



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

Fifteenth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 4358

Introduced by Honorable Sharon S. Garin

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Inequality pervades in our society because opportunities are unfairly distributed. And to provide equilibrium in opportunities in all social spectra, education is being given the thrust -- said to be the great equalizer and balance wheel of social machinery.

But beyond the discourse of social equity, putting emphasis on education has an undeniable practicality because an educated citizenry correlates to a productive and stable society. It is more than just the perfection of transfer of concepts and theories but rather a tool for transformation and empowerment of individuals and communities.

For this reason, if the government is serious in its commitment to rural development and empowerment, a fundamental step to be taken is ensuring equitable access to education in the countryside. Statistics have consistently demonstrated the widening gap between urban and rural development, and concomitantly, poverty incidence. The poverty incidence victimizes a bulk of the agricultural sector who mostly reside in the rural areas, resulting to a vicious cycle of worsening deprivation, marginalization and underdevelopment.

Education can also be used in ensuring sustainable agricultural productivity in the country for the coming decades by creating an educational system applicable and fitting to rural agricultural communities. As such, the youth are not keen in taking professions in the agricultural sector. Proof of this is the dwindling figures of enrolment and number of graduates of agricultural courses. The already low figures of enrollees decrease furthermore as the academic years commence, resulting to disappointingly few graduates of agricultural courses.

Traditional educational systems have long been speckled throughout the country. But the rural communities need an educational system suited to their environment and

realities. Hence, this bill proposes to promote Rural Farm Schools as an alternative delivery mode of secondary education without sacrificing quality of education.

The Rural Farm School shall be a parallel learning system and an alternative delivery mode of secondary education. It is a facilitative and experiential learning on the core subjects of social sciences, numeracy, literacy with focus on agriculture and patterned after the needs of rural, agricultural communities. It has four academic years with the last year being integrative learning with emphasis on farm entrepreneurship to encourage the youth to become local entrepreneurs in their respective rural, agricultural communities.

The teaching methodology provides a flexible alternative to the rigid structure of formal education. In the Rural Farm School, students engage in an alternating training cycle of home and school period. The student may go to learning centers as scheduled by the school to learn concepts and theories or the students may obtain modules from the tutors and take it home subject to the monitoring and assessment of the tutors. The other half of the cycle is the home period wherein the students shall spend half of the educative process at home as they work in their own farms or in other farms or enterprises to apply and practice the academic principles learned from school.

In consonance with the State's policy to provide free secondary education, the students enrolled in public Rural Farm Schools will not pay any tuition fee. Having minimal overhead expenses because of the flexible methodology and having no tuition fee lessen the financial burden on the parents especially since abject poverty is prevalent in the rural pocket sides.

And in furtherance of attaining social equity, the children and grandchildren of CARP beneficiaries are given preference in admission should the school exceed its allowable number of enrollees. They shall likewise be exempted from paying tuition fees in private sector-led Rural Farm Schools. Agrarian Reform Communities, on the other hand, shall be given priority in the site selection and establishment of Rural Farm Schools.

The Rural Farm School is, thus, a multipronged attack against poverty, inequity, agricultural decline, and economic constriction in the rural areas. Firstly, it provides opportunities for and access to learning, at minimal or zero cost, to the rural youth, equipping them with appropriate knowledge and practical skills that can be readily applied in their environment. Secondly, it entices the rural youth to engage in agricultural courses and/or enterprises leading to agricultural viability and sustainability. Accordingly, these will warm the social and economic engines of the countryside, lessening poverty incidence and empowering the rural communities.

In view of the foregoing, passage of this bill is fervently sought.



ATTY. SHARON S. GARIN
Representative
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AN ACT
PROMOTING RURAL FARM SCHOOL
AS AN ALTERNATIVE DELIVERY MODE
OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

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

Section 1. Title. - This Act shall be known as the "Rural Farm Schools Act of 2011".

Section 2. Declaration of Policy. - It is a declared policy of the State to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all. Further to this, the State shall establish, maintain, and support a complete, adequate and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of the people and society and encourage non-formal, informal and indigenous learning systems, as well as self-learning, independent and out-of-school study programs particularly those that respond to community needs.

The State shall likewise promote sustainable agricultural productivity and rural development by empowering the human capital in the countryside through access to avenues of learning suited to the needs and realities of the rural, agricultural communities.

In furtherance of the principles of social justice and social equity, the State shall provide the necessary support to the beneficiaries of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), including but not limited to the provision of access to a broad range of educational opportunities to their children.

SECTION 3. *Definition of Terms.* - For purposes of this Act, the following terms shall be defined as follows:

- a) "Alternative Delivery Mode" refers to the non-traditional education program recognized by the Department of Education (DepEd) which applies a flexible learning philosophy and a curricular delivery program that includes non-formal and informal sources of knowledge and skills. An alternative delivery mode may include the use of facilitator-aided and interactive self-instructional print and audio-based learning materials, video tapes, face-to-face structured learning groups, semi-structured and unstructured discussions, one-on-one tutorials, study groups and self-learning groups, demonstration sessions, home visits, mentoring and remediation.
- b) "Rural Farm School" refers to a parallel learning system and an alternative delivery mode of secondary education. It is a facilitative and experiential learning on the core subjects of social sciences, numeracy, literacy with focus on agriculture and patterned after the needs of rural, agriculture communities.
- c) "Public Rural Farm School" refers to Rural Farm Schools operated by the Government or its political subdivision.
- d) "Private Rural Farm School" refers to Rural Farm Schools operated by private entities, non-government organizations or farm associations. These are schools which are not funded by the Government or its political subdivisions.
- e) "Tutors" refers to the facilitators or instructors who comprise the teaching staff of the Rural farm Schools. They are specialists in their own fields of endeavor and who facilitate the educative process.
- f) "CARP Beneficiaries" refers to farmers or their kin who had received Certificates of Land Ownership (CLOA) or Emancipation Patents under Republic Act No. 6637, as amended, known as "The CARP Law of 1988".
- g) "Agrarian Reform Community" refer to a barangay or cluster of barangays where a critical mass of agrarian reform beneficiaries is situated.
- h) "Farm Entrepreneurship" refers to the inter-mingling of finance, business and agriculture in setting into operation or motion a business venture involved in the production of agricultural commodities or enterprises.

Section 4. *Rural Farm Schools as Alternative Delivery Mode of Secondary Education.* - Rural Farm Schools (RFS) are hereby created and established as an Alternative Delivery Mode of Secondary Education. The Rural Farm Schools shall be duly recognized and supervised by the Department of Education. It shall have the following components:

a) Curriculum and Teaching Methodology

The Rural Farm School system shall have a curricular program of four (4) academic years for secondary education. It shall be an experiential learning with alternating training cycle of home and school period. The curricular program should include the social sciences, numeracy, literacy, with focus on agriculture, including but not limited to farming, crop production, animal husbandry, and aquaculture, and other disciplines as may be prescribed by the Department of Education.

The Rural farm School shall apply a flexible learning philosophy which may include the use of facilitator-aided and interactive self-instructional print and audio-based learning materials, video tapes, face-to-face structured learning groups, semi-structured and unstructured discussions, one-on-one tutorials, study groups and self-

learning groups, demonstration sessions, home visits, mentoring and remediation and such other methods as may be prescribed by the Department of Education.

The Rural Farm School may hold classes at the learning center on the subjects offered to comprise the school period of the alternating training cycle. The Rural Farm School may also choose to offer learning modules for the students to take home and study at their own time subject to periodic monitoring and assessment of the tutors.

The students shall likewise spend half of the educative process at home as they work in their own farms or in other farms or enterprises to apply and practice the academic principles learned from school.

The Department of Education shall prescribe guidelines on the classes and/or learning schedule to be offered by Rural Farms Schools.

c) Eligible Students

Children with ages between twelve (12) and eighteen (18) years old, male and female, may enroll in the Rural Farm Schools for their secondary education.

c) Tutors

The tutors of the Rural Farm School shall be specialists in their fields of endeavor. They shall act as teachers, guidance counselors, rural developers, livelihood project proponents, marketing specialists, and/or project consultants. The tutors shall establish a working partnership with the parents by conducting parent-tutor dialogues and parent workshops.

Unless a special law provides a higher salary, the teaching staff of a public Rural Farm School shall receive a basic salary as prescribed in Republic Act 4670 or the Magna Carta for Public School Teachers and other related laws and the teaching staff of a private Rural Farm School shall receive a basic salary not lower than the prescribed minimum wage for the locality.

d) School Director

Every Rural Farm School shall have a School Director to oversee its operations and management. The School Director is tasked to facilitate the tutors' participation in professional development activities including technical skills training and extension services by the Department of Education, Department of Agriculture, and Department of Agrarian Reform. The School Director is likewise tasked to ensure that the curricular program is properly implemented and sufficient and adequate educational resources are available and accessible to the students.

e) Tuition Fee

In adherence to Republic Act 6655 or the Free Secondary Education Act, students enrolled in public Rural Farm Schools shall be free from payment of tuition and other school fees, except fees related to membership in the school community such as identification cards, student organizations and publication which may be collected.

Private Rural Farm Schools shall set a minimal tuition fee subject to the approval of the Department of Education; *Provided, That* relatives of CARP beneficiaries up to

third degree of consanguinity in the descending line shall be exempt from payment of said tuition fees.

f) Learning Center

There shall be an adequate, secure, and physically accessible schoolhouse which shall function as a meeting place and learning center for the tutors and students to interact. Students shall access their modules or instructional materials at the schoolhouse.

g) Community Partnership

The Rural Farm Schools shall establish productive partnership with the local community, including groups interested in the achievement of the goals and objectives of this Act, and in providing financial assistance, technological transfer, and extension services.

Section 5. Farm Entrepreneurship. The fourth and last academic year in the Rural Farm School educational system shall focus on integrative learning across all subject disciplines in the curriculum with emphasis on farm entrepreneurship theory and practice and its promotion as a tool in cultivating local entrepreneurs, revitalizing rural economies and repopulating rural communities.

Section 6. Rural Farm School in Every Province. – Within one (1) year upon formulation of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of this Act, the Department of Education shall establish at least one (1) Rural Farm School in every province in the country.

Section 7. Priority to CARP Beneficiaries and Agrarian Reform Communities. – Relatives of the beneficiaries of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) up to third degree of consanguinity in the descending line shall be given priority in admission when the Rural Farm School cannot accommodate all of those applying for enrollment.

Without prejudice to the provisions of Section Six (6) hereof, Agrarian Reform Communities shall be given priority in the site selection and establishment of Rural Farm Schools whenever possible or applicable.

Section 8. Skills Training and Extension Support. – Department of Education, Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Agrarian Reform shall provide continuous technical skills training and provision of extension materials including but not limited to books, student workbooks, teaching session guides, and other materials or equipment on the subjects offered, and other extension services to the tutors of Rural Farm Schools.

Section 9. Quality Assurance. The Department of Education shall institutionalize high standards of quality assurance in Rural Farm Schools. This shall involve prescribing guidelines and policies on the operation and management of Rural Farm Schools as well as basic curricular content to ensure the credibility and academic integrity of Rural Farm Schools.

Section 10. Accreditation of Rural Farm Schools. – The Department of Education shall set the requirements of accreditation of Rural Farm Schools and accredit those that meet the prescribed requirements. Rural Farm Schools may not operate unless accredited by the Department of Education.

The Department of Education may withdraw or downgrade the accreditation of a Rural Farm School if it fails to maintain the standards set for its accreditation.

Section 11. School Monitoring and Evaluation. – The Department of Education shall conduct regular monitoring and evaluation to determine continuing compliance with the requirements on accreditation status of the Rural Farm School and to determine that the Rural Farm Schools are adhering to the standards of quality assurance prescribed by the Department of Education.

Section 12. Tax Incentives. – All gifts and donations for the benefit of the Rural Farm School, for its support and maintenance or for aid to any of its students shall be tax-exempt and shall be an allowable deduction from the gross-income of the donors. For the purpose of income taxation, the school shall be exempt from payment of all taxes, fees, assessments and other charges of the Government, its branches and subdivisions. It shall likewise be exempt from taxes and duties on any equipment, books, articles, goods or services it may import from abroad. The Farm School shall also be exempt from the payment of real property tax on the property actually, exclusively and directly used by it for educational purposes.

Section 13. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – The Department of Education, Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Agrarian Reform shall formulate and prescribe the Implementing Rules and Regulations necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act.

Section 14. Appropriations. – The amount necessary to carry out the purposes of this Act is hereby authorized to be appropriated in the General Appropriations Act to be made available within one (1) year from the approval of this Act. Thereafter, continuing appropriations shall be appropriated in subsequent General Appropriations Acts: *Provided*, That the appropriation, for the purposes of this Act, shall not be reduced by Congress below the amount appropriated for the previous year and, after approval, shall be automatically and regularly released.

Section 15. Separability Clause. - – If any provision, or part hereof, is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

Section 16. Repealing Clause. - All laws or parts thereof, decrees, orders, rules and regulations inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 17. Effectivity Clause. - This Act shall take effect immediately following its publication in a newspaper of general circulation or in the Official Gazette, whichever comes first.

Approved,