

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

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **4368**



Introduced by **Representative RAYMOND ADRIAN SALCEDA**

**AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF THE FUTURE IN TECHNOLOGY
AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article XIV, Section 1 of the 1987 Constitution mandates 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.” Section 2 further directs the State to establish and maintain a system of free public education in the elementary and high school levels, and to adopt measures that make education relevant to the needs of the people and the demands of national development.

In the age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, education must be reimagined to prepare Filipino learners for a rapidly changing economy and society. Digital technologies are no longer supplemental but central to learning, teaching, and school administration. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed both the promise of digital tools in ensuring continuity of education and the stark disparities in access to them. Without systematic reforms, Filipino students and teachers risk being left behind.

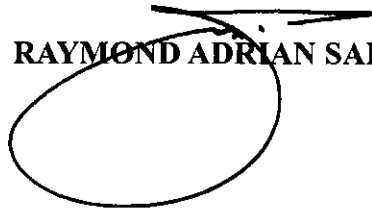
This bill seeks to establish the Public Schools of the Future in Technology (PSOFT) Program. The measure institutionalizes the use of information and communications technology (ICT) and emerging digital tools in all public elementary and secondary schools, while ensuring that innovations remain complemented by face-to-face instruction under a “High Touch, High Tech Framework.” It also creates the PSOFT Inter-Agency Task Force to develop a PSOFT Road Map, a comprehensive plan for infrastructure, digital education programs, online learning portals, school administration reforms, and public-private partnerships.

The PSOFT Program envisions every public school connected to the internet, equipped with the necessary devices, staffed with teachers trained in ICT-enabled instruction, and supported by online platforms such as a Public Online Library. Pilot schools shall be

established across the country to serve as models, while a system of oversight and annual reporting will ensure accountability. The measure further authorizes the Department of Education to receive donations and to engage in public-private partnerships, so that both government and non-government resources are mobilized.

In doing so, this bill responds to the urgent need to integrate digital education into the Philippine basic education system, ensuring that all Filipino learners have the skills, tools, and opportunities to thrive in a technology-driven world.

In view of the foregoing, the passage of this measure is earnestly sought.



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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* This Act shall be known as the “Public Schools of the Future in Technology (PSOFT) Act.”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* The State recognizes the need to adopt innovative technologies for development. It shall uphold the constitutional mandate of prioritizing quality education by providing mechanisms and resources. It shall harness technological innovations to enhance student and teacher performance, and provide all learners with access to information and communications technology (ICT). The State shall create a system to promote and regulate digital technology in public education, enhance the learning experience by providing access to digitized materials, and offer a complementary learning mode for national health emergencies. The State shall encourage participation from private groups, local government units, and community-based organizations in content generation, and shall promote public and private partnerships to improve access to quality education.

SEC. 3. *Objectives.* This Act aims to:

- (a) Establish an Inter-Agency Task Force to create and implement the roadmap for the PSOFT;
- (b) Institutionalize a program for integrating digital technology in public basic education through the PSOFT Road Map;
- (c) Identify the key components of the roadmap; and
- (d) Provide a public-private partnership mechanism to facilitate the attainment of the roadmap’s objectives.

SEC. 4. *Definition of Terms.* For purposes of this Act, the following terms are defined as follows:

- (a) Fourth Industrial Revolution refers to the ongoing automation of traditional industrial practices using modern smart technology, integrating artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things, among other technologies;
- (b) High Touch, High Tech Framework refers to a policy framework that balances electronically-delivered teaching methods with traditional face-to-face teaching, focusing on a teacher's ability to identify and improve a student's academic weaknesses;
- (c) Internet safety policy refers to an age-appropriate, research-based policy that regulates the safe, ethical, and responsible use of the internet in public education; and
- (d) New media refers to emerging digital, computerized, or network information and communication technologies, such as email, instant messaging, websites, blogs, social media, and mobile devices.

SEC. 5. *Public Schools of the Future in Technology (PSOFT) Program.* There is hereby established a PSOFT Program in all public elementary and secondary schools. The program shall adopt principles such as upgrading outdated technology, maximizing the use of ICT, providing technical support, training teachers and students on ICT, developing educators to use ICT effectively, and ensuring a balance between modern and traditional teaching methods.

SEC. 6. *Creation of the PSOFT Inter-Agency Task Force (PSOFT-IATF).* There is hereby created a PSOFT Inter-Agency Task Force to develop the PSOFT Road Map, a consolidation of development plans for advancing digital technology and innovation in public education. The Task Force shall be chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Education (DepEd), with members including the Secretaries of the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), and the Director General of the Philippine Space Agency (PhilSA). The Road Map shall be finalized within twelve (12) months from the effectivity of this Act and incorporated into the Philippine Development Plan. The Department of Social Welfare and Development shall formulate a program to assist marginalized students.

SEC. 7. *PSOFT Road Map.* The Road Map shall serve as the basis for programs and projects that use digital technology to improve the quality of education. It shall be reviewed and amended every three (3) years.

SEC. 8. *Components of the Road Map.* The Road Map shall include the following:

- (a) Physical and Technological Infrastructure, including universal access to internet for public schools and an annual investment program for ICT devices;
- (b) Enhanced Digital Education Program, including national human resource development and training and development of DepEd personnel;

(c) Digital Reforms in Public School Administration, including an internet safety policy, strengthening the Enhanced Basic Education Information System (EBEIS), and a digital Alternative Learning System; and

(d) Development of Online Learning Portals, including DepEd e-learning resources and a Public Online Library.

SEC. 9. *Universal Access to the Internet in Public Schools.* All public schools shall be provided with internet access to reduce the disparity in computing knowledge and raise educational standards. The Road Map shall explore all options, including telecommunication satellites or fiber optic technology, to ensure connectivity, especially in remote areas.

SEC. 10. *ICT Devices, Tools, and Equipment.* The DepEd shall provide equipment such as personal computers, laptops, tablets, and digital classroom equipment to all public elementary and secondary schools. The Road Map shall include a plan for procuring these devices. Where budgetary constraints exist, the national government shall aim for a ratio of one device for every two learners in Grades 4 to 6 and one for every fifteen learners in Grades 7 to 12. Digital classrooms shall be equipped with digital boards, computers, and reliable internet or hybrid intranet connectivity. The DepEd, with the assistance of the DICT, shall develop an administrative system for schools using hybrid intranet connectivity.

SEC. 11. *PSOFT Pilot Schools.* PSOFT pilot schools shall be established in Metro Manila, Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao in the academic year following the effectivity of this Act. These schools must have full internet access, teachers trained in technology, trained information technology specialists, and provide appropriate ICT devices to every teacher and learner. The DepEd, in coordination with NEDA, shall conduct an impact study on these pilot schools.

SEC. 12. *National Human Resource Development.* Public school students shall be prepared for the Fourth Industrial Revolution by providing them with introductory courses on foundational technology. The DepEd shall determine the content and delivery of these courses. The Road Map shall provide for the establishment of innovation hubs in every school to allow students to hone their skills and carry out technology-based projects. The DepEd shall also endeavor to include subject matters such as respect for personal information, understanding computer security, online gender sensitivity, proper use of social media, and insights into the Cybercrime Prevention Act in its curriculum.

SEC. 13. *Training and Development of DepEd Personnel.* The Road Map shall determine the training and development needs of school administrators, teachers, and personnel with respect to ICT. The DepEd shall establish an Education Technology Division to implement teaching programs that use technology-based instruction aids. The DICT shall support training for teachers, and the National Educators Academy of the Philippines shall implement programs to integrate ICT into classroom learning.

SEC. 14. *DepEd E-Learning Resources.* The DepEd shall develop an online portal with access to learning resources, including e-books, videos, learning materials, and interactive exercises. The DepEd shall maintain its own library to ensure the quality and safety of the information provided.

SEC. 15. *Public Online Library.* The Road Map shall include the establishment of a Public Online Library. The DepEd, DICT, DOST, Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), in partnership with the National Library of the Philippines (NLP) and other agencies, shall develop and maintain this library. The Public Online Library shall be directly connected to the website of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). The DepEd and NLP shall have joint custody over digitized copies of textbooks, while the DepEd and DICT shall jointly manage the library, with DICT ensuring security. Authors of digitized books shall be protected and properly remunerated in accordance with the Intellectual Property Code.

SEC. 16. *Internet Safety Policy.* The DepEd shall formulate and enforce an internet safety policy within six (6) months from the effectivity of this Act. This policy shall include internet safety education, online risk interventions, training for stakeholders, public education campaigns, parental education, and protection against online sexual abuse and exploitation of children.

SEC. 17. *Strengthening the Enhanced Basic Education Information System (EBEIS).* The EBEIS shall serve as the central school database for the DepEd. School administrators shall be trained on and given access to student records for purposes including admissions, discharges, and transfers. Any person who illegally alters, falsifies, or misuses student information shall be sanctioned in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

SEC. 18. *Digital Alternative Learning System.* The DepEd shall institute a digital format for the Alternative Learning System and provide professional training to personnel involved in the program.

SEC. 19. *Partnership Mechanism and Roles of Partners.* The DepEd may coordinate and enter into agreements with other government agencies, local government units, private sector, and non-profit organizations. The Road Map shall define the areas of responsibility of each partner agency. The DepEd shall be the lead agency for implementation. The DICT shall provide advice on ICT matters, assist in hybrid intranet connectivity, and support teacher training. The PhilSA shall advise on the use of space technology. The DOST, CHED, TESDA, and LGUs shall provide support and assistance.

SEC. 20. *Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) for the PSOFT Program.* The DepEd may pursue public-private partnerships under Republic Act No. 6957, as amended. The DepEd shall establish a PPP Unit to coordinate all PPP matters and work with the PPP Center of the Philippines.

SEC. 21. *Authority to Receive Donations.* The DepEd is authorized to accept grants, contributions, donations, or bequests from local and foreign sources to support the implementation of this Act, subject to auditing guidelines. The proceeds may be used to finance the establishment of pilot schools, research and development of emerging digital technologies, provision of laptops and ICT infrastructure, and training and capacity building.

SEC. 22. *Joint Congressional Oversight.* A Joint Congressional Oversight Committee on the PSOFT Program (JOC-PSOFT) is hereby created. It shall be composed of ten (10) members, five (5) from the Senate and five (5) from the House of Representatives, including the chairpersons of the Committees on Basic Education, Arts and Culture, Finance, and

Appropriations. At least one (1) member from the minority party or coalition shall be included from each House.

SEC. 23. *Annual Report.* The DepEd shall submit an annual report to Congress detailing the status of implementation of this Act.

SEC. 24. *Appropriations.* The Secretaries of Education and Information and Communications Technology and the Director General of the PhilSA shall include in their respective programs the funding necessary for the implementation of this Act, to be included in the annual General Appropriations Act. The funding for PSOFT Pilot Schools shall be charged against the current year's appropriation of the DepEd.

SEC. 25. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* The DepEd and DICT, in coordination with other government agencies and private stakeholders, shall promulgate the necessary implementing rules and regulations within one hundred twenty (120) days from the effectivity of this Act.

SEC. 26. *Separability Clause.* If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remaining provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 27. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 28. *Effectivity.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,