reducing the administrative burden on schools through simplified reporting requirements and integrated data systems that serve instructional improvement rather than bureaucratic documentation (DepEd Q-BEDP, 2025). Research from the World Bank's Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) framework emphasizes that effective accountability systems combine school autonomy, student assessment, and accountability mechanisms to improve learning outcomes (Demas & Arcia, 2015; Bruns et al., 2011).

Despite extensive target-setting at the national level, no clear operational mechanisms exist for cascading these objectives through DepEd's bureaucratic hierarchy—from central office to regional offices, divisions, and ultimately schools. Targets operate on different timelines without harmonization (e.g., Philippine Development Plan, National Expenditure Plan, General Appropriations Act) which creates parallel accountability structures that neither reinforce nor validate each other. This results in a disconnect between policy intentions and classroom realities, and consequently leads to a lack of enforceable accountability measures to ensure implementation.

This misalignment between measurement and improvement is not unique to the Philippines. International evidence from high-performing systems demonstrates that strategic focus on foundational competencies drives systemic improvement. Successful reforms in Vietnam and Poland demonstrate that streamlined, learning-focused accountability systems can drive rapid gains–Vietnam improved its PISA scores by 39 points in mathematics over six years through focused monitoring of foundational skills (World Bank, 2023).

ISSUE 1: DESPITE EXTENSIVE DOCUMENTATION, DATA SYSTEMS LIKEWISE REMAIN INEFFICIENT AND INEFFECTIVE.

The EDCOM II IPMAS workshops have also surfaced that "data systems in place are not effective for tracking progress against targets, nor are they used to improve teaching practices in a targeted way." This occurs despite the extensive documentation burden created by the four-phase Strategic Performance Management System requiring IPCRFs, OPCRFs, rating sheets, rubrics, and classroom observation tools. EDCOM II findings expose a fundamental weakness: the lack of purpose-driven standardized evaluation tools that can identify where interventions are most needed, alongside recommendations for leveraging data to comprehend performance trajectories and their underlying factors.

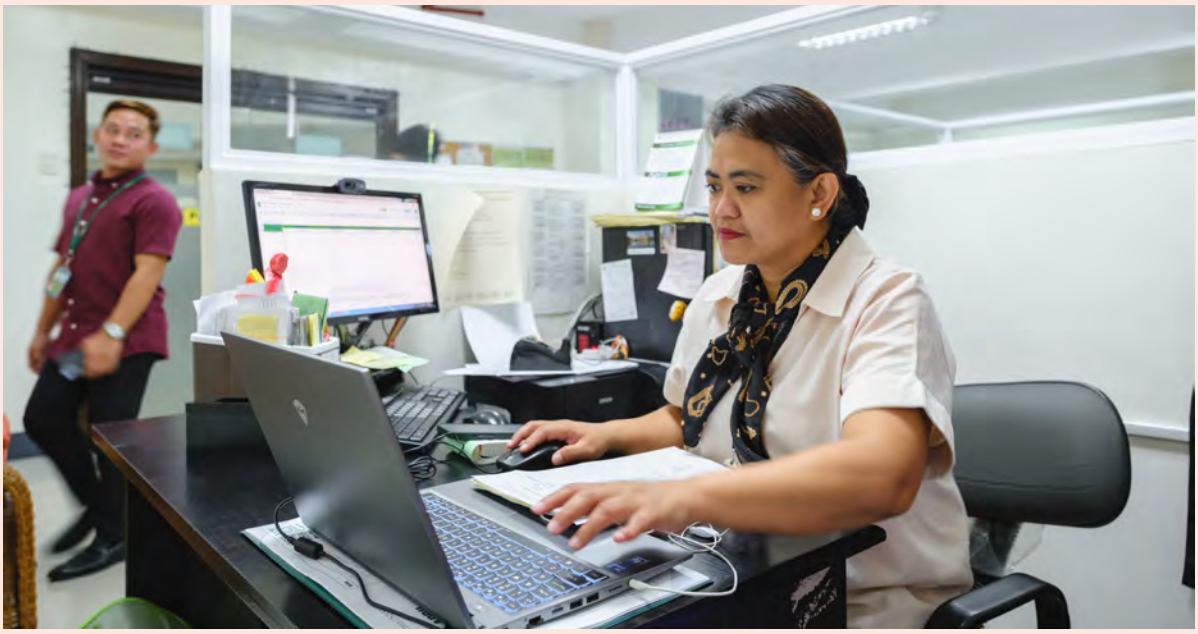
Although the system generates extensive performance documentation via IPCRFs and OPCRFs, it lacks the analytical capacity to transform this information into actionable insights. The emphasis on coordinating targets with school-level technical support delivery indicates that existing data collection primarily fulfills bureaucratic requirements rather than driving educational enhancement.

An OECD (2023) study on effective student information systems demonstrates that successful education systems integrate learning outcomes data with resource allocation and human capital information into coherent analytical platforms (Vincent-Lancrin & Gonzalez-Sancho, 2023). The study reveals that alignment of standardized learning outcomes with students' unique identifiers serves as a key instrument in promoting accountability and transparency within educational governance frameworks such as the New Zealand National Student Index (NSI) with its implementation of a national student number valid from early childhood through tertiary education (Vincent-Lancrin & Gonzalez-Sancho, 2023).

Most tellingly, the current system is not held to account for improvement, as noted in the EDCOM II workshops. The recommendation to simplify and align targets with performance management policies, tools, and funding processes indicates that despite extensive data collection requirements consuming administrative resources at every level, there are no effective feedback mechanisms to translate performance metrics into pedagogical improvements or systemic reforms (EDCOM II 2nd Workshop on IPMAS, September 12, 2023).

Singapore's education monitoring system, for instance, maintains clarity through its emphasis on literacy, numeracy, and 21st-century competencies (Dimmock & Tan, 2016), while Estonia's rapid PISA ascent correlates with their streamlined assessment architecture focusing on core learning outcomes rather than administrative compliance metrics (OECD, 2020; Tire, 2020). Effective performance management systems such as the SCOUT in Australia, e-asTTle in New Zealand, and the Vidya Samiksha Kendra in India illustrate how technology-enabled platforms can transform administrative data into pedagogical insights (Vincent-Lancrin & Gonzalez-Sancho, 2023).

> *Targets operate on different timelines without harmonization (e.g., Philippine Development Plan, National Expenditure Plan, General Appropriations Act) which creates parallel accountability structures that neither reinforce nor validate each other.*



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Reconceptualize DepEd's performance management framework by shifting decisively from scattered indicators to focused learning metrics.** The entire performance management architecture should become a driver of educational improvement rather than a compliance exercise. This requires developing a unified national framework that prioritizes foundational literacy and numeracy achievement, cohort progression rates, and completion indicators with explicit equity dimensions disaggregated by geographic division, socioeconomic status, and institutional characteristics. Quarterly reporting mechanisms would ensure continuous monitoring, while annual public dissemination promotes transparency and community engagement—following the accountability models successfully implemented in Vietnam's Fundamental School Quality Level system (World Bank, 2020; London, 2021).

2. **Ensure that performance accountability is coupled with systematic support structures that respond directly to identified needs.**The Philippine context demands moving beyond punitive compliance toward developmental accountability that links assessment findings directly to resource allocation for instructional coaching, learning materials provision, and leadership capacity building. This approach requires schools to develop evidence-based improvement strategies that specify concrete interventions—whether extended reading programs, intensive mathematics practice sessions, or collaborative lesson study initiatives—with progress monitored through systematic classroom observations. This means shifting the emphasis from documenting deficiencies to building capabilities. Systems that generate improvement through professional learning rather than bureaucratic pressure or what the OECD (2023) identifies as "intelligent accountability".

3. **Design performance management information systems that enable, rather than burden, educational leaders.** These platforms must move beyond data display toward decision support. For the Philippines, this means developing integrated dashboards at division and school levels that synthesize student achievement data, budget execution rates, and teacher deployment patterns into actionable intelligence. It should enable field leaders to identify resource gaps, redirect support to struggling schools, and implement timely interventions.



PRIORITY AREA 26: EDUCATION FINANCING

FINDINGS

ISSUE 1: CHRONIC UNDERFINANCING UNDERMINES PHILIPPINE EDUCATION QUALITY DESPITE SUCCESSFUL ENROLLMENT EXPANSION AND RECENT BUDGET ADVOCACY GAINS.

Government expenditure on education averaged only 3.6% of GDP from 2014-2022, below the 4.0% global benchmark and trails ASEAN neighbors (World Bank, 2023). Despite the Kindergarten Act (2012) and Enhanced Basic Education Act (2013) successfully expanding total basic education enrollment from 19.8 million to 27.1 million students between SY 2002-03 and SY 2023-24 (Manasan, 2025), this quantitative achievement masks severe resource constraints.

Understanding School-Level Education Financing in the Philippines
Public schools in the Philippines draw operational resources from three principal national and local government funding streams, each with distinct sources, governance mechanisms, and utilization parameters.

National Government Agency (NGA) Funding through DepEd
The bulk of education financing flows through the DepEd's annual budget which is predominantly allocated to Personnel Services (teacher and non-teaching staff salaries, comprising over 90% of the agency budget), Capital Outlay (school infrastructure, classroom construction, and equipment), and centrally procured inputs such as textbooks and learning materials. While substantial in aggregate, these national allocations are largely programmatic and do not translate into discretionary resources at the school level.

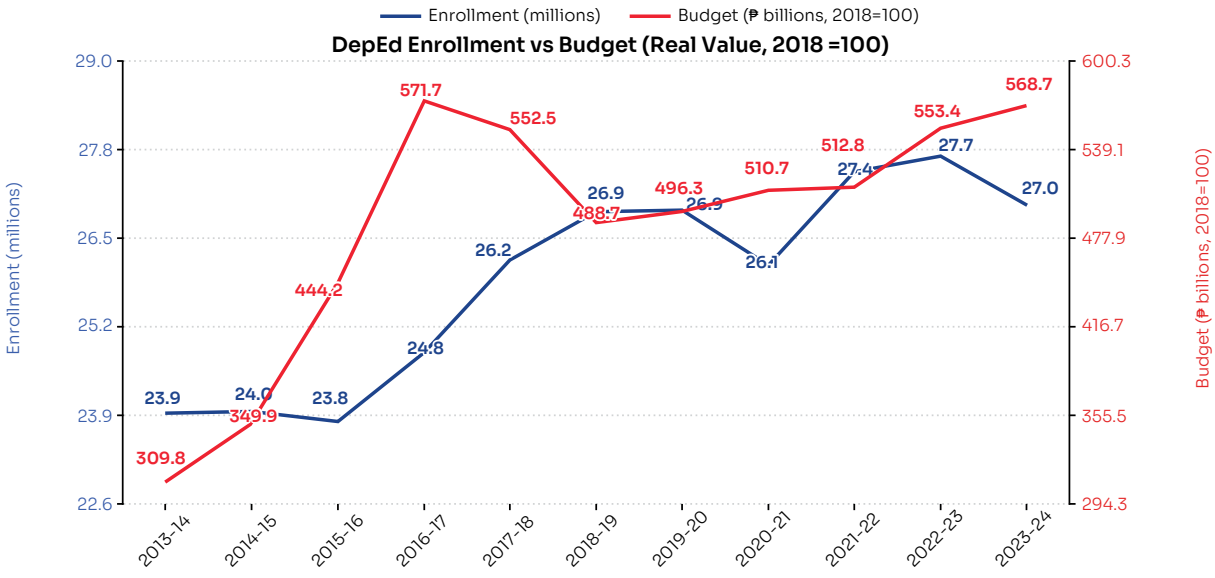
School Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE)

School MOOE represents the primary source of discretionary operational funding available to school heads. Derived from DepEd's budget and transferred to schools through Schools Division Offices, MOOE covers day-to-day expenses including utilities, minor repairs, consumable supplies, and connectivity costs. The EDCOM II Year One Report (2024) found that 30–70% of schools' MOOE is consumed by utility bills alone, leaving limited flexibility for instructional support (EDCOM II, 2024).

Special Education Fund (SEF)

The SEF is a local government financing mechanism derived from one percent of real property tax collections, managed by Local School Boards composed of local officials and DepEd representatives. SEF is intended to supplement national government funding for public schools, such as items such as construction and repair of school facilities, sports development, educational research, and other programs supportive of education. However, SEF distribution is inherently tied to local fiscal capacity, consequently resulting in extreme horizontal inequities across LGUs (EDCOM II, 2024).

FIGURE 3.
Enrollment Figures vs. National Budget Allocations, 2002-2024



Source: EDCOM II visualization and analysis of DepEd 2002-2024 enrollment and budget data

The Philippines' cumulative spending per student aged 6-15 ranked lowest or second-lowest among PISA 2018 and 2022 participating countries, approximating merely one-tenth of the OECD average—a disparity strongly correlated with poor reading and mathematics performance (OECD, 2023; Manasan, 2025). This underfunding intensified following the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act (2017) which redirected national education funding from basic education toward higher education and TVET, resulting in an estimated 0.2% GDP decline in basic education spending (Manasan, 2025). Institutional inefficiencies compound resource scarcity. DepEd's persistently low absorptive capacity resulted in PHP 27.6 billion average annual unutilized allotments between 2016-2023. This inefficiency represents approximately 0.1% of GDP (Manasan, 2025). Similarly, TESDA's budget, while growing nominally by 16% annually since 2010, constitutes merely 2% of total education spending and 0.08% of GDP as of 2024—substantially below sector requirements (Neri, 2025).

The urgency for increased ECCD, nutrition, and primary education funding is underscored by the persistent stunting crisis.

TABLE 2.
Comparative Education Investment Indicators

Indicator	Philippines	ASEAN Average	OECD Average	Gap to ASEAN
Education spending (% GDP) Average from 2014-2022	3.6%	4.2%	5.1%	-0.6%
Current Education spending (% GDP)	2025: 3.9% 2026: 4.5%			-0.3% +0.3%
EDCOM II's Proposed Education spending (% GDP)	2031: 5%			+0.5%
Per-student spending (ages 6-15) Average from 2014-2022	$3,500	$12,000	$35,000	-$8,500
ECCD enrollment rate Average from 2014-2022	29.12%	65%	85%	-36 pp
Primary completion rate Average from 2014-2022	92%	95%	98%	-3 pp
Learning-adjusted years of schooling Average from 2014-2022	7.5	9.2	11.5	-1.7 years

Sources: World Bank (2024); OECD (2023; Manasan (2025); APIS (2024); DBM data (2025)

Cumulative spending per learner from ages 6 to 15 was about onetenth the OECD average in PISA 2018 and 2022. Cross-country associations show that higher cumulative spending tracks higher performance in reading and mathematics, with the Philippines near the lower-left of the distribution in both years (Manasan, 2025, p. 12). For policymakers, the inference is simple and demanding: volume matters, and it must translate into time, materials, and teaching that reach the learner.

Recent advocacy by DepEd, DBM, and EDCOM II Commissioners has secured increased 2026 education allocations to 4.4% of GDP (2026 NEP; Senate Finance Committee 2026 National Budget). However, addressing the sector's structural underfunding requires sustained commitment beyond nominal increases particularly for early childhood development, nutrition programs, and primary education. The urgency for increased ECCD, nutrition, and primary education funding is underscored by the persistent stunting crisis, affecting nearly one-fourth of Filipino children, irreversibly impairs cognitive development and future productivity with the World Bank estimating that children born today will achieve only 52% of their potential productivity without adequate health and education investments (World Bank, 2024).

ISSUE 2: ELEVEN YEARS HAD PASSED BEFORE THE BONCODIN FORMULA OF 2013 FOR SCHOOL MOOE WAS UPDATED.

Systemic underfunding limits School MOOE effectiveness as full operationalization of the revised allocation formula awaits implementation. The Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) system, while designed for equity, suffers from chronic underfunding and outdated allocation mechanisms that constrain its impact on learning outcomes. Despite representing approximately 20% of DepEd's budget and averaging PHP 28.6 billion annually

between 2018-2022, per-learner MOOE allocations remain inadequate at PHP 1,041 for elementary, PHP 1,434 for junior high, and PHP 1,436 for senior high schools with values stagnating or declining in real terms (Bacate & Tenazas, forthcoming).

FIGURE 4.
The Boncodin Formula

School MOOE =	Fixed Amount + (Enrollment Cost x No. of Learners Enrolled) + (Teachers Cost x No. of Teachers) + (Classroom Cost x No. of Classrooms) + (Graduating Learners Cost x No. of Graduating Learners)

Source: EDCOM II Year Two Report

The Boncodin formula which was first used in 2013, determined MOOE distribution through fixed and variable components based on enrollment, classrooms, teachers, and graduates, yet failed to account for current cost structures, inflation, or contextual differences across schools. This outdated mechanism particularly disadvantages smaller schools and schools with unique operational costs or remote locations (Figure 4). Compounding these allocation challenges, obligation rates for MOOE averaged only 85.9% from 2016-2023, with disbursement rates for capital outlays plummeting from 30.4% to 13.5% between 2016-2021 and 2022-2023 (Manasan, 2025).

Regression analyses in the UNICEF–DOF study link a modest 1% increase in MOOE to a 3.1–3.8 percentage-point rise in Grade 6 NAT scores with these gains disappearing after controlling for poverty incidence (Bacate & Tenazas, forthcoming). The results suggest that socioeconomic constraints overwhelm the potential benefits of operational funding improvements.

For FY 2025, the DBM only approved a partial normative formula with the following parameters: 85% on fixed cost and 50% on enrollment cost. However, for the FY 2026 budget proposal, the DBM has finally approved a full normative formula with 100% increases for both the fixed and enrollment costs (Table 3).

TABLE 3.
FY 2024 Boncodin vs. FY 2026 Full Normative at Increase

MCOC	Medium Size Schools	FY 2024 (Boncodin)	FY 2025 (Partial Normative)	FY 2026 (Full Normative)	Increase (2024 vs. 2026)	Percentage Increase
Purely ES	School A	467,000	732,000	904,000	+437,000	94%
Purely JHS	School B	798,000	879,000	1,271,000	+473,000	59%
Purely SHS	School C	960,000	1,228,000	1,593,000	+633,000	66%
ES and JHS	School D	809,000	1,026,000	1,315,000	+506,000	63%
JHS with SHS	School E	1,182,000	1,242,000	1,608,000	+426,000	36%
All Offering	School F	1,172,000	1,328,000	1,513,000	+341,000	29%
Purely ES	School G	775,000	1,141,000	1,513,000	+738,000	95%
Purely JHS	School H	812,000	1,227,000	1,861,000	+1,049,000	129%
Purely SHS	School I	2,500,000	2,866,000	2,952,000	+452,000	18%
ES and JHS	School J	1,070,000	1,505,000	1,951,000	+881,000	82%
JHS with SHS	School K	2,348,000	2,535,000	2,611,000	+263,000	11%
All Offering	School L	2,363,000	2,380,000	2,617,000	+254,000	11%

> *While the adoption of the new normative MOOE formula is a welcome development, a more comprehensive review of minimum service standards is needed to ensure they support learner-centered and inquiry-based pedagogical approaches envisioned under recent curricular reforms.*

While the adoption of the new normative MOOE formula is a welcome development, a more comprehensive review of minimum service standards is needed to ensure they support learner-centered and inquiry-based pedagogical approaches envisioned under recent curricular reforms. In particular, current standards may not adequately account for the distinct operational requirements of schools implementing special curricular programs (e.g., science elementary and secondary schools) which incur costs beyond those of regular public schools. Improved resource flows could also address persistent inefficiencies: Brazil's direct transfer mechanism achieved 95% disbursement rates (World Bank, 2020), while improved procurement practices and budget decentralization could address the PHP 27.6 billion in unutilized DepEd allotments annually (Manasan, 2025).

ISSUE 3: INEQUITIES IN ACCESS TO RESOURCES DUE TO THE SPECIAL EDUCATION FUND.

Inequitable distribution and underutilization hamper the Special Education Fund's impact on learning outcomes. The EDCOM II Year One Report revealed that first-class income LGUs had an Special Education Fund (SEF) 68 times higher than sixth-class income municipalities. Recent analysis by Bacate and Tenazas (forthcoming) also reveals striking disparities in SEF per learner, ranging from PHP 25,587 in Makati City to merely PHP 65 in Guihulngan City—a 394-fold difference driven primarily by variations in local real property tax bases. This regressive distribution pattern concentrates education financing capacity among highly urbanized cities and first-class municipalities, a system that is disadvantageous for poorer localities where educational needs are often greatest. Consequently, cities account for the majority of total SEF revenues (approximately 64%) whereas provinces and municipalities each obtain around 18% of the overall SEF (Manasan, 2025).

Despite accumulating PHP 16.3 billion in unutilized funds in 2022 (Manasan, 2025), SEF demonstrates weak transmission channels from resource inputs to learning outcomes. Regression analyses show minimal impact on National Achievement Test scores with a 1% increase in SEF levels associated with only 1.1-1.6 percentage point improvements for Grade 10 students while showing no statistically significant effects for elementary or senior high school levels (Bacate & Tenazas, forthcoming). This limited efficacy stems from suboptimal expenditure composition with approximately half of SEF allocated to maintenance and operating expenses rather than targeted instructional improvements (Bacate & Tenazas, forthcoming). Manasan (2025) further highlights that SEF expenditures are primarily directed toward basic education as LGUs typically finance early childhood development spending using other funds. The combination of inequitable distribution and allocative inefficiency necessitates fundamental reforms to both intergovernmental fiscal design and Local School Board planning mechanisms to ensure educational resources translate into measurable learning gains.

> *Recent analysis by Bacate and Tenazas (forthcoming) also reveals striking disparities in SEF per learner, ranging from PHP 25,587 in Makati City to merely PHP 65 in Guihulngan City—a 394-fold difference*



ISSUE 4: PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT REVEALS UNTAPPED POTENTIAL FOR EDUCATION FINANCING.

Through streamlined tax incentives and strategic partnerships, priority interventions requiring immediate private sector support include eliminating triple-shift congestion, achieving universal electricity and internet connectivity, and strengthening nutrition and teacher training in early childhood education. The substantial gap between Brigada Eskwela's resource mobilization and Adopt-A-School Program (ASP) tax claims reveals significant untapped potential in private education financing (Table 1 p. 353). From 2018-2023, tax claims represented only 5.2% of total Brigada Eskwela resources which suggests that private entities contribute voluntarily without maximizing available tax benefits. Based on the EDCOM II Roundtable Discussion with key philanthropic organizations, this disparity stems from multiple factors: limited awareness that Brigada Eskwela contributions qualify for tax claims under Republic Act No. 8525, perceptions that community assistance reflects bayanihan spirit rather than formal corporate social responsibility warranting tax documentation, and potential overreporting due to inter-school competition, although DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2023 has discontinued competitive rankings.

Charitable foundations particularly emphasize ECCD and nutrition as critical priorities. During the roundtable discussion, they noted that while funding exists for large-scale feeding programs, gaps persist in enabling mechanisms like central kitchens and service delivery systems. Developing costed nutritional packages for First One Thousand Days interventions and allocating dedicated ECCD infrastructure within primary schools represent actionable opportunities for targeted private sector partnerships that could significantly amplify education resources beyond current government capacity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Improve resource allocation and prioritize strategic investment in foundational education for sustainable development. The proposed 2026 education budget of 4.5% of GDP marks meaningful progress toward UNESCO's 4-6% GDP benchmark.** To sustain this momentum, the Philippines should continue increasing education spending toward the upper end of the benchmark while redirecting resources toward early childhood and primary education, where per-capita funding remains lowest (UNESCO, 2025). This aligns with the EDCOM II Year Two Report's call to prioritize foundational years as the most cost-effective investment for long-term learning outcomes. Key interventions include: scaling nutrition-sensitive programs for stunting reduction, expanding ECCD coverage from 40% to regional standards, implementing learning recovery programs targeting 90% learning poverty rates, and strengthening LGU capacity for service delivery (World Bank, 2024; UNICEF, 2019). Vietnam's education financing strategy demonstrates ambitious prioritization with legislation mandating 20% of the national budget for education (Law on Education 2019) and actual expenditure reaching approximately 17-18% of the budget and 4-5% of GDP (Le Anh Vinh, 2022; Baum, 2020).

TABLE 4.
Investment Priorities Across Education Life Cycle Stages

Life Stage	Current Challenges	Required Investment Focus
Early Childhood	▪ >60% lack preschool access ▪ 23.6% stunting prevalence ▪ Limited ECCD coverage	▪ Nutrition interventions ▪ ECCD center and ADM expansion ▪ Parent education programs
Primary Years	▪ 90% learning poverty ▪ Weak foundational skills ▪ Infrastructure deficits	▪ Learning recovery programs ▪ Teacher training ▪ Learning resources
Secondary	▪ High dropout rates ▪ Skills mismatches ▪ Limited STEM resources	▪ TVET integration ▪ Digital infrastructure ▪ Career guidance
TVET and Lifelong Learning	▪ Negative perception of TVET and prevalence of low-skill programs ▪ High dropout rates and insufficient, inequitable scholarships ▪ Limited industry engagement and shortages of trainers/assessors ▪ Expanding TESDA mandates without proportional staffing increases	▪ Increased supports for disadvantaged learners in TVET ▪ Program-relevance ▪ Industry participation for EBET programs ▪ Trainers and Assessors especially for priority programs ▪ Rightsize TESDA and strengthen staff technical competencies
Higher Education	▪ Low completion rates in equity-focus areas ▪ Limited access for disadvantaged and poorest learners ▪ Weak articulation and harmonization with TVET ▪ Insufficient quality assurance mechanisms (e.g., accreditation, COEs)	▪ Strategic, targeted, ▪ Harmonized student and HEI financial assistance ▪ CHED rightsizing and staff technical competencies ▪ Stronger coordination and alignment with TVET

Source: EDCOM2 visualization and analysis

2. **Regularly review, monitor, and update allocation formulas to ensure they remain responsive to school-level needs.** EDCOM II has successfully pushed for updating the outdated Boncodin formula to be fully implemented in FY 2026, with needs-based allocation incorporating poverty indices, remoteness factors, and special program requirements, similar to Chile's Subvención Escolar Preferencial which increases funding by 50% for disadvantaged schools (OECD, 2017).

   Nevertheless, a one-time formula update is insufficient to address the dynamic nature of school-level needs. A periodic formula review mechanism must be developed with DepEd, DBM, and NEDA to evaluate the formula's equity impact (e.g., updated poverty incidence, enrollment shifts, infrastructure backlogs), and to recommend recalibrations to the allocation parameters. Equally critical is the development of a transparent monitoring framework that tracks whether allocated funds translate into improved school-level outcomes, to enable evidence-based adjustments rather than ad hoc revisions driven by fiscal or political exigencies.

3. **Establish equalization mechanisms and performance-based allocation to reduce the 394-fold disparity in local education financing.** Due to the extreme SEF disparities among high and low income class LGUs, Bacate and Tenazas (forthcoming) recommend performance-oriented, equity-sensitive management by Local School Boards with focus on programs demonstrating measurable learning impacts. Following South Korea's equalization model, high-SEF LGUs should be able to contribute to redistribution funds that prioritize underserved areas (UNESCO, 2021).

   Critically, equalization and allocation frameworks should incorporate targeted boosters for historically underfunded programs and populations: inclusive education for learners with disabilities, the Alternative Learning System, and special curricular programs such as Indigenous Peoples Education and Madrasah Education. Additionally, 4th and 5th class LGUs should receive weighted allocations or matching grants to ensure baseline adequacy in school operations and learning support.

   UNICEF recommends that high-performing LGUs with varied per-learner SEF allocations be examined as benchmarks for effective resource deployment, while establishing clear guidelines prioritizing expenditures with demonstrated impacts on learning outcomes.

4. **Streamline processes and establish integrator mechanisms to unlock private sector education investments.** A third-party integrator organization could serve as an intermediary between small private donors and public schools to design, implement, and monitor large-scale interventions funded through private donations. India's Azim Premji Foundation model demonstrates effective public-private coordination, managing over 50,000 schools (World Bank, 2021). Recommendations from heads of charitable foundations in the Philippines include developing "off-the-shelf" intervention packages, delegating tax endorsement authority below Secretary level, creating online portals to reduce transaction costs, and consumerizing donations through mobile banking platforms. Ultimately, streamlining Adopt-a-School documentation and tax availment. Indonesia's School Operational Assistance program achieved 40% efficiency gains through digital platforms (ADB, 2020). Joint adoption models, crowdfunding mechanisms inspired by Asia Philanthropy Circle, and targeted ECCD-nutrition priorities such as central kitchens can mobilize the funds needed per school for basic infrastructure.

REVISED JOINT CIRCULAR AMENDING THE SPECIAL EDUCATION FUND

ON DECEMBER 3, 2025, THE REVISED SEF GUIDELINES JOINT CIRCULAR WAS SIGNED BY DEPED, DBM, DILG, AND DOF. THE JOINT CIRCULAR (JC) AMENDS JC NO. 1, S. 2017, AND JC NOS. 1 AND 2, S. 2020. THE NEW GUIDELINES NOW INCLUDE PROVISIONS FOR THE FOLLOWING:

1. **ECCD PROGRAMS**
   The revised guidelines integrate the provisions of Republic Act No. 12199 or the ECCD System Act, strengthening the care and education of children aged zero to five.

   The SEF may now fund direct services, including the salaries and allowances of locally-hired CDTs and CDWs. A key provision is that compensation for these positions is exempt from the Personal Services (PS) limitations (45% or 55% cap) under the Local Government Code.

2. **NATIONAL FEEDING PROGRAMS**
   Pursuant to Republic Act No. 11037, the allowable expenses under this category are comprehensive; they include not only the School-Based Feeding Program and Milk Feeding Program but also the provision of micronutrient supplements, health examinations, vaccination, and deworming.

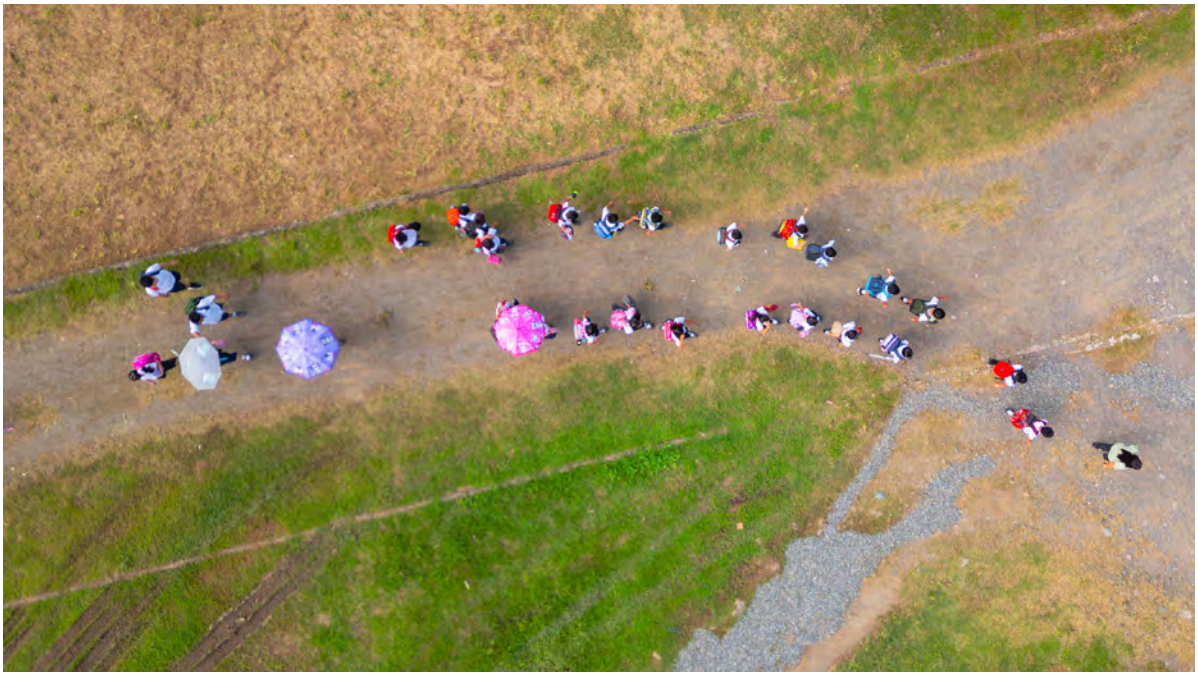
3. **PARENT EFFECTIVENESS SERVICE (PES) PROGRAM**
   In line with Republic Act No. 11908 or the Parent Effectiveness Service Program Act, the SEF may be charged for conducting parent effectiveness sessions designed to expand parents' and guardians' knowledge of their duties and responsibilities.

4. **CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS**
   The SEF may now be used for the construction, repair, and maintenance of elementary and secondary school buildings, learning centers, libraries, and school dormitories.

5. **ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SYSTEM (ALS)**
   To operationalize Republic Act No. 11510 or the ALS Act, the new provisions allow for a wide range of expenses to support out-of-school youth and adult learners, including the hiring of Community ALS Implementors and the development of Community Learning Centers (CLCs).

6. **ARAL PROGRAM**
   In response to learning losses, the guidelines integrate Republic Act No. 12028 or the ARAL Program Act to support national academic recovery strategies.

   The SEF may now fund the remuneration of para-teachers who serve as tutors to assist struggling learners. Additionally, recognizing the digital needs of education delivery, the guidelines allow SEF funding for data plans and communication expenses of para-teachers and pre-service teachers to support effective tutoring and connectivity.



PRIORITY AREA 27: DECENTRALIZATION AND PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

FINDINGS

ISSUE 1: PERSISTENT CENTRALIZATION EXISTS DESPITE REFORM EFFORTS IN DECENTRALIZATION AND PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

Despite long-standing policy frameworks, decentralization in Philippine basic education remains largely unrealized. Republic Act No. 9155's vision of "shared governance" has not materialized, as DepEd continues to function through highly centralized, memo-driven decision-making that limits initiative across regions, divisions, and schools. School-Based Management has become compliance-oriented, with schools spending most of their MOOE on utilities, leaving little room for innovation. LGUs also face restrictive interpretations of SEF rules, constraining their role as partners in system improvement (Laguda et al., 2025). The study concludes that meaningful decentralization requires not only policy change but also shifts in organizational culture, resource flows, and capacity-building.

These challenges mirror broader problems in Philippine devolution. In health, for example, LGUs received 6 in 10 national health personnel but only 4 in 10 of the corresponding funds, creating chronic vertical fiscal imbalance (Manasan, 2009, as cited in King, 2024). Evidence also shows that devolved spending tended to shift away from preventive services toward politically visible curative care (Schwartz et al., 2002; Arze del Granado et al., 2018). International research warns that decentralization without capacity equalization can worsen inequities: Argentina's education devolution improved outcomes only in non-poor, well-governed municipalities, while poorer areas experienced declines (Galiani et al., 2008, as cited in King, 2024).

Consistent with OECD (2016) and World Bank findings, decentralization works only when authority is matched with capacity and accountability. In Indonesia, clearer school autonomy frameworks improved resource use by 23% (Al-Samarrai et al., 2018). Without genuine deconcentration within DepEd and strategic devolution to LGUs, the system cannot deliver the responsive, context-sensitive services needed to address the country's learning crisis.

> *Currently, only 5.9% of public schools (2,661 out of 45,225) are designated as implementing units. This leaves a vast majority without direct access to their allocated funds and dependent on Schools Division Offices that are themselves stretched thin and inconsistent in their practices.*

ISSUE 2: THERE IS A LACK OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY AT LOWER GOVERNANCE LEVELS, INCLUDING ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY, TECHNICAL EXPERTISE, FISCAL RESOURCES, POLITICAL COMMITMENT, AND ADEQUATE TRAINING.

DepEd's personnel distribution shows problematic centralization, with only 22,356 staff across 228 Schools Division Offices directly supervising schools, while Central and Regional Offices employ 3,011 personnel. Each SDO averages just 98 staff supervising 33 schools which creates an unsustainable 1:1,237 staff-to-learner ratio. Extreme disparities compound this challenge. Leyte SDO oversees 1,363 schools while Isabela City SDO manages 74 schools, yet all operate under identical staffing frameworks regardless of workload (Bundoc, 2025). This difference in supervisory burden means educational quality depends on geography rather than need, fundamentally undermining equitable service delivery and field offices' capacity to provide meaningful school support. This is due to a provision under Section 7-c of Republic Act No. 9155 which states that: "A division shall consist of a province or a city which shall have a schools division superintendent, at least one assistant schools division superintendent and an office staff for programs promotion, planning, administrative, fiscal, legal, ancillary and other support services. (Republic Act No. 9155)"

These capacity constraints are compounded by fund flow arrangements that prevent schools from exercising control over their own operational budgets. Because most schools are not designated as implementing units (only 2,661 schools out of the 45,225 schools as of 2025), their MOOEs must be processed through SDOs which subjects routine expenditures to additional layers of approval, procurement, and liquidation requirements that already-stretched division offices struggle to process efficiently. This arrangement transforms what should be discretionary school-level spending into a centralized administrative bottleneck, further limiting principals' ability to respond to immediate operational needs.

Currently, only 5.9% of public schools (2,661 out of 45,225) are designated as implementing units. This leaves a vast majority without direct access to their allocated funds and dependent on Schools Division Offices that are themselves stretched thin and inconsistent in their practices.

ISSUE 3: AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF SEVERE CLASSROOM CONSTRUCTION BACKLOGS, THE CRITICAL GAP IN DIVISION ENGINEERS SPOTLIGHTS THESE STRUCTURAL INEFFICIENCIES.

Engineering personnel, essential for managing DepEd's massive infrastructure needs, are severely understaffed and maldistributed across governance levels. Only 169 of 224 divisions (75%) have engineer positions with 45 divisions lacking any engineering plantilla items despite managing school infrastructure (Table x). Each division receives only one engineer position regardless of scope—whether overseeing 13 schools in San Juan City or 1,275 schools in Leyte. This uniform allocation ignores the reality that division engineers must handle complex responsibilities spanning site identification, permit processing, construction monitoring, and compliance verification across all schools in their jurisdiction.

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With the Philippines facing severe classroom shortages and heightened disaster risks from typhoons and earthquakes, this engineering capacity deficit becomes particularly alarming.

The concentration of higher-level engineering positions at the Central Office (13 positions) rather than at field levels where direct infrastructure supervision occurs exemplifies the misalignment between resource allocation and operational needs. This systematic underinvestment in technical capacity at the division level compromises DepEd's ability to ensure safe, adequate learning facilities, particularly in disaster-prone areas requiring specialized engineering oversight for resilient school construction.

TABLE 5.
Distribution of DepEd Engineer Plantilla Items

Office of Assignment	Engineer II	Engineer III	Engineer IV	Engineer V	Total
Central Office	5	4	3	1	13
Regional Office	0	16	0	0	16
Division Office	0	170	0	0	170
Total	5	190	3	1	199

Source: DepEd EFD data as of 16 September 2025

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Implement phased deconcentration alongside simultaneous capacity development and accountability mechanisms to achieve meaningful decentralization.** DepEd should implement selective deconcentration of Programs, Activities, and Projects (PAPs) to Regional and Division Offices, beginning with procurement and beneficiary selection while Central Office maintains standard-setting and monitoring roles (Laguda et al., 2025). For instance, Laguda et al. (2025) recommend that NEAP develop curricula for short courses while Regional Offices collaborate with local higher education institutions for localized delivery and implementation of training programs. Hanushek et al. (2013) demonstrate that phased implementation with concurrent capacity building consistently outperforms rapid devolution in developing country contexts.

2. **Review rationalization of personnel at the division level to ensure that schools are adequately supported, instead of hampered**. SDO personnel allocation must reflect actual workload disparities. The World Bank's SABER (Systems Approach for Better Education Results) framework recommends supervisor-to-school ratios not exceeding 1:20 for effective monitoring (World Bank, 2013). Engineering positions particularly require redistribution—45 divisions lack engineers despite managing infrastructure. The Philippines should establish differentiated staffing formulas. UNICEF's Education Sector Analysis Methodological Guidelines (2014) support cluster supervision models for resource optimization in contexts with high geographic dispersion.

3. **Proactively build capacity of schools to become implementing units, identifying thresholds for efficiency (i.e., those with a large enough student population size that merits its own administrative capacity)**. DepEd should proactively build the capacity of schools to function as implementing units

to school heads and administrative staff with the competencies required for financial management, procurement, and liquidation reporting. In coordination with DBM, DepEd should establish clear and evidence-based thresholds (i.e., minimum student population size, enrollment across multiple grade levels, or annual budget allocation) that determine which schools possess sufficient scale to merit IU designation and the administrative responsibilities that come with it. Schools that do not meet these thresholds may be clustered under a lead school to achieve economies of scale while still benefiting from more direct fund access. Expanding IU coverage in a phased and capacity-driven manner will reduce bottlenecks at division offices, curtail the practice of withholding MOOE releases, and ultimately improve the responsiveness of the education system to local needs.



EDUCATION IN THE BANGSAMORO: GOVERNANCE, CHALLENGES, AND REFORM PRIORITIES

ISSUE 1: THE BANGSAMORO EDUCATION SYSTEM FACES UNIQUE CHALLENGES THAT REQUIRE COORDINATED NATIONAL-REGIONAL ACTION TO ENSURE EVERY CHILD HAS ACCESS TO QUALITY, CULTURALLY RELEVANT LEARNING.

The establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) through Republic Act No. 11054 marked a historic milestone in the pursuit of lasting peace and genuine autonomy in Mindanao. Article IX, Section 16 of Republic Act No. 11054 unequivocally states that the Bangsamoro Government shall prioritize and "establish, maintain, and support a complete and integrated system of quality education, which shall be a subsystem of the national education system."

Yet the legal architecture governing education in BARMM is inherently complex, and requires careful coordination between national and regional authorities across multiple levels of the education system. Meanwhile, Article IX, Section 16 establishes that the Bangsamoro Government builds and sustains a unified quality education system aligned with the national framework, and that it must "conform to the minimum standards set by the National Government" while developing an educational framework attuned to the distinct needs and aspirations of the Bangsamoro people (Republic Act No. 11054).

This dual mandate of autonomy with alignment presents both opportunity and complexity. The Commission's initial engagement with the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) revealed critical challenges requiring urgent intervention. During consultations with the Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (MBHTE) in Cotabato City on July 8-9, 2024, alarming education indicators emerged: 89.5% of children aged 3-4 are not in preschool, while only 34.7% of five-year-olds attend kindergarten. The region faces severe infrastructure deficits with the Ministry completing only 62.7% of targeted classroom construction despite receiving 30% of the regional budget. Learning outcomes remain critically low with Bangsamoro students averaging two years behind their peers by Grade 4. In addition, the region's functional literacy rate is the country's lowest. Systemic issues compound these challenges: discontinued feeding programs, insufficient WASH facilities (only two schools achieved three-star ratings as of March 2023), and severe teacher shortage, with ratios reaching 80-100 students per teacher. The MBHTE's struggle to balance autonomy with national coordination further complicates reform efforts. Key insights from the visit have shed a light on what BARMM should focus on: nutrition and early childhood education given high stunting rates, expanding Alternative Learning Systems for the 46% of youth aged 16-24 who are out-of-school, and strengthening Key Stage 1 interventions.

On October 9, 2025, EDCOM II convened a landmark hearing at the University of the Philippines BGC to examine how this mandate is being realized in practice. The hearing brought together Bangsamoro ministers, national agency heads, development partners, and education experts to assess the current state of coordination, identify persistent gaps, and chart a path forward for strengthening education governance across all levels from early childhood through higher education and technical-vocational training.

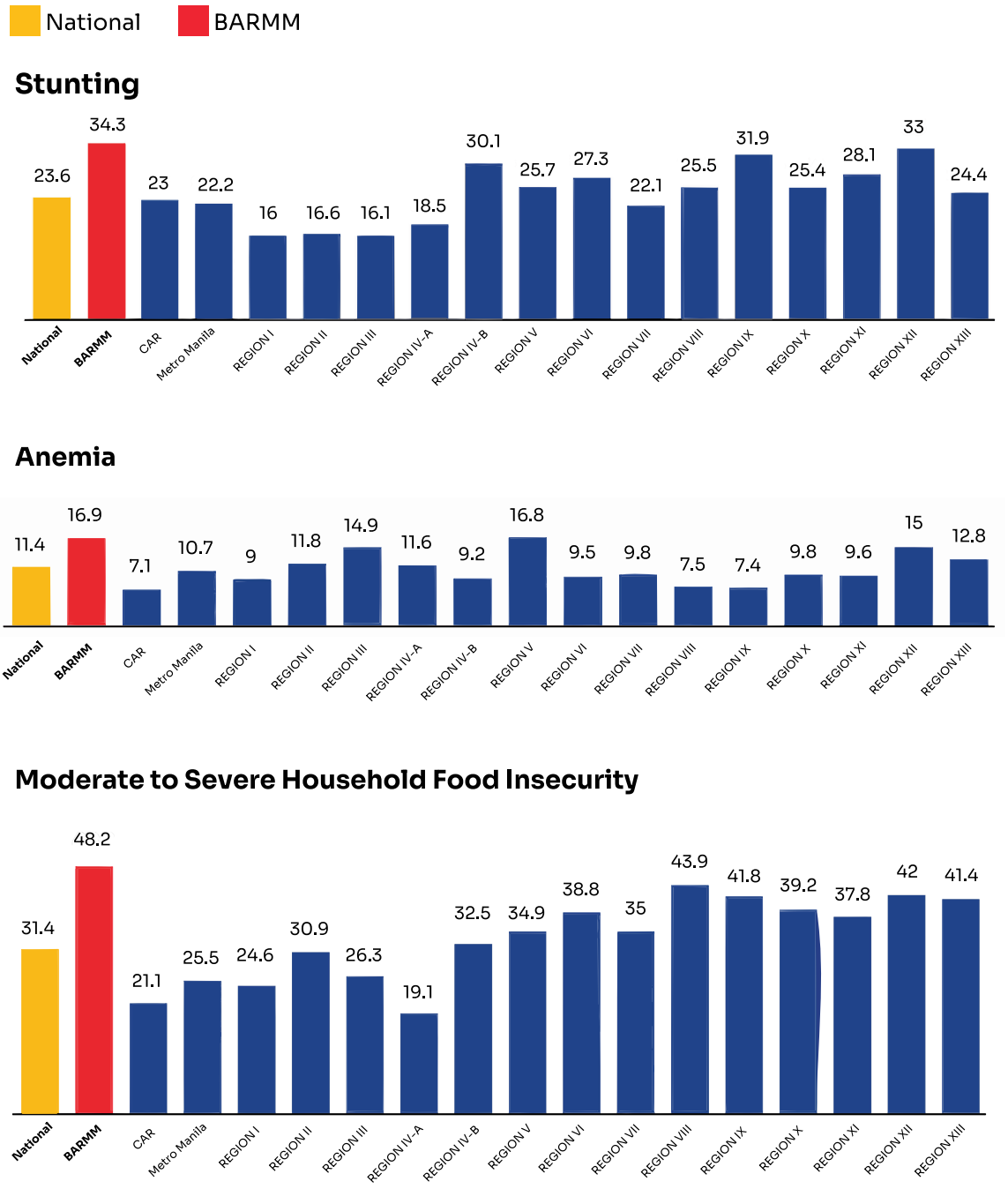
ISSUE 2: DESPITE PROGRESS IN GOVERNANCE REFORMS AND BUDGET EXPANSION, BARMM CONTINUES TO FACE SEVERE DEPRIVATION IN NUTRITION, LEARNING OUTCOMES, AND EDUCATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE.

The data presented during the hearing painted a stark picture of the scale of challenges facing BARMM's education sector. According to the 2023 National Nutrition Survey, BARMM recorded the highest stunting rate in the country at 34.3%, the highest anemia prevalence at 16.9%, and the most severe household food insecurity at 48.2%. These nutritional deficits have profound implications for children's readiness to learn and their long-term educational trajectories.

> *Learning outcomes remain critically low with Bangsamoro students averaging two years behind their peers by Grade 4. In addition, the region's functional literacy rate is the country's lowest.*

> *According to the 2023 National Nutrition Survey, BARMM recorded the highest stunting rate in the country at 34.3%.*

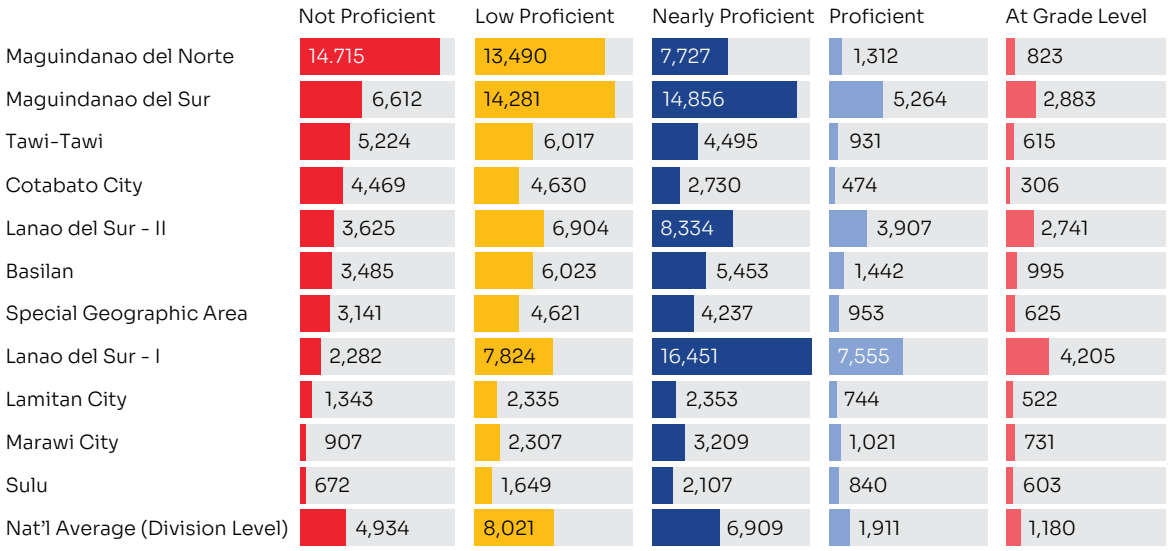
FIGURE 5.
Nutritional Status of Children Under Five in BARMM vs. National Averages



Source: 2023 National Nutrition Survey, DOST-FNRI

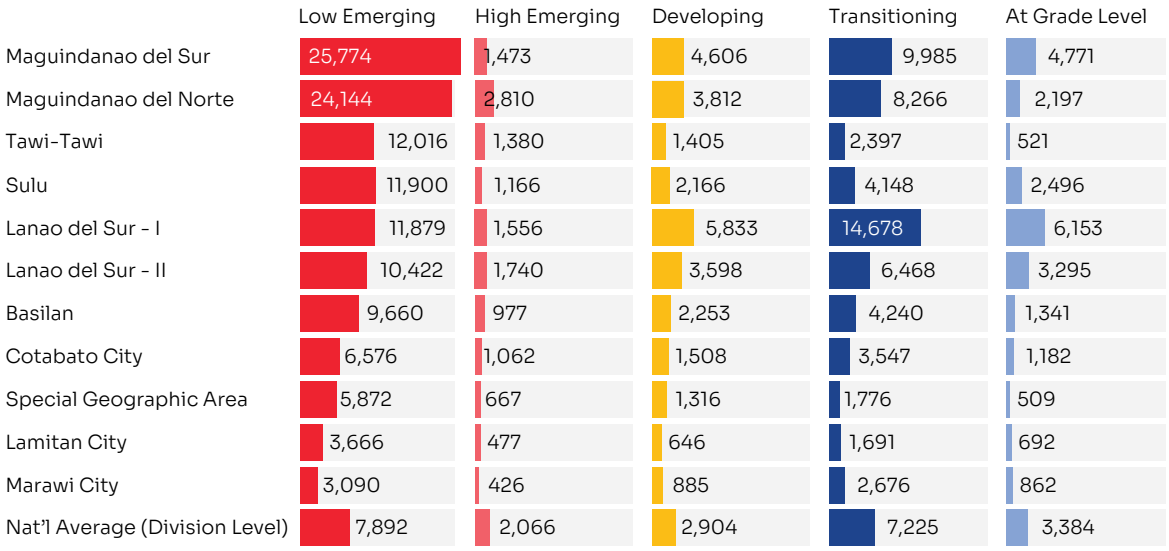
Learning outcomes reflect this foundational crisis. Results from the Rapid Math Assessment and Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) conducted at the beginning of School Year 2025-2026 revealed that 31.44% of Key Stage 1 learners in BARMM are "nearly proficient" in mathematics (the largest category) while 49.44% are classified as "low emerging" readers compared with the These figures underscore persistent learning gaps that begin early and compound over time.

FIGURE 6.
BARMM Key Stage 1 Math Proficiency Levels BoSY 2025-2026, by School Division



Source: Rapid Math Assessment, CRLA Dashboard, BoSY 2025-2026

FIGURE 7.
BARMM Key Stage 1 Literacy Proficiency Levels BoSY 2025-2026, by School Division

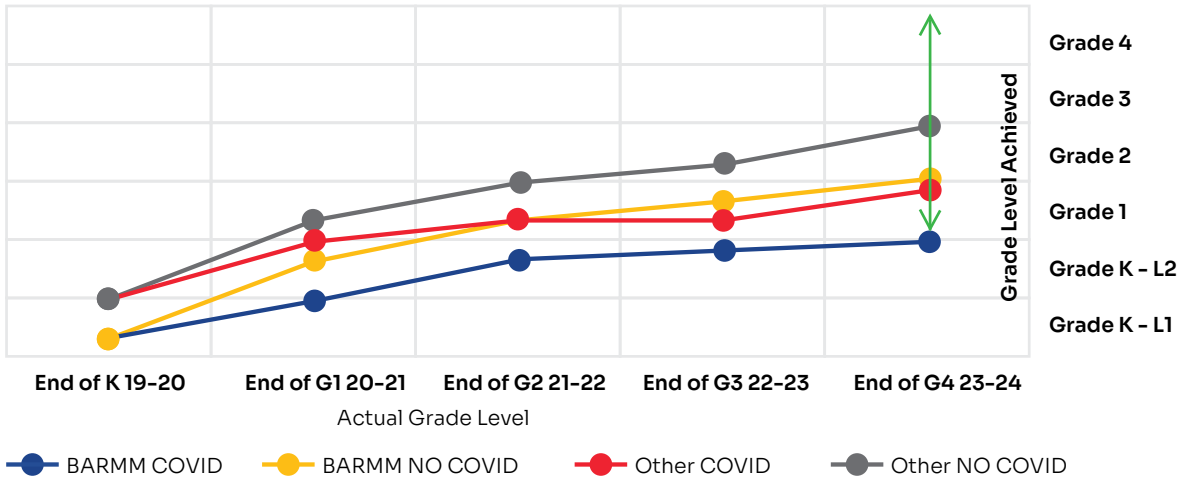


Source: Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment, CRLA Dashboard, BoSY 2025-2026

The 2024 Annual Report of UNICEF Philippines study found that Grade 4 students in BARMM performed approximately two years behind curriculum expectations (UNICEF, 2024). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has increased these gaps that significantly exceed national averages (Parker, et al., n.d.).

FIGURE 8.
BARMM Performance in Literacy during COVID-19

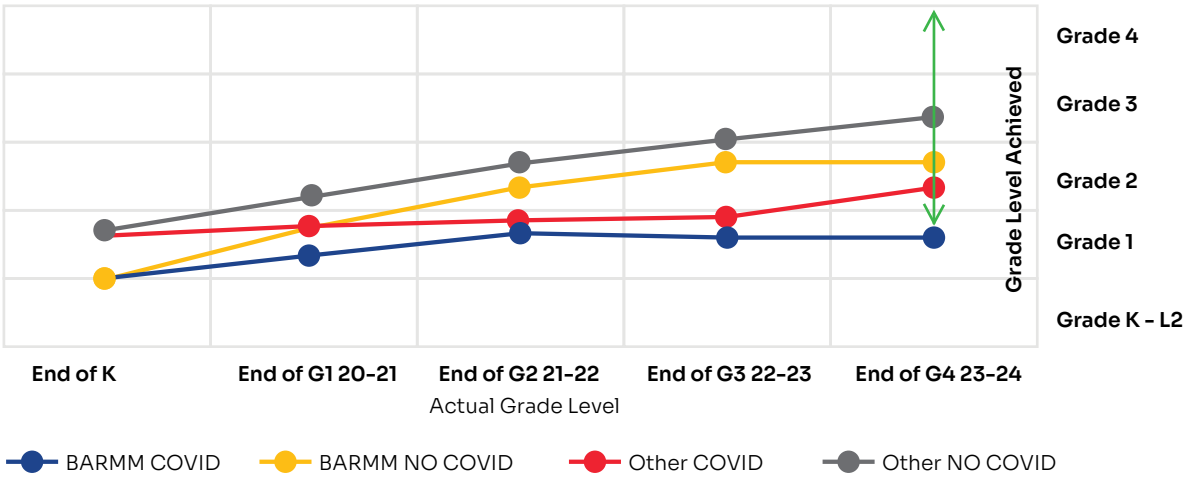
During COVID, students in BARMM and other locations were modeled as performing at 3 to 4 years below curriculum expectations in literacy



Source: Parker, R., Jefferies, D., Anderson, P., Cheng, J., Berry, A., Wong, D., Wendiady, J., & Garcia, H. (n.d.). Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on learning in subpopulations in the Philippines: A background study to inform SEA-PLM *(Summary report).*

FIGURE 9.
BARMM Performance in Numeracy during COVID-19

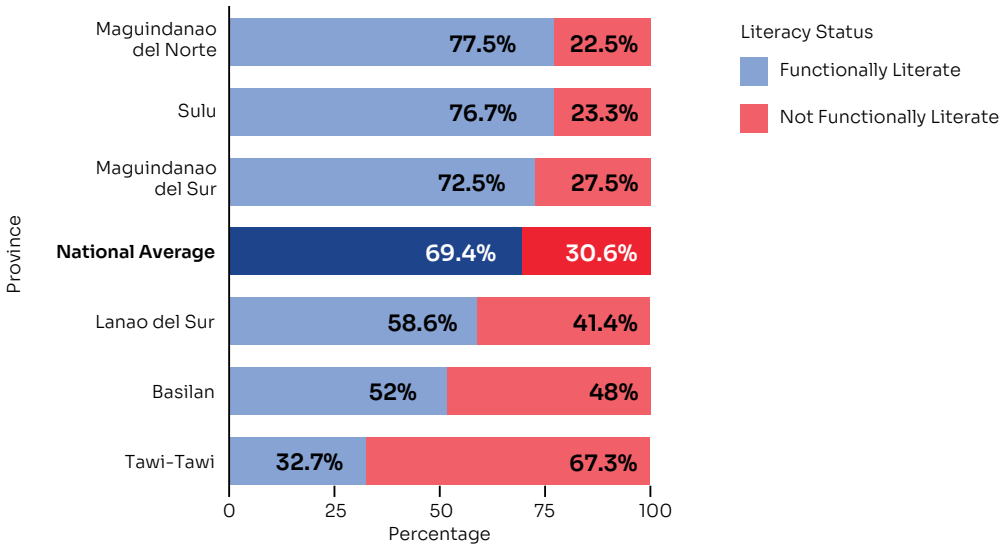
During COVID, students in BARMM and other locations were modeled as performing at 2 to 3 years below curriculum expectations in math



Source: Data from the UNICEF Philippines Early Childhood Education Kindergarten to Grade 4 Longitudinal Study (UNICEF, 2022)

> *According to the 2025 FLEMMS, the region's functional literacy rate of 64.7% is among the lowest in the country with particularly severe deficits in Tawi-Tawi (32.7%), Basilan (52%), and Lanao del Sur (58.6%) (PSA, 2025).*

FIGURE 10.
Functional Literacy Rates by BARMM Province



Source: 2025 Functional Literacy, Education, Mass Media Survey, Philippine Statistics Authority

ISSUE 3: PROGRESS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT HAS BEEN CONSTRAINED BY GOVERNANCE FRAGMENTATION, LAST-MILE SERVICE GAPS, AND INSUFFICIENT LOCAL INVESTMENT.

The Asia Foundation shared that while the region has made significant strides such as expanding the First 1,000 Days Program budget from PHP 26.8 million in 2023 to PHP 202.5 million in 2025 and improving budget utilization to 80% in 2023, critical gaps remain (Canuday, et al., 2025).

According to the 2025 TAF study on ECCD in BARMM, approximately 396 barangays lack Child Development Centers (CDCs), and an estimated 18,084 Child Development Workers are needed to achieve full ECCD coverage for the region's 452,095 children aged 0-5 years. The uneven distribution of services means that conflict-affected and geographically isolated communities often have the least access. As of 2024, 30 barangays had no functional CDCs, and areas in Sulu and Lanao del Sur faced severe deficits in both infrastructure and personnel (Canuday, et al., 2025).



FIGURE 11.
Barangays without functional CDCs/DCCs

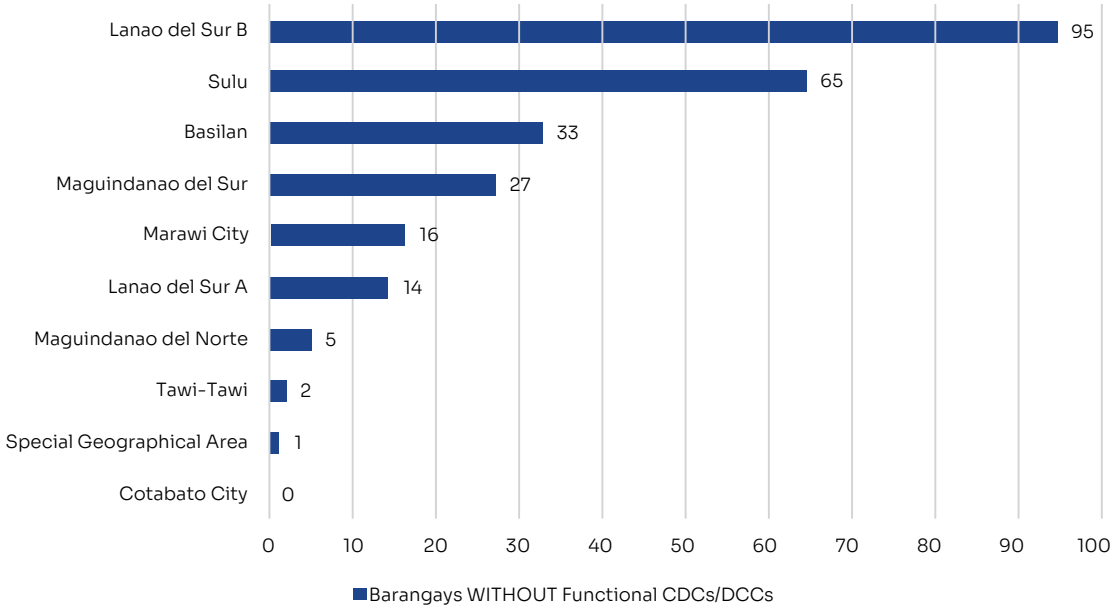
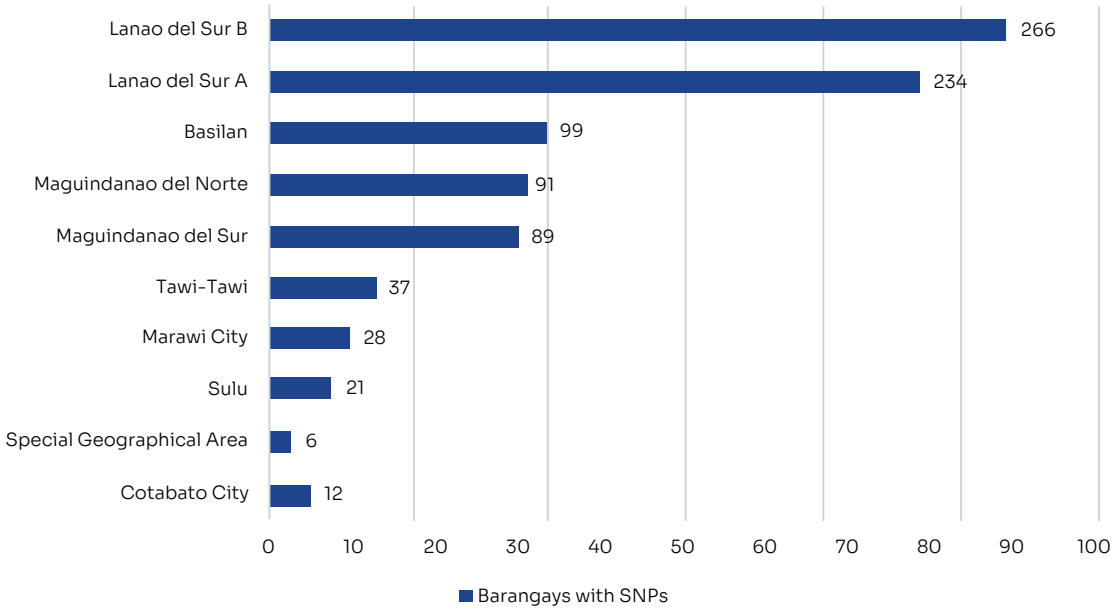


FIGURE 12.
Barangays with Supervised Neighborhood Play (SNP)

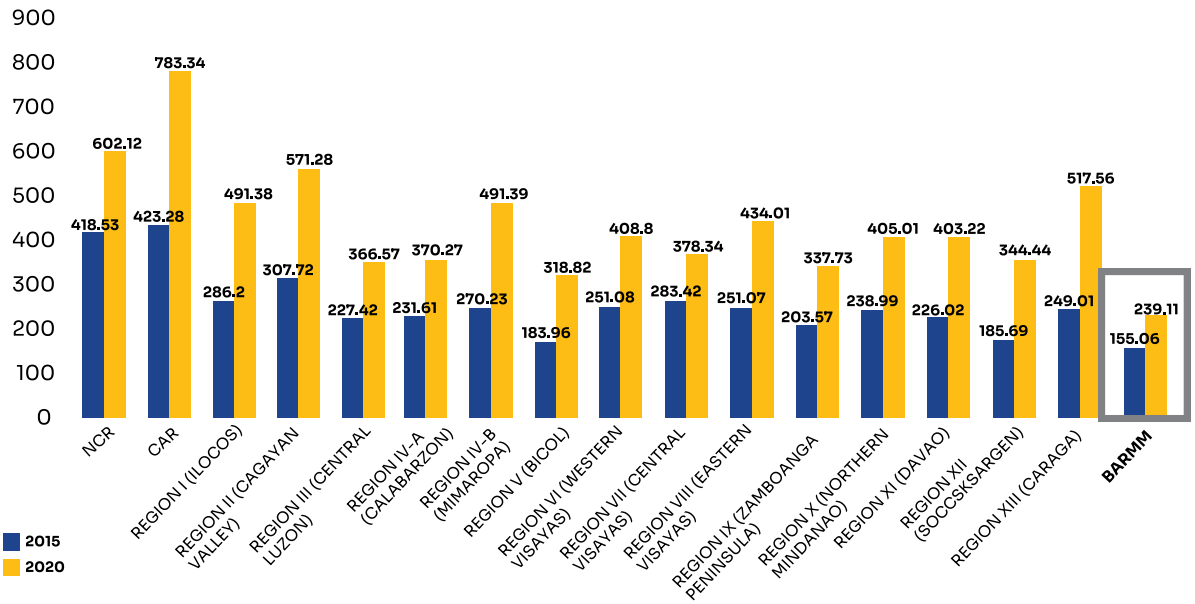


Source: Canuday, J. J., Tahir, K., Quetulio-Navarra M., Sescon J., Carbaja R.T., dela Cruz L.C. (2025). Covering the Last Mile | Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) governance and delivery in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM): A governance and policy reform study. The Asia Foundation & Tagpuan Ateneo de Manila University Center for Dialogue, Research, and Collaboration.

While showing improvement, the governance structure for ECCD remains fragmented as observed during the EDCOM II visit to BARMM last July 2024. Responsibilities are spread across ministries such as the Ministry of Social Services and Development (MSSD), Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Basic, Higher and Technical Education (MBHTE), Ministry of Finance, Budget and Management (MFBM), Ministry of the Interior and Local Government (MILG), Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Agrarian Reform (MAFAR), and the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs (MIPA). While each ministry has a defined role, the absence of a single, integrated ECCD governance framework creates coordination challenges, duplication of efforts, and gaps in accountability for individual child outcomes (Canuday, et al., 2025).

The Regional Plan of Action for Nutrition and the Local Protection of Children Program provide entry points for multisectoral collaboration, but they are not yet embedded in a comprehensive, legislated ECCD roadmap that tracks children continuously from birth through school entry (Canuday, et al., 2025). TAF also noted that local government units (LGUs) in BARMM allocate minimal shares of their budgets to social services and nutrition, often prioritizing economic infrastructure instead. In 2020, BARMM LGUs spent an average of only PHP 239.11 per child aged 0-8 years—the lowest in the country and a little more than half (55%) of the national average (Canuday, 2025).

FIGURE 13.
LGU ECCD Spending Per Child Aged 0-8, BARMM vs. National Average



Source: Canuday, J. J., Tahir, K., Quetulio-Navarra M., Sescon J., Carbaja R.T., dela Cruz L.C. (2025). Covering the Last Mile | Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) governance and delivery in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM): A governance and policy reform study. The Asia Foundation & Tagpuan Ateneo de Manila University Center for Dialogue, Research, and Collaboration.

> *"Without deeper local engagement and stronger intergovernmental coordination, ECCD in BARMM will continue to fall short of its transformative potential."*
>
> ***-Canuday, J. J., Tahir, K., Quetulio-Navarra M., Sescon J., Carbaja R.T., dela Cruz L.C.** (2025). Covering the Last Mile | Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) governance and delivery in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM): A governance and policy reform study. The Asia Foundation & Tagpuan Ateneo de Manila University Center for Dialogue, Research, and Collaboration.*

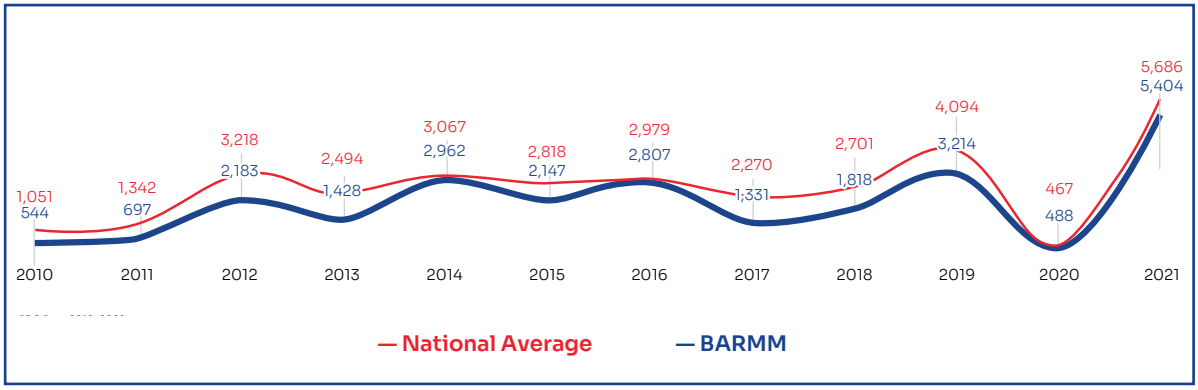


The EDCOM II July 2024 visit also revealed that teacher education quality in BARMM reflects systemic weaknesses in pre-service preparation, workforce management, and professional development. A fundamental issue is the absence of formal coordination mechanisms between MBHTE, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), and the Teacher Education Council (TEC). This regulatory gap creates confusion among TEIs regarding accreditation standards, program approval processes, and compliance requirements (Radam, 2025).

Based on the study of The Asia Foundation, there are persistent challenges in five strategic areas in teacher education development: regulatory structures, workforce planning, teacher preparation, infrastructure, and professional development (Radam, 2025).

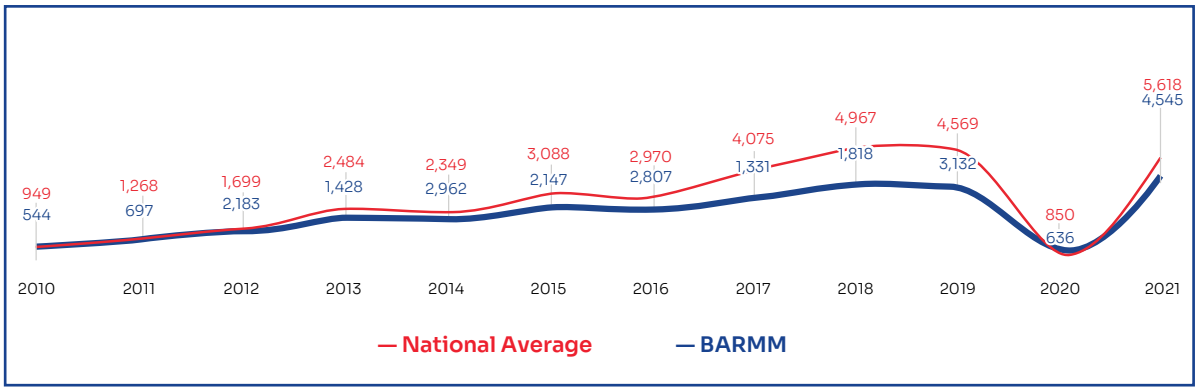
The PRC also shared concerning patterns in licensure examination results with 57 out of 192 schools (29.6%) performing below 29% passing rate in elementary education, and 58 out of 466 schools (12%) in secondary education coming from BARMM. BARMM consistently ranked as the lowest-performing region in Mindanao with pass rates fluctuating dramatically—from as low as 4.5% for elementary teachers in 2017 to 30.2% in 2022 (PRC data, 2010–2022).

FIGURE 14.
BLEPT Elementary Pass Rates, BARMM vs. National Average, 2010-2022



Source: PRC Data 2010-2022

FIGURE 15.
BLEPT Secondary Pass Rates, BARMM vs. National Average, 2010–2022



Source: PRC Data 2010-2022

> BARMM's constitutional authority to develop educational frameworks "relevant and responsive to the needs, ideals, and aspirations of the Bangsamoro people" must be reconciled with national requirements for standardized teacher qualifications.

Workforce planning is hampered by the absence of real-time, disaggregated data on teacher supply and demand, and the current centralized hiring system, administered by the MBHTE Office of the Minister, constrains schools' flexibility to respond quickly to staffing needs (Radam, 2025). Subject-specialization mismatches are also widespread which diminishes instructional quality and negatively affects teacher morale (Radam, 2025).

According to the BARMM Teacher Education study by Radam (2025), physical and digital infrastructure deficits further constrain teacher preparation. Many TEIs and Basic Education Institutions lack safe, accessible, and adequately equipped learning environments. Some TEI classes accommodate up to 50 students per section, and many priority training hubs lack baseline internet access. According to the study, these barriers prevent meaningful integration of technology into pre-service curricula and in-service professional development (Radam, 2025).

The Teacher Education Council has begun engaging BARMM Teacher Education Institutions in curriculum development consultations, though significant structural challenges remain in accommodating regional distinctiveness within national frameworks. BARMM TEIs have participated in consultations for the new pre-service teacher education curriculum. The challenge extends beyond curriculum design to assessment and licensure. Any separate BARMM teacher education curriculum would necessitate corresponding separate licensure assessments from the Professional Regulation Commission, as the Teacher Professionalization Act of 1994 mandates a uniform national examination structure.

This creates a fundamental tension: **BARMM's constitutional authority to develop educational frameworks "relevant and responsive to the needs, ideals, and aspirations of the Bangsamoro people" must be reconciled with national requirements for standardized teacher qualifications.** While TEC has expressed willingness to work toward accommodating regional curriculum variations, doing so would require amendments to existing legal frameworks governing teacher licensure. This effort underscores the need for joint coordination among MBHTE-CHED-PRC-TEC to address these structural coordination gaps.

In addition, professional development programs have been expanding, yet there remains a lack of institutionalized Training Needs Assessments (TNAs) (Radam, 2025). This results in offerings that may not match actual teacher or school needs. In the 2025 TAF study, results from the fieldwork have revealed that post-training integration and classroom application are rarely monitored consistently which makes it difficult to assess the effectiveness or impact of professional development investments. The fragmented governance of professional development across regional, division, and school levels has led to uneven access and inconsistent quality across the region (Radam, 2025).



ISSUE 4: NATIONAL PROGRAMS MANDATED UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11054 MUST CONTINUE IN BARMM, BUT COORDINATION MECHANISMS AND FISCAL ALIGNMENT REMAIN WEAK.

During the hearing, representatives from the DepEd, CHED, TESDA, and DBM clarified the extent of their ongoing programs in BARMM. CHED, confirmed that BARMM State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) are beneficiaries of Free Higher Education, the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES), and Tulong Dunong programs. DepEd also reported program-based coordination with MBHTE through the Bureau of Education Assessment, and Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education (GASTPE) with an estimated subsidy of PHP 900 million to PHP 1 billion flowing to BARMM.

PRC on the other hand revealed significant confusion about recognizing COPCs (Certificate of Program Compliance) issued by MBHTE versus CHED. PRC's Cotabato satellite office only handles licensure examination applications, not monitoring activities. However, PRC expressed willingness to establish institutional arrangements with MBHTE for joint inspection and monitoring, and requested clarification on whether MBHTE would adopt the same assessment tools used by CHED for program compliance evaluations.

Section 13 of Republic Act No. 11054 explicitly mandates that "national programs and projects such as the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, Health Facility Enhancement Program, School Building Program, retained hospitals of the Department of Health, PhilHealth, social pension for senior citizens, and the Task Force Bangon Marawi shall continue to be funded by the National Government, without prejudice to the power of the Bangsamoro Government to provide for supplemental funding for such programs and projects."

However, stakeholders from BARMM expressed concerns that some national programs, particularly those managed by the ECCD Council and the National Nutrition Council have been pulled back from BARMM following the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law. This perception has limited the region's access to critical technical and financial resources. Exceptions include the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) and the Sustainable Livelihood Program which continue to operate in the region.

> *There is a need for clear policy frameworks to guide collaboration such as an establishment of a Joint Coordinating Council composed of MBHTE, CHED, TESDA, PRC, and TEC*

During the same hearing, DBM's Local Government and Regional Coordination Bureau acknowledged the need for stronger intergovernmental fiscal mechanisms to ensure budgetary alignment and efficient resource mobilization for education. He supported a review of fiscal coordination frameworks to integrate ECCD and education priorities into both national and regional budget planning cycles.

ISSUE 5: ESTABLISHING FORMAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS, LEGISLATING REFORM CODES, AND INSTITUTIONALIZING MBHTE REPRESENTATION IN NATIONAL BODIES ARE ESSENTIAL STEPS FORWARD.

As Rep. Zia Alonto Adiong underscored, nationally funded programs must continue operating in BARMM and that the block grant is not a substitute for national education support. There is a need for clear policy frameworks to guide collaboration such as an establishment of a Joint Coordinating Council composed of MBHTE, CHED, TESDA, PRC, and TEC to harmonize policies, align standards, and facilitate regular consultation on teacher education reform. An inventory of all national education programs is also a concrete step forward to clarify which are implemented, and the reasons why some programs are not implemented in BARMM.

> *"Education should be unrestricted. . . It should not be subject to our idea of autonomy. Knowledge should be unrestricted. It should be freely accessed by anyone, regardless whether that political arrangement is on the issue of autonomy or not. It should be unrestricted."*
>
> *-**Rep. Zia Alonto Adiong**, EDCOM II Commissioner 20th Congress (October 9, 2025)*

Based on the research presented by The Asia Foundation, the hearing identified specific legislative and institutional reforms needed to strengthen ECCD and teacher education systems:

RECOMMENDATIONS

For Early Childhood Care and Development (Canuday, et al., 2025):

1. **Devolve ECCD planning and implementation** to capable LGUs in phases, using a readiness assessment framework that evaluates fiscal capacity, political commitment, and service delivery infrastructure.

2. **Create a whole-of-government ECCD governance structure** with the BARMM Chief Minister as convener, MSSD as coordinating agency, and cluster members including MOH, MBHTE, MFBM, MILG, and MIPA.

3. **Establish an intergovernmental fiscal mechanism between DBM and BARMM MFBM** to reconcile ECCD budgetary and fiscal governance, and integrate national and regional funding streams.

4. **Develop a data-driven ECCD roadmap legislated by the BARMM Parliament**, with clear goals, milestones, standards, and an interconnected beneficiary registry system to track individual child development outcomes across sectors.

For Teacher Education and Workforce Development (Radam, 2025):

1. **Establish a MBHTE-CHED-PRC-TEC Joint Coordinating Council** to harmonize policies, accreditation processes, and regulatory oversight for teacher education.

2. **Enact a Bangsamoro Teacher Education and Development Reform Code** through the BARMM Parliament, providing a comprehensive legislative framework for pre-service and in-service teacher preparation.

3. **Implement a hybrid hiring schem**e that balances regional oversight with division-level responsiveness, allowing schools to address staffing needs more quickly while maintaining quality standards.

4. **Institutionalize annual Training Needs Assessments at regional, division, and school levels**, and establish a competency-based micro-credentialing system to recognize and reward continuous professional development.

5. **Develop an Islamic Studies and Arabic Language (ISAL) bridging framework and career pathway** to integrate ISAL teachers into the mainstream education system to recognize their specialized skills while supporting their professional growth.

6. **Expand higher education pathways for early childhood education** across higher education institutions in BARMM, and establish a regional ECCD training center in Cotabato City to address chronic workforce shortages.

7. **Modernize classroom infrastructure and ensure digital connectivity** for all TEIs and priority training hubs to enable meaningful technology integration into teacher preparation programs.

ISSUE 6: COORDINATED ACTION ACROSS NATIONAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS, INFORMED BY EVIDENCE AND GUIDED BY A SHARED COMMITMENT TO EQUITY, CAN TRANSFORM EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR THE BANGSAMORO PEOPLE

The October 9, 2025 hearing underscored that while BARMM's education challenges are significant, they are not insurmountable. The MBHTE reports that the region has made measurable progress in expanding budgets, improving utilization rates, and building institutional capacity within MBHTE and partner ministries. Yet the persistence of severe nutritional deprivation, learning gaps, infrastructure deficits, and teacher quality concerns demands a more integrated, sustained, and evidence-based approach.

The path forward requires three critical commitments: formal coordination mechanisms that clarify roles, responsibilities, and accountability; legislative reforms that provide a stable, comprehensive foundation for ECCD and teacher education; and sustained fiscal alignment that ensures national programs continue to reach BARMM while regional innovations are supported and scaled. By honoring the spirit of Republic Act No. 11054: autonomy with alignment, innovation with inclusion, the national and regional governments can work together to ensure that every Bangsamoro child, regardless of geography or circumstance, has the opportunity to learn, thrive, and contribute to a future of peace and prosperity.

Among the key mandates entrusted to EDCOM II under Republic Act No. 11899 is the comprehensive review of the charters of the country's principal education agencies—the Department of Education (DepEd), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). This mandate

recognizes that the legal and institutional frameworks governing these agencies, some of which were established decades ago, must be examined in light of evolving educational demands, emerging global trends, and the persistent challenges confronting the Philippine education system. To fulfill this responsibility, the Commission conducted a series of Charter Hearings with each agency, which provided a structured venue for examining organizational mandates, assessing institutional performance, and identified legislative and administrative reforms necessary to strengthen the delivery of quality education across all levels. The findings and recommendations presented in the succeeding sections reflect the Commission's careful deliberation on the testimonies, documents, and evidence gathered throughout these proceedings.



THE UNFULFILLED PROMISE OF DECENTRALIZED EDUCATION GOVERNANCE

DEPED CHARTER HEARING, OCTOBER 28, 2025

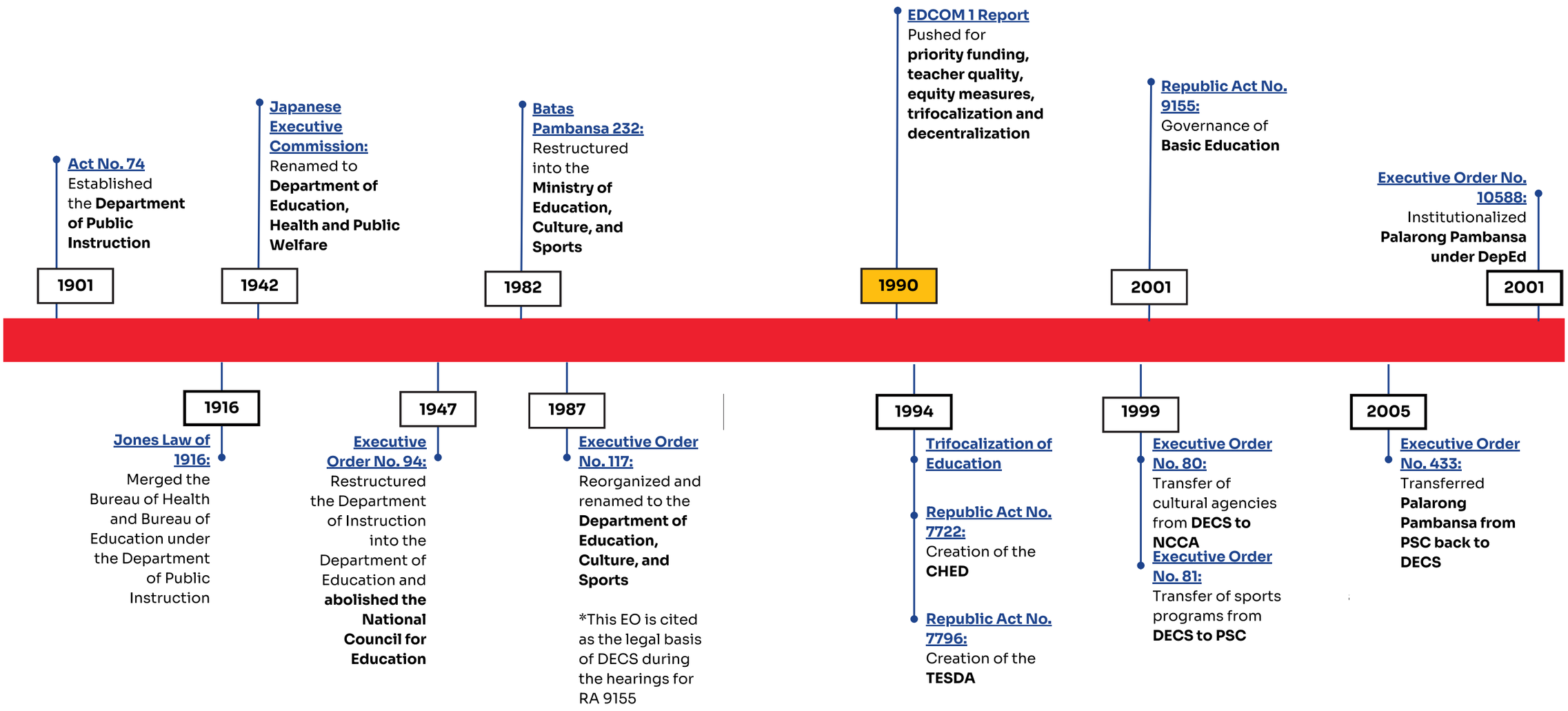
ISSUE 1: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9155 REVEALS PERSISTENT CHALLENGES IN ACHIEVING GENUINE DECENTRALIZATION AND FULFILLING DEPED'S CORE MANDATE.

Twenty-four years after the passage of Republic Act No. 9155, the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001, the Department of Education continues to grapple with fundamental structural challenges that impede its ability to deliver quality basic education to all Filipinos. The law's vision of decentralized governance where schools serve as the heart of the education system and field offices exercise meaningful autonomy remains largely unrealized despite numerous reform initiatives and policy interventions.

ISSUE 2: THE EVOLUTION OF DEPED'S MANDATE HAS CREATED OVERLAPPING JURISDICTIONS AND EXPANDED RESPONSIBILITIES WITHOUT CORRESPONDING STRUCTURAL REFORMS.

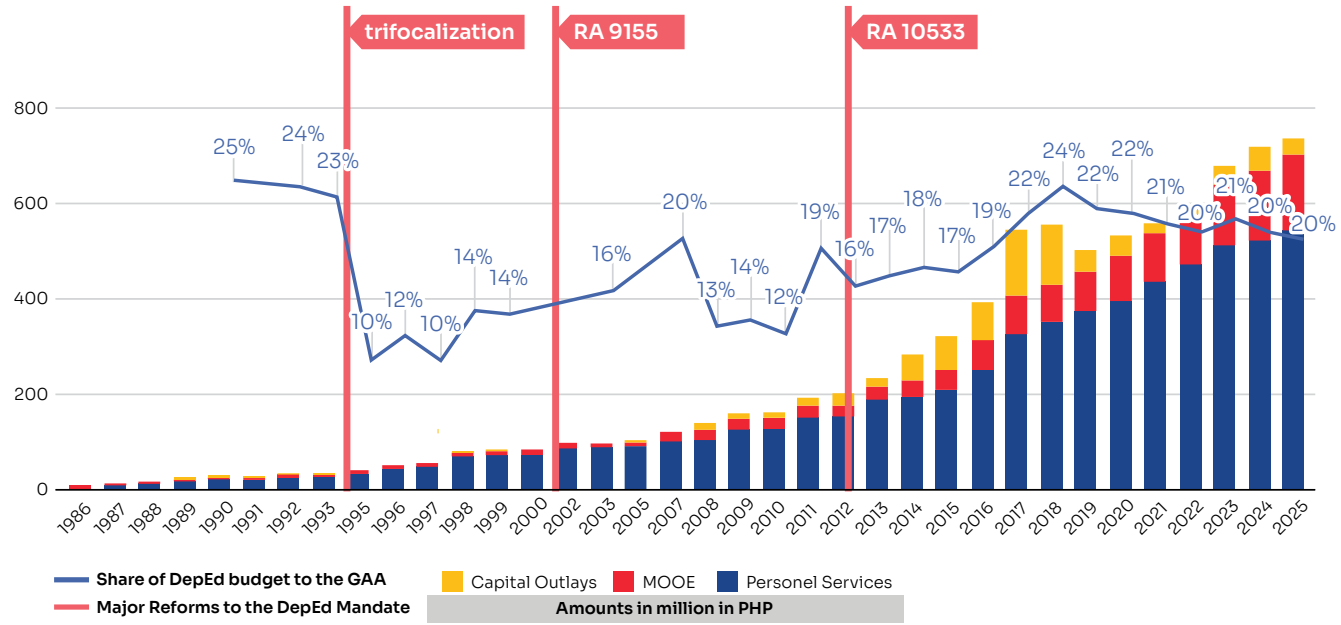
The legislative framework governing Philippine basic education rests on three foundational laws that continue to operate simultaneously: Batas Pambansa No. 232 (1982), Republic Act No. 9155 (2001), and Republic Act No. 10533 (2013). This layered legal architecture has produced jurisdictional complexities particularly following the K-12 reform's expansion of DepEd's mandate into domains traditionally managed by CHED and TESDA. The trifocalization of education, intended to allow DepEd to concentrate on basic education, has paradoxically resulted in coordination failures and unclear mandates across the three education agencies (Paqueo et al., 2025).

FIGURE 16.
Timeline of Major Reforms, Reviews, Expansions, and Restructuring of DepEd due to Legislation



The historical pattern reveals a department repeatedly restructured yet persistently unable to achieve its core objectives. As EDCOM I noted in 1990, the extent of DECS's mandate and its huge bureaucracy limited the effectiveness and efficiency of its performance. This is a finding that remains strikingly relevant today. Based on historical data from the GAA, the department's budget has grown from less than 10% of the national budget in the 1990s to approximately 20% in recent years, yet this increased investment has not translated into commensurate improvements in learning outcomes (see p. 142).

FIGURE 17.
Historical DepEd Budget Appropriations - Share of DepEd budget to the GAA

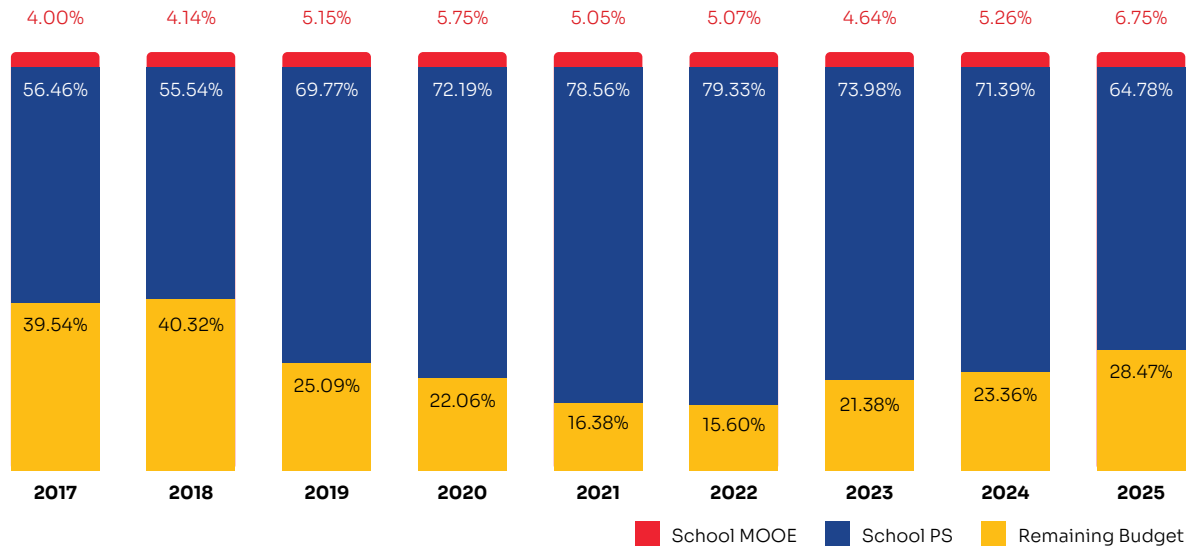


Source: DBM Budget Document Archives

ISSUE 3: DECENTRALIZATION EFFORTS HAVE PRODUCED ADMINISTRATIVE DEVOLUTION WITHOUT MEANINGFUL FISCAL OR POLITICAL AUTONOMY FOR SCHOOLS AND FIELD OFFICES.

The tension between Republic Act No. 9155's promise of locally responsive education and the reality of centralized curriculum control remains unresolved more than three decades after it was first identified. During the 1991 EDCOM I consultations, Senator Santanina Rasul articulated the need for curriculum decentralization, arguing that "the curricular content of subjects taught in the different regions should also work closely to the cultural components of the respective community". Yet today, DepEd continues to centrally determine uniform curricular requirements across the archipelago's diverse contexts, with limited mechanisms of ensuring that "the values, needs and aspirations of a school community are reflected in the program of education". Despite Republic Act No. 9155's explicit mandate for decentralized governance, DepEd continues to operate through highly centralized structures that concentrate decision-making authority at the Central Office level (Laguda, et. al., 2025; King, 2024). Field offices and schools remain constrained in their ability to initiate programs, allocate resources, or manage personnel, while the vast majority of public schools lack direct access to their allocated funds (Laguda, et. al, 2025; King, 2024). The fiscal dimensions of this centralization are examined in the Governance and Finance chapter of this report.

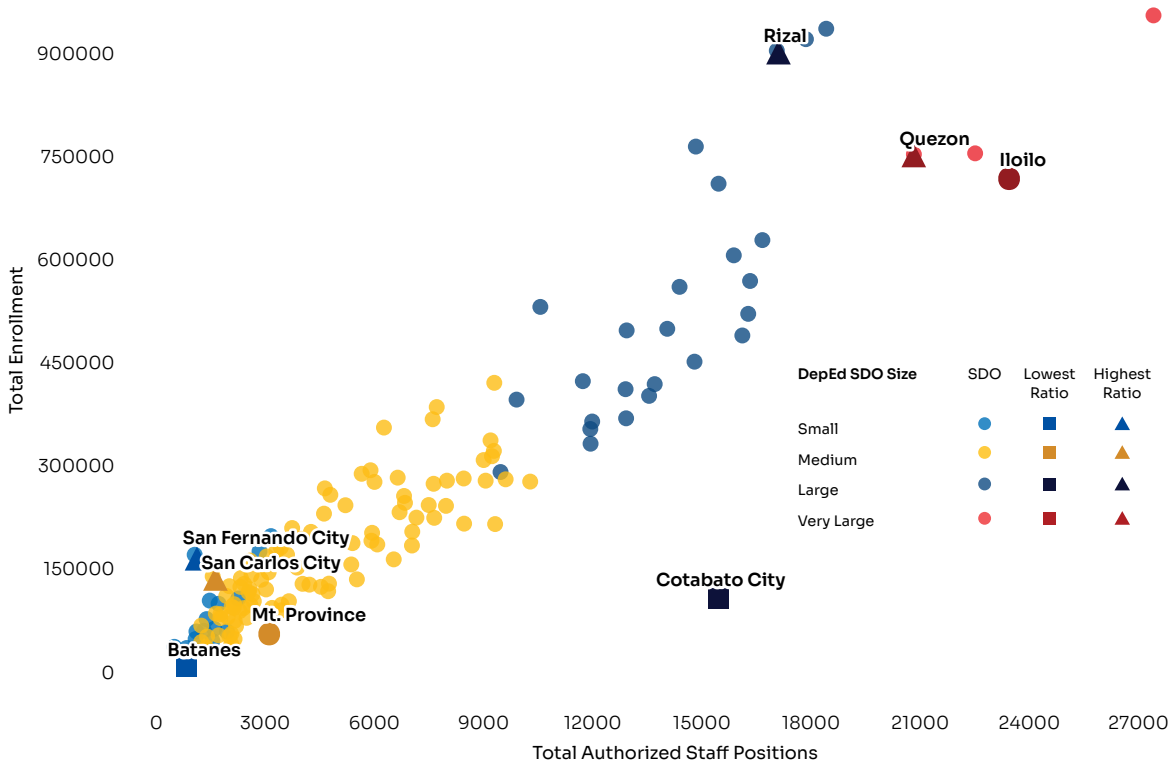
FIGURE 18.
Share of Operation of Schools in DepEd Budget, FY 2017-2025



Source: DepEd SAOODB data from FY 2017-2025

The distribution of DepEd's staffing across governance levels reveals a concerning concentration of personnel away from direct school supervision. Despite being the primary interface with schools, the 228 Schools Division Offices together have 22,356 regular personnel, while the Central Office maintains 897 regular personnel and Regional Offices collectively employ 2,114 staff members. This creates a ratio of 1:1,237 SDO staff to learners, an implausible supervision and support burden that fundamentally undermines the field offices' ability to provide meaningful technical assistance and monitoring to schools.

FIGURE 19.
Comparison of Total Enrollment vs total Authorized Positions by SDO



Source: DepEd SDO Data as of September 2025

An EDCOM II-ADB study has found extreme disparities in Schools Division Office responsibilities, and has revealed a fundamental irrationality in resource allocation that undermines equitable education delivery (Bundoc, 2025) further examined in the Governance and Finance chapter of this report (see p. 370). Despite these vast disparities in the number of schools supervised, personnel allocations, and student populations served, SDOs operate under uniform staffing patterns and resource frameworks (Republic Act No. 9155). This means that an SDO supervising 500+ schools receives similar support as one managing fewer than 10 schools. This creates a situation where the quality of educational supervision and support depends entirely on geographic accident rather than actual need. Such disparities directly challenge the principle of equitable resource distribution and highlight the urgent need to rationalize SDO structures based on actual carrying capacity and service requirements.

TABLE 6.
SDOs With the Highest and Lowest Staff-to-Student Ratio by Size

Size	Staff-to-Student Ratio	
Very Large	Quezon	1:36
	Iloilo	1:30
Large	**Rizal**	**1:53**
	Cotabato City	1:7
Medium	**San Carlos City**	**1:83**
	Mt. Province	1:18
Small	**San Fernando City**	**1:148**
	Batanes	1:9

Source: DepEd SDO data as of June 2025

The absence of school principals in nearly half of all schools undermines the fundamental premise of school-based management. Perhaps no indicator more starkly reveals the gap between policy aspiration and implementation reality than the persistent lack of school principals. Based on School Year 2024-2025 DepEd data, 18,576 schools (48% of all schools) have no principal items and rely on teachers-in-charge. An additional 12,057 schools have incorrect school head items, contrary to DepEd's own policies last reviewed in 1997. This situation directly contradicts Republic Act No. 9155's vision of the school principal as the instructional leader responsible for setting the school's mission, vision, and goals while being accountable for learning outcomes.

Republic Act No. 9155 provides detailed responsibilities for school heads encompassing twelve specific functions ranging from curriculum implementation to community engagement. Yet the persistent inability to fill these positions demonstrates the department's continued struggle with basic organizational capacity even as its mandate has expanded significantly. This was already a problem explicitly acknowledged during the 1999 deliberations on DepEd reform.

This means that an SDO supervising 500+ schools receives similar support as one managing fewer than 10 schools.

Overlapping responsibilities with Local Government Units create implementation gaps and accountability confusion. The interface between DepEd and Local Government Units presents another layer of complexity particularly following the Mandanas-Garcia ruling and Executive Order No. 138 (2021). This jurisdictional overlap has created confusion about funding responsibilities, project implementation, and maintenance obligations which has led to the drafting of revised guidelines on the utilization of the Special Education Fund (SEF) through the efforts of EDCOM II in close collaboration with DepEd, DILG, DBM, and DOF.

While the Local Government Code explicitly assigns responsibility for school buildings and facilities to LGUs, Republic Act No. 9155 simultaneously mandates DepEd to ensure equitable access to quality education infrastructure. The DBM has identified "Basic Education Facilities" as a Program, Activity, and Project for phase-out from national to local funding. However, as the DBM itself acknowledges, the national government cannot directly impose on local governments which specific programs and services to fund. This creates a potential gap where neither level of government takes full responsibility for ensuring adequate school infrastructure particularly in financially constrained localities.

TABLE 7.
Matrix of Policies on the Responsibilities of LGUs and NGAs in Building and Maintaining Schools

Local Government Code (Republic Act No. 7160)	Mandanas-Garcia Ruling (EO 138 s. 2021)	Republic Act No. 9155 (Governance of Basic Education)
SEC. 17. Basic Services and Facilities. [...] Local government units shall exercise such other powers and discharge such other functions and responsibilities as are necessary [...] to efficient and **effective provision of the basic services and facilities; [... such as] school buildings and other facilities for public elementary and secondary schools.** **National agencies or offices concerned shall devolve to LGUs the responsibility for the provision of basic services and facilities** [...] within 6 months. [...] Offices whose functions are devolved to LGUs as provided shall be phased out within 1 year.	**SEC. 4. Funding, Services, and Facilities for Full Devolution.** The **functions, services, and facilities which shall be fully devolved from the NGAs to the LGUs no later than the end of FY 2024**, shall include those indicated under Section 17 of Republic Act No. 7160. [...] The basic services fully devolved shall be funded from the share of the LGUs in the proceeds of national taxes and other local revenues. LCEs shall ensure the any fund or resources available [...] shall be first allocated for the provision of basic services or facilities. **IRR, ANNEX A.** Basic Services and Facilities devolved under LGC: municipalities - [...] **school buildings and other facilities for public elementary and secondary schools**.	**RULE VII, SEC 8.1. Equitable, Direct, and Immediate Release of Resources to the Field Offices.** In line with the decentralization of fiscal management to the level of field offices, the Secretary of Education is tasked to: [...] (b) Establish and develop a procedure to directly and immediately release to the regional and field offices (elementary school, secondary school, and schools division) all appropriations and resources intended for them by the national government which may include but are not limited to personnel services, maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE), desks, textbooks, and **repair and maintenance of school buildings.**

Moving forward requires fundamental restructuring rather than incremental reforms. The evidence presented reveals that Republic Act No. 9155's vision of decentralized, school-based management remains largely unfulfilled due to structural constraints that incremental reforms cannot address. The persistence of centralized control, inadequate field office capacity, chronic shortages of school leaders, and jurisdictional confusion with LGUs all point to the need for more fundamental restructuring of Philippine basic education governance. Nevertheless, there have been several initiatives in DepEd to decentralize program components such as teacher hiring and procurement (see Table x).

TABLE 8.
Sample Department Orders on Decentralization Efforts

DO 19, s. 1985	Appointing Locally Paid Teachers
DO 21, s. 1988	Decentralizing Contracts and Records Disposal
DO54, s. 1988	Local Relief Service and Disaster Monitoring Committees
DO14, s. 1996	Appointing Locally Paid Teachers for National Teaching Position Items
DO 48, s. 2007	Decentralizing STVEP
DO 37, s. 2009	Primers on SBM
DO 55, s. 2011	SBM Guidelines
DO 83, s. 2012	SBM Framework, Assessment Process And Tool
DO 44, s. 2015	Guidelines on Enhanced SIP Process and SRC
DO 45, s. 2015	SBM Grant FY 2014
DO 021, s. 2021	SBM for ALS (SY 2020-2021)
DO 043, s. 2021	Decentralizing Procurement of TVL Learning Tools and Equipment
DO 020, s. 2022	Decentralizing Procurement of STEM and TVL Tools and Equipment

As EDCOM II continues its assessment, leaders must confront the reality that despite significant legislative reforms and increased budgetary allocations over the past four decades, the basic governance challenges identified by EDCOM I in 1990 persist. The path forward requires not merely adjusting existing structures but reimagining how basic education can be effectively delivered in a diverse archipelagic nation of over 28 million learners. Only through such fundamental reform can DepEd finally fulfill its mandate under Republic Act No. 9155 to provide quality basic education that is accessible to all Filipino children.

> *And then finally, the one I am asking Congress to look into because it's a matter of constant irritation is, we have many schools that have no principals. And they have no principals because they have no items in the budget. And we negotiate this rather painfully with the Budget every year. But if there is a general principle from Congress that says that under certain criteria you must have a principal, then this doesn't have to become the subject of negotiation. And it should be. I don't know how you can run a school without a principal.*
>
> *-**Br. Andrew Gonzales FSC**, Secretary, Department of Education, March 24, 1999 Deliberations on DepEd*



RESOLVING TESDA'S STRUCTURAL CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN REGULATION AND PROVISION

TESDA CHARTER HEARING, JULY 10, 2025

The evolution of Republic Act No. 7796 reveals significant mandate drift from coordination to direct provision without commensurate resources. The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) was established in 1994 through Republic Act No. 7796 as a landmark reform emerging from the First Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM I). MENT Created to consolidate the fragmented technical-vocational education and training (TVET) landscape, TESDA merged the functions of the National Manpower and Youth Council (NMYC), the Bureau of Technical and Vocational Education (BTVE), and the apprenticeship programs of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). Thirty years later, as EDCOM II examines the agency's performance and relevance, critical questions emerge about whether TESDA's charter remains fit for purpose in addressing contemporary workforce development challenges.

> *Critical questions emerge about whether TESDA's charter remains fit for purpose in addressing contemporary workforce development challenges.*

GOVERNANCE OF TVET

- **1927 – Commonwealth Act No. 3377** (Vocational Education Act of 1927); Patterned after the US Federal Vocational Act, it provided for four departments: (1) Agriculture, (2) Trade and Industries, (3) Home Economics, and (4) Placement.
- **1939 – Commonwealth Act No. 313** led to the establishment of regional national vocational trade schools
- **1963 – Republic Act No. 3742** (Creating the Bureau of Vocational Education, to "strengthen, promote, coordinate and expand programs through development of skilled manpower in agriculture, industry, trade, fishery and other vocational programs")
- **1966 –** Creation of a **Manpower Development Council**
- **1969 –** Creation of a **National Manpower and Youth Council** (NMYC, to provide skills, motivation and career guidance to youth)
- **1982 –** Establishment of the **National Training Center for Technical Education and Staff Development** (NTCTESD) in the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports
- **1994 – Republic Act No. 7796** otherwise known as the **"Technical Education and Skills Development Act of 1994"** creating **TESDA**, merging the National Manpower and Youth Council, the DOLE Office of Apprenticeship, and the Bureau of Vocational and Technical Education in the DECS, as recommended by EDCOM I.
- **1996 – Executive Order No. 337** transferring the National Training Center for Technical Education and Staff Development (NTCTESD) from the DECS
- **2018 – Executive Order No. 67, s. 2018** transferring TESDA from DTI to DOLE.
- **2022 – Executive Order No. 5, s. 2022** transferring TESDA back to DOLE, citing how **DOLE is the primary policy-making, programming, coordinating, and administrative entity in the field of labor and employment**.

TESDA was designed as a coordinating authority, not primarily as a direct training provider. The TESDA charter articulated a clear policy vision: to "provide relevant, accessible, high quality and efficient technical education and skills development in support of the development of high quality Filipino middle-level manpower responsive to and in accordance with Philippine development goals and priorities." Legislative debates thirty years ago reveal that TESDA was deliberately designed not as a direct training provider, but primarily as a coordinating authority responsible for planning, monitoring, and standard-setting across both public and private TVET sectors.

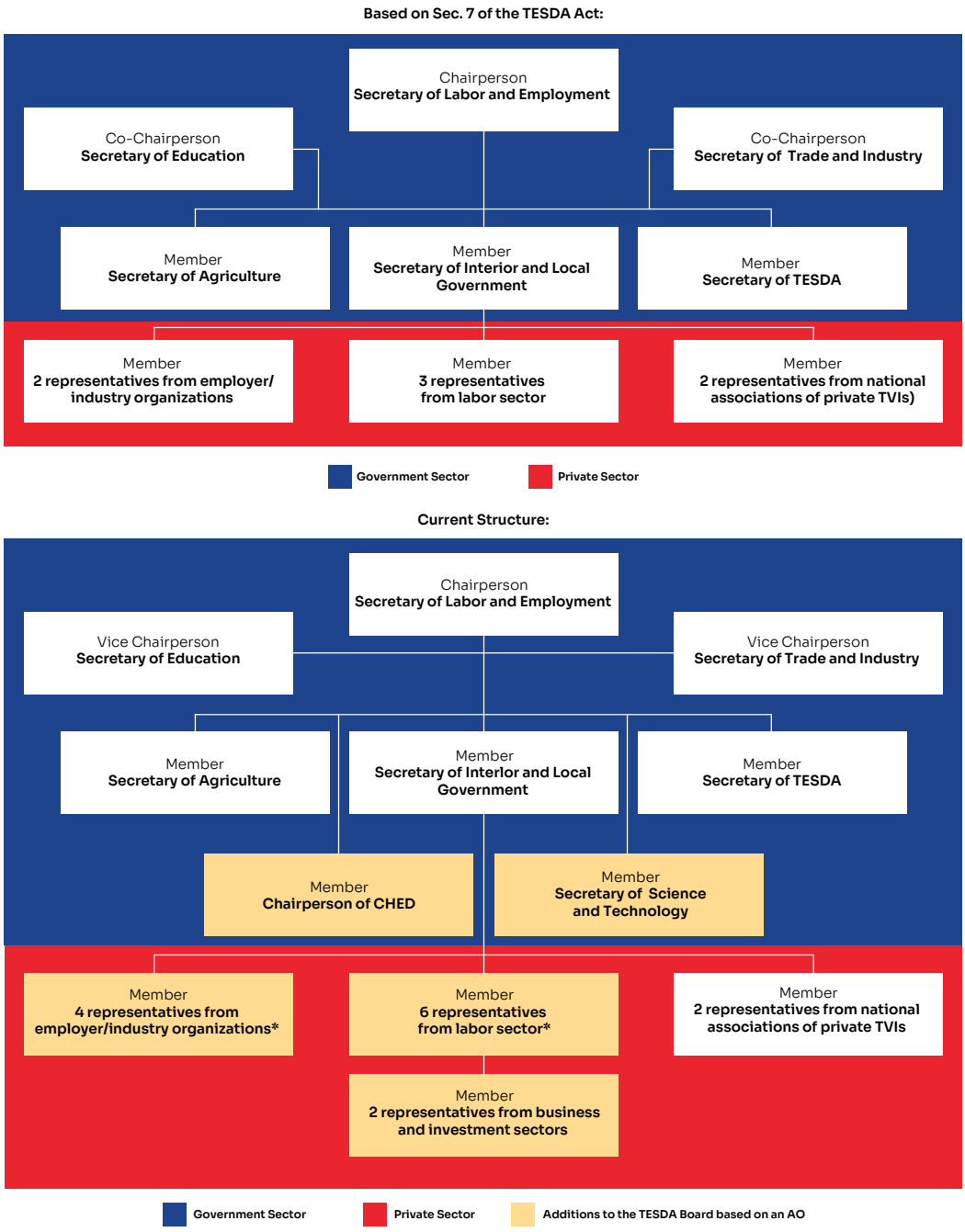
Senator Ernesto Herrera emphasized during the National Congress on Education in 1991 that "This Authority will be primarily responsible for planning, coordinating and monitoring all technical education and skill-development programs in both the public and private sectors." This distinction between coordination and implementation would prove critical to understanding tensions that persist three decades later.

Republic Act No. 7796 defined "technical education" as post-secondary, non-degree programs aimed at preparing technicians and middle-level workers, while "middle-level manpower" referred to those with practical skills equivalent to at least secondary education, preferably post-secondary, or skilled workers highly competent in their trade as attested by industry. These definitions established TESDA's target population and scope of work.

The TESDA Board has expanded beyond its original size which raises concerns about operational efficiency. TESDA's governance architecture reflects the tripartite collaboration central to its mandate. The TESDA Board, chaired by the Secretary of Labor and Employment and co-chaired by the Secretaries of Education and Trade and Industry, includes government representatives alongside employer organizations, labor sector representatives, and private TVET institutions. This composition was intended to ensure industry relevance and stakeholder participation in policy formulation.

However, the Board's size has expanded significantly beyond its original charter composition of 13 members through administrative orders, now encompassing 22 members with two positions unfilled. Legislative debates in 1993 presciently raised concerns about operational efficiency, with University of the Philippines Economics professor, Dr. Dante B. Canlas noting during Senate hearings that "we think it's very big and potentially it could be very unwieldy."

FIGURE 20.
TESDA Board Composition. Original Charter vs. Current Structure



> *However, the Board's size has expanded significantly beyond its original charter composition of 13 members through administrative orders, now encompassing 22 members with two positions unfilled.*

A deliberate policy decision during TESDA's creation was to avoid granting the Director General cabinet rank, given that the DOLE Secretary serves as Board chairman. As Dr. Canlas explained, "if the TESDA Director-General is accorded Cabinet-rank, then there is the possibility of conflicts or changes in thrust between the Secretary of Labor and... the TESDA Director-General." Despite this intent, the Director General has held de facto cabinet rank since 2004, raising questions about its impact on institutional coherence and coordination with DOLE.

> *"So in short, it's, yun nga, six years, six Director-Generals. Kasi nga malaki talaga ... malaking influence yung director-general eh. Kung babagalan niya, gagawa siya ng sarili niyang programa. And every time magpalit iyan, gagawa ng sariling programa. Walang magawa yung board. Kaya lang, kasi tahimik tayo eh. I also blame the board. The board is the problem. The board has the power. Why didn't you complain to the director-general then? "Eh, Mr. Director-General, kami ang may power dito, hindi ikaw." So why is it taking us a long time? See, so the structure by itself has a big problem. Change the structure."*
>
> -***Atty. Teodoro Pascua***, *Former TESDA Deputy Director General*

Compounding these resource constraints, TESDA's supervisory authority has shifted repeatedly across government administrations, with the agency transferred from DOLE (pre-2016) to the Office of the Cabinet Secretary (2016, via EO No. 1), to the Department of Trade and Industry (2018, via EO No. 67), and back to DOLE (2022). Thus, preventing the agency from establishing a stable institutional home. These transitions have raised concerns about policy coherence, institutional identity, and alignment with national workforce and industrial development goals. The National Technical Education and Skills Development Plan (NTESDP) exemplifies this instability. While five NTESDPs have been released (2000-2004, 2005-2009, 2011-2016, 2018-2022, and 2023-2028), implementation gaps between plan periods, shifts in strategic priorities with new leadership, and lack of continuity in monitoring and evaluation have weakened the plans' effectiveness as genuine roadmaps for sector development.

As an attached agency rather than a full-fledged department, TESDA faces structural disadvantages in inter-agency coordination, budget negotiations, and position classification. The lack of departmental status limits TESDA's voice in cabinet-level deliberations on economic and social policy, delays approval processes for critical programs and positions, and constrains its ability to secure commensurate budget allocations despite expanded mandates. This institutional instability has contributed to the persistent challenges in fulfilling core charter functions, particularly as TVET's importance to national competitiveness has grown increasingly urgent.

TESDA's responsibilities have also expanded dramatically through subsequent legislation without commensurate resources.

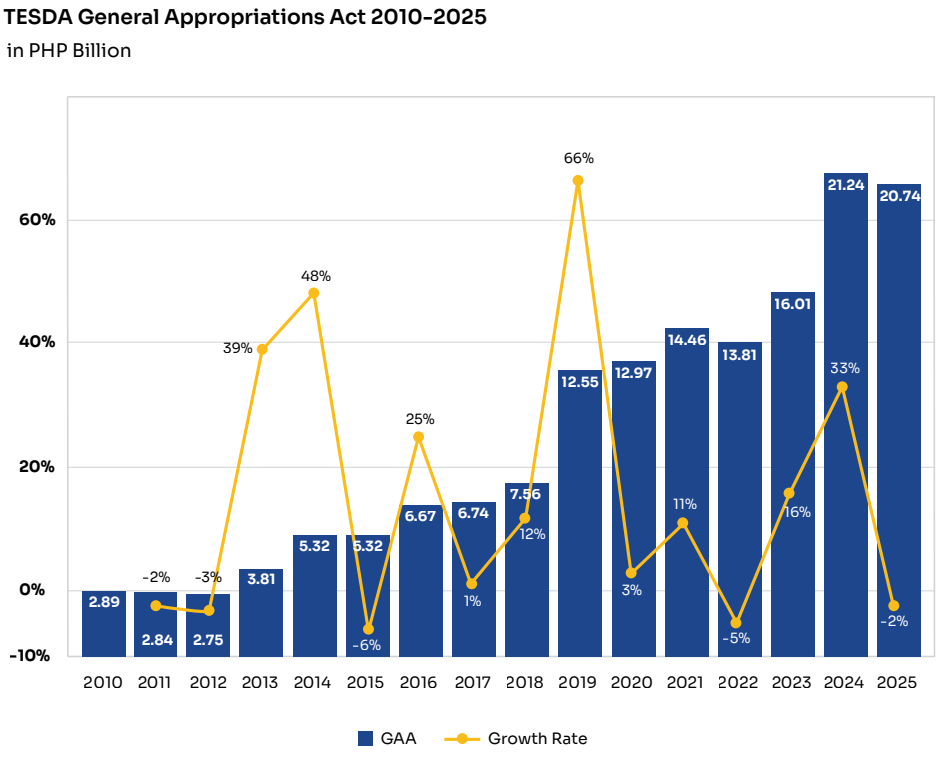
TESDA's responsibilities have expanded dramatically beyond its original charter through several major laws:

- RA 7686 (Dual Training System Act, 1994)
- RA 10647 (Ladderized Education Act, 2014)
- RA 10931 (Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, 2017)
- RA 10968 (Philippine Qualifications Framework Act, 2018)
- RA 11230 (Tulong Trabaho Act, 2019)
- RA 12063 (Enterprise-Based Education and Training Framework Act, 2024)
- RA 12124 (Expanded ETEEAP Act, 2024)

These legislative expansions have transformed TESDA from a coordination agency into one managing scholarship programs, qualifications framework implementation, enterprise-based training regulation, and free TVET provision. Notably, TESDA currently manages six out of eight scholarship types mandated by law despite the original charter containing no explicit provisions for scholarship administration.

This mandate expansion has occurred without commensurate resource growth. TESDA's budget comprises only approximately 2% of the total education allocation, yet scholarships now account for 50-70% of TESDA's annual budget. As highlighted in EDCOM II Year 1 findings, staffing levels have increased only 40.8%, from 1,883 plantilla positions in 2013 to 2,652 in 2023, despite significantly expanded functions. Provincial offices operate with merely 7-12 regular staff serving entire regions with thousands of technical-vocational institutions (TVIs).

FIGURE 21.
Historical TESDA Budget Since 2010



Source: Neri, R. (2026). The Role of Efficient Financial and Resource Mobilization System in TVET. Ateneo-EDCOM II Research Fellowship

Devolution remains largely unfulfilled after thirty years of sporadic implementation. Section 29 of Republic Act No. 7796 explicitly mandates TESDA to "formulate, implement and finance a specific plan to develop the capability of local government units to assume ultimately the responsibility for effectively providing community-based technical education and skills development opportunities." Legislative intent clearly envisioned eventual devolution of training functions to LGUs, enabling TESDA to focus on its core regulatory and coordinating role.

Yet implementation has been sporadic and limited. Only two pilot phases occurred: only five institutions from 2004-2006 and one additional institution 2012. TESDA's 2004 Progressive Devolution Policy outlined a 26-year phased implementation through 2030, but progress stalled. The 2002 Independent Review Panel concluded that "devolution of the direct training function has not been aggressively pursued," a finding echoed by the 2008 panel review.

Recent reforms emphasize LGU empowerment through Community Training and Employment Coordinators (CTECs) and scaled partnerships rather than institutional transfer. This may suggest continued resistance to fulfilling the charter's devolution mandate.

TABLE 9.
TESDA Training Institutions Devolved to LGUs, 2004-2012

Year	Region	Name of TTI	Type of Governance and Status
2007	NCR	KorPhil IT Center	**Devolved to LGU (Quezon City)** Currently Operational
2009	IV-A	PTC Lopez	**Devolved to LGU (Lopez, Quezon)** Currently Operational
2009	IV-A	PTC Calamba	**Devolved to LGU (Calamba, Laguna)** Currently Operational
2013	IV-A	PTC Malolos*	**Devolved to LGU (Malolos, Bulacan)** Currently Operational

*N.B. * PTC Malolos was instead devolved to Malolos Training Center*

TESDA'S SIMULTANEOUS ROLES AS REGULATOR, PROVIDER, AND ASSESSOR CREATE FUNDAMENTAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

A fundamental governance challenge identified by the Asian Development Bank's 2021 TVET sector study is TESDA's simultaneous roles as regulator, training provider, and assessor—functioning as "judge, jury, and executor." TESDA sets training standards through Training Regulations, operates 57 Technology Institutions nationwide competing with private providers, conducts competency assessments, and dispenses sanctions to both its own TTIs and private TVIs.

This creates inherent conflicts of interest particularly in quality assurance. TESDA TTIs constitute only 10% of all TVIs but receive preferential access to government scholarships and resources while being regulated by the same agency that operates them. The dual mandate undermines TESDA's credibility as an impartial regulator and distorts the training market.

THE TESDA DEVELOPMENT FUND REMAINS VASTLY UNDERUTILIZED DESPITE ACCUMULATING OVER HALF A BILLION PESOS

Section 31 of Republic Act No. 7796 established the TESDA Development Fund (TDF) to support institutional capability building and training innovation through multiple financing sources including a mandated one-time lump-sum appropriation from Congress, annual contributions from the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration Fund, and private donations. The fund was designed to award grants to training institutions, industries, and LGUs for upgrading capabilities.

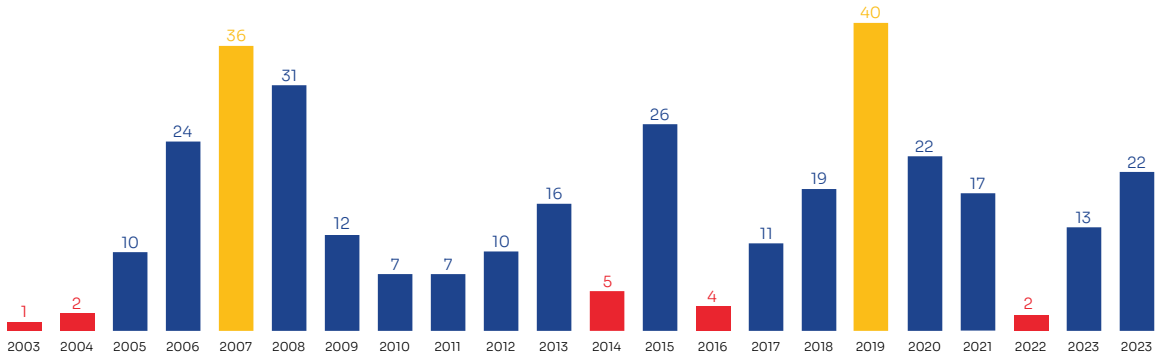
Despite legislative intent, Congress has never enacted the mandated lump-sum appropriation, as noted consistently in independent panel reviews covering 1995-2002 and 2001-2008. While PHP 543.9 million has accumulated in the fund since its operationalization, only PHP 13 million (2.39%) has been utilized for TVET program enhancement specifically the National TESD Research and Technology Research and Training for CEMMT Equipment Repair and Retrofitting projects. The overwhelming majority remains invested with limited impact on training quality.

Legislative debates in 1993 explored innovative financing mechanisms including levy-grant schemes and contributions from skilled overseas workers. However, Republic Act No. 10801 (the OWWA Charter) now explicitly prohibits use of the OWWA Fund to "aid, supplement, or in any manner augment" expenditures of other government agencies, effectively foreclosing this financing pathway originally envisioned in TESDA's charter.

PERSISTENT CHALLENGES IN PROGRAM RELEVANCE AND QUALITY UNDERMINE TESDA'S EFFECTIVENESS

EDCOM II findings reveal persistent challenges in program relevance and quality. Training Regulation development takes 6 months to 2 years which undermines responsiveness to rapidly evolving industry needs. TESDA averages only 15 new Training Regulations annually with fluctuations ranging from 1 to 40. Despite evidence that higher-level qualifications (NC III-IV) command wage premiums (Vandenberg & Laranjo, 2021; Brunello & Rocco, 2017; Maclean, Jagannathan, & Sarvi, 2013), 93% of TESDA graduates complete only NC I-II programs, with Driving NC II and Bread and Pastry NC II dominating enrollment.

FIGURE 22.
Historical Growth in Higher-Level Qualifications



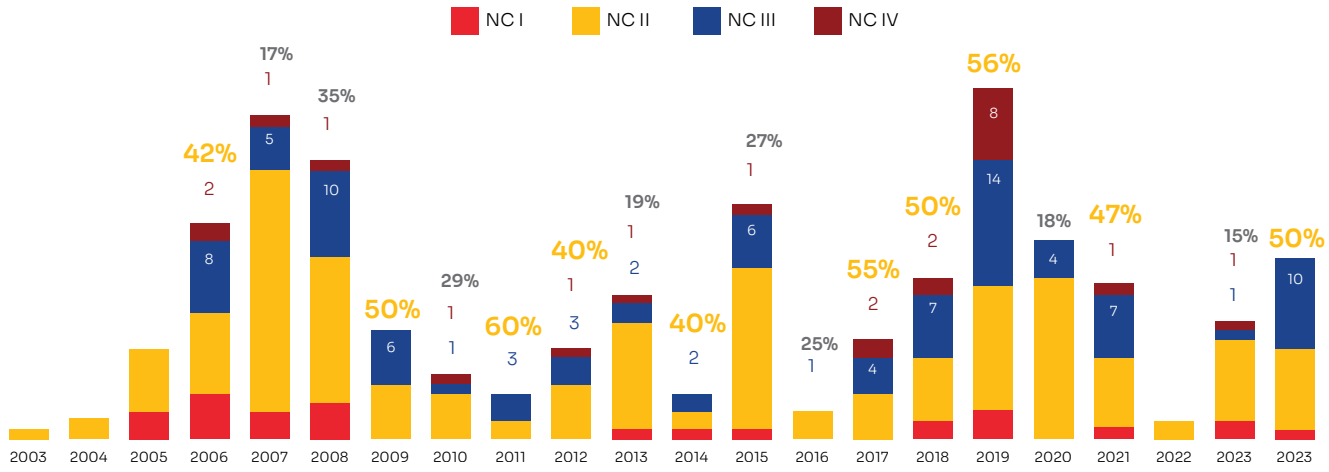
Source: TESDA TRMIS as of July 5, 2025

> *The lack of clarity about Level 5 qualifications undermines TESDA's capacity to serve learners seeking advanced technical specialization*

> *Despite evidence that higher-level qualifications (NC III-IV) command wage premiums, 93% of TESDA graduates complete only NC I-II programs.*

The absence of clearly defined Level 5 qualifications has further constrained TESDA's ability to develop advanced technical pathways. The charter defines "technical education" as post-secondary, non-degree programs, however diploma offerings remain limited and poorly understood within the qualifications framework. **Only 26 Technical Vocational Institutions offer NC IV programs, and diploma programs which should represent the pinnacle of TVET achievement equivalent to Level 5 in the Philippine Qualifications Framework are limited and unevenly implemented.** Ambiguity in consistent standards, duration guidelines, and articulation mechanisms with higher education has contributed to mission drift. As Senator Gatchalian noted during the hearing, three-year diploma durations resemble bachelor's degrees which potentially undermine the goal of providing immediate workforce skills. The lack of clarity about Level 5 qualifications undermines TESDA's capacity to serve learners seeking advanced technical specialization without pursuing full university degrees while also creating boundary disputes with CHED over institutional jurisdiction and program approval.

FIGURE 23.
Distribution of Training Regulations by National Certification Level



Source: TESDA TRMIS as of July 5, 2025

Only 10 National Industry Boards have been established since 1994, concentrated in five sectors. Consequently, this limits systematic industry engagement. Contact Center Services NC II has not been updated since 2003 despite dramatic sectoral transformation. A 2021 ADB review found that only one-third of employed TVET graduates worked in jobs aligned with their training.



CONCRETE RECOMMENDATIONS EMERGE FROM STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION TO ADDRESS STRUCTURAL GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

Drawing from testimony during the July 2025 TESDA Charter Hearing and stakeholder consultations, several actionable recommendations emerge to address the fundamental challenges identified in this review.

First, TESDA must urgently operationalize Section 29's devolution mandate through specific legislation. Former EDCOM II Co-Chair Senator Sherwin Gatchalian emphasized that continuing to expand TESDA's budget for direct training delivery while the law mandates devolution is "counterintuitive." The PHP 8.7 billion (40% of TESDA's budget) currently allocated to Technology Institutions should be systematically redirected to capable LGUs through a phased implementation plan with clear timelines, capacity-building support, and adequate operational funding. This would enable TESDA to focus resources on its core regulatory and coordinating functions rather than competing with private providers.

> *"We have observed, for example, diploma in automotive technology, iba yung ino-offer sa ibang region, iba po yung ino-offer doon sa ibang region. So kailangan namin yun i-calibrate. Together with CHED po, we start trying to look into ano ba yung dapat na nasa amin na hindi na dapat inuulit pa dun sa mga programs ng CHED, na puwede nang i-credit. So yun po yung inuupuan namin ngayon. So in two ano, the diploma program can be—kasi dalawa po ang pathways eh. Isa is for employment and the other is for higher education na magtuloy po sila."*
>
> - ***Ms. Rosanna Urdaneta**, TESDA Deputy Director General for Policies and Training*

> *"So almost 40% of your budget goes to the training institutions. Malaki ito ha, it is quite a substantial amount. So, study the possibility of carving out 8.7 and give it to the LGUs, those who are willing. Because the question is whether I don't think the question is if they are willing or not willing; the question is how will they finance it."*
>
> - ***Senator Sherwin Gatchalian**, EDCOM II Commissioner*

Second, TESDA's governance structure requires fundamental reform to eliminate conflicts of interest inherent in its regulator-provider-assessor model. The Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) Education Task Force proposal to elevate TESDA into a full-fledged department with revised governance boards merits serious consideration. At minimum, TESDA's direct training provision should be separated institutionally from its regulatory functions, with TTIs either fully devolved to LGUs or established as autonomous entities operating under the same regulatory framework as private TVIs.

Third, Congress must fulfill its mandate to provide the lump-sum appropriation for the TESDA Development Fund and authorize its strategic deployment for systemic quality improvement. With PHP 543.9 million accumulated but only 2.39% utilized, the Fund represents untapped potential for upgrading private TVI capabilities, supporting industry-led training innovation, and piloting alternative financing mechanisms such as sector-specific levy systems. The TESDA Board should develop a comprehensive utilization plan prioritizing interventions that strengthen the broader TVET ecosystem rather than TESDA's own institutions.

Fourth, simplifying and streamlining TESDA's operations must become a strategic priority. As EDCOM II Co-Chair, Representative Roman Romulo noted, TESDA should refocus its mission on enabling TVET graduates to secure jobs paying above minimum wage. This signifies a clear, measurable objective that could guide program rationalization and resource allocation decisions. This includes reviewing diploma programs that may blur boundaries with higher education, accelerating Training Regulation development through streamlined processes, and strengthening National Industry Boards to ensure sustained employer engagement in standards-setting and program validation.

> *"...hindi puwedeng kayo yung magsi-set ng standards, kayo magtuturo, tapos kayo rin ang mag-a-assess. It's really about time you devolve. So you give the standards, LGUs and the private does these trainings. And then at least, as a regulator, alam natin kung they passed or did not pass. Kasi ang hirap talaga to give yourselves a failing mark. So kailangan na natin talagang ayusin in that sense. Let's start streamlining it."*
>
> -***Representative Roman Romulo**, EDCOM II Co-Chairperson*

In line with these recommendations, EDCOM II has drafted the **TESDA Modernization Act** which include the following features:

1. **Transforming governance through a streamlined Board of Advisers**
   The draft legislation fundamentally restructures TESDA's governance by converting the current 22-member Board into a Board of Advisers that convenes twice annually for policy direction and functional oversight. The Board of Advisers would focus on approving annual roadmaps for Philippine technical education, initiating regular program evaluations, and ensuring industry-labor-government linkages rather than micromanaging operations. Operational authority shifts to a cabinet-level Director-General and six Deputies handling major functional portfolios.

2. **Clarifying institutional typologies and establishing Level 5 diploma qualifications**
   The proposed bill formally defines three distinct categories: Polytechnic or Technological Institutes offering at least three programs awarding National Certificates 4-5 with corresponding diplomas; Polytechnic or Technological Colleges additionally providing ladderized and applied bachelor's degree programs; and Polytechnic or Technological Universities offering masteral or doctoral programs in applied fields with expansive industry linkages. The charter recognizes a diploma as a Level 5 qualification in the Philippine Qualifications Framework.

3. **Operationalizing devolution through dedicated institutional mechanisms**
   The proposed charter creates a Community and Local Skills Development Office with explicit functions: facilitating devolution implementation, providing capacity-building training for community-based TVET, offering formal training and oversight for Community Training and Employment Coordinators, and maintaining coordination systems ensuring full devolution and autonomy.

4. **Activating the TESDA Development Fund for industry engagement**
   The fund is refocused to primarily support industry TVET boards, improving its current low utilization and enabling strategic investments in program upgrading and alternative financing models under strict governance safeguards.

5. **Strengthening industry standards development and alternative assessment pathways**
   The bill prioritizes establishment of national trade skills standards by TESDA-accredited industry committees with explicit aim to shorten development cycles for competency standards, assessment tools, and training regulations. Industry boards gain formal mandate to determine continuation, abolition, and propagation of programs while coordinating closely with DepEd, CHED Technical Panels, and PRC Professional Regulatory Boards to ensure smooth learning transitions and alignment. The charter formally recognizes alternative assessment systems including work-based learning, recognition of prior learning, micro-credentials, and digital badges, while mandating flexible learner eligibility requirements responsive to learners' unique capacities and needs.

6. **Establishing accountability through regular evaluation**
   The proposed charter mandates independent review panels every five years and requires impact evaluations for scholarship programs at least every three years through UniFAST coordination especially as scholarships dominate TESDA spending without prior mandated assessments.



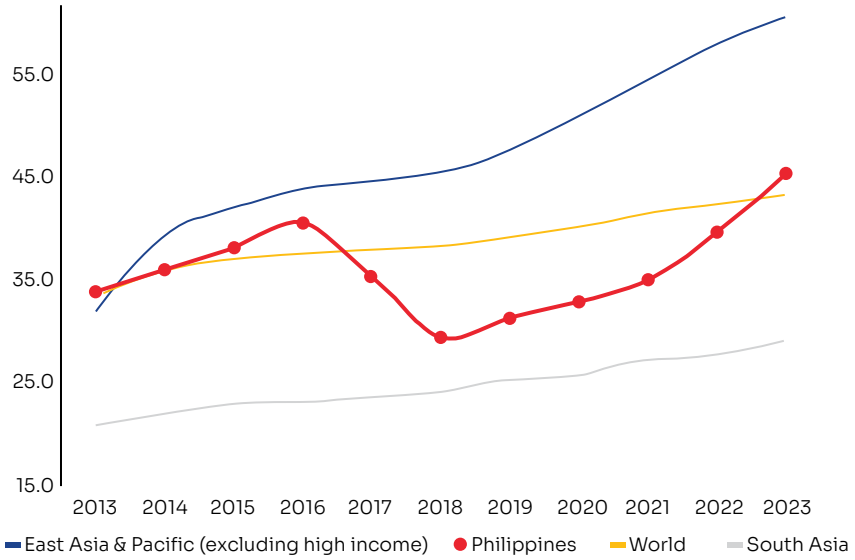
FROM BLANKET REGULATION TO DIVERSIFIED DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

CHED CHARTER HEARING, JULY 3, 2025

REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7722'S VISION OF ADVANCEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IS UNDERMINED BY REGULATORY BURDEN AND LACK OF STRATEGIC DIRECTION

When the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) was created through Republic Act No. 7722 in 1994, it was conceived as a solution to fundamental problems plaguing Philippine higher education. EDCOM 1 had identified critical gaps: large but imbalanced enrollments, underinvestment and poor quality, a mismatch between graduates and employment needs, and limited graduate education. The Philippines had the highest gross enrollment ratio (GER) in the region over thirty years ago (EDCOM I). Currently, the Philippines remains among the highest in GER among ASEAN countries, at 38%, compared with Indonesia (6.5%), Malaysia (6%), Singapore (11%), and Thailand (19.6%) yet remain concentrated in just three disciplines (i.e., Business, Teacher Education, and Engineering (Table 11).

FIGURE 24.
Historical Gross Enrollment Rates in Tertiary Education of the Philippines vs Other Regions (2013-2023)



Source: TESDA TRMIS as of July 5, 2025

TABLE 10.
Percentage of enrollment in Business, Teacher Education, and Engineering in 1991 vs. 2021

Discipline	1989	2021
Business	29.20%	26.55%
Teacher Education	18.04%	16.58%
Engineering	20.31%	12.80%

Source: 1991 CHED Enrollment Data, 2021 CHED Enrollment Data

Engineering enrollment dropped significantly from 20.31% (1989) to 12.80% (2021), while other critical fields like IT and Medical/Allied Health remain underrepresented relative to labor market needs. EDCOM I also noted the poor passing rates in the Professional Board of Teachers, even reaching a low of 10.6% in the 1990s, in spite of teacher education's large enrollment share in both undergraduate and graduate programs in higher education institutions. Trifocalization was meant to address these issues by creating specialized oversight while freeing the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports (now DepEd) to focus on basic education.

Senator Edgardo Angara, during the February 9, 1994 Senate plenary interpellation, emphasized that higher education deserved "academic freedom" requiring a collegial rather than hierarchical regulatory structure. The goal was consultative and collegial policymaking that would promote advancement rather than mere regulation. This was reflected in the governance structure of the agency, as a Commission rather than a Department, and a Chairperson who is considered a primus inter pares with four other Commissioners, instead of a Secretary.

Thirty years later, the evidence reveals troubling gaps between these foundational intentions and actual implementation.

> *"There should be less regulation and more promotion of higher education."*
>
> *-**Senator Edgardo Angara**, February 9, 1994 Senate plenary interpellation*

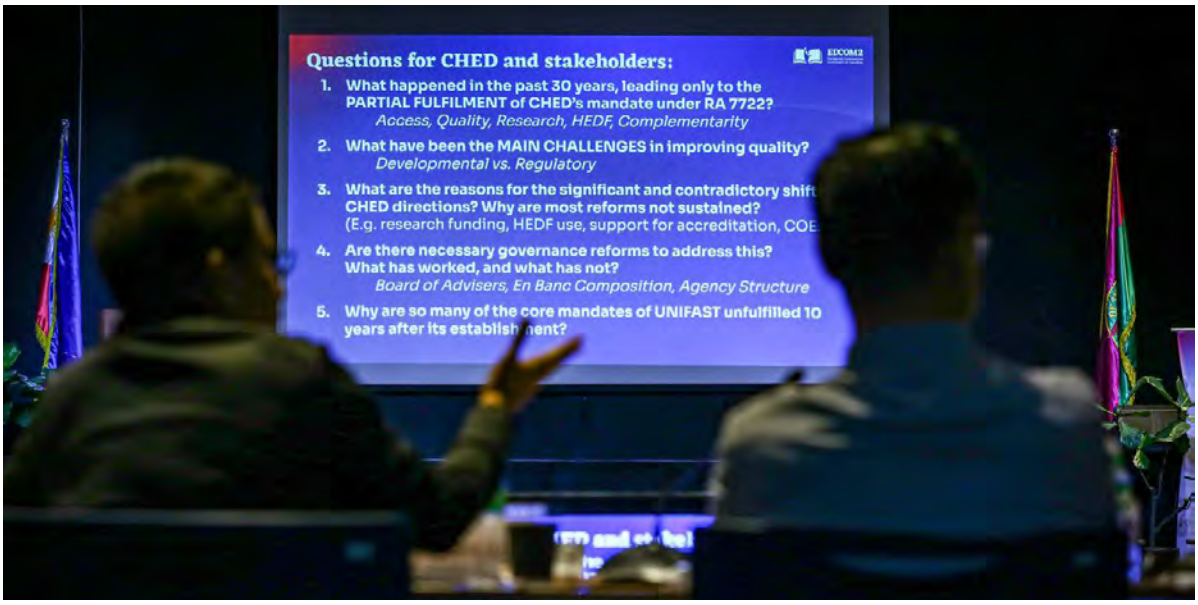
THE ABSENCE OF STRATEGIC DIRECTION LEAVES INSTITUTIONS WITHOUT CLEAR GUIDANCE

Republic Act No. 7722 explicitly mandates CHED to "formulate development plans, policies, priorities and programs on higher education" (Section 8-a). However historically, the agency has been unable to develop and publish plans on higher education. Meanwhile, the establishment of higher education institutions especially SUCs and LUCs have been reactive (through independent initiatives by local governments and legislators) rather than proactive. This absence of updated strategic frameworks perpetuates a long-standing vacuum in clear direction which compounds challenges at a time when such guidance is particularly crucial. Without overarching national priorities, the establishment of new colleges and universities are dissociated from national targets to improve higher education participation, individual institutions decide on program offerings and resource allocation decisions in isolation (resulting in duplication of program offerings in already saturated programs like teacher education and business administration), CMOs define priorities piecemeal for specific programs, and the system as a whole lacks coherence.

This gap has profound implications beyond CHED itself. Republic Act No. 7722 requires State Universities and Colleges to align with national, regional, or local development plans. The law envisioned strategic direction guiding institutional policies and resource allocation, thus creating a coordinated higher education ecosystem responsive to national development needs. Instead, the absence of updated strategic plans and clear, measurable, and strategic directions for higher education leaves each institution navigating independently, unable to fulfill the alignment mandate that was supposed to ensure higher education serves broader development goals. This is aggravated by the diverse mix of provision of higher education in the country, composed of SUCs (5.97%), LUCs (8.14%), Private (85.57%) providers. A distribution that reflects a major change compared to the 1990s. Through the years, the share of public enrollment has been steadily increasing. As noted in the EDCOM II Year Two Report, private institutions hit a new low in 2022 with only half the student population enrolled after years of declining market share. Nevertheless, this level of private sector engagement remains remarkably high and central to how the nation's universities operate. The converging public-private enrollment shares before the UAQTEA years were likely the result of dynamic complementarities of government policies to improve access before 2017 (PIDS, 2024).

The three strategic pillars that Republic Act No. 7722 established: creating better fit between education and employment, increased and efficient investments, and mechanisms ensuring access to quality, remain only partially realized thirty years later because implementation gaps persist between mandate and execution.

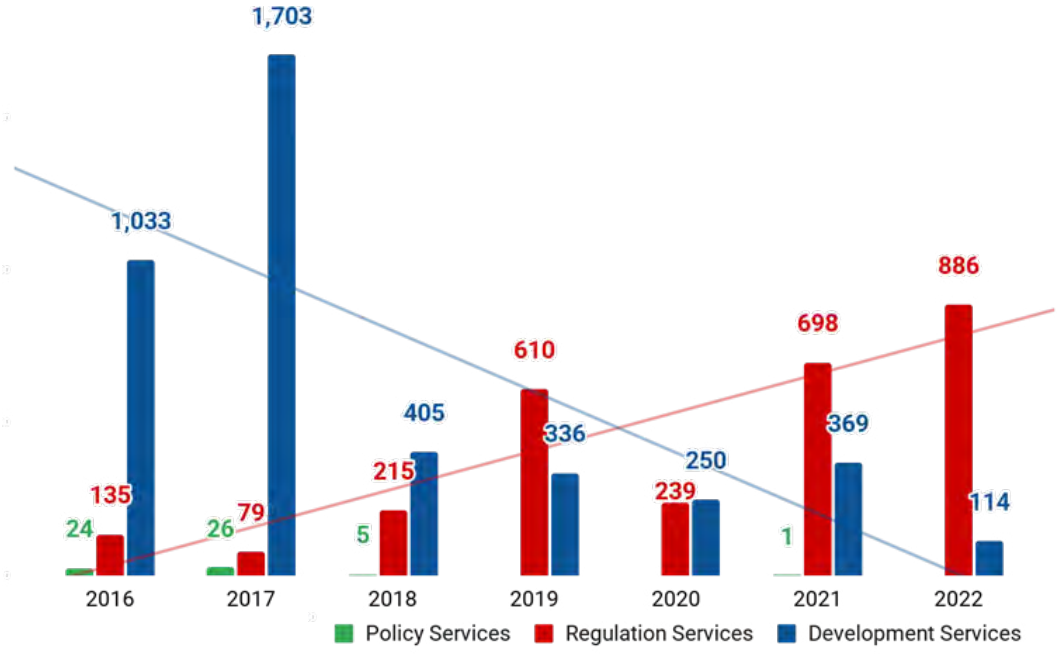
> *Without overarching national priorities, the establishment of new colleges and universities are dissociated from national targets to improve higher education participation*



DEVELOPMENT FUNDING DECLINED WHILE THE HIGHER EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT FUND SHIFTED TOWARD REGULATION

Republic Act No. 7722 also created the Higher Education Development Fund (HEDF) to be used "exclusively for the strengthening of higher education in the entire country," operationally defined during EDCOM 1 discussions as supporting "faculty development, scholarships for poor but deserving students, and library and laboratory improvement." The law required equitable regional distribution and specified that no funds should underwrite administrative overhead.

FIGURE 25.
HEDF Fund Allocation by Service Type (2016-2022)



Source: CHED HEDF data (2016-2022)

> *Since 1994, at least 164 laws and policies have expanded CHED's responsibilities, primarily in regulation and scholarships.*

Implementation reveals a stark departure from these intentions. Development funding declined 78% from 2017 to 2022 while regulation funding increased 11-fold. By 2022, only 4% of the HEDF supported private HEIs despite the law's explicit requirement to serve both public and private institutions equitably. From 2018 to 2022, public HEI support grew from 77% to 97%. This has left 87% of HEIs, the private institutions educating about half the student population, largely unserved.

Regional concentration is equally pronounced. NCR and Region 1 received approximately 60% of total COE project funding from 2017 to 2023 while eight regions received zero funding. Teacher Education alone accounted for nearly 50% of all project funds.

In addition, accreditation rates remain low at 29% despite CHED's mandate under Republic Act No. 7722 Section 14 to "provide incentives to institutions of higher learning, public and private, whose programs are accredited." CHED approved only 39 applications for financial assistance for accreditation from 2015 to 2025 with the last award in 2020.

Joint CHED-PRC monitoring from 2022 to 2025 found that 84% (53 of 63) of monitored programs had deficiencies with only 16% compliant. Alarmingly, 177 teacher education institutions continued operating despite zero passing rates in the Licensure Examination for Teachers over the last 10 years.

NEW MANDATES HAVE EXPANDED RAPIDLY WHILE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY REMAINS INADEQUATE

Since 1994, at least 164 laws and policies have expanded CHED's responsibilities, primarily in regulation and scholarships. These expansions fall into five categories: regulatory authority (82 laws), financial service provider (35 laws), capacity development partner (67 laws), social policy implementer (70 laws), and education system integrator (19 laws) (Table 12).

This mandate expansion occurred without commensurate organizational development. CHED's budget increased 633% from 2013 to 2023 while staffing complement grew only 22.7%. The EDCOM II Year 2 Report noted that staffing "has not kept pace with the growing responsibilities of the agency and the increased investments in education."

> *"This Commission will draw up policies and plans and recommend programs on higher education, including financial aid to public and private institutions. It will set academic standards, enhance institutional capabilities, link higher learning to national development needs and help transform institutions of higher learning into a reliable national resource".*
>
> *(Making Education Work, An Agenda for Reform, EDCOM 1)*

TABLE 11.
Expansion of CHED mandates

Category	Key Functions	Sample Laws (2016-2025)
Regulatory Authority (Explicating the Original Charter)	Quality assurance, standards setting, institutional oversight, industry development plans	**Republic Act No. 12124** - ETEEAP Act **Republic Act No. 11396** - Safe Spaces Act **Republic Act No. 11927** - Philippine Digital Workforce Development Act
Financial Service Provider (Major Expansion)	Scholarships, student financial assistance, UniFAST administration	**Republic Act No. 10931** - Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act **Republic Act No. 11524** - Coconut Farmers and Industry Trust Fund Act **Republic Act No. 10817** - Philippine Halal Export Development Act
Capacity Development Partner (Sectoral Expansion)	Industry workforce development, faculty enhancement, technical assistance	**Republic Act No. 11904** - Philippine Creative Industries Development Act **Republic Act No. 11106** - The Filipino Sign Language Act **Republic Act No. 11509** - Doktor Para sa Bayan Act **Republic Act No. 11206** - Secondary School Career Guidance Act **Republic Act No. 12080** - Basic Education Mental Health Act
Social Policy Implementer (Cross-cutting Expansion)	Education as social protection, advocacy mandates, inclusion programs	**Republic Act No. 10869** - JobStart Philippines Act **Republic Act No. 11291** - Magna Carta of the Poor **Republic Act No. 11861** - Expanded Solo Parents Welfare Act
Education System Integrator (Coordination Expansion)	Inter-agency collaboration, multi-level education curriculum	**Republic Act No. 10968** - PQF Act **Republic Act No. 11054** - Organic Law for the BARMM

The original vision of CHED as a collegial body providing sense and direction for a higher education ecosystem and enabling higher education to take an active part in national development has been overshadowed by expanding operational burdens. The Commission meant to promote advancement has become increasingly consumed by compliance and administration, often unable to fulfill even its core mandates effectively.

This has led to CHED's struggle in fulfilling many of its mandates under the law, including the following:

1. The reconstitution of Technical Panels, which remained on holdover for 6 years from 2019 to 2025;
2. The designation of new Centers of Excellence and Development, yet only 2.51% are currently designated;
3. The updating of policies, standards and guidelines for college undergraduate courses, which studies indicate take at least eleven years to update; and
4. The provision of research grants, which collapsed after 2017 with only 11% of applications approved and zero funding awarded in 2021, 2023, and 2024.

STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES ACHIEVED GREATER AUTONOMY UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8292, BUT THE LAW'S GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK FACES ONGOING CHALLENGES FROM FISCAL CONSTRAINTS, POLITICAL INTERFERENCE, AND UNCLEAR REGULATORY BOUNDARIES

The Higher Education Modernization Act of 1997 (Republic Act No. 8292) marked a pivotal transformation in Philippine higher education governance. Enacted to establish a more coordinated and integrated system of higher education, the law standardized the composition of governing boards across state universities and colleges (SUCs) while granting institutions greater autonomy in fiscal, administrative, and academic matters.

Composition of SUC Governing Boards under Republic Act No. 8292

A UNIFORM COMPOSITION OF THE BOARD

Section 3. The Governing Boards; Composition

(i) Chairman of the Commisssion on Higher Education (CHED), Chairman;
(ii) President of the university or college, Vice Chairman;
(iii) Chairmen of the Congressional Committees on Education and Culture;
(iv) Regional Director of the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) where the main campus of the university or college is located;
(v) Regional Director of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) (for) science and technological colleges;
or the Regional Director of the Department of Agriculture colleges;
or the Secretary of Education for an Autonomous Region (**or**)
Philippine Air Force and the Philippine Navy (for PhilSCA or PMMA), respectively;
(vi) President of the faculty association;
(vii) President of the supreme student council or the student representative elected by the student council: xxx
(viii) President of the alumni association of the institution concerned;
(ix) Two (2) prominent citizens who have distinguished themselves in their professions or fields of specialization xxx

> *"If there is one institution in the Republic of the Philippines that is sanitized from political influence, it should be the higher education institution and the Commission on Higher Education.*
>
> *It is only in doing that that we can fully exercise academic freedom and that the academic leaders can really exercise fully the intent of education in this land."*
>
> *-**Dr. Shirley Agrupis**, CHED Chairperson*

During the same July 2025 EDCOM II hearing on the CHED mandates, PASUC President, Dr. Tirso Ronquillo shared that Republic Act No. 8292 delivered transformative impacts across three critical dimensions. **First, it empowered SUCs with institutional autonomy, allowing them to fix tuition fees, determine academic programs, and engage in partnerships without prior approval from central agencies.** This autonomy enabled several institutions to emerge as regional or national leaders, particularly those with strong institutional capacity and visionary leadership. However, the subsequent implementation of Republic Act No. 10931 in 2017 introduced a moratorium on tuition and fee increases, creating fiscal imbalance and limiting SUCs' ability to generate their own income.

Second, the law introduced a standardized governance framework through uniform Board of Regents or Trustees composition. As articulated in the 1995 sponsorship speeches, this uniform structure was proposed "in the interest of efficient governance, concerned mainly with the problems of access, relevance and quality." The composition emphasized participative and inclusive governance, incorporating representatives from government agencies, faculty, students, alumni, and the private sector to ensure that educational policies would be more effectively addressed through relevant government agency participation in SUC decision-making processes.

Third, the autonomy facilitated by Republic Act No. 8292 supported innovation and internationalization. Many SUCs expanded their technology transfer initiatives, forged industrial linkages, and entered international academic partnerships—efforts accelerated further by CHED institutional development programs starting in 2010.

The EDCOM-PASUC survey conducted in June 2025, with responses from 56 SUCs (approximately 50% retrieval rate), revealed strong overall satisfaction with Republic Act No. 8292 implementation. All four objectives of the law achieved mean scores above 4.0 out of 5.0, with "Provide for more relevant direction in SUC governance" receiving the highest rating (4.50) and "Composition allows for meaningful representation from all sectors" receiving the lowest (4.29). Over 80% of respondents rated each objective as achieving success, indicating broad consensus that the law's autonomy and governance reforms are working effectively.

Despite these gains, persistent challenges remain. The survey revealed that while most board positions receive high ratings (4.5+), government officials from the Senate (4.07) and House of Representatives (4.27) are rated significantly lower than other members, indicating potential issues with engagement or contribution quality. Additionally, concerns were raised about the unclear delineation of roles between governing boards and university presidents, political interference in leadership succession, and the need for orientation and capacity building for board members to understand local contexts.

Most fundamentally, CHED's dual role as both Chair of SUC Boards and regulatory agency creates fundamental tensions in the implementation of autonomy, placing CHED in the position of proposing, approving, and regulating its own decisions which undermines the very autonomy the law seeks to institutionalize.

UNIFAST'S CORE MANDATES REMAIN PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED TEN YEARS AFTER ENACTMENT DESPITE EVIDENCE OF SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON COLLEGE ACCESS.

The Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (UniFAST), established through Republic Act No. 10687 in 2015, represented the government's ambitious response to what then Senator Sonny Angara described as a "fragmented and meager," "untargeted" and "unharmonious" system of student financial assistance programs (StuFAPs). As articulated in Senator Pia Cayetano's sponsorship speech on March 4, 2015, UniFAST was envisioned not only to increase access but to ensure the efficient utilization and equitable allocation of government resources specifically aiming to increase enrollment and completion rates in tertiary education across all socio-economic classes, especially the poor. **The law sought to address a critical gap identified during legislative deliberations: the absence of a unified repository or inventory of available student aid and their outcomes with no institutional means of tracking whether scholarships helped students land decent jobs, earn higher salaries, or reach far-flung areas.**

Republic Act No. 10687 established an extensive framework granting the UniFAST Board sweeping powers to harmonize existing StuFAPs, prepare budget proposals, promulgate minimum guidelines for determining qualified beneficiaries, monitor and assess program impacts, adopt a qualifying examination system, design fund-generation programs, develop a National Student Loan Program with tracking systems, and establish comprehensive databases on public websites. Evidence from a 2025 Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) research demonstrated UniFAST's potential impact, finding that being a beneficiary of the UAQTE program decreases the hazard or risk of not attending college by 70%.

Despite UniFAST's transformative vision, the EDCOM II hearing and audit findings revealed significant implementation challenges a decade after the law's enactment. The Commission on Audit's FY 2022 Annual Audit Report flagged numerous compliance issues in both the Free Higher Education (FHE) and Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) programs including overpayments to three SUCs totaling PHP 548 million, probable duplicate student-beneficiaries, delayed release of TES benefits totaling PHP 1.8 billion, unliquidated fund transfers aggregating PHP 13.5 billion across four CHED regional offices, and the failure to establish the composite fee despite the lapse of the five-year moratorium on tuition increases. More fundamentally, CHED submissions received by EDCOM II on June 30, 2025, revealed that core UniFAST functions mandated by law remain partially implemented ten years after establishment:

1. Monitoring and impact evaluation of StuFAPs remains pending with only a monitoring tool for UAQTE programs launched;
2. Minimum guidelines for qualified beneficiaries and a qualifying examination system are now in its final stages of completion to be submitted to the UniFAST Board for review and approval now in its final stages of completion to be submitted to the UniFAST Board for review and approval;
3. Separate books of accounts with required mid-year and annual reports to Congress remain unestablished;
4. The National Student Loan Program and tracking system for student-borrowers have not materialized after initial guidelines were halted. The revised Guidelines is expected to be finalized in 2026;
5. Fund-generation programs remain undesigned; and
6. Comprehensive databases on public websites have not been created.

Most critically, Section 23 of Republic Act No. 10687 mandated that major programs be evaluated within five years of implementation through tracer studies and experimental analyses. This means that comprehensive impact evaluation studies should have been completed by 2020—a requirement that remains unfulfilled as of 2025 which ultimately undermines the law's fundamental vision of evidence-based, coordinated student financial assistance.

FUNDAMENTAL REFORMS MUST ADDRESS STRUCTURE, AUTONOMY, AND THE BALANCE BETWEEN REGULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The July 2025 EDCOM II hearing revealed consensus among former CHED officials, university leaders, and legislators that incremental adjustments will not suffice. Several critical issues demand immediate attention to restore CHED's capacity to fulfill its original mandate.

> *"And then in terms of monitoring and evaluation, CHED has a very lean and mean structure. So with the number of institutions we need to monitor, especially at the regional office level, we could not monitor. Sometimes we monitor this year. We can monitor the institution after five or 10 years. So that's how (...) there's really a need to look into the organizational structure. (...) Especially when we were implementing already the UniFAST. It was not in our duties and responsibilities in the regional office. (...) But when I was regional director,* ***I noticed that almost 60% of what we're doing is the implementation of UniFAST, disbursing [a] big amount of money, almost a billion pesos, and then the accountability is with us.****"*
>
> *-**Dr. Amelia Biglete**, Former CHED Director*

The current organizational structure was designed for policymaking, not program implementation. As Representative Jude Acidre noted, if program implementation functions remain with CHED, "the institutional profile should also be revisited." In the EDCOM II Year One Report, CHED's budget has ballooned from 633% from 2013 to 2023, but only 22.7% personnel increase (from 543 to 666) within the same period.

The agency now administers billions in scholarships. This is a function not explicitly mandated in its charter while core development functions remain underfunded. Another recommendation from the July 2025 EDCOM II hearing included contracting scholarship management out which could both improve efficiency and reduce politicization.



TOWARDS A DIFFERENTIATED FRAMEWORK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE

In addition, the autonomy framework promulgated by the Commission requires urgent review and updating. First, while private HEIs have a pathway to autonomous and deregulated status,even Level IV State Universities and Colleges do not. Second, there is a need for differentiated autonomy extending beyond designated institutions, which follows the template of "research universities" therefore disabling the attainment of excellence and innovation in more technological and professional oriented institutions.

The July 2025 EDCOM II hearing also revealed that innovative programs are hindered due to the lack of a CMO. This illustrates how regulatory rigidity stifles innovation. CHED must strengthen its "teeth" for substandard institutions while enabling autonomous institutions to respond to emerging needs.

The one-size-fits-all evaluation system must give way to outcomes-based differentiation. The empirical typology study currently underway by EDCOM II should inform a classification system that recognizes different institutional missions while maintaining quality standards appropriate to each category.

Finally, CHED must immediately convene the Board of Advisers as required by Republic Act No. 7722. Former CHED Chairperson, Dr. Licuanan acknowledged the challenge of securing attendance from agency heads, however successful inter-agency coordination requires a conductor or someone who follows up and ensures agencies work toward a unified plan. Singapore's model , where agency heads must collaborate on strategic priorities, offers a proven approach.

The question facing Philippine higher education is whether CHED's current structure can fulfill the transformative vision that created it. Without fundamental reforms that restore its capacity to promote advancement rather than merely police compliance, enable innovation while ensuring quality, and serve all students and institutions equitably rather than concentrating resources on a privileged few, the nation's massive PHP 1.2 trillion investment in higher education for the past decade will continue yielding diminishing returns on an educated workforce capable of driving national development.

> *"Academic freedom actually ends where the rights of students to quality education begins."*
>
> *-**Dr. Cynthia Bautista**, EDCOM II Advisory Council Member*

"...a few years back, we got a grant from, not from CHED, but from DOST, to put up a data science and analytics center. And we did very well. The only one in Mindanao. And then our LGU was benefiting a lot from it. Then our LGU said, we need more data people in LGU. They want data people in divisions and in departments. So, what we tried to do was offer a specialization within either computer science or IT. Both existing programs, both accredited. What did CHED tell us? I mean, CHED in general, meaning the regional office.

You can't because there's no CMO yet for data science."

-***Rev. Fr. John Young***, *EDCOM II Standing Committee Member on Higher Education*

"...the mayor naman will not ask, oh, how many Scopus publications or how many research papers have your students or faculty produced? Ang susukatin sa mga LUC is social mobility, employment."

-***Dr. Elyxur Ramos***, *EDCOM II Standing Committee Member on Higher Education*

"But let me just start by saying, we have to ask ourselves, is it really the law that is the problem? Because I went back historically and studied both the Republic Act No. 7722 and Republic Act No. 8292 and there were reasons for them. The reasons they were promulgated in the first place and then the discussions were also very informative, but basically, I asked myself. ***Is it the law or was it the people who implemented it who messed it up? And that's always the problem, that we may modify the charter as much as we want, but essentially, it will be the people appointed to positions that will implement and then that's when the trouble starts.*** *Because looking at the laws, they were basically reasonable and they responded to certain needs. So, let's not fool ourselves into thinking that once we put those things in, it will just happen automatically."*

-***Dr. Patricia Licuanan***, *Former CHED Chairperson*

BEYOND SPENDING:

Why *the* Philippines Must Invest Earlier *and* Smarter *in* Education

Janssen Teixeira

Learning poverty represents not just an education crisis, but an economic issue that threatens the Philippines' future prosperity.



The evidence on the existence of a learning crisis in the Philippines is unequivocal. 91% of ten-year-old Filipinos cannot read and understand age-appropriate text.

This staggering reality, known as learning poverty, represents not just an education crisis, but an economic issue that threatens the Philippines' future prosperity. The Philippines' learning poverty rate far exceeds that of Indonesia (53 percent) and Thailand (23 percent) (World Bank et al., 2022). Beyond the 91% learning poverty rate documented by the World Bank and UNESCO (2022), the 2022 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results reveal that over 75% of fifteen-year-old Filipinos scored below minimum proficiency in mathematics, reading, and science (OECD, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic worsened this crisis, as the Philippines experienced the longest school closures among more than 120 nations (Bautista & Aranas, 2023).

Extensive research confirms that education drives economic growth by increasing labor productivity, enabling innovation and diffusion of technologies, and reducing inequalities (Lucas 1988; Romer 1990; Mankiw et al., 1992; Hanushek, 2013; Acemoglu et al., 2014; Jones, 2016; Biasi & Ma, 2022; OECD, 2022). Students who



cannot read by age 10 earn substantially less over their lifetimes. When 91% of 10-year-old students face this issue, the cumulative economic cost is staggering. The Philippines will struggle to build a competitive knowledge economy without addressing this learning crisis.

Considering the context mentioned above, an analysis of the public education spending in the Philippines unveils three critical issues: underfunding, inequalities exacerbated by the resource allocation pattern, and inefficiency. These issues, which are explained below, have a direct implication to the resolution of the country's learning crisis and ultimately, economic growth.

UNDERFUNDING

Government education spending increased from approximately 2% of GDP in 2010 to 3.6% in 2023 (UIS, 2022). While this increase is significant, **the Philippines still invests less than Malaysia, Vietnam, and Thailand, and falls short of the UNESCO-recommended minimum of 4% of GDP (World Bank, 2020)**. Additionally, primary education spending was only around USD 320 per student in 2022, far below the approximate amount of USD 980 average spending in Upper-Middle-Income Countries.

INEQUALITIES EXACERBATED BY THE RESOURCE ALLOCATION PATTERN

The Philippines has been spending more on tertiary than on primary education. It is important to highlight the relevance of tertiary education for developing high-level skills and promoting innovations, which are key growth drivers in middle-income countries. Having highlighted the above, it is worth noting that the **spending per Filipino tertiary education learner was 2.7 higher than that per primary education learner (PHP 48,688 compared to PHP 18,066) in 2022.** This spending gap was just 1.8 in Thailand in 2020 (Punyasavatsut

Students who cannot read by age 10 earn substantially less over their lifetimes. When 91% of 10-year-old students face this issue, the cumulative economic cost is staggering. The Philippines will struggle to build a competitive knowledge economy without addressing this learning crisis.

> *A goal could be to increase the per primary education student spending from USD 320 (of 2022) to a figure close to the Upper-Middle-Income Country per student spending average of USD 980.*

2022), and 1.7 on average in OECD countries in 2024 (OECD 2024). Moreover, the cumulative spending on a Filipino student up to age 15 in the Philippines was only the equivalent of USD PPP (purchasing power parity) 11,000 in 2018, compared to USD PPP 13,800 in Viet Nam and USD PPP 50,700 in Malaysia (Schleicher 2019). This spending pattern in the Philippines is not aligned with the evidence on the highest returns to education investments in the early years among age groups, and the urgent need to address the learning crisis in basic education. It would make more sense to invest more resources to address the country's foundational learning deficits sooner rather than later. This pattern also adds to the typical drivers of inequalities, such as differences in household income and locations, gender, ethnicity and disabilities. While tertiary education matters for growth, this allocation pattern represents a misalignment: the Philippines invests most heavily in advanced education while 91% of its primary education learners cannot read age-appropriate text. This pattern also exacerbates inequality, as access to tertiary education is lower among the poorest than the better-off students (PIDS, 2013).

SPENDING INEFFICIENCY

Despite increasing investments in education over the past decade, the Philippines' learning deficits demonstrate that these investments have not led to good educational outcomes. **Most resources are not reaching the ideal students at the right time, and interventions are not producing considerable improvements in learning outcomes.**

To address these critical issues, the Philippines could adopt the following strategies to align spending with the robust evidence on the returns to education, education quality improvement and equity:

Rebalance public spending toward early childhood and primary education: Shift public education funding allocation to prioritize the early years, i.e., early childhood and primary education, over higher levels of education. The Philippines has been spending more in tertiary than early childhood and basic education over the past years, although investments in early years have a higher rate of return than investments in later years of education (Heckman 2008; Heckman, Stixrud, and Urzua 2006). Such a shift would help address both efficiency and inequalities. A goal could be to increase the per primary education student spending from USD 320 (of 2022) to a figure close to the Upper-Middle-Income Country per student spending average of USD 980.

Target additional resources toward disadvantaged students: Adopt an equity-focused funding mechanism that could direct additional resources to disadvantaged students, including those from low-income households, remote areas, or marginalized communities. This could be done by using weighted funding formulas to provide higher per-student allocations to these vulnerable populations.

Enhance teacher professional development programs: Invest urgently in effective teacher professional development programs focused on strengthening qualifications and pedagogical practices, particularly in evidence-based methods for teaching foundational literacy and numeracy. Since teacher salaries comprise the

largest share of education spending, and teachers are the most impactful driver of learning improvement, enhancing the effectiveness of these programs is critical.

Create more fiscal space for education including through private financing: develop Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to complement public investment, particularly in early childhood education and development. PPPs in education could happen through contract arrangements for either private financing with public provision, or public provision with private financing. These partnerships can leverage the private sector's strengths, such as strong managerial and operational capacities, high adoption of innovations and technologies, and robust accountability frameworks (USAID 2023). PPP models that could be helpful in the Philippines include: concession schools; philanthropic co-financing to pilot and scale-up evidence-based interventions; and social or development impact bonds in which private investors finance education services and are repaid only when previously agreed outcomes (such as increased enrollment or improved learning) are achieved. Following Uzbekistan's successful experience, where PPPs helped increase early childhood enrollment from 28% to 72% in five years, the Philippines could pilot these models in selected regions with rigorous evaluation before their broader implementation.

The four spending strategies mentioned above should be taken synergistically. Rebalancing public funds and targeting disadvantaged students will address the equity and efficiency challenges, while investing in teacher qualifications ensures that increased resources translate into improved learning outcomes. At the same time, promoting PPPs in education leverages funding and innovation capacity to maximize impact, particularly on the expansion of access to early childhood education and development.



EDCOM II has exhibited courage, honesty, and genuine commitment to identifying and understanding the root causes of the crisis we face.



The ROLE *of* TRANSPARENCY *in* ADDRESSING *the* EDUCATION CRISIS

Sen. Bam Aquino

Matagal naming paniniwala na ang unang hakbang tungo sa reporma ay ang pagtukoy sa problema. Dahil sa mga EDCOM II report, nagiging possible iyon. Over the course of two years, EDCOM II has proven to be a crucial source of information, data, and analysis on the education crisis our nation faces. Moreover, EDCOM II has exhibited courage, honesty, and genuine commitment to identifying and understanding the root causes of the crisis we face.

Transparency to this degree, and the bravery to demand accountability from fellow government entities, reflect our shared commitment to creating new systems in our government. It bears repeating that when we have access to information and data, we are better equipped to work together and create sustainable and effective reform. When all information is laid bare, when the corruption and theft, the inefficiency and policies that lead to wasted resources are given no quarter or areas to hide, all of society benefits.

When I started my second term in the Senate, I laid out the legislative agenda for the education crisis. This agenda was based on our consultations and backed up by the wealth of data and information in EDCOM II's reports. These issues and our solutions are illustrative



of the importance of research, data, and information availability in collective and consultative decision-making.

Nutrition: Only 25% of Filipino children between 6-12 months old meet the recommended daily energy intake. One in every four Filipino children under 5 years old is stunted. Due to EDCOM's data and recommendations, we were able to ensure additional funding in the 2026 budget for school-based feeding programs and daycare feeding, the latter of which is crucial to preventing childhood stunting. We will continue to monitor the budget until passage, as well as monitor implementation of existing laws and programs for nutrition.

Classrooms: There is a lack of at least 165,000 classrooms in the country; that number does not include classrooms affected by recent typhoons, flooding, and earthquakes. Nor does it include condemned classrooms, or classrooms where students have to go through shifting. Still, the data from EDCOM's research is clear—there is a huge classroom gap that we must address immediately. We developed an innovative solution that decentralizes classroom construction, allowing Local Government Units and Civil Service Organizations with proven track records to participate in construction, with the goal of closing the classroom gap in six years. We also included a provision in our proposed legislation where the Department of Education is required to make public all budget and procurement documents.

Internet connectivity: Recognizing the crucial role of technology in leapfrogging the deficiencies in our current educational system, we are working with the DICT to ensure that all schools are connected to the internet by the end of the year. EDCOM's reports gave us the numbers and research needed to exercise our legislative oversight over the DICT's implementation of the Free WiFi law, and we will continue to do so until our goal is met.

Textbooks: EDCOM's data on the number of fulfilled textbook deliveries shed light not only on the shortage, but on the many issues of textbook production. This information led us to filing legislation

> *When we have access to information and data, we are better equipped to work together and create sustainable and effective reform.*

requiring digital access of textbooks as a stopgap measure. However, we will continue to demand transparency from DepEd in textbook procurement procedures, with the goal of identifying a system in which all Filipino students receive the books they need at the start of each new school year.

Support for teachers: EDCOM's research and unflinching analysis of the day-to-day lives of our teachers painted a picture of how and why our children are not receiving the best possible education. Two out of three teachers reported being involved in over 50 non-teaching tasks and working more than 40 hours a week. We have thus fought to increase teacher salaries and provide additional funding for non-teaching support staff, as well as provide access to training.

Learning gap: Beyond international assessments, EDCOM's own research shows a widening gap in student learning driven by curriculum shifts, the COVID-19 pandemic, and uneven education delivery. In some schools, Grade 3 students are performing at Grade 1 levels in reading and math. In response, we have recommended a stronger, better-resourced National Learning Recovery Program.

Employability: Although roughly 20% of Senior High School graduates enter the workforce and most opt to pursue further studies, these numbers raise concerns about whether the SHS program is truly delivering on its employment and entrepreneurial goals. We will push for the proper implementation of the K–12 system so that it fulfills its original purpose and provides Filipino learners with real opportunities upon completing Senior High School.

EDCOM II's release of its final report comes at a turning point for our educational system. For the first time, our national budget has allotted a total of 4.5% of the nation's GDP for education. We will work to ensure that this is only the beginning, and that we make the most of this rare opportunity.

We are thankful to have found a fellow education champion in Senator Win Gatchalian, who supported our proposals to increase funding across numerous priority areas in education. It is through his committee that we have ensured funding in the 2026 National Budget to make a significant impact in addressing the education crisis.

This achievement would not have come to pass without the access to information, data, and analysis provided by EDCOM II. The availability of data and information, which led to widespread understanding of the education crisis, has played a key role in this success. When we have access to information and data, we are better equipped to work together and create sustainable and effective reform.

When I started my term as EDCOM co-chair, I was honored by the opportunity to pursue this advocacy—to have the chance to advocate for transparency and propose systemic changes in support of Filipino students across the country.

When we received the EDCOM II reports, we saw them as a call to action—a clear picture of the work that needs to be done.

Six months on, I am more hopeful than ever. When we work together, share knowledge openly, and hold one another accountable, we can create practicable and lasting change for our children and for the future of our country.


Saini



The National Education Plan

THE PURPOSE AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT OF THE NATPLAN

The National Education Plan (NatPlan) is a ten-year roadmap to make the promise of education and workforce development real for every Filipino. Guided by AmBisyon Natin 2040, while building on the respective strategic plans of DepEd, CHED, TESDA, DTI, DepDev, and DOST, the NatPlan is an effort to ensure synergy and coordination in reforms that relate to education and workforce development, putting together a common agenda for education reform through 2035.

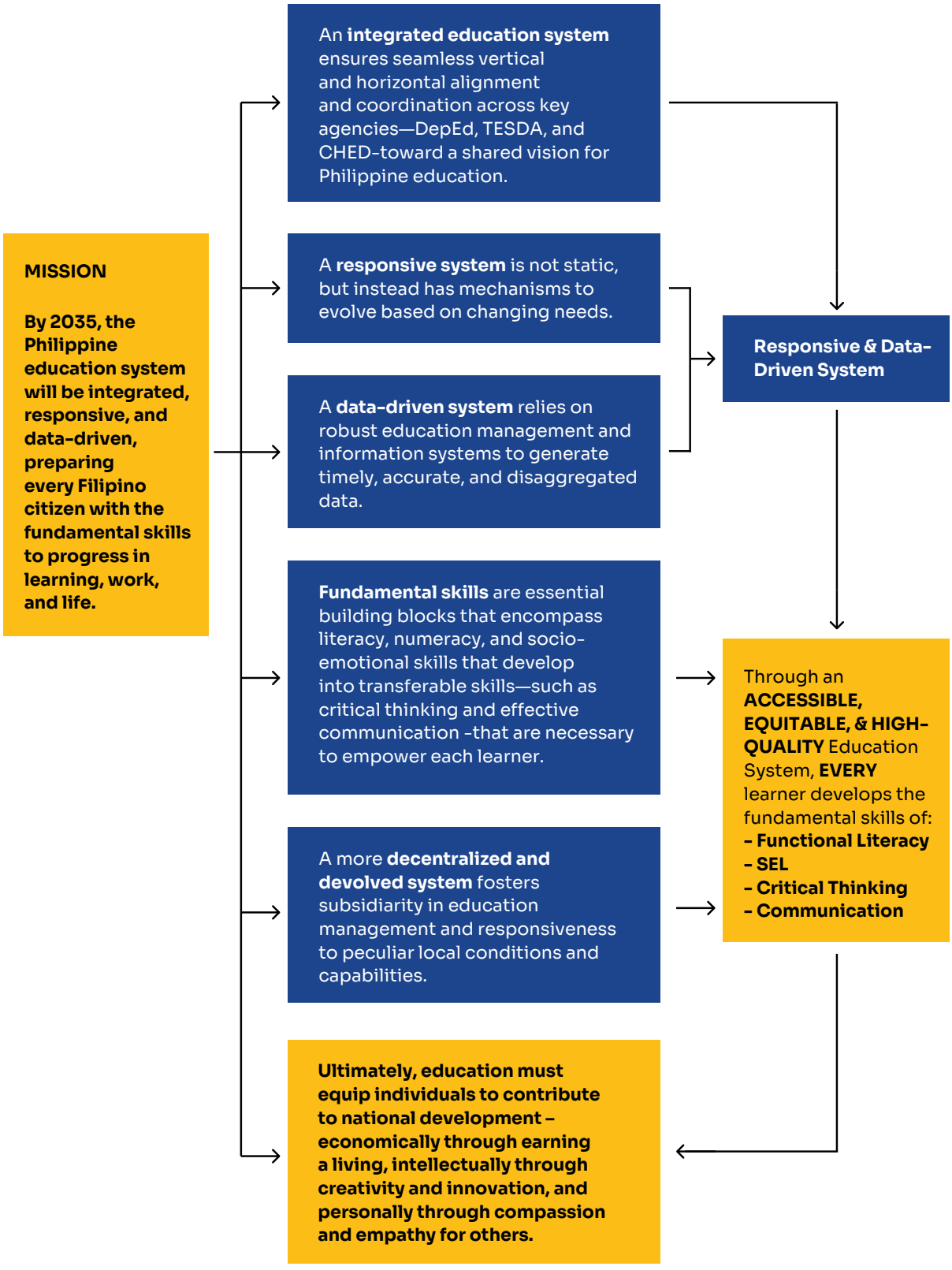
The NatPlan also fulfills the mandate of EDCOM under Republic Act No. 11899, to "provide a final report at the end of the existence of the Commission" which "shall include a roadmap with clear key performance indicators and results framework to address the learning crisis" (Section 7). It is envisioned to be a shared roadmap that unites government, schools, local leaders, and communities around one goal: to rebuild trust in our education system and prepare every Filipino to learn, work, and thrive.

Developed through a rigorous and participatory process starting with the key EDCOM findings and recommendations in the past three years, the Commission also brought together a cross-section of government agencies, institutions, local governments, the private sector, and civil society partners to deliberate and prioritize reforms, resulting in a shared system-wide framework for action sequenced over the next ten years.

By defining our national baseline, studying agency-set targets, and benchmarking against internationally accepted standards, the Plan provides a calibrated view of progress, acknowledging where targets may need to be adjusted to reflect realistic performance or inspire stronger action. These principles ensure that the proposed reforms are not only ambitious but also grounded in institutional realities and capable of withstanding future disruptions.

MAPPING EXERCISE TO DISSECT OUR MISSION

How the Mission Translates into System Change



THE VISION FOR PHILIPPINE EDUCATION BY 2035

Using futures thinking as its foundation, the Ateneo Research Institute for the Futures of Education (RIFE) guided EDCOM II through a foresight-based process to imagine and design a 2035-ready education system. Drawing on concepts from Cerejo & Carvalhais (2024), the workshops identified "Forces of Change" that could constrain reform if left unaddressed. From these exercises emerged a shared long-term vision and a set of Key Priority Areas (KPAs) that form the backbone of the National Education and Workforce Development Plan. These KPAs were then refined through further consultations, technical reviews, and workshops co-led by DepEd's Education Futures Office, the Teacher Education Council, and The Asia Foundation.

The NatPlan sets its mission toward 2035: an integrated, responsive, and data-driven education system. Only such a system can prepare citizens to earn a living, live meaningfully, and contribute productively to society. It does so by grounding them in **fundamental skills: literacy, numeracy, and socioemotional learning**, which develop into transferable skills such as critical thinking and effective communication.

Cognizant that some interventions are path-dependent (e.g. investments in early childhood investments and functional literacy) before improvements can be realized in other aspects (such as upskilling and the development of higher-order skills), targets are phased across the ten-year horizon from 2026 to 2035. It is also set across the life course, from early childhood to lifelong learning. This is intentional, with the aim of emphasizing (1) that progress at any one stage depends on the performance of the stages before it, and (2) that system-wide coordination is an imperative, in a sector notorious for working in silos. Finally, process-owners are specified for every target to establish the lead and contributing agencies and reinforce accountability.

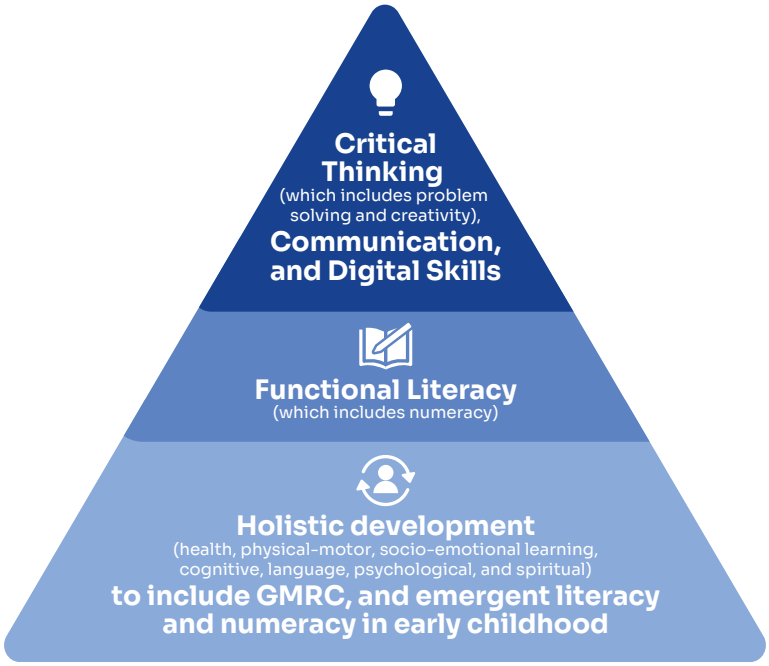
The NatPlan also adopts three milestone years, with intervals of three years in between: 2028, 2031, and 2035. These were intentionally chosen to align with national political cycles, as well as local government election cycles, given the central role of Local Government Units (LGU) in service delivery. This is intended to strengthen accountability, enable course correction, and anchor reforms within realistic governance and budgeting windows.

Additionally, the stakeholders engaged in the various workshops per KPA include the Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Department of Budget and Management (DBM), Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Council, local government units (LGUs), Department of Health (DOH), The National Nutrition Council (NNC), The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Teacher Education Council (TEC), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), the Department of Science and Technology - Food and Nutrition Research Institute (DOST-FNRI), Department of Science and Technology - Scientific and Technical Services (DOST - STS), Department of Science and Technology - Science Education Institute (DOST - SEI), Department of Economy, Planning and Development (DepDev), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Office of the Special Assistant to the President for Investment and Economic Affairs (OSAPIEA), Department of Tourism (DOT), Department of Migrant Workers (DMW), Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF), Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST).

FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS

Fundamental skills are essential building blocks that encompass literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills that develop into transferable skills—such as critical thinking and effective communication—that are necessary to empower each learner.

Citizens that can progress in **learning, work,** and **life.**



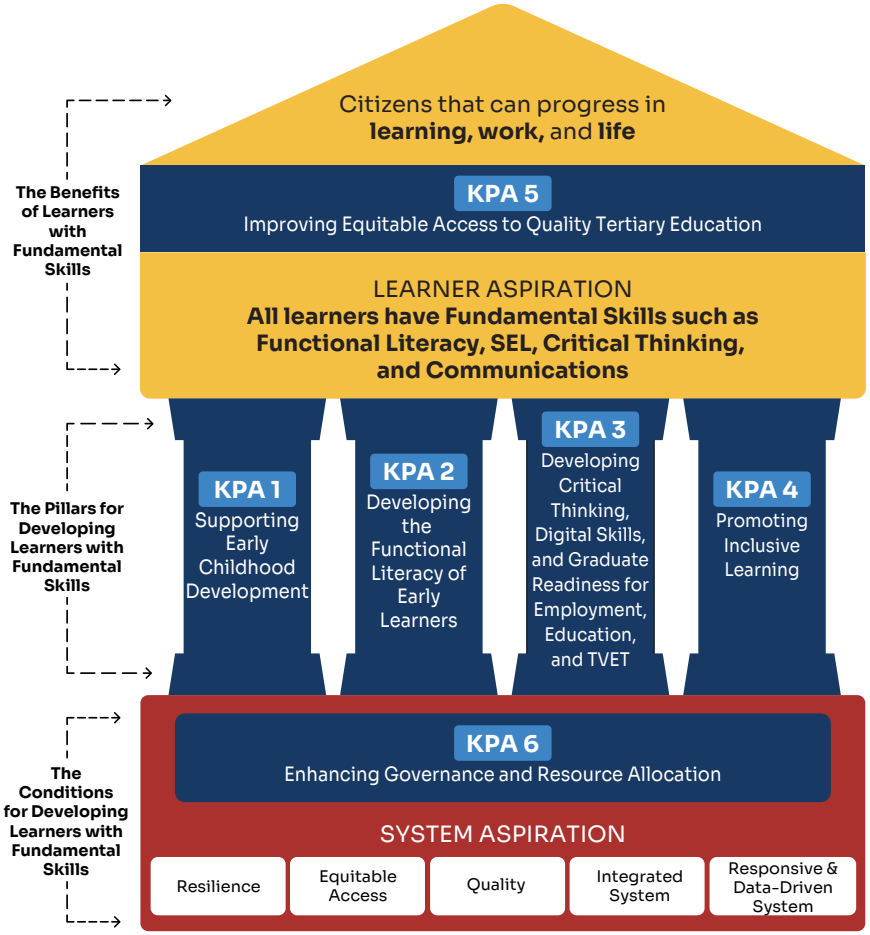
Sources:

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LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The relationship of our Mission to our Key Priority Areas (KPAs)



KEY PRIORITY AREAS

KPA 1

Supporting Early Childhood Development

1.1. Establish targeted and integrated maternal and early childhood nutritional and health supports

1.2. Ensure each barangay has universal access to inclusive and high-quality holistic early learning opportunities

KPA 2

Developing the Functional Literacy of Early Learners

2.1. Ensure students are functionally literate

KPA 3

Developing critical thinking, digital skills, and graduate readiness for employment, education, and TVET

3.1. Equip all students with critical thinking, creative thinking, and communication skills, strengthening readiness for employment

KPA 4

Promoting Inclusive Learning

4.1. Increase the participation and completion of learners in inclusive education

KPA 5

Improving Equitable Access to Quality Tertiary Education

5.1. Provide learners with more opportunities to access quality tertiary education

5.2. Improve the development and support of educators in tertiary education

KPA 6

Enhancing Governance and Resource Allocation

6.1. Ensure adequate financial and human resource investments in education

6.2. Build coherent and accountable governance arrangements toward an effective education ecosystem

GUIDE TO READING EACH KPA SECTION

Each Key Priority Area (KPA) section is presented in a standardized format to facilitate clarity, coherence, and ease of interpretation. The structure is as follows:

1. **Title and Summary**
   The section begins with a summary table outlining the **Priority Outcomes** and their corresponding **Recommendations**, including the **baseline, targets for 2028, 2031, and 2035**, and the **recommended lead agency** for each. Outcomes specify the system-level change sought, while recommendations indicate the actions required to achieve them.


KEY PRIORITY AREA 1: SUPPORTING EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

From the Commission's consultations and workshops, it became clear that ECCD outcomes are most visible at the local level. LGUs are closest to families and therefore best positioned to deliver services such as the construction of Child Development Centers, feeding programs, and parent engagement. At the same time, uneven LGU resources create unequal opportunities, with the poorest communities—those needing intervention most—least able to resource them.

SUMMARY OF KPA 1 OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

KPA 1.1 Establish targeted and integrated maternal and early childhood nutritional and health supports

OUTCOMES & RECOMMENDATIONS	BASELINE	TARGETS 2028	TARGETS 2031	TARGETS 2035	AGENCY
Outcome 1.1.A. Reduced the prevalence of stunting for children under 5 years old	23.6% (~2.2 million) (DOST-FNRI, 2022)	17.9%	13.5%	<10%	DOH
Recommendation 1.1.1. Increase investments in early childhood nutrition (first 1,000 days and Supplementary Feeding Program, and School-Based Feeding Program)					DOH, DILG, & DSWD
Recommendation 1.1.2. Enhance the delivery and nutritional support for [illegible]					[illegible]

2. **Detailed Outcome and Recommendation Pages**
   The succeeding pages elaborate on each Outcome and its associated Recommendations. It is important to distinguish the two:

Outcomes define the intended long-term results or system improvements ("what success looks like").

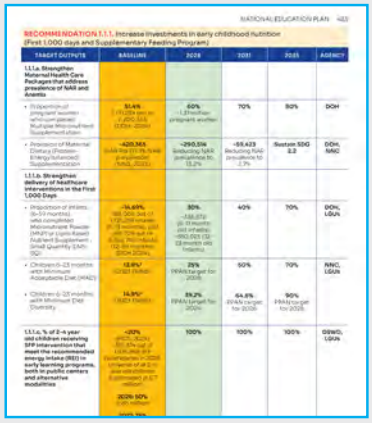
Recommendations outline the specific interventions, programs, or enabling measures needed to deliver those outcomes.

Where relevant, **equity targets** are presented to highlight differentiated goals for priority regions or populations.


1.1. ESTABLISH TARGETED AND INTEGRATED MATERNAL AND EARLY CHILDHOOD NUTRITIONAL AND HEALTH SUPPORTS

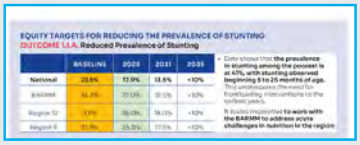
OUTCOME 1.1.A. Reduced Prevalence of Stunting for Children under 5 years old

BASELINE	TARGETS 2028	TARGETS 2031	TARGETS 2035	AGENCY
23.6% (~2.2 million) (DOST-FNRI, 2022)	17.9% (2023-2028 PAMI) Achieving Regional Leadership	13.5% Achieving World-Class Performance Peru's transformation from 31% to 13.5% over 20 years Philippines' pathway from 23.6% to 13.5% over 5 years	<10% Sustaining the Gains and Global Leadership	DOH


NATIONAL EDUCATION PLAN

RECOMMENDATION 1.1.1. Increase investments in early childhood nutrition (First 1,000 days and Supplementary Feeding Program)

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
1.1.1.a. Strengthen Maternal Health Care Packages that address prevalence of MAM and stunting					
• Proportion of pregnant women who can access Multiple Micronutrient Supplementation	51.4% (~1,200,000 pregnant women)	60% (~1.5 million pregnant women)	70%	80%	DOH
• Presence of Maternal Dietary (Protein-Energy Intensive) Supplementation	~420,365 (MAM-Risk (17.5% MAM prevalence, NNS, 2018))	~290,596 (Reducing MAM prevalence to 12.2%)	~55,423 (Reducing MAM prevalence to 7.7%)	Sustain SDG 2.2	DOH, NNC
1.1.1.b. Strengthen delivery of healthcare interventions in the First 1,000 Days					
• Proportion of infants (6-11 months) who completed Micronutrient Powder (MNP) or Lipid-Based Nutrient Supplement - Small Quantity (LNS-SQ)	~16.69% (66,500 out of 1,121,259 infants (6-11 months) who were 70% out of 6,724,761 infants (12-23 months) BNSP 2024)	30% (~330,372 (6-11 months old infants) ~660,743 (12-23 months old infants)	40%	70%	DOH, LGUs
• Children 6-23 months with Minimum Acceptable Diet (MAD)	12.8% (DHS 2022)	25% (PAMI target for 2028)	50%	70%	NNC, LGUs
• Children 6-23 months with Minimum Diet Diversity	14.9% (DHS 2022)	24.2% (PAMI target for 2028)	44.8% (PAMI target for 2028)	90% (PAMI target for 2028)	
1.1.1.c. % of 2-4 year old children receiving SFP intervention that meet the recommended energy intake (REI) in early learning programs, both in public centers and alternative modalities	<20% (~800,000 out of 4,000,000 (4Ps beneficiaries (~2,000,000) + Universe of all 2-4 year old children (estimated) 2,017 million)) 2029: 50% (2.01 million)	100%	100%	100%	DSWD, LGUs


EQUITY TARGETS FOR REDUCING THE PREVALENCE OF STUNTING

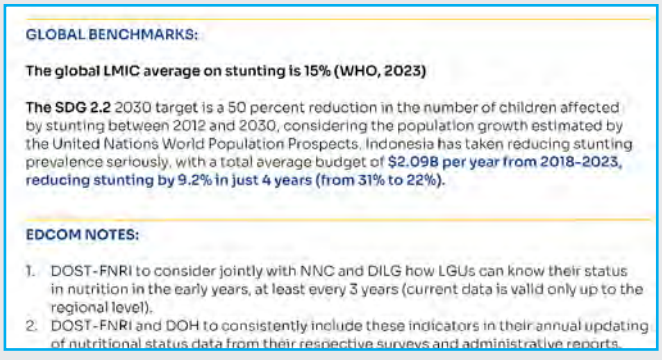
OUTCOME 1.1.A. Reduced Prevalence of Stunting

	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035
National	23.6%	17.9%	13.5%	<10%
[illegible]	46.8%	37.0%	28.0%	<10%
Region IV	17.9%	13.6%	10.2%	<10%
Region X	31.8%	23.3%	17.5%	<10%

Data shows that the prevalence in stunting among the poorest is at 41%, with stunting observed beginning 5 to 25 months of age. This underscores the need for front-loading interventions to the earliest years.

It is also important to work with the BARMM to address acute challenges in nutrition in the region.

3. **Benchmarks and Supplementary EDCOM Notes** provide key contextual information, technical clarifications, or policy considerations to support a deeper understanding of the outcome and recommendation.


GLOBAL BENCHMARKS:

The global LMIC average on stunting is 15% (WHO, 2023)

The SDG 2.2 2030 target is a 50 percent reduction in the number of children affected by stunting between 2012 and 2030, considering the population growth estimated by the United Nations World Population Prospects. Indonesia has taken reducing stunting prevalence seriously, with a total average budget of **$2.098 per year from 2018-2023, reducing stunting by 9.2% in just 4 years (from 31% to 22%).**

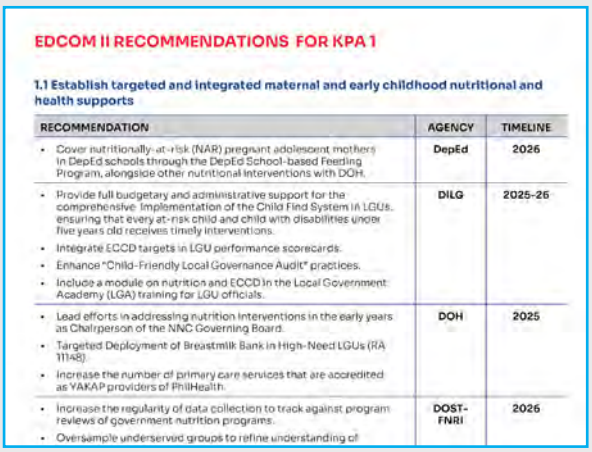
EDCOM NOTES:

1. DOST-FNRI to consider jointly with NNC and DILG how LGUs can know their status in nutrition in the early years, at least every 3 years (current data is valid only up to the regional level).
2. DOST-FNRI and DOH to consistently include these indicators in their annual updating of nutritional status data from their respective surveys and administrative reports.

Global benchmarks drawn from Low Middle-Income Countries and other comparable contexts were used as the principal reference in identifying aspirational targets for the succeeding years. These were complemented by local benchmarks from various national and agency plans, such as the Philippine Development Plan 2040, DepEd's Quality Basic Education Development Plan, TESDA's National Technical Education and Skills Development Plan, to determine the final targets.

4. Supporting Recommendations

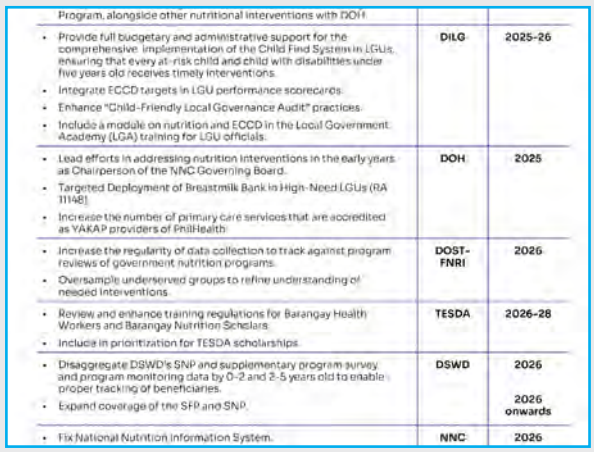
Additional recommendations that are not prioritized but complement, reinforce, or enable the main reforms are listed towards the end of the section, with the indicative **timeline** and **lead agency** for implementation.



EDCOM II RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KPA 1

1.1 Establish targeted and integrated maternal and early childhood nutritional and health supports

RECOMMENDATION	AGENCY	TIMELINE
• Cover nutritionally-at-risk (NAR) pregnant adolescent mothers in DepEd schools through the DepEd School-based Feeding Program, alongside other nutritional interventions with DOH.	DepEd	2026
• Provide full budgetary and administrative support for the comprehensive implementation of the Child Find System in LGUs, ensuring that every at-risk child and child with disabilities under five years old receives timely interventions. • Integrate ECCD targets in LGU performance scorecards. • Enhance "Child-Friendly Local Governance Audit" practices. • Include a module on nutrition and ECCD in the Local Government Academy (LGA) training for LGU officials.	DILG	2025-26
• Lead efforts in addressing nutrition interventions in the early years as Chairperson of the NNC Governing Board. • Targeted Deployment of Breastmilk Bank in High-Need LGUs (RA 11148). • Increase the number of primary care services that are accredited as YAKAP providers of PhilHealth.	DOH	2025
• Increase the regularity of data collection to track against program reviews of government nutrition programs. • Oversample underserved groups to refine understanding of	DOST-FNRI	2026



Program, alongside other nutritional interventions with DOH.		
• Provide full budgetary and administrative support for the comprehensive implementation of the Child Find System in LGUs, ensuring that every at-risk child and child with disabilities under five years old receives timely interventions. • Integrate ECCD targets in LGU performance scorecards. • Enhance "Child-Friendly Local Governance Audit" practices. • Include a module on nutrition and ECCD in the Local Government Academy (LGA) training for LGU officials.	DILG	2025-26
• Lead efforts in addressing nutrition interventions in the early years as Chairperson of the NNC Governing Board. • Targeted Deployment of Breastmilk Bank in High-Need LGUs (RA 11148). • Increase the number of primary care services that are accredited as YAKAP providers of PhilHealth.	DOH	2025
• Increase the regularity of data collection to track against program reviews of government nutrition programs. • Oversample underserved groups to refine understanding of related interventions.	DOST-FNRI	2026
• Review and enhance training regulations for Barangay Health Workers and Barangay Nutrition Scholars. • Include in prioritization for TESDA scholarships.	TESDA	2026-28
• Disaggregate DSWD's SNP and supplementary program survey and program monitoring data by 0-2 and 2-5 years old to enable proper tracking of beneficiaries. • Expand coverage of the SFP and SNP.	DSWD	2026 2026 onwards
• Fix National Nutrition Information System.	NNC	2026

5. Case Studies and Illustrative Practices

Relevant **case studies** are provided at the end of each KPA section to demonstrate effective initiatives and local practices that may inform adaptation of the proposed recommendations.



NATIONAL EDUCATION PLAN 441

MUNICIPALITY OF MANOLO FORTICH, BUKIDNON:
Demonstrating Strong Nutrition Governance and Holistic Family Support

Manolo Fortich offers a strong example of how LGU-led investments in nutrition governance can produce significant improvements in child health outcomes. The municipality strengthened its Municipal Nutrition Office by creating two plantilla positions—Nutrition Officer II and Nutrition Officer III—supported by two Nutrition Officer I staff under job order status and four administrative personnel. This team is further complemented by 32 Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS) across its 22 barangays, enabling consistent monitoring, individualized counseling, and comprehensive community-based nutrition services.

These institutional investments have translated into measurable gains. From a stunting prevalence of 4% in 2022, Manolo Fortich reduced this to 2% in 2024, demonstrating how sustained frontline capacity can drive significant improvements in child nutrition.

The municipality also hosts Northern Mindanao's first Milk Hub, established through strong collaboration with national agencies and private partners. In 2024, 784 lactating women donated approximately 180 liters of milk, with 89.6% going to infants whose mothers had insufficient milk supply, and 14.2% provided to children at the DSWD Reception and Study Center for Children (RSCC), a residential care facility for neglected, abandoned, abused, and exploited children aged 0–6.

In addition, the LGU invested its Local Development Fund to construct a complementary food processing facility, intended to support community-based production of complementary foods for young children and nutritionally at-risk households.

Continuing its multisectoral approach, Manolo Fortich expanded its nutrition programs in 2025 through a partnership with the Del Monte Foundation, Inc. (DMFI) to implement a 120-day Supplemental Feeding Program, benefiting 60 nutritionally at-risk children across four barangays. This initiative reinforced the LGU's emphasis on early intervention and targeted support for the most vulnerable.

The LGU has also integrated women's economic empowerment into its nutrition agenda. In partnership with Connected Women, AboitizPower, and the Aboitiz Foundation, 20 lactating mothers completed training under Elevate AIDA (Artificial Intelligence and Data Annotation). Three of these mothers successfully secured digital jobs, enabling them to pursue flexible, home-based work while caring for their young children.



NATIONAL EDUCATION PLAN 442

PASIG CITY'S PROGRAM CONTRACTING SCHEME:
Expands Access to Early Childhood Care and Development

Pasig City has advanced toward universal early childhood care and development (ECCD) through Resolutions No. 248-11 and 292-11, series of 2024. The first authorized the grant of financial assistance to children enrolled in accredited private learning centers, while the latter empowered Mayor Vico Sotto to formalize agreements with ninety-five (95) private Child Development Centers (CDCs) accredited by the City Social Welfare and Development Office – ECCD Unit. Together, these measures address persistent access gaps, as the city's 107 public CDCs, as of 2024, served only about 19% of children aged 3–4. Through the Program Contracting Scheme, Pasig provides ₱5,000 in financial assistance per child, extending support to children who can no longer be accommodated in public CDCs.

Anchored on Republic Act No. 10410, or the Early Years Act of 2013, the initiative illustrates how local governments can localize national ECCD goals through innovative partnerships and targeted financing. Although implemented prior to the enactment of Republic Act No. 12199 (ECCD System Act of 2025), Pasig's program already embodies its key principles—LGU-led service delivery, system integration, and public-private convergence—positioning the city as an early model for alignment with the strengthened ECCD system envisioned under the new law.

TOP 20 RECOMMENDATIONS

KEY PRIORITY AREA 1: Supporting Early Childhood Development	
1	1.1.1. **Increase investments in early childhood nutrition (First 1000 days, Supplementary Feeding Program, School-Based Feeding Program)**
2	1.2.1. **Provide scholarships for the training of Child Development Workers and Child Development Teachers**
3	1.2.2. **Expand access to early childhood education through center-based and alternative delivery modes**
KEY PRIORITY AREA 2: Developing the Functional Literacy of Early Learners	
4	2.1.1. **Address classroom backlog and congestion in schools, utilizing different modalities (LGU and CSO partnerships, PPPs, voucher program)**
5	2.1.2. **Revise procurement guidelines and DepEd policies to ensure complete and timely delivery of textbooks**
6	2.1.2. **Provide equitable internet connectivity and digital resources for schools, teachers, and learners**
7	2.1.4. **End "mass promotion" in schools (Fully implement ARAL; Revise RPMS, OPCR and GAA targets; Rescind grade transmutation policy)**
8	2.1.5. **Reduce administrative burden on teachers**
KEY PRIORITY AREA 3: Developing critical thinking, digital skills, and graduate readiness for employment, education, and TVET	
9	3.1.1. **Address teacher subject-specialization misalignment**
10	3.1.2. **Improve quality and relevance of SHS TechPro program**
11	3.1.3. **Institutionalize school-to-employment pathways and strengthen industry-academe coordination**
KEY PRIORITY AREA 4: Promoting Inclusive Learning	
12	4.1.2. **Invest in teachers and professionals in inclusive education**
13	4.1.3. **Expand programs for learners with disabilities**
KEY PRIORITY AREA 5: Improving Equitable Access to Quality Tertiary Education	
14	5.1.1. **Expand access and supports to tertiary education, especially the poorest**
15	5.1.2. **Build relevant and seamless TVET and college pathways**
KEY PRIORITY AREA 6: Enhancing Governance & Resource Allocation	
16	6.1.1. **Invest at least 5% of GDP on education, focusing on the foundations**
17	6.1.2. **Recruit and develop quality school leaders and administrators (from basic education to higher education)**
18	6.2.1. **Implement phased decentralization and devolution to enable targeted and contextualized services**
19	6.2.2. **Strengthen inter-agency alignment and data integration**
20	6.2.3. **Update the charters of DepEd, CHED, and TESDA and optimize agency capacity**



KEY PRIORITY AREA 1: SUPPORTING EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

From the Commission's consultations and workshops, it became clear that ECCD outcomes are most visible at the local level. LGUs are closest to families and therefore best positioned to deliver services such as the construction of Child Development Centers, feeding programs, and parent engagement. At the same time, uneven LGU resources create unequal opportunities, with the poorest communities—those needing intervention most—least able to resource them.

SUMMARY OF KPA 1 OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

KPA 1.1 Establish targeted and integrated maternal and early childhood nutritional and health supports

OUTCOMES & RECOMMENDATIONS	BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
		2028	2031	2035	
Outcome 1.1.A. Reduced the prevalence of stunting for children under 5 years old	**23.6% (DOST-FNRI, 2023)**	**17.9%**	**13.5%**	**<10%**	**DOH**
Recommendation 1.1.1. Increase investments in early childhood nutrition (First 1000 days, Supplementary Feeding Program, and School-Based Feeding Program)					**DOH, DILG, & DSWD**
Recommendation 1.1.2. Enhance the health and nutritional support for female adolescent learners					**DepEd**

KPA 1.2 Ensure each barangay has universal access to inclusive and high-quality holistic early learning opportunities

OUTCOMES & RECOMMENDATIONS	BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
		2028	2031	2035	
Outcome 1.2.A. Increased Participation Rate Among Children Ages 3-4	**34% (APIS, 2024)**	**50%**	**70%**	**90%**	**DILG**
Recommendation 1.2.1. Provision of scholarships for training and continuing education for CDWs and CDTs					**TESDA, TEC**
Recommendation 1.2.2. Expand access to early childhood education					**DILG**
Recommendation 1.2.3. Strengthen the capacity of LGUs to implement Republic Act 12199					**DILG**

1.1. ESTABLISH TARGETED AND INTEGRATED MATERNAL AND EARLY CHILDHOOD NUTRITIONAL AND HEALTH SUPPORTS

OUTCOME 1.1.A. Reduced Prevalence of Stunting for Children under 5 years old

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
23.6% **~2.2 million[1]** **(DOST-FNRI, 2023)** *Note that the initial target under PPAN and the PDP was 22.3% for 2025, but data collection is irregular and not in sync with program interventions	**17.9%** (2023-2028 PPAN) **Achieving Regional Leadership** 2024 stunting prevalence in SEA: 22.7%[2]	**13.5%** **Achieving World-Class Performance** **Peru's transformation** from 31% to 11.5% over 20 years **Philippines' pathway from 23.6% to 13.5% over 5 years**	**<10%** **Sustaining the Gains and Global Leadership**	**DOH**

GLOBAL BENCHMARKS:

The global LMIC average on stunting is 15% (WHO, 2023)

The SDG 2.2 2030 target is a 50 percent reduction in the number of children affected by stunting between 2012 and 2030, considering the population growth estimated by the United Nations World Population Prospects. Indonesia has taken reducing stunting prevalence seriously, with a total average budget of **$2.09B per year from 2018-2023, reducing stunting by 9.2% in just 4 years (from 31% to 22%).**

EDCOM NOTES:

1. DOST-FNRI to consider jointly with NNC and DILG how LGUs can know their status in nutrition in the early years, at least every 3 years (current data is valid only up to the regional level).
2. DOST-FNRI and DOH to consistently include these indicators in their annual updating of nutritional status data from their respective surveys and administrative reports.

EQUITY TARGETS FOR REDUCING THE PREVALENCE OF STUNTING

OUTCOME 1.1.A. Reduced Prevalence of Stunting

	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035
National	**23.6%**	**17.9%**	**13.5%**	**<10%**
BARMM	34.3%	27.0%	18.5%	<10%
Region 12	33%	26.0%	18.0%	<10%
Region 9	31.9%	25.0%	17.5%	<10%

- Data shows that **the prevalence in stunting among the poorest is at 41%, with stunting observed beginning 5 to 25 months of age.** This underscores the need for frontloading interventions to the earliest years.

It is also imperative **to work with the BARMM to address acute challenges in nutrition in the region.**

1 2023 population of 0-4 interpolated from PSA 2020 & 2025 projections (Scenario 2) which is at around 9.5 million; 23.6% equivalent ≈2.2 million

2 WHO South-eastern Asia, Stunting prevalence among children under 5 years of age (% height-for-age <-2SD), model-based estimates, Both sexes 2024 =22.7 [22.1-23.4]

RECOMMENDATION 1.1.1. Increase investments in early childhood nutrition (First 1,000 days and Supplementary Feeding Program)

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
1.1.1.a. Strengthen Maternal Health Care Packages that address prevalence of NAR and Anemia					
▪ Proportion of pregnant women who completed Multiple Micronutrient Supplementation	**51.4%** 1,131,234 out of 2,200,865 (DOH, 2024)	**60%** ~1.31 million pregnant women	**70%**	**80%**	**DOH**
▪ Provision of Maternal Dietary (Protein-Energy balanced) Supplementation	**~420,365** NAR PW (19.1% NAR prevalence) (NNS, 2023)	**~290,514** Reducing NAR prevalence to 13.2%	**~59,423** Reducing NAR prevalence to 2.7%	**Sustain SDG 2.2**	**DOH, NNC**
1.1.1.b. Strengthen delivery of healthcare interventions in the First 1,000 Days					
▪ Proportion of infants (6-59 months) who completed Micronutrient Powder (MNP) or Lipid-Based Nutrient Supplement - Small Quantity (LNS-SQ)	**~14.69%** 188,004 out of 1,121,239 infants (6-11 months), and 285,728 out of 2,266,749 infants (12-59 months) (DOH,2024)	**30%** ~336,372 (6-11 month old infants) ~680,025 (12-23 month old infants)	**40%**	**70%**	**DOH, LGUs**
▪ Children 6-23 months with Minimum Acceptable Diet (MAD) ▪ Children 6-23 months with Minimum Diet Diversity	**13.9%**[3] (2023 ENNS) **14.5%**[4] (2023 ENNS)	**25%** PPAN target for 2028 **39.2%** PPAN target for 2024	**50%** **64.6%** PPAN target for 2026	**70%** **90%** PPAN target for 2028	**NNC, LGUs**
1.1.1.c. % of 2-4 year old children receiving SFP intervention that meet the recommended energy intake (REI) in early learning programs, both in public centers and alternative modalities	**<20%** (PIDS, 2024) ~387,374 out of 1,936,868 SFP beneficiaries in 2023; Universe of all 2-4 year old children is estimated at 5.7 million[5] **2026: 50%** ~2.85 million[6] **2027: 75%** ~4.28 million[7] **2028: 100%** ~5.7 million [8]	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**DSWD, LGUs**

3 The 2021 ENNS reported a prevalence of 13.3%, thus showing a marginal increase of only 0.6% over two years.
4 The 2021 ENNS reported a prevalence of 13.8%, thus showing a marginal increase of only 1.2% over two years.
5 Estimated by linearly interpolating PSA population projections for ages 0–4 between 2020 and 2025, yielding 9.5 million for 2023. Assuming an even age distribution, ages 2–4 account for three-fifths of the total (≈ 5.7 million). Source: Philippine Statistics Authority. (2025). Statistical Tables – Population of Children Aged 0–4 Years. Retrieved from https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/dhsd/Statistical%20Tables%20CBPP_0.pdf
6 Calculation based on the same estimated 2-4 years old population count of 5.7 million
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
1.1.1.d. Expand coverage of School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP) ▪ Reduced number of undernourished learners who fall back (Kinder to Grade 6)	**11.55%** or around 240,000 of 2,000,000 SBFP beneficiaries (DepEd, 2024; partial report as of August 2024)	**5%** ~100,000 of the SBFP beneficiaries	**0%**	**0%**	**DepEd**
▪ % of nutritionally at-risk pregnant adolescents supported with feeding and Multiple Micronutrient Supplementation	**It is imperative for DepEd to collect data on NAR pregnant women in DepEd schools so that proper targeted interventions may be provided.**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**DepEd, DOH**
1.1.1.e. Improve active BHWs to households ratio	**1:95** 285,530 of BHWs is to 27,130,697 households (DOH, 2024) Universal need based on 2020 Census: 1,138,600[9]	**1:75** 361,743 of BHWs is to 27,130,697 households Focus will be on regions with a ratio above 1:100: NCR (1:763), BARMM (1:170), Region 4A (1:150), Region 3 (1:129), Region 12 (1:120), Region 9 (1:112), and Region 11 (1:101)	**1:55** 493,285 of BHWs is to 27,130,697 households	**1:35** 775,163 of BHWs is to 27,130,697 households	**DOH, DILG**
▪ Increase in the hazard and subsistence allowances to all accredited active BHWs as stipulated in Sec. 6 of Republic Act No. 7883	**~PHP 1,150-PHP 3,000** (PIDS, 2024) ~monthly BHW allowance, depending on the LGU	**PHP 3,000** for registered BHWs **PHP 5,000** for certified BHWs (based on the proposed Magna Carta of BHWs) with DOH support for 4th and 5th class municipalities	**Gradual increase based on minimum wage** with enhanced DOH support for 4th and 5th class municipalities	**Gradual increase based on minimum wage** with enhanced DOH support for 4th and 5th class municipalities	**LGUs, DOH, DILG**

EDCOM POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Cover nutritionally-at-risk (NAR) pregnant adolescent girls in DepEd schools through the DepEd School-based Feeding Program.
- Improve coverage of nutritionally-at-risk pregnant mothers consistent with the First 1,000 Days Law.
- Clarify responsibilities between DOH, NNC, DepEd, and DSWD on nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions for NAR pregnant mothers (e.g., Tutok Kainan Program, Nutrition Counseling, School Health and Counseling, Parent Engagement)

9 Maximum 1% of the total population as stipulated in Republic Act No. 7883

RECOMMENDATION 1.1.2. Enhance the health and nutritional support for female adolescent learners

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
1.1.2.a. Ensure provision of intermittent Weekly Iron Folic Acid (WIFA) supplementation among menstruating learners, including those in ALS *(DepEd Order No. 59, s. 2017)* ▪ Reduced prevalence of anemia among 10-19 years old	**5.8%** ~618,000 out of around 10.7 million[10] 10-19 years old female (NNS, 2023)	**4%** ~426,000 PPAN target for 2028 on prevalence of anemia among women of reproductive age	**2.5%**	**1%**	**NNC, DepEd**

1.2. ENSURE EACH BARANGAY HAS UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO INCLUSIVE AND HIGH-QUALITY HOLISTIC EARLY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

OUTCOME 1.2.A. Increased Participation Rate Among Children Ages 3-4

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
34% ~1.1M[11] children (APIS, 2024)	**50%** ~1,747,000[12] **Reflecting an EDCOM adjusted target from PDP Midterm and ECCD Strategic Plan** **2026: 40%** ~1,371,120[13] **2027: 45%** ~1,557,405[14] **2028: 50%** ~1,747,000	**75%**	**90%**	**ECCD Council**

EQUITY TARGETS FOR INCREASING PARTICIPATION RATE AMONG CHILDREN AGES 3-4

OUTCOME 1.2 Increased Participation Rate Aamong Chilldren Aages 3-4

	BASELINE (APIS, 2024)	2028	2031	2035
National	**33.54%**	**50%**	**75%**	**90%**
Region 4A	17.4%	32%	61%	90%
Region 3	17.26%	34%	62%	90%
BARMM	20.65%	39%	65%	90%

10 2023 figure interpolated from PSA 2020 & 2025 projections (Scenario 2); 5.8% equivalent ≈ 930,300.
11 Estimates derived from interpolated population figures based on PSA 2025 and 2030 projections (Scenario 2).
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.

GLOBAL BENCHMARKS:

- While the PDP Midterm Target and the ECCD Strategic Plan, the target for 2025 is 33% and for 2028 is 60%, there has not been significant improvements in access in the past years. We are therefore proposing an adjusted target of 50% by 2028.
- The 2031 target of 75% reflects the global average for children in organized learning one year before primary entry.

EDCOM NOTES:

1. The ECCD Council's Provincial Data Monitoring covers only 47% of LGU reports as of August 2025, indicating a participation rate of 23.5% for 3-4 years old children.
2. However, using APIS 2024 shows a higher participation rate of 33.5% (~1.1M children) for 3-4 years old children. This again underscores the need to improve encoding and expand ECCD data coverage for reliable estimates.

RECOMMENDATION 1.2.1. Provide scholarships for the training of Child Development Workers and Child Development Teachers.

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
1.2.1.a. Number of CDWs trained for NC III in ECCD Services	**25.3%** (9,796) Scholarship slots for FY 2025 **out of 36,800 incumbent CDWs w/o college of post-graduate degrees**	**100%** **FY 2026:** +9,500 **FY 2027:** +9,500 **FY 2028:** +9,500	**100%** **FY 2026-2035:** 9,500 each FY To address the shortage of CDWs (~240,000),[15] scholarships must be sustained beyond 2035.		**TESDA, DILG, and ECCD Council**
1.2.1.b. Number of Teacher Education Scholarship Program (TESP) recipients (Republic Act No. 11713) through the Teacher Education Council (TEC)	**0** TEC has identified Bachelor of Early Childhood Education as one of the priority programs for the TESP. [16]	**1,000** Total Active Scholars by AY 2028-2029 (BECEd only) **2026:** +240 **2027:** +456 **2028:** +304 Total slots for TESP across all priority programs: **2026:** +720 **2027:** +2,736 **2028:** +2,736	**1,216** Total active scholars and 696 completers by AY 2031-2032 (BECEd only)	**1,216** Total active scholars and 1,912 completers by AY 2035-2036 (BECEd only)	**TEC, CHED**

15 Ulep, V. G., Casas, L. D., Manuel, A. C., Mendoza, J. P., Bagas, J., & Dela Luna, K. L. (2024). Behind the slow start: An assessment of early childhood care and development in the Philippines (Discussion Paper Series No. 2024-04). Philippine Institute for Development Studies. https://doi.org/10.62986/dp2024.04

16 The Teacher Education Council (TEC) is currently finalizing the Teacher Education Scholarship Program (TESP) targets. The initial proposal identifies Early Childhood Education (BECEd), Special Needs Education (BSNEd), and Values Education (BSEd–Values Education) as priority specializations for the initial rollout. The program will then gradually expand to include Technical-Vocational Teacher Education (BTVTEd), Technology and Livelihood Education (BTLEd), Culture and Arts Education (BCAEd), and Physical Education (BPEd). By its third year of implementation, TESP will further extend to cover Elementary Education (BEEd) and Science Education (BSEd–Science).

RECOMMENDATION 1.2.2. Expand access to early childhood education

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
1.2.2.a. Percentage of Barangays with public Child Development Centers	**91.7%** or 38,565 out of 42,047 (ECCD-IS, 2023) 2026 to 2028: +400 barangays per year from 3rd class municipalities	**93.6%** +1,136 from remaining barangays without CDCs in 3rd class municipalities	**95.9%** +1,104 from remaining barangays without CDCs in all municipalities and SGAs	**100%** in all cities, municipalities, and SGAs	**DILG**
1.2.2.b. Percentage of Day Care Centers converted into Child Development Centers	**5.9%** (2,241 Day Care Centers out of the existing 38,237 barangay with centers) 2026 to 2028: +4,500 per year for three years	**39.9%** +13,001 in 2nd-5th Class municipalities and SGAs	**70.2%** +11,593 in all municipalities and SGAs	**100%** +11,593 in all remaining cities and municipalities	**DILG**
1.2.2.c. Number of Children in Alternative Delivery Modalities	**6,814** (based on the PSWDO ECCD Data Monitoring Sheet as of August 2025; No disaggregation of LGU income class)	**≤ 114,173** (in 3rd to 5th class municipalities or 18% out of 635,839 children below 5 years in all municipalities with no barangay CDC)	**+521,666** (in 1st to 2nd class municipalities or 100% of 635,839 children below 5 years in all municipalities with no barangay CDC)	**+382,761** (in all cities or 100% of 382,761 children below 5 years in all cities with no barangay CDC)	**DILG**
1.2.2.d. Per capita spending for early childhood education (ages 3-4) It is imperative for DBM to tag expenditures to enable proper monitoring of this critical indicator	**PHP 1,969**	**PHP 4.3K**	**PHP 4.7K**	**PHP 5.3K**	**DILG**

RECOMMENDATION 1.2.3. Strengthen the capacity of LGUs to implement Republic Act No. 12199

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
1.2.3.a. Percentage of municipalities and cities classified as "progressive" or higher based on the Republic Act 12199-aligned LGU self-assessment framework **Universe**: 1,642 cities & municipalities	**TBD** (Pending administration of Republic Act 12199-aligned LGU self-assessment)	**50%** or 821 cities & municipalities **2026: 20%** (328) **2027: 35%** (575) **2028: 50%** (821)	**75%**	**100%**	**DILG**

EDCOM II RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KPA 1

1.1 Establish targeted and integrated maternal and early childhood nutritional and health supports

RECOMMENDATION	AGENCY	TIMELINE
▪ Cover nutritionally-at-risk (NAR) pregnant adolescent mothers in DepEd schools through the DepEd School-based Feeding Program, alongside other nutritional interventions with DOH.	**DepEd**	**2026**
▪ Provide full budgetary and administrative support for the comprehensive implementation of the Child Find System in LGUs, ensuring that every at-risk child and child with disabilities under five years old receives timely interventions. ▪ Integrate ECCD targets in LGU performance scorecards. ▪ Enhance "Child-Friendly Local Governance Audit" practices. ▪ Include a module on nutrition and ECCD in the Local Government Academy (LGA) training for LGU officials.	**DILG**	**2025-26**
▪ Lead efforts in addressing nutrition interventions in the early years as Chairperson of the NNC Governing Board. ▪ Targeted Deployment of Breastmilk Bank in High-Need LGUs (Republic Act 11148). ▪ Increase the number of primary care services that are accredited as YAKAP providers of PhilHealth.	**DOH**	**2025**
▪ Increase the regularity of data collection to track against program reviews of government nutrition programs. ▪ Oversample underserved groups to refine understanding of needed interventions.	**DOST-FNRI**	**2026**
▪ Review and enhance training regulations for Barangay Health Workers and Barangay Nutrition Scholars. ▪ Include in prioritization for TESDA scholarships.	**TESDA**	**2026-28**
▪ Disaggregate DSWD's SNP and supplementary program survey and program monitoring data by 0-2 and 2-5 years old to enable proper tracking of beneficiaries. ▪ Expand coverage of the SFP and SNP.	**DSWD**	**2026** **2026 onwards**
▪ Fix National Nutrition Information System. ▪ Develop and implement a behavioral change campaign for Breastfeeding and Maternal health. ▪ Develop and implement an advocacy and education campaign on the First 1,000 Days.	**NNC**	**2026**

1.2 Ensure each barangay has universal access to inclusive and high-quality holistic early learning opportunities

RECOMMENDATION	AGENCY	TIMELINE
▪ Provide funding for ECCD to support low-income LGUs under the Local Government Support Fund (LGSF) consistent with Republic Act 12199.	**DBM**	**2026**

MUNICIPALITY OF MANOLO FORTICH, BUKIDNON: *Demonstrating Strong Nutrition Governance and Holistic Family Support*



Manolo Fortich offers a strong example of how LGU-led investments in nutrition governance can produce significant improvements in child health outcomes. The municipality strengthened its Municipal Nutrition Office by creating two plantilla positions—Nutrition Officer II and Nutrition Officer III—supported by two Nutrition Officer I staff under job order status and four administrative personnel. This team is further complemented by 32 Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS) across its 22 barangays, enabling consistent monitoring, individualized counseling, and comprehensive community-based nutrition services.

These institutional investments have translated into measurable gains. From a stunting prevalence of 4% in 2022, Manolo Fortich reduced this to 2% in 2024, demonstrating how sustained frontline capacity can drive significant improvements in child nutrition.

The municipality also hosts Northern Mindanao's first Milk Hub, established through strong collaboration with national agencies and private partners. In 2024, 784 lactating women donated approximately 180 liters of milk, with 59.6% going to infants whose mothers had insufficient milk supply, and 14.2% provided to children at the DSWD Reception and Study Center for Children (RSCC), a residential care facility for neglected, abandoned, abused, and exploited children aged 0–6.



Source: LGU Manolo Fortich

In addition, the LGU invested its Local Development Fund to construct a complementary food processing facility, intended to support community-based production of complementary foods for young children and nutritionally at-risk households.

Continuing its multisectoral approach, Manolo Fortich expanded its nutrition programs in 2025 through a partnership with the Del Monte Foundation, Inc. (DMFI) to implement a 120-day Supplemental Feeding Program, benefiting 50 nutritionally at-risk children across four barangays. This initiative reinforced the LGU's emphasis on early intervention and targeted support for the most vulnerable.

The LGU has also integrated women's economic empowerment into its nutrition agenda. In partnership with Connected Women, AboitizPower, and the Aboitiz Foundation, 20 lactating mothers completed training under Elevate AIDA (Artificial Intelligence and Data Annotation). Three of these mothers successfully secured digital jobs, enabling them to pursue flexible, home-based work while caring for their young children.

MUNICIPALITY *of* BACNOTAN, LA UNION:

Strengthened Nutrition Governance Through Community and Multisectoral Action

Bacnotan demonstrates a strong model of LGU-led, multisectoral nutrition governance anchored in the SIBOL-Bacnotan program ("Sustainable Interventions to Break Hunger, Zero Malnutrition, and Increase Literacy"). The municipality substantially increased its nutrition budget—from PHP 50,000 in 2020 to over 5 million for the Nutrition Office alone in 2024, and over PHP 50 million for total nutrition-related programs—representing more than 20% of its total LGU budget. A full-time Municipal Nutrition Action Officer (Nutrition Officer II) and expanded Municipal Nutrition Committee (MNC) ensure coordinated policy development, planning, and monitoring across all 47 barangays.

Bacnotan strengthened barangay-level service delivery by institutionalizing monthly incentives, regular training, and capability-building for Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS) and Barangay Nutrition Committees (BNC), resulting in more functional local nutrition planning and improved barangay investment in nutrition PPAs. Nutrition education programs such as Pabasa sa Nutrisyon and Nutriskwelaan ti Bacnotan similarly contributed to significant gains in caregiver knowledge, as reflected in increased post-test scores and expanded community participation.

Bacnotan's nutrition strategy is anchored in a robust local food systems approach that links feeding programs, community kitchens, and local food production. Its multitiered interventions—*Taraon Intay' Idanun Malnutrisyon Intay' Siguden (Pagkain ating Ihatid, Malnutrisyon Ating Sugpuin), Kusina ng Kalinga*, and the 6M Hunger Reduction Framework—provide targeted support for nutritionally at-risk pregnant women, 6–23-month-olds, preschoolers, and vulnerable households. These are strengthened by the LGU's Carabao Development Program, which supplies fresh carabao milk for feeding programs while supporting local farmers, and by the municipality's fully operational community kitchen that prepares fresh meals daily. The expansion of Gulayan sa Barangay and household gulayans across all 47 barangays further enhances dietary diversity and secures local food availability.

As a result of these sustained investments and community-driven strategies, Bacnotan achieved measurable improvements in child nutrition outcomes. From 2021 to 2024, the prevalence of combined stunting and severe stunting decreased from 5.66% to 3.2%, wasting dropped from 2.37% to 0.8%, and underweight prevalence improved from 2.88% to 2.14%. Bacnotan was recognized with multiple awards—including the Green Banner Seal of Compliance (2023–2024) and repeated Seal of Good Education Governance citations—affirming the impact and transferability of its integrated ECCD and nutrition system.

PASIG CITY'S PROGRAM CONTRACTING SCHEME:
Expands Access to Early Childhood Care and Development



Pasig City has advanced toward universal early childhood care and development (ECCD) through Resolutions No. 243-11 and 292-11, series of 2024. The first authorized the grant of financial assistance to children enrolled in accredited private learning centers, while the latter empowered Mayor Vico Sotto to formalize agreements with ninety-five (95) private Child Development Centers (CDCs) accredited by the City Social Welfare and Development Office – ECCD Unit. Together, these measures address persistent access gaps, as the city's 107 public CDCs, as of 2024, served only about 19% of children aged 3–4. Through the Program Contracting Scheme, Pasig provides PHP 3,000 in financial assistance per child, extending support to children who can no longer be accommodated in public CDCs.

Anchored on Republic Act No. 10410, or the Early Years Act of 2013, the initiative illustrates how local governments can localize national ECCD goals through innovative partnerships and targeted financing. Although implemented prior to the enactment of Republic Act No. 12199 (ECCD System Act of 2025), Pasig's program already embodies its key principles—LGU-led service delivery, system integration, and public–private convergence—positioning the city as an early model for alignment with the strengthened ECCD system envisioned under the new law.

KEY PRIORITY AREA 2: DEVELOPING THE FUNCTIONAL LITERACY OF EARLY LEARNERS

KPA 2 highlights the critical role of functional literacy as the foundation of broader capacities required for higher learning, employability, and citizenship. Together with numeracy, the ability to read, write, compute, and comprehend collectively forms functional literacy (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2025). The development of these skills is crucial in Kindergarten to Grade 3 or Key Stage 1 (KS1), as they form the building blocks for higher-order learning in the succeeding years of schooling (Dündar et al., 2024). Without proper support for these foundations, learners bear the burden of cumulative learning losses and unharnessed potential that follow them through life.

Given the importance of addressing these gaps early, the scope of this KPA anchors early learning within a supportive ecosystem of adequate infrastructure, accessible learning resources, responsive remediation, meaningful assessment, and empowered teachers. These are the conditions that allow every Filipino child not only to read and count, but to thrive—prepared for the academic, social, and economic opportunities that lie ahead.

SUMMARY OF KPA 2 OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

KPA 2.1 Ensure students are functionally literate

OUTCOMES & RECOMMENDATIONS*	BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
		2028	2031	2035	
Outcome 2.1.A. CRLA: Increased percentage of Key Stage 1 learners reading at grade level	**47.74%** EOSY 2024-2025	**75%**	**90%**	**95%**	**DepEd**
Outcome 2.1.B. Phil-IRI: Increased grade ready Grade 10 students	**42.1%** Filipino **18.1%** English BOSY 2025-2026	**57%** **33%**	**72%** **48%**	**87%** **63%**	**DepEd**
Outcome 2.1.C. RMA: Increased percentage of Key Stage 1 learners with at-grade-level numeracy skills	**40.49%** EOSY 2024-2025	**65%**	**75%**	**85%**	**DepEd**
Outcome 2.1.A. CRLA: Increased percentage of Key Stage 1 learners reading at grade level	**30.52%** EOSY 2024-2025	**50%**	**70%**	**90%**	**DepEd**
Recommendation 2.1.1. Address classroom backlog and congestion in schools, utilizing different modalities (LGU and CSO partnerships, PPPs, voucher program					**DepEd**
Recommendation 2.1.2. Revise procurement guidelines to ensure complete and timely delivery of textbooks					**DepEd**
Recommendation 2.1.3. Provide equitable internet connectivity and digital resources for schools, teachers, and learners					**DepEd and DICT**
Recommendation 2.1.4. End "mass promotion" in schools (fully implementing ARAL, aligning RPMS, OPCR and GAA targets with learning outcomes, and rescinding the grade transmutation policy)					**DepEd**
Recommendation 2.1.5. Reduce administrative burdens on teachers					**DepEd and DBM**

*The actual number of targets are reflected in the succeeding Outcomes section

2.1. ENSURE STUDENTS ARE FUNCTIONALLY LITERATE

Outcome 2.1.A. CRLA: Increased percentage of Key Stage 1 learners reading at grade level

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
CRLA EOSY: 47.74% 2,604,392 at grade level out of the of 5,455,581 KS1 learners assessed (DepEd, SY 2024-2025)	**75%** **2026: 57%** +505,289 **2027: 66%** +491,002 **2028: 75%** +491,003	**90%**	**95%**	**DepEd**

EDCOM POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. For DepEd to expand coverage of CRLA and RMA to include private schools and ALS.
2. For DepEd to ensure the regularity of assessment to enable dynamic grouping of students within the school year.

BENCHMARKS:

The PDP and Q-BEDP aim to increase the percentage of Grade 3 learners achieving at least proficient in the NAT-Reading and NAT-Math to 77.2% and 66% by 2028, respectively.

- A ceiling of 95% was set because the baseline combined typical and atypical learners. If data is gathered for the latter, the 2035 target can be adjusted to 100%, while a corresponding target can be set for atypical learners.
- Ideally, sub-targets can be set for learners in underserved populations and those with acute challenges in literacy (last mile schools, GIDCAs, indigenous, SPED learners) and are oversampled in the national assessments. Results must also be disaggregated to assess performance of public vs. private schools.

These outcome targets are aligned with SDG Indicator 4.1.1 on the proportion of children in Grade 3 who achieve at least a minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics.[1]

EQUITY TARGETS FOR OUTCOME 2.1.A. CRLA: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS READING AT GRADE LEVEL (EOSY)

	BASELINE (DepEd, SY 2025-2026)	2028	2031	2035
National	**47.74%**	**75%**	**90%**	**95%**
BARMM	27.97%	45%	65%	85%
Region 12	39.77%	50%	70%	90%
MIMAROPA	41.02%	50%	70%	90%

1 SDG Indicator 4.1.1 also includes children and young people at the end of primary,and at the end of lower secondary

OUTCOME 2.1.B. PHIL-IRI: Increased percentage grade ready Grade 10 students

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
Phil-IRI BOSY: **42.1%** 623,862 grade ready out of the 1,481,177 Grade 10 students assessed in Filipino (DepEd, SY 2025-2026)	**57%** **2026: 47%** +72,291 **2027: 52%** +74,059 **2028: 57%** +74,059	**72%**	**87%**	**DepEd**
18.1% 268,041 grade ready out of the 1,484,204 Grade 10 students assessed in English (DepEd, SY 2025-2026)	**33%** **2026: 23%** +73,326 **2027: 28%** +74,210 **2028: 33%** +74,210	**48%**	**63%**	

GLOBAL BENCHMARKS:

In 2022, around 68.5% of lower secondary school age Vietnamese children were able to meet minimum reading comprehension standards (UNESCO and World Bank, 2025).

EQUITY TARGETS FOR OUTCOME 2.1.B PHIL-IRI: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS THAT ARE GRADE READY IN FILIPINO

	BASELINE (DepEd, SY 2025-2026)	2028	2031	2035
National	**42.1%**	**57%**	**72%**	**87%**
Region 9	25.9%	41%	56%	71%
Region 10	26.4%	42%	57%	72%
CARAGA	28%	43%	58%	73%

EQUITY TARGETS FOR OUTCOME 2.1.B PHIL-IRI: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS THAT ARE GRADE READY IN ENGLISH

	BASELINE (DepEd, SY 2025-2026)	2028	2031	2035
National	**18.1%**	**33%**	**48%**	**63%**
Region 12	9.7%	25%	40%	55%
Region 9	9.8%	25%	40%	55%
Region 5	10.1%	25%	40%	55%

Outcome 2.1.C. RMA: Increased percentage of Key Stage 1 learners with at-grade-level numeracy skills

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
RMA EOSY: **40.49%** 2,223,763 at grade level out of the 5,492,078 KS1 learners assessed (DepEd, SY 2024-2025)	**65%** **2026: 49%** +467,355 **2027: 57%** +439,366 **2028: 65%** +439,367	**75%**	**85%**	**DepEd**

EQUITY TARGETS FOR OUTCOME 2.1.C. RMA: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WITH NUMERACY SKILLS AT GRADE LEVEL (EOSY)

	BASELINE (DepEd, SY 2024-2025)	2028	2031	2035
National	**40.49%**	**65%**	**75%**	**85%**
BARMM	27.58%	40%	55%	70%
Region 11	32.62%	45%	60%	75%
Region 9	34.24%	50%	65%	80%

Outcome 2.1.D. ELLNA: Increased percentage of at least proficient Grade 3 learners

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
ELLNA: **30.52%** 430,457 at least proficient out of 1,410,408 KS1 learners assessed (DepEd, SY 2023-2024)	**50%** **2026: 37%** +91,394 **2027: 44%** +98,729 **2028: 50%** +84,624	**70%**	**90%**	**DepEd**

EQUITY TARGETS FOR OUTCOME 2.1.D. ELLNA: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS THAT ARE AT LEAST PROFICIENT

	BASELINE (DepEd, SY 2024-2025)	2028	2031	2035
National	**30.52%**	**50%**	**70%**	**90%**
GIDA	24.65%	40%	55%	70%
Last Mile Schools	29.26%	45%	60%	75%
Hardship Post	22.17%	40%	55%	70%
IPEd	24.91%	40%	55%	70%
MEP	25.23%	40%	55%	70%

RECOMMENDATION 2.1.1. Address classroom backlog and congestion in schools, utilizing different modalities (LGU and CSO partnerships, PPPs, voucher program)*

*While the intention is to put focus on Key Stage 1, because DepEd's data system precludes disaggregation, we are unable to propose more nuanced targets. However, moving forward, it is ideal for DepEd to track in a more targeted way to allow strategic allocation of resources.

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
2.1.1.a. Number of classrooms constructed to address current backlog and Target classrooms to be funded	**63.84%** 24,692 out of 38,680 elementary schools (2024)	**18.3%** 40,000 out of 219,000 deficit	**28%** 65,246 out of 232,805 deficit	**34.4%** 82,089 out of 239,987 deficit	**DepEd and DPWH**
Target classrooms to be funded[1]		**40,000** [2]	**65,246**	**82,507**	
▪ *Basic Education Facilities Fund (DPWH and LGUs)*	**9,158** 2026-2028 (DepEd, 2025)	**19,520**	**19,520**	**26,027**	
▪ *PPP for School Infrastructure Program (PSIP) targets*[3]	**9,296** PSIP I **4,367** PSIP II (DepEd, 2025)	**15,000** PSIP III	**40,000** PSIP IV	**50,000** PSIP V	
▪ *Adopt-a-School Program*[4]	**142 (DepEd, 2025)**	**1,500**	**1,500**	**2,000**	
▪ *No. of classrooms decongested through vouchers issued based on identified free seats in private elementary schools*	**111,998** free seats ≈ 3,733 classrooms (ECAIR, 2024)[5]	**119,390** seats ≈ 3,980 classrooms	**126,782** seats ≈ 4,226 classrooms	**134,398** seats ≈ 4,480 classrooms [6]	
Classrooms needed based on current and projected deficit		**219,000**	**232,805**	**239,987**	
▪ *Current backlog*		165,443	179,000	167,559	
▪ *For condemnation (classroom 50 years old and above)* [7]		51,222	51,470	69,288	
▪ *Classrooms totally damaged by typhoons, earthquakes, and other calamities*		2,335	2,335	3,140	
2.1.1.b. No. of schools implementing multiple class shifts across Elementary Schools[8]	**1,410** (DepEd, 2024)	**0**	**0**	**0**	**DepEd**
▪ *No. with double shifts*	1,301	0	0	0	
▪ *No. with triple class shifts*	31	0	0	0	
▪ *No. with two or more shifts*	78	0	0	0	
2.1.1.c. No. of Last Mile School classrooms constructed[9]	**9,542** Target LMS classrooms to be built (DepEd, 2025)	**50%** **2026: 17%** +1,590 **2027: 33%** +1,590 **2028: 50%** +1,590	**100%** +4,772		**DepEd and DPWH**

1 Assumes average construction time of 3 years (Abrigo et. al, 2025).
2 President Marcos committed to building 40,000 additional classrooms before the end of his term in 2028. To achieve this goal, the BEFF target of classroom construction started in 2026-2028 needs to increase from 9,158 to 19,767 to complement other construction mechanisms.
3 Based on DepEd's target to fund 105,000 classrooms through PPPs from 2026 to 2028
4 Projections are based on the assumption that the previous baselines of 142 classrooms built through the Adopt-a-School Program will be increased to 500 per year.
5 Based on E-CAIR's mapping of the free seats in private elementary schools for SY 2023-2024. Assumes that 30 free seats is equivalent to the decongestion of 1 public school classroom.
6 Assuming a progressive and proportionate increase in number of free seats in privates schools which shall reach 20% in 203
7 EFD's projection of classrooms to be condemned for the whole basic education.
8 Includes schools in S.Y 2023-2024 with elementary offering such as those tagged as Purely ES, ES and JHS, and All Offering
9 Last mile schools are constructed in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged and Conflict-Affected Areas (GIDCAs) and hardship posts (as measured by the hardship index variables: transportation from school to SDO, human violence, availability of temporary learning spaces, level of poverty, and availability of basic amenities), defined in DepEd DM No. 058 s. 2019, DepEd DO No. 039 s. 2021.

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
2.1.1.d. Percentage of elementary classrooms needing major repairs addressed[10]	**75,654**[11] elementary classrooms needing major repair (DepEd, 2024)	**50%** 31,523[12] **2026: 14%** +10,507 **2027: 28%** +10,508 **2028: 50%** +10,508	**80%** +18,913	**100%** +25,218	**DepEd and DPWH**

On classroom construction and decongestion

- Review the threshold for minor and major repairs and empower schools to undertake repairs in light of delays with DPWH
- Revise guidelines on the Quick Response Fund to clarify DRRM policies and guidelines to ensure consistent implementation across all units, including the roles of the different funds, i.e. QRF, DPRP, BEFF, and GSIS Insurance, and enable flexible, risk-based resource allocation
- Streamline QRF disbursement and replenishment, and ensure disaster funds cover both natural and man-made emergencies
- Assess school vulnerabilities, partner with hazard-mapping agencies (i.e. UPRI), and strengthen modular learning continuity

On classroom repairs

As recommended in EDCOM II's consultations with DepEd EFD, a crucial step in achieving the repair targets is to review the definitions of major and minor repairs. This will clarify the levels of interventions available to schools, differentiating between repairs that schools can handle on their own or in collaboration with LGUs and other partners, thereby bypassing procurement bottlenecks and enabling DPWH to concentrate on more complex repair cases. Considering the country's vulnerability to disaster-related losses, it is imperative for DepEd to follow through with its commitment to construct and rehabilitate buildings with a climate-adaptive design. This aligns with SDG Target 13.1, which calls for strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters.

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
2.1.1.e. Schools with functional health clinics[13] DepEd proposal is to target schools with more than 1,000 students as of School Year 2024-2025	**37%** 1,869 out of 5,092 target (DepEd, 2025)	**80%** **2026: 51%** +728 **2027: 65%** +713 **2028: 80%** +764	**100%**	**100%**	**DepEd**

On the accreditation of school health clinics

To strengthen the capacity of school clinics to provide comprehensive health care services, DepEd recommends its accreditation as PhilHealth Konsulta Package Provider (KPP) through PhilHealth's capitation system.

10 Major repairs refer to the replacement of school building components that bear critical structural loads and stresses (DepEd DO 35, s. 2017). The allowable cost for a major repair ranges from Php 50,000 up to below 10% of the cost of constructing a new classroom, about Php 250,000, given DepEd's average classroom cost of Php 2.5 million. Such repairs may be charged to the Basic Education Facilities Fund (BEFF) for wear-and-tear, or to the Quick Response Fund (QRF) for disaster-related damage.

11 Data from DepEd SY 2023-2024 National School Buildings Inventory (NSBI), isolating for elementary schools offering ES to SHS, ES and JHS, ES only.

12 The stock–flow model treats the baseline as the stock of classrooms needing major repairs (75,654 in 2023). Each year, a flow of completed repairs reduces this stock until the backlog is cleared by 2035.

13 There are too few school health clinics because the high establishment (Php 1M per clinic) and staffing costs (Php 2.7M yearly) limit expansion, and many existing clinics remain understaffed. As a result, DepEd strategically establishes clinics to serve clusters of schools rather than every campus, given the severe shortage of health personnel.

RECOMMENDATION 2.1.2. Revise procurement guidelines to ensure complete and timely delivery of textbooks

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
2.1.2.a. Establish comprehensive MTB-MLE instructional materials and learning resources, for Key Stage **1** *(Republic Act 12027)*	**2026:** Language mapping completed	Development of learning resources in the mother tongue, and conduct of teacher training, for monolingual classes			**DepEd**
2.1.2.b. Address procurement challenges in textbooks and other learning resources Percentage of Elementary learners with complete set of textbooks (1:1)	~10,001,702 out of the 13,335,603 elementary learners SY 2023-2024	**100%** All 14,748,764 elementary learners (as of 2025)	Delivery of updated textbooks following the 5-year cycle followed by DepEd	**100%**	**DepEd**

RECOMMENDATION 2.1.3. Provide equitable internet connectivity and digital resources for schools, teachers, and learners

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
2.1.3.a. Provision of internet connection to elementary schools	**79.2%** 29,429 out of 37,141 schools (DepEd, 2025)	**100%** **2026: 86%** +2,512 **2027: 93%** +2,600 **2028: 100%** +2,600	**100%**	**100%**	**DepEd and DICT**
2.1.3.b. Provision of laptops to teachers	**16.03%** 140,429 (DepEd, 2025)	**100%** **2026: 67%** +454,259 **2027: 88%** +183,319 **2028: 100%** +106,144	**100%**	**100%**	**DepEd and DICT**
2.1.3.c. Percentage of elementary schools with eLearning Cart Package	**1.03%** 383 out of 37,108 schools (DepEd, 2024)	**3.97%** **2026: 2.01%** +368 **2027: 3%** +368 **2028: 3.97%** +368	**76%** **2029: 27.9%** +9,106 **2030: 51.9%** +9,106 **2031: 76%** +9,106	**100%**	**DepEd and DICT**
2.1.3.d. Provision of Smart TVs for classrooms (5 per package, per school)	**34%** 15,404 out of 45,794 schools	**72%** **2026: 47%** +5,922 **2027: 59%** +5,807 **2028: 72%** +5,693	**100%** **2026: 84%** +5,581 **2027: 96%** +5,472 **2028: 100%** +1,916	**100%**	**DepEd**
2.1.3.e. School electrification	**93%** 44,614 out of the 47,972 schools are electrified; SY 2023-2024 (Q-BEDP, 2025)	**100%** +3,358	**100%**	**100%**	**DepEd**
2.1.3.f. Electrical upgrading	**13.6%** of schools equivalent to 6,435[114] needs electrical upgrading (DepEd, 2025)	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**DepEd**

14 Computed from the 9,793 schools identified under the programs "Electrification of Un-Energized Schools and Modernization of Electrical Systems of On-Grid Schools" and "Modernization of Existing Electrical Facilities (Rewiring) and Installation of Transformer," excluding the 3,358 schools already targeted for electrification. Data based on the Department of Education's official submission under Memorandum OULLA-2025-1873, submitted in response to the request of the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II) for data on classroom congestion, construction, and major repairs (DepEd, 2025).

ADDRESS "MASS PROMOTION" IN SCHOOLS

As supported by EDCOM II, the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program Act (Republic Act 12028) was passed into law in October 2024, becoming a legal framework for a national learning intervention program for struggling students, particularly in reading, mathematics, and science. In its implementation, EDCOM has consistently urged that principles of "Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL)"—among the Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel's "great buys" or cost-effective investments for improved learning outcomes—be considered.

RECOMMENDATION 2.1.4. End"mass promotion" in schools (Fully implement ARAL; Revise RPMS, OPCR and GAA targets; and Rescinding the grade transmutation policy).

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
2.1.4.a. Fully Implement ARAL Program (Republic Act 12028)	Initial implementation in reading for SY 2025-2026	Continuous refinement of program to support learners in reading, math and science			**DepEd**
2.1.4.b. Amend the RPMS and OPCRF, and other targets that unintendedly lead to mass promotion	Persisting practice of mass promotion despite the removal of the link between PBB and student promotion rate in 2019	**2026:** ▪ **Review and revision of all the policies and plans that unintendedly encourage mass promotion** (e.g. GAA DepDev targets). ▪ **Establishing clear mechanisms for determination of context-specific targets** at the Central, Regional, Division, and School-levels. ▪ **Revise the RPMS,** ensuring the clear articulation of the removal of the link between school principals' incentives and student promotion. **Likewise, calibrating practices and interpretation on the ground.** ▪ **Articulate safeguards in the RPMS to protect teacher autonomy.** **2027-2035:** Implementation of the revised RPMS and OPCRF			**DepEd and DepDev**
2.1.4.c. Phase out DepEd's grade transmutation policy	DepEd's grade transmutation policy (DepEd Order No. 08, S. 2015) is under review	**2027-2028:** Implementation of phaseout of grade transmutation policy			**DepEd**
2.1.4.d. Teachers trained on functional literacy and learner remediation, including structured pedagogy programs	Baseline to be established in ARAL's implementation in SY 2025-2026	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**DepEd**
2.1.4.e. Implementation of vision screening for all Kinder students *(Republic Act 11358 or the Vision Screening Act of 2019)*	**By 2026:** Begin full implementation; Requires catch-up for at least 3 years to cover older batches	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**DepEd**

Beyond the ARAL Program, it is imperative for DepEd to review and revise its Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS), and Office Performance Commitment and Review Form (OPCRF), to ensure that targets or incentives within these systems are not linked, directly or indirectly, to student promotion or dropout rates. A streamlined, outcomes-focused performance management system, centered on improving student learning rather than compliance or promotion rates, will help ensure that all promotion decisions genuinely reflect students' actual performance.

REDUCE THE ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN ON TEACHERS

Teacher workload has long been identified as a key barrier to improving classroom instruction. IDInsight (2025) notes that 42% of teachers work over 50 hours per week, spending around 17.8 hours on additional duties and 8.1 hours on program-related tasks. Much of this time is dedicated to filling out forms and complying with reporting requirements.

DepEd has revised its School Organizational Structure and Staffing Standards (SOSSS) to ensure that schools are staffed proportionately to their size. Administrative Officers, Project Development Officers, School Counselors, and School Counselor Associates are expected to support teachers by taking on administrative, project management, and student counseling tasks. These staffing parameters inform plantilla creation and filling targets from 2025 to 2035.

RECOMMENDATION 2.1.5. Reduce the administrative burden on teachers

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
2.1.5.a. Create plantilla positions based on the updated DepEd School Organizational Structure and Staffing Standards (SOSSS)					**DepEd, DBM**
▪ Administrative Officer II (SG 11)	**34,519** Existing positions out of 46,597 required items	**+12,078** **2026:** +11,268 **2027:** +810			
▪ Administrative Officer IV (SG 15)	**325** Existing positions out of 4,978 required items	**+4,653** **2026:** +4,653			
▪ Project Development Officer I (SG 11)	**1,500** Existing positions out of 45,785 required items	**+44,285** **2026:** +5,000 **2027:** +20,000 **2028:** +19,285			
▪ School Counselor Associate I (SG 11)	**0** existing positions out of 51,572 required items	**+40,853** **2025:** 5,844 (created SCA positions through scrap and build) **2026:** +10,000 **2027:** 14,291 **2028:** 10,718	**+10,719**		
▪ School Counselor (SG 16)	**603** RGC/RPsy incumbents to be reclassified to SC; 22,542 required items (DepEd, 2025)	**+1,500** **2026:** +500 **2027:** +500 **2028:** +500	**+1,500**	**+2,000**	
2.1.5.b. Fill authorized plantilla positions					**DepEd**

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
▪ Administrative Officer II	**73%** 25,137 filled out of the 34,519 existing items	**100%** **2026:** 100% **2027:** 100% **2028:** 100%			
▪ Administrative Officer IV	**26%** 1,279 filled out of the 4,978 existing items	**100%** **2026:** 75% **2027:** 100% **2028:** 100%			
▪ Project Development Officer I	**96%** 1,821 filled out of the 1,893 existing items	**100%** **2026:** 100% **2027:** 100% **2028:** 100%			
▪ School Counselor Associate I	**0%** 0 filled out of the 5,844 items to be created this 2025 through scrap and build	**100%** **2026:** 75% **2027:** 100% **2028:** 100%	**100%**		
▪ School Counselor	**60%** 603 incumbents to be reclassified to SC out of 1,000 SC positions targeted for 2026	**100%** **2026:** 100% **2027:** 100% **2028:** 100%	**100%**	**+100%**	

BEYOND FUNCTIONAL LITERACY

Functional literacy is essential, yet insufficient on its own. Learners must also develop the socioemotional, ethical, and interpersonal capacities that allow them to navigate the personal, academic, and social demands of their lives. KPA 2, therefore, extends beyond the technical acquisition of skills in reading, writing, and numeracy, and recognizes the broader set of competencies that shape how learners understand themselves, relate to others, and participate in their communities. These capacities are central to the aims of the MATATAG curriculum, which frames education as the holistic development of the child.

Socioemotional learning (SEL) has emerged as a particularly vital dimension. Competencies such as emotional regulation, perspective-taking, empathy, responsible decision-making, and conflict management form the scaffolding for sustained learning and well-being. In the current curriculum, these are embedded in Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao (ESP). UNICEF (2024) identifies five macroskills that help anchor SEL development: pag-unawa (understanding), pagninilay (reflection), pagsangguni (seeking advice), pagpapasya (decision-making), and pagkilos (taking action). These reinforce the curriculum's aspiration to form learners who can reflect on their choices, act responsibly, and engage constructively with others.

Values Education within ESP aims to nurture these dispositions, but EDCOM II's Standing Committee members stress that its approach often remains anchored on external behavioral expectations rather than deeper competencies. For Values Education to support the MATATAG curriculum more fully, it must cultivate dispositions aligned with active citizenship, participatory democracy, and peaceful coexistence. This includes the ability to recognize one's interconnectedness with others, understand diverse perspectives, negotiate differences, and contribute to the shared life of the community.

The need to foster unity while appreciating diversity becomes more pressing when viewed against the Philippines' cultural, ethnic, and linguistic plurality. The Delors Commission's four pillars of education—learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together—remain relevant in this regard. "Learning to live together" invites learners to collaborate and navigate differences constructively, while "learning to be" highlights the importance of personal integrity and ethical development. These pillars offer a useful lens for reimagining how Values Education can center the learner's humanity and relationships with others.

Local and global frameworks converge around similar ideas. Many Scandinavian systems emphasize empathy as a core skill for social cohesion. Filipino psychology (Sikolohiyang Pilipino) grounds this in the concepts of kapwa and pakikipagkapwa, which frame the self as fundamentally connected to others. Embedding these concepts meaningfully in instruction can support learners in building relationships rooted in respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility.

This broader perspective on human development also aligns with a growing critique of schooling systems that privilege only two intelligences: verbal–linguistic and logical–mathematical. Learners who excel in these areas often gain a competitive advantage for scholarships, awards, and future employment. Those whose strengths lie in other domains, musical, kinesthetic, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist, or existential intelligences, are often overlooked or labeled as weak. This narrowness reinforces social inequalities by rewarding a limited set of abilities while undervaluing others that may be equally important for individual and collective flourishing.

Instead of fulfilling its promise as the "great equalizer," education often becomes a divider when it recognizes only a select set of talents. KPA 2, therefore, calls for a broader vision of foundational learning, one that integrates literacy and numeracy with the socioemotional, ethical, and interpersonal capacities needed to form compassionate, capable, and responsible learners. This vision recognizes that strong learning outcomes rest not only on technical skills, but also on the learner's character, relationships, and sense of belonging within a diverse society.

EDCOM II RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KPA 2

2.1 Ensure students are functionally literate

RECOMMENDATION	AGENCY	TIMELINE
Classroom Construction ▪ Employ different modalities (PPP, DepEd-LGU/CSO or CAP, Adopt a School, Leasing, etc.) for classroom construction. ▪ Review the threshold for minor and major repairs and empower schools to undertake repairs in light of delays with DPWH . ▪ Revise guidelines on the Quick Response Fund (QRF) to clarify DRRM policies and guidelines to ensure consistent implementation across all units, including the roles of the different funds, i.e. QRF, DPRP, BEFF, and GSIS Insurance, and enable flexible, risk-based resource allocation. ▪ Streamline QRF disbursement and replenishment, and ensure disaster funds cover both natural and man-made emergencies. ▪ Assess school vulnerabilities, partner with hazard-mapping agencies (i.e. UPRI), and strengthen modular learning continuity.	**DepEd**	**2026**
Learning Resources ▪ Develop a two-stage textbook pipeline: (A) a pre-evaluation & pre-selection stage run by DepEd to vet and list acceptable titles before any buying; then (B) the usual procurement but only from the pre-selected list. ▪ Require uploading of digital version of textbooks in the procurement requirements.	**DepEd**	**2026**
Addressing Mass Promotion ▪ Balance preventive K-3 instruction with remediation initiatives through distinct budget lines for remediation and prevention (e.g. protected daily time, teacher coaching, production of decodable texts, early identification, and family engagement).	**DepEd**	**2026**

VALENZUELA CITY'S EDUCATION 360° INVESTMENT PROGRAM – *Addressing Classroom Decongestion Through Strategic Infrastructure Planning*



Valenzuela City has long been recognized for its efforts to improve the education opportunities available to its constituents. Its Education 360°Investment Program was recognized as one of the Ten Outstanding Programs in Local Governance by the **Galing Pook Foundation in 2015**, highlighting the City's holistic approach in prioritizing investments for curriculum improvements, community engagement and resourcing for education. A key component of the program is its massive infrastructure investments in classrooms, with multi-year plans mapped out to guide its construction priorities.



NORZAGARAY'S PROJECT BRIGHT
as a Local Model for Effective Early Literacy Remediation



Through targeted interventions, smaller class sizes, and outstanding support from the local government, schools in Norzagaray, Bulacan are proving that the country's learning crisis can be tackled effectively, according to findings from a joint consultation with the Second Congressional Commission on Education and the Department of Education. Since 2023, Norzagaray has initiated Project BRIGHT (BRIdging Gaps through Helpful Tools), a collaboration between the DepEd schools, teachers, parents, and local government officials. Since then, their outstanding results—eliminating illiteracy among their Grades 1 to 3 students, provide a compelling counter-narrative to the 2022 PISA results, where 75% of Filipino students were identified as low performers in core subjects, as well as the 2022 World Bank study that showed 91 % of 10-year-old Filipino children could not read a simple text.

DepEd's Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment highlights the remarkable progress in Bulacan for Grades 1-3. The School District Office of Bulacan posted an average progress score of 23.72% in improving student reading profiles during the 2024-2025 school year, outpacing the national average of 20%.

A standout achievement is that 60.73% of students in Norzagaray, Bulacan are now reading at their grade level, far exceeding the national average of 47.74%.

The schools visited by EDCOM 2 and DepEd in Norzagaray exemplified this success. North Hills Village Elementary School achieved an exceptional 61.6% progress score, followed by FVR Phase 3 Elementary School (52.7%) and Norzagaray Elementary School (47.1%).

Across the three schools in Norzagaray, teachers showcased their intentionality and creativity in coming up with programs that engaged students while improving their literacy. This included learning through play strategies, through games that focused on phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension, story reading during lunch breaks, one-on-one tutorials for students, and even songs and online games to continuously target learners that require further practice.

Teachers consistently cited the unwavering support of the local government as a game-changer. Norzagaray Mayor Merlyn Germar's administration provided a Php 7,000 incentive to teachers for summer reading camps and ensured a quarterly supply of literacy materials. This combination of school-led innovation and robust local government partnership allowed educators to focus on teaching, not on resource shortages. DepEd Assistant Secretary Jerome Buenviaje noted that this model provides a concrete framework for the nationwide Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program.

KEY PRIORITY AREA 3: DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING, DIGITAL SKILLS, AND GRADUATE READINESS FOR EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, AND TVET

KPA 3 advances the learning continuum by emphasizing the development of higher-order cognitive, digital, and employability skills. It recognizes that learners must not only master basic competencies but also acquire the critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication abilities needed to thrive in further education, technical-vocational training, or the world of work.

Communication skills are directly measured through the Grade 12 National Achievement Test, particularly by the Language and Communication domain. In this domain, the NAT also measures Problem Solving, Critical Thinking, and Information Literacy; hence, it is also used as a proxy measure for Critical Thinking and Creativity, considering the close association between these skills. Considering the very low baseline for this outcome, an incremental increase of ~10% per year is set as the target for succeeding years.

SUMMARY OF KPA 3 OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

KPA 3.1 Equip all students with critical thinking, creative thinking, and communication skills, strengthening readiness for employment

OUTCOMES & RECOMMENDATIONS	BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
		2028	2031	2035	
Outcome 3.1.A. NAT Grade 12 Overall: % of learners who are at least proficient	**0.4%** (DepEd, 2024)	**30%**	**60%**	**90%**	**DepEd**
Outcome 3.1.B. NAT Grade 12 Language and Communication: % of learners who are at least proficient	**0.03%** (DepEd, 2024)	**30%**	**60%**	**90%**	**DepEd**
Outcome 3.1.C. Employment Rate of SHS, TVET, and Higher Education graduates at least six months after completion of training or graduation[1]					
▪ SHS	20% (Orbeta & Potestad, 2025)	≥20%	≥20%	≥20%	**DepEd**
▪ Higher Education	60% (Tutor et al., 2021)	≥60%	≥60%	≥60%	**CHED**
▪ TVET	70% (SETG, 2020)	83%	84%	85%	**TESDA**
Recommendation 3.1.1. Ensure teacher subject-specialization alignment					**DepEd**
Recommendation 3.1.2. Improve quality and relevance of SHS TechPro program					**DepEd**
Recommendation 3.1.3. Institutionalize school-to-employment pathways and strengthen industry-academe coordination					**CHED, TESDA, CHED, DOLE/ PESOs**

1 This is for learners seeking employment and not further studies

3.1. EQUIP ALL STUDENTS WITH CRITICAL THINKING, CREATIVE THINKING, AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS, STRENGTHENING READINESS FOR EMPLOYMENT

OUTCOME 3.1.A. NAT GRADE 12 OVERALL: % of learners who are at least proficient

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
0.4% 6,518 learners at least proficient out of the 1,611,809 assessed (DepEd, 2024) **NAT Grade 12: Overall**	**30%** 2026: 10% +154,663 2027: 20% +161,181 2028: 30% +161,181	**60%**	**90%**	**DepEd**

GLOBAL BENCHMARKS:

The PDP and Q-BEDP aim to increase the percentage of Grade 12 learners achieving at least proficient in the NATReading and NAT-Math to 59% and 43% by 2028, respectively.

EDCOM POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

HEIs will need to serve as a bridge while basic education outcomes progressively improve toward the 60% target by 2031 and the 90% target by 2035. This transition period must be supported by clear policy alignment, capacitybuilding, and sustained inter-agency collaboration to ensure that expanding access to higher education also results in improved learning outcomes and graduate quality.

OUTCOME 3.1.B. NAT Grade 12 Language and Communication: % of learners who are at least proficient

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
0.03% 438 learners at least proficient out of the 1,611,809 assessed (DepEd, 2024) **NAT Grade 12: Language and Communication**	**30%** 2026: 10% +154,663 2027: 20% +161,181 2028: 30% +161,181	**60%**	**90%**	**DepEd**

As confirmed by DepEd–Bureau of Education Assessment (BEA), there is currently no outcome indicator for digital skills, although the digital literacy component of the ALS A&E test presents a promising tool that can be repurposed for measuring digital skills in basic education (DepEd, 2025, September 5).

OUTCOME 3.1.C. Employment Rate of SHS, TVET, and Higher Education graduates at least six months after completion of training or graduation[2]

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
~20% of SHS graduates enter the labor force while over 70% go into further education	≥20%	≥20%	≥20%	DepEd
60% or 76% of higher education graduates are employed, out of the 86% who participate in the labor force (2021) [3]	≥60%	≥60%	≥60%	CHED
70% TVET (2020)[4]	83%	84%	84%	TESDA

GLOBAL BENCHMARKS:

In Malaysia, 59.5% of higher education graduates were employed within six months of graduation.[5] In Peru, the figure was 48.22%.[6]

In the Philippines, a PIDS tracer study (2021) shows a slower school-to-work transition: graduates of PRC-licensure programs began job hunting about 5.9 months after graduation and secured their first job after 15 months on average. Those in non-PRC programs started searching earlier (3.2 months) and entered their first job sooner (10.5 months).[8]

EDCOM POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

In SY 2025–2026, DepEd piloted the Strengthened SHS Curriculum, selecting 841 of 1,277 nominated schools to implement reforms aimed at expanding learner choice and improving workforce readiness. The curriculum streamlines SHS from four tracks to two—Academic and TechPro—requiring schools to realign offerings, remove overlaps, and focus on core subjects and elective clusters. Continued quality assurance must be multi-layered, aligning curriculum, teacher qualifications, facilities, and assessments to ensure graduates attain industry-recognized competencies.

RECOMMENDATION 3.1.1. Address teacher subject-specialization misalignment

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
3.1.1.a. Increased % occupancy rate of authorized teaching positions	**96.5%** ~892,678[7] filled out of 925,087 authorized teaching positions	**100%** Even as plantilla numbers[8] increase, the goal remains full (100%) occupancy	100%	100%	DepEd

2 This is for learners seeking employment and not further studies
3 Tutor, M. V., Orbeta, A. C., Jr., & Miraflor, J. M. B. (2021). The 4th Philippine Graduate Tracer Study: Examining Higher Education as a Pathway to Employment, Citizenship, and Life Satisfaction from the Learner's Perspective (PIDS Research Paper Series No. 2021-05). Philippine Institute for Development Studies. https://pidswebs.pids.gov.ph/CDN/PUBLICATIONS/pidsrp2105.pdf
4 The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) employment rate baseline adopted here is derived from the Study on Employment of TVET Graduates (SETG) conducted in 2020, which is consistent with the targets set in the National Technical Education and Skills Development Plan (NTESDP) 2023-2028 and aligned with the baseline of SHS and Higher Education (2020). For context on recent performance, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) has achieved an average employment rate of 77% over the last five calendar years: CY 2019: 70.51% ; CY 2020: 78.57%; CY 2021: 76.69%; CY 2022: 79.00%; and CY 2023: 83.34%
5 Graduate employability statistics for Malaysia sourced from: Penang Institute. (2022). Graduate Employability: Trends, Gaps, and Policy Implications. Retrieved from https://penanginstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Employability-report.pdf
6 Graduate employment timeline in Peru sourced from: Frontiers in Education. (2025). Employment outcomes among university graduates. Retrieved from https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/education/articles/10.3389/feduc.2025.1664249/full
7 DepEd Plantilla Status Report based on GMIS data as of June 30, 2025
8 Actual numbers of projected new plantilla positions have already requested from DepEd

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
3.1.1.b. Reduced % of Mismatched Teachers	**74.69%**[9] ~666,741[10] of teachers experience some level of subject-specialization mismatch. Where 42.86% of teachers are mismatched; and 31.84% handle a mix of aligned and misaligned subjects. (Mejia et al., 2025)	**0%** **2026:** -33% -222,247 Mismatched teachers **2027:** -33% -222,247k **2028:** -33% -222,247k	**0%**	**0%**	**DepEd, CHED, TEC**

The table below shows the distribution of Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) offering the specialization in BSEd-Values Education and BSEd-Science, highlighting regional disparities in access to the program.

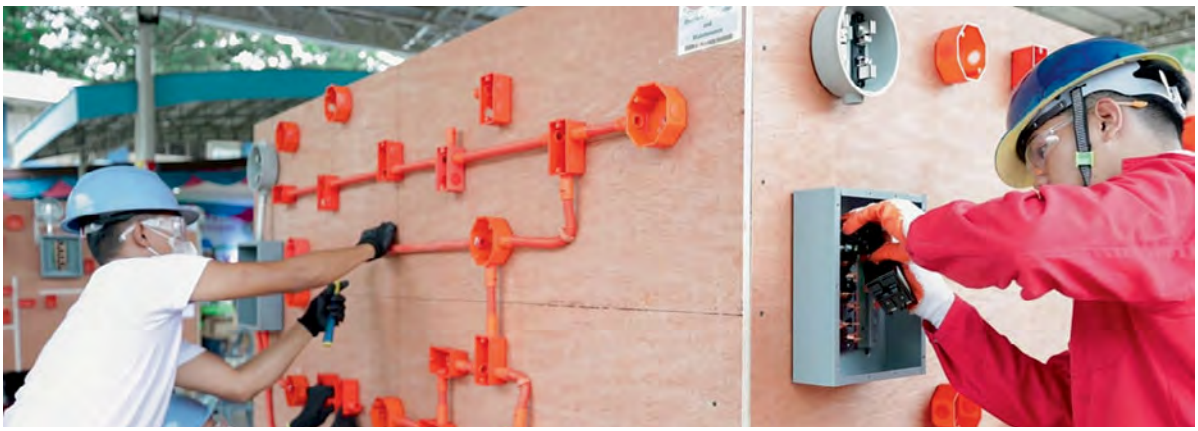
REGION	SECONDARY EDUCATION, MAJOR IN VALUES EDUCATION (BACHELORS)	SCIENCE EDUCATION (BACHELORS)	REGION	SECONDARY EDUCATION, MAJOR IN VALUES EDUCATION (BACHELORS)	SCIENCE EDUCATION (BACHELORS)
Region 1	9	33	**Region 10**	3	6
Region 2	4	25	**Region 11**	2	11
Region 3	13	30	**Region 12**	2	7
Region 4	3	10	**NCR**	3	9
Region 5	3	13	**CAR**	1	4
Region 6	1	7	**Caraga**	1	3
Region 7	1	8	**MIMAROPA**	2	3
Region 8	2	6	**BARMM**	0	5
Region 9	3	4	**NIR**	3	9

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
3.1.1.c. Institutionalize quality assurance of Teacher-Education Programs					
% of TEIs with accredited programs (undergraduate programs)	**TBD** (Universe of 1,470, excluding BARMM)	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**CHED, PRC, TEC**
	0 (Universe of 83 for BARMM)	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**MBHTE**
% of TEIs with accredited programs (graduate programs)	**TBD** (National)	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**CHED, PRC, TEC**
	TBD (BARMM)	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**MBHTE**

Source: Teacher Education Council (as of December 2025)

9 Mejia, I. P., Tenorio, A. D., Monteverde, R. P., Marasigan, A. C., De Vera, J. L., Castulo, N. J., de Pano, C. P., Sinsay-Villanueva, L. M., Tanyag, I. H., & Berroya, J. D. (2025). Taught Off-Guard: When Specialization and Teaching Assignments Do Not Match (PIDS Policy Notes No. 2025-17). Philippine Institute for Development Studies. https://www.pids.gov.ph/publications/category/policy-notes

10 Approximation based on 74.69% of ~892,678 filled teaching position as of June 2025



Department of Education Philippines. (2023, July 18). Sa pangalawang araw ng National Festival of Talents (NFOT) Technolympics [Photograph]. Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/DepartmentOfEducation.PH/posts/tingnan-sa-pangalawang-araw-ng-national-festival-of-talents-nfot-technolympics-s/670838168417993/

RECOMMENDATION 3.1.2. Improve quality and relevance of SHS TechPro program

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
3.1.2.a. Increased % of SHS TechPro Providers compliant to TESDA Training Standards	**SHS offering TechPro Tracks compliant to TESDA Training Standards** It is essential for DepEd to systematically collect and use data on SHS equipment needs and teacher qualifications to ensure full compliance with TESDA Training Standards	**100%** (Need for DepEd and TESDA to achieve at least 30% per year from 2026-28) **2026:** 30% **2027:** 60% **2028:** 100%	**100%**	**100%**	**DepEd, TESDA**
3.1.2.b. Increased % of SHS TVL Teachers capacitated	**SHS TVL Teachers Capacitated through specialized program** It is essential for DepEd to systematically collect data on SHS equipment needs and teacher qualifications to ensure full compliance with TESDA Training Standards	**100%** (Need for DepEd to support at least 30% per year from 2026-28) **2026:** 30% **2027:** 60% **2028:** 100%	**100%**	**100%**	**DepEd, TESDA**

On Ensuring Senior High Schools Are Fully Equipped for TechPro Implementation

- To ensure the quality and relevance of the SHS Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) track, schools must comply with TESDA training standards and be fully equipped with tools, machinery, and facilities that meet industry requirements.
- Teacher upskilling and certification remain vital, but these efforts will only translate to quality outcomes if laboratories and workshops are adequately furnished and maintained.
- The full equipping of TechPro implementing SHSs should therefore be explicitly reflected in DepEd's budget estimates and investment programming, ensuring that learners can develop practical, industry-aligned competencies leading to national certification and gainful employment.

INSTITUTIONALIZE SCHOOL-TO-EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS AND STRENGTHEN INDUSTRY-ACADEME COORDINATION

A structured school-to-employment transition requires dedicated institutional mechanisms. As envisioned in the the School-to-Employment Program (STEP) Bill, the establishment of Job Placement Offices (JPOs) would ensure learners receive sustained support through trained personnel, comprehensive career guidance, updated labor market information, and active employer partnerships, contributing to Outcome 3.1.C. Complementing this, the nationwide establishment of Local Industry–Academe Councils (LIACs), would provide provinces and highly urbanized cities with regular platforms to engage industry, identify high-demand occupations, guide specialization offerings, and strengthen work immersion placements. When combined, the JPOs & LIACs create a coherent, locally responsive system in which LIACs supply the labor market intelligence and employer networks that enable JPOs to offer accurate career guidance, job matching, and internship or apprenticeship opportunities, ultimately supporting learners as they transition into employment, higher education, or further training.

RECOMMENDATION 3.1.3. Institutionalize school-to-employment pathways and strengthen industry-academe coordination

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
3.1.3.a. % of SHS with established Job Placement Offices	**0**	**100%** (Need for DepEd to support at least 30% per year from 2026-28) **2026:** 30% **2027:** 60% **2028:** 100%	**100%**	**100%**	**DepEd, TESDA**
3.1.3.b. % of Provinces and HUCs with Local Industry-Academe Councils (LIAC) Universes: 115 provinces: 82 HUCs: 33	**0**	**100%** (Need for DepEd to support at least 30% per year from 2026-28) **2026:** 30% +35 LGUs **2027:** 60% +35 LGUs **2028:** 100% +45 LGUs	**100%**	**100%**	**DepEd, CHED, LGUs**

SYSTEMATIC INTERVENTIONS FROM GRADES 10 TO 12

The transition from basic to higher-level competencies requires coordinated interventions across DepEd, CHED, and TESDA. Republic Act 12313 (Lifelong Learning Development Framework Act) provides the architecture for aligning skills development across the education system, while the Philippines Qualifications Framework (PQF) establishes learning levels across sectors. Integrating PFQ levels into Grades 10–12 assessments can help ensure clearer skills progression.

Microcredentialing pathways, particularly in TVET, present opportunities for targeted upskilling and stackable learning. Embedding microcredentials in SHS allows learners to graduate with verified competencies recognized by TESDA and the industry. These can also support smoother transitions into higher education, especially when integrated with CHED recognition policies. Without sustained remediation, students carry foundational deficits into higher education and the labor market.

EDCOM II RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KPA 3

3.1 Equip all students with critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, and digital skills

RECOMMENDATION	AGENCY	TIMELINE
▪ Ensure relevance of licensure examinations through systematic data use and feedback. ▪ Improve the equitable distribution of Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) designated as Centers of Excellence (COEs) to ensure broader access, support, and collaboration towards high-quality teacher education nationwide.	**TEC**	**2025 -2026**
▪ Provide additional scholarships and subsidies in relevant fields, such as the DepEd's Joint Delivery Voucher Program (JDVP)	**DepEd, CHED, TESDA**	**2026-2031**
▪ Integrate Guidance, information, & scholarships systems (for Secondary Education & Onwards) by developing an updated and interoperable aptitude tool, aligned with data on career pathways and local jobs available	**DepEd, CHED, TESDA, DOLE**	**2028**
▪ Strengthen collaboration between TESDA and DepEd in ensuring the quality of SHS Tech-Voc providers by subjecting their program registration to TESDA's UTPRAS procedures and quality assurance mechanisms.	**DepEd & TESDA**	**2026**

OPOL NATIONAL SECONDARY TECHNICAL SCHOOL'S STRENGTHENED TECH-VOC PATHWAYS *Through Skilled Teachers and Industry-Aligned SHS Program Delivery*

Given its proximity to Cagayan de Oro City, a major hospitality and commercial hub in Northern Mindanao, cookery and food services quickly became high-demand specializations at Opol National Secondary Technical School (ONSTS). Responding to this opportunity, ONSTS proactively secured early membership in the Cagayan de Oro Hotel and Restaurant Association (COHARA) to ensure its programs were aligned with industry standards and to provide students with work immersion placements in reputable hotels and restaurants across the city.

To further strengthen its flagship SHS programs, ONSTS received substantial support from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which provided additional equipment for the State-of-the-Art (SOTA) building and



ALIMPUYAO – ONSTS Publication. (2024, October 15). *Angara binisita ang nag-iisang technical school sa Misamis Oriental* [Photograph]. Facebook. Photo by Krishen Dominguez.

funded the construction of a dedicated gas tank house. These investments significantly upgraded the cookery workshops, enhancing instructional delivery and enabling learners to acquire industry-recognized and certifiable competencies. Today, ONSTS is also TESDA-accredited Training and Assessment Center for various programs.

Teacher quality is also a core strength of ONSTS. The school makes deliberate efforts to assign teachers with the appropriate Teacher's Methodology Certificate (TMC) or at least a National Certificate (NC) to each SHS specialization. As reflected in ONSTS's program profile, most TVL programs are handled by teachers with both NC II and TMC qualifications. In cases where teachers are still completing TMC requirements, such as the Beauty Care (Nail Care) program, ONSTS ensures they are at least NC II holders with relevant teacher-education specialization, such as a Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Technology and Livelihood Education, while actively supporting their pursuit of full TMC certification. This approach ensures compliance with TESDA standards and strengthens the delivery of competency-based training.

PROGRAM	OFFERED	ACCREDITED AS AN ASSESSMENT CENTER	WITH A TVL TEACHER HOLDING RELEVANT NC II	WITH A TVL TEACHER A RELEVANT TMC I
Cookery	■	■	■	■
Agri-Crop Production	■		■	■
Technical Drafting	■		■	■
Shielded Metal Arc Welding	■		■	■
Electric Power Distribution Line Construction NC II	■		■	■
Beauty Care (Nail Care)	■	■	■	

■ YES
□ NO

As its program offerings expanded, ONSTS broadened its partnerships with government agencies, local enterprises, and industry associations. Its Electric Power Distribution Line Construction program, for instance, is delivered in partnership with the Misamis Oriental Electric Service Cooperative (MORESCO).

A notable graduate of this program, Eric Jason Otoc, completed his work immersion with MORESCO and earned his NC II before graduation, enabling him to secure accreditation as an electrician with the same cooperative soon after.



Reflecting on his journey, Eric shared:

"Dako kaayo'g tabang ang Senior High School sa akong kinabuhi. Sa work immersion pa lang sa MORESCO, nakasabot na ko unsa gyud ang tinuod nga trabaho sa mga electrician ug lineman. Pagkuha nako sa NC II, mas nisalig ko sa akong kaugalingon kay kabalo ko nga ang akong nahibaw-an kay sakto ug standard sa trabaho. Karon accredited na ko sa MORESCO ug gapadayon ko sa akong panginabuhian isip electrician."

"The program has made a huge difference in my life. During my work immersion at MORESCO, I learned what the real work of electricians and linemen looks like and the responsibilities the job requires every day. Earning my NC II strengthened my confidence because I knew my skills met industry standards. Today, I am accredited by MORESCO and continuing my livelihood as an electrician."



Partnerships for Indigenous Peoples Education. (2022, August 8). 2022 Leaders in IP Education & Advocacy Program [Photograph]. Facebook. Photo by Tina Basco and Demi Nasol.

KEY PRIORITY AREA 4: PROMOTING INCLUSIVE LEARNING

KPA 4 aims to ensure that every learner, regardless of circumstance or background, can access and complete quality education. It seeks to address structural gaps that have historically excluded certain groups from policy support, including Learners with Disabilities (LWDs), out-of-school youth (OSYs), and Indigenous and Muslim students, who are often loosely tracked, inconsistently supported, or overlooked across agencies. Fragmented data and accountability systems mean that only a small proportion of these learners progress through the education pathways available to their peers.

Despite the existence of programs that are designed to cater to these groups– such as the Special Needs Education (SNED) for LWDs, the Alternative Learning System (ALS) for OSYs, the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) for IP students, and the Madrasah Education Program (MEP) for Muslim learners–the lack of resources and qualified professionals limits the reach and effectiveness of these needs-based interventions.

In addition, despite the high regard they receive, high-achieving students are also prioritized in this chapter, given the inclusivity challenges they are facing. The EDCOM Year 2 report highlights that without tailored support to nurture their talents, they risk underachievement and disengagement.

SUMMARY OF KPA 4 OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OUTCOME 4.1 Increase the participation and completion of learners in inclusive education

OUTCOMES & RECOMMENDATIONS	BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
		2028	2031	2035	
OUTCOME 4.1.A. Increased enrollment rate of children in inclusive education programs	**7.8%** Children with Disabilities	**34%**	**59%**	**85%**	**DepEd**
	12.6% ALS learners	**30%**	**50%**	**70%**	**DepEd & DOST**
	1.03% Best and brightest learners	**1.8%**	**2.4%**	**3%**	**DepEd & NCIP**
	60.4% IP learners	**75%**	**85%**	**95%**	**DepEd & MBHTE**
	20.5% Muslim learners	**46%**	**72%**	**100%**	**DepEd**
OUTCOME 4.1.B. Increased completion rate of learners in inclusive education programs	**TBD** Children with disabilities	**TBD**	**TBD**	**TBD**	**DepEd**
	5.4% ALS learners	**25%**	**50%**	**70%**	
Recommendation 4.1.1. Build better infrastructure for inclusive education learners					**DepEd**
Recommendation 4.1.2. Invest in teachers and professionals in inclusive education					**DepEd**
Recommendation 4.1.3. Expand inclusive education program offering					**DepEd & CHED**

4.1. INCREASE THE PARTICIPATION AND COMPLETION OF LEARNERS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

OUTCOME 4.1.A. Increased enrollment rate of children in inclusive education programs

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
Children with Disabilities				
7.8% 391,098 enrolled out of estimated 5 million total population of children with disabilities[1]	**34%** **2026:** 17% +458,902 **2027:** 25% +400,000 **2028:** 34% +450,000	**59%**	**85%**	**DepEd**

GLOBAL BENCHMARKS:

UNICEF benchmarks on enrollment rate among children with one or more functional difficulty (as of 2022):

- Primary - 81%
- JHS - 79%
- SHS - 65%

This aligns with SDG 4.5 target on ensuring equal access to all levels of education for persons with disabilities.

1 Based on IDInsight's (2025) Descriptive Study on Early Implementation of the Inclusive Education Act

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
ALS Learners				
12.6% 617,712 ALS learners out of 4.9 million OSYs (DepEd, SY 2024-2025)	**30%** **2026:** 19% +313,288 **2027:** 25% +294,000 **2028:** 30% +245,000	**50%**	**70%**	**DepEd**
Best and Brightest Learners				
1.03% 279,796 enrolled in SCP Science and in PSHS out of the 27,081,292 basic education learners (DepEd, SY 2023-2024)	**1.8%** **2026:** +49,779 **2027:** +49,778 **2028:** +49,778	**2.4%** +88,155 learners	**70%** +96,623 learners	**DepEd and DOST**

GLOBAL BENCHMARKS:

- Top 3%: China and South Korea
- Top 10%: in Australia and Europe

On identifying and nurturing "the best and the brightest"

- It is imperative for DepEd to develop an assessment that will enable schools to identify emergent talent as early as Grades 3-5 to enable differentiated supports.
- DepEd, DOST, and other relevant institutions (NCCA, NAS, PHSA, etc) must also work towards greater complementarity of programs and efforts to support the best and brightest across different areas beyond the sciences.

Per Level Target for SCP Science

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
Elementary: 0.88% Only 106,670 out of 12,115,125 elementary learners are in Special Science Elementary Schools (DepEd, 2024)	**1.8%** +133,558	**2.4%** +72,143	**3%** +80,839	**DepEd**
Secondary: 2.43% Only 175,851 out of 7,245,957 JHS learners are in Special Science Junior High Schools (RSHS, LSHS, STE, PSHS) (DepEd; EDCOM 2)	**2.6%** +13,052	**2.8%** +16,012	**3%** +15,784	**DepEd**

EDCOM NOTES:

1. The 3% outcome target for 2035 is set uniformly for both elementary and secondary levels.
2. Interim targets for 2028 and 2035 represent progressive increments from their respective baselines, calibrated to align with the attainment of the 3% goal by 2035.
3. For the Secondary baseline, DepEd's use of JHS population only in their SCP Briefer (2024) was adopted.

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
IP Learners				
60.4% 1,621,640 enrolled out of 2,684,063 school-age IP children (DepEd, 2025)	**70%** **2026:** 60% +123,001 **2027:** 65% +123,001 **2028:** 70% +134,203	**80%**	**90%**	**DepEd**

GLOBAL BENCHMARKS:
ASEAN benchmarks:

- Malaysia (Orang Asli): 77%
- Indonesia (Papua Selatan): 86% for primary

Given the global benchmark, the proposed targets are set go beyond DepEd IPSEO's Targets:

- 2028: Additional 100,000 IP learners enrolled
- 2031: Additional 200,000 IP learners enrolled
- 2035: Additional 300,000 IP learners enrolled

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
Muslim Learners				
20.5% 343,672 ALIVE students out of 1,676,470 school-age Muslim children (DepEd, SY 2023-2024)	**46%** **2026:** 28% +125,740 **2027:** 36% +134,117 **2028:** 46% +167,647	**72%**	**100%**	**DepEd**

GLOBAL BENCHMARKS:
The proposed targets aim for a more aspirational progress in Muslim learner inclusion when referenced with DepEd's targets for MEP learners:

- 2028: 185,330
- 2031: 189,252
- 2035: 194,610

EDCOM NOTES:

1. To ensure that all Muslim learners are receiving culturally responsive education, the target of incorporating all learners to the MEP is set for 2035.
2. Interim targets for 2028 and 2035 represent progressive increments from the baseline.

OUTCOME 4.1.B. Increased completion rate of learners in inclusive education programs

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
Children with Disabilities				
Data pending from DepEd as of Sept 26, 2025 Secondary completion rate (based on their respective IEPs with an embedded transition program)	Data pending from DepEd as of Sept 26, 2025			**DepEd**

EDCOM 2 NOTES:
Of the 391,089 enrolled learners with disabilities, 75% are in mainstream general education classes, while 25% (97,772 LWDS) are in non-graded or self-contained programs.

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
ALS Learners				
5.4% 266,113 ALS completers out of the 4.9 million OSYs (DepEd, SY 2024-2025)	**25%** **2026: 12%** +321,887 **2027: 18%** +294,000 **2028: 25%** +343,000	**50%**	**70%**	**DepEd**

RECOMMENDATION 4.1.1. Build better infrastructure for inclusive education learners

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
SPED Centers and Inclusive Learning Resource Centers					
4.1.1.a. Percentage of municipalities/ cities with a SPED Center	**28%** 471 out of 1,642 municipalities and cities	**52%** **2026:** 36% +121 **2027:** 44% +294,000 **2028:** 52% +132	**76%**	**100%**	**DepEd**
Percentage of 4th class municipalities with a SPED Center	**36%** 89 out of 245 4th class municipalities	**100%** **2026:** 57% +51 **2027:** 79% +54 **2028:** 100% +51	**100%**	**100%**	
Percentage 5th class municipalities with a SPED Center	**75%** 48 out of 64 5th class municipalities (DepEd, SY 2023-2024)	**100%** +16	**100%**	**100%**	
4.1.1.b. Percentage of divisions with at least 1 fully operational ILRC	**0%** 32 out of the 226 divisions have an ILRC, but none are fully operational (DepEd, SY 2023-2024; IDInsight, 2025)	**26%** +58	**37%**	**49%**	**DepEd**
SPED Centers converted to fully operational ILRC		**2026:** 32 existing ILRCs are fully operational +21 converted (7 per year)	+ 21 converted (7 per year)	+ 21 converted (7 per year)	
New fully operational ILRCs		5 constructed	5 constructed	5 constructed	

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
Community Learning Centers					
4.1.1.c. No. of Type 1 ALS Community Learning Centers (CLCs) upgraded	**13,713** Type 1 CLCs (DepEd, 2024)	**50%** 6,857 of Type 1 CLCs converted to at least a Type 3 CLC	**100%** +6,856		**DepEd**
4.1.1.d. At least one (1) Type 5 CLC per school division	**63.27%** 143 out of 226 divisions with Type 5 CLC (DepEd, SY 2023-2024)	**100%** + one Type 5 CLC in each of the 83 divisions that do not have one yet (28 per year from 2026-28)	**+108** Type 5 CLCs in high-need divisions in every region (2 per region, 36 per year from 2029-31)	**+144** Type 5 CLCs in high-need divisions in every region (2 per region, 36 per year from 2032-35)	**DepEd**

RECOMMENDATION 4.1.2. Invest in teachers and professionals in inclusive education

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
SNEd Teachers					
4.1.2.a. Establish Baccalaureate-Level Programs in Special Needs Education (SNEd) in regions with no program offerings	**16 Regions**	**+1 Region (BARMM)**			**MBHTE, TEC**
4.1.2.b. Provide scholarships for Baccalaureate-Level Programs in Special Needs Education (SNEd)	**To be implemented**	**1,000** Active Scholars **2026:** +500 **2027:** +500 **2028:** +500	**1,216** Total active scholars and 1,000 completers	**1,216** Total active scholars and 3,000 completers	**TEC**
4.1.2.c. Train receiving teachers on inclusive education	**TBD**	**TBD**	**TBD**	**TBD**	**DepEd, MBHTE**
4.1.2.d. Percentage of SNED teacher positions filled Target percentages for 2031 and 2035 remain fixed, but absolute numbers should adjust to the increase in number of SNED teachers.	**88.54%** ≈787 unfilled 6,082 out of 6,869 total plantilla positions (DepEd, June 2025)	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**DepEd**

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
Multidisciplinary Team for ILRCs					
4.1.2.e. Establish programs in support of the Inclusive Education Act in regions with no program offerings:					**CHED**
Speech Pathology (Bachelors)	**3 Regions**	**+13 Regions** **2026:** 3 Regions **2027:** 5 Regions **2028:** 5 Regions	-	-	
Occupational Therapy (Bachelors)	**7 Regions**	**+9 Regions** **2026:** 2 Regions **2027:** 2 Regions **2028:** 5 Regions	-	-	
Clinical Psychology (Masters)	**12 Regions**	**+4 Regions** **2026:** 2 Regions **2027:** 2 Regions	-	-	
Guidance and Counseling (Masters)	**13 Regions** (AY 2023-2024, CHED)	**+3 Regions** **2026:** 3 Regions	-	-	
4.1.2.f. Fill approved MDT plantilla positions	**0%** Note: For 2026, only 4 MDT plantilla positions have been approved by DBM out of the 7 positions requested by DepEd	**50%** of plantilla positions for 58 ILRCs targeted to be operational by 2028 **2026:** 15% **2027:** 30% **2028:** 50%	**60%**	**75%**	**DepEd**
4.1.2.g. Number of Learning Support Aides (LSAs) trained in Caregiving (clients with Special Needs) NC II or other related program	**0**	**100%** Of hired LSAs without NC II	**100%**	**100%**	**DepEd, TESDA**
4.1.2.h. Number of Learning Support Aides (LSAs) certified in Caregiving (clients with Special Needs) NC II or have received other related certifications	**0**	**94%** of the assessed	**94%** of the assessed	**94%** of the assessed	**DepEd, TESDA**

On the supply of professionals qualified for ILRC & Care Center positions

- The supply of professionals for ILRC positions is limited, with only 1,287 Speech-Language Pathologists, 6,192 Occupational Therapists, and 2,403 Psychologists registered nationwide. Critical gaps, especially in Speech-Language Pathology and Psychology, pose challenges in fully staffing Multi-Disciplinary Teams in ILRCs.
- To address these gaps, phased hiring, targeted scholarships, and expansion of HEIs offering the relevant programs will be essential to gradually build a sufficient pool of qualified personnel and ensure comprehensive support for learners with diverse needs.
- DepEd proposed 7 positions for the ILRC based on the submitted letter to DBM last June 2025. These positions are the following:
  - (1) Chief Education Supervisor
  - (1) Physical Therapist III
  - (1) Occupational Therapist III
  - (1) Education Program Specialist II [Reading Specialist)
  - (1) Education Program Specialist II (Specialist for Braille)
  - (1) Education Program Specialist II (FSL Specialist)
  - (1) Administrative Assistant II
- DBM, however, counter-proposed for only 4 positions:
  - Senior Education Program Specialist
  - Occupational Therapist II
  - Physical Therapist II
  - Education Program Specialist I (Language or Braille Specialist)

EDCOM Advisory Council and Subcommittee members also emphasized that Learning Support Aides (LSAs) are essential for delivering on the promise of inclusive education. As stipulated in Republic Act 11650, LSAs are persons who have experience in caring for learners with disabilities, graduates of a caregiving course under the TESDA or other accredited training centers. They help teachers implement accommodations, assist with classroom management, and provide direct, day-to-day support to learners with disabilities to ensure they can meaningfully participate in learning activities.

However, a major structural challenge is that DepEd currently has no formal position for Learning Support Aides within its staffing standards. This gap makes it difficult for schools to sustainably deploy LSAs despite the clear and growing need. Thus, the narrative must explicitly articulate the importance of training candidates and creating and institutionalizing LSA positions to operationalize inclusive education at scale. With the per-capita training cost for Caregiving (Clients with Special Needs) NC II at PHP 36,221.40 (TESDA Circular 10, s. 2025), structured investment in training LSAs is both feasible and necessary.

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
ALS Teachers					
4.1.2.i. Number of Learning Support Aides (LSAs) trained in Caregiving (clients with Special Needs) NC II or other related program	**2 Regions** with post-baccalaureate programs in ALS (CHED, 2025)	**+15 Regions** **2026:** 8 Regions **2027:** 7 Regions	-	-	**CHED, DepEd, TEC**
4.1.2.j. Number of Learning Support Aides (LSAs) certified in Caregiving (clients with Special Needs) NC II or have received other related certifications	**0**	**1,320 trained** **2026:** 300 trained **2027:** 510 trained **2028:** 510 trained	**As needed**	**As needed**	**CHED, DepEd, TEC**

No. of HEI Providers per Region for key programs for the implementation of Inclusive Education Programs

Region	Special Needs Education (Bachelors)	Speech Pathology (Bachelors)	Occupational Therapy (Bachelors)	Psychology (Masters)	Guidance and Counseling (Masters)	Alternative Learning System (Bachelors)
Region 1	9	0	0	1	3	0
Region 2	0	0	0	4	0	0
Region 3	10	0	1	5	3	0
Region 4	11	1	6	10	4	1
Region 5	10	0	0	1	2	0
Region 6	13	0	1	3	6	0
Region 7	13	1	4	7	4	0
Region 8	2	0	0	0	3	0
Region 9	4	0	0	1	3	0
Region 10	6	0	1	1	2	0
Region 11	12	0	1	4	5	0
Region 12	3	0	0	0	0	1
NCR	16	2	7	24	9	0
CAR	4	0	0	2	4	0
Caraga	2	0	0	0	3	0
MIMAROPA	1	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**116**	**4**	**21**	**63**	**51**	**2**

Source: CHED OPRKM-KMD, AY 2023-2024 Enrollment Data as of 30 June 2025

RECOMMENDATION 4.1.3. Expand inclusive education program offerings

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
Special Programs					
4.1.3.a. Increase the number of PSHS Campuses	**16** PSHS campuses (DOST, 2025)	**23** +6 campuses	**29** +6 campuses	**35** +6 campuses	**DOST & DepEd**
4.1.3.b. Increase the number of slots in PSHS Campuses	**4,600** slots for admission (SY 2023-2024)	**15,364** slots for admission **2026:** +3,588 **2027:** +3,588 **2028:** +3,588	**19,372** slots for admission	**23,380** slots for admission	**DOST & DepEd**
4.1.3.c. Percentage of divisions with Special Science Programs/ Schools	**88.5%** 200 out of 226 divisions (DepEd, 2023-2024)	**100%** +26 divisions			**DepEd**

School Division Offices Without SCP Science Elementary or JHS, Science High School or PSHS Campus

Region 1	Batac City	**Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)**	Lamitan City
Region 3	Meycauayan City		Lipa, Maguindanao
Region 4A	Bacoor City		Marawi City
	Sto. Tomas City		Special Geographic Area Division
Region 6	Kabankalan City	**Cordillera Administrative Region**	Kalinga
Region 10	El Salvador	**Negros Island Region**	Bago City
Region 11	Davao Oriental		Canlaon City

Source: SY 2023-2024 Learners by Special Curriculum Program (DepEd, 2024)

On the rationalization of SCP offerings

Review the SCP policy and rationalize offerings along with the identification of gaps in delivery, resourcing and staffing, and funds needed for expansion.

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
Indigenous Peoples Education					
4.1.3.d. Number of schools offering the IPED Program	**18.9%** 3,763 IPEd Implementing Schools out of 19,948 Schools with IP learners (DepEd, 2024)	Targets to be nuanced by regular IP mapping, and monitoring of migration trends, subject to the review of the policy on IPEd school tagging through PSF issuance (one off).			**DepEd & NCIP**

On enhancing the support for IP learners

- Conduct a mapping of ancestral domains and areas that have no IP schools to inform the targeted establishment of IP schools.
- Train principals and teachers on culturally responsive school improvement planning and IPEd implementation, especially for IP-majority areas.
- Ensure the representation of IPs in School Governing Councils of IP-majority schools to facilitate collaboration on curriculum indigenization and convergence of community and school resources.
- Establish a regional repository/hub of quality assured indigenous learning resources.
- Provide hardship allowance for teachers deployed in GIDCA schools.
- Establish a database of private- or CSO-led IP schools to monitor IP learners outside of DepEd's system.
- Incorporate ethnicity/ IP status variables in key census, surveys and administrative data collection.

On reviewing the policy for IPEd Program Support Fund utilization

DepEd Schools are tagged as IPEd and MEP Implementing schools if they are receiving Program Support Funds (PSF) for their respective programs based on specific guidelines for qualification. While the guidelines for MEP's PSF utilization have been updated through D.O. No.11, S.2024 to reflect clear thresholds on which schools should be receiving MEP PSF, the guidelines for IPEd PSF (D.O. No. 22, S.2018) issuance is vague in comparison to the definite thresholds of MEP. DepEd IPSEO has noted that IP learners have become an increasingly mobile population, with migrations affecting where IPEd should be offered. Given the need to be dynamic, qualification guidelines for IPEd PSF are due for a revision to enable schools to quickly determine if they are qualified to tap into the IPEd PSF to capacitate its teachers on culturally responsive education delivery.

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
Madrasah Education Program					
4.1.3.e. Number of schools offering ALIVE Program	**3,408** (DepEd, 2024)	Targets to be nuanced by regular Muslim learner mapping, and monitoring of migration trends.			**DepEd**

On enhancing the support for Muslim learners

- Conduct mapping of Muslim children and MEP implementing schools to determine program offering and support gaps in high-need areas.
- Train principals and teachers on MEP Implementation.
- Develop a repository of curriculum and teacher guides, manuals, and instructional materials.
- Provide hardship allowance to ALIVE teachers in GIDCA schools.

POST SECONDARY PATHWAYS FOR INDIGENOUS LEARNERS

World Bank (2024b) findings show that Indigenous learners have lower completion and transition rates, often entering agriculture or self employment when education pathways are limited. Existing models and initiatives offer valuable foundations for improvement and scaling of pathways for IPs. For example, the University of Southeastern Philippines' Pamulaan Center for Indigenous Peoples Education offers contextualized basic education and provides tertiary education support across a wide array of courses, including Social Entrepreneurship, Agriculture, Environmental Science, Medical fields, Law, and Social Work.

EDCOM II RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KPA 4

4.1 Increase the participation and completion of learners in inclusive education

RECOMMENDED	AGENCY	TIMELINE
Learners with Disabilities Develop annd operationalize the Child Find System (CFS), as mandated by the Inclusive Education Act (Republic Act11650). Develop in-service training programs in inclusive education practices, focusing on tools and the creation of IEPs. Upon the determination of the number of approved plantilla positions for the MDT and the Care Centers, revisit and recalibrate the required supply of program providers in each region, and provide support for the development of programs in regions.	**DepEd**	**2026**
Explore the possibility of tapping the Doctors to the Barrio (DTTB) program, or the graduates from the Doktor Para sa Bayan Act to ensure the supply of development pediatricians, neurologists, and psychiatrists to ILRCs.	**DepEd DILG and DOH**	**2027**
ALS Learners Include school-based CLCs in the normative school MOOE computation.	**DepEd**	**2026**
IP Learners Review IPEd's PSF utilizaation guidelines (D.O. No. 22, s.2018).	**DepEd**	**2026**
Map IP areas and ancestral domains needing school establishment, and identify and support underserved IP groups.	**DepEd and NCIP**	**2026**
Review and enhance the IP curriculum and available learning and teaching resources. Incorporate ethnicity/ IP status variables in key census, surveys, and administrative data collection.	**DepEd, TESDA, CHED, PSA, DOST-FNRI, DSWD, among others**	**2026**

ARNOLD JANSSEN CATHOLIC MISSION FOUNDATION

Supporting ALS Learners through Education and Skills Training



The Arnold Janssen Catholic Mission Foundation, Inc. (AJCMFI) traces its roots back to 2019 when it was acknowledged as one of the few partners of the DepEd and the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP) in piloting the ALS – Education and Skills Training Program. This initiative focuses on implementing the Alternative Learning System Education and Skills Training, Employment, and Livelihood Program for out-of-school youth and non-literate adults among internally displaced persons in the war-torn Muslim communities of Marawi and Butig in Lanao del Sur, indigenous populations in Balabac and Quezon in Palawan, as well as informal settlers in the National Capital Region and Cavite, including drivers, electricians, and miners in Semirara, Antique.

Guided by its mission of becoming the premier faith-based organization in the delivery of ALS, AJCMFI has produced 4,868 graduates between 2019-2025. Majority of the graduates have completed their training on Bread and Pastry, Computer System Servicing, and Food and Production and Organic Farming, with some eventually earning their certification through TESDA and others proceeding to higher education and employment.

AJCMFI serves as a platform for aligning the efforts of key partners—including local government units, the private sector, sociocivic organizations, religious institutions, and Diocesan schools. In addition to DepEd, DAP has been a major partner for AJCMFI in program implementation, establishing a monitoring system that requires monthly reports from all Learning Facilitators across centers and conducting field and office site visits to ensure program quality.



Beyond Inclusivity: VALENZUELA CITY SPECIAL EDUCATION CENTER

The City Government of Valenzuela, in partnership with the DepEd, established the ValSpEd Center on 22 January 2016, under the leadership of then City Mayor Rexlon T. Gatchalian. It is the first locally-funded Special Education institution in the country. It provides a wide array of services—ranging from early intervention and special education to occupational, physical, and speech therapy, among others.

Ever since its establishment in 2016, the ValSpEd Center has seen an increasing number of learners that have benefited from its programs and services, particularly for the implementation of the SNED program (Table 1) and the provision of occupational therapy. This has been accompanied by continuous investments to either maintain or increase the Center's staffing to ensure proper program delivery.

Table 1: ValSpEd Center by Program Offering

	JAN-MAR 2016			
PROGRAM	NO. OF LEARNERS	SNED TEACHERS	NO. OF LEARNERS	`SNED TEACHERS
Early Intervention Program	18	1	73	3
Special Needs Program	58	3	325	11
Bridge Program	20	1	142	5
Transition Program	20	1	57	2

Table 2: ValSpEd Number by Services Offered

	2016		2025	
SERVICE/S	NO. OF ENROLLEES	ALLIED MEDICAL STAFF	NO. OF ENROLLEES	ALLIED MEDICAL STAFF
Physical Therapy	51	2	155	4
Occupational Therapy	421	7	432	7
Speech Therapy	144	3	65	4

The Center operates through a multi-sectoral partnership model that integrates resources from the DepEd, the Local Government Unit, and private stakeholders. The Center is headed by a Center Director who holds a Public Schools District Supervisor position under the DepEd and is supported by 11 Special Education (SPED) teachers. Complementing this core team are therapists and para-teachers employed by the LGU, as well as dedicated volunteers from private organizations and civic groups who contribute their time and expertise to specialized interventions and learner support.

Operational and sustainable funding for the Center is provided by the LGU of Valenzuela—which provides facilities, personnel augmentation, and logistical support—and DepEd, which allocates teaching positions, instructional resources, and curriculum supervision. Additional support is mobilized through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs and private donations, enabling the Center to sustain and expand services for learners with diverse exceptionalities. For the years 2024 and 2025, the Valenzuela City LGU has allocated PhP62.71 million, a strong indication of how inclusive learning is given priority.`



Valenzuela City Public Information Office. (2016, January 22). *First look at the Valenzuela SPEC Center* [Photograph]. Facebook. Photo by Rodrigo de Guzman

ASSISI DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION'S PARTNERSHIPS *for* INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

The Assisi Development Foundation's (ADF) Partnerships for Indigenous Education Program illustrates how sustained collaboration between communities, civil society, and government can advance culturally grounded education for Indigenous learners. The program began in 2001 as a humanitarian response to the Ayta communities affected by the Mt. Pinatubo eruption and has since evolved into a long-term initiative addressing structural inequities in Indigenous Peoples (IP) education. To date, ADF and its implementing partners have supported over 48,000 Indigenous learners across early childhood, basic education, and tertiary levels.

ADF provides financial, technical, organizational, and capacity-building support to local partners to strengthen culturally relevant education programs and offer direct assistance to Indigenous learners from economically disadvantaged families. Two partnerships demonstrate the program's impact.

In Himamaylan City, Negros Occidental, ADF partnered with the Schools Division Office in 2018 to address challenges in implementing IP Education—specifically limited teacher training, staffing shortages in Indigenous communities, and the absence of culturally appropriate materials and facilities. Seven years later, three IP community schools have transitioned from extension to independent elementary schools. Teachers and DepEd personnel are now better equipped to deliver culturally responsive instruction, and one school has even established a mini-forest that protects a key water source, showing how education can support environmental stewardship.

In Malita, Davao Occidental, ADF strengthened its collaboration with the Malita Tagakaulo Mission (MATAMIS), a pastoral ministry supporting the Tagakaulo community. The partnership emerged from a tragedy in 2011, when a Tagakaulo child drowned while crossing a stream on his way home from school. The incident catalyzed the establishment of community-based elementary schools, reducing hazardous travel and ensuring safer, more dignified access to education. With ADF's support, MATAMIS now sustains holistic, culturally rooted learning by training teachers, maintaining community-based schools, and engaging families in school management. Community members contribute food subsidies for teachers, and MATAMIS has become a resource hub for other IPEd implementers.

These experiences demonstrate both the urgency of addressing systemic barriers in Indigenous education and the transformative potential of community-led and cross-sector partnerships. With adequate government and civil society support, Indigenous communities can lead efforts to ensure that every child receives high-quality, culturally integral education.

KEY PRIORITY AREA 5: IMPROVING EQUITABLE ACCESS TO QUALITY TERTIARY EDUCATION

Tertiary education shapes how Filipinos enter work, pursue higher skills, and adapt to a labor market that continues to shift. KPA 5 responds to this reality by strengthening both access and quality in universities, colleges, and TVET institutions. It addresses gaps that have accumulated for years: outdated standards, incomplete pathways, weak labor market intelligence, and inconsistent support for the poorest learners. The goal is to ensure that young people can complete tertiary education with relevant preparation and skillsets for current and emerging occupations.

Insights throughout our workshops emphasized the importance of recognizing and valuing both formal and non-formal learning. Skills acquired through work experience, community roles, or modular training should be recognized as valid pathways for learner advancement. Achieving this requires modern approaches to assessment, certification, and progression that support microcredentials, stackable qualifications, and flexible pathways across TVET and higher education. Together, these reforms expand the system's capacity to recognize diverse learner journeys and respond more quickly to evolving industry needs.

SUMMARY OF KPA 5 OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

KPA 5.1 Provide learners with more opportunities to access quality tertiary education

OUTCOMES & RECOMMENDATIONS	BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
		2028	2031	2035	
Outcome 5.1.A. TVET Participation Rates	**1,613,772** (TESDA, 2024)	**1,991,611**	**2,331,989**	**2,877,987**	**TESDA**
Outcome 5.1.B. TVET Completion Rates	**89%** (TESDA, 2024)	1,792,450	**90%** 2,098,790	2,590,188	**TESDA**
Outcome 5.1.C. Higher Education Participation Rates	**54%** (CHED, 2024)	**Maintain**	**-**	**-**	**CHED**
Outcome 5.1.D. Higher Education Completion Rates	**70%** (CHED, 2025)	**Maintain**	**-**	**-**	**CHED**
Recommendation 5.1.1. Expand access and supports to tertiary education, especially the poorest					**CHED, UNIFAST, TESDA**
Recommendation 5.1.2. Build relevant and seamless TVET and College PAthways					**CHED & TESDA**

KPA 5.2 Improve the development and support of educators in tertiary education

OUTCOMES & RECOMMENDATIONS	BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
		2028	2031	2035	
Outcome 5.2.A. **Increased Percentage of HEI Faculty Members with at least a Graduate Degree**	**58.2%** (AY 2023- 2024)	**56.4%**	**86.2%**	**88.1%**	**CHED**
Outcome 5.2.B. **Increased Number of TESDA Trainers & Assessors for Priority Clusters**	**25 Trainers** (as of September 2025) **8 Assessors** (as of September 2025)	**Developing the NCs**	**252** Regional Lead Trainers (2 per region) **252** Regional Lead Assessors (2 per region)	**6,300** Additional Trainers **6,300** Additional Assessors	**TESDA & DTI**
Recommendation 5.2.1. Invest in the professional development of faculty, trainers, and researchers					**CHED & TESDA**

Note:

The initial decrease in the percentage of faculty with graduate degrees by 2028 is due to the following assumptions in the calculations:
(a) There is a 9% increase in number of faculty with BA/BS or MA/MS year to year
(b) An increase in figures for faculty with MA/MS and PhD is expected only by 2029 and 2030 (i.e. 3 and 4 years after award of scholarships by 2026, respectively)

	BASELINE		2026		2027		2028	
Bacc	72,137	41.79%	78,629	42.41%	85,706	43.00%	93,420	43.55%
Mas	69,918	40.51%	76,211	41.11%	83,070	41.68%	90,546	42.21%
Doc	30,550	17.70%	30,550	16.48%	30,550	15.33%	30,550	14.24%
TOTAL	**172,605**	**100%**	**185,390**	**100.00%**	**199,326**	**100.00%**	**214,515**	**100.00%**

5.1. PROVIDE LEARNERS WITH MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO ACCESS QUALITY TERTIARY EDUCATION

OUTCOME 5.1.A. TVET Participation Rates

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
1,613,772 (TESDA, 2024)	**1,991,611**	**2,331,989**	**2,877,987**	**TESDA**

GLOBAL BENCHMARKS:

Computation is based on a 5.4% growth each year starting from the baseline data.

OUTCOME 5.1.B. TVET Completion Rates

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
89% (TESDA, 2024)	**90%** 1,792,450	**90%** 2,098,790	**90%** 2,590,188	**TESDA**

OUTCOME 5.1.C. Higher Education Participation Rates

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
54% (CHED, 2024)	**Maintain**	**-**	**-**	**CHED**

OUTCOME 5.1.D. Higher Education Completion Rates

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
69.6%[1] National Completion Rate as of AY 2023-2024 (CHED, 2025)	**Maintain**	**-**	**-**	**CHED**

GLOBAL BENCHMARKS:

Vietnam had a completion rate of 65% in tertiary education in 2022 (UNESCO WIDE).

Outcomes 5.1.A, and 5.1.C are likewise aligned with the SDG 4.3.1 indicator on the participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training during the previous 12 months.

EQUITY TARGETS COMPLETION RATES IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

OUTCOME 5.1.D Higher Education Completion Rates

	BASELINE (CHED, 2025)	2028	2031	2035
National	**70%**	**75%**	**80%**	**85%**
NCR	60%	65%	70%	75%
CAR	58%	63%	68%	72%
Region 5	56%	61%	66%	71%

Collect dropout and completion rates and better student-level data

In the case of higher education, CHED does not yet collect student-level data, making it difficult to accurately determine dropout and completion rates. Instead, CHED measures completion rates as the cohort size of graduates of a particular year over the cohort size of entrants four (4) academic years prior. This method does not account for those students who may eventually return to complete their programs, or are completing their program, but not in the four (4) year time frame. Thus, non-completion should not be conflated with permanent dropout.

1 Completion Rate computed as AY 2023-2024 Graduates over 1st Year Entrants AY 2020-2021; does not have computed completion rate for BARMM

RECOMMENDATION 5.1.1. Expand access and supports to tertiary education, especially the poorest

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
Strengthen support to disadvantaged students in tertiary education (TES)					
5.1.1.a. Percentage of 4Ps accessing the Tertiary Education Subsidy through TESDA and CHED	**1.53%** 5,872 out of 384,388 Total 4Ps G12 Graduates, (AY 2023-2024)	**At least 50%** But increasing percentage of those that are "first generation" tertiary graduates (70% of all Grade 12 4Ps in 2025) **2026: 40%** +196,126 **2027: 45%** +159,520 **2028: 50%** +385,878			**CHED & TESDA**
TES through TESDA (for higher level NC programs)	**0.29%** 1,126 TES beneficiaries out of the 384,388 G12 4Ps Graduates in 2024[2]	**30%** of the target beneficiaries for the year			
TES through CHED	**1.23%** 4,746 TES beneficiaries out of the 384,388 G12 4Ps Graduates (1st Sem, AY 2024-2025)	**70%** of the target beneficiaries for the year			
5.1.1.b. Percentage of TES grantees who are first generation students	Baseline to be established subject to the establishment of baseline and formulation of policy	**Increasing coverage** With targets to be defined after the establishment of baseline			**CHED & TESDA**

Defining disadvantaged students

CHED and TESDA must develop a nuanced definition for disadvantaged students, to provide differing eligibility criteria, supports, and benefits for learners in differing contexts.

These may include the following:

- High school graduates from 4Ps families and non-4Ps poor families
- "First generation college/TVET students"
- ALS completers (noting the need for DepEd to implement ALS for SHS)
- Learners with disabilities, only 30% of whom complete secondary education (Philippine Business for Education [PBEd], 2025)
- Special populations identified through legislation (e.g. Migrant Workers, Solo Parents and their Children, Coconut Farmers and their families, Indigenous Peoples)
- Students in danger of dropping out due to costs

	TOTAL NUMBER OF PROJECTED INCOMING COLLEGE STUDENTS[3]	TARGET COVERAGE	TARGET NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES	TARGET THROUGH TESDA	TARGET THROUGH CHED
2026	490,315	40%	196,126	58,838	137,288
2027	354,488	45%	159,520	47,856	111,664
2028	771,756	50%	385,878	115,763	270,115

2 Computed as total number of TES recipients in 2024, data does not disaggregate by year of high school graduation

3 DSWD through UnIFAST, Retrieved 12 September 2025

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
Full operationalization of the Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (UNIFAST)					
5.1.1.c. Full Implementation of the core functions and deliverables of the UniFAST Secretariat as provided in Republic Act No. 10687	**Only 4 out of 9 partially implemented**	Full implementation of all deliverables	-	-	**CHED**
5.1.1.d. Expanding access in priority provinces identified as "access deserts" in higher education	**11 provinces**	Pilot the implementation of access interventions and support in 2 provinces. **2026:** completion of mapping and design of development plans in all 11 provinces, citing the fit-for-purpose access intervention.	**55%** **6 out of 11** Provinces have expanded access to HEIs	**100%**	**CHED**

TARGET OUTPUTS
5.1.1.e. Improve the support programs for learners

All Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) shall provide a minimum package of Learner Support Services (LSS) to support the success, retention, and employability of all students, with particular emphasis on TES grantees and other learners at risk. The LSS package shall include:

- Bridging programs to address learning gaps and strengthen foundational skills;
- Tutoring and academic coaching to improve performance and prevent attrition;
- Career counseling and employability support to prepare students for transition to the workforce

These services shall conform to CHED–UniFAST standards, with each HEI designating an LSS Coordinator responsible for implementation, monitoring, and reporting, ensuring that TES beneficiaries receive prioritized and proactive support throughout their academic journey.

RECOMMENDATION 5.1.2. Build relevant and seamless TVET and college pathways

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
Enhance Industry Boards and Technical Panel Representation, Processes, and Technical Support					
5.1.2.a. No. of Discipline and Sector Skills Councils Established and Operational	**0** pending the constitution of the Board for Curriculum Standards and Discipline & Sector Skills Councils ("DSSCs")[4]	**6** established Discipline & Sector Skills Councils ("DSSCs") based on the EDCOM priority clusters[5]	Continuing based on identified priority areas, with reviews programmed at least every 5 years to ensure relevance		**CHED & TESDA**
5.1.2.b. No. of Technical Panels reconstituted/ Developed (priority clusters)	**7** Healthcare Advanced Manufacturing Digital Technology Tourism Financial Services Legal Management Fintech Biotechnology	**100** needed Technical Panels reconstituted/ developed			**CHED**
5.1.2.c. No. of National Industry Boards created (priority clusters)[6]	**8** Aeronautical and Aviation Fintech Accountancy Business Administration Legal Energy/ Electric Vehicle Renewables Chemical Engineering	**100%** Proposed Industry Boards created			**TESDA**
Establish, update, and expand programs in high-demand fields					
5.1.2.d. Percentage of TRs for higher NCs required by industry that are developed	**47%** developed	**55%**[7] developed	**65%** of emerging needs TRs	**75%** of emerging needs TRs	**TESDA**
5.1.2.e. Percentage of -microcredential programs required by the industry that are developed/ accredited	**40%** developed	**100%**[8] developed/ accredited	**100%** of emerging micro-credential programs developed/ accredited	**100%** of emerging micro-credential programs developed/ accredited	**TESDA**

4 According to the CHED-TESDA JMC signed on September 15, 2025, the Board shall, within sixty (60) days of its constitution, establish DSSCs tasked with developing and/or updating curricula for disciplines and sector skills relevant to jobs within the Priority Industry Clusters.

5 The 6 EDCOM 2 Priority Industry Clusters: Advanced Manufacturing, Digital Technology, Healthcare, Financial Services, Tourism, Creative Economy.

6 The priority clusters are based on the EDCOM II Workforce Development Plan. In addition, the PDP and NTESDP also identify the following industry clusters as priorities: renewable energy, e-vehicles, marketing, finance and accounting, human capital development/organizational development, and aviation and aeronautics.

7 Based on the WFD workshops, the following are the TRs that are targeted for 2028: Gaming Programming NC IV and Diploma, Animation NC III, Advanced Manufacturing Technician NC III & IV, Financial Advisor NC II & III, NEW TR SUPPORTED BY INDUSTRY: US-specific Clinical Claims Processing NC III.

8 List of pre-baccalaureate microcredential programs required by the industry that are developed / accredited: Advanced Manufacturing (general microcredential courses such as embedded systems engineering - for all engineering students), Tourism (Digital Tourism, Tourism Research, Tourism Governance, Tourism Policies , Community-Based Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Airline Management, Data Analytics for Tourism, Social Media Management for Tourism), Financial Services (Data Analytics for Finance)

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
5.1.2.f. Increase the number of newly registered NC III and IV TVET programs offered by TESDA-accredited Institutions	**89** (TESDA, 2025)[9]	**103**[10]	**119**	**145**	**TESDA**
5.1.2.g. Increase the number of new Diploma programs (level 5 TVET programs) offered by TESDA-accredited Institutions	**123** (TESDA, 2025)[11]	**126**[12]	**180**	**252**	**TESDA**
5.1.2.h. No. of TVIs and TTIs given the STAR Awards	**81** (1.78% of 4548 TVIs/ TTIs, 2025)	**231**[13] **2026:** 113 **2027:** 181 **2028:** 231	**381**	**581**	**TESDA**
5.1.2.i. Percantage of TRs for NCs required by industry that are updated[14]	**34.8%**[15] updated	**100%** updated	**100%** updated	**100%** updated	**TESDA**
5.1.2.j. No. of Regions with SUCs capacitated to offer medical programs	**16 Regions** with at least 1 Public HEI offering a Doctor of Medicine Program	**+2 Regions**	-	-	**CHED**
5.1.2.k. No. of PSGs and TRs revised, ensuring alignment with expected Industry-oriented learning outcomes					**CHED**
Implement the ladderized programs nationwide					
5.1.2.l. No. of ladderized Health Sciences campuses nationwide	**4** 1 in Region 8 2 in Region 3 1 in Region 12	**+6** 1 in BARMM 1 Caraga 1 in MIMAROPA 1 in Region 12 1 in Region 9 1 in Region 5	**+6** 1 in Region 4A 1 in Region 7 1 in Region 3 1 in Region 1 1 in Region 10 1 in Region 6	**+6** 1 in Region 2 1 in Region CAR 1 in Region NIR 1 in Region NCR	**CHED & TESDA**
5.1.2.m. No. of Regions with SUCs capacitated to offer dental programs	**4 Regions** with at least 1 Public HEI offering Doctor of Dental Medicine Program	**+12 Regions** **2026:** 4 Regions **2027:** 4 Regions **2028:** 4 Regions	-	-	**CHED**

9 83 NC III programs and 6 NC IV programs.
10 Based on a 5% annual increase from the previous year.
11 QSO Diploma Program Monitoring Dashboard, processed (October 7, 2025).
12 Computed under the assumption that 1 Diploma program per priority industry per region will be created in the first year, and one per region after that.
13 Targets are based on a yearly increase of 50 STAR accredited programs.
14 Based on the WFD consultations, the following NCs were identified: Contact Center Services NC II, Medical Coding & Claims Processing NC III, Barangay Health Services NC II, Health Services NC II.
15 TESDA recommends target rates of 45% by 2028, 50% by 2031, and 55% by 2035.

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
An increased number of enterprises participating in EBET and that avail of incentives					
5.1.2.n. Number of enterprises participating in Enterprise-Based Education and Training EBET	**119** (TESDA, July-Sep 2025)	**569**[16] **2026:** 269 +150 **2027:** 419 +150 **2028:** 569 +150	**1,019**	**1,619**	**TESDA**
5.1.2.o. Number of participating companies/enterprises in the Enterprise-Based Education and Training Program that avail of incentives	**2** (2025) TESDA (Need for TESDA and BIR to work together to monitor what incentives are for EBET)	**171**[17] (30% of 569) **2026:** 81 **2027:** 126 **2028:** 171	**306**	**486**	**TESDA & BIR**
Improve the relevance of programs through local LMIS planning and coordination across the industry, LGU, and schools					
5.1.2.p. Align surveys and administrative data from DOLE, TESDA, CHED, DepEd, PRC, and PSA	Legislation or JMC ensuring the linkage of data Revised LFS and APIS instruments Updated PSOC and PSCED documents	**Increasing**	**Increasing**	**Increasing**	**EWDG**

A high-quality tertiary education system depends on competent, well-supported educators who can deliver relevant, industry-responsive learning across higher education and technical-vocational pathways. Yet today, educator capacity remains uneven, limiting institutions' ability to prepare learners for a rapidly evolving labor market. Strengthening the qualifications, competencies, and professional pathways of tertiary educators is therefore a core lever for improving learning outcomes, workforce readiness, and innovation. Under Outcome 5.2, the NatPlan prioritizes sustained investments in faculty development and trainer capacity to ensure that teaching quality keeps pace with expanding access and rising skill demands.

Consultations with CHED, TESDA, DepEd, and DOST highlighted the importance of expanding the pool of Research Scientists and Engineers (RSEs), with international benchmarks suggesting 380 RSEs per million population, and strengthening monitoring of research productivity through high-impact publications. Beyond human capital,International experience shows that technological upgrading requires not only highly trained individuals but also institutions and ecosystems that enable research, innovation, and entrepreneurship to reinforce one another. Gaining such competitiveness depends on robust research and innovation ecosystems, including strong universities, industry collaboration, and enabling institutions. While current NEP targets focus on measurable foundations, the NatPlan signals the parallel need to build these enabling conditions through faculty and researcher development, interdisciplinary research clusters, university–industry partnerships, and reintegration mechanisms, laying the groundwork for more precise research and innovation targets in future planning cycles.

16 Targets are based on a 150 yearly increase of the number of institutions participating in EBET.

17 Targets are based on the projection for the increased number of enterprises participating in EBET, starting from a baseline of 119 enterprises in 2025 and assuming a yearly increase of 150 participating institutions. Applying a 30% incentive uptake rate, it is projected that a proportion of enterprises engaged in EBET will avail of incentives.

KPA 5.2. Improve the development and support of Educators in Tertiary Education

Outcome 5.2.A. Increased Percentage of HEI Faculty Members with at least a Graduate Degree

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
HEI Faculty members with a graduate degree	**56.4%**	**86.18%**	**88.1%**	**CHED**
58.2%	**56.4%**	**56.4%**	**88.1%**	
40.5% Masters	**42.2%** Masters	**44.3%** Masters	**41.8%** Masters	
17.7% Doctorate (AY 2023-2024[18])	**14.2%** Doctorate	**41.3%** Doctorate	**46.3%** Doctorate	

Outcome 5.2.B. Increased Number of TESDA Trainers & Assessors for Priority Clu

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
25* Trainers (as of September 2025)	**Developing the NCs**	**252**** Regional Lead Trainers (2 per region) **2029: 40%** +100 trainers **2030: 70%** +76 trainers **2031: 100%** +76 trainers	**6,300***** Additional Trainers	**TESDA & DTI**
8* Assessors (as of September 2025)	**Developing the NCs**	**252**** Regional Lead Assessors **2029: 40%** +100 assessors **2030: 70%** +76 assessors **2031: 100%** +76 assessors	**6,300***** Additional Assessors	**TESDA & DTI**

* *New NCs will still be developed, after which Training of Trainers and Assessors will be conducted, it should be noted that as of September 2025, there are 25 trainers (2D Animation NC III- 24, 3D Animation NC III - 1) and 8 TVET Assessors (2D Animation NC III - 6, 3D Animation NC III- 2) for related qualifications to those NCs identified in priority clusters.*

** *For projection only, based on the training of 2 lead trainers and 2 lead assessors per region for each of the 7 programs. Targets will be adjusted once projections of certified TVET graduates from the new programs and the corresponding demand for trainers and assessors in succeeding years are finalized.*

*** *Based on TESDA calculation, each lead trainer/assessor will have a multiplier of 1 batch (25 new assessors/trainers) until 2035.*

RECOMMENDATION 5.2.1. Invest in the professional development of faculty, trainers, and researchers

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
5.2.1.a. Number of graduate scholarship recipients towards an advanced degree (e.g. SIKAP)	**2,183** Approved Scholars under SIKAP (2021 to 2022)	**85,706** New Masters Scholars	**11,132** New Masters Scholars	**1,811** New Masters Scholars	**CHED**
5.2.1.b. Increased number of researchers, scientists, and engineers (RSEs) per million population	**270** or ~31,000 RSEs[19] (DOST-PCAARRD, 2024)	**380** or 45,241[20] RSEsProjection from The Elusive Critical Mass of RSEs, by the National Academy of Science and Technology Philippines, based on 2028 population (119,055,954). Estimated based on a population of 115 million.	**380** or 46,670[21] RSEs	**380** or 48,646 [22]RSEs	**CHED**

18 Faculty data as of 29 May 2025, Retrieved 16 September 2025.
19 Estimated based on a population of 115 million.
20 Projection from *The Elusive Critical Mass of RSEs,* by the National Academy of Science and Technology Philippines, based on 2028 population (119,055,954).
21 Ibid., based on 2031 population projection (122,816,558).
22 Ibid., based on 2035 population projection (128,016,119).

EDCOM II RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KPA 5

5.1 Provide Learners with More Opportunities to Access Quality Tertiary Education

RECOMMENDATION	AGENCY	TIMELINE
▪ Address and co-create with industry, whenever possible, any emerging need for higher level TRs, NCs, microcredentials, and specialized degree programs. ▪ Fully implement the National AI Upskilling Roadmap.	**CHED & TESDA**	**2028**
▪ Increase the number of autonomous and deregulated institutions to broaden access to quality education while enabling innovation. ▪ Specialized degree programs required by the industry that are developed in Tourism and Financial Services.	**CHED**	**2031**
▪ Build at least 1 Healthcare/Biotech City that is a center of medical education and applied medical research.	**CHED**	**2035**
▪ Build an Advanced Manufacturing "Capital" with shared laboratories and networks of industry-to-school partnerships.	**TESDA & OSAPEIA**	**2035**
▪ Provide additional scholarships and subsidies in relevant fields: ▪ TESDA's Training for Work Scholarship Program ▪ Supports for TESDA's EBET ▪ Vouchers provided for the pilot roll-out of micro-credentials relevant to industry needs ▪ CHED Merit Scholarship Program slots ▪ Rollout of the Presidential Merit Scholarship Program	**DepEd, CHED, and TESDA**	**2026-2031**
▪ Develop a unified Career Guidance and Labor Market Information platform that integrates career guidance, labor market data, and scholarship information from secondary education onwards. This should include an updated and interoperable aptitude assessment tool aligned with career pathways and local employment opportunities, with annual reporting on user engagement and utilization.	**DepEd, CHED, TESDA, DOLE, and DICT**	**2028**
▪ DepEd, TESDA, and CHED should conduct comprehensive and regular graduate tracer studies through an integrated platform, and ensure that findings are aligned with labor market data from DOLE to inform policy and program improvements.	**DepEd, CHED, TESDA, and DOLE**	**2026**
▪ Work closely to identify, target, and support 4Ps students in secondary, and provide assistance in career guidance and college/TVET applications and transition. ▪ Ensure a joint initiative to establish a more nuanced definition of "disadvantaged students" to guide eligibility criteria, support mechanisms, and benefits across the tertiary education sector.	**DepEd, CHED, TESDA, and DSWD**	**2026**
▪ Create mechanisms for the establishment of baseline data, and the creation of policies and programs for affirmative action for other disadvantaged students ▪ Coordinate with DOLE and other relevant agencies for employment and placement of disadvantaged students after training or graduation ▪ Establish a baseline of first-generation TES beneficiaries, and create policies and programs to ensure the increasing coverage of this population. ▪ Note: Based on the APIS LFS Survey 2024, 62% of households do not have head of households who are tech-voc or college graduates ▪ Institutionalize a regular system for CHED and TESDA to collect, analyze, and report post-graduation and employment data of graduates, particularly from State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) participating in government scholarship and financial assistance programs such as the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES).	**CHED & TESDA**	**2026**
▪ Strengthen the National TVET Trainers Academy (NTTA) and ensure access to training support for TVET trainers.	**TESDA**	**2026**

5.2 Improve the development and support of Educators in Tertiary Education

RECOMMENDATION	AGENCY	TIMELINE
▪ Strengthen the National TVET Trainers Academy (NTTA) and ensure access to training support for TVET trainers. ▪ Align TVET trainer development with the TVET Trainer Qualification Framework (PTTQF). ▪ Ensure a sufficient number of competent TVET trainers, assessors, administrators, and non-teaching positions with plantilla positions, especially in critical sectors.	**TESDA**	**2026**

Adventist University of the Philippines: BUILDING BELONGING TO PREVENT DROPOUT



CSC External Affairs Council triumphs camaraderie in vibrant AUP Run. AUP University Voice. (2023, December 19)

The Adventist University of the Philippines (AUP) demonstrates how cultivating a strong sense of belonging and community can significantly reduce student dropout. Recognizing that the transition to college is often overwhelming, especially for first-year students, AUP designed a comprehensive support ecosystem that centers on **mentorship, early intervention**, and **peer connection.**

At the heart of AUP's approach is the **Foster Family Program**, where each faculty or staff member mentors ten first-year students. These mentors serve as trusted adults who guide students through the academic and emotional challenges of college life, helping them feel seen, supported, and valued. This personal connection is further reinforced by AUP's early warning referral system: when a student incurs three consecutive absences, the Guidance Office immediately reaches out to provide counseling and understand the underlying issues. This proactive mechanism allows the university to catch early signs of disengagement before they escalate into withdrawal.

Beyond individualized support, AUP strengthens student retention through communal and spiritual engagement. Colleges and departments hold twice-monthly care group meetings that foster fellowship, encourage group study, and build small, supportive learning communities. These spaces help students develop friendships, share struggles, and receive encouragement from peers, factors proven to protect against dropout. At the start of each term, orientation programs organized by the Office of Student Affairs and individual colleges ensure that new students are familiar with university life, processes, and support services, reducing confusion and anxiety during their adjustment period.

AUP's experience illustrates how a relational and community-centered approach anchored in mentorship, early intervention, and peer support creates an environment where students are more likely to remain engaged and complete their studies.

Centro Escolar University: USING COUNSELING AND ACADEMIC MONITORING TO STRENGTHEN RETENTION

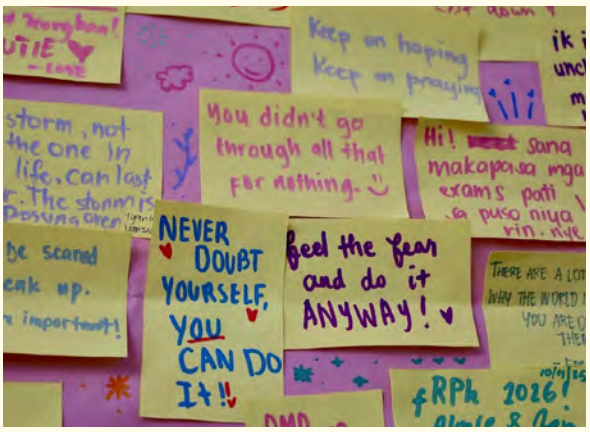
Centro Escolar University (CEU) provides a strong model of how systematic **academic monitoring, personalized counseling**, and **continuous re-engagement** can significantly lower student attrition. Understanding that academic struggles often stem from deeper emotional, psychological, or personal challenges, CEU developed an integrated system that identifies at-risk learners early and provides support that addresses the whole student.

The university's **Learning Assistance Program** offers targeted academic help to students who need guidance in managing coursework, developing study strategies, or overcoming academic difficulties. This is complemented by the close monitoring of grades by deans and department heads, especially in core and professional subjects. **When students begin to fall behind, faculty leaders are able to intervene swiftly**, preventing academic difficulties from accumulating unnoticed.

A defining component of CEU's approach is its **Guidance Assistance to Students with Academic Deficiency/ies (GASWAD)**. Students who fail subjects, particularly during preliminary examinations, are automatically referred to the Guidance and Counseling Department. Counselors work closely with them to identify the root causes of their academic challenges, which often include stress, emotional difficulties, family concerns, or a lack of effective study habits. Through ongoing counseling and guided interventions, students receive the emotional and psychological support necessary not only to recover academically but to sustain their progress.

CEU also extends its retention strategy to students who have already stopped schooling. Through the **College Continuity Plan**, the university obtains lists of non-enrolled students from the Registrar and ICT Office and reaches out to understand their situation. This outreach serves multiple purposes: it checks on the student's welfare, identifies barriers that prevent continued enrollment, and invites students to return when ready. Many learners who may have otherwise permanently dropped out are able to re-enter because the university maintains an open line of communication.

CEU's experience demonstrates that reducing dropout requires more than academic remediation but a holistic system that monitors performance, responds to early signs of difficulty, addresses psychosocial barriers, and keeps pathways open for students to return. Through this integrated approach, CEU shows how higher education institutions can build supportive environments where students are supported to overcome barriers and complete their academic journeys.



KEY PRIORITY AREA 6: ENHANCING GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

The goal of KPA 6 is to ensure that governance and financing reforms are in place to achieve targets identified in previous KPAs. It brings decisions and resources closer to learners, clarifies accountabilities, and ensures every peso delivers results.

The NatPlan workshops emphasized that our system is fragmented. Roles are blurred, follow through is uneven, and accountability is weak. The urgency of reforms is reinforced by findings from the EDCOM II Year 1 Report (2023), which document significant misalignments in accountability and performance frameworks across the education sector. The system needs to move from input-based, punitive compliance to outcome -based, capacity-building accountability, with differentiated targets by level and a laser focus on equity.

SUMMARY OF KPA 6 OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

KPA 6.1 Ensure adequate financial and human resource investments in education

OUTCOMES & RECOMMENDATIONS	BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
		2028	2031	2035	
Outcome 6.1.A. Education spending as % of GDP	**3.9%** (Calculation based on DBM data, 2025)	**4.5%**	**5%**	**5.5%**	**DBM & EWDG**
Recommendation 6.1.1. Invest at least 5% of GDP on education, focusing on the foundations					**DBM & EWDG**
Recommendation 6.1.2. Recruit and develop quality school leaders and administrators from basic education to higher education					**DepEd, CHED, & TESDA**
KPA 6.2 Build coherent and accountable governance arrangements toward an effective education ecosystem					
Outcome 6.2.A. Sustained models for decentralization and devolution in basic and tech-voc education	*See the full description of qualitative targets in the succeeding pages	Development of models and guideposts	Scaled Decentralization and devolution	Scaled Decentralization and devolution	**DepEd, TESDA, & DILG**
Outcome 6.2.B. Institutionalization of Public-Private Complementarity	Operationalization and Implementation of Public-private complementarity	Public-private complementarity framework clarified and operationalized in Agency Plans with specific finance instruments and allocated complementarity budgets for each agency	Achievement of metrics identified in the plans	At least 50% of incremental budget increases in education shall be in the form of portable student financing instruments like grants, loans and vouchers	**EWDG through a Partnership Board to align the complementarity plans of DepEd, TESDA, CHED, ECCD Council and LGUs**

OUTCOMES & RECOMMENDATIONS	BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
		2028	2031	2035	
Outcome 6.2.C. Development of a harmonized information system and accountability system	**New indicator**	Basic functionality, performance management targets and learning outcome targets established	Advanced functionality, performance management targets and learning outcome targets established	Mature, trusted, and established system	**DepEd, CHED, TESDA, DOLE, & EWDG**
Recommendation 6.2.1. Implement phased decentralization and devolution to enable targeted and contextualized services					**DepEd, TESDA, & DILG**
Recommendation 6.2.2. Strengthen inter-agency alignment and data integration					**EWDG**
Recommendation 6.2.3. Update the charters of DepEd, CHED, and TESDA and optimize agency capacity					**DepED, TESDA, & CHED**
Recommendation 6.2.4. Strengthening of the Philippine Qualifications Framework (Republic Act 10968- The PQF Act)					**PQF-NCC**
Recommendation 6.2.5. Provision of Lifelong Learning Opportunities in Cities, Municipalities, and Barangays					**PQF-NCC**

6.1 ENSURE ADEQUATE FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCE INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION

OUTCOME 6.1.A. EDUCATION SPENDING AS PERCENTAGE OF GDP

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
3.9% (Calculation based on DBM data, 2025)	**4.5%**	**5%**	**5.5%**	**DBM & EWDG**

GLOBAL BENCHMARKS:

The Education 2030 Incheon Declaration recommends 4-6%.

ASEAN Countries Spending as % of GDP (World Bank Open Data):

- **Malaysia:** 3.6% (2023)
- **Vietnam:** 2.9% (2022)
- **Thailand:** 2.5% (2023)
- **Singapore:** 2.2% (2023)
- **Indonesia:** 1.3% (2023)

RECOMMENDATION 6.1.1. Invest at least 5% of GDP on education, focusing on the foundations

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
6.1.1.a. Increase education spending as % of National Expenditure	**16.5%** (Calculation based on DBM data, 2025)	**21%**	**24.5%**	**29%**	**DBM & EWDG**
6.1.1.b. Increase percentage share of TVET in the GDP Available potential benchmarks include a World Bank TVET Report that notes how TVET spending is usually 0.2% of GDP among LMICs and 0.46% of GDP among HICs. The current targets aim to meet 0.2% of GDP by 2031.	**0.07%** (Calculation based on DBM data, 2025)	**0.1%**	**0.2%**	**0.3%**	**DBM & TESDA**
6.1.1.c. Increase per capita spending for basic education[1]	**PHP 47,286**[2] (PIDS, 2021) It would be ideal for expenditure tracking for DBM and DepEd to tag funding accordingly to best estimate per capita spending	**PHP 50K**	**PHP 60K**	**PHP 78K**	**DBM & DepEd**

RECOMMENDATION 6.1.2. Recruit and develop quality school leaders and administrators from basic education to higher education

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
6.1.2.a. Increase the Number of Schools with School Principal Plantilla Positions[3]	**52%** 23,661[4] Schools with Principal I-IV plantilla positions	**100%**[5] **2026: 6,000** **2027: 8,000** **2028: 8,124**	**100%**	**100%**	**DepEd**
6.1.2.b. Ensure timely filling of Principal Plantilla positions aligned with the accelerated creation of these positions ▪ Occupancy Rate of School Principal Positions	**94.35%** 22,320[6] filled out of 23,661 School Principal Plantilla positions	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**DepEd**
6.1.2.c. Increase the % of Principals meeting SBM Competencies	**0%** Pending the establishment of DepEd's Principals Academy Universe: 22,320[7] School Heads	**33%** ~15,110 School Heads (cumulative) **2026: +11%** +5,036[8] **2027: +11%** +5,037 **2028: +11%** +5,037	**33%**	**100%**	**DepEd**

1 Recommendation 1.1.1.h. under KPA 1 includes provisions for per-child funding for early childhood nutrition.
2 In a PIDS Study, Philippine expenditure per primary student is at USD813 in 2018. The estimates were based on the author's calculation using enrollment data (PSA, 2021), public education expenditure by level (DBM, 2020), and GDP in constant 2017 international (purchasing power parity, PPP) dollars. According to the same study, Indonesia spends USD1,348 per primary student, USD1,068 per secondary student. Thailand spends USD3,676 per primary student and USD2,838 per secondary student. The 2028 and 2031 targets are based on the total proposed budget estimate (lower bound) for interventions under KPAs 2, 3, and 5 added to the latest DepEd budget divided by the projected population of learners. The 2035 target is based on Indonesia as a benchmark.
3 Based on the new School Organizational Structure and Staffing Standards (SOSSS) allocation of one (1) School Principal per unique DepEd-managed school.
4 Based on June 2025 GMIS data. No. of schools based on SY 2024-2025 data, including 467 schools in Sulu.
5 Additional items after 2028 may be created, depending on the number of newly-established schools.
6 Ibid.
7 Based on June 2025 GMIS data
8 The 2026-2028 yearly targets for 6.1.2.c (~5,036) are calculated from the 11% of the 45,785 Principal positions targeted to be filled by 2028.

6.1.2.d. Bolster capacity development for Principals, SDS, PSDS, and RDs

- To strengthen instructional leadership and management within the Department of Education, it is recommended that NEAP expand targeted and competency-based training and professional development programs for Schools Division Superintendents (SDS), Public Schools District Supervisors (PSDS), and Regional Directors (RDs) to enhance leadership, planning, and accountability in education delivery.
- Further, it is recommended that NEAP expand Professional Learning Communities under its developing Principal Academy to enhance leadership capacity and foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing among school heads

6.1.2.e. Strengthen leadership capacity of Higher Education faculty and staff

- To strengthen leadership within higher education institutions, it is recommended that Congress prioritize the passage of bills amending Republic Act No. 8292, or the *Higher Education Modernization Act of 1997*. These amendments should provide for the institutionalization of a **Philippine Higher Education Academy**, which is tasked with developing, aligning, and sustaining the leadership and professional capacities of higher education faculty, administrators, and personnel.

6.2 BUILD COHERENT AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS TOWARD AN EFFECTIVE EDUCATION ECOSYSTEM

OUTCOME 6.2.A. Sustained models for decentralization and devolution in basic and tech-voc education

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
Ongoing initiatives of DepEd: ▪ Decentralization Readiness Index developed for Regional Offices ▪ Delivery Units piloted in five Regions (Region 1, 3, 8, 9, CAR) to model decentralized mechanisms ▪ PhP 10M fund/Region to administer unique PAPs ▪ Deconcentration of select PAPs from COs to ROs ▪ Normative MOOE implemented	**Set guideposts to sustain decentralization** Pilots tested across multiple school years ready for scaling Partnership arrangements with LGUs defined Decentralization Readiness Index developed for Divisions, Schools, and LGUs	**Scaled implementation**	**School communities and local stakeholders** have the capacity, authority, and resources to design and implement programs that improve learning outcomes. **DepEd Field Offices** focus support and resources towards Last-Mile Schools.	**DepEd & DILG**
Defining the phases, stages, and scope of decentralization ▪ Rationalize functions, authorities, and programs for devolution or deconcentration ▪ Determine KPA 1–5 targets and PAPs suitable for decentralization ▪ Align budget allocation, capacity-development initiatives, and accountability mechanisms with decentralization models			**Schools** have functional SGCs, funded SIPs, and practice SBM. **Local Government Units** fully utilize SEF aligned with SIPs	

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
TESDA 2022 Board Resolution defines three pathways for devolution.[9]	**Development of phased devolution models:** Pilot implementation in TTIs, guided by LGU readiness and new pathways.	**Scaled devolution:** Monitoring & quality-assurance mechanisms institutionalized at the LGU level	**Sustained devolution:** Evidence of locally-driven innovations in LGU-led TTIs	**TESDA & DILG**
Baseline: **1** TTI successfully devolved out of 11 pilots and total of 178 TTIs[10]	At least **12** Piloted devolved TTIs located in 1st class municipalities of Region IV-A, which covered three of the four national TTI devolution pilots.	**24** Additional pilot TTIs devolved and located in 1st class municipalities		

RECOMMENDATION 6.2.1. Implement phased decentralization and devolution to enable targeted and contextualized services

6.2.1.a. Increase school readiness to absorb decentralized functions

- To build the capacity of schools to absorb decentralized functions, it is recommended that DepEd develop a decentralization readiness index to guide training and interventions that account for varying school needs and capacity
- It is recommended that DepEd increase school-level resources and refine its recently implemented School MOOE formula to integrate equity-based measures and allocations, taking into account LGU income class, priority status (e.g., schools with SPED learners), and schools offering SCPs.
- Further, DepEd should strategically expand the number of Implementing Units (IUs) by prioritizing schools with large enrollment size and demonstrated economies of scale to maximize operational efficiency and ensure greater impact of decentralized functions.
- Lastly, an increase in the number of Schools Division Offices (SDOs) in large and high-need jurisdictions is recommended to enhance system responsiveness, improve oversight, and strengthen technical and administrative support to schools, particularly those transitioning to greater decentralized authority.

6.2.1.b. Increase LGU readiness for locally-driven education services

- To build the capacity of LGUs to absorb decentralized functions, it is recommended that DILG oversee the development of a decentralization readiness index with DepEd and TESDA to determine baseline needs, capacity, and possible incentives for LGUs
- Further, it is recommended that DILG provide targeted training and technical assistance to LGUs on the delivery of early childhood, basic, and technical-vocational education; financial management; participatory budgeting; and data use (in partnership with ECCD Council, DepEd, and TESDA)
- To facilitate knowledge sharing and scaling of best practices, it is recommended that DILG facilitate the creation of peer-learning networks across LGUs

The EDCOM II Year 1 and Year 2 Reports highlight that the lack of a clear framework for public–private complementarity has contributed to declining private sector participation, with private school enrollment falling by about 20% over the past decade despite strong outcomes and cost efficiency. Operationalizing complementarity requires a strategic, data-driven approach to school and program expansion, the institutionalization of diverse public–private partnership models, including shared facilities, management arrangements, and publicly funded but independently run institutions, and a regulatory environment that ensures independence, quality assurance, academic freedom, fairness, and clear separation between regulators and providers. Taken together, sustained collaboration among government agencies, LGUs, and private providers allows the system to fully mobilize the respective strengths of both sectors in support of national development.

9 TESDA recommends conducting a study by 2028 to assess possible devolution models and determine the most suitable approach for implementation. Based on the results of this study, the appropriate devolution model should be rolled out by 2030/2035.

10 Transcript of EDCOM II TESDA Charter Hearing

OUTCOME 6.2.B. Institutionalization of Public-Private Complementarity and Student Choice

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
Operationalization and Implementation of Public-Private Complementarity	Public-private complementarity framework operationalized in Agency Plans with specific finance instruments and allocated complementarity budgets for each agency	Achievement of target outcomes/ metrics identified in agency plans	At least 50% of incremental budget increases in education shall be in the form of additional portable student-choice financing instruments like grants, loans, and vouchers	**EWDG Partnership Board to align the complementarity plans of DepEd, TESDA, CHED, ECCD Council and LGUs**

OUTCOME 6.2.C. DEVELOPMENT OF A HARMONIZED INFORMATION SYSTEM AND ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

OUTCOME 6.2.C. Development of a harmonized information system and accountability system

BASELINE	TARGETS			AGENCY
	2028	2031	2035	
(New Indicator)	**Basic functionality, performance management targets, and learning outcome targets established:** Unified learner ID operational across systems	**Advanced functionality, performance management targets, and learning outcome targets established:** Learner pathways tracked longitudinally	**Mature, trusted, and established system:** Full coverage of learner life cycle	**DepEd, CHED, & TESDA**

GLOBAL BENCHMARKS:

Progressively expand coverage to broader population beyond learners, as needed; starting with all enrollees in Basic Ed, TVET, and Higher Ed by 2028 to cover all school-age population.

RECOMMENDATION 6.2.2. Strengthen inter-agency alignment and data integration

As discussed in the synthesis for Priority Area 23 (Ensuring Seamless and Integrated Delivery of Education), EDCOM II's over the past three years highlight a critical need for stronger coordination across the trifocalized education system, with stakeholders calling for a more coherent governance architecture that ensures alignment, accountability, and sustained inter-agency collaboration. Proposed reforms include institutionalizing a Cabinet Cluster on Education, establishing an independent education assessment body, streamlining fragmented scholarship administration, strengthening public–private alignment platforms, and rationalizing the growing number of overlapping councils and inter-agency bodies, estimated to have expanded from 68 to about 130. Together, these measures advance KPA 6's objective of building a streamlined, evidence-based governance system capable of sustaining education reform across political cycles.

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
Phased learner data-integration					
6.2.2.a. Standardize LRN as operational learner ID across systems, transitioning to a PhilSys-enabled system ▪ % of learners integrated in the system	N/A	Learner information system that uses the Learner Reference Number (LRN) as the unique learner identifier		An interoperable and integrated learner information system that uses PhilSys as the unique learner identifier	**DepEd, CHED, & TESDA**
TARGET OUTPUTS	**BASELINE**	**2028**	**2031**	**2035**	**AGENCY**
Establish a Unified Career Guidance and Scholarship Platform across Education Agencies					
6.2.2.b. Integrate career guidance efforts and scholarship programs into a unified platform across DepEd, CHED, TESDA, and DOST	**0**	Pilot unified platform	Full 4-agency integration	Institutionalized unified platform	**EWDG & UNIFAST**
Review and rationalize overlapping councils and inter-agency bodies					
6.2.2.c. Increase the number of councils and inter-agency bodies rationalized (through the Education and Workforce Development Group)	**130** (2025)	(~30%)	(~60%)	(~90%)	**EWDG**

6.2.2.d. Legislate the establishment of the Cabinet Cluster on Education (or National Education Coordination Authority)

On the sustained Oversight and coordination of Education:

- Legislate the establishment of a National Education Coordination Authority (a permanent Oversight Coordination structure that is beyond the Cabinet Cluster) to institutionalize coordinated planning across Basic Ed, higher Ed, and Tech Voc, assessments of learners and teachers, as well as the development and maintenance of an integrated information system across the educational sector.

RECOMMENDATION 6.2.3. Update the charters of DepEd, CHED, and TESDA and optimize agency capacity

As discussed in the synthesis for Priority Area 23 (Ensuring Seamless and Integrated Delivery of Education), the EDCOM II Charter Hearings highlighted a shared concern that existing organizational setups reflect conditions at the time of the agencies' establishment in the mid-1990s, resulting in capacity gaps in critical functions such as quality assurance, data and analytics, procurement, and labor-market alignment. These constraints limit agencies' ability to effectively respond to emerging needs and coordinate reforms across the education and training system.

6.2.3.a. Update the charters of DepEd, CHED, and TESDA

Amend the charters of DepEd, CHED, and TESDA to clarify mandates, eliminate overlapping functions, and institutionalize coordination mechanisms in line with EDCOM II's reform recommendations. Updates should reflect a coherent governance structure across basic education, higher education, and TVET to improve alignment, accountability, and system efficiency.

6.2.3.b. Rationalize staffing structures in CHED and TESDA aligned with agency functions

As of September 2025, TESDA has 5,072 authorized positions, of which 4,229 are filled, while CHED data is still pending. By 2028, TESDA targets an additional 220 positions, rising to 22 more by 2031, alongside corresponding increases for CHED once validated. The recommendation emphasizes not just increasing headcount but strategically filling gaps and rationalizing positions so that staffing aligns with expanded responsibilities, supported by the forthcoming World Bank study and the implementation of the Government Optimization Law.

RECOMMENDATION 6.2.4. Strengthening of the Philippine Qualifications Framework (Republic Act No. 10968- The PQF Act)

Republic Act No. 10968 established the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) as the national system for quality-assured, lifelong recognition of qualifications, linking education and training pathways with labor-market needs to support workforce mobility and skills development. To operationalize the PQF, three synchronized mechanisms are essential: a fully implemented Philippine Credit Transfer System (PCTS) to enable learner mobility and recognition of prior learning through clear national credit values; a credible and updated Philippine Qualifications Register (PhQuaR)to ensure transparency and accountability of recognized qualifications and progressively integrate with skills and labor-market data systems; and the institutionalized periodic referencing of the PQF to the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF) to maintain international comparability. Together, these mechanisms anchor the PQF as a governance and development tool that connects education, training, and employment into a coherent, future-ready lifelong learning ecosystem.

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
6.2.4.a. Operationalized Credit Grants/ Units for Qualifications towards the Full Implementation of the Philippine Credit Grants and Transfer System	**Assignment of Credit Grants/Units for Industry-Linked Qualifications**	**80%** of TVET qualifications, including TVET microcredential have assigned credits	**100%** of industry-linked qualifications, including TVET microcredentials have assigned credits	**100%** of industry-linked qualifications including TVET microcredentials have assigned credits	**PQF-NCC**
		50% of higher education qualifications and industry-oriented microcredentials in identified industry sub-sectors have assigned credits	**80%** of higher education qualifications and industry-oriented microcredentials in identified industry subsectors have assigned credits	**100%** of higher education qualifications and industry-oriented microcredentials in identified inustry subsectors have assigned credits	
6.2.4.b. Implementing Guidelines for the Philippine Credit Transfer System in identified Industry sub-sectors	**PCTS Implementation Guidelines for Programs related to identified industry sub-sectors**	**50%** of Programs related to identified industry sub-sectors have PCTS implementing Guidelines prepared jointly by the relevant TESDA Technical Committees and the CHED Technical Panels	**80%** of Programs related to identified industry sub-sectors have PCTS implementing Guidelines prepared jointly by the relevant TESDA Technical Committees and the CHED Technical Panels Expansion of the identified industry sub-sectors	**100%** of Programs related to identified industry sub-sectors have PCTS implementing Guidelines prepared jointly by the TESD Technical Committees and the CHED Technical Panels Expansion of the identified industry sub-sectors	**TESDA & CHED**

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
6.2.4.c. Wide-ranging referral of quality-assured qualifications in the Philippine Qualifications Register (PhQuaR)	**Institutionalization of the PhQuar as the national database of quality-assured qualifications authorized under the PQF to provide information to employers, education and training providers, and students.**	**100%** of existing qualifications are entered in the PhQuar Review of qualifications entered in the Register and External Certification of the PhQuar system	Inclusion of all additional quality-assured qualifications and continuous improvement of PhQuar	PhQuar linked to the Philippine Skills Framework and the Labor Information System	**PQF-NCC** **Through its Working Group on PhQuar**
6.2.4.d. PQF Referenced to the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)	**PQF Referencing Report is published globally as meeting the criteria for alignment to the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework**	Updated PH Referencing Report (2nd) endorsed by AQRFC	Updated PH Referencing Report (3rd) endorsed by AQRFC	Updated PH Referencing Report (4th) endorsed by AQRFC	**PQF-NCC**

RECOMMENDATION 6.2.5. Provision of Lifelong Learning Opportunities in Cities, Municipalities, and Barangays. (Republic Act 12313 – The Lifelong Learning Development Framework Act)

As noted in the synthesis for Priority Area 22 (Framework for Equivalency and Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning), Republic Act 12313 defines lifelong learning as continuous learning across all stages of life and settings—formal, nonformal, and informal. The Lifelong Learning Development Framework translates this into seven objectives, from functional literacy and inclusion to workplace learning, technology use, quality assurance, and a culture of learning, implemented through nine action components led by LGUs. Together, these reforms position every city, municipality, and barangay as a learning community, with clear standards, designations, and regular progress monitoring.

TARGET OUTPUTS	BASELINE	2028	2031	2035	AGENCY
6.2.5.a. Designated Learning Cities based on their proven capacity to carry out the LLDF Action Components and Performance *(RA 12313 Sections 5, 9, and 10)*	New indicator Universe: 149 cities 1493 towns 42011 barangays total 43, 653 Total 43,653 (DILG Facts and Figures Nov 3, 2025)	**0.05%** 18 cities/ towns (one per region)	**1%** 436 cities /towns/ barangays	**10%** 4,365 cit-ies /towns/ barangays	**PQF-NCC**
6.2.5.b. Services for counselling, coaching, mentoring, and information sharing are provided for all prospective beneficiaries *(Republic Act No. 12313 Sec 10)*	New indicator Operational Community LLLearning Centers in target cities, towns, and barangays	**18** CLLCs	**436** CLLCs	**4,322** CLLCs	**PQF-NCC**
6.2.5.c. LLL Programs designed based on learner and community needs *(Republic Act 12313 Sec 10)*	New indicator Learners completing LLL programs	**1,800** LLL pro-grams	**4,360** LLL pro-grams	**43,220** LLL pro-grams	**PQF-NCC**

Note on the Development of the Lifelong Learning Development Framework (LLDF):

The Lifelong Learning Development Framework (LLDF) National Master Plan shall serve as the strategic blueprint for promoting lifelong learning and designating learning cities, municipalities, and barangays across the Philippines (Republic Act 12313, Sec. 8). Its implementation will be supported by an advocacy and change management program that promotes a paradigm shift, from teaching to learning, from the mere acquisition of information to the development of creativity, learning, and skills-based assessment aligned with agreed standards (Sec. 10).

Beginning in 2028, the Philippine Educational Credit Transfer System (PCTS) should operationalize the award of educational credits for learning outcomes achieved through LLDF and related lifelong learning programs, which will be published in the Philippine Qualifications Register (PhQuaR) (Sec. 7d).

The private sector will play a key role by providing lifelong learning opportunities for employees (Sec. 13), while the implementation of LLDF will be supported through financial, material, and personnel resources drawn from the Special Education Fund, local government allocations, national education agency subsidies, private sector donations, and international technical assistance (Sec. 14).



STRENGTHENING LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS *and* COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN ILOILO *(Synergia Foundation, 2024–2025)*

The Synergia Foundation, in partnership with the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II), implemented a Proof of Concept (POC) Education Reform program in 11 pilot areas in the province of Iloilo. The initiative aimed to demonstrate how strengthening **Local School Boards (LSBs)**, enhancing **community participation**, and **decentralizing** certain education delivery functions can directly improve learning outcomes, school leadership performance, and accountability mechanisms.

Through capacity building, participatory planning, and performance-based budgeting, the program sought to ensure that **every Grade 3 child can read well**, improve children's creative thinking skills, and strengthen the instructional and managerial performance of teachers and principals. The LSBs and local school communities assumed expanded roles in needs assessment, development of reading materials, teacher and parent training, and creation of incentive and disincentive schemes to promote accountability.

Pre- and post-assessment results show **significant learning gains** among children in experimental schools: Grade 3 learners scored **88% on average**, compared to 8**1% in control groups**, with statistically significant differences at the 1% level ($p<0.01$). The experimental group outperformed peers in English comprehension, story understanding, and critical thinking tasks. Notably, average reading performance in the municipality of Pavia increased from **67% to 82%**, and results were consistent across LGUs regardless of income classification. Central schools also showed significantly higher outcomes compared to non-central and integrated schools.

The Iloilo case illustrates the importance of devolved, accountable, and participatory education governance, which can lead to greater learning outcomes.



BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR THE NATIONAL EDUCATION PLAN (2026-2035)

This section presents the projected investment requirements for implementing the National Education Plan (NatPlan) in order to achieve the necessary reforms to stem our learning crisis in the next decade. These estimates focus on the Top 20 priorities indicated by EDCOM, and aims to raise education spending to at least 5.5% of GDP by 2035. These estimates were developed using the following approach:

- **Incremental costing:** All figures represent additional investments required on top of current appropriations. They assume that the delivery of unmet outcomes scales proportionally with increased resources.
- **Front-loaded investments:** Given the need for foundational investments in infrastructure, training, and system-building to enable sustained delivery in subsequent years, many interventions are front-loaded by design.
- **Linear assumption in macroeconomic trends**: Macroeconomic projections (GDP growth, inflation) are based on linear assumptions and carry inherent uncertainty, particularly for later years of the plan period. Notably, all cost estimates are expressed in current (2025) prices. Actual nominal budget requirements for future years would be higher when adjusted for inflation.
- **Unit cost approach**: Where possible, costs were derived by multiplying target outputs (e.g., number of classrooms, beneficiaries, trained personnel) by unit costs from agency data and comparable programs.
- **Milestone periods:** Costs are aggregated into three milestone periods: 2026-2028, 2029-2031, and 2032-2035, aligned with the NatPlan's monitoring framework.
- **Data sources**: Estimates draw from official macroeconomic projections, agency statistics from DepEd, CHED, and TESDA, line-item programs from DBM budget documents, indicative per-unit costs and program targets from implementing agencies, and relevant research from government agencies and academic institutions.

Considering these assumptions, we note that these estimates are preliminary and indicative, ultimately subject to refinement based on inputs from implementing agencies during the usual budget preparation process. This must consider absorptive capacity, agency readiness, and refined program designs. Further, given the timeline of the reform, estimates for later periods carry wider margins of uncertainty, as they depend on evolving program requirements, future policy decisions, and economic conditions that are inherently difficult to forecast.

EDUCATION INVESTMENTS AS PERCENTAGE OF GDP

	ANNUALIZED			MILESTONES		
	2026	2027	2028	2028	2031	2035
Target Education Budget as % of GDP	4.09%	4.29%	4.50%	4.50%	5%	5.50%
Incremental % of GDP (Increments to the current educ budget)	+0.88%	+0.79%	+0.73%	+0.78%	+0.65%	+0.44%
Trajectory of NatPlan	4.52%	5.32%	5.28%	5.28%	5.16%	4.95%
All Recommendations	270.4534	264.7725	264.5549	788.4294	842.4675	1,032.8881
Top 20 Priority Recommendations	266.7079	261.0270	260.8094	777.1928	826.8460	1,009.2666

Notably, the proposed 2026 national budget already reflects a significant increase in education spending, bringing the sector to approximately 4.3% of GDP–ahead of the NatPlan's interim target for 2028. This frontloading means that in the near term (2026-2028), status quo projections actually exceed the target trajectory. However, as the target rises toward 5.0% of GDP by 2031 and 5.5% by 2035, an investment gap emerges and widens— representing that additional resources are needed to sustain the upward trajectory beyond current budget trends.

By 2035, this annual investment gap will reach approximately P623.1 billion. The cumulative investment gap over 2026-2035—the total additional funding required to move from the status quo trajectory to the target trajectory—is estimated at approximately P1.91 trillion. The total indicative incremental cost of implementing the NatPlan is estimated at P2.66 trillion over the plan period.

These estimates underscores the need for the 2026 level of investment in education to be sustained and continuously increased. This is imperative in order to allow the education system to squarely address our learning crisis, and prepare Filipino learners for the demands of a rapidly evolving economy. The estimated incremental investment of P2.66 trillion over 2026-2035 represents the scale of commitment needed in order to address the compounded underinvestment on education in the past decades, and to truly fulfill the potential of our people and nation.

STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS ACROSS KEY PRIORITY AREAS

The distribution of investments reflects the NatPlan's strategic priorities:

- **Basic Education accounts for the largest share (60%) of incremental investments, reflecting the scale of interventions needed to address foundational learning**. Key cost drivers include classroom construction and repair, teacher deployment and training, instructional materials, and programs to address mass promotion and improve functional literacy in the early grades.
- **Higher Education represents nearly 30% of incremental costs, driven primarily by expanded scholarship coverage** (TES, SIKAP).
- **Early Childhood Care and Development** investments target maternal and child nutrition programs (First 1,000 Days, Supplementary Feeding), training of Child Development Workers, and expanding access to quality early learning through Child Development Centers in every barangay.
- **Technical-Vocational Education and Training** investments focus on strengthening the quality assurance of SHS Tech-Voc tracks, capaciting TVL teachers, developing new Training Regulations and programs aligned with industry needs, and expanding TESDA's role in skills development.

KPA 1: SUPPORTING EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

	ANNUALIZED			MILESTONES		
	2026	2027	2028	2028	2031	2035
KPA 1: Supporting Early Childhood Development	**20.0684**	**20.1231**	**20.1598**	**48.9998**	**59.7657**	**81.4528**
KPA 1 Priority Recommendations	**19.0598**	**19.1145**	**19.1512**	**45.9741**	**56.7442**	**77.4313**
1.1 Establish targeted and integrated maternal and early childhood nutritional and health supports	**17.0686**	**17.0686**	**17.0686**	**39.8543**	**49.6189**	**68.3412**
Recommendation 1.1.1. Increase investments in early childhood nutrition (First 1000 days, Supplementary Feeding Program, School-Based Feeding Program)	17.0600	17.0600	17.0600	39.8286	49.5974	68.3197
Recommendation 1.1.2. Enhance the health and nutritional support for female adolescent learners	0.0086	0.0086	0.0086	0.0257	0.0215	0.0215
1.2 Ensure each barangay has universal access to inclusive and high-quality holistic early learning opportunities	**2.9998**	**3.0545**	**3.0912**	**9.1456**	**10.1469**	**13.1115**
Recommendation 1.2.1. Provide scholarships for the training of Child Development Workers and Child Development Teachers	0.3373	0.3920	0.4288	1.1581	1.3633	1.8177
Recommendation 1.2.2. Expand access to early childhood education through center-based and alternative delivery modes	1.6625	1.6625	1.6625	4.9875	5.7836	7.2938
Recommendation 1.2.3. Strengthen the capacity of LGUs to implement Republic Act 12199	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	3.0000	3.0000	4.0000

KPA 2: DEVELOPING THE FUNCTIONAL LITERACY OF EARLY LEARNERS

	ANNUALIZED			MILESTONES		
	2026	2027	2028	2028	2031	2035
KPA 2: Developing the Functional Literacy of Elementary Learners	**125.7520**	**119.6547**	**119.6547**	**365.0613**	**364.6027**	**502.9258**
KPA 2 Priority Recommendations	**125.7520**	**119.6547**	**119.6547**	**365.0613**	**364.6027**	**502.9258**
2.1 Ensure students are functionally literate	**125.7520**	**119.6547**	**119.6547**	**365.0613**	**364.6027**	**502.9258**
Recommendation 2.1.1. Address classroom backlog and congestion in schools, utilizing different modalities (LGU and CSO partnerships, PPPs, voucher program)	49.8777	49.8777	49.8777	149.6330	198.3930	225.6180
Recommendation 2.1.2. Revise procurement guidelines to ensure complete and timely delivery of textbooks	6.0433	6.0433	6.0433	18.1300	0.0000	18.1300
Recommendation 2.1.3. Provide equitable internet connectivity and digital resources for schools, teachers, and learners	19.9839	13.8866	13.8866	47.7570	0.4734	42.3312
Recommendation 2.1.4. End"mass promotion" in schools (Fully implement ARAL; Revise RPMS, OPCR and GAA targets; and Rescinding the grade transmutation policy)	11.0138	11.0138	11.0138	33.0413	32.9363	43.6466
Recommendation 2.1.5. Reduce administrative burdens on teachers	38.8333	38.8333	38.8333	116.5000	132.8000	173.2000

KPA 3: DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING, DIGITAL SKILLS, AND GRADUATE READINESS FOR EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, AND TVET

	ANNUALIZED			MILESTONES		
	2026	2027	2028	2028	2031	2035
KPA 3: Developing critical thinking, digital skills, and graduate readiness for employment, education, and TVET	**3.5728**	**3.5798**	**3.5888**	**10.7414**	**1.9807**	**2.6409**
KPA 3 Priority Recommendations	**3.5728**	**3.5798**	**3.5888**	**10.7414**	**1.9807**	**2.6409**
3.1 Equip all students with critical thinking, creative thinking, and communication skills, strengthening readiness for employment	**3.5728**	**3.5798**	**3.5888**	**10.7414**	**1.9807**	**2.6409**
Recommendation 3.1.1. Ensure teacher subject-specialization alignment	2.4447	2.4447	2.4447	7.3342	0.0000	0.0000
Recommendation 3.1.2. Improve quality and relevance of SHS TechPro program	1.1211	1.1211	1.1211	3.3632	1.9117	2.5489
Recommendation 3.1.3. Institutionalize school-to-employment pathways and strengthen industry-academe coordination	0.0070	0.0140	0.0230	0.0440	0.0690	0.0920

KPA 4: PROMOTING INCLUSIVE LEARNING

	ANNUALIZED			MILESTONES		
	2026	2027	2028	2028	2031	2035
KPA 4: Promoting Inclusive Learning	**33.5894**	**33.6441**	**33.6808**	**100.9143**	**103.5978**	**26.9322**
KPA 4 Priority Recommendations	**30.8524**	**30.9072**	**30.9439**	**92.7035**	**90.9978**	**7.3322**
4.1 Increase the participation and completion of learners in inclusive education	**33.5894**	**33.6441**	**33.6808**	**100.9143**	**103.5978**	**26.9322**
Recommendation 4.1.1. Build better infrastructure for inclusive education learners	29.8650	29.8650	29.8650	89.5950	89.6630	5.6630
Recommendation 4.1.2. Invest in teachers and professionals in inclusive education	0.9874	1.0422	1.0789	3.1085	1.3348	1.6692
Recommendation 4.1.3. Expand inclusive education program offerings	2.7370	2.7370	2.7370	8.2109	12.6000	19.6000

KPA 5: IMPROVING EQUITABLE ACCESS TO QUALITY TERTIARY EDUCATION

	ANNUALIZED			MILESTONES		
	2026	2027	2028	2028	2031	2035
KPA 5: Equitable Access to Quality Tertiary Education	**72.6697**	**72.6697**	**72.6697**	**218.0092**	**263.1173**	**361.7832**
KPA 5 Priority Recommendations	**72.6697**	**72.6697**	**72.6697**	**218.0092**	**263.1173**	**361.7832**
5.1 Provide learners with more opportunities to access quality tertiary education	**13.5981**	**13.5981**	**13.5981**	**40.7944**	**55.0881**	**73.2558**
Recommendation 5.1.1. Expand access and supports to tertiary education, especially for the poorest	12.6012	12.6012	12.6012	37.8036	54.4088	72.5451
Recommendation 5.1.2. Strengthen relevance and seamlessness of TVET and college pathways	0.9970	0.9970	0.9970	2.9909	0.6793	0.7108
5.2 Improve the development and support of educators in tertiary education	**59.0716**	**59.0716**	**59.0716**	**177.2148**	**208.0292**	**288.5274**
Recommendation 5.2.1. Invest in the professional development of faculty, trainers, and researchers	59.0716	59.0716	59.0716	177.2148	208.0292	288.5274

KPA 6: ENHANCING GOVERNANCE & RESOURCE ALLOCATION

	ANNUALIZED			MILESTONES		
	2026	2027	2028	2028	2031	2035
KPA 6: Enhancing Governance & Resource Allocation	**14.8011**	**15.1011**	**14.8011**	**44.7033**	**49.4033**	**57.1533**
KPA 6 Priority Recommendations	**14.8011**	**15.1011**	**14.8011**	**44.7033**	**49.4033**	**57.1533**
6.1 Ensure adequate financial and human resource investments in education	**12.0678**	**12.0678**	**12.0678**	**36.2033**	**39.4033**	**47.5533**
Recommendation 6.1.1. Invest at least 5% of GDP on education, focusing on the foundations	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Recommendation 6.1.2. Recruit and develop quality school leaders and administrators from basic education to higher education	12.0678	12.0678	12.0678	36.2033	39.4033	47.5533
6.2 Build coherent and accountable governance arrangements toward an effective education ecosystem	**2.7333**	**3.0333**	**2.7333**	**8.5000**	**10.0000**	**9.6000**
Recommendation 6.2.1. Implement phased decentralization and devolution to enable targeted and contextualized services	1.0667	1.0667	1.0667	3.2000	3.5000	1.6000
Recommendation 6.2.2. Strengthen inter-agency alignment and data integration	1.6667	1.9667	1.6667	5.3000	6.5000	8.0000
Recommendation 6.2.3. Update the charters of DepEd, CHED, and TESDA and optimize agency capacity	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Recommendation 6.2.4. Strengthening of the Philippine Qualifications Framework (Republic Act No. 10968- The PQF Act)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Recommendation 6.2.5. Provision of Lifelong Learning Opportunities in Cities, Municipalities, and Barangays	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

CONCLUSION

The NatPlan requires sustained and substantial increases in education investment to address the learning crisis and prepare Filipino learners for the demands of a rapidly evolving economy. The estimated incremental investment of P2.66 trillion over 2026-2035 represents the scale of commitment needed to achieve the plan's ambitious outcomes.

The estimates provide a basis for informed budget planning inter-agency coordination, helping ensure that education investments are commensurate with the scale of the challenge. They should be refined through continued engagement with implementing agencies to ensure that resource allocations are aligned with programmatic requirements and implementation capacity.



Workforce Development Plan

INTRODUCTION

A Workforce Development Plan is complementary and necessary to any reforms made in foundational education, as the Filipino student eventually enters the labor force in search for meaningful, productive work.

Education develops the capacities of Filipinos to live meaningful and productive lives, often realized most clearly through the work they choose. A Workforce Development (WFD) Plan, therefore, is an equally important complement to the National Education Plan. We view education as an investment that must flow into clear, measurable employment outcomes such as employability, matching of skills, and social mobility. A disproportionate focus on the supply side, which has long been the case, has produced graduates whose competencies are misaligned with workforce needs, leading to underemployment and wasted potential. To prevent this, our education system must ensure that curricula, certification and credentialing, and coordination with employers are efficient and relevant. This is why a WFD plan is neither peripheral nor optional, but rather a core requirement to ensure our investments in education redound to both the Filipino citizen and to the country's economic progress.

The national Trabaho Para sa Bayan agenda provides a critical first step in that direction. Republic Act No. 11962 established a National Employment Master Plan to coordinate skills, jobs, and MSME support across agencies and to drive medium- and long-term targets for labor-force participation and decent work. The law (and the government's May 2025 launch of the 10-year plan) creates the institutional space — an interagency council, shared metrics, and budgetary authorizations — that any complementary workforce development strategy must plug into rather than duplicate. This report is therefore explicitly designed to supplement the Trabaho Para sa Bayan Plan by (a) proposing national workforce development goals informed by industry-specific diagnoses, (b) documenting local labor-market frictions, and (c) proposing measurable interventions that both government and industry can scale.

Further, 26 laws that supplement the needs of the workforce have also been enacted. These include, but are not limited to, the PH Development Plan of 2023, the Digital Workforce Competitiveness Act of 2023, and the Tatak Pinoy Strategy of 2024 (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1.
Overview of Current Government Priorities

Our labor force faces critical gaps, alongside opportunities for decisive reform, especially when looking at underemployment, quality of work, and the efficiency of our education-to-employment pathways.

2008

RA 9513

Renewable Energy Act

Agencies

DOE, BOI, DOE, DOF, DOST, ERC, DTI

2009

RA 9593

Tourism Act

Agencies

DOT, DPWH, DENR, DILG, DOF, DTI

2013

RA 10557

Philippine Design Competitiveness Act

- Visual Communications
- Architecture
- Industrial Design
- Interior Design
- Information Design
- New Media and Technology
- Fashion Design
- Environmental Design

Agencies

DTI, NCCA, DOT, DepEd, CHED, DOST

2016

RA 10869

JobStart Philippines Act

Agencies

DOLE

Green Jobs Act

Agencies

DOLE, DOF, DENR, DepEd, CHED, TESDA, NEDA, DTI, PRC, DOST, DOTC, DOT, DPWH, CCC

2018

RA 11223 | Heatlh

Universal Health Care Act

Agencies

DOH, CHED, PRC, NEDA

RA 11293

Philippine Innovation Act

- MSME development
- Education
- Trade
- Investment
- Finance
- Agriculture
- Sustainable Energy
- Climate Change

Agencies

NEDA, DOST, DTI, DA, DOH, DENR, DOTr, DOE, DND, DICT, CHED, DBM, DepEd, DILG, DFA, DOLE, IPOPHL

Philippine Space Act

- Space Science
- Technology
- Allied Fields

Agencies

DOST, DND, NEDA, DOF, DFA, DA, DENR, DTI, DICT

RA 11230

RA 11230: Tulong-Trabaho Act

Agencies

TESDA

2022

RA 11646 | Energy

Microgrid Systems Act

Agencies

DOE

RA 11697

Electric Vehicle Industry Development Act (EVIDA)

Agencies

DOE, DOTr, DTI, DOST, DENR, DPWH, DILG, NEDA, NCCA

2023

PH Development Plan

- Industrial, Manufacturing and Transport (IMT)
- Technology, Media, and Telecommunication (TMT)
- Health and Life Science (HLS)
- Modern Basic Needs (MBN)
- Resilient Economy

Agencies

Whole of Government

RA 11962

National Employment Master Plan / Trabaho Para sa Bayan

- Health Services
- Construction
- Tourism
- Agriculture
- Information Technology and Business Process Management
- Manufacturing

Agencies

NEDA, DTI, DOLE, TESDA, DBM, DOF, DILG

RA 11904

Philippine Creative Industries Act

- Audiovisual Media
- Digital Interactive Media
- Creative Services
- Design
- Publishing and Printed Media
- Performing Arts
- Visual Arts
- Traditional Cultural Expressions
- Cultural Sites

Agencies

DTI, DepEd, DOST, NEDA, DOT, DICT, DILG, CHED, NCCA, IPOPHL

RA 11927

Digital Workforce Competitiveness Act

- Web development and Designing
- Online teaching and Tutoring
- Animation
- Writing and Copywriting
- Digital Marketing
- Creative Design
- Graphic Designing
- 3D Modelling and CAD
- Game Development
- Audio and Video Production
- Mobile Application Development
- Search Engine Optimization
- Virtual Assistance
- Branding and Public Relations
- Social Media Coordinator and Community Management
- Web Research
- Business Intelligence and Data Analytics
- Transcription and Data Entry
- Customer Service and Technical Support
- Human Resource Management and Systems
- Architecture Services
- Management of Team and Remote Workers

Agencies

NEDA, DOLE, DTI, DICT, DOST, DILG, DepEd, CHED, TESDA

2024

RA 11981

Tatak Pinoy Strategy

Agencies

NEDA, DOF, DBM, DICT, DILG, DOLE, DOST, DOT, DFA, DTI

> *a DTI survey has shown that for manufacturing companies, only 11% of their entry level hires were considered "fully ready" by their employers.*

Our labor force faces critical gaps, alongside opportunities for decisive reform, especially when looking at underemployment, quality of work, and the efficiency of our education-to-employment pathways.

Even as headline unemployment has fallen, there is a persistent question on underemployment (14.6% in April 2025, per PSA) and quality of employment. In some key industries such as healthcare and advanced manufacturing, "overeducation" (i.e., having credentials above what is required in your occupation) could reach as high as 36% of the labor force. Further, our analysis has shown that 24% of "specialized" graduates (i.e., graduates with a degree in a specific field) are working in an unrelated industry. These findings point towards opportunities to make our education-to-workforce pipelines more intentional and efficient, and are reinforced by realities on the ground.

Across industry consultations, we have heard industry leaders sharing unnecessarily burdensome ways to train new hires beyond what is expected. For instance, a DTI survey has shown that for manufacturing companies, only 11% of their entry level hires were considered "fully ready" by their employers. Especially with the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI), proactive action is necessary to safeguard the agility of our education system.

Being strategic means any reform investments must be informed by grounded insights that are industry-specific, validated by both public and private sectors, and generate material, measurable returns.

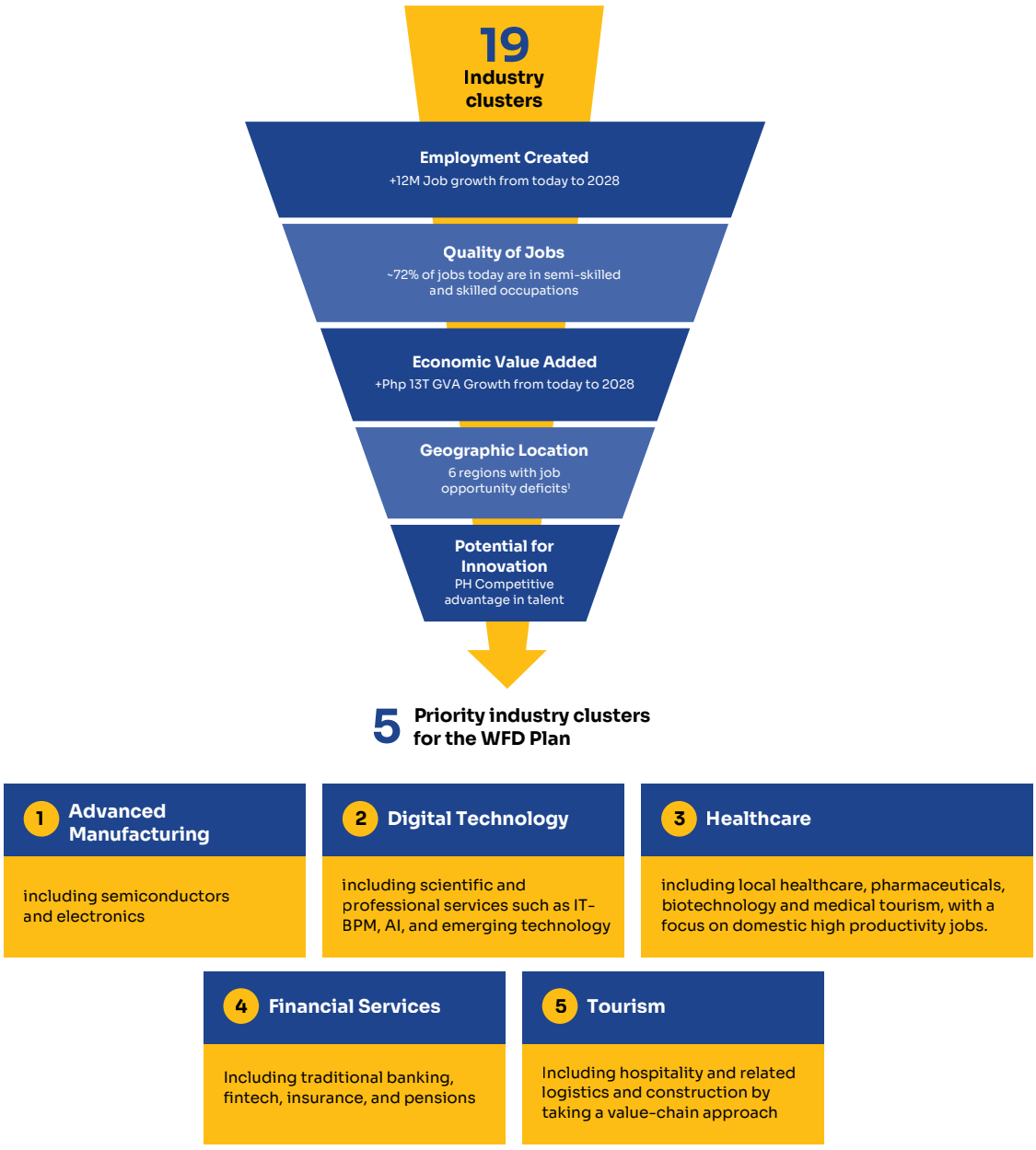
Therefore, this WFD Plan was crafted following three distinct phases. First, EDCOM II, in consultation with principals of key government agencies, identified the priority clusters that are most in need of education and training interventions, and that would also capitalize on the country's competitive advantage. Second, within each industry cluster, workforce gaps were assessed - both quantitative and qualitative - to sharpen emerging challenges that could be addressed by reform. From these diagnoses, the third phase followed: identifying a suite of reform options through workshops with industry partners and national government agencies. As a result, the WFD Plan's core contribution to education reform is a list of more than 20 reforms to be tracked and implemented over the next 10 years. These reforms, while specific and inspired by the diagnoses across the five priority clusters, are often relevant for the broader education system. In the spirit of forging a more adaptable education system, this WFD Plan must also be revisited, updated, and even expanded over the years.

FIVE PRIORITY CLUSTERS: TARGETING SKILLS FOR THE SECTORS OF THE FUTURE

To formulate actionable and insightful reforms, we prioritized 5 industry clusters to analyze. These clusters are where education and workforce development reforms would deliver the broadest national impact.

Five clusters were selected from an exhaustive list of 19 sectors using a process that balanced economic relevance, geographic inclusion, and the potential for high-quality and productive work.

FIGURE 2.
Priority Industry Selection Criteria



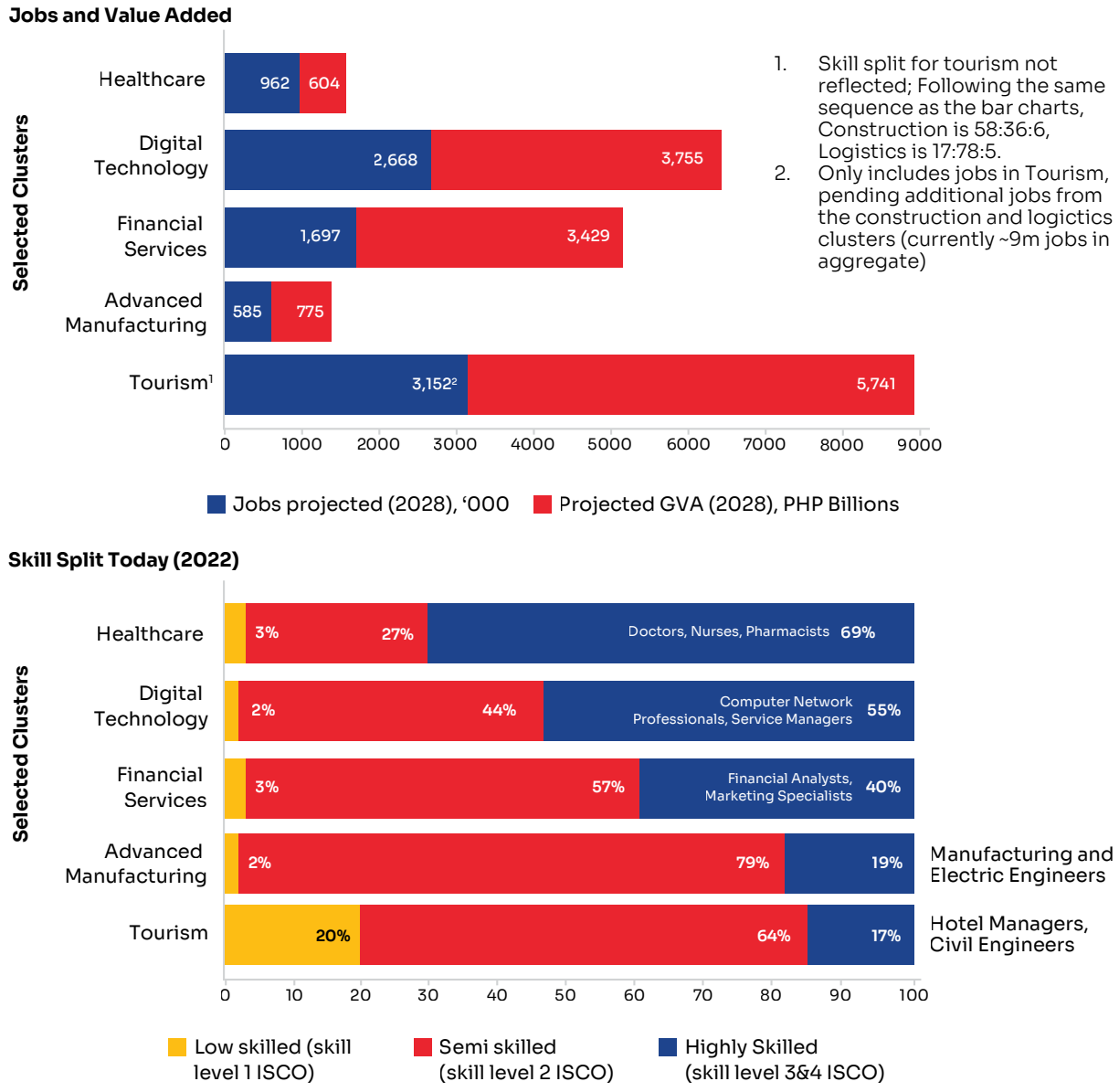
1. Population % share is larger than jobs % share nationwide (e.g., Region 3 has 11% of the population but only 8% of jobs)

The final prioritization was guided by the following criteria:

1. **Quality of jobs** – preference for sectors where a large share of employment is in semi-skilled and skilled occupations,
2. **Geographic distribution** – capacity to expand employment across all regions throughout the country
3. **Employment growth potential** – sectors projected to generate a significant amount of jobs between today and 2028, providing both volume and diversity of opportunities.
4. **Economic value-added growth** – industries with the potential to contribute significant Gross Value Added (GVA) by 2028.

The overall relevance of the five criteria were used in selecting the five priority industries. Weighting, however, varied per industry. For instance, sectors like advanced manufacturing and digital technology might rank lower in terms of the quantity of jobs created and geographical spread, but would generate high quality jobs that are productive and value-creating. These industries can also capitalize on a potential competitive advantage for the country, such as riding the AI wave, for example. On the other hand, sectors such as tourism and healthcare generate demand across all regions of the country—creating large volumes of employment, though with a wide range in job quality. Lastly, while these weights varied across industries, the final consideration was whether the proposed education and workforce development reforms would deliver real impact—or merely add activity without measurable outcomes.

FIGURE 3.
Baseline Job and GVA Estimates in Priority Clusters by 2028



18.3M
Projected jobs in 2028
(32% of total jobs)

Php 14.1T
Projected GVA in 2028
(43% of total)

Source: PSA, DepDev, Oxford Economics

Prior to the WFD plan, baseline projections show that by 2028, these five clusters could collectively account for 32% of all jobs in the country and generate 43% of gross value added (GVA) (Exhibit 3). Their combined footprint ensures that targeted reforms in these areas will have system-wide economic and employment effects, and substantially elevate productivity, innovation, and inclusive growth.

The priority clusters are: **(1) Healthcare**—encompassing the talent for our domestic local healthcare system, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, and medical tourism; and emphasizing the importance of creating high-productivity domestic jobs; **(2) Digital Technology**—including scientific and professional services such as IT-BPM, artificial intelligence, gaming, animation, and digitally-enabled creative industries, as well as other emerging technologies; **(3) Financial Services**—covering traditional banking, fintech, insurance, and pensions; **(4) Advanced Manufacturing**—including manufacturing for semiconductors and electronics, renewables, and electric vehicles (EVs); and **(5) Tourism**—approached through a full value chain lens, primarily considering workforce needs for the hospitality industry (including relevant creative industries), but also acknowledging needs for the enabling industries of logistics and construction.

Specific analyses were undertaken for the five clusters to help identify the necessary investments, curriculum redesigns, training systems, and credentialing frameworks, among others, that could strengthen workforce readiness.

What follows is a summary of the key insights discovered for each cluster. Each section examines each priority cluster in detail, outlining the workforce challenges, skills gaps, and opportunities that will subsequently inspire our proposed WFD reform agenda.

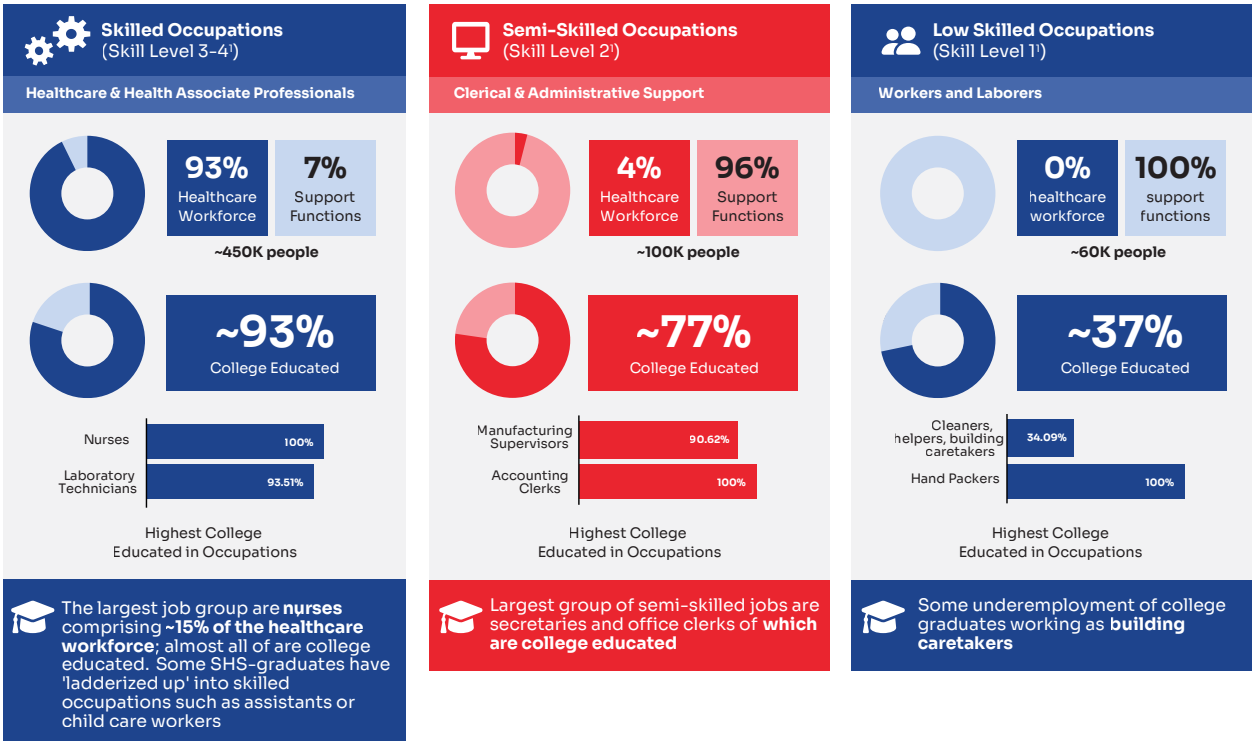
INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC ANALYSIS: HEALTHCARE



The healthcare cluster considers the workforce across three major sets of industries: healthcare services (including health service providers and public health practitioners), pharmaceuticals, and biotechnology. Among these, healthcare services represent the most urgent domestic need, addressing core social-sector challenges in access and equity. At the same time, the global demand for Filipino healthcare professionals continues to rise, placing further pressure on local systems to retain talent while meeting international market opportunities. While the majority of the following analysis covers the first sub-industry, such as the pressing need for more doctors, nurses, and dentists, the workforce needs across the entire cluster, such as researchers and biotechnologies, are well within the scope of any reforms considered for the healthcare workforce.

Based on the PSA's labor force survey (Figure 4), today's full healthcare workforce of roughly 610,000 is concentrated in key roles such as nurses (95,000), secretaries and clerks (65,000), laboratory technicians (50,000), and midwives (45,000). Each year, we estimate that around 32,000 graduates enter the job market, led by graduates of nursing (9,000), medical technology (6,000), medicine (5,000), and midwifery (4,000).[1] The quantum of the workforce specifically in biotechnology, for instance, remains small.

FIGURE 4.
Estimated Healthcare Workforce[2] by Occupation Type, Number of People (2022)



1. Aligned to International Standards for the Classification of Occupations (ISCO) defined skill taxonomy
2. Nurses, Dentists, Medical Technologist, Midwives, Nutritionist/Dietician, Occupational Therapist, Pharmacist, Physical Therapist, Physician, Radiologic Technologist, X-Ray Technologist numbers are based on DOH HRH statistics; others estimated based on PSA labor force survey

Source: PSA Labor Force Survey, October 2022 (n = 183,602), DOH HRH Statistics 2022

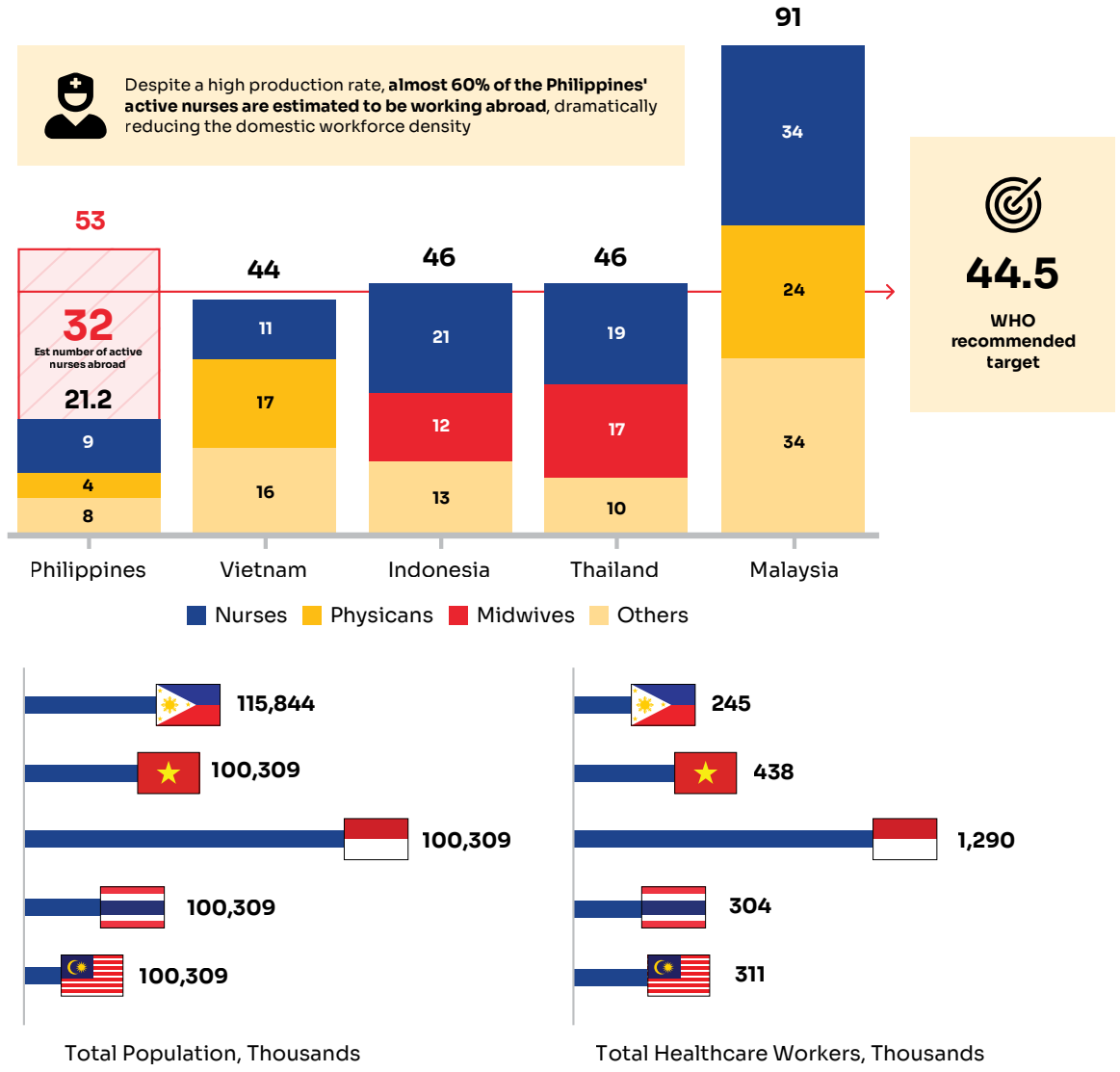
The Philippines has an estimated 21.2 healthcare workers per 10,000 people - below the 44.5 recommended ratio of the World Health Organization (WHO). While many challenges drive this shortfall, migration of workers is a prominent driver of talent leakage.

Of this 610,000, around 245,000 are classified and tracked by the Department of Health as core healthcare workers. These include nurses, midwives, physicians, pharmacists, and dentists, among others. This roughly translates to only 21.2 healthcare workers per 10,000 people—less than half of the WHO-recommended 44.5, implying a clear shortfall that constrains both healthcare access and outcomes.

However, the country has theoretically produced enough healthcare workers. Just considering the estimated number of nurses that have migrated out of the country would bring the ratio to 53 healthcare workers per 10,000 people, sufficiently meeting the WHO recommendation (Figure 5). The issue of migration is most prominent in the healthcare industry, with many healthcare workers treating migration as the ultimate goal in choosing this career path.

1 PSA Labor Force Survey, October 2022 (n = 183,602), DOH HRH Statistics 2022

FIGURE 5.1.
Philippine Healthcare Workers Per 10,000 Population vs. Select Asean Countries



1. Includes all other healthcare professions (i.e. physical therapists, occupational therapists, medical assistants, dental technologists, optometrists, etc.)
2. Based on DOH 2021 estimates

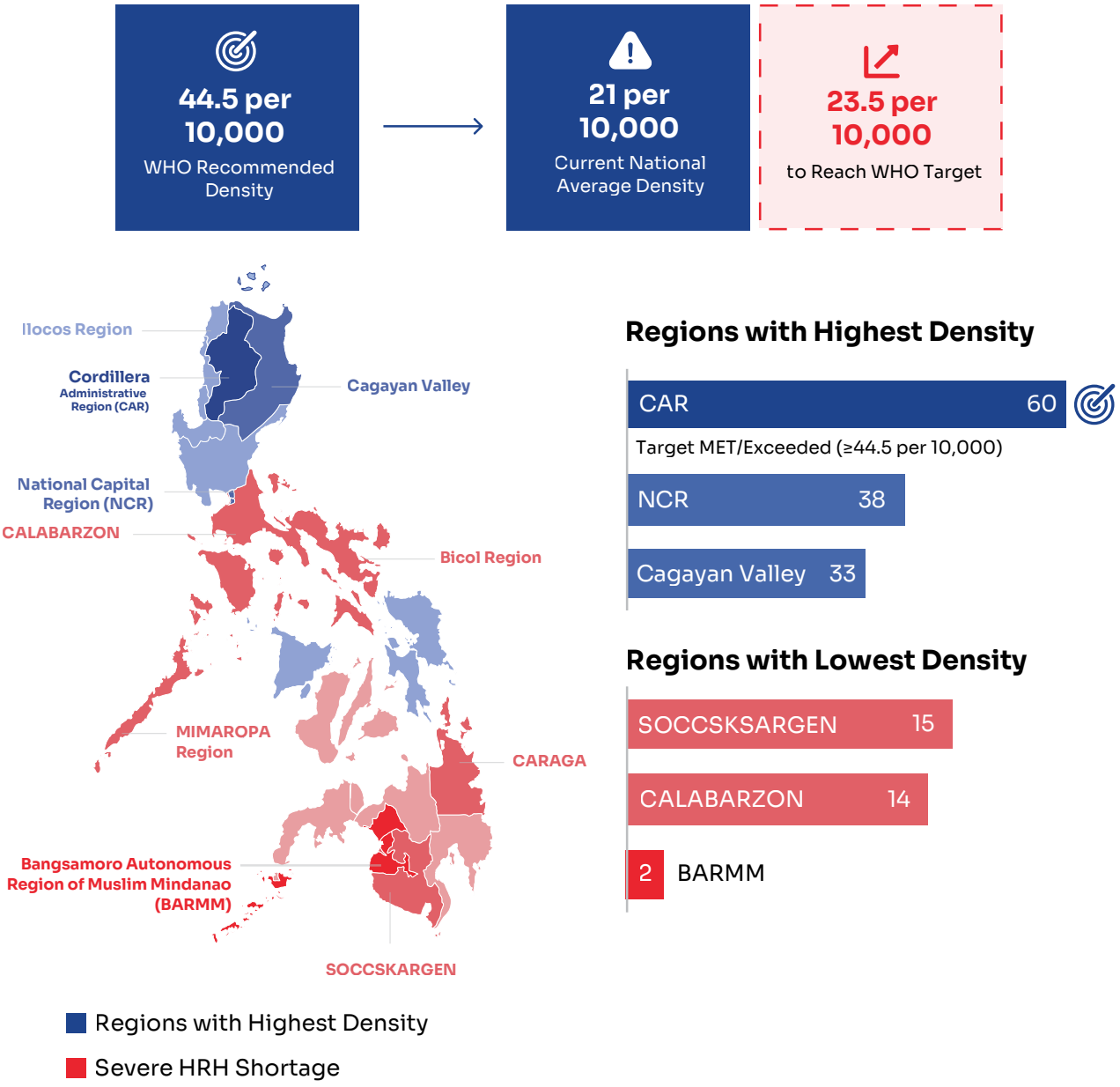
Source: WHO Global Health Observatory Data Repository, Country-specific department of health statistics (DOH, SPD, MOH, SPS)

The Human Resources for Health (HRH) reform plan further reports: Only about one in ten health workers serve in rural areas, and roughly a quarter of barangays have no dedicated health personnel. Just 25 percent of active health professionals work in primary care, leaving many localities underserved. The country needs an estimated 15,000 additional doctors to meet annual population needs, yet the ratio stands at one government physician for every 33,000 Filipinos—far from the WHO's 1:1,000 benchmark, and below our own DOH's 1:20,000 recommendation. While the ratio is not the ultimate measure of healthcare access, we have seen that across countries and within Philippine regions, higher numbers of doctors, nurses, midwives, and allied health professionals are highly correlated with longer life expectancy—a reflection of how direct access to skilled care shapes outcomes.[2]

2 PSA 2020 Census, DOH HRH Statistics 2022, Global Data Lab, WHO Global Health Observatory Data Repository, Country-specific department of health statistics (DOH, SPD, MOH, BPS)

The Universal Health Care (UHC) Law, which aims to guarantee equitable access to quality and affordable health services for every Filipino, also furthers the importance of developing our domestic healthcare workforce.

FIGURE 5.2.
Deficit Of Healthcare Workers by Region



Source: PSA 2020 Census, DOH HRH Statistics 2024

The healthcare workforce is also distributed unevenly across regions. Most regions fall well short of the WHO-recommended 44.5 ratio, leaving many communities without adequate medical coverage. The most underserved regions include BARMM, MIMAROPA Regions IV-A, V, XII, and XIII – all with less than 15 healthcare professionals per 10,000 people.



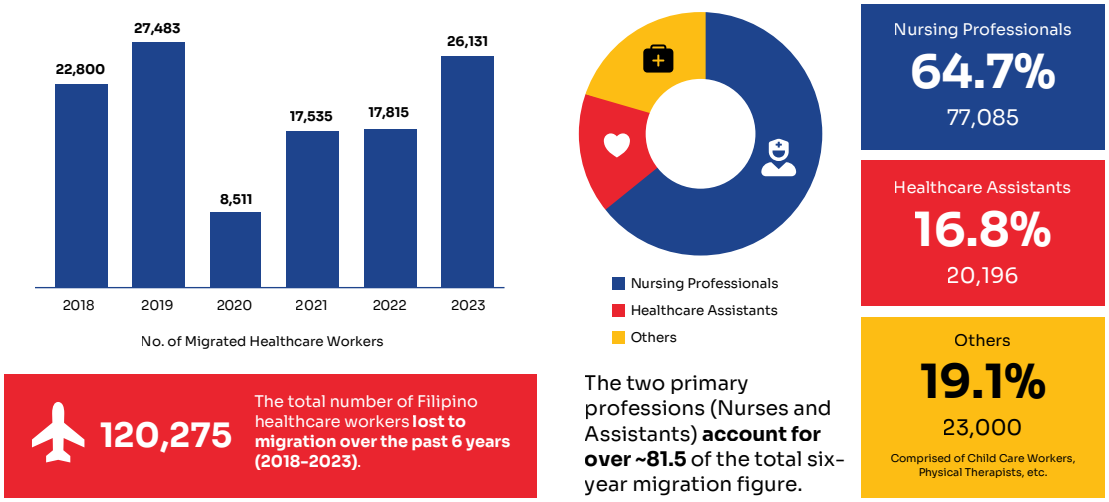
Migration of our healthcare workforce is thus a critical aspect that must be analyzed. With the skills of Filipino health professionals recognized and sought after worldwide, this international demand places sustained pressure on the domestic system already struggling to meet basic needs. According to the Department of Health's Philippine Health Statistics, six in every ten Filipinos die without ever seeing a doctor—a figure unchanged since a similar finding by the DOH and the Philippine Institute for Development Studies in 1991. In more than two decades, we have made little progress on one of the most fundamental indicators of healthcare access. Today, an average of 1,667 Filipinos share a single doctor, and each hospital bed must serve roughly 1,000 patients—far from the global standards of one doctor per 1,000 individuals and one bed per 200. These numbers point to a health sector operating well beyond its capacity, constrained by chronic shortages in both human resources and infrastructure. The national priority, therefore, is not only to build and retain a healthcare workforce capable of delivering accessible, high-quality care, but also to expand the system's capacity to create sufficient healthcare jobs at home—strengthening both public health outcomes and the broader economy.

Around 25,000 to 27,000 healthcare workers migrate annually, a number that is projected to increase in the next few years. Over the past six years, estimates show nearly 120,000 healthcare workers have migrated, with half going to Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom. (Figure 6). This steady outflow reflects a broader pattern in Philippine education and labor policy, where higher education—particularly in health sciences—has long been aligned with overseas employability (Ortiga, 2018).[3] Universities continue to produce graduates for global markets, reinforcing a system in which education functions as an export industry and migration as the primary route to upward mobility (Ortiga, 2020).[4] The result is a persistent domestic gap, as trained professionals build careers abroad while local health systems struggle to retain talent. Beyond migration, natural attrition through retirement or movement into other industries further reduces the available health workforce by an estimated 27,000 each year.

3 Ortiga, Yasmin Y., "Emigration, employability, and higher education in the Philippines" (2018). Research Collection School of Social Sciences. Paper 2678. https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/soss_research/2678

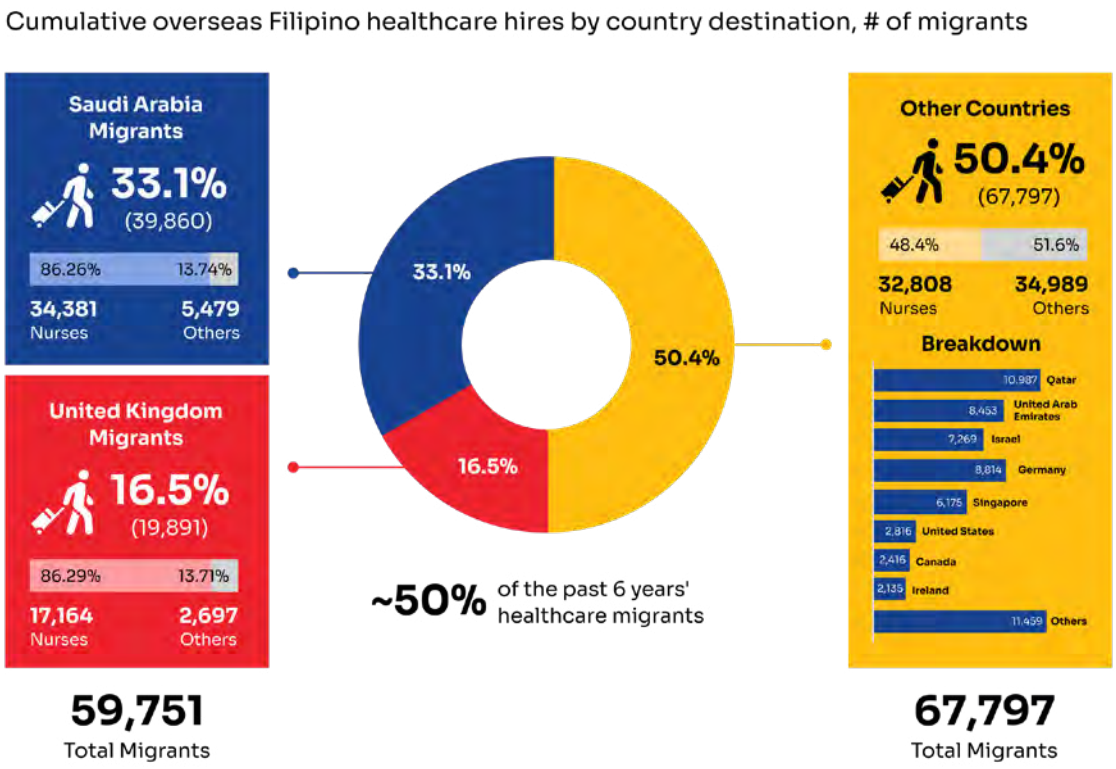
4 Ortiga, Yasmin Y., (2020). Shifting employabilities: Skilling migrants in the nation of emigration. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, , 1-19

FIGURE 6.1.
Overseas Filipino healthcare hires by profession, number of migrants (2018-23)



Source: DOH HRH Statistics 2024, CHED, PRC

FIGURE 6.2.
Cumulative Overseas Filipino Healthcare Hires by Country Destination and Number of Migrants (2018-2023)

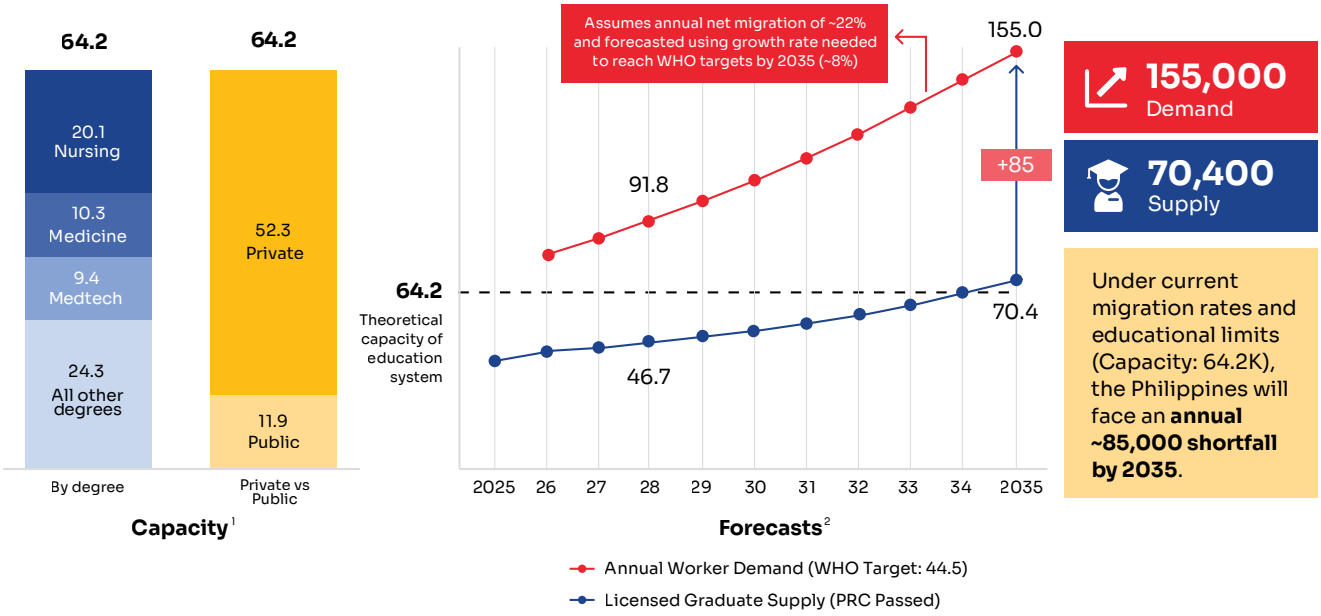


Source: Department of Migrant Workers - Management Information and Technology Service (2018-2023)

Even if the migration and attrition of health professionals is mitigated, our domestic supply of workers could still be insufficient to meet our workforce needs. The problem is magnified by attrition within the education-to-employment pipeline: across healthcare degree programs, roughly 33,000 students—about 56 percent of an entering class—never reach the workforce, either due to dropping out from school, or failing the licensure examinations required for practice. Only about 32,000 graduates or licensure passers each year enter the system, which is insufficient to close the workforce gap even through the next 10 years.

FIGURE 6.3.
Projected Number of Healthcare Graduates and New Workers Required to Achieve WHO Targets (2025-35)

Number of healthcare graduates and new workers required to achieve WHO target, thousands of people



1. Sum of highest historical number of gradutes produced at a regional and degree level, from 2013-2022
2. Expected number of graduates assumed to grow at historical rate of ~1% p.a. (2016-2024)

Source: DOH HRH Statistics 2024, CHED, PRC

Against the World Health Organization's benchmark, the country should have approximately 520,000 healthcare workers by 2025. This leaves a gap of about 290,000—a shortfall that cannot be closed without decisive reforms in training, retention, and workforce deployment. Based on target density levels, the country will require roughly 94,000 doctors and 196,000 nurses, and significant numbers of midwives and other essential health professionals, to meet population health needs[5]. Without urgent intervention, this gap risks becoming entrenched, constraining service delivery, overburdening existing staff, and limiting progress toward health coverage targets.

> *There are a limited number of healthcare education programs in the country, mostly private-led and concentrated in Metro Manila.*

The demand for healthcare workers will persist both domestic and internationally. An examination of current supply pipelines reveals a system that is both inadequate and unevenly distributed across regions.

For instance, only 80schools offer medical programs in the country, 28 (26 are SUCs and 2 are LUCs) of which are in public universities, with 2 (Region 10 and CAR) regions not having a public medical university. The problem is more pronounced with dental programs: only 34 dental schools exist in the country, with 10 (29%) being in Metro Manila. Z regions do not have any dental school whether public or private.

5 The WHO benchmark does not explicitly indicate the breakdown of the 44.5 ratio by profession, given the contextual differences across countries, including how work is typically split between regions. To crystallize the benchmark for the Philippines, local experts and institutions must be further consulted to identify the ideal mix of healthcare professions that sufficiently serve their communities.

Moving earlier in the education pathways, there are also limited technical/vocational pathways. For one, healthcare programs are not yet offered for Senior High School students who decide to take a TVL/TechPro track. When it comes to TESDA courses, only 14.23% of TVIs in high priority regions (i.e., regions with the lowest healthcare worker ratios) offer programs in healthcare.

In order to help bridge the healthcare workforce gap, we would have to expand not only access to healthcare programs nationwide, but also ensure that the funnel of students– from enrollment, to graduation, to passing licensure exams– is efficient and effective.

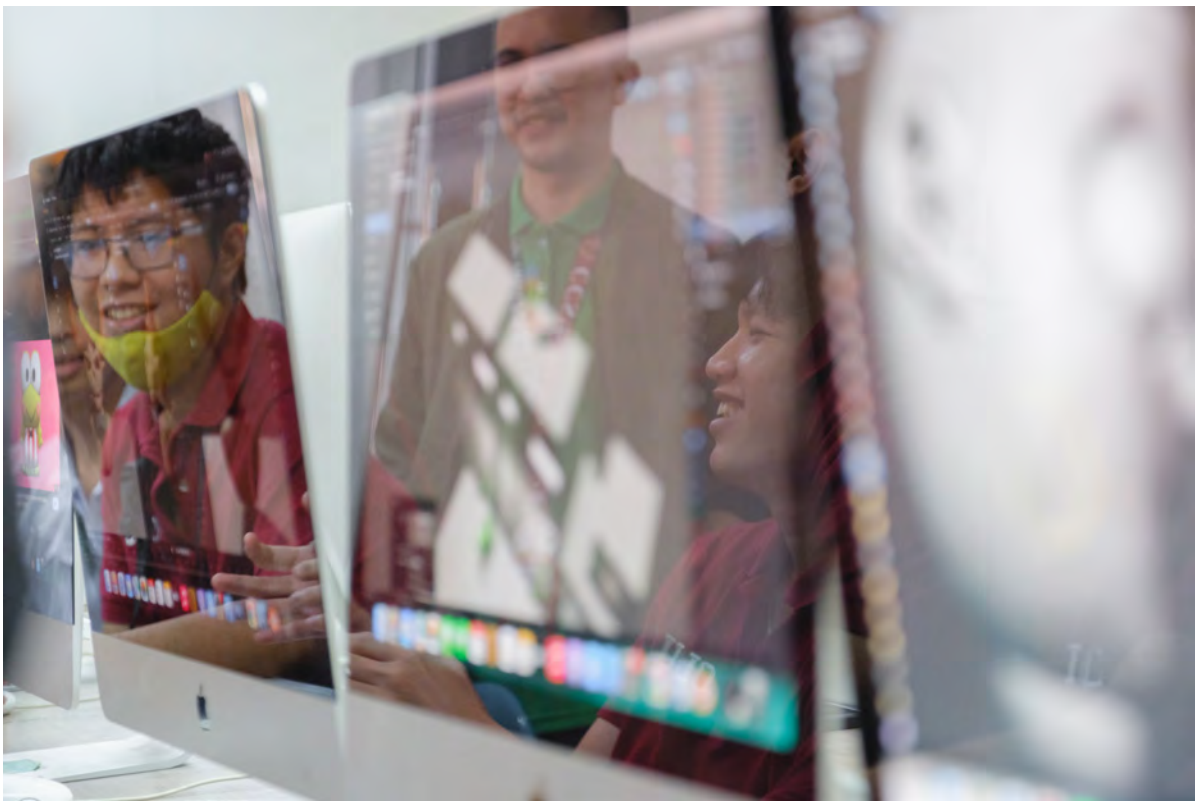
Implications for the education system

- **PATHWAYS:** Expand possible ways for students to get healthcare training and certification.
- **CAPACITY:** Support more institutions to be able to offer healthcare programs across the country to help bridge the quantity gap
- **RETENTION:** Expand retention and re-entry programs, including novel ladderized programs proven to have high retention and success rates

INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC ANALYSIS: DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

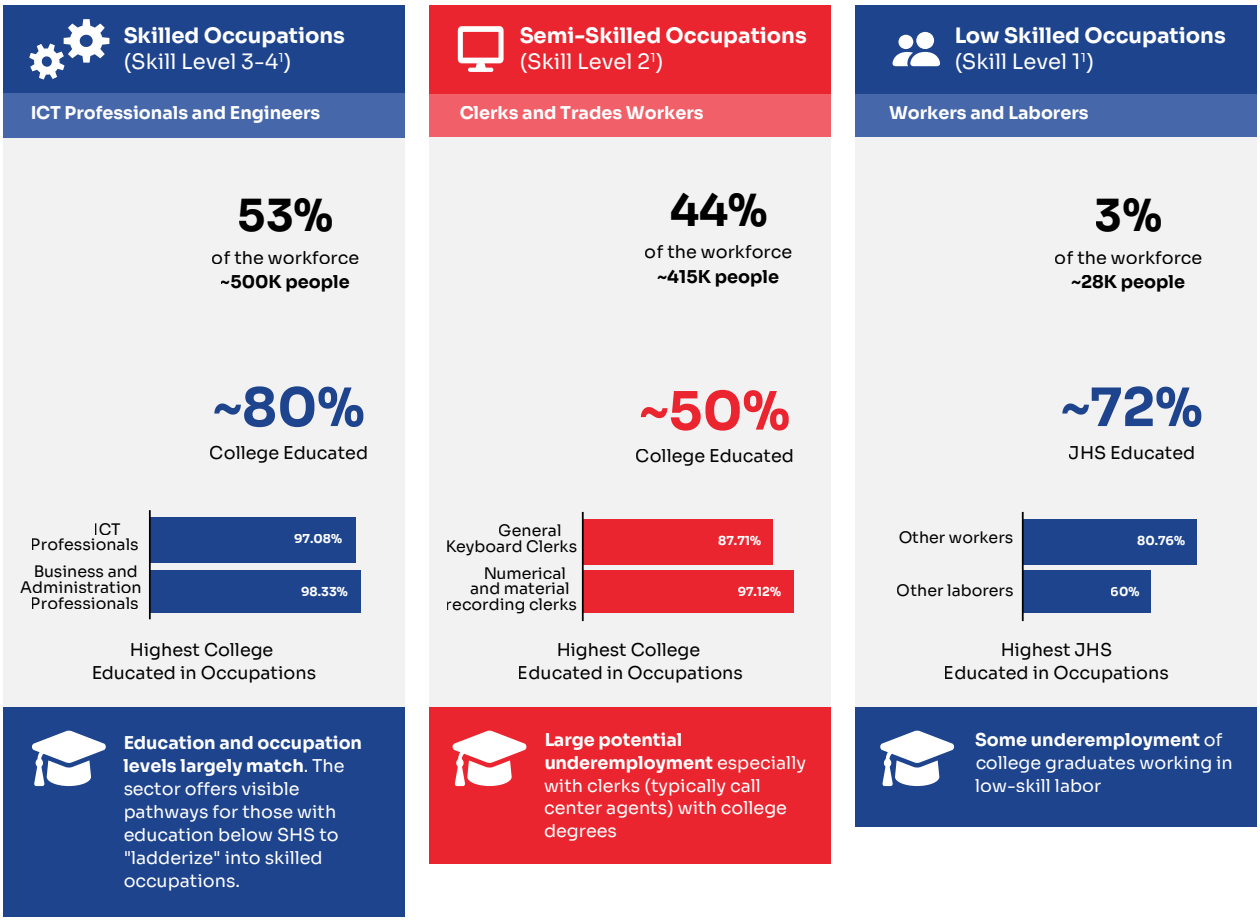
The digital technology cluster is a major pillar of the Philippine economy, driving up to 6.9% of GDP and employing ~1.4 million people.

As a major pillar of the Philippine economy, the digital technology cluster is positioning itself for rapid and sustained expansion. The business process management industry – the biggest component of this cluster – contributed around 6.9% of GDP in 2024. As of 2022, the workforce stands at approximately 1.4 million, spanning top occupational groups such as ICT professionals (around 90,000), keyboard clerks (about 118,000), and



business administration professionals (roughly 79,000). The talent base is supported by 333,000 graduates from digital technology–related fields, led by Business Administration (195,000), Engineering and Technology (79,000), and IT-related disciplines (52,000). An additional 275,000 potential workers come from post-secondary finishers in digital-related courses, offering a significant pool for recruitment if pathways into the industry are strengthened.[6]

FIGURE 7.1.
Estimated Digital Workforce by Occupation Type, Number of People



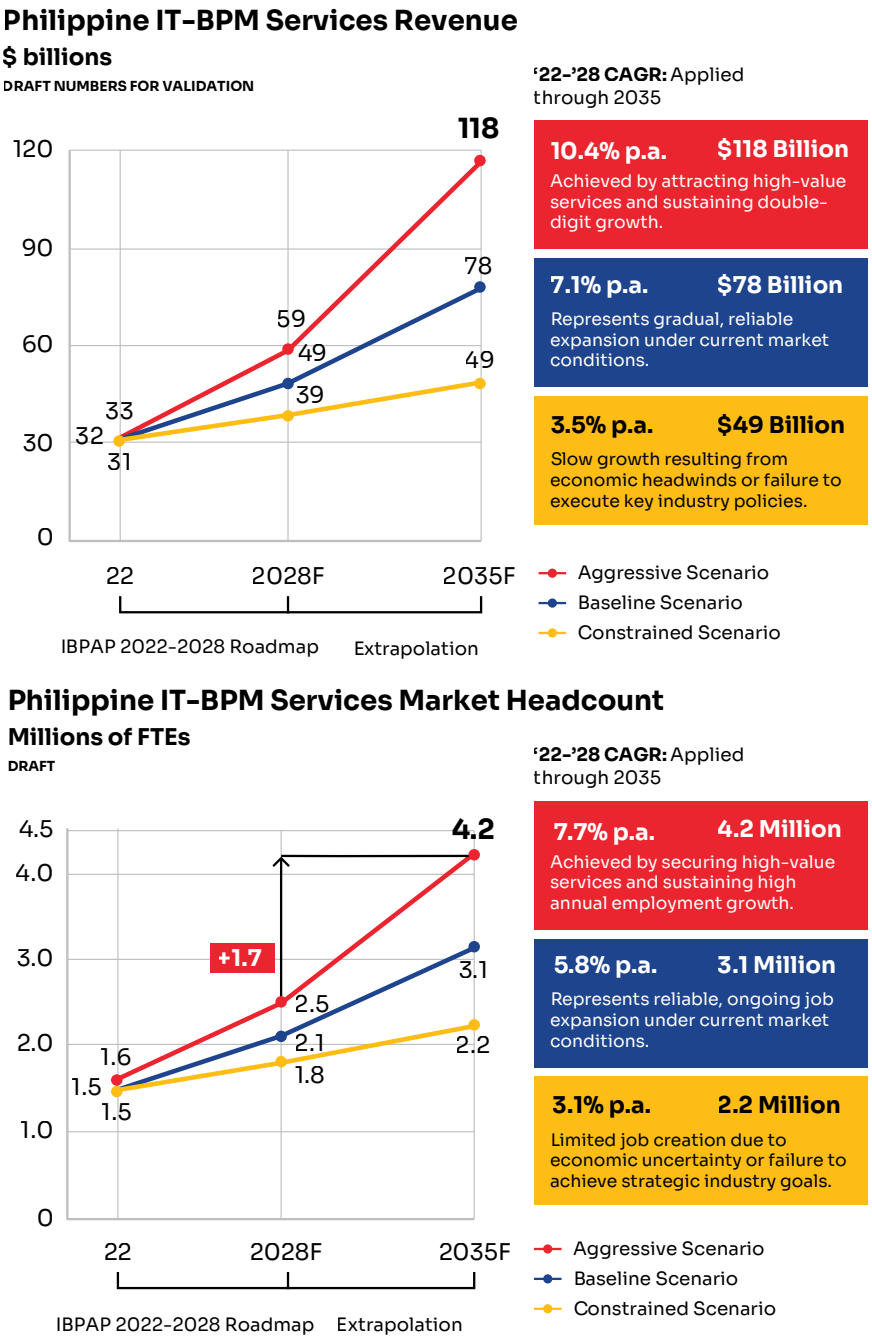
1. Aligned to International Standards for the Classification of Occupations (ISCO) defined skill taxonomy

Source: PSA Labor Force Survey, October 2022 (n=183,602)

The IT-BPM industry, the largest industry of this cluster, envisions positioning the Philippines as the world's leading hub for digitally enabled, customer-centric services, driving inclusive and sustainable economic and social growth. By 2028, the IT and Business Process Association of the Philippines (IBPAP) targets expanding the workforce to roughly 2.5 million—adding about 1.1 million jobs to the 2022 base of 1.4 million—and increasing annual revenues from USD 33 billion to USD 59 billion. This growth will be anchored in transformation: becoming the top global destination for experience transformation across customer, employee, and user experience; shifting toward higher-complexity, higher-skill roles to raise revenues per full-time equivalent by 13 percent; and consolidating its lead in the delivery of digitally enabled services.

6 PSA Labor Force Survey, October 2022 (n = 183,602)

FIGURE 7.2.
Projected Philippines IT-BPM Services Revenue and Market Headcount by 2035 (IBPAP Roadmap, 2022-35)



Note: The IBPAP Roadmap is currently being updated with refreshed numbers, to be released within 2025.

Source: IBPAP Roadmap, 2022-2028

If realized, this vision could enable the IT-BPM industry to reach up to USD 118 billion in value and employ as many as 4.2 million Filipinos by 2035.—a scale of aspiration that must be thoughtfully supported.

> *Estimates show that around 86 percent of agents—many in customer service and other semi-skilled roles—are college graduates, reflecting some misalignment between qualifications and job requirements.*

FIGURE 7.3.
IT-BPM service segments by growth and fit to PH prospects (baseline scenario)

Protect dominant market position

Service Segment		Higher Ed	TechVoc
Contact Center	✓	-	Contact Center Services NC II (being updated)

Go deeper and move up value-chain

Finance and Accounting	✓	Typically BS Accountancy	Bookkeeping NC III
Application services	?	Typically BS Computer Science/Engineering.	Several Computer Programming NCs
Infrastructure services[1]	✗	None specific (base degree BS Computer Science/Engineering)	
Human Resources	✗	None specific (base degree BS Management/Biz Ad/Psychology)	
Industry-specific BPM[2]	✗	None specific (base degree BS Management/Biz Ad, BS Nursing)	

Invest to build capabilities

Marketing	✓	BS Marketing	-
Game Development	?	BS Game Development (~3 schools in NCR)	Game Programming NC II
Animation	?	BS Illustration/Animation (~3 schools in NCR)	Animation NC II
Trust & Safety	?	BS Cybersecurity (4 schools); Typically BS CS/IT	Several Computer Programming NCs
Digital and Data Services[3]	?	Typically BS MIS, BS IT, BS CS	-
Other BPM Services[4]	✗	None specific (base degree BS Management/Biz Ad)	
Procurement & SCM	✗		

Industry-Pointed Themes

Digital competencies and foundational skills in graduates (e.g., critical thinking, communication and collaboration) is critical as having pathways.

Specializing the workforce fast is necessary for them to move up to high-value domains (e.g., health informatics specialization for nursing graduates) – but **use industry to know what to train the workforce on** given how fast digital skills change.

New programs are needed for growing domains (e.g., Game Development, Animation, Cybersecurity), but at skill levels **protected from AI disruption.**

✓ Has existing dedicated pathways
? Potentially has existing pathways
✗ No existing dedicated pathways

1. Includes traditional services (e.g., network, workplace, cloud infrastructure services, cybersecurity, and managed services).
2. Includes operations across verticals such as banking, healthcare, retail, manufacturing, etc.
3. Includes next-generation technology services such as cloud and mobile apps development, IoT, AI/ML, AR/VR, blockchain, quantum computing, big data, D&A, etc.
4. Includes services such as legal, market research, etc.

Source: IBPAP Roadmap, 2022-2028, Industry Interviews

Structural challenges threaten to slow the sector's trajectory. Underemployment persists: Estimates show that around 86 percent of agents—many in customer service and other semi-skilled roles—are college graduates, reflecting some misalignment between qualifications and job requirements. This mismatch is partly driven by the sheer growth of the industry, which demands over 230,000 new hires each year.

Education and training pipelines for high-growth, specialized roles in areas such as infrastructure services and industry-specific BPM are also welcomed by the industry. Yet firms—especially those at the forefront of innovation—consistently cite skill shortages as a major constraint, with innovative firms twice as likely as traditional ones to be dissatisfied with workforce preparation. The Philippines also lags behind most regional peers in advanced education levels, limiting its capacity to adopt modern technologies (World Bank, 2025)7. The industry's voice is consistent in acknowledging that graduates with digital competencies and strong foundational skills—critical thinking, communication, collaboration—is as important as creating the pathways themselves. Without foundational skills, workers cannot adapt quickly enough to evolving technologies or industry demands.

The agility with which the digital technology cluster shifts must also be reflected in our educational pathways, particularly in the advent of AI.

For the workforce to capture higher-value opportunities, skills must be targeted to emerging domains—health informatics for nursing graduates, for example—guided by industry input to ensure training aligns with market needs in real time. For instance, the IBPAP roadmap identifies segments with high market growth rate forecasts, and assesses how they fit with the current capabilities and market maturity of the Philippines. These segments include Game Development and Animation, Trust and Safety, and Data Services (e.g., IoT, AR/VR, quantum computing). Investments are required to build capabilities where we could compete, and to accelerate the momentum where we are showing signs of a competitive advantage.

Geographic concentration further limits the sector's potential for inclusive growth: 64 percent of the digital workforce is clustered in just four regions, with about 40 percent in the National Capital Region and another 24 percent spread across Regions III, IV-A, and VII.[8] Without deliberate strategies to expand digital talent and industry into emerging hubs, and without distributing higher-value digital jobs more evenly, many Filipinos will be left out of the sector's growth.

Whether AI substitutes or complements human work will likewise depend on the sector's ability to upskill its workforce—particularly in foundational areas such as literacy and language. Without these basics, AI adoption risks replacing rather than enhancing existing roles. A national AI upskilling program would be valuable, but it must be paired with stronger interventions in core skills, especially English proficiency.

Implications for the education system

- **PATHWAYS:** Revise and update current pathways to make them more industry-attuned; allow better industry-led programs to be recognized, including microcredentials
- **CAPACITY:** Enable industry's training programs to supplement existing formal education pathways; explore region-specific "domain specializations" and build capacity accordingly
- **RETENTION:** Expand retention and re-entry programs, including novel ladderized programs proven to have high retention and success rates

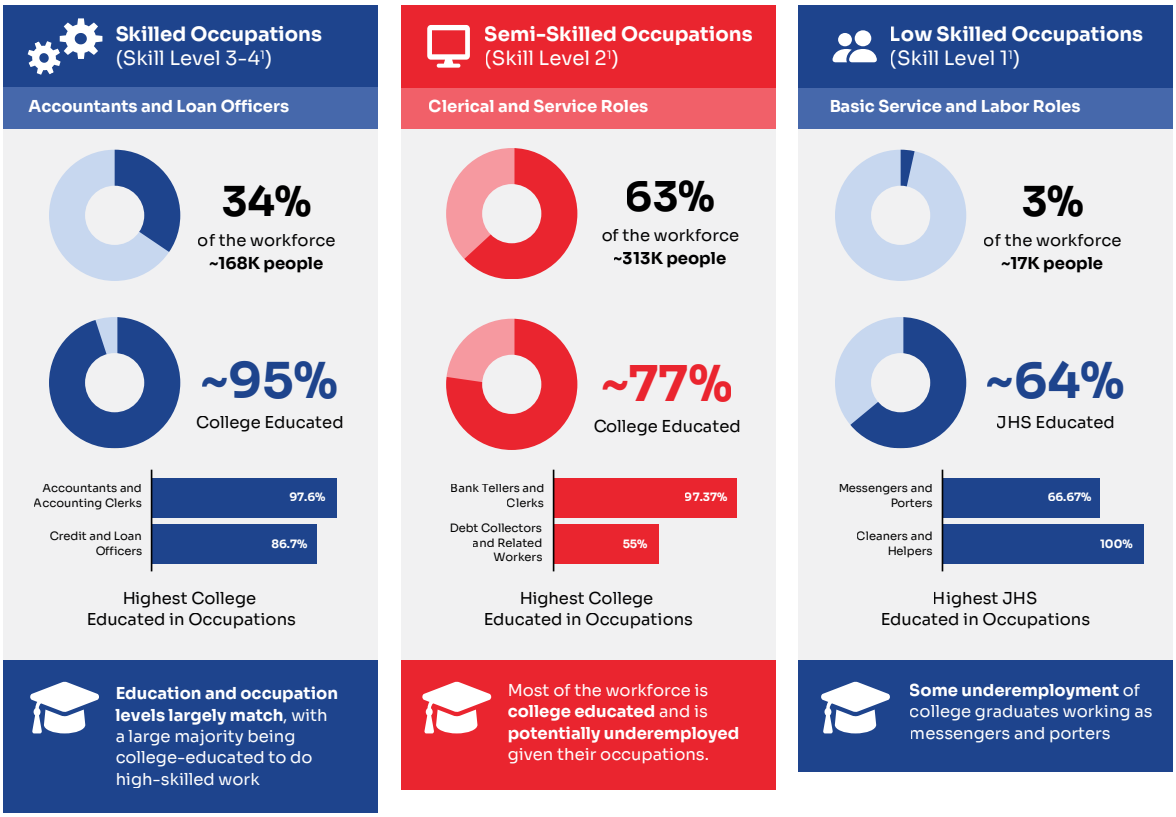
7 World Bank. 2025. Running Uphill: Growth, Jobs, and the Quest for Productivity. Philippines Growth and Jobs Report. © World Bank.
8 PSA Labor Force Survey, October 2022 (n = 183,602)

INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC ANALYSIS: FINANCIAL SERVICES

> *The almost 650k employees of the financial services sector are vastly college educated, with almost two-thirds of jobs concentrated in five regions.*

The financial services cluster spans industries that form the backbone of capital circulation, risk management, and innovation in the economy. It covers traditional banking, insurance and pensions, and a rapidly expanding fintech sector. The cluster employs roughly 645,000 workers. Employment is concentrated in five key regions—NCR, Region VII, III, VIII, and VII—which together house nearly two-thirds (64%) of the sector's labor force, reflecting the geographic centralization of financial infrastructure. Within this workforce, nearly 500,000 are concentrated in banking and core financial activities, with skilled occupations such as accountants, loan officers, and managers well-aligned with education levels, with 95% of these roles filled by college graduates. Majority of banking jobs– around 313,000 people– fall into semi-skilled categories, where over three-quarters of workers are also college educated, signaling potential underemployment (by qualification) in this area. This is most notable for bank tellers – an occupation that is semi-skilled by international standards, but typically requires college degrees in the Philippines' labor market.

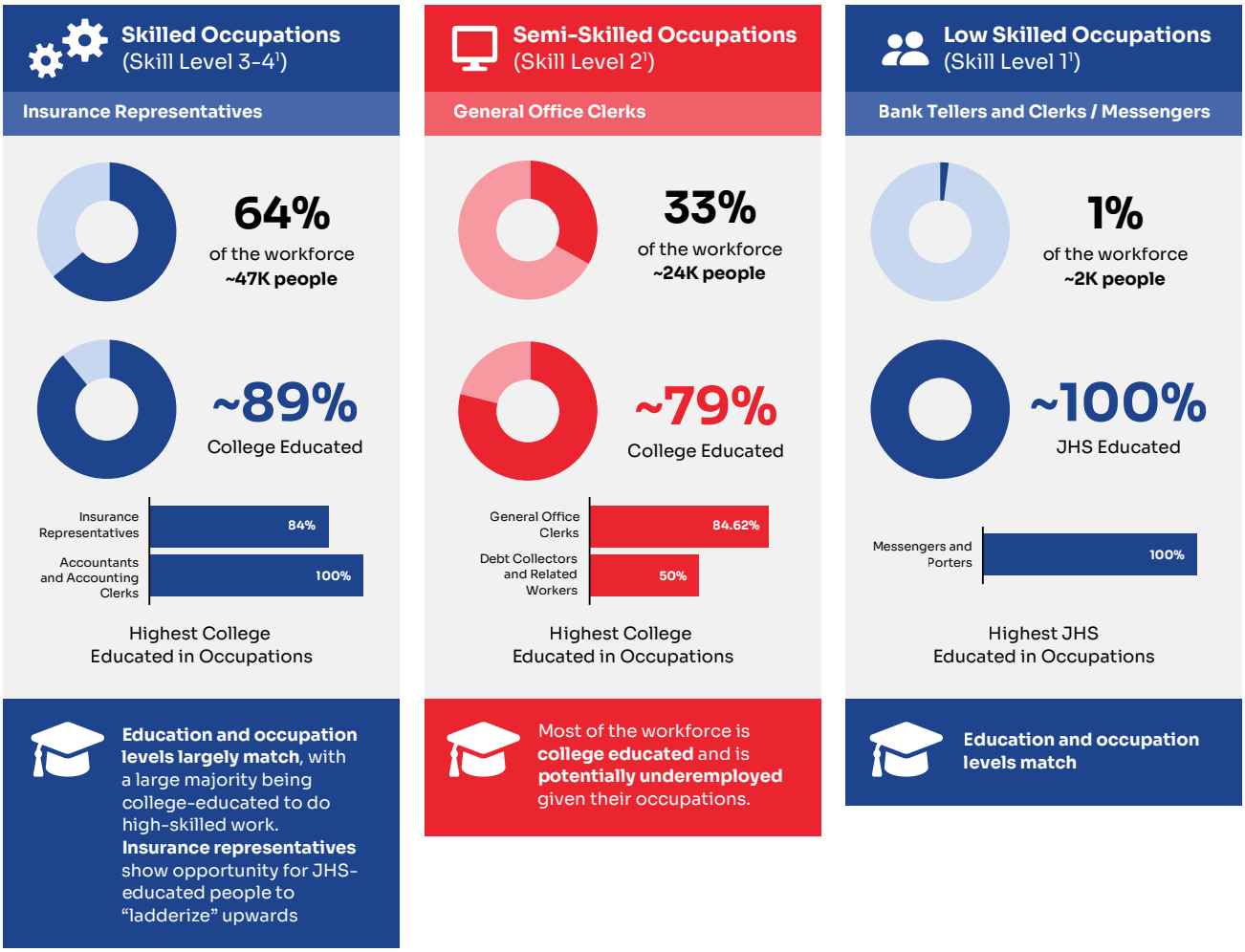
FIGURE 8.
Estimated Banking Workforce by Occupation Type, Number of People (Based on PSA Labor Force Survey, October 2022)



1. Aligned to International Standards for the Classification of Occupations (ISCO) defined skill taxonomy

Source: PSA Labor Force Survey, October 2022 (n=183,602)

FIGURE 9.
Estimated Insurance Workforce by Occupation Type, Number of People (Based on PSA Labor Force Survey, October 2022)



1. Aligned to International Standards for the Classification of Occupations (ISCO) defined skill taxonomy

Source: PSA Labor Force Survey, October 2022 (n=183,602)

A similar trend can be seen in insurance, which employs around 73,000 of the financial service workforce: 89% of skilled workers are college-educated, and 79% of semi-skilled workers are also college-educated.[9]

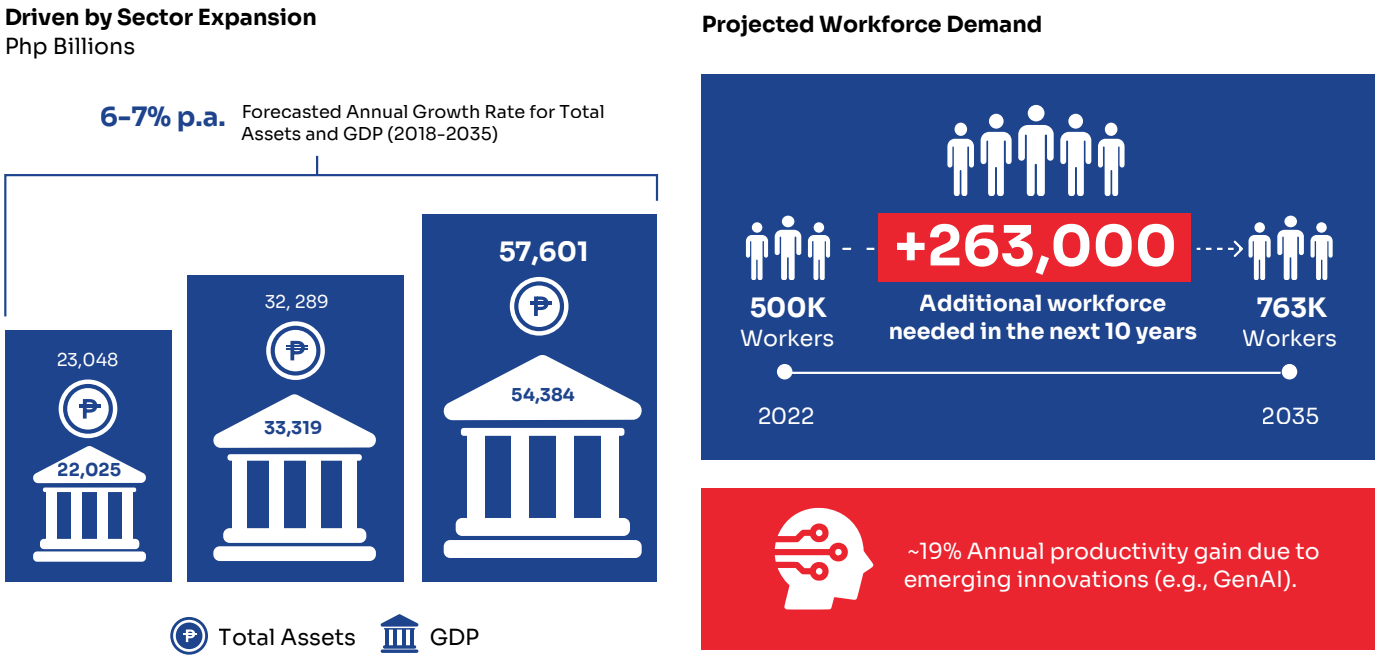
Education-to-employment gaps remain. In banking, IT support specialists benefit from clear higher education tracks and tech-voc programming curricula, but frontline roles such as tellers, relationship managers, and sales tend to come from general pools of educated talent (e.g., BS Business Management, BS Marketing, BS Accountancy). Similarly, in the insurance industry, top hiring needs—including financial advisors and digital sales specialists—are served only by broad-based degrees. In fintech, software developers, data scientists, and cybersecurity specialists have structured pathways, but roles like UX/UI designers and compliance specialists do not. While dedicated pathways are not necessarily the solution, it is critical that tactical skills required are either embedded within the broad pathways, or foundational skills are integrated and sufficient in broad degrees to ensure readiness for work.

9 PSA Labor Force Survey, October 2022 (n = 183,602)

Almost 400k more jobs may be created through 2035 for core banking and insurance talent needs, even considering the impact of AI.

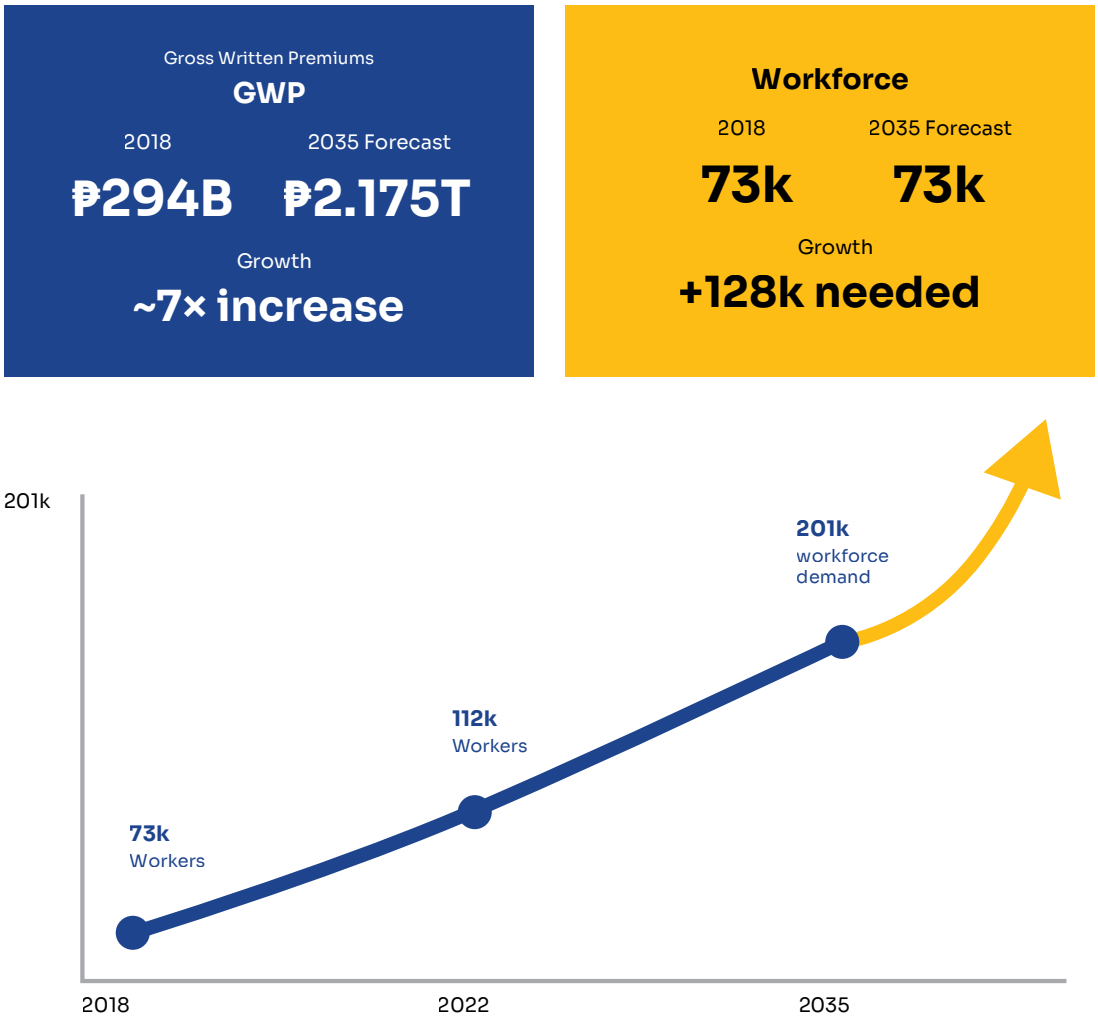
By 2035, the banking sector may need 263,000 additional workers from today's base of around 500,000 workers, in line with the workforce required to manage the country's growing asset base tied to rising GDP. Assuming GDP growth of 6-7% per annum, total bank assets could more than double from ₱23 trillion in 2022 to nearly ₱58 trillion. This growth in the workforce is required even with an assumed productivity gain of around 19% annually from innovations such as AI. Insurance shows parallel trends: growth in premiums and penetration could generate demand for 128,000 additional workers by 2035, even as automation reshapes claims, underwriting, and customer service (Figure 11).

FIGURE 10.
Potential Growth in GDP, Total Bank Assets, and Banking Workforce Demand by 2035



Source: Philippine Development Plan (2023-2028), PSA

FIGURE 11.
Potential Gross Written Premiums (GWP), GDP, and Insurance Workforce Demand by 2035



1. Historical growth in GWP/Workforce from 2018-2022

Source: Philippine Development Plan (2023-2028), Insurance Service Malaysia Statistical Yearbook

What's driving the demand?



Why this matters for education & workforce planning

- The Philippines must rapidly expand actuarial, insurance, finance & data analytics programs
- Alignment needed between CHED, TESDA & Industry
- Opportunities for high-skill local jobs without migrating abroad



Generative AI is already redefining skills and job requirements. In banking, AI-driven tools are strengthening “Know Your Customer” (KYC) tracking, fraud monitoring, and compliance, while marketing and sales functions are shifting toward hyper-personalization and virtual portfolio assistants. Credit decisioning, mid-office documentation, and data quality checks are increasingly supported by AI systems. Insurance is undergoing similar changes: AI now enables research assistants for product development, agent co-pilots for sales, underwriting assistants that generate indicative decisions, and claims chatbots that automate eligibility and processing. IT and support functions are also evolving, with AI-enabled coding assistants and HR virtual assistants accelerating both technical and training workflows. It is imperative that our digital talent is equipped to ride this wave of technological disruption and move up in the skill value chain.

As it stands, the industry sees the roles they require to evolve together with the demands of the customer for experience. For instance, bank tellers may need to be upskilled to have skillsets closer to relationship managers - including active listening, empathy, product knowledge - which will also have to be reflected in how the education system has pathways or credentials that build these skills.

The higher education system is producing a pipeline of graduates that by our estimates is sufficient to meet the quantity of workers needed in banking and insurance by 2035. However, direct placement cannot be assumed: other industries will compete for the same talent, and graduates will need both specialized preparation and transferable skills. Deliberate workforce planning is therefore essential—not only to prevent underutilization of highly educated workers, but also to ensure that the financial services cluster remains a driver of the Philippine economy.

Implications for the education system

- **PATHWAYS:** Build more fit-for-purpose pathways for most in-demand occupations, including higher-level skills to combat potential AI disruptions



INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC ANALYSIS: ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

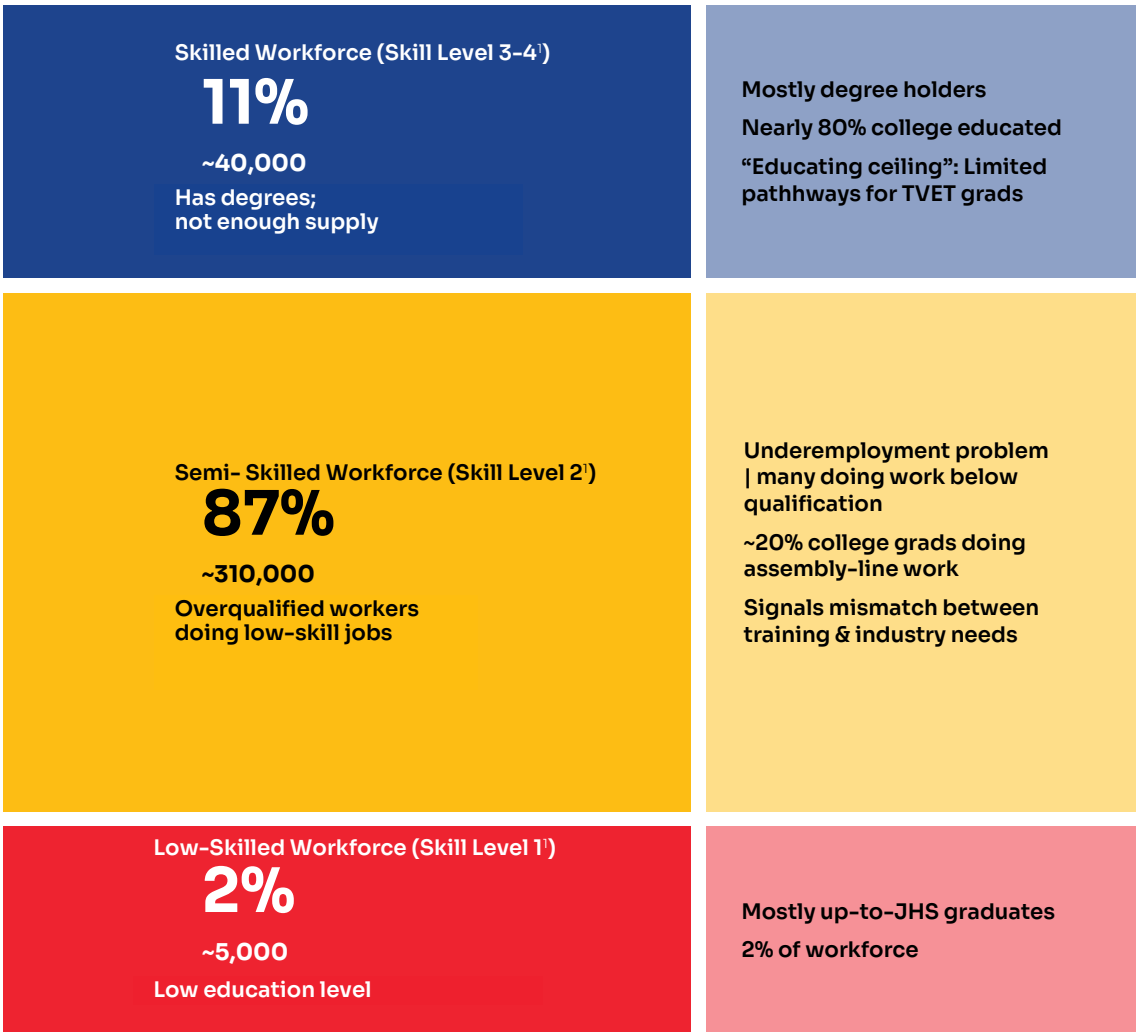
The advanced manufacturing cluster covers the production of semiconductor devices and other electronic components, computers and peripherals, communication equipment, consumer electronics, electromedical and electrotherapeutic devices, optical and photographic instruments, and magnetic and optical media. It also includes emerging sectors such as renewable energy-linked components and equipment, including electric vehicles, as well as aerospace and aviation parts and accessories. This wide breadth underscores the scale and diversity of workforce capabilities required to sustain its growth.

> *The ~350,000 workforce for the semiconductors industry is mostly doing semi-skilled work, like technicians, assemblers, and machine operators, but there are instances of "overeducated" college graduates doing semi-skilled work.*

Within this cluster, the semiconductor and electronics industry stands as the core employer, with roughly 350,000 workers today. However, workforce gaps persist: many in semi-skilled roles hold college degrees, suggesting some underemployment. Further, skilled occupations are largely held by college graduates, implying a "profession ceiling" and limited pathways for technical-vocational graduates to advance through ladderized programs. This mismatch leaves thousands of degree-holders—about 19,000 in assembly work alone—underemployed in roles that do not fully utilize their training.[10] (Figure 12)

10 PSA Labor Force Survey, October 2022 (n = 183,602)

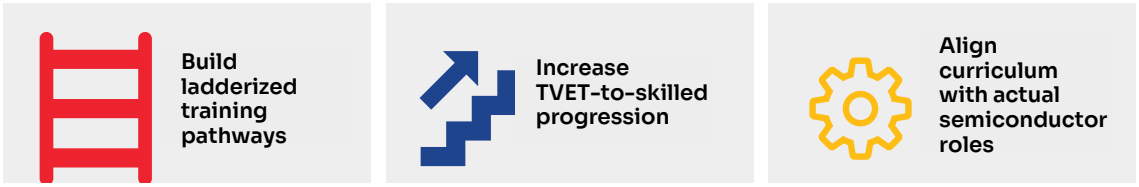
FIGURE 12.
Estimated Advanced Manufacturing Workforce by Occupation Type, Number of People (PSA Labor Force Survey, October 2022)



1. Aligned to International Standards for the Classification of Occupations (ISCO) defined skill taxonomy

Source: PSA Labor Force Survey, October 2022 (n=183,602)

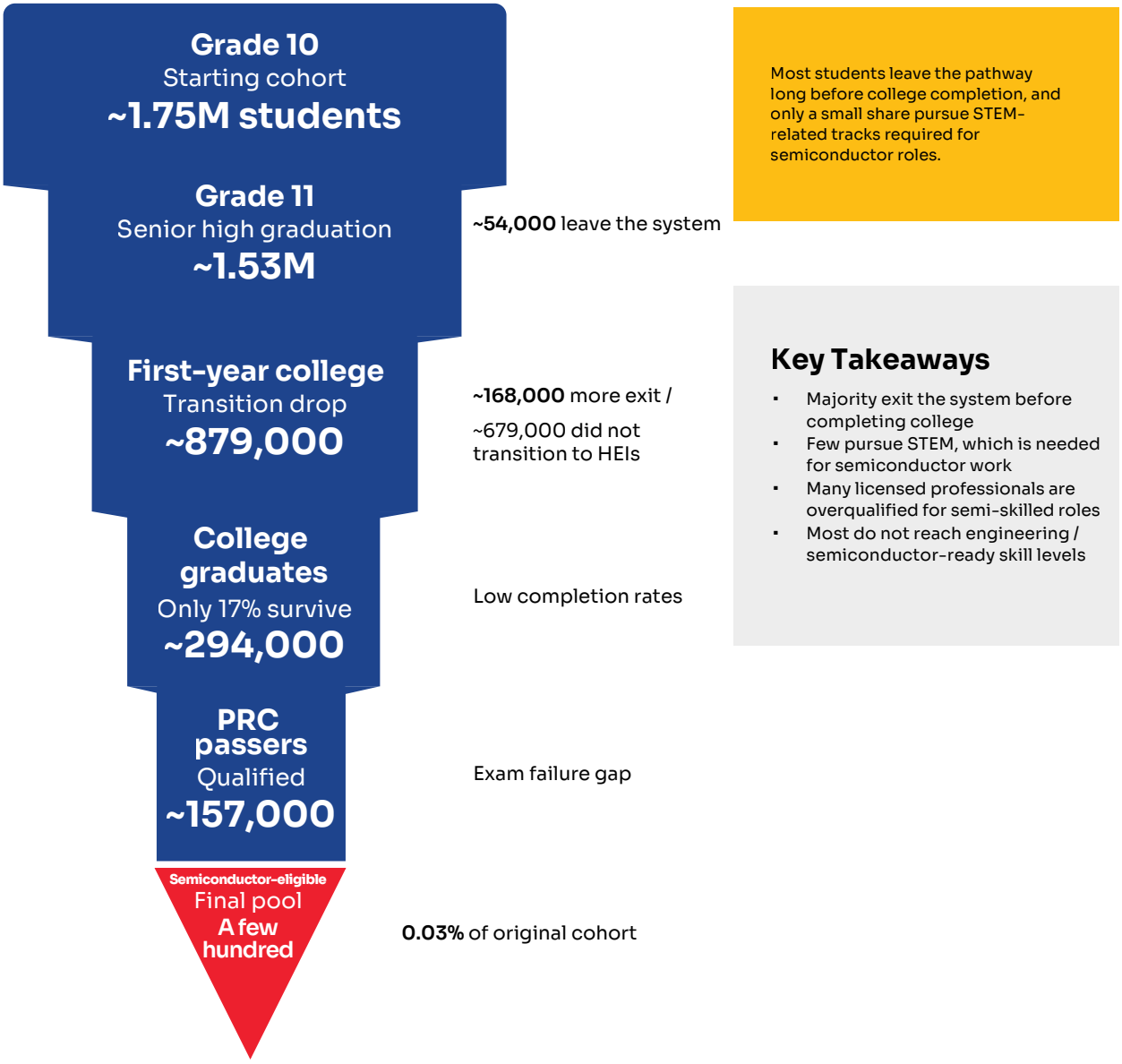
What needs to be fixed



The education-to-industry pipeline remains narrow. Only 15 percent of STEM enrollees pursue courses that typically feed into semiconductor careers[11], leaving a shallow pool of new entrants with the right technical foundation. Industry feedback indicates that certain regulatory requirements, such as professional licensure, are not always necessary to fulfill the demands of their jobs. Some employers train engineers directly after graduation, while others note that well-designed in-house training can enable even high school graduates to perform effectively—yet perceptions about needing a bachelor's degree persist, limiting the talent pool and stifling the efficiency of education-to-employment pathways. (Figure 13)

11 DepEd, CHED, TESDA

FIGURE 13.
Illustrative Enrollment Trends of the Grade 10 class of 2019



The workforce is geographically concentrated. Nearly 95 percent of the semiconductor workforce is concentrated in Regions IVA, III, VII, and NCR, while only about a third of senior high school TVL tracks with semiconductor-relevant programs are located in those regions[12]. This spatial mismatch not only raises recruitment costs but also delays workforce deployment, weakening the sector's responsiveness to demand surges. (Figure 14)

A ~188,000 workforce gap could persist through 2035 without any interventions. In particular, a vast majority of the gap (~163,000) will come from semi-skilled roles, necessitating both utilization and expansion of today's system capacity.

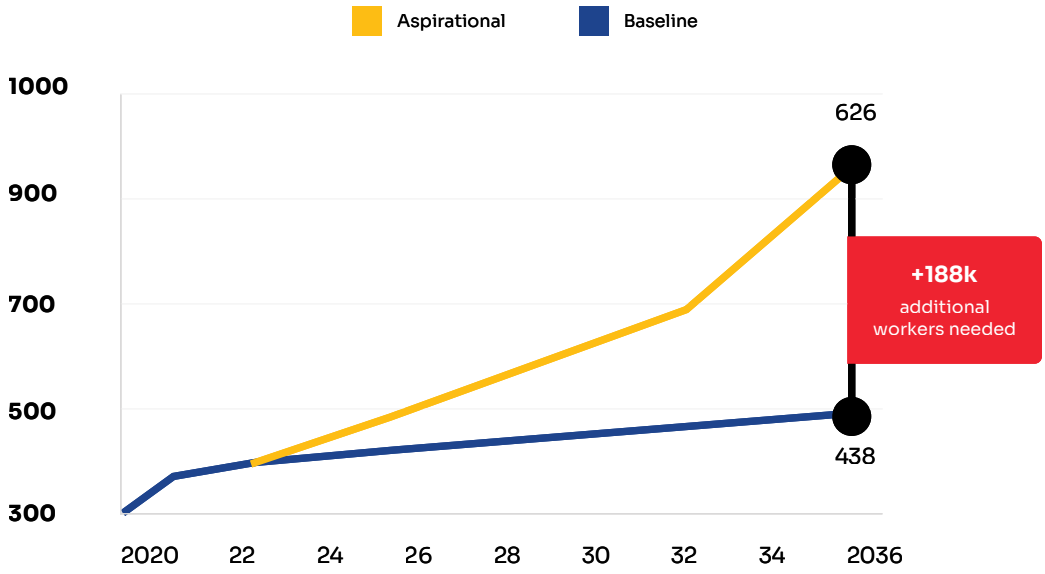
12 DepEd, PSA Labor Force Survey (October 2022)

If the pipeline for TVET-trained workers cannot be expanded and aligned to industry needs, the sector's ability to meet production targets, adopt new technologies, and sustain competitive advantage will be severely constrained. Technical readiness likewise remains uneven; as production shifts toward automation.

By 2035, the cluster will require approximately 626,000 workers to achieve its growth aspirations, but baseline trends suggest only 438,000 will be available, leaving a gap of 188,000.[13] (Figure 14) Of this gap, the largest share—around 163,000 positions—will be in semi-skilled technical jobs typically filled by TVET graduates, such as equipment assemblers, production clerks, electronics mechanics, and machine operators; the projected shortfall, therefore, shall be driven primarily by semi-skilled technical roles—the very backbone of production capacity. Skilled technical occupations, which often require higher education or advanced technical certifications, account for a further 20,000 unfilled roles, while skilled non-technical jobs add another 1,000, and semi-skilled non-technical jobs add around 4,000.[14]

FIGURE 14.
Projected advanced manufacturing cluster workforce demand by 2035

Projected workforce growth: Baseline vs. Aspirational scenario (in thousands)



Source: DTI Semiconductor and Electronics Industry Roadmap, PSA Labor Force Survey (October 2022), ILO, Department of Statistics of Malaysia

Industry growth requires a significantly larger talent pipeline:

Baseline reaches ~433k
Aspirational needs ~626k
Additional ~190k workers required
Requires major TVET + STEM + engineering enrollment expansion

GVA growth	Productivity per worker
+75% productivity to reach PHP 1.17M	**+65%** vs Malaysia benchmark

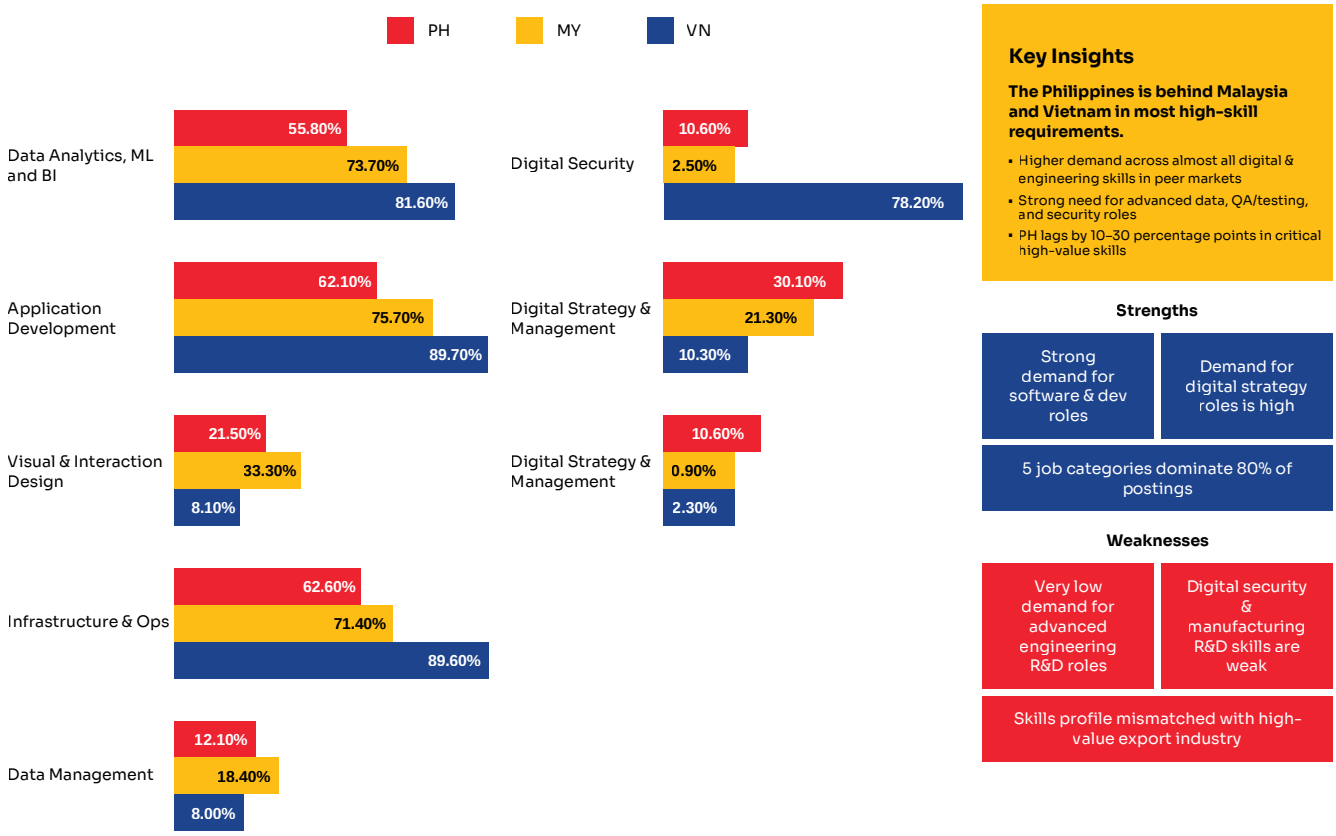
13 DTI Semiconductor and Electronics Industry Roadmap, PSA Labor Force Survey (October 2022), ILO, Department of Statistics of Malaysia
14 DTI Semiconductor and Electronics Industry Roadmap, PSA Labor Force Survey (October 2022), ILO

This imbalance highlights a fundamental risk: if the pipeline for TVET-trained workers cannot be expanded and aligned to industry needs, the sector's ability to meet production targets, adopt new technologies, and sustain competitive advantage will be severely constrained.

Technical readiness likewise remains uneven; as production shifts toward automation, AI-enabled systems, and Industry 4.0 environments, even traditionally manual functions—such as packaging and testing—now demand competencies in data interpretation, machine interface, and process optimization.

LinkedIn job postings in Malaysia and Vietnam, when compared to those in the Philippines, indicate some gaps, especially in higher levels of advanced technical skills such as data analytics, application development, and infrastructure management—competencies increasingly central to semiconductor manufacturing. Philippine postings show lower prevalence of these requirements, yet even at this lower bar, the supply of candidates with the requisite skills remains insufficient (Figure 15).

FIGURE 15.
Percentage of Advanced Manufacturing Job Postings Requiring Specific Skills, Philippines vs. Malaysia and Vietnam (2025)

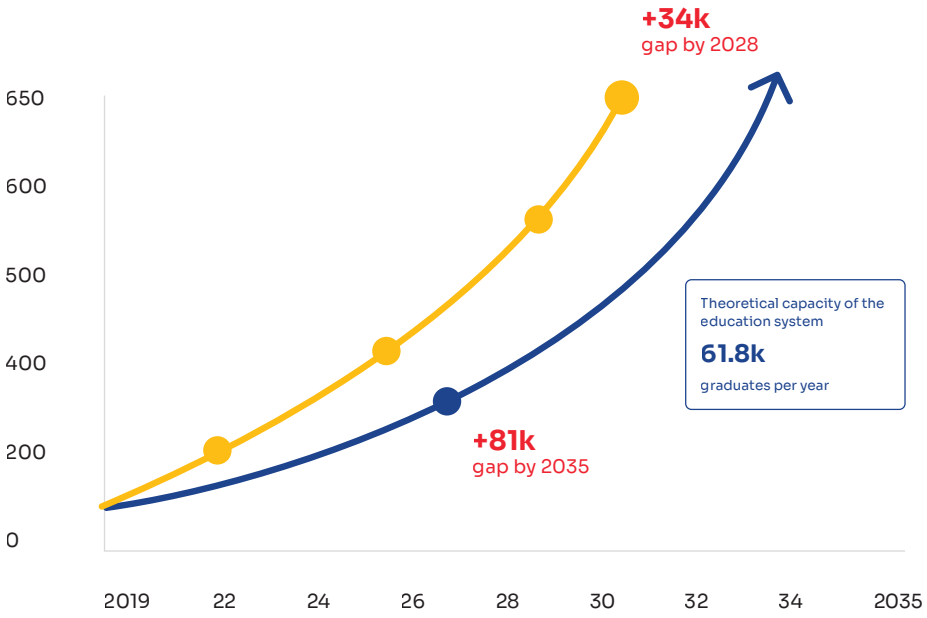


Source: LinkedIn Analytics (as of March 3, 2025)

Looking ahead, the supply of TVET-trained workers for semiconductor-related roles is set to fall well short of demand. Even at the theoretical maximum capacity of the current education system—around 61,800 graduates annually—the output of relevant NC programs has stagnated near 36,000 per year. By 2028, the sector will need about 69,000 new semi-skilled workers, leaving a gap of roughly 33,000; by 2035, this shortfall could swell to 81,000 as demand rises to nearly 118,000.

FIGURE 16.
Projected Demand for Semi-Skilled Workers vs. Projected Supply of Semiconductor-Related NC Graduates by 2035

Graduates of semiconductor-related NCs vs. demand for new semi-skilled workers (2019-2035)



Capacity[1] of Current Education Pipeline (thousands of graduates per year)	
Private SHS-TVLs	7.8k
Private TVIs	22.0k
Public SHS-TVLs	21.3k
Public TVIs	10.7k
Total	61.8k

Key Insights & Action Points

- Demand curve is rising sharply while supply remains flat
- System has room to train more, but enrollment is uneven across regions

Supply-Demand Gaps

~34k worker shortage by 2028
~81k shortage by 2035

Why This Matters

- Semiconductor industry is scaling rapidly and requires more skilled workers
- TVET graduate output has stayed almost flat (~44–36k/year)
- Increasing supply is critical to meet economic and industry goals

1. Sum of highest historical number of graduates produced at a regional and public vs private level, from 2019-2024
2. Expected number of graduates assumed to grow at historical rate of 0.6% p.a. (2020-2024)

Source: DepEd (SHS-TVL Enrollees and Graduates Data for SY 2019 - 2024); TESDA (TVI Enrollees and Graduates Data 2018 - 2024 as of March 2025)

By 2035, meeting advanced manufacturing's projected workforce demand will be challenging enough—yet the sector must also contend with a steady outflow of talent. In the last two years, around 8 percent of all new land-based migrant workers—roughly 69,000 people—had semiconductor-related skills, from manufacturing laborers and equipment assemblers to engineers and supervisors. While some overseas placements give Filipino engineers valuable exposure to advanced practices, many do not return, and the most capable often find permanent roles abroad. Employers acknowledge that the sector struggles to compete with foreign opportunities in both pay and career prospects, leading to a thinning domestic pool of experienced professionals. The decline in engineering's local appeal compounds the challenge, eroding the talent base that once anchored industrial growth. Unless the Philippines can both scale the pipeline and retain its best-trained workers, advanced manufacturing risks ceding ground not just in technology and productivity, but in its ability to sustain the human capital that underpins long-term competitiveness.

Implications for the education system

- PATHWAYS: Offer more semi-skilled pathways aligned with industry needs and strengthen on-the-job training opportunities; provide ways for existing workers like engineers to upskill via microcredentials
- CAPACITY: Build more capacity for semi-skilled pathways, including offering scholarships and vouchers to maximize existing capacity

INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC ANALYSIS: TOURISM

The tourism cluster brings together hospitality, logistics, retail trade, and construction to form the ecosystem that shapes the visitor experience. Accommodations, food services, and recreation define the core of this journey; logistics ensures seamless mobility; retail adds cultural and commercial vibrancy; and construction underpins long-term viability through roads, airports, utilities, and tourism estates.

> *A large employing industry at around ~5.8 million, the Tourism workforce could almost double by 2035 if aspirations are met.*

The workforce stands at 5.8 million—1.9 million in tourism, 2.4 million in logistics, and 1.5 million in retail trade. The adjacent industry of construction stands at around 4.6 million workers as well.[15] Collectively, these roles span the visitor journey, from pre-trip planning to in-trip services and post-trip engagement.

The National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) sets ambitious targets for 2028, building from 2022 baselines. Domestic trips are projected to rise from 103 million in 2022 to between 137.5 and 195.7 million by 2028. Inbound arrivals are expected to grow from 2.6 million to 11.5–13.5 million, while tourism employment is targeted to expand from 5.4 million to 6.3–7.2 million—up to 14.7% of national jobs. Tourism's GDP contribution, meanwhile, is projected to climb from 6.2% in 2022 to as high as 18.7% by 2028.

By 2035, the scale intensifies. Tourist volumes could reach 350–380 million, largely driven by domestic travel, generating PHP 24–25 trillion in revenues and supporting 11–12 million jobs. Meeting this demand may require up to 5.7 million additional workers—a challenge given that the pipeline of tourism-related graduates may not suffice.

These ambitions face constraints. Infrastructure, connectivity, and service capacity remain uneven, while recovery from the pandemic has been slower than peers. As of 2024, the Philippines still trailed ASEAN neighbors, with international arrivals 34.1% below 2019 levels compared to stronger rebounds elsewhere.

15 PSA Labor Force Survey, October 2022 (n = 183,602)

FIGURE 17.
Tourism Cluster Workforce across 3 Industries (Based on PSA Labor Force Survey 2022)
Four interconnected sectors power the end-to-end visitor experience.

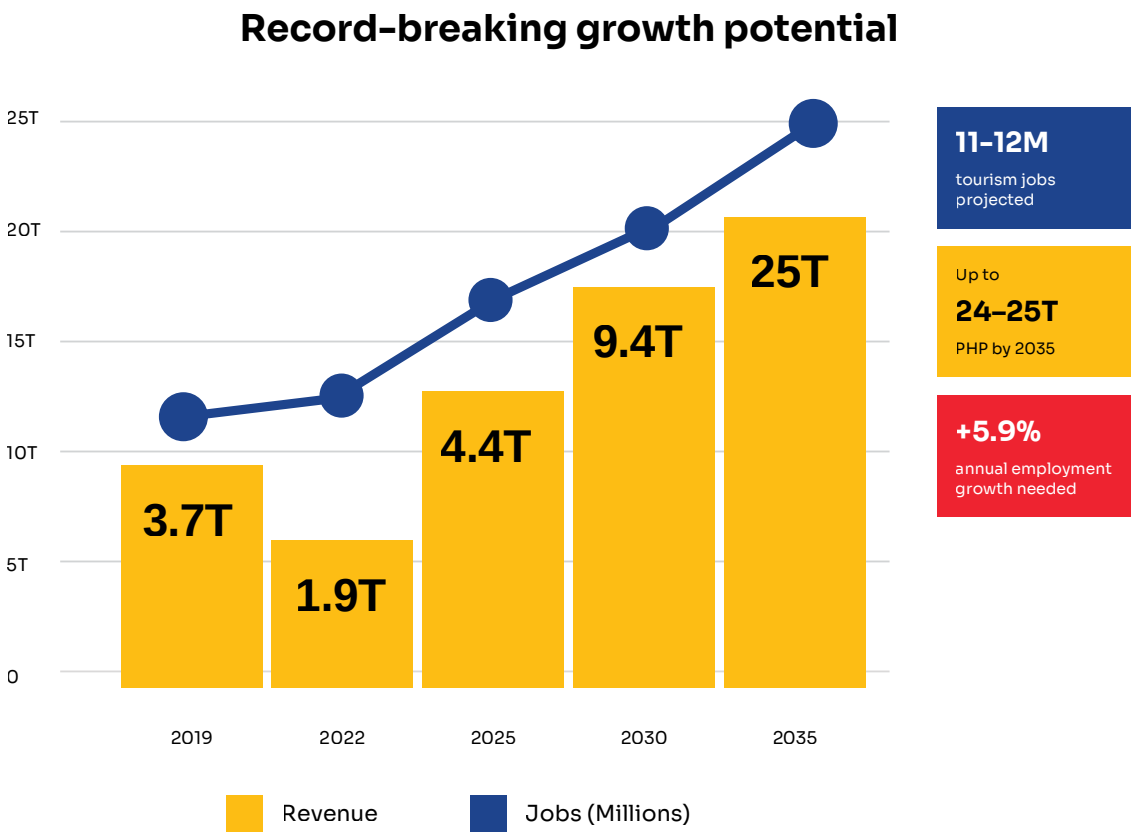


Insight
Tourism is more than hospitality — strong logistics, retail, and infrastructure enable the full visitor experience.

Source: PSA Labor Force Survey, October 2022 (n=183,602)

FIGURE 18.
Tourism Vision 2035: PHP 24–25 Trillion Revenue $ 11–12 Million Jobs

Tourism can be a major economic engine — if growth and talent align.



Supporting Blocks

Workforce Pipeline
Skills, certification, attracting returning workers

Infrastructure & Destinations
Transport access, airports, digital booking, quality service

Economic Multiplier
Tourists support jobs 1:10, drives MSME growth

1. 2029-2035 numbers are extrapolated from ideal tourists per employee ratio on a regional level
Source: NTDP Roadmap, 2023-2028



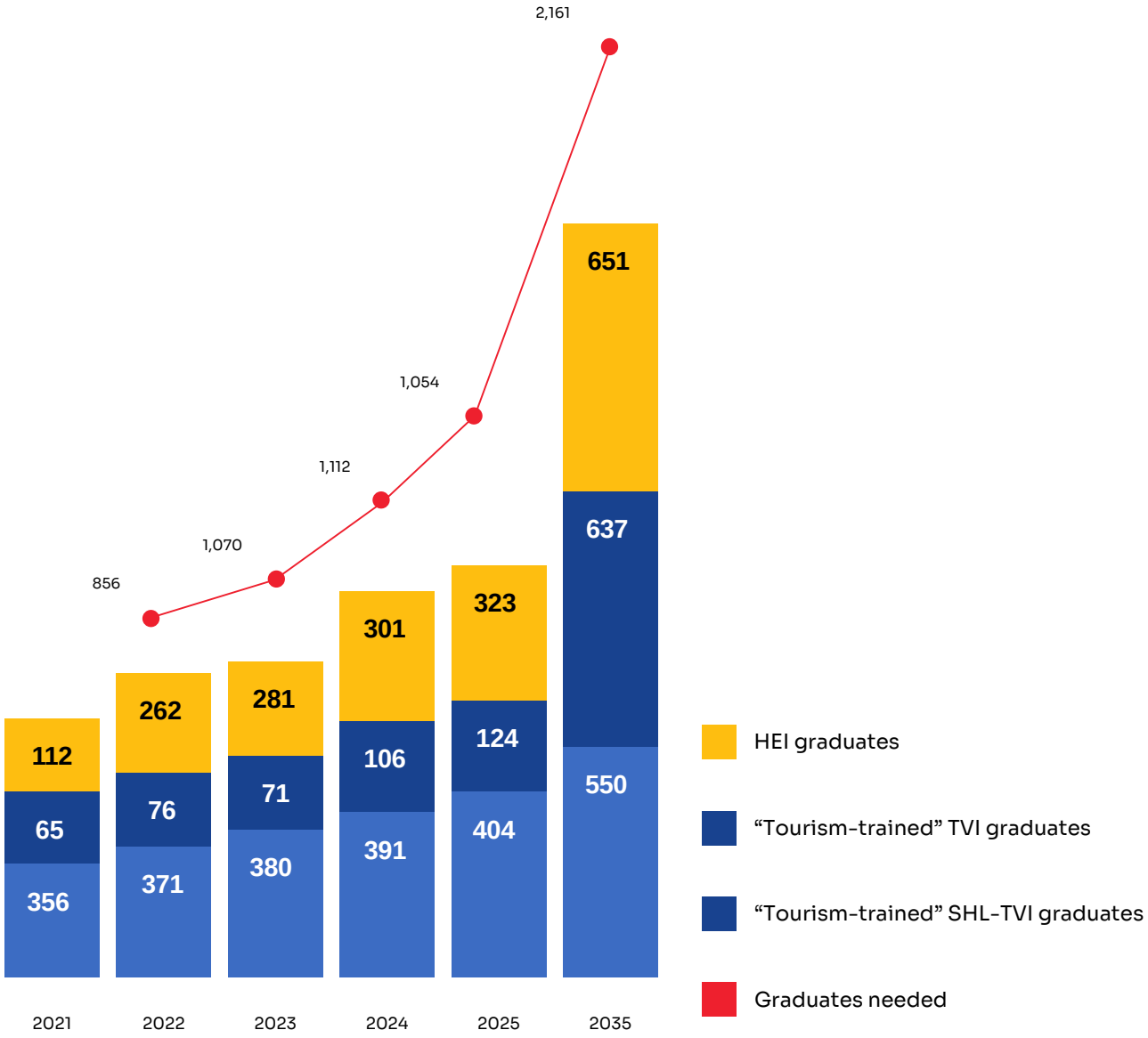
Workforce mismatches also persist. Within the 1.9 million directly in tourism, underemployment is evident: semi-skilled roles such as waiters, salespersons, cooks, and cashiers often employ college graduates, while low-skilled jobs in food service and cleaning also absorb degree-holders. At the same time, opportunities exist for those with less than Senior High School education to “ladderize” into skilled positions in hotel and restaurant management. Only 20% of the workforce hold college degrees, and just a quarter of these are in tourism or hospitality-specific fields.

In 2024, 800,000 tourism-related graduates entered the labor market: ~300,000 from higher education institutions in business administration, home economics, and humanities, and ~500,000 from technical-vocational institutions and SHS-TVL tracks, with certifications such as Bread and Pastry Production NC and Food and Beverage NC. At current trends, this pipeline of graduates is unlikely to meet industry demand—even before accounting for those who may pursue careers outside tourism.

Going over to the construction sector, we see another layer of complexity. While current accommodation and airport capacity may suffice for present demand, the projected volumes of 2035 will require significant expansion in hotels, resorts, and related infrastructure. These needs will not be uniform: some regions will require disproportionately more construction workers to address accommodation shortages. Region-specific workforce planning will therefore be essential to mobilize labor where it is most needed.

FIGURE 19.
Number of Tourism-Related Graduates and Required Incremental Workforce for the Tourism Cluster, Thousands of People

Number of tourism-related graduates vs. required workforce, in thousands of people

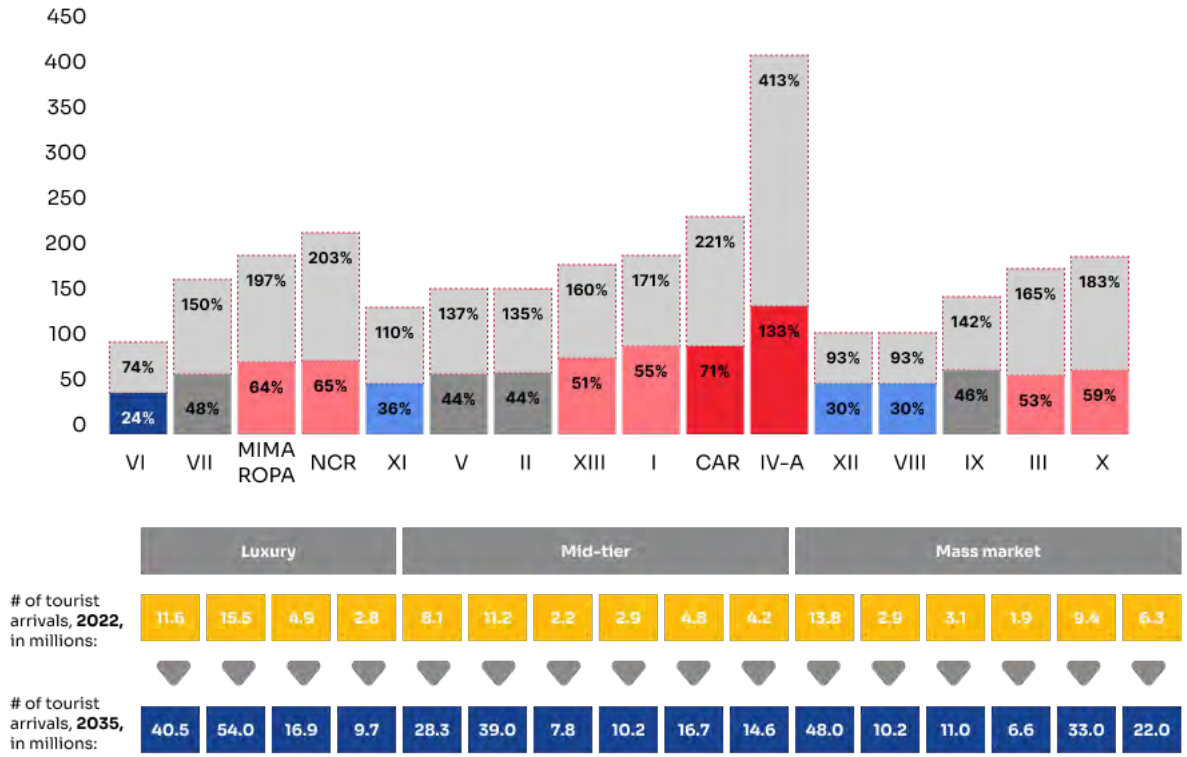


1. Assuming 10% attrition rate and 4% migration rate
2. Includes graduates from business admin, home economics, humanities, maritime, mass communication, service trades, social sciences, and trade and industrial disciplines

Source: CHED, TESDA, DPW 2017-2024 Migration Data

Finally, technological change is reshaping the landscape. Generative AI is projected to disrupt 50–70% of customer touchpoints, from online booking to itinerary generation, requiring targeted upskilling for roles such as travel agents and marketing managers. Addressing both physical and digital capacity will be critical if the Philippines is to meet its tourism targets and secure long-term competitiveness.

FIGURE 20.
Forecasted Occupancy Rates by Region in 2035 if accommodation capacity does not change



1. Counts visitors staying in accredited accommodations for at least 3 days and 2 nights

Source: NTDP 2023-2028

Implications for the education system

- **PATHWAYS:** Improve guidance, matching, and placement of potential talent from school-to-work, especially for semi-skilled pathways to reduce over-education
- **CAPACITY:** Build institutional capacity to grow graduates, especially in underserved regions in need of tourism-trained talent



THE REFORM AGENDA

The analyses of the five clusters helped identify a set of reforms that fall under three overarching themes:

1. **Fixing foundations** focuses on measures that are broadly feasible and command wide agreement—reforms that can be implemented in the immediate term to establish momentum and demonstrate early progress.

2. **Investing in our system** builds on these foundational reforms by directing resources toward students and the school system—expanding scholarships, strengthening training, and enhancing institutional capacity—while also addressing structural challenges such as migration and the shortage of highly skilled trainers.

3. Finally, **big bets for the future** advances more ambitious multi-year initiatives that require more collaboration with other government agencies and the private sector: from creating polytechnic universities and centralized scholarship mechanisms, to partnering with industry to build mega-cities for education and applied research.

What follows is a catalogue of twenty-four identified reforms across these three buckets, each mapped to specific agencies, that collectively define the imperative for education and workforce development reform. These reforms have been synthesized and reflected in the core National Plan document, largely in Key Priority Area 4 (KPA 4).



A. FIXING THE FOUNDATIONS

Analysis revealed, across all five clusters, recurring fractures at a basic level: misaligned systems, outdated curricula, unclear pathways, and weak connections between education and labor demand. Fixing the foundations therefore becomes the indispensable first step. It means strengthening guidance, updating standards, and ensuring quality at scale, to build a base that can carry weight. Without reliable fundamentals, no investment or forward-looking reform can take hold; with them, the system gains coherence, allowing the workforce, consequently, to gain direction.

A1. DepEd: EXPANDING AND STRENGTHENING CAREER GUIDANCE IN PRIORITY SCHOOLS

For many students, the Career Guidance Program (CGP) is the first structured opportunity to align their skills and interests with real labor market demand. Institutionalized under Republic Act No. 11206, or the Secondary School Career Guidance and Counseling Act of 2019, the program's full implementation has been delayed, with its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) released only in 2025. Yet the system in its current state is uneven and under-resourced. Too few trained guidance counselors—especially in rural areas—are spread across too many students, leaving needs unmet. As of 2022, there are only 4,069 licensed guidance counselors in the country, which is significantly lower than the more than 50,000 needed to achieve the ideal global ratio of one counselor for every 250 students. DepEd has reported that there are 4,460 vacancies for guidance counselors nationwide in 2025. Some regions, specifically MIMAROPA and Region 8, have not had any graduates in Master's programs related to Guidance and Counseling since 2018. Guidance often fails to reflect where jobs are growing, and partnerships with companies remain limited, preventing students from seeing tangible career pathways.

The reform agenda calls for an interagency effort to drive a stronger, better-resourced rollout of the CGP in priority schools, deploying more guidance counselors in underserved areas and making systematic use of even "roughly available" labor market data from willing partners. Such efforts can be anchored on the revised DepEd LANDAS toolkit and existing industry partnerships. The LANDAS (Filipino for "pathway") toolkit, designed to support high school learners, teachers, and parents in making informed decisions about life after basic education, helps learners navigate career choices, education tracks, and future opportunities through futures thinking literacy, fostering adaptability, resilience, and a stronger sense of agency. The toolkit includes worksheets for self reflection, job shadowing, SHS course catalogs, skills matching, LMI, and career planning.

It is also imperative to integrate the DOST-SEI's Finding North in STEM Guidebook into senior high school career guidance. The guidebook provides learners with a clearer view of the breadth of opportunities in STEM—covering courses, scholarships, university offerings, and career specializations that extend well beyond the most familiar fields. The Guidebook features the stories of individuals who have built successful careers in STEM, offering concrete examples that can inspire informed choices.

Equally important is deepening the role of industry and local governments units (LGUs). Companies and LGUs can co-develop strategies through career caravans, mentorships, and internships, while regional industry clusters can shape guidance to reflect local economies—whether healthcare in Davao or IT-BPM in Metro Manila. Pilots can test this model in practice for selected senior high schools in Regions 3, 4A, VI, and VII for digital technology and advanced manufacturing, and pilot schools linked to healthcare NCs for the health sector. Existing mechanisms such as the Public Employment Service Offices (PESO) and the Tulong Trabaho Act already provide foundations for linking learners to employment, yet these must converge and modernize to truly meet the student where they are.

Currently, the DOLE, the DepEd, and other education agencies are working together to strengthen career guidance through the Career Development Support Program. This collaboration includes career expos, free national certification assessments for senior high school Technical-Vocational learners, and support for first-time job seekers.

These initiatives form part of sectoral plans like the Trabaho Para sa Bayan Plan, the Philippine Labor and Employment Plan, and the National Technical Education and Skills Development Plan, all aligned with the Philippine Development Plan 2023–2028. The aim is to improve employability, lower job barriers, and align education and training with labor market needs.

Sustaining these reforms requires targeted investments such as recurring resources for training and industry engagement, and one-time funds to develop pilot materials. With these in place, career guidance can move from a fragmented service to a strategic driver of workforce alignment.

Cluster-specific examples:

Digital Technology: Select 5 priority senior high schools (SHSs) each in Regions 3, 4A, VI, and VII

Healthcare: Select all pilot SHSs that are also implementing healthcare National Certificates (NCs)

Advanced Manufacturing: Select 5 priority SHSs each in Regions 3, 4A, and VII

A2. TESDA: ACCELERATING INDUSTRY-LED CURRICULA DEVELOPMENT

Training fulfills its role only when curricula evolve at the pace of industry, equipping workers for real demand. Yet under TESDA's current Adopt-Adapt Framework– —a mechanism meant to fast-track competency standards by drawing directly on industry-identified skills— timelines for certifying industry-led curricula are not clearly defined, resulting in unpredictable approval processes that can drag on for months or even years.

Reviews of Training Regulations (TRs), meant to occur every three years, have also lagged—leaving programs outdated while demand for new skills accelerates. Industry partners consistently raise the same concern: by the time training programs are certified, the skills themselves may already be shifting (Rosales, 2026).[16]

The reform agenda calls not only for more predictable and responsive approval processes—with clearly detailed timelines under the revised Adopt-Adapt framework—but for a fundamental shift in mindset. It moves away from a purely regulatory posture toward one that positions industry in the driver's seat of program design and updating. To make this possible, TESDA could designate sector-specific dedicated staff—for example, TR "reviewers" in healthcare and advanced manufacturing—who will have direct lines to industry partners when designing, reviewing, and launching training programs. This allows new programs to be shaped with input from those closest to changing labor needs. Existing training programs from industry can also be leveraged to shorten development time. Training Regulations (TRs) will be prioritized according to the jobs and skills most in demand, as identified by industry.

The reforms also introduce fast-track approvals for priority industries. This means simplifying the approval process by reducing unnecessary steps—for instance, dropping duplicative document reviews for industry-launched programs—and allowing pilot launches to proceed quickly in TESDA centers, with refinements made afterwards.

Finally, funding for TR reviews should become automatic—at least for those programs that reach the three-year mark and fall within priority clusters. This ensures that high-demand programs do not languish in bureaucratic cycles, but instead receive the resources needed to stay updated and aligned with fast-moving industry needs.

Cluster-specific examples:

Digital Technology: Updates to Contact Center Services NC II and Medical Coding & Claims Processing NC III, alongside a new US-specific Clinical Claims Processing NC III developed with industry support.

Healthcare: Updates to Barangay Health Services NC II and Health Services NC II to ensure training remains relevant to frontline needs.

Advanced Manufacturing: Industry-backed submission of five Operator NCs and five Technician NCs by Fastech, reflecting demand for specialized manufacturing skills.

16 Rosales (2026). Ensuring Quality in TVET: Exploring Challenges and Solutions for Trainers and Assessors. Ateneo-EDCOM II Research Fellowship

A3. TESDA: FULLY FUND A DEDICATED EBET OFFICE AND EXPAND BUDGET FOR AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS FOR ADOPTION WITH PARTNER COMPANIES

Following the efforts of EDCOM legislators, Republic Act No. 12063 or the ""Enterprise-Based Education and Training (EBET) Framework Act" was signed into law last November 7, 2024, finalizing rationalizing fragmented government programs in apprenticeship and dual training. However awareness and appreciation of such models of training remains low among industry stakeholders, limiting its potential to drive partnerships and incentivize industry-led training programs. .

TESDA has allocated of ₱3 million for an information and education campaign in 2026; to sustain the impact of this effort, additional funding will be required—including support for a fully funded EBET office and strategically marketed campaigns, particularly in sectors with distinct regional demands—to anchor industry participation and ensure the framework becomes a recognized, practical tool for workforce development.

Furthermore, EBET can be strengthened by engaging private sector representative bodies (e.g., the Private Sector Advisory Council) as interim "matching" bodies to identify priority companies and mobilize participation. Close collaboration with LGUs and senior high schools can likewise bring EBET to the grassroots, with job and career fairs helping local communities connect to concrete opportunities.

Cluster-specific examples: (illustrative only):

Advanced Manufacturing: Companies under the Semiconductor and Electronics Industries in the Philippines Foundation, Inc. (SEIPI)—such as Fastech, Analog Devices, and Amkor—could participate in EBET initiatives.

Financial Services: Member firms of the Bankers Association of the Philippines (BAP), including BDO, BPI, and Metrobank, present potential partners for EBET adoption.

Digital Technology: Firms such as IT and Business Process Association of the Philippines (IBPAP), the Healthcare Information Management Association of the Philippines (HIMAP), as well as gaming and animation companies, offer strong opportunities for EBET integration.

A4: FAST-TRACK DEVELOPMENT OF PHILIPPINE SKILLS FRAMEWORKS

The Philippine Skills Framework (PSF) initiative is anchored on the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) Act or Republic Act No. 10968, which institutionalized a national, quality-assured system for recognizing qualifications based on learning outcomes. The law also established the PQF-National Coordinating Council (NCC)—a multi-agency body composed of DepEd, TESDA, CHED, DOLE, PRC, and industry representatives—to oversee implementation, quality assurance, pathways, and equivalency arrangements. Together with the charters of TESDA and CHED, this governance structure lays the foundation for a coherent qualifications system that connects education, training, and employment.

The Philippine Skills Framework (PSF) defines the essential skills, knowledge, and attributes demanded by various industries. It also outlines job roles and advancement pathways, ranging from entry-level positions to leadership roles, enabling individuals to assess their current competencies and identify the skills they need to progress in their careers. For educational and training institutions, the PSF serves as a guide for aligning curricula with real labor-market needs, ensuring that graduates are credentialed and employable.

Yet, the PSF can only remain relevant through continuous and structured engagement with industry.In rapidly evolving sectors like ICT, AI, and creative industries, PSFs must be regularly updated to reflect new technologies. Since 2021, only eleven PSFs have been developed signaling the need to ramp up progress in this area. Nevertheless, many of the PSFs formulated correspond directly to this Plan's priority clusters, enabling systematic development and/or updating of qualifications:

1. Semiconductor and Electronics
2. Health Information Management
3. Analytics and Artificial Intelligence
4. Contact Center and Business Process Management (BPM)
5. Global In-House Center
6. Software Development and Security
7. Digital Art and Animation
8. Business Development (Partnerships, Sales, and Marketing)
9. Human Capital Development

By 2026, twelve additional PSFs are recommended for development to meet the demands of the WFD Plan:

1. Sustainable Tourism
2. Inclusive Tourism
3. Tourism Attractions
4. Business Tourism (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions - MICE)
5. Travel Agents/Guides
6. Accommodations
7. Health Services
8. Pharmaceuticals
9. Renewable Energy
10. Quantum Technologies - Internet of Things
11. Banking Services
12. Biotechnology

Crucially, as the PSF system expands, it must remain aligned with the Philippine Qualifications Framework to ensure that national qualifications are globally comparable while still responsive to domestic industry needs. This balance between standardization and adaptability is central to future-readiness. Achieving it requires institutionalized mechanisms for harmonization—regular coordination among government, education, and industry stakeholders; periodic PSF updates that capture sectoral innovations while mapping outcomes to PQF levels; and robust monitoring to ensure mutual reinforcement between the two frameworks.



A5: CHED: PILOT "WELL-EQUIPPED" CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICES IN SELECT SUCS

At present, CHED Memorandum Order No. 9, series 2013 sets standards for guidance and counseling in higher education, including a 1:1,000 counselor-to-student ratio and the establishment of career placement offices to institutionalize industry links. Yet implementation is uneven, and industry stakeholders have expressed stronger interest in collaborating with Higher Education Institutions to steer students toward electives that enhance employability.

To bring career services in higher education closer to industry needs, the reforms propose piloting well-equipped career and professional development offices in select SUCs. These pilots will test more structured partnerships between universities and industry, beginning with matching programs where companies provide counselors with real-time insights on internships, jobs, and the electives or micro-credentials that can make students more attractive to employers. Such direct input ensures that guidance is no longer generic but tied to labor market realities.

A second reform is the creation of a career counseling academy to train representatives from HEIs who will then cascade their learning to their own institutions. Training will cover practical skills such as finding company partners, identifying learner aptitudes, and aligning electives or pathways with future demand. Together, these pilots aim to institutionalize career services as a bridge between higher education and employment, equipping students with both awareness and actionable pathways.

Cluster-specific examples:

Digital Technology: One target SUC in Region VI, with a large base of healthcare students, will be engaged to guide students toward healthcare informatics pathways.

Healthcare: One target SUC in each of the five most underserved regions will be supported to strengthen healthcare tracks, improving graduation outcomes and PRC pass rates.

Advanced Manufacturing: Two to three target SUCs in Regions 3, 4A, and VII with strong engineering pipelines will orient students toward advanced manufacturing pathways, including recommended electives.

A6: CHED: PROVIDE DEDICATED STAFF AND FUNDING TO ACCELERATE THE EFFICIENCY OF TPS TO APPROVE AND UPDATE PRIORITY PSGS

Technical Panels (TPs)-- expert groups that update CHED's Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSGs) for higher education programs– face chronic delays due to limited staff support and uneven processes. With revisions of CHED curricula taking eight to 13 years, and with nine technical panels[17] still to be reconstituted, dedicated staff and funding are urgently needed to keep curricula aligned with industry demand (Largoza & Fernandez 2025).[18]

Accelerating the work of Technical Panels requires not only more staff but also a clearer system of support and accountability. One reform is to carve out dedicated teams focused solely on TP-related approvals for priority clusters, ensuring that critical curricula are not delayed by competing demands. Alongside this, dedicated funding streams should be established—drawing from sources like the Higher Education Development Fund (HEDF)—to provide TPs with the tools, technologies, and resources necessary for more efficient reviews. Such funding could also underwrite the hiring of additional staff or consultants with specialized expertise to help clear bottlenecks in policy updates.

Equally important is the optimization of the review process itself. Timebound steps must be instituted for recruitment, evaluation, and comment periods, with implicit approval given if deadlines are missed. Regular review cycles must also be programmed in order to embed continuity and responsiveness into the system. Taken together, these reforms would transform TPs from slow-moving advisory bodies into agile engines for curricular modernization, keeping higher education aligned with industry and student needs.

17 Letter from CHED-OPSD, 01 October 2025
18 Largoza, G. L. & Fernandez, C. G. (2025). Review of CHED Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSGs) Pre- and Post-K to 12 Reforms. (Discussion Paper Series 2025-13). Philippine Institute for Development Studies. https://pidswebs.pids.gov.ph/CDN/document/pidsdps2513.pdf

Cluster-specific examples:

Digital Technology: Reconstitute Technical Panel for Computer Engineering.

Healthcare: Reconstitute Technical Panel for Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering.

Advanced Manufacturing: Reconstitute panels covering ceramic, metallurgical and materials, chemical, electrical, electronics, mechanical, manufacturing, mining engineering, and engineering technology.

Tourism: Reconstitute Technical Panel for Sanitary Engineering.

Other Clusters: Reconstitute panels for criminology, law enforcement administration, industrial security, legal management, customs administration, logistics and supply chain management, geodetic, industrial, civil engineering, and religious studies.

A7. DEPED AND TESDA: ENSURE DEPED TECHPRO TRACKS ARE QUALITY ASSURED BY TESDA

As DepEd reviews the design and curriculum of its senior high school program ten years after its initial implementation in 2016, it is imperative for the agency to balance critical issues that have ensued since: the lack of alignment of DepEd programs with TESDA training regulations; the limited time for work immersion that impacts job-readiness of graduates; as well as the responsiveness of TVL electives to the needs of their respective communities.

To achieve this, it is critical for DepEd and TESDA to work closely to assure the quality of repackaged SHS Technical Professional (TechPro Programs). This must include ensuring that (1) DepEd teachers hold valid TESDA/NTTC certification; (2) programs comply with TESDA Training Standards; and (3) learners undergo proper assessment and certification.

A8. CHED AND TESDA: ESTABLISH AND/OR RECONSTITUTE CRITICAL TECHNICAL PANELS (TPS) AND INDUSTRY BOARDS (IBS)

Under their respective mandates, both CHED and TESDA are tasked to establish and maintain Technical Panels and Industry Boards to ensure that higher education curricula and training programs remain responsive to evolving industry needs. Yet, as noted in the EDCOM Year 1 Report, many of these bodies had long been inactive or unconstituted due to limited institutional capacity, with some panels remaining on hold for several years.

In TESDA's case, although a relatively large number of Industry Boards exist, EDCOM's Year 2 Report found that they remain concentrated in a few overrepresented sectors, leaving critical gaps in others. Meanwhile, CHED's Technical Panels—composed of academic and industry experts—have struggled with inadequate technical and administrative support. Members, who serve on top of their regular professional responsibilities, often face resource constraints that hinder their ability to carry out their mandate effectively.

Recent reforms, however, signal renewed momentum. CHED began reconstituting its Technical Panels in September 2023, though a panel for Legal Management remains to be formed and new panels are needed for Fintech and Biotechnology.

TESDA, for its part, has continued to organize and strengthen its Industry Boards to deepen alignment between training regulations and sectoral demand. At present, all priority clusters have at least one Industry Board except Financial Services; eight additional Boards are planned under the priority clusters for 2026: Aeronautical and Aviation, Fintech, Accountancy, Business Administration, Legal Management, Electric Vehicles, Renewables, and Chemical Engineering.

These institutional reforms also converge under the broader Developing the Skilled and Smart Communities (DSSC) initiative jointly pursued by CHED and TESDA last September 2025, which seeks to modernize curricula and training standards for key industries through stronger collaboration with employers, professional bodies, and local governments. This is also further discussed below in initiative C1. By creating joint frameworks and pathways that connect higher education and technical-vocational systems, the DSSC aims to close long-standing gaps in workforce readiness and regional skill mismatches—an ambition directly reinforced by the ongoing revitalization of Technical Panels and Industry Boards across both agencies.

A9: AMEND ACTS AND POLICIES WITH AMENDMENTS REQUESTED BY INDUSTRY

Outdated laws and professional regulations have become a hidden barrier to workforce development. Aligning laws with current realities is therefore critical to ensure education reforms translate into employability.

In healthcare, several acts constrain career pathways or create mismatches with training programs. The Philippine Nursing Act of 2002 limits vertical and horizontal career progression, while the Philippine Psychology Act of 2009 requires a Master's degree for licensure, raising barriers to entry. The Philippine Pharmacy Act of 2016 restricts pharmacists from serving multiple establishments, and the Dental Act of 2007 conflicts with TESDA's shorter NC training duration, requiring two years of certification for licensure. Even the PRC's Resolution 1948 (2025) has been flagged for banning video-based CPD units, curbing flexibility in continuing education.

In financial services, gaps include the absence of a "Fit and Proper Law" for entry-level positions and pending updates to the Accountancy Professionalization Act. Cross-cutting reforms will also be needed. The repeal of the Dual Training System law by the new EBET framework must be recognized, while the TESDA Law (RA 7796) and ETEEAP also warrant review to harmonize with today's demands.

In this light, EDCOM II formalized coordination among CHED, TESDA, and the PRC through a signed agreement aimed at addressing existing and emerging misalignments in their respective mandates. EDCOM Chairpersons and Commissioners also filed Philippine Professional Standards and Quality Assurance System Act, which seeks to harmonize and systematize the efforts of these agencies in ensuring that qualifications and professional standards in tertiary education remain aligned with the needs of industry, the academe, and the professional boards.

B. INVESTING IN OUR SYSTEM

Foundations, however strong, can only sustain transformation if the system is equipped to deliver. The analyses showed how shortages of skilled trainers, limited institutional capacity, and uneven access to resources hold back progress even where demand is clear. Investing in our system addresses these constraints directly: expanding scholarships, upgrading training facilities, and building the institutions that can absorb and scale reform.

B1. DEPED AND TESDA: STRATEGICALLY EXPAND ACCESS TO CURRENT PROGRAMS THAT ARE IN-DEMAND BY INDUSTRY

Enrollment in industry-relevant NCs remains low. For example, only 1–3% of NC completions in SHSs and TVIs are tied to semiconductor courses, or around ~30,000 semi-skilled graduates every year, despite the sector needing ~55,000 annually. Meanwhile, a large share of NC graduates are in low-demand areas like bread and pastry, and driving. This leaves a ~26,000 annual worker gap for the semiconductor cluster, which could be addressed through expanded scholarships, vouchers, and subsidies. At the same time, no healthcare-related NCs are currently offered in SHS, though planned introductions present opportunities to link DepEd programs with regional TVIs and provide JDVP scholarships to meet critical demand.

Addressing these imbalances will require more than expanding scholarships or subsidies. It demands a deliberate policy choice to identify and implement priority programs, anchored in national economic strategy rather than local convenience. Previous attempts to rationalize program offerings faltered when free-choice pressures outweighed long-term workforce goals. Reform must therefore assert that strategic alignment is not a constraint on choice, but a responsibility of government to direct opportunity where the country needs it most.

In this light, reforms must broaden access to education and skills training for marginalized and underserved populations, as well as those in vulnerable situations (e.g. displaced workers, out-of-school youth, informal sector workers), ensuring that opportunity is not constrained by geography or income. At the same time, financial barriers to participation in DepEd and TESDA programs should be reduced through scholarships, vouchers, and subsidies. Finally, TVET programs targeting skills gaps in priority industries must expand enrollment and more closely align training pipelines with labor market demand.

Cluster-specific examples:

Digital Technology: JDVP and TESDA scholarships offering 77,000 slots for Contact Center Services NC II in priority regions (NCR, 3, 4A, 6, 7).

Healthcare: JDVP scholarships for healthcare NCs such as Barangay Health Services NC II and Pharmacy Services NC II in five priority regions and BARMM, with expansion to SHS level.

Advanced Manufacturing: JDVP for EPAS, CES NC II, and ICS NC II, plus TESDA TWSP scholarships for EPAS NC II, Mechatronics NC II, Electromech Technology, Machining NC II, and Advanced Manufacturing NC III, alongside EBET vouchers for Mechatronics Servicing NC III and IV.

B2. CHED, TESDA, AND DOST: REFORM UNIFAST AND OTHER STUDENT AID SYSTEMS TO STRATEGICALLY ALIGN FUNDING WITH WORKFORCE AND INDUSTRY NEEDS

While multiple scholarship programs are already in place, they operate without a unifying strategy that ties funding to industry demand. This fragmentation risks spreading resources thin and misaligning public investment with workforce needs. The very problem of scattered, poorly targeted assistance was what led to the passage of Republic Act No. 10687, or the Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (UniFAST) Act of 2015. The law sought to "harmonize, reform, strengthen, expand, rationalize, and re-focus all legislated or ongoing StuFAPs of the government for greater efficiency, coherence, synchronization, effective funding, and improved coordination among implementing entities."

UniFAST was designed to centralize oversight of scholarships, loans, and grants; implement a qualifying exam; evaluate existing StuFAPs; plan a self-sustaining National Student Loan Program; and maintain an updated database of accredited institutions. In practice, however, many of these intentions remain unrealized a decade later. As EDCOM II noted in its July 2025 press release, "Ten years later, many of the intentions of the law are still unfulfilled."

Implementation has been hampered by competing agency mandates, misalignment between national and local priorities on course offerings, and the persistence of political pressures that favor open-ended choice over strategic targeting. State universities and colleges (SUCs) have also become increasingly reliant on national subsidies and delayed UniFAST reimbursements, undermining the very efficiency and coherence the law was meant to achieve.

At the same time, government has opened the door to co-investment with industry groups—such as the IT-BPM association of the Philippines (IBPAP)—for training and upskilling both near-hires and the existing workforce. These opportunities signal the need to refocus public funding so it systematically advances employability and sectoral growth.

Scholarship funding must therefore align with national development priorities and urgent labor market needs—for example, channeling general engineering scholarships into semiconductor-focused programs under DOST-SEI or expanding support for healthcare fields. Distribution must also be made more equitable, ensuring that underserved regions are not left behind. Finally, government and industry must co-invest in training and upskilling programs through mechanisms that define clear returns on investment, embedding accountability into budgetary allocations and guaranteeing that every peso spent produces measurable impact on workforce readiness.

A reformed approach must therefore return to the spirit of the UniFAST Act—ensuring that student financial assistance is not merely distributed, but directed. Scholarships and public training funds must become instruments of national strategy: tools for building a workforce that is not only educated, but precisely equipped for the sectors that will drive the Philippines' next decade of growth.

Cluster-specific examples:

Digital Technology: Co-investing with IBPAP for the training and upskilling of their workforce.

Financial Services: DOST-SEI scholarships in fields such as actuarial sciences and mathematics.

Healthcare: DOST-SEI scholarships for medicine and biotechnology/pharma, complemented by CHED Graduate Scholarships for Faculty in Healthcare.

Advanced Manufacturing: DOST-SEI scholarships and micro-credential vouchers in target HEIs for industry-specific training (e.g., embedded systems development).

Tourism: DOST-SEI scholarships in fields such as aeronautical engineering, alongside micro-credential vouchers in target HEIs for programs in data analytics, tourism research, governance, airline management, community-based tourism, and sustainable and inclusive tourism.

B3. DEPED, CHED AND TESDA: REGULARLY IDENTIFY AND INVEST IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW PROGRAMS AND THE CAPACITY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

The demand for specialized skills is rising rapidly across industries, particularly in sectors that are expanding or emerging. Nowhere is this more evident than in healthcare, where the Philippines faces a shortage of over 220,000 workers and thousands of unfilled DOH plantilla positions. At the same time, industry stakeholders note the lack of relevant national certifications (NCs) that could better identify talent and prepare near-hires for immediate employment. This mismatch highlights the urgent need to invest in developing new programs and strengthening institutional capacity to keep pace with labor market realities.

Currently, new programs often take more than a decade to be reviewed and approved—an inertia compounded by dependence on "traditional" Technical Panels. As Fr. John Young, member of the EDCOM Standing Committee on Higher Education, observed during the charter hearing of CHED, even when higher education institutions seek to introduce timely specializations—such as data science tracks under accredited IT or computer science programs—applications are often denied simply because no corresponding CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) yet exists. A more developmental paradigm would allow innovation to inform regulation, not the other way around.

To address these challenges, agencies must establish a dedicated mechanism for bottom-up proposals of innovative as well as interdisciplinary programs, particularly in fast-evolving fields. Alongside this, curricula must be modernized to align fully with industry standards and adapt to emerging trends. Education and training must improve in quality through investments in facilities and equipment that match real workplace environments. At the same time, programs must extend their reach into underserved areas, ensuring equitable access to opportunities and preventing regional disparities from deepening.

Cluster-specific examples:

Digital Technology: TESDA to develop Gaming Programming IV and Diploma, and Animation III.

Healthcare: DepEd and TESDA to offer healthcare NCs at SHS; CHED to build SUCs for Doctor of Medicine (CAR, NIR) and Doctor of Dental Medicine (Regions 2, 3, 4A, B, 7–12, CARAGA, BARMM); TESDA to capacitate 26 public TVIs for dental NCs.

Advanced Manufacturing: TESDA to develop Advanced Manufacturing Technician NC III & IV.

Financial Services: TESDA to develop Financial Advisor NC II/III.

Tourism: CHED to capacitate Centers of Excellence in HEIs offering tourism and hospitality, upgrading facilities and demo labs.

B4. DEPED, TESDA AND CHED: PURSUE STRATEGIC LADDERIZATION OF NCS TO PRODUCE HIGHER CREDENTIALLED GRADUATES (E.G., DIPLOMAS)

At present, senior high school students complete individual National Certificates (NCs) that could not always be credited towards higher level qualifications due to the lack of ladderized programs that ensure seamless pathways towards TVET and higher education. This lack of articulation— which reflects the historical chasm between education agencies— has thus hampered the progression of learners across the system. This, despite the passage of Republic Act No. 10647 or the Ladderized Education Act in 2014.

Moving forward, strategic ladderization must be pursued so that National Certificates (NCs) are not treated as stand-alone qualifications but as building blocks toward higher-level credentials such as diplomas and degrees. This approach enables credit transfer in line with the Philippine Credit Transfer System and Philippine Qualifications Framework and structured progression, where NCs can be recognized within higher education programs and sequenced into a clear pathway of advancement. This will allow learners to begin with technical-vocational training, move upward to diplomas, and even cross over into higher education, efficiently enabling them to make clearer choices through program structures that guide them into defined fields of specialization.

Finally, this effort must be implemented alongside the aims of Republic Act No. 12124, or the Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP) Act, signed into law last March 4, 2025, which institutionalizes the recognition of prior learning, from relevant work experiences, and from formal, non-formal, and informal trainings.

Cluster-specific examples:

Digital Technology: Stack CCS NC and the new Data Analytics NC into a "basic digital services diploma."

Healthcare: Stack Health Services NC I & II and Community Health Services NC I & II into a healthcare services diploma.

Financial Services: Stack Bookkeeping NC I & II and Data Analytics into a financial services diploma.

Tourism: Stack Tour Guiding Services NC II, Travel Services NC II, and Eco-tourism NC into a tourism diploma.

Advanced Manufacturing: Stack Advanced Technician NC III, IV, and V into a Technician diploma.

B5. ALL AGENCIES INCLUDING DOST: UPSKILL AND EQUIP OUR TRAINERS IN COLLABORATION WITH INDUSTRY PRACTITIONERS

Industry consultations underscore a clear and recurring call: faculty and trainers must have deeper, more deliberate exposure to real industry environments. From senior high school to higher education, those who teach and train play a pivotal role in shaping learners' understanding of career possibilities and in preparing them for the rapidly changing demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Regular upskilling and work immersion would ensure that educators remain current with industry practices and technologies, while also broadening their awareness of emerging occupations and nontraditional pathways that industries now require. For example, many SHS learners still associate tourism only with becoming flight attendants, unaware of equally vital roles in destination management, events coordination, or sustainable tourism development. Faculty with direct industry experience can correct these misconceptions and guide students toward a fuller spectrum of opportunities.

TESDA already requires at least two years of industry experience for trainers—a standard that could be expanded and strengthened through structured partnerships. Industrial parks, regional chambers, and business associations can work with SHS technical-vocational providers and TVET institutions to establish faculty immersion programs that refresh technical knowledge, align instruction with real-world practice, and bridge education with enterprise.

B6. CHED, DOST, TESDA, AND DMW: MITIGATE MIGRATION AND ATTRITION; IMPROVE REINTEGRATION OF RETURNING MIGRANTS

In healthcare, an estimated 27,000 workers leave the country annually—70 percent of them nurses—amounting to around 120,000 over the past six years. Roughly 11 percent of the health workforce exits the sector altogether, often for higher-paying opportunities abroad. Advanced manufacturing also faces steady outflows, with about 8 percent of labor migrants coming from the semiconductor industry each year.

To respond to these migration pressures, reforms must focus on both retention and reintegration. Skilled workers must be encouraged to stay by improving local job opportunities and ensuring working conditions that are competitive and dignified. For those who do return, reintegration into the domestic workforce must be actively supported, reducing barriers and aligning their expertise with national needs. Beyond mere absorption, the system must also find ways to leverage the skills, experiences, and networks of returning migrants so that their time abroad translates into broader benefits for the local economy. On September 15, 2025, CHED and the Department of Migrant Workers announced a partnership agreement to advance the educational and professional pathways of migrant workers.

Cluster-specific examples:

Healthcare: Pilot an expanded reintegration program building on Balik Scientist and Balik Nurse; expand bilateral agreements with countries such as UAE and UK; strengthen deployment to underserved areas through HRH to the Barrios and Doktor Para Sa Bayan.

Advanced Manufacturing: Expand bilateral agreements with partner economies such as Japan and Taiwan to better manage mobility and skills alignment.



C. BIG BETS FOR THE FUTURE

The analyses made clear: long-term competitiveness will depend on bold initiatives that push beyond incremental change. Big bets for the future chart this course, divided into two fronts. First is **building a best-in-class education system**: redesigning how industry boards and technical panels operate, consolidating scholarship management under a centralized government entity, creating polytechnic universities with ladderized programs, and establishing a labor market information system that can track and match talent in real time. Second is **investing with industry**, through initiatives that reconfigure key sectors themselves: a ladderized health sciences program in medical schools, the National AI Upskilling Roadmap, new Healthcare and Biotech Cities, and an Advanced Manufacturing "Capital" with shared laboratories and school-to-industry partnerships. These are strategic leaps that go beyond patching gaps, positioning the country to claim space in industries that will define the decades ahead.

BUILDING A BEST-IN-CLASS EDUCATION SYSTEM

C1. REDESIGN THE MODEL AND PROCESS OF ENGAGING OUR INDUSTRY BOARDS AND TECHNICAL PANELS

The first big bet is to redesign the model and process of engaging Industry Boards and Technical Panels so that curriculum review becomes responsive, consistent, and anchored in labor market realities. At present, the mechanisms for updating Training Regulations (TRs) and Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSGs) are fragmented and slow, often dependent on ad hoc consultations. The reform envisions consolidating governance under a common office for curriculum standards and drawing on a standing pool of experts from both industry and higher education. This pool would be tasked with rapid review and rollout, guided by clear qualifications, tenure limits, and time commitments to ensure continuity and accountability.

Key design questions will need to be resolved: what triggers a review, what the timelines and processes for validation will be, who has final decision-making authority, and where governance support will sit. But if executed well, this reform would replace a patchwork of episodic consultations with a durable, agile model capable of anticipating and meeting industry's evolving needs.

C2. INSTITUTE A CENTRALIZED SCHOLARSHIP MANAGEMENT GOVERNMENT ENTITY

Such an entity can bring coherence and efficiency to a system now marked by fragmentation. Today, scholarship programs are spread across DepEd, CHED, TESDA, DOST, and other agencies, each with its own processes, criteria, and monitoring arrangements. The result is duplication, administrative burden, and long processing times that discourage applicants and divert agencies from their core functions. The reform proposes consolidating these efforts under a dedicated entity or platform that aligns scholarship strategies with national priorities, conducts screening and selection, and manages disbursement and evaluation. Agencies would remain student-facing but operate within a unified framework, reducing redundancy and ensuring transparency. While the specific structure remains to be determined, the principle is clear: scholarships must be managed strategically as a national instrument for talent development, not as isolated programs.

In the interim, existing bodies like CHED's Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (UNIFAST) could be utilized as we build towards a sustainable, resourced solution.

C3. CREATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITIES THAT PROVIDE HIGH-LEVEL TVET PROGRAMS (E.G., DIPLOMAS) THAT LADDERIZE INTO COLLEGE DEGREES

A third big bet is to **create polytechnic universities that provide high-level TVET programs—such as diplomas—that can ladderize into college degrees.** These institutions would fill the critical middle ground between short-cycle technical qualifications and four-year academic programs, producing graduates who are both immediately work-ready and capable of pursuing further education.

International models point to the value of this approach. Singapore's polytechnic system offers applied, practice-based diplomas designed in close partnership with industry. Students follow an accelerated pathway of about three years, with curricula that emphasize labs, real-world projects, and work attachments. The system's flexibility allows graduates to move directly into employment, re-enter later for upskilling, or fast-track to university by up to two years. The result: nearly 88 percent of graduates are employed within six months of finishing.

Northeastern University's co-op model in the United States demonstrates another dimension: embedding extended, employer-paid apprenticeships directly within diploma, undergraduate, and graduate programs. With over 3,800 employer partners, Northeastern ensures that students graduate not only with academic credentials but also with deep professional experience, leading to higher employability and salaries above national averages.

Taken together, these examples highlight what a TESDA–CHED collaboration could achieve in the Philippines: a vibrant polytechnic system offering diploma programs that are industry-relevant, flexible, and seamlessly connected to higher education. Such institutions would expand access to practical, career-focused learning while creating new ladders of opportunity, ensuring that talent development keeps pace with the demands of priority industries.

Establishing polytechnic institutions in the country

To institutionalize the polytechnic typology into the Philippines, EDCOM 2 incorporated their corresponding definitions into the legislative measures filed by EDCOM 2 Co-Chairs Senators Loren Legarda and Bam Aquino, as well as Co-Chair Representative Jude A. Acidre. These measures include the amendments to the TESDA and CHED Charter, as well as the measures on governance of local universities and colleges. When these measures are passed into law, the system will serve as a foundation for the long-term growth and progression of polytechnic institutions in the Philippine tertiary education landscape.

C4. BUILD A CENTRALIZED LMIS THAT SERVES AS A LABOR WATCHTOWER, TALENT MATCHER, AND UPSKILLING-INTEGRATED CAREER NAVIGATOR

A centralized Labor Market Information System (LMIS) would serve as the country's watchtower over talent and demand, consolidating data now scattered across DepEd, TESDA, CHED, DOLE, PQF NCC, PSA, and industry groups. By unifying school-level output, workforce flows, and demographic profiles into a single platform, the LMIS would give policymakers, institutions, and employers a real-time picture of skills supply and demand.

Its use cases are wide-ranging. Education institutions could track graduate outcomes, benchmark performance, and design new programs based on verified supply-demand gaps. Government agencies could analyze employment data by occupation and region, target incentives, and allocate funding to sectors with critical shortages. Learners could see career pathways, assess their skills against industry requirements, and access upskilling opportunities, while employers could better understand the available talent pool and shape recruitment strategies. The payoff would be smarter decision-making at every level: revisiting low-enrollment programs, guiding scholarship allocation, focusing career guidance inputs, and shaping new investments.

INVESTING WITH INDUSTRY

C5. HEALTHCARE: IMPLEMENT THE LADDERIZED HEALTH SCIENCES PROGRAM IN MEDICAL SCHOOLS NATIONWIDE

The ladderized health sciences program offers a strategic response to the country's chronic shortage of healthcare workers by creating multiple entry and progression points along the medical education pathway. Modeled on the UP School of Health Sciences—consistently a top-performing institution in licensure examinations, with a 100% passing rate in Nursing and 96% to 100% in Midwifery and Physician exams–the program begins with a certificate in community health work and builds through nursing and community health degrees toward a full medical qualification. At each stage, learners return to their home communities for short service leaves, ensuring that even partial completers contribute to the health system. This model not only widens access to medical training but also anchors service to underserved areas, building a more equitable distribution of talent, with 85% of graduates working either as Municipal Health Officers or Rural Health Physicians in their respective communities, including Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA).

Scaling nationwide would require phased expansion: two new SUCs by 2026 in Caraga and BARMM respectively, followed by additional rollouts in priority regions with low human resources for health ratio (Regions 4B, SOCCSKSARGEN, IX, V, and VIII), until every region has at least one public medical school offering the program, with eventual extension to private institutions. The reform envisions a continuous pipeline of healthcare professionals—community workers, nurses, and doctors—produced through a unified system that balances national workforce needs with community service.

C6. IMPLEMENT THE NATIONAL AI UPSKILLING ROADMAP

Artificial intelligence is transforming every sector, and the Philippines must ensure its workforce is not left behind. The National AI Upskilling Roadmap sets out a vision to equip Filipinos—from students to workers across industries—with the literacy, skills, and confidence to thrive in an AI-powered economy. It begins with broad AI awareness for the general public, extending digital and problem-solving skills to millions, then builds toward specialized training for developers, engineers, and experts. The President issued a directive (PBBM-2025-1603-1606) mandating TESDA, CHED, and AAP to jointly prepare a 2025–2026 workplan and budget within 60 days, to align with the FY 2026 National Budget. The proposed workplan lays out a ₱5.96B nationwide AI upskilling program for 2025–2026, co-led by TESDA, CHED, and the Analytics & Artificial Intelligence Association of the Philippines (AAP), with a strong focus on training, curriculum integration, research, infrastructure, and governance, targeting over 150,000 learners and thousands of HEI faculty and trainers, to establish the Philippines as AI-ready by 2026.

By 2028, the roadmap aims to cultivate a general AI workforce of over one million, supported by 10,000 developers, 3,000 engineers, and 2,000 experts.

The strategy rests on five goals: build AI literacy for all; integrate AI-enabling skills across sectors; develop a local talent pipeline for AI-related jobs; promote ethical, inclusive AI use; and foster homegrown innovation and R&D. Achieving this will require collaboration among government, universities, industry, and research institutions, with each sector playing a role in training, standards-setting, and ethical guardrails.

C7. HEALTHCARE: BUILD 3 HEALTHCARE/BIOTECH CITIES (ONE FOR EACH ISLAND GROUP) THAT ARE CENTERS OF MEDICAL EDUCATION AND APPLIED MEDICAL RESEARCH

The Philippines faces both an urgent shortage of healthcare workers and the opportunity to position itself as a hub for biotech innovation. One bold step is to establish three Healthcare/Biotech Cities—one each in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao—designed as physically clustered ecosystems where education, healthcare delivery, research, and industry collaboration converge. Proposed areas would be Tarlac or Pampanga for Luzon, Cebu or Iloilo for Visayas, and Davao, General Santos City, or Cagayan de Oro for Mindanao; with each province carrying a unique proposition or area of expertise in biotech innovation. Modeled on global successes such as India's BioCon, these cities would bring together SHSs, TVIs, and HEIs offering ladderized health and biopharma programs, tightly linked to healthcare providers, biopharma companies, applied research labs, and market incubators.

To bring this vision to life, three areas of support will be critical: first, enabling policies and ecosystem development; second, sustained sector-focused research and development; and third, dedicated funding for program development and scholarships. Each Biotech City would anchor select institutions offering specialized programs in biotechnology, supported by facilities for research and start-up incubation, and by industry networks that provide learners with immersion and internship opportunities. Private sector participation will be essential, not only in financing new technologies but also in ensuring their adoption—an approach that draws lessons from successful models in India and Korea.

Such ecosystems would not only produce a steady pipeline of doctors, nurses, and allied health professionals, but also foster cutting-edge medical research, local drug development, and medtech innovation. They would function as centers for breakthrough discovery while generating jobs, startups, and intellectual property. By integrating healthcare education and practice with biotech entrepreneurship and research, these cities offer a long-term bet: transforming the country from a labor-exporting health system into a leader in medical knowledge and applied innovation, serving both domestic and global needs.

C8. BUILD AN ADVANCED MANUFACTURING "CAPITAL" WITH SHARED LABORATORIES AND NETWORKS OF INDUSTRY-TO-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

On March 28, 2025, the President issued Administrative Order No. 31, creating the Semiconductor and Electronics Industry (SEI) Advisory Council, chaired by OSAPIEA. The Council is tasked to provide strategic guidance and ensure the implementation of the Philippine Semiconductor and Electronics Industry (PSEI) Roadmap, a 10-year framework to accelerate sectoral growth and global competitiveness.

In line with this, the Philippines must go beyond being merely a source of labor and establish itself as a hub for innovation and high-value production in advanced manufacturing. One bold step would be to create an Advanced Manufacturing "Capital" modeled on successes such as Penang, Malaysia. By combining tax and trade incentives with strong academic-industry linkages, Penang developed world-class clusters in electronics, semiconductors, and EVs, generating over 310,000 jobs and training 250,000 workers through its Skills Development Centre. A proposed location is the Luzon Economic Corridor (Subic–Clark–Manila–Batangas), which is also the focus of Japan–Philippines–US cooperation on infrastructure, clean energy, semiconductors, agribusiness, and port modernization.

The Philippine version would build on existing assets—KIST Parks, PEZA zones, UP Diliman's Center for Integrated Circuit and Device Research, UPSCALE hubs, and TESDA innovation centers—into a coherent ecosystem anchored on shared laboratories, industry-to-school partnerships, and a talent pipeline of SHSs and TVIs offering relevant NCs. Focus areas such as integrated circuit design and electric vehicle/renewables innovation could serve as anchors for global competitiveness. With supporting infrastructure, from affordable housing to transport links, workers and families would thrive alongside industry. The vision is clear: to build a national epicenter of advanced manufacturing that drives jobs, intellectual property, and global market share.

FROM VISION TO ACTION

This Workforce Development Plan is a blueprint for national renewal. By focusing on five priority clusters—healthcare, digital technology, advanced manufacturing, tourism, and financial services—it aligns education with the sectors that will define the Philippines' competitiveness in the coming decade. Analysis of each cluster has revealed both the scale of opportunity and the urgency of reform.

The proposed reforms—fixing foundations, investing in systems, and making big bets—respond directly to our challenges. They create new pathways for learners, from ladderized NC bundles to polytechnic diplomas; they modernize how curricula are designed, updated, and linked with industry; they reimagine guidance, scholarships, and labor-market intelligence as integrated national tools. Above all, they put forward bold investments: an AI Upskilling Roadmap, a national network of healthcare and biotech hubs, and an advanced manufacturing "capital" that can anchor the Philippines in global value chains.

Without these investments, the Philippines risks falling further behind—its industries constrained by outdated skills, its workers unable to compete for the high-value jobs emerging across the region, and its education system trapped in a cycle of mismatch and underperformance.

Reform must therefore include a substantial expansion of the TVET system—not only in scale, but in depth—to develop higher levels of qualifications that respond to the technological complexity of future work. This expansion must also be geographically inclusive: our analysis revealed significant regional imbalances in workforce supply and opportunity across all five clusters, reflecting the concentration of training and employment in Metro Manila and a few growth centers. A genuine national strategy must bring opportunity closer to where Filipinos live, ensuring that every region participates in and benefits from growth.

Finally, the relevance of curricula and training programs must be protected through constant renewal—anchored in industry demand, informed by labor market intelligence, and flexible enough to evolve with technology and time.

These proposals go beyond mere abstraction; they are pragmatic, sequenced, and designed to generate results that matter—jobs of higher quality, industries positioned for innovation, and institutions capable of continuous adaptation. If implemented with commitment, they will not only address the chronic mismatches of the present but also give the Philippines the capacity to anticipate and shape the demands of the future.

The task ahead is clear: to translate this plan into policy, this policy into institutions, and these institutions into opportunity—for workers, for industries, and for the nation as a whole.

The Filipino Learner Today

I. DEFINING THE FILIPINO YOUTH

This generation represents the largest youth population the Philippines may ever see. Data from the Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study (YAFS 5) show that those aged 15 to24 make up a historically high share of the population, a proportion that will start to decline by 2040 as fertility rates fall (University of the Philippines Population Institute [UPPI] & Demographic Research and Development Foundation [DRDF], 2021; Laguna, Kabamalan, Marquez, and Tanalgo, 2024). For the first time, the country's future workforce and its present learners are essentially the same group. It is a single generation whose size and choices will define national growth.

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National definitions of youth vary across agencies and laws. The Philippine Statistics Authority classifies youth as those aged 15 to 29, an estimated 29.9 million individuals in 2024, or more than one-fourth of the country's 112.7 million citizens (Presidential Communications Office, 2025; Philippine Statistics Authority, 2025). The Youth in Nation-Building Act (Republic Act No. 8044, 1995) extends this to ages 15 to 30, reflecting the longer transitions that Filipinos navigate between study, work, and family responsibility. Within the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), youth are defined as those aged 15 to 40, describing this period as the continuum from adolescence to mature adulthood (BARMM, 2022). These overlapping definitions determine who receives educational and employment support, who is visible in data, and who is formally recognized as central to nation-building.

Economic evidence reinforces the scale of this opportunity. Growth on the scale achieved by the East Asian Tigers, namely Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan, in the 1980s depended on a large and educated workforce capable of producing and innovating. Studies from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Philippine Statistics Authority, the World Bank, and the U.S. Census Bureau project that between 2045 and 2055, the Philippines' working-age population will peak at 66 to 69% before it begins to decline. The country, therefore, has less than a generation to harness this advantage. Thus, closing learning gaps for both students and working-age adults has become a social and economic imperative. (EDCOM II Year Two Report, 2025, p. 47).

In 2020, the effect of the K to 12 reform became evident. A smaller share of those aged 15 to 19 had already finished a baccalaureate degree compared with 2010 and 2015, since more students were still completing senior high school. Despite this structural adjustment, there has been very little change in the country's overall educational profile. A substantial portion of young Filipinos remain at the elementary level. In countries that successfully reaped their demographic dividend, this share was minimal among those aged 15 to 19 and 20 to 24. The persistence of low educational attainment among these age groups signals that while access has expanded, learning progression has stalled. The data reveal a central tension of the demographic window: a large youth population without the skills foundation needed to sustain growth.

Young Filipinos today voice both confidence and concern. The 2021 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study (YAFS5). also adds insight into youth agency by using the General Self-Efficacy Scale to measure the ability to define one's goals and act upon them. Sample items include:

1. I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I set for myself.
2. When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them.
3. In general, I think that I can obtain outcomes that are important to me.
4. I believe I can succeed at most any endeavor to which I set my mind.
5. I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges.
6. I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks.
7. Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well.
8. Even when things are tough, I can perform quite well.

The results reveal a consistently high level of self-efficacy among Filipino youth, with confidence rising alongside educational attainment. Those with no schooling or only elementary education reported a mean self-efficacy score of 3.872 (SD = 0.573). The score increased slightly among learners in Grades 7–10, averaging 3.928 (SD = 0.536), and climbed further among those in senior high school, who averaged 4.006 (SD = 0.515). The highest mean, 4.151 (SD = 0.476), was recorded among youth with some college education or higher. These results suggest that continued schooling strengthens young people's belief in their ability to achieve goals and overcome challenges, reinforcing the link between education and agency.

In a 2024 UNICEF survey, the Filipino youth identified employment, education, and health as their top priorities and called for stronger government action on climate change and mental well-being (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2024). Cultural expectation also shapes their choices. As the Inquirer observed, "Every Filipino child, it seems, grows up with the notion that it is his or her 'duty' not just to support parents in their old age, but to bring the entire family, including siblings and other relatives, out of poverty and raise their standard of living" (2023, para. 3). Most youth still aim to finish school, secure stable work, and support their families before personal goals, a pattern reflected in reporting on the SWS–YouthLed findings (Rappler, 2024). These ambitions reveal resilience and care, and they also show how responsibility distributes opportunity and risk.

To turn this window into a true dividend, education policy must look beyond schooling as an academic sequence. It must see the learner as a whole person situated in Philippine society today. Learners grow within households that may depend on their earnings, in communities that shape safety and belonging, and in labor markets that promise opportunity yet often deliver uncertainty. Planning that ignores these conditions risks mistaking access for success.

II. HISTORICAL AND POLICY CONTEXT: FROM EDCOM I TO EDCOM II

The United Nations frames youth as a "transition" from dependence to independence, emphasizing its fluid and unfinished character (UNDESA, 2013). Scholars generally view youth not only by biological change but by the expectations that families, schools, and communities place upon it. Developmental studies note that these years coincide with rapid physical, emotional, and neurological change that shapes judgment, behavior, and social learning (Casey, 2010; Liu, Snellinger, & Lewis, n.d.). In cultural terms, scholars such as Ogena (1999, p. 84) argue that how young people are supported reflects how a society envisions its own future.

This perspective allows us to read two distinct moments in Philippine education reform. In 1990, when EDCOM I was convened, the country's youth stood before the promises and risks of globalization. In 2022, under EDCOM II, they carried the burdens of a declared learning crisis, the disruptions of the pandemic, and a rapidly changing world of work due to technology and artificial intelligence. These moments trace how the conditions and roles of youth have shifted, and what enduring challenges remain.

These results suggest that continued schooling strengthens young people's belief in their ability to achieve goals and overcome challenges, reinforcing the link between education and agency.



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THE YOUTH DURING EDCOM I

When EDCOM I was established in 1990, Filipino youth stood at the threshold of a new century and in the middle of rapid political and economic change (Ogena, 1999, p. 84). The first Congressional Commission noted that while neighboring countries were advancing quickly on the strength of private enterprise, the Philippines was struggling to keep pace. This divergence was not only economic but also demographic. East Asian economies such as South Korea had begun to reap their demographic dividend by the early 1990s, when a larger, better-educated workforce drove productivity and investment. In contrast, the Philippines had yet to align its education system with the demographic opportunity ahead. EDCOM I put the task plainly: "this strength can be harnessed only if we have a better fit between higher education and development" (Congressional Commission on Education [EDCOM], 1991, p. 32). It also warned of the cost of misalignment: "the country lacks scientists, higher-level engineers and technicians. This mismatch and the resulting unemployment or underemployment or brain drain represent heavy losses in the investments of individuals and families and Government in higher education" (EDCOM, 1991, p. 31).

Indicators of education and work reflected this uneven progress. Literacy rates rose only modestly in the first half of the 1990s, from 93.5 % in 1990 to 95.8 % in 1995, with urban centers consistently outperforming rural areas (Ogena, 1999, p. 96). Many young Filipinos entered the labor force early: 40.9 % of those aged 15 to 19 and 67.3 % of those aged 20 to 24 were either employed or looking for work (Ogena, 1999, pp. 90–91).

However, EDCOM I cautioned against overreliance on these surface indicators. It called for a reevaluation of the Functional Literacy, Education, and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) as the country's primary gauge of learning, warning that headline numbers masked deeper functional illiteracy (EDCOM I, Put All Our Money in Basic Education, p. 8).

The Commission emphasized that functional literacy had to be detected and addressed early. It identified the school principal as a pivotal actor in ensuring external assessments of both teachers and pupils—at Grade 4 for literacy, Grade 6 for achievement, and the secondary years for aptitude and vocational readiness (Making Education Manageable, p. 38). Early childhood care and development also entered the

> *Representative Salvador "Sonny" Escudero III remarked in 1991 that Filipinos showed "less inclination and regard for TVET than for baccalaureate degree programs,"*

conversation. EDCOM I linked nutrition and early learning outcomes, observing that malnutrition from pregnancy through a child's first six years led to poor classroom performance or even permanent mental impairment (Sectoral Targets and Linkages, p. 6). It urged parents and communities to be active partners in education, marking one of the earliest policy calls for integrated child development.

Beyond schools, the Commission found a fragmented ecosystem of non-formal and skills programs run by multiple agencies without coordination. Each institution planned independently, leading to duplication and weak alignment with industry needs (*EDCOM I Report*, pp. 73–84). "Because non-formal education in the Philippines caters to a wide variety of clients and educational needs, programs and activities of various entities overlap," the report noted, stressing the need for a single system to plan, cost, and evaluate literacy and training programs. This fragmentation, combined with limited monitoring, dulled the impact of government investment in lifelong learning.

The Commission also linked dropping out to deeper social attitudes toward schooling. Studies cited by EDCOM I found that, beyond poverty, children's disinterest in school was tied to weak parental motivation and low self-perception (p. 14). It suggested introducing social marketing campaigns to promote elementary completion and considered an anti-truancy system to give effect to compulsory education. The goal was to shift both perception and participation and make schooling not just accessible, but valued.

Choices about what kind of education to pursue reflected these same hierarchies. Baccalaureate degrees were strongly preferred over technical or vocational programs, a pattern policymakers viewed as a barrier to workforce development. Representative Salvador "Sonny" Escudero III remarked in 1991 that Filipinos showed "less inclination and regard for TVET than for baccalaureate degree programs," a sentiment mirrored in enrollment data (Escudero, 1991, as cited in the First Congressional Commission on Education [EDCOM I], 1991). This imbalance emerged in the context of major policy shifts: the streaming of secondary students into either TVET or college tracks during the 1980s, the abolition of the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE) in 1994, and the country's continued reliance on labor export as a safety valve for unemployment. These moves expanded higher education access but weakened the link between training and domestic labor demand, as "tertiary schools adjusted their programs to supply what the overseas market required" (Ruiz, 2014, p. 11).

EDCOM I responded to this imbalance by introducing a set of reforms. It recommended the creation of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and the trifocalization of the old Department of Education, Culture, and Sports into DepEd, CHED, and TESDA to give each level a clear mandate (EDCOM I Report, 1991). TESDA was to deliver "relevant, accessible, high-quality, and efficient technical education and skills development" (Republic Act No. 7796, sec. 2, as cited in Daño, 2025, p. 1). DepEd, for its part, was to focus on addressing functional illiteracy and strengthening the foundations of learning, while CHED was tasked to raise the quality of higher education, which the EDCOM I report had described as being, in parts, "a farce." These reforms redefined accountability lines in education and laid the groundwork for today's institutional landscape, which EDCOM II now revisits three decades later.



THE YOUTH DURING EDCOM II

EDCOM II was convened in 2022 in response to a crisis that had been building for years. The dismal results of the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) led policymakers to declare a "learning crisis" and spurred Congress to establish a second commission to review and assess the education system. Four years later, the 2022 PISA showed only marginal gains. More than three in four Filipino students continued to score below minimum proficiency in mathematics, science, reading, and creative thinking (EDCOM II Communications, 2024).

At the same time, demographic and family dynamics also shifted in ways that reshaped the learning environment. According to Adarlo (2024), care arrangements among left-behind children have been reimagined in households where one or both parents migrate and extended caregivers or older siblings often step into roles once assumed by parents (pp. 17–19). These transnational parenting systems complicate the link between schooling and support structures at home.

Early exposure to violence at home further compounded learning loss. "Exposure to physical or emotional violence by a parent at age 10 is significantly associated with lower odds of school enrollment by age 14. This association persists even after controlling relevant individual- and household-level covariates available in the survey... Such violence can lead to internalized stress, diminished concentration, and reduced motivation to learn" (Manuel, Casas, & Ulep, 2024, pp. 11–12).

> *care arrangements among left-behind children have been reimagined in households where one or both parents migrate and extended caregivers or older siblings often step into roles once assumed by parents*

> *Taken together, the spread of informality, underemployment, and gig-based work suggests that the apparent recovery in youth employment hides a drift toward precarious labor.*

The pandemic exposed these vulnerabilities more sharply. By May 2022, the Philippines was one of only five countries worldwide that had not resumed in-person classes (Asian Development Bank, 2023, p. 14). Remote and modular learning failed to reach many learners. Around 34,500 public schools had no internet connection, making continuity of instruction impossible in large parts of the country (Joaquin et al., 2020, as cited in ADB, 2023, p. 14). Enrollment dropped by roughly 800,000 students in basic education during SY 2019–2020 (Senate of the Philippines, 2022, p. 6). In higher education, at least 41.16% of sophomores paused or left school in SY 2020–2021 (Chi, 2023). Data from YAFS5 show that 69 % of young learners enrolled and completed AY 2020–21, 0.6 % enrolled but dropped out, and 24.7 % did not enroll (Laguna & Afable, 2024). This strain was compounded by SHS being implemented in 2016 during a political transition and still in its infancy when the pandemic struck.

Labor market outcomes reflected the fragility of this period. Among youth aged 15–24, employment fell from 34.2 % in July 2024 to 29.5 % in July 2025, after dipping to 31.8 % in April 2025 (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2025; International Labour Organization, 2020). Pre-pandemic yearly youth employment rates averaged 88–89 % in 2019 and early 2020, fell to 86 % in 2020–2021, and recovered to 88.3 % by August 2025 (PSA, 2025). Many of the jobs regained were insecure. According to Bersales (2024), young and newly graduated workers are increasingly absorbed into the informal economy, often in part-time, casual, or platform-enabled arrangements. Grab and Uber drivers illustrate this shift, where digital platforms provide income but little protection. Across the labor market, informality reaches 62.8% and may double under updated ILO measures. Workers with SHS or partial college education face higher odds of informal employment than degree holders, and many hold unpaid family or self-employed positions without benefits. TVET graduates also record a 22.6% underemployment rate in 2021–2022, pointing to limited access to secure, full-time work. (Bersales, 2024, pp. 3, 11, 14, 21–22.)

The share of out-of-school youth added further strain. Defined as those aged 15–24 who were not enrolled, had not completed college or post-secondary education, and were not working, they accounted for about 15 % of young Filipinos in SY 2020–2021 (Laguna & Afable, 2024). Survey data in 2022 showed varied reasons for leaving school: the need to work (44.17 %), financial pressures (20.98 %), marriage or pregnancy (3.99 %), and lack of personal interest (24.94 %) (EDCOM II Year Two Report, 2025, p. 166). Taken together, the spread of informality, underemployment, and gig-based work suggests that the apparent recovery in youth employment hides a drift toward precarious labor. (Bersales, 2024.)

The changing landscape of higher and technical education reflects growing pressures in the labor market. Following the implementation of Republic Act No. 10931, the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, enrollment patterns in public higher education institutions (HEIs) have become more socially inclusive. The proportion of students from the lowest three income deciles in public HEIs increased by 10.97% between 2014 and 2022, reflecting a narrowing of access gaps in favor of poorer households (Bayudan-Dacuycuy, Orbeta, Vargas, et al., 2024, p. 9).

The shift extends to the technical-vocational education and training (TVET) sector, where learner profiles have evolved just as sharply. As cited in the EDCOM II Year One Report, the profile of TVET learners has evolved significantly over the past decade. Once primarily composed of high school graduates seeking entry-level skills, TVET programs have increasingly drawn individuals with prior college experience. In 2012, about 32% of TVET graduates had

some college background or higher, rising sharply to 55% by 2022. This shift signals that many young Filipinos view TVET not as a first option but as a corrective or alternative pathway after incomplete or unproductive college experiences. (EDCOM II, 2024, p. 212).

These constraints were compounded by gender norms. Nine in ten economically inactive women identified household and family duties as the main reason they could not participate in the labor force, showing how unpaid care work continues to limit opportunities for young women (Belghith & Fernandez, 2021, p. 5).



III. ASPIRATIONS OF THE FILIPINO YOUTH

Aspirations are crucial in driving individual success and life trajectory. They are especially critical in education, influencing both choices and results (Arguelles & Mendoza, 2024, p. 7). They also drive goals and bridge gaps, particularly in nations where citizens face uneven access to resources (p. 8).

The collective dream of Filipinos is expressed in AmBisyon Natin 2040, adopted through Executive Order No. 5, s. 2016 as the country's long-term vision. It lays out a prosperous, predominantly middle-class society where no one is poor, where people live long and healthy lives, are smart and innovative, and thrive in a high-trust environment. The collective goal is a comfortable or maginhawa life where families are secure and self-sufficient. "Children receive quality education so that they realize their full potential and become productive members of society" (National Economic and Development Authority [NEDA], 2016, p. 2). This vision highlights education as central to national aspirations toward prosperity, especially for the youth, who see schooling as a means to uplift not only themselves but also to support their parents and siblings (Republic of the Philippines, 2016).

Nine in ten economically inactive women identified household and family duties as the main reason they could not participate in the labor force, showing how unpaid care work continues to limit opportunities for young women

> *Most young Filipinos expect to continue beyond secondary school, and many also consider non-formal education to improve employability.*

ASPIRATION 1: FINISH OR RETURN TO EDUCATION; ATTEND HIGHER/GRADUATE EDUCATION AND/OR NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Education stands as the first and most persistent ambition. Among those who remain enrolled, 78 % aspire to complete education, with another 10 % aiming for graduate degrees (Laguna & Afable, 2024). While 15 % of Filipino youth did not finish high school or college and were not enrolled in AY 2020–21, 59 % of them intend to return to school (YAFS5, Table 5.7, Laguna & Afable, 2024), with the majority expecting to earn a college degree, while 18 % plan to complete senior high school. The Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study (YAFS5) adds further evidence: most young Filipinos expect to continue beyond secondary school, and many also consider non-formal education to improve employability (Laguna & Afable, 2024). These patterns affirm that the desire for education remains widespread even amid economic and social barriers.

In the same token, data from the Longitudinal Cohort Study of the Filipino Child showed that majority of parents have consistently wished that their children would earn a college degree: 90% at baseline, when children were 10 years old, 93% when the children were in senior high school. They also have a strong belief that their children can achieve this aspiration. Among those who said that their children will not be able to achieve such an aspiration, half attributed it to the uncertainty of whether or not the family can afford the child's future education.

ASPIRATION 2: FIND GOOD JOBS AND PARTICIPATE IN THE GLOBAL MARKET

Employment emerges as the horizon of youthful ambition. UNICEF Philippines reports that 33% of young people lament the lack of entry-level jobs, while 26% are dissatisfied with the broader economic environment (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2024). A regional poll in late 2024 confirms this sentiment: Filipino youth were among the least satisfied in Southeast Asia with jobs, education, and healthcare (Mangaluz, 2024). Surveys also indicate a strong demand for job creation programs and better employment services (Vero, 2024; Mangaluz, 2024).

65% of Filipino youth aspire to work in international labor markets or migrate abroad (UPPI & DRDF, 2021, as cited in Arguelles & Mendoza, 2024, p. 2). YAFS5 data also provide insight into labor participation and unemployment, showing the structural constraints that young people navigate (Laguna & Afable, 2024). For many, the search for work abroad is a practical response to domestic limits rather than a rejection of national belonging.

At age 10, popular work aspirations include teacher, policeman, and there is an evident gender preference: "Boys aspire for jobs in traditionally male-dominated sectors and professions (realistic and enterprising jobs such as policeman, soldier), while girls' preferences tend to subscribe to traditional conceptions of femininity, particularly the creative, nurturing, and caring roles (teacher, nurses)" (Laguna & Paquibot, 2025, p. 14). Work aspirations, however, are continually iterated in a lifetime, making a more processual explanation of how they are formed a more nuanced take on the matter. Young learners may shift their aspirations if they see enough models within their horizons of possibilities.



> *... Youth aspirations themselves are political acts. To aspire for a better city or society is already a form of resistance and civic engagement.*

ASPIRATION 3: CONTRIBUTE TO FAMILY, SOCIETY, AND NATION-BUILDING

Aspirations also take social form. Marriage and parenthood remain central. A majority (83%) of young Filipinos aspire to marry later in young adulthood (Arguelles & Mendoza, 2024, p. 15). Most identify the ideal age for marriage as 24 to 26 for both men and women. Those in education and training often prefer a later age (Arguelles & Mendoza, 2024, p. 20). Women cite 27 as the ideal age for their first child, 1.42 years higher compared to men (Arguelles & Mendoza, 2024, p. 18).

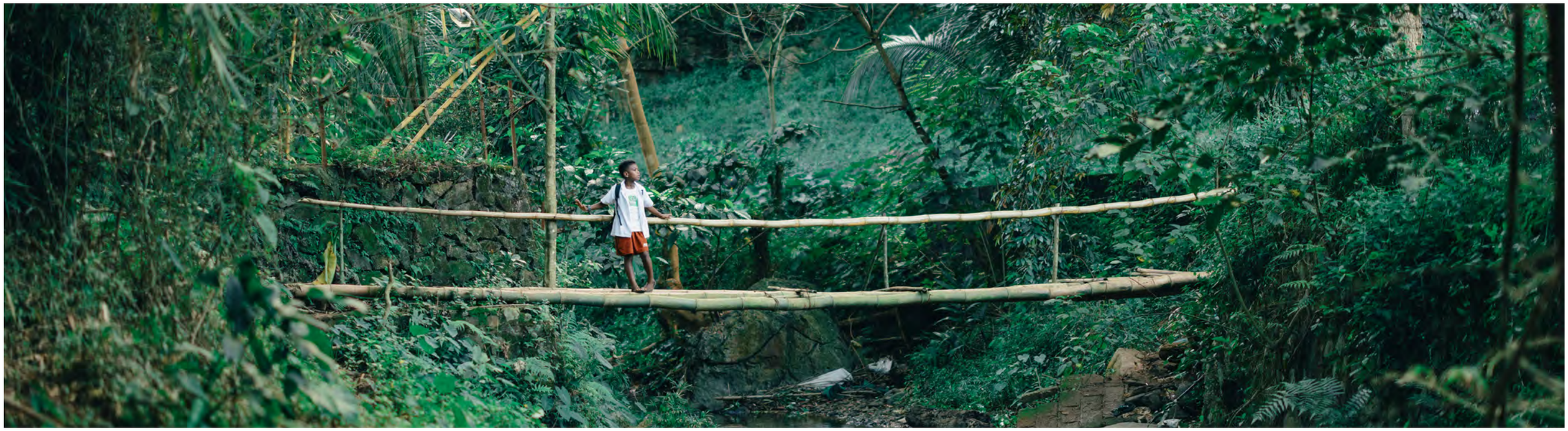
Data from The 2021 National Youth Survey show that Filipino youth continue to value participation in governance and democracy as essential expressions of citizenship. 42% had already voted in national or local elections, while another 33% were registered but had not yet voted (Youth Leadership for Democracy [YouthLed], 2022, p. 74). Among those who had participated, a majority cited civic duty (52%) and the exercise of their right to vote (35%) as their primary motivations (p. 72). Nonparticipation stemmed largely from procedural constraints rather than apathy, with 95% of nonvoters reporting that they were not yet registered (p. 73).

Subsequent findings confirm that these attitudes are reflected in actual political behavior. Among the voting-age population (18 years old and above), 81% were registered voters, and 95% intended to vote in the 2022 presidential election (Laguna & Afable, 2024). Such levels of participation show that Filipino youth do not only dream of private success; they also value their role in shaping society and governance.

Beyond formal voting, civic attitudes remain strongly affirmative. 95% of respondents agreed that citizens have both the right to vote and the duty to protect the nation's natural resources, while 93% supported the right to express opinions in public (YouthLed, 2022, p. 56). These findings indicate that young Filipinos view political participation not merely as individual self-expression but as a shared social responsibility. Their civic orientation, grounded in democratic values and a sense of obligation to the community, puts emphasis on the continuing role of youth as partners in nation-building and the preservation of democratic life.

In post-conflict Marawi, youth described being "invited but only for tokenistic purposes," their voices heard in consultations yet rarely reflected in decisions (Cornelio & Calamba, 2022, p. 8). Such experiences illustrate how inclusion often remains symbolic rather than substantive. Broader governance processes are similarly technocratic and top-down, with national and local planning dominated by Manila-based elites, leaving young people feeling unheard and alienated from policy spaces (pp. 9–10). These dynamics help explain why some youth disengage from civic institutions despite professing strong democratic ideals. We need to recognize these barriers so that we can expand the youth's capacity to aspire. As Cornelio and Calamba (2022) argue, youth aspirations themselves are political acts. To aspire for a better city or society is already a form of resistance and civic engagement (pp. 12–13). Through these aspirations, young people critique the very structures that marginalize them while asserting hope as a mode of participation. Civic engagement, therefore, must be cultivated not only through voter education but through inclusive institutions that treat the youth as partners in governance, not mere beneficiaries.

These aspirations form a coherent portrait. Filipino youth want to finish school, secure meaningful work, support their families, and engage in civic life. These are not abstract hopes but repeated signals across surveys and studies. They underline the responsibility of the education system and labor market to create scaffolding that makes ambition attainable. The Filipino Dream, from this perspective, is deeply personal, anchored on family, and unmistakably social. It is rooted in education as preparation, labor as fulfillment, and civic life as duty. To support it is to meet youth not at the margins of policy, but at its center.



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IV. HINDRANCES TO ASPIRATIONS

Aspirations carry weight only when systems clear a path for them. For Filipino youth, ambition often collides with structural barriers that weaken the promise of education. From inequities in access to fragile learning outcomes, from resource scarcity to hostile social environments, each obstacle narrows the chances that dreams can translate into durable futures.

These hindrances are not abstract. They are felt in households that cannot shoulder transport costs, in classrooms where children struggle to read, in communities where resources are diverted elsewhere, and in programs where reentry pathways fail to deliver. For many, the weight of these barriers leaves migration as the only perceived path forward. Findings from the YAFS5 reveal that education level strongly shapes this aspiration: compared with college graduates, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) graduates are 72% more likely to aim for job opportunities abroad, while undergraduates are 25 % more likely to do so. In contrast, those who reached only elementary education are 45 % less likely to seek employment overseas (Arguelles & Mendoza, 2024). Such patterns underscore how structural constraints push young Filipinos to equate success with departure rather than opportunity at home.

We can only understand the landscape of youth ambition by examining the conditions that repeatedly frustrate it. The following six barriers outline the structural and social constraints that hold back Filipino learners and point to the reforms that must follow.

HINDRANCE 1. INACCESSIBILITY OF EDUCATION

From the first EDCOM, inequities in access have marked the system. The 1991 report described the school system as “a giant sorting machine, which keeps children from well-off city families and throws out children from rural and poor families” (Congress of the Philippines, 1991, p. 9). Dropout rates in both elementary and secondary schools were highest in rural areas, and many dropouts fell into illiteracy. Recent data confirm that these gaps remain visible at every stage. In School Year 2024–2025, 59,755 out of 2,070,358 enrollees dropped out in Grade 1 (2.89%), 78,252 out of 2,141,724 in Grade 7 (3.65%), and 169,836 out of 2,041,601 in Grade 11 (8.32%). These entry grades mark critical transition points where many learners fall behind or leave altogether, highlighting the need for targeted intervention and early support.

Recent reforms have widened access, including the institutionalization of free tuition under the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act. Yet, despite a 5.7 % decrease in attrition from 2014 to 2022 (EDCOM II Year Two Report, 2025, p. 166), barriers persist. Transport costs, food expenses, and opportunity costs tied to lost income continue to deter participation. A survey in Cagayan Valley found that financial aid must be seen as an ongoing process rather than a one-time intervention, since students face recurring costs beyond tuition (de Leon et al., 2025, p. 1). A study on technical-vocational education likewise found that many scholarships fail to sustain learners through completion. It recommends an expanded and performance-linked scholarship framework in which eligibility screening includes academic preparedness and learner motivation, disbursements are tied to training outcomes, and administrative processes are streamlined to ensure accessibility and retention among low-income learners (Ateneo Policy for Expanded Scholarship Admission and Engagement Framework, 2025).

These layered barriers produce not simply an “aspiration gap” but a sense of interrupted transition. Legaspi (2025) describes how disrupted paths to adulthood, where young people juggle multiple roles as students, workers, and breadwinners, generate stress and strain mental health. The pressure to contribute economically while pursuing education leaves many feeling suspended between dependency and independence.

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At the same time, education has become embedded in what Brown and Hesketh (2004, as cited in Ortiga, 2018, p. 4) call a "global war for talent," where credentials serve the demands of industry rather than personal or civic fulfillment. Ortiga (2018, p. 5) argues that the accumulation of degrees functions less as a pathway out of poverty than as a sorting mechanism that channels graduates into segmented labor markets. To counter this, reforms must elevate pathways such as TVET and the Enterprise-Based Education and Training (EBET) Framework as strategic responses to global economic shifts. Rather than treating them as fallback options, positioning these programs as routes to high-demand skills and quality employment can make the education system both inclusive and competitive.

For learners, free tuition alone does not ensure access. For policymakers and educators, the challenge is to create a continuum of support, including transport stipends, food allowances, mental-health services, and flexible reentry pathways so that aspirations do not collapse under the weight of daily costs.

HINDRANCE 2. LEARNING POVERTY IN THE PHILIPPINES

Access without learning undermines ambition. A World Bank (2022) study revealed that 91 % of Filipino children cannot read proficiently by late primary age (p. 7). Literacy weaknesses persist into adulthood. According to the 2024 Functional Literacy, Education, and Mass Media Survey, seven in ten Filipinos aged 10–64 are functionally literate, meaning nearly a third struggle with basic comprehension and numeracy tasks (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2025). Alarmingly, 18 % of college students and 7 % of those with graduate degrees fall under functional illiteracy. **Being functionally illiterate means struggling to follow written instructions, compute basic expenses, read medication labels, or complete forms required for employment or public services. These deficits translate directly into diminished agency and limited participation in civic and economic life.**

Illiteracy is not confined to early school years but shadows learners across their lifetime. Weak reading foundations erode confidence, restrict access to higher learning, and diminish job prospects. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) called this a moral emergency, urging that "to delay, ignore, or fail to respond to the basic needs of our children is to delay the progress of our nation's future" (CBCP, 2025). The statement frames education not merely as a service but as a moral obligation to safeguard the nation's heritage.

Our education system implies that literacy interventions must be continuous, data-driven, and moral in urgency. Schools must embed reading and numeracy support at every level, while partnerships with faith-based and civic groups can reinforce the shared duty to restore learning.



HINDRANCE 3. A CULTURE OF SCARCITY DUE TO UNDERUTILIZED OR MISALLOCATED RESOURCES

Programs such as the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) have struggled with implementation, leaving out many of the poorest. Reports show that Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) graduates often fail to access TES benefits (EDCOM II Communications, 2025).

Scarcity is compounded by misallocation. In 2024, billions intended for flood-control projects were announced for redirection to education and health in 2026 after reports of misuse (Presidential Communications Office, 2025). This pattern exposes a deeper imbalance: education continues to compete with infrastructure for resources, and the leakage of funds widens inequality across regions and schools.

For students, scarcity manifests as empty libraries, unpaid allowances, or delayed stipends. For teachers and administrators, it means improvising with minimal materials. A reform agenda must not only increase budgets but guarantee that allocations reach the classrooms and learners that need them most, especially in last-mile schools and rural divisions.

HINDRANCE 4. LACK OF OPTIONS FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Reentry pathways remain limited. The Alternative Learning System (ALS), while expanded, suffers from low completion. In 2023–2024, only 302,807 of 655,517 enrollees finished the program, a rate of just 46.2% (EDCOM II Communications, 2025). A 2021 UNICEF study found that financial pressures, work obligations, and waning interest were primary drivers of dropout.

Technical and vocational education is likewise constrained. Most TESDA programs remain clustered at NC II, considered low-level qualifications. As of 2025, only 26 NC IV programs existed nationwide, representing just 0.16% of offerings compared with more than 12,000 NC II programs (Chua, forthcoming; EDCOM II Communications, 2025). This imbalance narrows opportunities for learners seeking advanced technical training.

Without credible, attractive, and feasible alternatives, youth who leave the formal system risk being locked out permanently. Schools and local governments must align non-formal programs with labor market demands and support learners beyond enrollment, ensuring that completion becomes the norm rather than the exception.

HINDRANCE 5. LACK OF SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS AND OTHER SOCIAL BARRIERS

Education does not occur in isolation, as social environments shape whether learners persist or disengage. **Bullying remains a significant barrier: international assessments identify the Philippines as having some of the highest reported rates of bullying globally, with 43% of girls and 53% of boys reporting victimization at least a few times each month** (Programme for International Student Assessment [PISA], 2023, as cited in EDCOM II Communications, 2025).

Home conditions compound these challenges. A study by Adarlo (forthcoming) found that about three in ten Filipino children grow up without at least one parent at home due to labor migration, reshaping family care and emotional support systems (Aguilar, 2020; Fu et al., 2023; Zhu et al., 2023). When both parents migrate, children are often left with relatives or older siblings, increasing emotional vulnerability and disengagement from school.



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Domestic violence and emotional neglect further drive absenteeism and grade repetition. Emotional abuse can reduce school enrollment odds more than tenfold (Sherr et al., 2015) and increase anxiety and depression (Stewart-Tufescu et al., 2022; Supol et al., 2021). Physical violence such as corporal punishment leads to aggression and higher absenteeism (Psaki, Mensch, & Soler-Hampejsek, 2017; Perkins & Graham-Bermann, 2012). Longitudinal evidence from the Longitudinal Cohort Study on the Filipino Child (LCSFC) confirms that violence and bullying remain widespread among Filipino learners. In *Home and School Environment: Sense of Belongingness and Bullying*, Herrin and colleagues (2024, pp. 8) reported that about 33.7% of children had witnessed physical violence at home in 2016, declining only to 17.9% by 2022. Emotional bullying was more pervasive, affecting 46 % of children at baseline and 27 % six years later. **The study found that children exposed to violence at home were significantly less likely to stay on track with schooling, even after controlling for child, family, and community factors (pp. 10–11). These patterns suggest that poor attendance is often a symptom of hidden harm at home or in school.**

The implication of bullying for schools is twofold. First, creating safe and supportive environments is as vital as instruction itself. Second, these patterns of violence raise a deeper question about the society that tolerates them. They point to the emotional tensions of a generation that must learn, care, and survive all at once. Schools must become spaces of protection as well as progression.

HINDRANCE 6. LACK OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION REFORMS

Children with disabilities remain among the most excluded in Philippine education. The absence of reliable and centralized data on their profiles and outcomes continues to hinder proper planning and budgeting (EDCOM II Communications, 2025). Republic Act No. 11650, the Inclusive Education Law, was enacted to establish support mechanisms and inclusive learning resource centers, but implementation remains uneven. Special Education Fund (SEF) resources are still underutilized, leaving many divisions without functioning SPED programs or trained personnel. Families, in turn, bear the private cost of what should be a public guarantee.

Inclusive education, therefore, must move from principle to practice. This requires sustained investment in data systems that make learners visible, budget realignment that secures year-on-year funding for services, and teacher preparation that develops the skills to support diverse learning needs. When children with disabilities are treated as peripheral, the system itself weakens; when they are placed at the center, schools become stronger for all learners.

> *Without credible, attractive, and feasible alternatives, youth who leave the formal system risk being locked out permanently.*

Beyond disability, exclusion persists for other groups who remain outside the reach of the formal system. Many indigenous learners continue to encounter language barriers and culturally misaligned curricula, while Last Mile Schools struggle with shortages of teachers, electricity, and learning materials. Children in remote or impoverished areas face similar constraints, where distance and deprivation make even basic schooling a challenge.

Framing inclusivity as a structural obligation rather than a discretionary effort sets the stage for reform. It points to the broader challenge this report now turns to: how to carry the youth onwards by rebuilding pathways, strengthening support, and anchoring policies in the lived realities of Filipino learners. The following section traces these reforms and visions of change, recognizing that the barriers outlined here must be matched with concrete commitments if aspirations are to hold.

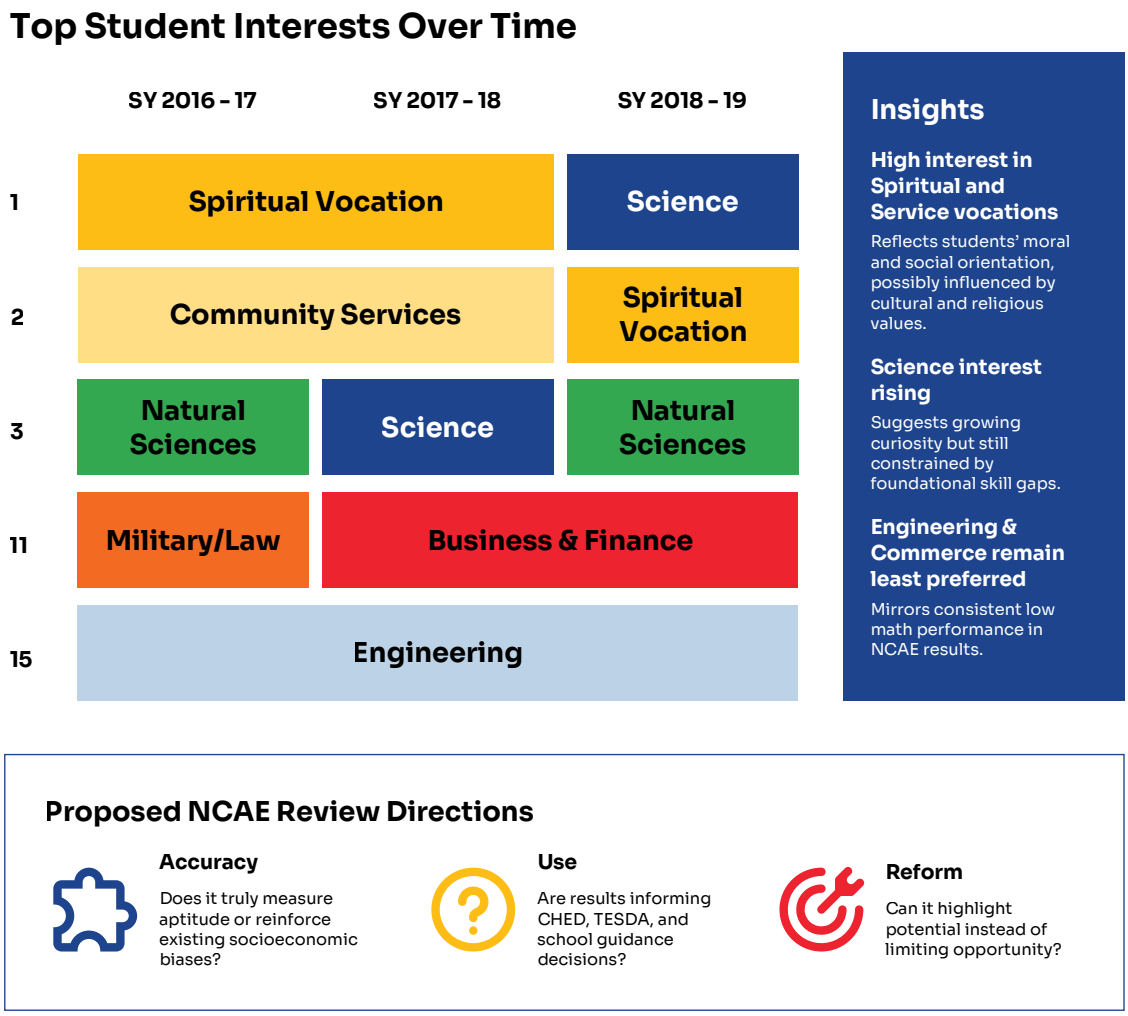


V. CARRYING THE YOUTH FORWARD THROUGH REFORMS AND VISIONS OF CHANGE

Ambition falters when systems fail to respond, because the barriers young people encounter often outweigh their individual drive. As Arguelles and Mendoza (2024, pp. 2, 24) warn, without solid scaffolding, aspiration can slip into stalled or abandoned goals. These dynamics expose a core truth: the system's responsibility is not only to expand opportunity but to sustain ambition.

The first action is to build stronger support networks, since ambition alone cannot carry learners through without relational and institutional backing. Schools cannot act alone; families, communities, and industry partners must help learners bridge gaps in access to information, resources, and role models (Arguelles & Mendoza, 2024, p. 21).

FIGURE 1.
Rethinking the NCAE: Are We Measuring Potential or Reinforcing Limits?



A second action is to conduct a comprehensive review of the National Career Assessment Examination (NCAE). The exam, long under scrutiny, requires evaluation to determine whether it genuinely guides learners toward pathways suited to their skills and aspirations (p. 20). Results from School Years 2016–2019 reveal consistent patterns in students' occupational preferences. The most highly rated field was Spiritual Vocation, particularly the priesthood, followed by Science, Community Services, and Professional Services. These align with students' strengths in reading, communication, and reasoning skills as indicated by the General Scholastic Aptitude component. However, consistently low performance in mathematical ability limits access to math-intensive careers such as Engineering and Commerce. These trends underscore the need for targeted support in mathematics to ensure that learners are not constrained in their career choices by weaknesses in one critical domain, and for continued strengthening of programs that develop communication and analytical skills.

A full review of the NCAE should therefore assess both its structure and its use. It must determine whether the test measures aptitude accurately, whether it reinforces existing socioeconomic or gender biases, and whether its findings are effectively used by schools, TESDA, and CHED to inform guidance and placement. As a national diagnostic, the NCAE can illuminate potential or inadvertently narrow it; its reform is essential to building a system that channels talent toward meaningful and attainable futures.

> *Domestic violence disrupts concentration, motivation, and attendance, producing cumulative setbacks in schooling. Emotional violence, such as verbal abuse or neglect, can reduce the likelihood of school enrollment more than tenfold at follow-up*

Early warning is equally vital. The loss of learners from the system often begins with small, undetected signs of discouragement or disengagement. Arguelles and Mendoza (2024) recommend embedding counseling services into schools to flag risks before dropout occurs (p. 20). Yet, less than half of guidance counselor posts were filled from 2018 to 2021, with shortages compounded by licensing requirements and a limited training pipeline (EDCOM II Communications, 2025).

Evidence further shows that absenteeism and grade repetition are closely linked to children's exposure to violence at home. Domestic violence disrupts concentration, motivation, and attendance, producing cumulative setbacks in schooling. Emotional violence, such as verbal abuse or neglect, can reduce the likelihood of school enrollment more than tenfold at follow-up (Sherr et al., 2015). It also contributes to anxiety and depression, which heighten absenteeism and dropout (Stewart-Tufescu et al., 2022; Supol et al., 2021). Physical violence, including corporal punishment, is similarly correlated with increased absences and behavioral issues that undermine participation and learning (Psaki, Mensch, & Soler-Hampejsek, 2017). Studies note that while emotional violence impairs cognitive and emotional regulation, physical violence triggers aggression and social withdrawal, both of which compromise academic performance (Perkins & Graham-Bermann, 2012; Smiley et al., 2021).

These findings underscore that absenteeism is often a symptom of deeper harm. Schools need early-warning mechanisms that connect attendance data with psychosocial support. Embedding trained counselors and community liaisons within schools can help identify violence-related risk factors before they evolve into permanent dropout (Manuel, Casas, & Ulep, 2025).

For principals and divisions, this translates into overextended staff handling hundreds of students each, leaving many learners unsupported. Closing this gap requires filling vacant positions, improving counselor preparation programs, and integrating guidance units into broader student support services.

For educators, aspiration is not self-sustaining because, without the right scaffolding, even motivated learners can lose direction. It requires institutional scaffolding: mentors to steady ambition, assessments that genuinely guide, immersion that makes futures visible, and counselors who detect early warning signs. Without these, aspiration gaps harden into failures.



FOSTERING SPACES FOR DEMOCRATIC LEARNING AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP

If ambition requires scaffolding, so does participation. The study "Young people 'learning to become' active citizens: Informal learning and youth social action in the Philippines" highlights how young Filipinos learn citizenship through lived experiences of social action rather than formal instruction. Civic learning unfolds across multiple spaces, such as schools, communities, and volunteer organizations, where young people negotiate roles, build confidence, and practice collaboration. When schools nurture these experiences, they evolve into communities of practice rather than hierarchical institutions. Within these spaces, learners develop empathy, dialogue, and a sense of shared responsibility—all of which are the attitudes and skills necessary for democratic life.

Millora (2025) further notes that much of this civic learning is initiated by youth themselves. In the absence of enabling structures, young people create informal spaces for leadership and collective hope. Advocacy groups, volunteer initiatives, and peer-organized projects function as training grounds where civic agency is exercised and refined. These spaces demonstrate how youth transform everyday challenges into opportunities for social engagement and meaning-making.

Building on these insights, schools can design similar environments that recognize and sustain youth agency. Student clubs, councils, and service programs should not be treated as peripheral activities but as integral to citizenship formation. When adequately supported, these become laboratories of participation where students deliberate on shared issues, organize initiatives, and experience responsibility for collective outcomes. Education for citizenship, as articulated in "Young people 'learning to become' active citizens", is most effective when it allows youth to learn to participate, reflect, and lead within communities that value their voice.

STRENGTHENING PATHWAYS AND ELEVATING TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Data from our coordination meetings with CHED and TESDA pointed out the persistent challenge of learner attrition across the basic education cycle. Between School Years (SY) 2016–2017 and 2022–2023, dropout levels in elementary ranged from about 92,000 to 164,000. Junior high school reported 85,000 to more than 204,000, while senior high school saw 14,000–21,000 leavers each year. The lowest dropout levels appeared in SY 2021–2022, when flexible learning during the pandemic temporarily reduced recorded attrition. By SY 2022–2023, however, numbers rose again: elementary to 144,314, junior high to 148,222, and senior high to 20,057. The rebound confirmed what both agencies observed—that the return to face-to-face classes did not automatically translate into learner recovery. The Alternative Learning System (ALS), which should absorb many of these leavers, showed the same volatility. Enrollment peaked in 2018–2019 at more than 618,000 learners, then fell sharply during the pandemic before recovering to around 482,000 in 2022–2023. Participation in both the Basic Literacy Program (BLP) and the Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) tracks declined by roughly one-third from pre-pandemic levels. While BLP enrollment has started to recover, A&E participation, particularly at the high school level, remains far below earlier totals. CHED and TESDA noted that these trends directly affect higher and technical education pipelines. Each dropout represents a learner whose progression into tertiary or technical programs becomes less likely. When ALS completion rates remain below half, the system loses potential entrants for reskilling and workforce training. For TESDA, this limits the number of youth qualified to enter enterprise-based or higher-level National Certificate programs. For CHED, it narrows the pool of first-generation college-goers who can sustain completion. These data point to weak progression from basic to postsecondary learning. Therefore, strengthening pathways means restoring continuity between these levels. It involves improving retention in basic education, sustaining ALS delivery in partnership with local governments, and aligning ALS outcomes with TESDA and CHED entry requirements. The figures illustrate that without a stable bridge from basic education to re-entry programs, the promise of technical education cannot be fully realized.



Implementation gaps in Republic Act No. 11510 or the ALS Law continue to constrain second-chance learning. Guidelines for tapping the Special Education Fund (SEF) and revenue regulations that would enable private contributions and tax incentives remain pending (EDCOM II Communications, 2025). Without these mechanisms, local governments and schools lack the flexibility to expand ALS programs or link them with technical and vocational training. The unfinished policy infrastructure reflects a deeper systems issue in which stalled re-entry pathways weaken the transition from basic to postsecondary learning.

Technical and vocational education offers one of the most direct routes to employment, especially for young people seeking skills that convert quickly into work. Employment rates among TVET graduates increased from 37 % before training to 58 % one year after completing programs (Generalao et al., 2025, p. 4). The Enterprise-Based Education and Training (EBET) Framework Act builds on this potential through three categories of programs: general training for low- to mid-level skills, apprenticeships for advanced competencies, and upskilling programs for employed workers (EDCOM II Communications, 2025). Its principle of industry-led design ensures that training standards reflect real labor-market demand. The task ahead lies in consistent implementation and coordination, so that technical education becomes a stable, credible bridge from learning to livelihood.

Daño (2025) observed that scholarships are not sufficiently targeted to high-poverty regions and that certifications often fail to align with actual job requirements (pp. 28, 30). This disconnect risks producing graduates who remain underemployed or mismatched with market needs. Bayudan-Dacuycuy, Epetia, Vargas, et al. (2024) note that the Philippines faces a persistent problem of a mismatch between qualifications and available jobs. Similarly, Galban (forthcoming) cites data from Aspiring Minds (2017) showing that about 65 % of graduates are not considered employable in their chosen fields because of insufficient or outdated skills. Such conditions risk producing workers who are underemployed or mismatched with market demand. For TESDA partners, there is a need to expand high-skill training and reorient scholarship distribution to where poverty is deepest. For HEIs and local institutions, alignment with EBET pathways allows for collaboration rather than duplication, building ladders from secondary TVL tracks to postsecondary credentials. For schools and teachers, it means guiding learners to see TVET not as a fallback but as a valid and respected route to decent work.

A learner-centered system ties the evidence in this chapter to the proposed reforms in the EDCOM Final Report, as well as in the National Education and Workforce Development Plan. It starts by meeting youth where they are, not where averages place them. It secures the demographic window by fixing foundations in reading and numeracy and by making attendance financially and emotionally possible. It turns ALS, TVET, and EBET into credible bridges to decent work, and it improves the NCAE so guidance reflects both aptitude and opportunity. It strengthens counseling and protection so that violence, caregiving strain, and poverty do not decide who learns. It funds inclusion for learners with disabilities and reaches those in hard places. Above all, it measures success by capability, mobility, and dignity, not only by enrollment or test scores. **If policy, financing, and accountability align with these aims, staying to build a maginhawa life becomes a real choice for the youth, and the promise of the Filipino learner today becomes the strength of the Philippines tomorrow.**

> *A learner-centered system ties the evidence in this chapter to the reforms that follow.*



Reflections on Reform

THE ORIGINS AND MANDATE OF EDCOM II

For nearly a century, Philippine education has been examined through national surveys and commissions. The findings have been strikingly consistent. From the Monroe Survey of 1925, the Prosser and Quezon surveys of the 1930s, the UNESCO Mission of 1949, the Swanson Survey of 1960, and the Presidential Commission to Survey Philippine Education (1970), to the World Bank's Philippine Education Sector Study (1988), the diagnoses echoed one another: the need to lengthen the basic education cycle, improve teacher preparation, expand vocational and technical pathways, reform governance, and secure adequate and equitable financing. Analysts have remarked that such recommendations have become "tiresome in their repetition," a sign not of analytical failure but of a political and institutional system unable to act. Recent scholarship captures the dynamic more explicitly: "large-scale education reforms in the Philippines have often been prompted by crises or international pressures, resulting in periodic but unsustained interventions," and the cycle tends to repeat: "diagnose systemic failures, propose structural solutions, achieve partial implementation, and repeat" (Brillantes, Riva, & Flores, 2024).

> *EDCOM I exploited a unique policy window: broad public demand for reform, strong congressional leadership, and a reform coalition that could translate evidence into law. Its landmark report,* ***Making Education Work****, underpinned sweeping systemic reforms—CHED, TESDA, the trifocal governance structure—that reshaped Philippine education in the 1990s.*

While these studies were influential, most of their recommendations were only partially implemented. The **First Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM I, 1990)** stands out as a rare moment the cycle was broken. EDCOM I exploited a unique policy window: broad public demand for reform, strong congressional leadership, and a reform coalition that could translate evidence into law. Its landmark report, Making Education Work, underpinned sweeping systemic reforms—CHED, TESDA, the trifocal governance structure—that reshaped Philippine education in the 1990s.

EDCOM I demonstrated how a congressional commission could build consensus and legislate structural change. As its authors held, "We chose to amass the information we needed to review and assess Philippine education by direct consultation... Hence we can say confidently that our findings, conclusions and recommendations are the national consensus on education" (Congress of the Philippines, 1991, Preface).

The authors were clear on implementation: "Many of our proposals can be carried out by executive action, but the key ones require legislation" (Congress of the Philippines, 1991, p. iv). One result was the "trifocalization of basic education, splitting the education function among three government agencies—the Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED)... and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA)" (Bautista, Bernardo, & Ocampo, 2009, p. 3). The limits were also documented: "Considering EDCOM's significance and high profile, one would have expected the then-Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS)—now DepEd—to embark on the systematic implementation of the recommendations for basic education. However, the opposite happened" (Bautista et al., 2009, p. 4); "Our work in our separate Committees on Education confirmed our worst fears for the mind of our nation" (Congress of the Philippines, 1991, Preface).

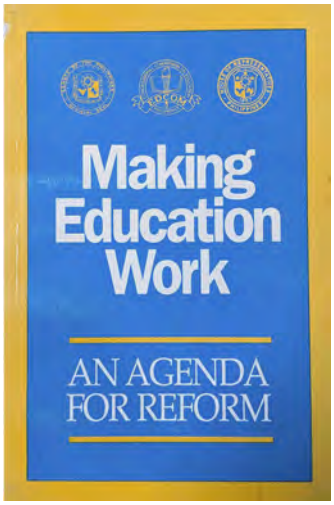
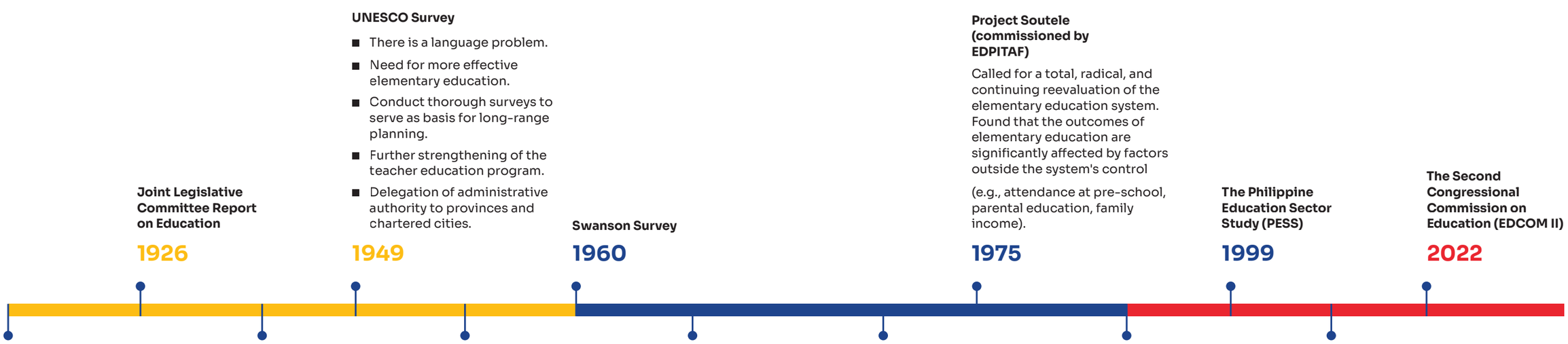




FIGURE 1.
Commisions, Surveys, and Reviews on Philippine Education



Source: Magno, C. (2010). A Brief History of Educational Assesment in the Philippines. Online Sibmission, 1 (July), 140-149



> *This persistence reflects the limits of institutional capacity and coalition durability. Reforms that are bold at inception often dissipate in implementation.*

Although the commission's recommendations were not uniformly implemented, EDCOM I laid the groundwork for enduring institutional reforms. As discussed in One Hundred Years of Solicitude: A Path Constitution Analysis of Philippine Basic Education Assessments and Reforms, 1921–2020 by Brillantes, Riva, and Flores (2024), the commission's work became a critical reference point for subsequent policy shifts. The table below outlines its key policy proposals and how these were translated into legislation and administrative action.

Subsequent efforts—including the **Philippine Commission on Educational Reform (PCER, 2000)**, the **Education for All plans**, and the **Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA, mid-2000s)**—were valuable, but were often constrained by fragmented implementation, bureaucratic resistance, and weak political follow-through. Analysts have noted that Philippine reforms too often became "projectized," lacking the systemic anchoring that could sustain transformation.

Three decades on, many of the same issues remain unresolved. Equity gaps persist, early learning remains underdeveloped, teacher preparation and welfare are uneven, and governance is fragmented. This persistence reflects the limits of institutional capacity and coalition durability. Reforms that are bold at inception often dissipate in implementation,becoming "projectized" or donor-driven, with weak anchoring in the system's incentives and bureaucratic routines.

By 2019, these unresolved issues had metastasized into what legislators openly called an education crisis, underscored by poor performance in PISA 2018 and the massive learning losses of the COVID-19 pandemic. Recognizing both the continuity of past diagnoses and the transformative precedent of EDCOM I, Congress passed Republic Act No. 11899 (2022) creating EDCOM II.

The mandate in law of EDCOM II addresses that historic pattern directly. “It is the declared policy of the State to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality, accessible, adequate and relevant education at all levels” (Republic Act No. 11899, sec. 2). Congress created EDCOM II “to undertake a comprehensive national assessment and evaluation of the performance of the Philippine education sector for the purpose of recommending transformative, concrete and targeted reforms” (sec. 4) and directed it “to set specific, targeted, measurable and time-bound solutions” and “develop a more holistic, harmonized and coordinated education ecosystem” (sec. 3).

EDCOM II was deliberately designed to mirror the systemic ambition of EDCOM I while addressing its limitations. It is meant to be a **comprehensive, legislative engine for reform**, anchored on three foundational pillars: **joint leadership of Senate and House education chairs** to ensure bipartisan authority; a **permanent and robust Technical Secretariat** to provide continuity and expertise; and an **Advisory Council** to bring academe, civil society, and industry into a sustained reform coalition.

> *Commissions themselves are symptomatic of a deeper problem: the absence of institutionalized mechanisms to regularly assess and correct the course of the education system.*



This design reflects core lessons from reform scholarship: that lasting change requires broad coalitions, political champions, and institutional mechanisms that link evidence to legislation and budgets. This structure aligns with the view that "reform leadership at the highest level," a "motivated, competent and reform-minded coalition," and "public support" are jointly necessary, and that coalitions missing any of these elements "are unlikely to succeed" (Room for Maneuver, 2008, p. ix). This triad of leadership, coalition, and public trust defines the political economy of reform; it spells the difference between momentum that endures and initiatives that fade once the spotlight moves on.

EDCOM II thus represents both critique and continuity. It sustains the long line of education reviews, affirms EDCOM I's success in enabling structural reform, but also acknowledges that commissions themselves are symptomatic of a deeper problem: the absence of institutionalized mechanisms to regularly assess and correct the course of the education system. Whether the Philippines should rely on periodic "big-bang" commissions every generation or embed these functions within permanent institutions remains an open question. But in convening EDCOM II, Congress signaled its intent to confront the crisis not with incrementalism, but with systemic ambition.

Equally important, EDCOM II did not stop at diagnosis. It helped shepherd into law a raft of measures in the past three years, worked closely with DepEd, CHED, TESDA, and PRC, among others, and successfully pushed for the creation of an Education and Workforce Development Group (initially proposed as the "Cabinet Cluster on Education") chaired by no less than the Philippine President, signaling a recognition that education is a whole-of-government concern.



I. EDUCATIONAL REFORM THAT STARTS AT THE FOUNDATIONS

At the core of the mandate of EDCOM II is a legislative foundation that grants it an unusual reach for a temporary body. Constituted as a bipartisan commission of Congress, it is composed of ten members—five each from the Senate and the House of Representatives—with the respective committee chairpersons serving as co-chairpersons (sec. 5).

The design has allowed reforms to move quickly from evidence to law. Senate and House versions, though not always identical, drew from the same research base, consultations, and site visits, and thus carried the same principles. With both the chairpersons of the Basic and Higher Education Committees at the helm, cross-cutting issues were addressed more systematically: early childhood care and development needed higher education and TVET to supply child-development workers and teachers, while inclusive education required alignment across subsectors.

Apart from the efficient passage of critical legislation, its membership also enabled concerted action in both houses. For instance, the presence of the Chairperson of the Senate Committees on Finance, then Senator Sonny Angara in the 19th Congress (now Secretary of Education) and Senator Win Gatchalian in the 20th Congress, enabled the Commission to conduct stronger oversight of budget utilization, and ensure resourcing for priority interventions as early as the next fiscal year, with all commissioners supporting these during budget deliberations. Further, the steady participation of the minority leader in the Senate side (then Senator Koko Pimentel III in then 19th Congress) allowed constructive discussion and debate.



A COALITION OF REFORMISTS PUSHING FOR CRITICAL EDUCATION REFORM

This design ensures balance in oversight and places education reform firmly within the political center of government. The broad-based Advisory Council is drawn from across society and includes academia, civil society, and the private sector (RA 11899, 2022, secs. 5, 9, 10, 13; EDCOM II, 2024, p. 359). Its mission is to align national education goals with the lived realities of learners and schools and to ensure that no Filipino child is left behind—an imperative made urgent by the ongoing education crisis.

The Council includes the following: Dr. Maria Cynthia Rose Bautista of the University of the Philippines and Fr. Bienvenido Nebres of Ateneo de Manila University, representing higher education; Mr. Alfredo Ayala of National Teachers College and APEC Schools and Dr. ChitoSalazar of PHINMA Education and the Philippine Business for Education, representing industry; Ms. Rhodora Angela Ferrer of PEAC National Secretariat and Ms. Irene Isaac, former TESDA Director General, representing government; and Mayors Vico Sotto of Pasig City and Lani Cayetano of Taguig City, reflecting local leadership. Civil society is represented by Dr. Milwida Guevara of the Synergeia Foundation and Ms. Maria Olivia Lucas of E-Net Philippines and the Philippine Inclusive Education Network.

The Commission cast a wide net. Champions from academe, civil society, and industry, both in the Advisory Council and the Standing Committees, placed their expertise and networks to support the reform movement collectively pushing for urgent reform. The active involvement of its members— 44 in all, composed of distinguished scholars, highly respected former civil servants, and a diverse range of education experts—grounded the Commission's deliberations in the realities of schools, communities, and systems, making EDCOM II more than a congressional body. It became a coalition of education leaders pressing for reform across sectors and segments of society.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DATA AND EXPERTISE TO DEVELOP DIAGNOSES AND INTERVENTIONS

Consultations with teachers, principals, and parents surfaced the core issues, and access to data provided scale and nuance. Key findings included: stockrooms with no textbooks from 2012–2022; learning assessments thinning out after 2016 due to procurement failures; and a sharp rise in bullying cases since 2013 alongside a long-standing shortage of guidance counselors. Half of all public schools were found to operate without principals, while unplanned government housing projects worsened school congestion. Teachers were burdened with over 50 administrative tasks and 160 forms daily, and DepEd officials were likewise overloaded with 261 inter-agency councils and responsibilities that diverted focus from basic education.

As provided under RA 11899, the Commission was also granted subpoena powers, authorizing it to "secure from any department, bureau, office or instrumentality of the government such assistance, including technical information, preparation and production of reports, and the submission of recommendations or plans, as may be required" (Republic Act No. 11899, 2022, sec. 7[h]). **This enabled EDCOM to scrutinize data long withheld by agencies from external analysis, including among them the national achievement tests administered by DepEd.**



Reform requires stability and institutional memory.

Legal authority allowed access to critical datasets that might otherwise have remained beyond reach, such as:

1. The licensure examinations administered by the PRC
2. The number of poorest of the poor supported through the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) by CHED
3. The National Achievement Tests (NAT) administered by DepEd
4. The educational attainment of teachers handling different grade levels in DepEd public schools.
5. Budget allocation and utilization of funds of government agencies and the Special Education Fund (SEF);

Nevertheless, key data challenges also hampered review, especially during the Commission's first year: fragmented data systems, incomplete geographic coordinates, and mismatched definitions and variables, disabled meaningful analysis. Amid time constraints, the Commission was able to anticipate its priorities and work with PSA to amend the definition of functional literacy in FLEMMS 2024 and to insert rider questions into the Annual Poverty Indicators Survey (APIS) and labor force survey (LFS). These yielded new insights for ECCD, TVET, and higher education. This was possible only with Congress providing added resources, advocated by legislators, to support stronger research.

One persistent challenge was the limited number of scholars in education research, and the near absence of expertise in ECCD and TVET. Universities stepped in. UP, DLSU, Ateneo, PNU, and AIM launched fellowships, grants, and programs using their own resources. Partners such as USAID, DFAT, TAF, UNICEF, UNFPA, IPA, the British Council, and the World Bank invested similarly. Together, these parallel efforts allowed a three-year body of work that mapped challenges and opportunities in Philippine education.

The experience underscored the need to continuously nurture scholars and sustain universities' long-term commitment to policy analysis. It also revealed the critical roles of transparency and access to data. To ensure continuity, it is imperative for the country to build and retain a corps of education policy specialists across DepEd, CHED, TESDA, DBM, DepDev, the Senate and House committees, in order to tackle educational issues incisively. Philippine universities and partners have likewise shown the same potential and commitment. Reform requires stability and institutional memory.

The work of EDCOM II in the legislature was reinforced by a level of executive support unlike the one experienced by EDCOM I. By its second year in 2024, two EDCOM II commissioners had been appointed by the President to the Cabinet as Secretary of Education, and Secretary of TESDA, enabling reform ideas to move directly into agency practice. In Year Three, a CHED Commissioner who had been closely engaged with

> *EDCOM II's experience directly addressed these weaknesses and challenges, aiming to convert evidence and legislation into action. The result affirms a central lesson: that durable reform depends not only on strong policy design, but on sustained partnership between Congress and the executive—where will, expertise, and continuity converge.*



EDCOM II's work assumed the chairmanship of the Commission on Higher Education. These leadership shifts allowed reforms to bridge legislative design and executive action.

Immediately following his assumption of office, Secretary Angara convened the Teacher Education Council Secretariat and the PQF National Coordinating Council— two key reforms pushed by EDCOM—which until then was languishing years after their respective laws had been issued. Within a month, he also fast-tracked the implementation of the Expanded Career Progression for Teachers. Following his appointment, Secretary Benitez likewise prioritized the development of the NC III in ECCD for child development workers, the certification and assessment of SHS-TVL students, and worked closely with EDCOM for the passage of the EBET Law. On the other hand, CHED Chair Agrupis prioritized the reconstitution of all CHED technical panels, reformed the UNIFAST in light of EDCOM recommendations, and worked closely with DepEd, TESDA and DSWD in a concerted effort to encourage 4Ps beneficiaries to take up tertiary education studies. Taken together, these steps showed how alignment across branches can accelerate change when the mandate is clear and the leadership is serious and steady.

This alignment stood in sharp contrast to the experience of EDCOM I. Despite broad consensus and legislative resolve, DECS resisted several of its key recommendations, delaying their implementation. Then-DECS Secretary Dr. Isidro Cariño argued that merging the Bureau of Technical and Vocational Education (BTVE) and the National Manpower and Youth Council (NMYC) into a new TESDA was unnecessary, insisting that "each agency should adhere to its original mandate." He also described the proposed CHED as "both impractical and unrealistic," saying its advisory role could be handled within DECS. These views, recorded in the Department's official comments submitted to EDCOM I, showed how bureaucratic caution shaped the pace of reform (Department of Education, Culture and Sports [DECS], 1991, pp. 4–5).

The commission's own report observed that, while its recommendations could have been carried out by executive action, the department's reluctance meant that "the opposite happened," and many proposals failed to take root (Congressional Commission on Education, 1993). The impasse underscored how even well-designed reforms can falter without executive cooperation.

> *The result affirms a central lesson: that durable reform depends not only on strong policy design, but on sustained partnership between Congress and the executive— where will, expertise, and continuity converge.*

A similar dynamic was evident during the period leading up to the trifocalization reforms. While DECS had launched its 1990 Decentralization Program, implemented in January 1991, the Department positioned this initiative as sufficient response to concerns about overcentralization. The program transferred key functions to the regional offices, including school supervision and the authority to issue or revoke permits and recognitions for curricular programs, including those with board and bar examinations. In its official comments to EDCOM I, DECS argued that proposals to restructure the agency were misplaced, stating that the commission's recommendations "reflected lack of knowledge and appreciation" of reforms already underway. As then Secretary Cariño noted, decentralization had "adequately responded" to governance issues raised by EDCOM I, rendering structural change unnecessary (Department of Education, Culture and Sports [DECS], 1991, p. 9).

This stance illustrated the gap between EDCOM I's push for systemic reorganization and DECS's preference for administrative adjustments. It also foreshadowed the friction that would shape the eventual passage of the 1994 laws, showing how early reform efforts were circumscribed by bureaucratic conviction that internal measures, rather than institutional redesign, would suffice.

Over three decades of education reform show a clear lesson: fixing structures alone does not fix learning. An entire generation of Filipino students now carries the consequences of choices that focused heavily on reorganizing the system, but not enough on what enables children to learn.

The raft of institutional reforms since the 1990s, most prominently the trifocalization of DepEd, CHED, and TESDA after EDCOM I, were intended to rationalize functions and improve system management. But as Paqueo and colleagues (2024) note, the reform instead (unintendedly) fragmented governance and blurred accountability. The result underscores a recurring pattern: organizational restructuring has often delivered administrative change, not classroom change.

EDCOM I itself recognized these limits. While it pursued major governance reforms and teacher welfare measures, it warned in 1991 that underinvestment and inequitable access would undermine progress. At the time, only 12.8% of the national budget and 1.3% of GNP went to education, the lowest in ASEAN. Only 65.7 of every 100 children reached Grade 6, with most dropouts coming from poor rural communities (EDCOM I, 1991). Later assessments affirmed the point: EDCOM I set important milestones, but structural weaknesses persisted in access, teacher preparation, and system coherence (World Bank & PIDS, 2001). The record makes one thing clear: institutional reform can enable progress, but without attention to learning conditions and learner well-being, that is followed through by coordinated investments, implementation, and accountability, "reforms do not transform" (Bautista, Ocampo, Bernardo, 2009).

The lesson from three decades is unambiguous: governance reform is necessary, but never sufficient. It must be coupled with investments in children's early development, teacher preparation, and the everyday conditions that support learning. Durable reform happens not when systems are reorganized, but when learners' lives are changed.



II. AN APPROACH ROOTED IN EVIDENCE, DIALOGUE, AND TRUST

As the only Congressional Commission existing at this time, EDCOM II had the space to push boundaries and practices, relating to public consultations in policy reforms. It issued white and green papers to surface early options and invite public comment. It conducted online surveys to capture perspectives beyond formal hearings, and partnered with universities to host fellows and pursue targeted studies. This willingness to test and refine approaches gave the work breadth and depth by combining structured research with open engagement.

Building on this adaptive approach, EDCOM II carries out its mandate through a methodology that unites evidence, engagement, and legitimacy.

Since its creation, EDCOM II has continued to hold nationwide engagements, listening to voices from classrooms, communities, and local governments. On many occasions, EDCOM Commissioners participated in extended workshops with education experts, fishbowl discussions with teachers, and focused group discussions with principals and students—a departure from the usual public hearings. Each encounter enriches the evidence base with lived experience, sharpening the Commission's grasp of systemic challenges and local innovations. Over its three-year mandate, the Commission undertook a wide range of activities:

- ***11 Quarterly Commission Meetings***
- ***30 hearings***
- ***44 workshops and consultations***
- ***9 site visits***
- ***3 benchmarking missions***



All outputs and resources are preserved in the EDCOM II repository, ensuring access to evidence and insights beyond the life of the Commission.

The evidence base is further strengthened by research. To date, there have been 102 commissioned studies, each addressing a Priority Area and ensuring that the Commission's recommendations are rooted in documented realities rather than anecdotes. These research efforts were made possible through partnerships with Ateneo de Manila University through the Ateneo–EDCOM II Research Fellowship, the University of the Philippines through the UP President Edgardo J. Angara (UPPEJA) Fellowship, De La Salle University, and the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), designated as the Commission's research arm under Section 12 of Republic Act No. 11899.

The Commission operates through policy teams, thematic working groups, and partnerships with external experts, guided by a systems approach that analyzes the interconnected subsystems of education to ensure reforms consider all actors and their impacts (Cuyegkeng, 2024, p. 1).

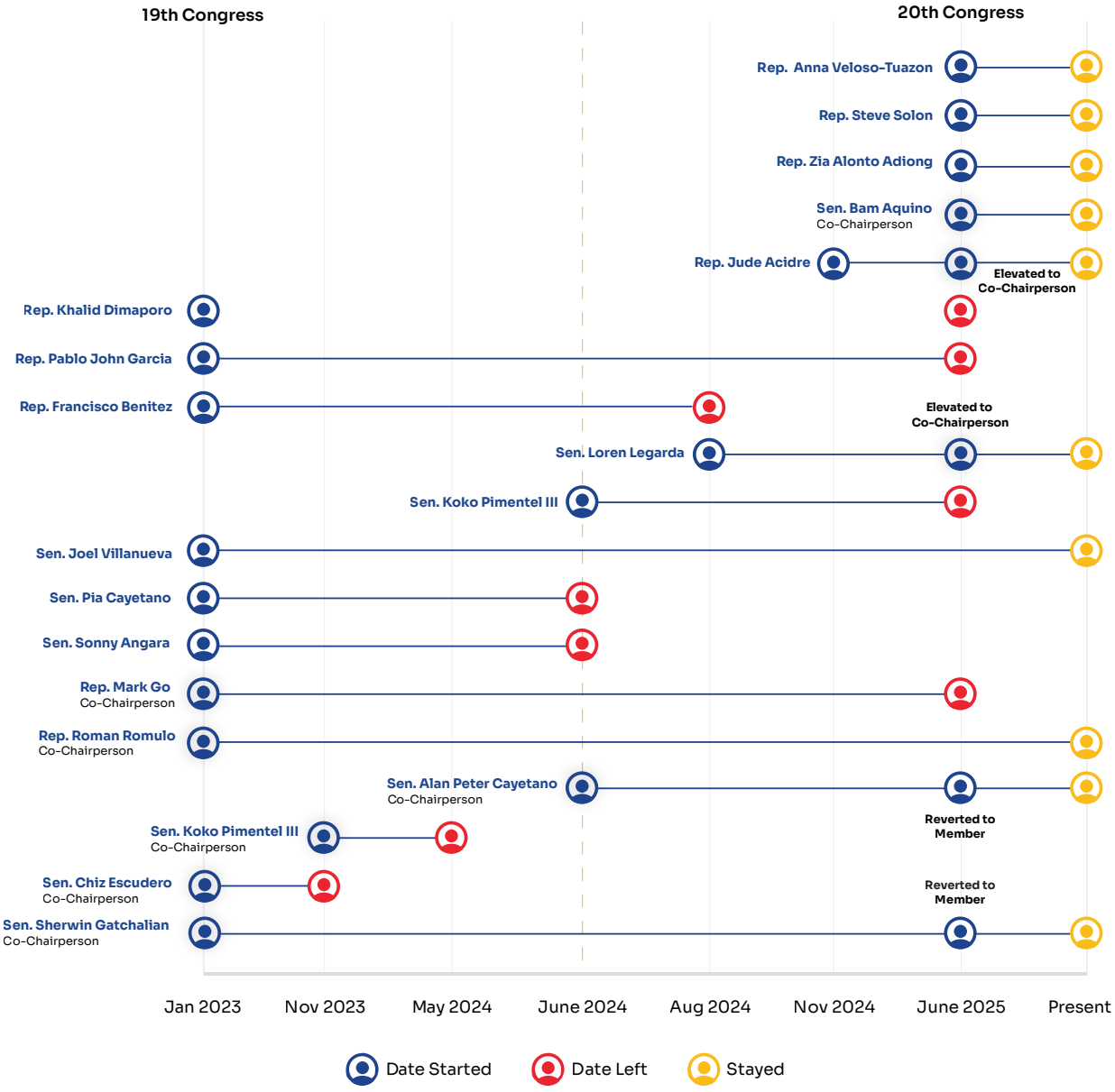
Taken together, these methods ground reform in evidence. This balance allows EDCOM II to advance reforms that are not only analytically sound but also grounded in the realities and needs of learners, teachers, and communities, lending its recommendations the power to endure beyond its mandate.

This longevity was possible for two reasons. First, the Commission was not a regulator: field offices, teachers, and principals did not see it as DepEd, and so they spoke openly about challenges they could not raise with their supervisors. Second, inter-agency conversations were easier under a neutral convenor. Because the Commission did not represent an executive department, discussions were less likely to be seen as turf battles. Its legislative character lent weight to the process. Oversight and the power of the purse signaled that the work could translate into accountability and resources.

III. LESSONS LEARNED

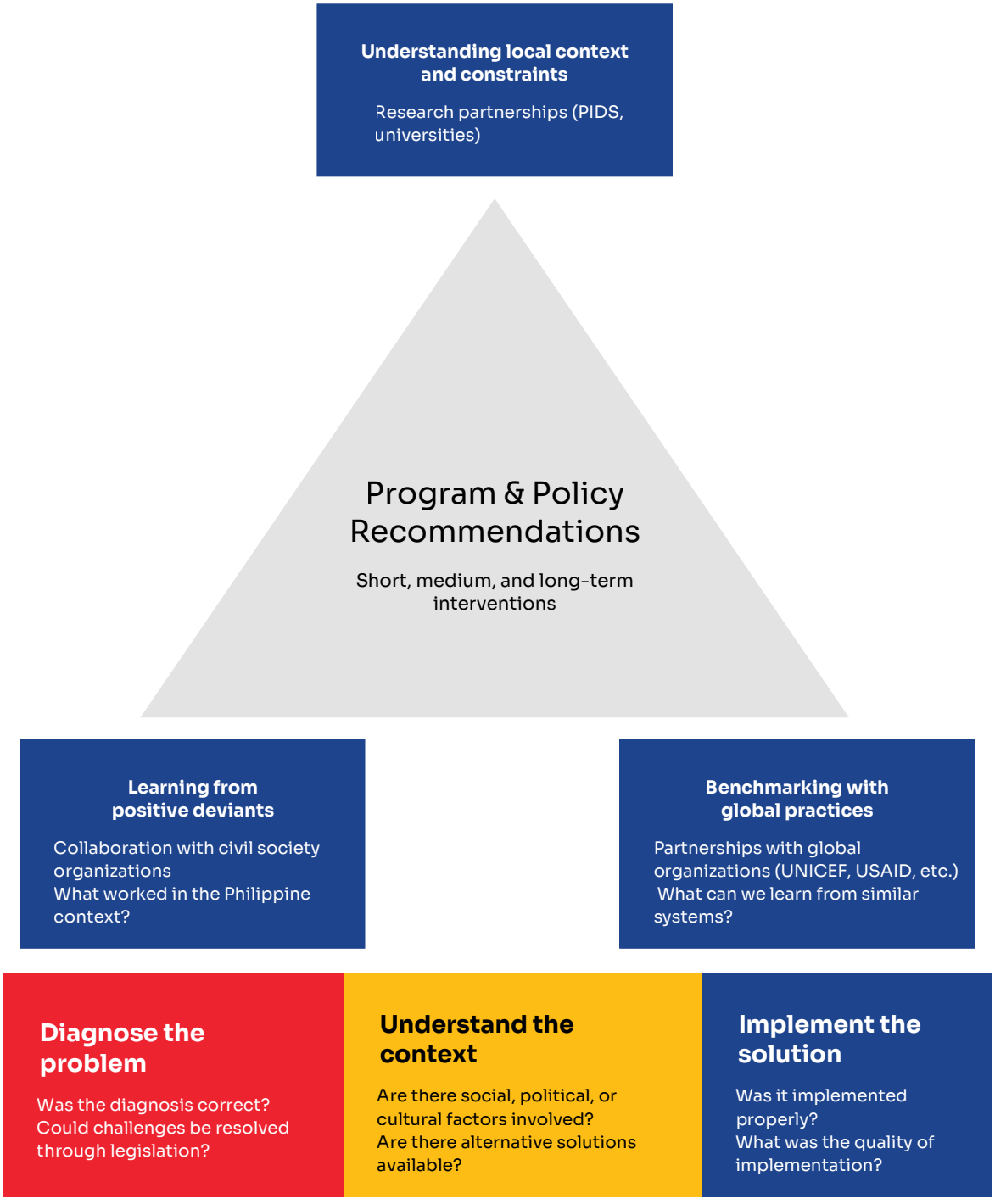
The Commission also faced institutional conditions that shaped its scope and pace. Its wide mandate produced 28 priorities, making focus difficult, and the depth of analysis naturally varied, with greater rigor directed toward reforms most critical to equity and quality. Mission creep was a constant risk, as the Commission's visibility drew it into policy debates beyond its core agenda. Leadership turnover also impacted the dynamics: three Senate Presidents served during its term, each bringing changes in commissioners, alongside shifts after elections and new leadership cycles. Divergent administrative rules between the Senate and House further complicated financing and operations, with little precedent to guide decisions. These underscored that reform is bounded by institutional realities, and progress relies on persistence and adaptability within them.

FIGURE 2.
Membership Shifts in the Past 3 years



One of the most striking lessons comes from positive deviance. The Year Two Report documented local initiatives and case studies where schools and communities achieved better-than-expected outcomes despite limited resources, particularly in improving foundational skills and local governance capacity (EDCOM II, 2025, pp. 358–361).

FIGURE 3.
Program and Policy Recommendations



Data from our site visit in Norzagaray, Bulacan schools revealed that targeted interventions under Project BRIGHT eliminated illiteracy among Grades 1–3 students, with 60.73% now reading at grade level compared to the national average of 47.74%, with progress scores in some schools exceeding 60%. In Navotas City, programs such as Basa, Navoteño, NavoReads, and the Joyful Reading Treasures mobile library produced a 65% increase in the number of children identified as "grade-ready" in reading by the end of School Year 2024–2025, placing the city ahead in Metro Manila literacy assessments (EDCOM II, 2025). To illustrate, UNICEF Innocenti (2024) explains:

> "Positive deviance identifies successful outliers to explore sustainable, scalable local solutions to complex problems…The Data Must Speak (DMS) positive deviance research leverages a positive deviance approach to identify practices and behaviours of positive deviant schools, which are schools that outperform others despite operating in similar contexts and with similar resources." (p. 1)

These cases demonstrate that effective solutions often already exist within communities. Recognizing and scaling these homegrown practices allow policymakers to harness local ingenuity rather than rely solely on external models.



IV. THE LEGACY AND STRATEGIC VALUE WE AIM TO BUILD

An enduring contribution of the Commission is proving that the government can lead systemic reform through evidence, collaboration, and legislative leadership. The Commission showed that meaningful change is possible even in politically complex systems long characterized by inertia.

But the Commission's legacy extends beyond recommendations and legislation. EDCOM II seeks to leave behind durable structures by embedding reform milestones, advisory mechanisms, and proposals for sustained oversight. Part of this legacy comes from initiatives that were not formally within its legislative mandate but grew from relationships built across the sector. These include

> *An enduring contribution of the Commission is proving that the government can lead systemic reform through evidence, collaboration, and legislative leadership. The Commission showed that meaningful change is possible even in politically complex systems long characterized by inertia.*

initiatives like Sulong Edukasyon,[1] which brought together volunteers and universities to work on ECCD, nutrition, and literacy; its collaboration with Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), which issued a pastoral letter, followed by engagements with Caritas across dioceses nationwide. This echoed the Commission's stance in its Year Two Report, which stressed the need to "empower communities to actively participate in improving learning outcomes and ensure that interventions are targeted and effective." (EDCOM II, 2025, p. 376).



Another lesson from these years is the value of strategic communication. Findings had to be presented not only to policymakers but also to the broader public, to generate awareness and secure political support. Communicating evidence in clear and accessible ways helped prepare the ground for legislative measures and ensured that reforms could build momentum beyond the halls of Congress.

Such authority, both in practice and law, affirms that legislative commissions can act as architects of transformation, capable of sustaining institutional momentum.

1 Working with Br. Bernard "Bernie" S. Oca, FSC of DLSU, Dr. Shirley Agrupis of Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU), and Fr. Albert N. Delvo, PhD of the Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations (COCOPEA)



EDCOM II was both a reminder and a warning. It demonstrated that when Congress treats education as a national priority, it can drive meaningful reform. At the same time, it underscored that without permanent institutions to monitor progress and sustain momentum, reforms risk stalling—requiring yet another extraordinary commission to overcome inertia.

The Commission's work signals a transition. The Reports are not endpoints, but milestones. What follows belongs to school leaders, supervisors, educators, and communities who will turn strategies into sustained progress. While established by RA 11899 to recommend broad policy directions, strategies, and reforms to address the learning crisis, the strategic value of EDCOM II lies in this handover: a launchpad for continued reform, equipped with evidence, structures, and momentum for those who now carry the task forward.

What, then, is the lesson of EDCOM II? At least three stand out.

First: systemic problems demand systemic responses. Isolated projects, however innovative, cannot substitute for institutional reform. By placing Congress at the center, EDCOM II was able to align legislation, budget, and oversight in ways that line agencies would find challenging.

Second: coalitions matter. Reform requires not only technical solutions but also political champions and social partners. EDCOM II's Advisory Council and Standing Committee members, its partnerships with universities, and its ability to bring together civil society, the diplomatic corps, development partners, local government champions, and even the church, were not incidental but essential.

Third: reform is never finished. EDCOM II's mandate has ended, but its work must now be carried forward. Without continued commitment, its recommendations risk meeting the fate of many past commissions—well-intentioned insights left unimplemented.

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As the Philippines confronts the next decade of its education journey, The challenge is to ensure that EDCOM II's work does not fade into the long list of well-meaning but forgotten reports. The true measure of its contribution will not be the weight of its volumes, but whether its findings and reforms are sustained, institutionalized, and felt by the Filipino learner.


RD
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Conclusion

The learning crisis before us is deep and longstanding, but it is neither inevitable nor irreversible. Over the last three years, EDCOM has shown that meaningful reform requires more than isolated programs; it demands a system that continually examines itself, corrects course, and improves with intention.

When the system fails to teach children to read, write, and reason, the nation pays the price for generations. Children who never acquire foundational skills not only struggle academically; they miss the chance to discover their talents, build confidence, and develop the socio-emotional abilities that allow them to thrive in society. Over time, these unrealized capabilities translate into young adults who cannot fully participate in civic life, who are less able to engage in community problem-solving, and who feel alienated from democratic processes. The workforce then inherits a cohort that lacks both the cognitive skills needed to innovate and the social skills needed to collaborate—constraining industries, slowing economic growth, and weakening the social fabric. What begins as a learning crisis becomes a skills crisis, a citizenship crisis, and ultimately a crisis of national development.

Real and lasting reform begins with government leadership that is competent, accountable, and unwaveringly committed to learners. The direction and pace of transformation depend on leaders who are chosen for merit, supported to make evidence-based decisions, and held to the highest standards of integrity. Without strong leadership across government—national agencies, LGUs, SUCs, LUCs, and schools—policies cannot take root, programs cannot scale, and learners remain the silent victims of institutional failure.

> *For reforms to succeed, they must transcend political cycles and remain firmly anchored on what learners need, not on shifting priorities. Education cannot restart every three or six years.*

For reforms to succeed, they must transcend political cycles and remain firmly anchored on what learners need, not on shifting priorities. Education cannot restart every three or six years; reforms must be protected from disruption and designed for continuity through institutionalized structures, clear mandates, and long-term commitments. A system that resets with every transition cannot deliver equitable learning, and only continuity—insulated from partisanship—can safeguard gains and prevent repeated losses.

A programmed, evidence-based review of curriculum and key policies is essential to keep the system aligned with its purpose and responsive to the demands of the future. Without a disciplined cycle of updating what is taught and how it is taught, the system drifts, and coherence is lost across basic education, TVET, and higher education. Institutionalizing review cycles ensures that reforms are iterative, data-driven, and guided by clear learning standards rather than tradition or political pressure. Too often in our work in EDCOM II, we found many policies untouched since the 1990s following the first EDCOM— these included laws that did not work and were unfunded for decades, budget formulas that were no longer responsive to the realities of schools, and curricula/regulations that were updated at most every 10-12 years.

Independent, regular, credible, and transparent assessment of learning outcomes remains the nation's best defense against complacency, providing an honest account of where learning stands and what must be done. Objective and globally benchmarked measures reveal gaps that internal systems often overlook and provide the clarity needed to target interventions effectively. Only by confronting learning outcomes truthfully can the Philippines chart a path toward meaningful improvement.

A strong education system depends on a strong knowledge ecosystem built on research, timely data, and broad collaboration. Universities must serve not only as training institutions but as centers of inquiry that guide policy, while civil society contributes expertise, advocacy, and community engagement. Access to data and a culture of research empower all actors to diagnose problems, design better solutions, and hold the system accountable.

For too long, programs have been implemented without rigorous evaluation of their efficacy. As we have seen in so many programs reviewed, higher budgets do not automatically translate into better learning, especially when interventions are not strategically designed or systematically measured. The executive branch must therefore be held accountable not only for outputs and budget utilization, but—more importantly—for the actual impact of its programs on learner outcomes. Monitoring and evaluation must become a permanent habit of governance, not an afterthought. Effective M&E closes the loop between policy and practice, allowing programs to improve continuously, resources to flow to the most effective interventions, and leaders to adjust based on evidence rather than assumptions. Without M&E, systems cannot learn—and a system that cannot learn cannot help children learn.

Above all, the nation must coalesce behind learning outcomes as the singular, non-negotiable goal of education reform. We cannot afford business as usual when so many children cannot read, compute, or reason at grade level. Urgency must guide every decision we make: we must reduce or set aside non-essential activities, focus energy and

> *Reform demands the discipline to prioritize, because not all needs are equal and not all interventions are equal in urgency.*

resources on what demonstrably improves learning, and demand coherence across every level of the system. Only by placing learning outcomes at the center—above politics, above bureaucracy, above tradition—can we deliver the transformation our learners deserve.

Reform demands the discipline to prioritize, because not all needs are equal and not all interventions are equal in urgency. The country must invest first where the returns are greatest—nutrition, early childhood care and development, and foundational literacy—because these determine every outcome that follows. **As we work to repair decades of underperformance, we must also accept that transitional solutions are necessary: accelerated learning programs, catch-up interventions, and pragmatic measures to ensure every learner becomes functionally literate.** We cannot allow the perfect to become the enemy of the good. Trying to do everything at once will scatter resources and stall progress; focusing on what matters most will give us the momentum to catch up, rebuild, and eventually excel.

This moment can be a true turning point for our country—but only if we act now, act together, and persist over the decade of necessary reforms that lies ahead. The gains we seek will not come from short bursts of activity but from sustained commitment, shared responsibility, and the long-term discipline to keep learners at the heart of every decision. The window for change is open, but it will close quickly if we fail to seize it with unity, resolve, and deliberate action.

For more than half a century, the Philippine public school system stood as the country's most trusted institution—"the most democratic, most pervasive, and most trusted" presence in every community, as Conrado Benitez observed. It was an engine of dignity and mobility: attendance in public schools was "a matter of pride," and a public-school diploma carried the "mark of discipline and learning," in the words of F. Sionil José. International reviewers affirmed this strength; UNESCO described Philippine public education as "one of the most extensive and efficient in Asia," with secondary schools whose instruction "compares favorably with many countries." Even our own writers recognized its nation-building force: Nick Joaquin recalled that "the old public school gave the Filipino a civic spine."

These reminders do not invite nostalgia but clarity. They show that our system once embodied coherence, seriousness of purpose, and a public commitment to learning that lifted entire communities—and that these gains were the result of deliberate choices: professional teachers, protected instructional time, stable governance, and a culture that honored learning. The work before us now is to recover its discipline of purpose and rebuild a system worthy of the talent of every Filipino child.

The future we owe our learners demands nothing less. The work of the coming decade must consolidate reform, protect learning from disruption, and anchor the system on stable institutions that outlast political cycles. With clear standards, accountable leadership, and a shared commitment to evidence, we can build an education system that matches the talent of every Filipino child—and finally fulfils the promise long owed to the nation.

May we meet the work ahead with clarity, unity, and an unwavering commitment to every learner entrusted to us.



This moment can be a true turning point for our country—but only if we act now, act together, and persist over the decade of necessary reforms that lies ahead.



EPILOGUE:

Reflecting *on* Philippine Education, 100 Years After *the* Monroe Report

INTRODUCTION: CHARTING A CENTURY OF EDUCATION REFORM

For over a century, Philippine education has been a site of continuing intense contestation. Yet, it has also been a sphere of consensus and collaboration. The history of a hundred years of educational surveys–dating back to the Monroe Report of 1925–is no different, as it tells the story of two sides: paternalism and sovereignty, national and global, change and continuity. Subsequent surveys, although not exhaustive, include the UNESCO Mission of 1949, the National Board of Education Report of 1958, the Swanson Survey of 1960, the Presidential Commission to Survey Philippine Education of 1969, and the first Congressional Commission on Education of 1991. Upon closer inspection, they reveal a system of education making sense of its future–negotiating uneven and at times overlapping visions that would, more often than not, refract and represent imperfect iterations of the reforms they intended. Seen collectively, they offer less of a linear progression than a cycle of recurring challenges and aspirations, inviting us to reflect on what persists and why in Philippine education reform.

PRE-1925: FILIPINO AGENCY IN COLONIAL CLASSROOMS

In the years leading up to the first major educational survey, two competing visions remained in constant tension: one tethered to American colonial authority, the other to Filipino hopes for self-rule. For Americans, schooling was a tool to instill order and assess the readiness of Filipinos for civic participation. At the turn of the century, the presence of soldiers-turned-teachers made visible how tightly education was bound to the colonial project of stability and control. Faced with the choice between guns or books, Filipinos largely gravitated toward education over armed resistance. Public education became a crucible for nationhood, forging primary and secondary education curricula to "reinforce acceptable social, economic, and political habits and roles" within students (Stratton, 2016, p. 5). It was also a departure from the dominant, aristocratic "Spanish tradition of education," which had privileged religious private schools for almost three hundred years (Carson, 1961, p. 1). In contrast to Spain, Americans designed a formal education system to pacify and prepare Filipinos for nominal independence starting in 1901, relying heavily on American teachers, English instruction, vocational training, and public, secular learning to do so (Francisco, 2015, p. 19).



On the other hand, Filipinos pragmatically repurposed or revised their colonial education for veritable economic and political independence. Recognizing the merits of industrial education in improving individual lives and building the nation's future, some Filipino educators and students writing for *The Filipino Teacher* (later renamed *The Progress of Education*), a monthly journal published by the Philippine Teachers' Association from 1907 to 1911, welcomed industrial instruction. Numerous articles in the short-lived journal were dedicated to the topic. While this could be viewed as colonial indoctrination that favors industrial over classical education, it may also reflect the agency and prescience Filipinos had to adopt industrial education as a means of building the nation.

Notably, select Filipinos had practice in converting their colonial education into resources for national advancement. Established during Spanish colonial times, religious private universities such as Ateneo de Manila and the University of Santo Tomas served as training grounds for Filipino leaders in the latter part of the 19th century. Their classical, colonial education equipped them with a shared language and liberal ideas, helping them to envision a Filipino nation. Their education also fostered a desire for a "system of free public schools" on the islands even before American occupation, providing Filipino and American leaders a common ground to stand on (Carson, 1961, p. 2).

Naturally, many *pensionados*–Filipino students funded to study at American universities–believed their roles were an extension of the nineteenth-century Propaganda Movement that, although campaigning for political and social equality with Spaniards (assimilation), concomitantly spurred Filipino nationalist consciousness. Like the ilustrados of the Propaganda Movement–educated Filipinos who contested Spanish portrayals of the lazy and indolent native–*pensionados* considered their time in the United States "as a time of toil and exile" that transformed them into better "builders of the nation" and "better Filipinos" (Francisco, 2015, p. 54; Schumacher, 1997, p. 41). While careful to abide by a sedition law that criminalized calls for Philippine independence, these students found creative ways to channel their education to advancing this goal. However, when curricular changes were deemed necessary to progress national visions of the Philippines, both Americans and Filipinos revised educational materials (Francisco, 2015, p. 31). Operating within the bounds and expectations of American colonial leaders, Filipino legislators and teachers pushed to incorporate their history across all levels of education.

This was the context leading up to the first major educational assessment in the Philippines. Even as debates persisted over whether Filipinos were ready for independence, many individuals from both sides of the Pacific shared a common conviction that education played a vital role in promoting national progress and cultivating a Filipino identity. While Americans can be attributed with shaping the≈foundations of the existing Philippine education system, Filipino policymakers, administrators, educators, and students actively repurposed and revised this structure in hopes of casting their vision of independence and nationhood. As the system turned towards Filipino voices, critical questions arose: what would this vision entail, and what was the role of education in substantiating it?

THE MONROE REPORT OF 1925: ASSERTING FILIPINO EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The blurred lines between colonial imposition and earnest collaboration continued with *A Survey of the Educational System of the Philippine Islands*, also known as the Monroe Report. Published in 1925, the Monroe Report was the most comprehensive assessment of Philippine education undertaken during American colonial rule. Although local sentiments at the time disfavored international assistance, Filipino educators and legislators, including Camilo Osias, a former pensionado turned educator and politician, advocated for the survey, seeking "an impartial and thorough survey of the educational institutions and educational work in the Philippines" (Joint Educational Committee on Education, 1926, p. 11). Filipino legislators voted and approved an appropriation of 100,000 Philippine pesos for the cause (Joint Educational Committee on Education, 1926, p. 11). At the time, this was a staggering investment in education, exceeding the initial allocation by 60,000, and underlined the legislators' commitment to improving their own education system. However, after noticing apparent "defects" in the survey's processes and findings, Filipino politicians formed a joint legislative committee to study and contextualize the report; Filipino voices began to take center stage (Joint Educational Committee on Education, 1926, p. 21).

The joint committee, composed of senators and representatives, lamented the commission's distinctly American tenor, in large part due to the appointments made by the American Superintendent of Public Instruction, Eugene Allen Gilmore. Although thirteen research associates, the majority of whom were Filipino, joined the nine American educational experts leading the survey, the associates were primarily relegated to doing "routinary work" (Joint Educational Committee on Education, 1926, p. 13). In the joint committee's eyes, the commission, led by Paul Monroe, an international education expert from Teachers College in New York and the survey's namesake, lacked

> *The joint legislative committee's response to the Monroe report underscores Filipino policymakers' resolve to assert themselves as the primary architects of the Philippine education system, and, transitively, the Philippine nation.*

the necessary expertise in areas important to Philippine education–namely, agricultural and vocational education (Joint Educational Committee on Education, 1926, p. 13). Worse still, the responsibilities given to members frequently bore little relation to their actual knowledge. Most striking of all, they did not seek the expertise of Filipino education leaders on the ground. When Osias asked Gabriel Mañalac, the Assistant Director of the Bureau of Education in the Philippines, whether the commission conferred with him, he answered, "No, sir, they did not. That is one of the things I had in mind as one of the errors" (Joint Educational Committee on Education, 1926, p. 21). This highlights a fundamental tension in Philippine education during colonial times. Although efforts to "indigenize" educational materials in the Philippines preceded and occurred in the Monroe Report and received American support, the Philippines' classification as a colonial state betrayed a hierarchy of "legitimate" knowledge that disadvantaged Filipino policymakers and educators (Wikstrom, 2024, p. 5). So, it comes as no surprise that Mañalac, a product and expert of the Philippine education system, was not consulted. The Monroe commission's members, it seemed, favored their own science and theories over those of their Filipino counterparts.

Still, Mañalac recognized the salutary effects some of the commission's recommendations could have on the Philippines' education system. "There are many good points in the report which we want to take advantage of," Mañalac emphasized, which include discussions on establishing a language of instruction, developing effective teacher preparation programs, expanding educational infrastructure, and implementing a learning system that meets the needs of Filipinos (Joint Educational Committee on Education, 1926, pp. 21-22). Mañalac's attitude towards these recommendations underscores the pragmatism of Filipino voices. These points continue to be priority areas that the current Philippine education system aims to address, highlighting the persistence of these challenges.

After the Monroe Report, Filipino educators and policymakers also placed greater emphasis on defining the fledgling state's national vision and the role of education in articulating it–something the commission's writers described as "rather dimly conceived without sufficient basis in experience" (Board of Educational Survey, 1925, p. 99) In their own education report, the joint legislative committee dedicated an entire chapter, entitled "Educational Aims and Objectives," spanning twenty-four single-spaced pages that detail the views held by the Secretary of Public Instruction, the Bureau of Education, the University of the Philippines, and the islands' legislative body on the issue (Joint Educational Committee on Education, 1926, pp. 21-44). In so doing, the joint legislative committee sought neither defensive justification nor withdrawal from responsibility. Instead, they leaned into clarity in hopes of inviting greater cooperation, both globally and locally, through the crystallization of their "aims and ends": a politically and economically efficient, *independent* democracy sustained by an education system designed to prepare citizens to participate in and uphold it (Joint Educational Committee on Education, 1926, p. 43).

The joint legislative committee's response to the Monroe report underscores Filipino policymakers' resolve to assert themselves as the primary architects of the Philippine education system, and, transitively, the Philippine nation. After attaining greater independence and taking significant steps to establish a national language in the 1930s, World War II dealt a heavy blow, halting the nation's steady progress. The war disrupted schools and universities and compelled the Filipino government to focus on postwar recovery in the 1940s. The education system was left in disarray once again, prompting a return to American assistance to rebuild it.

POSTWAR RECONSTRUCTION OF THE 1940S–1950S: EDUCATION AS NATION-BUILDING

Filipino leaders desired to rebuild Philippine education alongside and in service of rebuilding the Philippines immediately after the war. In 1948, the Philippine government was the first to request assistance from UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization), a specialized agency of the United Nations dedicated to promoting peacebuilding through education, science, and culture. UNESCO reflected a shift in American foreign policy in the Philippines and throughout Asia. While the promotion of democracy remained intact, the U.S. no longer justified its presence in the islands as a civilizing mission. The mission now was much bigger and more urgent–the U.S. needed to contain the communist threat seeking to transmit its ideology across the region.

A Filipino representative assisted in selecting the members and defining the scope of the commission, which underscored a more collaborative approach between the international and local agents than the one led by Monroe. One Filipino commissioner even recalled the "sincere friendships…from sleeping under the same roof, eating at the same table, and hurrying from place to place to catch up with a travel schedule which is as tight and heavy as that of any similar mission anytime, anywhere" (Lewis, p. 122). They shared "a common problem and goal": to improve the Philippine education system (Lewis, p. 122). However, there were limits to the scope of the mission and the role of the Filipino commissioners. The commission did not assess the country's technical education programs, and the Filipino commissioners were once again assigned technical roles meant to provide contextual support to the international researchers. Even as Filipino sovereignty deepened, outside voices continued to frame the terms of reform.

The UNESCO commission identified priority areas that echoed the concerns of their predecessor. Like Monroe and his team, the UNESCO commissioners listed a unified language of instruction, educational infrastructure, and teacher quality as the system's primary problems (Lewis, pp. 122-125). These issues needed to be addressed in order to improve education in the Philippines.

FROM INTERNATIONAL TO LOCAL LEADERSHIP OF THE 1960S AND ONWARDS: FILIPINO-LED EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

Calls to enhance Philippine education persisted throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In 1954, the Philippine government established a local educational board to "formulate, implement and enforce general educational objectives and policies…with a view to accomplishing an integrated, nationalistic and democracy-inspired educational system in the [country]" (Republic Act No. 1124, 1954). The National Board of Education published a comprehensive report on educational policies in 1958. However, many of its recommendations were left unattended due to insufficient funding, weak public support,

> *But beneath the system's challenges lay genuine accomplishments: a functioning, independent democracy, widespread access to education, and a population that valued learning (Commission on Education, 1991, p. 1).*

and resistance to change (United States Operations Mission to the Philippines, 1960, p. xiii). Two years later, a joint team of Filipinos and Americans, led by J. Chester Swanson of the University of California, conducted a survey of the country's public schools. Similar to the surveys that came before, the Swanson Survey named many of the same needs–stronger teachers, more educational materials, a consistent plan for language, and the money needed to make these happen.

Following the Swanson Survey, a trend toward locally led educational surveys emerged. In 1969, President Ferdinand Marcos ordered the creation of the Philippine Commission to Survey Philippine Education (Executive Order No. 202, 1969). Theorizing that the system was operating beyond its means, the president tasked the commission to improve the system's efficiency and align it with the country's development goals. The president recruited the Philippines' Secretary of Education, Onofre Corpuz, and Filipino economist, Placido Mapa, to spearhead the commission. The Philippine Commission sought to make educational aims more feasible and to introduce robust systems to guide educational decision-making better (Presidential Commission to Survey Philippine Education, 1971, pp. 1-6).

In 1991, the first Congressional Commission on Education revisited the efficacy of these goals, along with the cumulative efforts of educators, researchers, and policymakers that preceded and followed it. The commission, composed of senators and representatives, was reminiscent of the Joint Committee on Education nearly seventy years ago. To "[carry] out the most extensive and intensive hearings in [the] country's history" at the time, they engaged 378 experts from various fields to survey 18 provinces and 13 regional centers (Commission on Education, 1991, p. xv). To their disappointment, EDCOM 1 discovered an underperforming system that lacked the proper financial investment and planning, impacting both the system's infrastructure and its teachers and students. Many of their recommendations closely aligned with those of past surveyors: improving teacher quality, establishing a common language of instruction, reorganizing educational structures, making education more relevant to the country's economic and social realities, and allocating more funds to the system. **But beneath the system's challenges lay genuine accomplishments: a functioning, independent democracy, widespread access to education, and a population that valued learning (Commission on Education, 1991, p. 1).**

Filipinos were no longer mere participants in reform movements; they were leading the way. Equally important, sovereignty was no longer the central question driving reform. The question had shifted: how could the Philippines achieve educational equity and excellence on the global stage? It is a question that continues to guide and challenge Filipino educators and policymakers today, particularly with the widespread use of international assessments, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), to measure and compare student learning across countries.

When we put these surveys in conversation with each other, we find enduring themes and noteworthy departures. Even when education reforms originated from international actors, Filipino actors tailored these reforms with local sensibilities in mind. At the same time, as Filipino leaders gained primary authority over the education system, they maintained a tradition of international cooperation that grew less coercive over time. They continued to look beyond national borders to inform and improve their educational practice and gauge their global standing.

A closer reading of the surveys also reveals concrete reasons for optimism. For example, the Philippines' rich education ecosystem offers robust collaborative opportunities, especially in private-public school partnerships known as complementarity (Yee, 2020, pp. 23–24). Writers of the Monroe Report note that "Despite the rapid expansion of the public school system after the American occupation, facilities did not keep pace with the demand for education" (Board of Educational Survey, 1925, p. 92). This welcomed profit-driven and nonprofit schools, especially in higher education, to populate the system. Although the quality and quantity of private schools remain a challenge, policymakers in the Philippines have made headway in operationalizing private-public complementarity, which could expand access to and improve the quality of learning.

Moreover, vocational training, or Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), as discussed extensively by survey writers, remains an area where clearer policy could further strengthen the system. From the American colonial period onward, different superintendents resulted in contradictory policies, which were then reflected in inconsistent articulation of curriculum goals and fragmented program implementation (Maca, 2017). Policy shifts, such as Frank White's 1909 emphasis on vocational subjects like basketry, pottery, and poultry farming, were often motivated by elite concerns about mass education rather than coherent developmental strategies (Davis, 2024). Despite successive surveys from the Economic Survey Committee in 1927 to the Prosser Survey in 1930 recommending improvements to vocational education to better absorb graduates into economic life, the fundamental tensions persisted (Magno, 2010). The colonial curriculum was essentially designed to organize vocationally trained laborers to serve American business interests, creating a lasting ambiguity about whether vocational education existed to empower Filipinos or to maintain existing economic and racial hierarchies (Maca, 2017). Today, these historical contradictions manifest in weak structural and policy implementation, poor coordination among TVET stakeholders, and persistent mismatches between graduate skills and employment needs (Edralin & Pastrana, 2023). Yet understanding this history offers a path forward. By acknowledging whose interests vocational education has served in the past, Filipino educators and policymakers can more intentionally design a system that truly empowers learners and drives inclusive economic development.

The dilemmas that shaped vocational education are, in many ways, microcosms of the larger challenges facing Philippine education. The same oscillation between visionary design and fragmented implementation, between rhetoric and continuity, has characterized reform across the system. Understanding how these tensions evolved allows us to see that what is at stake today is not simply another round of reform, but the capacity to carry reform forward beyond political administrations.

> *Each assessment, from Monroe to EDCOM II, captures not only the state of education but the state of the nation's hope.*

History shows that reform, no matter how well designed, rarely transforms unless it is accompanied by sustained political will, capable and principled leadership, and institutional mechanisms that ensure implementation beyond personalities and political administrations. Many of our education reforms, such as curriculum shifts, teacher development programs, and governance frameworks, have faltered not for lack of vision but for want of institutional continuity, coherence, and grounded execution. Transformation depends not only on policy design but on appointing leaders at all levels of the system for their proven integrity, competence, and commitment to implement programs on the ground and the public good—rather than for political expediency.

As the country once again charts its educational future, the task is not merely to craft new policies but to embed reform in the daily routines of academic institutions, teachers, and learners. Real change begins when good policy is matched by capable implementation—when leadership is stable, monitoring is institutionalized, and learning from experience becomes part of governance itself. Transformation, in the end, is sustained less by declarations than by the discipline and continuity that make reform a lived practice rather than a recurring promise

Having traced a century of reforms—some visionary, others faltering—we are reminded that policy alone cannot sustain transformation. What endures are the aspirations and labors of those who, like the surveyors of past commissions, sought to take the measure of our schools and of our national character itself. Each assessment, from Monroe to EDCOM II, captures not only the state of education but the state of the nation's hope. The conclusion that follows asks what these hundred years of inquiry and striving reveal about the unfinished project of Philippine education—and what story the next hundred years might tell.

CONCLUSION: WHAT THE NEXT CENTURY HOLDS

Given that a century has passed since the first major educational assessment took place, it is tempting to view Philippine education as having unequivocally failed. Yet, when we pause to consider the story behind the headlines, they don't capture the ambition, action, and alacrity with which many past and present educationists, both local and international, worked to develop and sustain one of the largest education systems in the region. Most recently, members of the Second Congressional Commission on Education have made extraordinary efforts to identify the root causes of our educational problems and offer recommendations to remedy them. We see in them the spirit of the Joint Committee on Education one hundred years ago, as they "demand that education be an effective agency to develop the Filipino youth for free, efficient, and happy citizenship (Joint Educational Committee on Education, 1926, p. 361).

At its center, this is a coming-of-age story about the growing pains of a maturing polity, but it is also a tale of unfulfilled potential. The last hundred years of educational surveys offer us a Janus-faced view of our education system today. These documents have already told one story. What story will the next hundred years tell?







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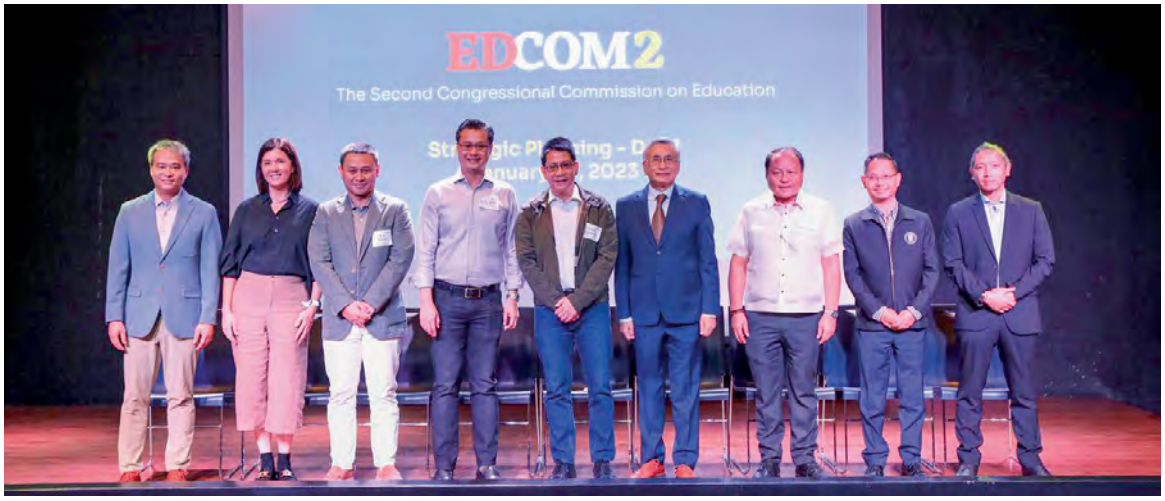
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BRIDGING EVIDENCE *and* POLICY:

Strengthening Research *for* Philippine Education Reform

Dr. Aniceto Orbeta,
Dr. Vicente Paqueo, and
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INTRODUCTION

The failure to systematically generate and utilize evidence is not a passive shortcoming but an active driver of ineffective reforms in the Philippine education system. Learning problems have persisted precisely because of the lack of a systematic approach to finding empirically validated solutions to learning problems and reform implementation bottlenecks. This note deconstructs how this weak research culture has directly contributed to poor learning outcomes, squandered opportunities for meaningful reform, and perpetuated a cycle of well-intentioned but ultimately ineffective reforms. It concludes with a vision of a more research-informed policy making, program, and project design and implementation that ultimately delivers on its promise to the nation's children.



CONSEQUENCES OF A WEAK RESEARCH AND EVALUATION CULTURE

For years, the Philippine education system operated with warning signs that were largely ignored, as national achievement tests failed to inform public discussions, classroom practice, or policy reform. The dismal PISA and TIMSS results were alarming, not because the problems were new, but because the data finally made them undeniable. PISA 2022 reveals that about 8 in 10[1] of our 15-year-olds do not possess the minimum proficiency skills for their grade, revealing a systemic inability to address foundational learning and leaving generations of students without the essential skills for higher education or meaningful work.

A lack of a robust research and evaluation culture has also doomed promising, evidence-based reforms before they had a chance to succeed. Major initiatives, such as the Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) and the Senior High School (SHS) programs, were rooted in sound international evidence but were severely hampered by poor implementation on the ground. Challenges such as the limited availability of learning materials, conceptual confusion among implementers, and other logistical hurdles plagued these programs (Monje et al., 2021; Brillantes et al., 2019).

A system committed to research and evaluation could have identified these on-the-ground challenges in real-time, providing policymakers with the data needed to make targeted adjustments and offer better support. Instead, when implementation issues arise, the tendency has been to reverse entire programs. This approach disregards the careful

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1 84% in Mathematics, 76% in Reading, and 77% in Science.



analysis that led to their creation and, more damagingly, means the country misses valuable opportunities to learn what works and what does not. Weaknesses in implementation do not necessarily mean a program's design has failed; however, without a culture of evaluation, it is impossible to distinguish between the two.

This history of ultimately ineffective education reforms, driven by a lack of solid evidence, underscores the urgent need to identify and explore the critical research and information needs that have been systematically overlooked.

EVIDENCE AND METHODOLOGICAL GAPS

Beyond the weak research culture constraint are significant evidence and methodological gaps. These gaps weaken our ability to diagnose problems accurately, design effective interventions, and monitor progress. Closing them is critical for a more resilient, learning-focused education system.

Understanding influences on student achievement: There is a scarcity of research in the Philippines that identifies which factors—school, individual/household, or community—have the greatest influence on student learning outcomes. While international research exists (i.e., Akyeampong et al, 2023), these findings may not be directly applicable to the unique context of the Philippines. We need estimates based on our data to inform interventions and resource allocations.

Improved and better utilization of national assessments. National assessments should shift from compliance to strategy—identifying learning gaps, informing remediation, assessing school effectiveness, and guiding resource allocation (Santos et al., 2025). Formative and comparable longitudinal assessments are needed to track learning progress and evaluate reforms, but earlier tests often lack these features. Compounding this challenge is the fundamental paradox: data producers like DepEd collate valuable administrative and assessment data but limit external stakeholder access due to

concerns about misuse. External data users who could help improve these very systems, on the other hand, remain locked out of the data necessary to generate evidence-based solutions.

Learning loss recovery. The very low percentage of students possessing the minimum skills for their grade level, as indicated by PISA results, means we must recover the learning lost over the years. Clearly, these are not merely the result of the COVID-19 pandemic, although one cannot discount its lasting impact. The pre-pandemic PISA 2018, which tested 15-year-olds, already showed similar proportions of students not possessing the minimum proficiency for their grade. How to do learning recovery while continuing to improve current teaching requires serious study and experimentation.

ECCD critical evidence and policy gaps. Weak data systems, fragmented coordination, supply-side deficits, low parental demand, and underfunding hinder ECCD progress. Evaluation research is necessary to determine the effectiveness of proposed interventions in addressing these issues.

Pedagogical approaches. Research on teacher effectiveness remains critically underdeveloped, particularly regarding pedagogical approaches that are effective for Filipino learners in multilingual, resource-constrained classrooms. While we have implemented reforms such as spiral progression and various teacher support initiatives, we lack rigorous experimentation to understand which instructional interventions actually support foundational literacy and numeracy in our specific context.

Technology integration and cost-effectiveness. The pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital learning, yet we lack rigorous research on which educational technologies effectively improve outcomes in Philippine classrooms and at what cost. Without systematic evaluation of digital interventions and their resource requirements, investments in educational technology proceed without evidence of their comparative effectiveness or optimal implementation strategies. This absence of cost-effectiveness analysis extends beyond technology to many education interventions, leaving policymakers unable to prioritize investments that deliver the greatest learning gains per peso spent.

Non-school determinants of learning. Student achievement is influenced by peers (Sacerdote, 2011), households (Bjorklund & Salvanes, 2011), and communities (Hossain, 2021), yet Philippine research in these areas remains limited. Systematic local studies are needed to design holistic interventions.

Collaborations within the education sector. Partnerships among schools, divisions, and COEs for Teacher Education—across both public and private systems—can yield classroom-tested solutions that also strengthen teacher training but remain underexplored.

Lack of granular performance indicators (Basic, TVET, and Higher Education). Program-level data on costs, outcomes, certification rates, professional exam performance, and graduate employment remain inconsistent. This reality undermines informed decision-making due to misaligned incentives, limited data capacity, and fragmented institutional stewardship (Orbeta and Paqueo, 2022).

Weak framework for public-private partnerships. Programs like ESC and SHSVP show benefits but lack a long-term framework (Paqueo et al., 2025). Enterprise-based training remains minimal (Generalao et al., 2024), and HEI-industry research collaboration continues to be emergent (STRIDE, 2019).

Broadening disciplinary tools. Complex challenges require insights beyond economics.

- *Implementation science* adapts evidence-based reforms to local contexts for sustainable impact (Moir, 2018; Ryan et al., 2024).
- *Political economy* emphasizes the incentives, interests, and power structures that influence the feasibility of reforms (Kingdon et al., 2014; Busemeyer et al., 2018).
- *Behavioral and decision sciences* reveal how biases, norms, and incentives shape behavior, enabling more effective interventions (Lavecchia et al., 2014).

BUILDING RESEARCH CAPACITY AND FOSTERING INNOVATION

Addressing these gaps requires investing in people, institutions, and the systems that support them. Strengthening research capacity, while also fostering innovation in methods and tools, creates the foundation for sustained and relevant knowledge generation.

Increase national R&D investment: We must commit to a multi-year, non-negotiable plan to increase the Gross Expenditure for Research and Development (GERD) to meet the UNESCO benchmark of 1% of GDP. This investment is the price of admission to the global knowledge economy.

Develop national flagship universities: We must adopt the "Flagship University" model, strategically investing in a select group of top-tier public and private universities to establish them as world-class hubs for graduate education and cutting-edge research. This approach ends the inefficient practice of spreading limited resources thinly across hundreds of mediocre institutions.

Incentivize research productivity: We must reform institutional policies, particularly within SUCs, to drastically reduce the heavy teaching loads of research-active faculty. Providing protected time for research is essential to accelerating knowledge creation, technology development, and national innovation.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Yet separate capacity building alone is not enough. Strong partnerships between government, academe, industry, and civil society are essential to ensure that research priorities align with societal needs and that knowledge is effectively translated into action.

Build a fully functioning innovation ecosystem: We must intentionally develop and integrate the critical components of a modern innovation ecosystem, including knowledge-producing organizations (such as universities and research institutions), a supportive and agile regulatory framework, innovative firms, and an adequate communication infrastructure.

Promote collaborative R&D models: We must establish and fund formal government and university programs that aggressively incentivize academe-industry partnerships. These programs must actively support collaborative R&D, commissioned research, technology licensing, and the creation of university spin-off companies.

TOWARDS A MORE RESEARCH-INFORMED EDUCATION POLICY MAKING, PROGRAM, AND PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

A strong research infrastructure is indispensable for ensuring that policymaking, program design, and project implementation are informed by evidence rather than conjecture. First, adequate **resources and data** provide the foundation: reliable datasets, research funding, and analytical tools allow for rigorous inquiry into social and economic challenges. Second, the presence of

competent and independent researchers is crucial to guarantee that studies are not only technically sound but also free from political or institutional bias, thereby enhancing credibility and public trust. Finally, effective **venues for utilizing research results—such as policy forums, legislative discussions, advisory councils, program and project planning and implementation, and stakeholder dialogues—ensure that findings are not merely** academic exercises but are translated into actionable policies and operational strategies. Together, these three elements create a virtuous cycle where evidence informs better decisions, decisions guide implementation, and implementation generates new lessons for research.

From the foregoing analysis, three systemic and interconnected barriers emerge that prevent the Philippines from achieving a virtuous cycle of evidence-based education policy. These are: (a) a fractured data and resource foundation that starves the system of reliable information and adequate funding; (b) a stalled culture of evaluation that resists learning from local context and implementation challenges; and (c) a broken system of policy execution plagued by procedural bottlenecks and governance gaps. These are not isolated problems but symptoms of a deeper, systemic weakness. Moving forward, building a truly evidence-based education system will require a holistic approach—one that addresses not just individual programs, but the underlying structural and cultural frailties that inhibit the system's fundamental capacity to learn from its failures, adapt to new evidence, and ultimately deliver on its promise to the nation's children.



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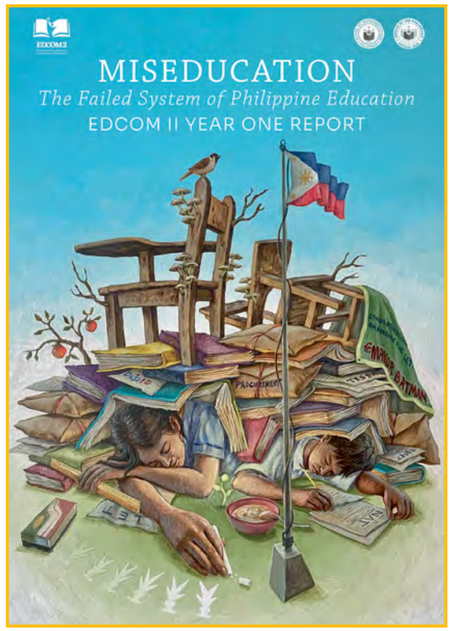
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Released: January 2024

The EDCOM II Year One Report, ***Miseducation: The Failed System of Philippine Education***, was widely recognized as one of the first comprehensive, data-grounded examinations of the deep structural challenges facing Philippine education. By spotlighting foundational failures—the non-delivery of textbooks from 2012 to 2023, the Tertiary Education Subsidy no longer going to the poorest since 2018, and the 68+ interagency bodies attended to by DepEd, CHED and TESDA, thus distracting the agencies from their core mandates—the report broke ground in public discourse by confronting facts that many had long sensed but not fully articulated, providing a strong factual baseline for sustained reform.

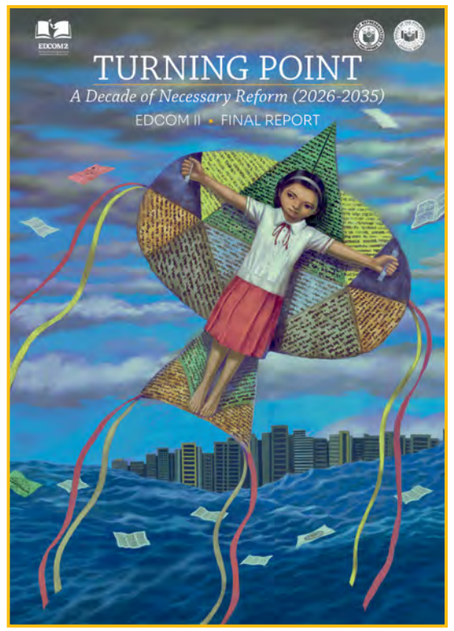
https://edcom2.gov.ph/publications/year1report/



Released: January 2025

The EDCOM II Year Two Report, ***Fixing the Foundations: A Matter of National Survival***, builds on the hard truths established in Year One by shifting the national conversation from diagnosis to decisive action. It provided a sharpened focus on the foundations of learning, underscoring how many Filipino learners were already several years behind by Grade 3, in large part due to stunting, lack of access to ECCD, and poor literacy. The Report underscored the need for prioritization towards the most urgent reforms, where failure was most costly, impeding learners from progressing to later years. The same Report also highlighted critical fissures that demanded swift action: among them, more than 50% of public schools not having principals, and the worrying number of class suspensions, worsening learning loss.

https://edcom2.gov.ph/publications/year2report/



Released: January 2026

The EDCOM II Year Three ***Report, Turning Point: A Decade of Necessary Reform (2026 - 2035)***, brings together three years of evidence, consultations, and legislative work into a single, coherent account of where Philippine education stands, and what must be done next. The Report lays out a ten-year National Education and Workforce Development Plan anchored on foundational learning, system coherence, and sustained investment. The Final Report synthesizes all key researches conducted by the Commission from 2023 to 2025, reports on key legislative measures passed/filed and policy reforms pursued, and provides a clear roadmap that phases the reforms to squarely address the learning crisis in the next ten years.

https://edcom2.gov.ph/publications/the-edcom-2-final-report/



Research Publications

From 2023 to 2025, EDCOM collaborated with leading research institutions and scholars to produce more than 100 studies, which provided independent analysis and empirical grounding to the further consultations and hearings conducted by the Commission, as well as its policy recommendations.

Collectively, this body of work represents one of the most extensive and rigorous research efforts ever assembled to examine Philippine education.

The full research papers may be accessed through the EDCOM website, via this link:

Qhttps://edcom2.gov.ph/publications/

Recognizing the breadth and complexity of education reform, the EDCOM Final Report is presented in both print and digital formats. Thus, additional chapters—available online—provide deeper analysis and supporting evidence for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers:



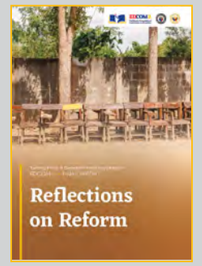
The full version of the National Education Plan (2026-2035) may be accessed here, to gain a comprehensive view of the baseline, benchmarks, and notes extensively studied by the Commission to come up with the ten-year education reform agenda.



The chapter sets out a national strategy to close critical skills gaps and align education and training with the country's economic and industrial aspirations. Grounded in rigorous workforce gap analyses, the plan identifies where demand will grow, where shortages will persist, and where current pipelines fall short. It also reframes skills development as a long-term national investment essential to competitiveness, inclusion, and growth.



The chapter presents a grounded portrait of Filipino learners today, and their dreams and deterrents as they progress through the country's education system. It explores who and why some students are left behind, looking into differences in income, geography, and context. At the same time, the chapter affirms the resilience and aspirations of Filipino learners, making clear that systemic reform must begin by understanding their real conditions and designing policies around their needs rather than institutional convenience.



The chapter steps back to examine what three years of evidence, legislation, and implementation reveal about how reform actually happens. By distilling lessons from past and ongoing efforts in education reform, it reflects on why well-intended policies falter, how fragmentation and short political cycles undermine continuity, and where key pockets of success have been seen and may be furthered to sustain progress.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1rV2S19sEl5vfrgb1DdN3sphOKrhtFeYT

PINANGARAP NA NOON PA

MICHAEL M. COROZA

Pinangarap na noon pa
ni Crisostomo Ibarra
ang huwarang eskuwela
na magbibigay-pag-asa

at susi upang matuklas
ang sariling galíng, lakas
sa paghahawan ng landas
sa malayang hinaharap

ng ganap na pagkatao
bilang mga Filipino.
Matapos ang isang siglo,
nasaan na nga ba tayo?
Malayo pa nga marahil,
ngunit di tayo titigil
hangga't buo ang layuning
ang isipa'y palayain

sa dilim ng kamangmangan
na nagbibigay ng daan
sa ibayong panlilinlang,
sa pag-unlad humahadlang.

Pangarapin natin ngayon
nang may tapat na pag-aks'yon:
sistema ng edukasyong
tumutugon sa panahon.



About EDCOM II

The Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II) is a national commission established through Republic Act No. 11899, tasked to undertake a comprehensive national assessment and evaluation of the performance of the Philippine education sector, and to propose transformative solutions, from 2023 to 2025

It is composed of lawmakers from both the Senate and the House of Representatives, and is guided by an Advisory Council, and assisted by the Technical Secretariat.



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