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Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

First Regular Session
TWENTIETH CONGRESS

House Bill No. 848



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Introduced by REP. JESUS MANUEL "BONG" C. SUNTAY

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EXPLANATORY NOTE

Section 1, Article XIV of the 1987 Constitution declares that "The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all." Moreover, Section 2 of the same Article mandates the State to "establish, maintain, and support a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of the people and society."

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The Philippine education system faces profound challenges. While the implementation of the K-12 curriculum marked a significant stride, many of our public elementary and secondary schools remain severely deficient in modern facilities such as computer laboratories, science equipment, and libraries. These gaps hinder not only the teaching of essential technical skills but also students' capacity to keep pace with global standards in science, technology, and information.

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Yet the modernization of facilities alone cannot address the crisis in Philippine education. Recent results of international assessments, including the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), reveal alarmingly low levels of reading comprehension and critical thinking among Filipino students. Without direct interventions to strengthen higher-order cognitive skills, investments in hardware and infrastructure will fall short of preparing our youth for an increasingly knowledge-driven and competitive world.

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This measure seeks to establish a School Modernization and Innovation Program as a permanent initiative of the Department of Education (DepEd) to upgrade and sustain facilities—such as computer laboratories, libraries, and science laboratories—and to expand access to integrated distance learning platforms. Most importantly, the bill mandates programs to directly improve reading comprehension, critical thinking, problem-solving, and other higher-order cognitive skills across all public elementary and secondary schools.

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To ensure inclusivity and equity, the measure provides for phased implementation of the modernization program based on regional priorities and schools' absorptive

1 capacities. It institutionalizes a School Modernization and Innovation Trust Fund
2 sourced from a combination of appropriations, national government revenue shares,
3 and private sector contributions. Recognizing the importance of community
4 involvement, the bill mandates counterpart support from local government units and
5 incentivizes private partners to actively participate through fiscal benefits.

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7 Additionally, this bill strengthens accountability by establishing National and Regional
8 Modernization Committees to evaluate project proposals, ensuring that funded
9 programs are aligned with measurable goals for facility upgrades and cognitive skill
10 improvements. Teacher training in both technology integration and comprehension-
11 focused pedagogies is explicitly prioritized.

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13 Through these comprehensive interventions, this bill envisions modern public schools
14 that do not merely provide hardware but empower every Filipino child with the
15 cognitive tools necessary for lifelong learning, informed citizenship, and meaningful
16 participation in a rapidly changing world.

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18 In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.
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12
13 **AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING A SCHOOL MODERNIZATION AND**
14 **INNOVATION PROGRAM FOR PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY**
15 **SCHOOLS, STRENGTHENING STUDENTS ’READING COMPREHENSION**
16 **AND CRITICAL THINKING, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR**
17 **OTHER PURPOSES**
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21 Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in
22 Congress assembled:

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24 SECTION 1. Short Title.

25 This Act shall be known as the “School Modernization, Reading Comprehension, and
26 Critical Thinking Enhancement Act.”
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28 SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.

29 It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote a comprehensive and sustainable
30 modernization program for all public elementary and secondary schools aimed at
31 improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of basic education, as well as
32 enhancing students ’reading comprehension, critical thinking, problem-solving, and
33 other higher-order cognitive skills necessary for lifelong learning and active
34 participation in a dynamic, knowledge-driven world. The State shall likewise consider
35 regional and sectoral needs in developing a viable modernization plan and encourage
36 private sector and local government participation.
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38 SEC. 3. Statement of Purpose.

39 This Act seeks to attain the following objectives:

- 40 a. To institutionalize a comprehensive, sustainable modernization program for public
41 schools;
42 b. To encourage innovation and resourcefulness in developing modernization programs;
43 c. To define the roles and responsibilities of officials from regional, division, to school
44 levels;
45 d. To provide mechanisms for private sector participation;

- 1 e. To formulate regional, division, and school modernization and innovation plans
2 responsive to local student needs; and
3 f. To ensure that modernization programs directly improve reading comprehension,
4 critical thinking, and higher-order cognitive skills of students.

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6 SEC. 4. Implementing Agency.

7 The Department of Education (DepEd) shall be the main implementing agency. The
8 Secretary of Education shall ensure the smooth implementation of the modernization
9 plan and cognitive skills enhancement programs.

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11 SEC. 5. Components.

12 The School Modernization and Innovation Program shall consist of the following
13 components:

- 14 a. Computerization – Allocation of IT equipment based on student enrollment, with
15 priority to science high schools;
16 b. Upgrading of Libraries – Establishment of well-equipped libraries with at least five
17 (5) internet-connected computers per public elementary and secondary school;
18 c. Integrated Distance-Learning Program – Interactive systems enabling students to
19 access Science, Math, English, Communication, and global learning resources through
20 television, satellite, or cable;
21 d. Upgrading of Science Laboratories – Provision of modern science equipment
22 essential to improving competencies in science and technology; and
23 e. Strengthening Reading Comprehension and Critical Thinking – Integration of
24 evidence-based interventions to improve reading comprehension, critical and analytical
25 thinking, including:

- 26
27 1. Acquisition of appropriate reading materials;
28 2. Development of critical thinking modules across core subjects;
29 3. Teacher training programs on comprehension and higher-order skills instruction.

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31 SEC. 6. Phased Implementation.

32 The Department shall implement the program in phases according to priorities set and
33 the absorptive capacities of schools.

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35 SEC. 7. Financing.

36 The Department of Budget and Management shall allocate at least ten percent (10%) of
37 the total annual appropriations of the Department to finance the program.

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39 SEC. 8. Formulation of School Modernization and Innovation Plans.

- 40 a. National Plan – The Secretary of Education, in consultation with Regional Directors
41 and Schools Division Superintendents, shall develop a 5-year comprehensive
42 modernization and innovation plan, incorporating measurable standards for
43 improvements in reading comprehension and critical thinking. It shall identify sources
44 of funding from local and international partners, as well as define national standards
45 and frameworks.

- 1 b. Regional Plan – Regional Directors, with Schools Division Superintendents, shall
2 create regional frameworks aligned with national standards and reflecting unique
3 regional needs, including literacy and critical thinking gaps.
4 c. School Plan – Each school shall formulate its own 5-year modernization plan,
5 assessing needs, existing facilities, priorities for cognitive skills development, funding
6 strategies, and effective resource use. Plans shall be submitted to regional offices for
7 consolidation.
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9 SEC. 9. School Modernization and Innovation Trust Fund.

10 A School Modernization and Innovation Fund (“the Fund”) is hereby established, to
11 augment regular appropriations. Sources include:
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- 13 1. ₱15 billion seed capital;
 - 14 2. 10% of annual PAGCOR gross earnings;
 - 15 3. 10% of annual travel tax collections;
 - 16 4. 10% of increases in vehicle registration fees;
 - 17 5. 2% of annual revenue collection increases;
 - 18 6. 10% of annual PCSO lotto sales;
 - 19 7. Donations in cash, equipment, property, or services.
- 20 The Fund is distinct from schools’ regular MOOE and may use annual interest
21 income only for modernization and cognitive skills programs.
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23 SEC. 10. Management of the Fund.

24 The Fund shall be administered by DepEd, which shall appoint a reputable government
25 financial institution as portfolio manager, and organize an autonomous management
26 staff. Guidelines shall prohibit using the Fund’s seed capital for overhead, and allow
27 only private donation earnings for administrative expenses, unless stipulated otherwise.
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29 SEC. 11. LGU Assistance.

30 Each LGU shall allocate at least five percent (5%) of their Special Education Fund to
31 support modernization programs, including cognitive development initiatives.
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33 SEC. 12. Uses of the Fund.

34 The Fund shall be used to finance:

- 35 a. Priority projects approved by National or Regional Modernization Committees;
- 36 b. In-service teacher training in computer literacy, instructional communication
37 technology, reading comprehension, and pedagogies for teaching critical and analytical
38 thinking;
- 39 c. Procurement and maintenance of IT and multimedia equipment;
- 40 d. Procurement of science laboratory equipment; and
- 41 e. Acquisition of reading materials and development of cognitive skills enhancement
42 programs.
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44 SEC. 13. Order of Priority in Fund Allocation.

45 Priority shall be given to programs aligned with modernization plans, with schools
46 securing at least 40% counterpart funding from LGUs, private corporations,
47 foundations, or donors.

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2 SEC. 14. Selection Process.

3 Schools shall develop project proposals aligned with regional modernization thrusts, to
4 be evaluated by:

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6 1. Regional Modernization Committees for proposals up to ₱1 million;
7 2. National Executive Modernization Committee, chaired by the DepEd Secretary, for
8 projects above ₱1 million.
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10 SEC. 15. Private Sector Participation.

11 Private sector contributions to modernization programs are deductible at 100% of
12 expenses from gross income. Schools achieving 40% counterpart support from LGUs or
13 private partners shall have priority for grants.
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15 SEC. 16. Implementing Rules and Regulations.

16 The Secretary of Education shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for
17 effective implementation.
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19 SEC. 17. Separability Clause.

20 If any provision of this Act is held invalid, the remaining provisions shall remain in full
21 force and effect.
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23 SEC. 18. Repealing Clause.

24 All laws, decrees, orders, rules, regulations, or ordinances inconsistent with this Act are
25 hereby repealed or amended accordingly.
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27 SEC. 19. Effectivity.

28 This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or a
29 newspaper of general circulation.
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32 Approved,