

**Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila**

**THIRTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session**

HOUSE BILL NO. 2446



Introduced by **Rep. Rodolfo “Ompong” G. Plaza**

Explanatory Note

It has been acknowledged that the Philippines has better chances of surviving the current era of borderless transactions and speedy, continuous exchange of goods, capital, and labor if it equips itself with the tools it needs to address the needs of the new world order. With globalization giving rise to rapid technological change, increased competition among nations, the expansion of the services sector, and increasing mobility of skilled labor, the country should look for ways and means to sustain its strengths, even fortify its stable of resources, so that it may not lose out on opportunities while participating in the world arena.

Poor countries like the Philippines should recognize that the opportunity to participate in globalization must not be wasted. The need to optimize the use of the human resource, specifically, is therefore imperative.

The country's leadership calls for science and technology to be the foundation of future economic development in the country. The resulting National Science and Technology Plan for 2002-2020 or NSTP 2020 states that biotechnology and information and communications technology stand out as having great potential for less developed countries in the era of globalization. This becomes possible with the collaboration of Science and Technology with the field of Research and Development, which can bring forth technological innovation that can lead to the growth of technology-based spin-off enterprises. Yet in the Philippines, opportunities for citizens seeking to pursue these disciplines are scarce when it should not be for the reason that these fields are more skill-intensive rather than capital-intensive.

The country also finds itself in the brink of a “brain drain” with the lack of adequate employment opportunities that has resulted in the exodus of practitioners in the fields of science and technology, particularly in Medical and Allied Sciences like Nursing. The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration or POEA records show that the biggest number of skilled Filipino workers deployed overseas is made up of

Professionals and Technical Workers. With this number working to ensure better lives for their families in the Philippines and helping out the Motherland through dollar remittances, the government should take significant steps in ensuring that even with their absence, the country has a reservoir of so-skilled workers that can contribute locally and who can take the place of those deployed who may want to settle for good in the country in the future.

Sadly, the economic state of the country has prevented millions of high school graduates from pursuing tertiary studies in the fields of Nursing, Pharmacy, Chemistry, Biology and other Natural Sciences, Engineering and Technology. While it is a fact that there are 15 known Scholarship Grants and student assistance programs implemented by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and 2 Scholarship Grants by the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), data on the number of college graduates from Philippine colleges and universities since 1994 reveal two things:

1. The total number of Graduates of Science and Engineering and Technology, Math and ICT, Medical and Allied Sciences, and the Natural Sciences account for less than 33% of the total national graduate population.
2. On any given year, graduates of Business Administration and Related Disciplines, Education and Teacher Training, social sciences, and general disciplines outnumber graduates of Science and Technology courses by almost one hundred thousand.

The CHED-administered scholarships only award limited financial benefits to grantees. The CHED Special Study Grant Program for Congressional Districts, for instance, awards only a total of P2,500.00 per grantee to cover his Tuition and school fees and living allowance. This amount, even by provincial living standards, is not sufficient. Because of this, grantees can only enroll in Education, Social Science, or Business courses. The grantees also have to find other sources of funding in order to complete a four-year baccalaureate degree. Their failure to augment their finances has resulted in the interruption and eventual termination of their studies and their demoralization. Those fortunate to have graduated have also contributed to unemployment problems as there are not enough institutions ready to absorb the graduates in these disciplines.

The stringent rules governing the 2 DOST Scholarships meanwhile have prevented even above-average but poor high school graduates from pursuing their choice 4-year degrees in Engineering and Technology. For 2003, more than 16,000 high school graduates belonging to the Top 5% of their graduating classes pre-qualified for the DOST-SEI Merit Scholarship. Only 317 have been awarded. High school graduates who have not been fortunate to be awarded DOST-Science Education Institute (DOST-SEI) Scholarships but were pre-qualified by virtue of their belonging to the Top 5% of their graduating class, are considered to possess the mental abilities required in Engineering and ICT courses. However, their economic statuses that, in the first place, also pre-

qualified them, now prevent them from pursuing studies in the same discipline group. If any, the DOST grants only served to demoralize these youths and imbibe in their young and impressionable minds, their utter poverty and limitations in accessing opportunities for education.

If the objectives of the CHED and DOST-SEI Merit Scholarship is to assist in educating financially-handicapped youth and create a qualified pool of scientific and technological human resource to operate the wheels of industrialization, then these goals, sad to say, have not been faithfully adhered to.

This proposed National Scholarship Program will help correct the oversight of government education grants by providing high school graduates greater access to education opportunities in a most equitable manner – *a scholar per municipality all over the country.*

This bill will also institutionalize a focused approach towards the country's Science and Technology goals by ensuring that *every poor and deserving high school graduate inclined to join the Philippine Labor Market as a future practitioner and contributor in the fields of Engineering, Technology, ICT, Nursing and other Sciences, shall have the full and unequivocal support of the National Government.*

Human resource being any country's prime resource deserves no less. Education being the biggest beneficiary of the National Budget is a thrust borne out of the recognition of the critical importance of human development. This proposed measure underscores this fact and shall mandate government to embrace this concept more tightly.

In view of the foregoing, in accordance with President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's SONA pronouncements to advance public interest first, and consistent with her commitment to provide economic opportunity for the Filipino Youth, approval of this bill is urgently sought.



RODOLFO 'Ompong' G. PLAZA

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**THIRTEENTH CONGRESS
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HOUSE BILL NO. 2446

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**AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL
SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS IN SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY COURSES IN EVERY MUNICIPALITY OF EVERY
PROVINCE OF THE COUNTRY, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. There shall be selected annually from the graduating classes of all public and private high schools in every municipality of the country, a poor but deserving student who shall be granted scholarships in science and technology course, in the form of a Fund Assistance to cover tuition and registration fees, book allowance, board and lodging fees or transportation allowance, and a monthly stipend for living expenses.

SECTION 2. For the purposes of this Act, Science and Technology Courses shall refer to courses related to Allied Sciences, Engineering, and Communications Technology.

SECTION 3. Candidates for scholarship shall possess the following qualifications:

1. He must belong to the top one (1) percent of the high school graduating class, and attain and maintain, such tests, standards, or criteria as will insure that he is specifically gifted in and/or inclined to study the particular college course of his preference;

2. He must be of good health, excellent moral character, and unquestionable integrity;
3. He must be a resident of the municipality for the last four (4) years prior to his availment of the scholarship, as attested by the school records; and
4. He must be a natural-born citizen of the Philippines and must not be more than 21 years of age at the time of his selection;

SECTION 4. The scholarship program under this Act shall be geared exclusively towards the study of Science and Technology courses, which may be offered by colleges or universities from four to five years.

SECTION 5. In order to provide for an equitable allotment of slots for scholarship grantees, the Scholarship under this Act shall be geared towards enlisting one scholar in each municipality of the Philippines.

SECTION 6. The Scholarship grant provided herein shall not be limited to studying only in a school in the province where the municipality is situated but would grant the opportunity to study in schools offering Science and Technology courses that are situated anywhere in the region where the province is located.

SECTION 7. Immediately upon completion of a Bachelor of Science course, a scholar shall work in his municipality for at least a period of two years by organizing technology-based livelihood activities or enterprises, teaching, or such other service related to the course or training he has completed.

SECTION 8. Any scholar who violates the preceding section shall be liable to reimburse the Government of the Fund Assistance received under this Act.

SECTION 9. In order to encourage graduates of the scholarship program under this Act to work in his municipality, they shall be entitled to the following incentives:

1. Priority for job placement in his municipality or in the private sector in positions appropriate to his area of education or training;
2. Access to government research facilities in the conduct of research and development projects and other science and technology services.

SECTION 10. The scholarship program herein provided shall be directly implemented by the Commission on Higher Education. It shall exercise and perform the following specific functions and duties:

1. To screen and approve candidates for scholarships;

2. To prescribe such tests and standards, which candidates for scholarship shall attain and maintain as will insure that he will perform excellently in the particular field of study chosen by him;
3. To help the qualified scholar in selecting the college or university in which he wants to enroll;
4. To approve or fix the different expenses which shall be provided to individual scholars and authorize the payment thereof out of the sum of sums appropriated by law;
5. To enter into contract/Memorandum of Agreement with the colleges and universities where the recipients enrolled.
6. In general, to do such acts, adopt such measures, enter into such arrangements, or issue such rules and regulations as may be proper for the effective implementation of this Act.

SECTION 11. The amount necessary for the effective implementation of this Act shall be charged to the appropriations of the Commission on Higher Education under the current General Appropriations Act. Thereafter, such sum as may be provided for its operation shall be included in the General Appropriations Act.

SECTION 12. This act shall take effect immediately upon its approval.

Approved,