

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **5448**



Introduced by **Representative AGATHA PAULA "AGAY" A. CRUZ**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

In the age of artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and virtual classrooms, it is nothing short of tragic that many of our students still study under flickering fluorescent lights, armed with outdated textbooks, and unstable internet connections, if any at all.

The proposed Public Schools of the Future in Technology (PSOFT) Act seeks to close this glaring gap by transforming the Philippine public basic education system into one that is inclusive, technology-enabled, and future-ready. It institutionalizes a clear, achievable, and long-term framework for digital transformation through the PSOFT Road Map and establishes an inter-agency task force to harmonize national efforts in integrating information and communications technology (ICT) into all facets of education.

The bill adopts a phased and fiscally sustainable approach, introduces pilot schools of the future, and mandates the establishment of digital classrooms, innovation hubs, and connectivity infrastructure across the country. It encourages public-private partnerships, cost-sharing with LGUs, and donor participation, recognizing that education in the digital era is a shared national enterprise.

Equally important, PSOFT empowers our educators. It ensures that teachers are not left behind in the digital transition by liberating them from paperwork so that they can focus on their true vocation: teaching and shaping the next generation.

In a world where digital divides often deepen social divides, this measure aims to democratize opportunity through technology. It ensures that no Filipino learner and teacher is left offline, left behind, or left out of the nation's future.

The immediate enactment of this education and nation-building measure is earnestly sought. For to delay its passage is to deny an entire generation the competence to compete.


AGATHA PAULA "AGAY" AGUILAR CRUZ
Representative, Fifth Legislative District of Bulacan



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

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

ARTICLE I
GENERAL PROVISIONS

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

Section 2. Declaration of Policy. –It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote quality, accessible, relevant, and future-ready public basic education by integrating information and communications technology (ICT), digital innovation, and scientific advancement in the teaching and learning processes, school governance, and policy development. Towards this end, the State shall:

- (a) Uphold the constitutional mandate to give the highest priority to education and ensure that technological advancement contributes to inclusive, equitable, and high-quality learning for all Filipino learners;
- (b) Institutionalize a framework for the digital transformation of public basic education that is phased, fiscally sustainable, and socially inclusive, ensuring that no learner or teacher is left behind in the digital transition;
- (c) Promote the responsible, ethical, and secure use of digital technologies in schools through policies that protect learners, uphold data privacy, and foster digital citizenship;
- (d) Strengthen the capacity of teachers, school administrators, and learners to

effectively use and manage ICT resources as instruments for lifelong learning and innovation;

- (e) Encourage collaboration among the national government, local government units (LGUs), the private sector, and civil society in financing, developing, and maintaining digital infrastructure and learning technologies for public schools;
- (f) Foster digital equity by prioritizing connectivity and access to learning tools in remote, disadvantaged, and underserved communities; and
- (g) Advance national competitiveness and technological self-reliance by nurturing a generation of digitally literate, innovative, and globally competent citizens.

Section 3. Objectives. – This Act shall pursue the following objectives:

- (a) Establish an Inter-agency Task Force to craft and implement the Road Map for the PSOFT Program;
- (b) Institutionalize a program for the integration of digital technology and innovation in public basic education through the PSOFT Road Map;
- (c) Identify key components of the PSOFT Road Map; and
- (d) Provide a public-private partnership (PPP) and cost-sharing mechanism to facilitate the attainment of the objectives of the PSOFT Road Map.

Section 4. Definition of Terms. – As used in this Act:

- (a) *Fourth Industrial Revolution* refers to the ongoing automation of traditional manufacturing and industrial practices using modern smart technology by integrating advances in large-scale machine-to-machine communication, artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, the Internet of Things, and other technologies for increased automation, improved communication and self-monitoring, and production of smart machines that can analyze and diagnose issues without the need for human intervention;
- (b) *High Touch, High Tech Framework* refers to a policy framework supported by the United Nations Education Commission that espouses the need for educators to find a balance between the more modern electronically-delivered and digitally-supported method of teaching and the traditional face-to-face mode, the latter being teaching methods that are founded on a teacher’s capability to identify, develop, and improve an individual student’s academic weakness;
- (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, promotes an informed and critical understanding of the Internet, and the education of children and communities about how to prevent or

1 respond to problems or dangers related to the Internet and new media; and

- 2
- 3 (d) *New media* refers to emerging digital, computerized, or network information
- 4 and communication technologies that often have interactive capacities, which
- 5 includes e-mail, instant messaging, text messaging, web sites, blogs, interactive
- 6 gaming, social media, cellphones, and mobile devices.
- 7

8 **ARTICLE II**

9 **PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF THE FUTURE IN TECHNOLOGY**

10

11 **Section 5. Coverage.** – This Act shall apply to all public elementary and secondary

12 schools under the supervision of the Department of Education (DepEd). Local

13 Government Units (LGUs), State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), and other public

14 institutions may voluntarily participate in or support the PSOFT Program through

15 cooperative arrangements with the DepEd.

16

17 **Section 6. Public Schools of the Future in Technology (PSOFT) Program.** – There

18 is hereby instituted a Public Schools of the Future in Technology (PSOFT) Program in all

19 public elementary and secondary schools. The PSOFT Program shall adopt the following

20 principles in administering basic education:

21

- 22 (a) Establish a system for upgrading and replacing outdated technology on a
- 23 phased and needs-based basis;
- 24 (b) Broaden and maximize ICT use to aid learning and school administration;
- 25 (c) Provide technical support to maintain ICT and other technology;
- 26 (d) Train and support teachers and students in the use of digital tools;
- 27 (e) Develop educators' capacity to use ICT effectively in classrooms; and
- 28 (f) Ensure that a balanced integration of modern and traditional teaching methods
- 29 is maintained to achieve optimal learning outcomes.
- 30

31 **Section 7. PSOFT Inter-Agency Task Force (PSOFT-IATF).** – There is hereby

32 created the PSOFT Inter-Agency Task Force (PSOFT-IATF).

33

34 The PSOFT-IATF shall, in consultation with relevant non-government entities,

35 including private companies, non-profit organizations, and private academic institutions,

36 develop the PSOFT Road Map, a comprehensive plan integrating programs and projects

37 to advance digital technology and innovation in public basic education.

38

39 The PSOFT-IATF shall be composed of:

40

- 41 (1) Secretary of the Department of Education (DepEd), as Chairperson;
- 42 (2) Secretary of the Department of Information and Communications Technology
- 43 (DICT);
- 44 (3) Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST);

- (4) Secretary of the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development (DEPDev);
- (5) Secretary of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM); and
- (6) Director General of the Philippine Space Agency (PhilSA).

The PSOFT-IATF shall finalize the PSOFT Road Map within twelve (12) months from the effectivity of this Act, in accordance with national development goals. The PSOFT Road Map shall be incorporated in the Philippine Development Plan.

The Secretaries of the DepEd, DICT, and the Director General of the PhilSA may recommend for the creation of necessary positions as they deem necessary for the effective implementation of this Act, subject to the approval of the DBM, in accordance with civil service laws, rules and regulations.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) shall develop assistance programs for marginalized and disadvantaged students to ensure that their full participation in the PSOFT Program.

Section 8. *PSOFT Road Map.* – The PSOFT Road Map shall serve as the guiding framework for the phased implementation of technology-based reforms in public basic education. It shall be reviewed and updated every three (3) years.

It shall also establish mechanisms for cost-sharing and public-private participation, especially for infrastructure and device procurement.

Section 9. *Components of the PSOFT Road Map.* – The PSOFT Road Map shall include the following components:

- (a) Physical and Technological Infrastructure
 - (1) Universal Access to Internet for Public Schools
 - (2) Annual Investment and Cost-Sharing Program for ICT Devices, Tools, and Equipment
- (b) Enhanced Digital Education Program
 - (1) National Human Resource Development
 - (2) Training and Development of DepEd personnel
- (c) Digital Reforms in Public School Administration
 - (1) Internet Safety Policy
 - (2) Strengthening the Enhanced Basic Education Information System (EBEIS)
 - (3) Digital Alternative Learning System (ALS)
- (d) Development of Online Learning Portals
 - (1) DepEd E-Learning Resources

1 (2) Public Online Library
2

3 **ARTICLE III**
4 **PHYSICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE**
5

6 **Section 10. *Universal Access to the Internet in Public Schools.*** – All public basic
7 education schools shall be provided reliable, secure, and affordable access to the Internet
8 to reduce the digital divide among public school learners and raise educational standards.
9

10 In addition to traditional means of accessing the Internet, such as commercially
11 available connections or existing land-based initiatives of government programs to
12 expand access to the Internet, the PSOFT Road Map shall adopt a phased, needs-based,
13 and cost-efficient approach to connectivity for all public schools, including partnerships
14 with LGUs and private telecommunications providers.
15

16 In order to provide the remote and geographically isolated areas with digital
17 connectivity, the PSOFT Road Map shall explore cost-effective options for establishing a
18 telecommunication satellite or installing fiber optic technology infrastructure as part of
19 the National Government Program under the DICT, DOST, and PhilSA, in partnership
20 with LGUs and private telecommunications providers whenever feasible.
21

22 The necessary funding for the conduct of feasibility studies on the
23 Telecommunication Satellite Connectivity Program, through building, purchasing, or
24 leasing of a satellite, shall be appropriated in accordance with the PSOFT Road Map and
25 may be implemented through PPP or grant-based cooperation mechanisms.
26

27 **Section 11. *ICT Devices, Tools, and Equipment.*** – The DepEd shall provide the
28 following equipment and services in all public elementary and secondary schools:
29 personal computers, tablets, learning devices, digital classroom equipment, and Internet
30 and hybrid intranet connectivity.
31

32 The PSOFT Road Map shall include a phased and cost-shared plan for device
33 procurement. All learners shall be provided with the necessary learning devices as
34 stipulated in the PSOFT Road Map.
35

36 Should budgetary constraints prevent the attainment of such target, the national
37 government shall endeavor to meet a minimum ratio of one (1) device per two (2) learners
38 from Grades 4-6 to ensure that learners can make use of productivity tools in the conduct
39 of regular classes. The national government shall also maintain one (1) device per fifteen
40 (15) learners from Grades 7-12 to ensure that learners can avail of weekly classes on ICT
41 topics that require higher computing power.
42

43 The PSOFT Road Map shall provide for the establishment of functional digital
44 classrooms in all public schools. Digital classrooms shall be equipped with digital boards,

computers, wireless router, multimedia projector, printer, and other necessary tools and devices.

To ensure sustainability, LGUs, private partners, and donor agencies may contribute to the procurement or maintenance of ICT equipment through matching grants or joint-funding schemes approved by the DepEd and DBM.

The PSOFT Road Map shall provide for the establishment of functional and accessible digital classrooms in all public schools. Digital classrooms shall be equipped with digital boards, computers, wireless routers, multimedia projectors, printers, and other necessary tools and devices in accordance with DepEd standards for digital learning environments.

The PSOFT Road Map shall likewise provide for stable, secure, and resilient Internet and hybrid intranet connectivity. Educators in public schools shall make use of ICT and hybrid intranet systems as presentation tools to complement traditional teaching methods. The DepEd shall, with the technical assistance of DICT, develop an administrative system in all public schools utilizing hybrid intranet connectivity to enhance organizational management and streamline front office procedures.

Section 12. PSOFT Pilot Schools. – The national government shall establish PSOFT pilot schools in the academic year following the effectivity of this Act. The pilot schools shall be located in Metro Manila, Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

Each pilot school shall have:

- (a) Full Internet access equipped with wireless technology or such other modes of connectivity that may be developed: *Provided*, That school administrators shall implement Internet content filters and appropriate-use policies to protect learners from harmful online material;
- (b) Adequately trained teachers in all technologies that the pilot schools shall adopt for the use of learners;
- (c) Dedicated information technology specialists to assist faculty and learners; and
- (d) Appropriate ICT devices, tools, and equipment for teachers and learners to ensure optimum satisfaction in both the teaching and learning experiences.

The DepEd shall, in coordination with DEPDev, conduct an impact and feasibility study of the pilot schools to determine its potential in improving the quality of education. The results shall be submitted to Congress within two (2) years from implementation.

Additional pilot schools may be established in the following years, subject to the availability of funds and through cooperative arrangements with LGUs and the private sector.

ARTICLE IV
ENHANCED DIGITAL EDUCATION

Section 13. *National Human Resource Development.* – Students in public elementary and secondary schools must be prepared for the disruptive technologies that come with the Fourth Industrial Revolution. To equip students to meet these challenges, they shall be provided with introductory and context-appropriate courses on foundational technology and digital citizenship, which shall be integrated gradually and flexibly within the K–12 curriculum, consistent with national learning competencies and subject to periodic review. The content and mode of delivery shall be determined by the DepEd.

The PSOFT Road Map shall likewise provide for Innovation and Technology Hubs in every school cluster or district to enable students to develop digital skills through project-based learning.

In addition to the standard ICT curriculum, the DepEd shall endeavor to integrate instruction on:

- (a) Data privacy and protection;
- (b) Understanding cybersecurity and online threats;
- (c) Online gender sensitivity and respectful communication;
- (d) Responsible digital behavior; and
- (e) Respect for intellectual property rights and applicable laws such as R.A. No. 10175 and R.A. No. 8293.

The DepEd shall, in coordination with the DICT, enjoin the use of the latter's ICT Literacy Competency and Development Bureau and its relevant specialized ICT subjects to be utilized as elective courses in Grades 11 to 12.

Section 14. *Training and Development of DepEd Personnel.* – The PSOFT Road Map shall determine the ICT training and development needs of school administrators, teachers, and personnel.

The DepEd shall establish an Educational Technology Division under its central and regional offices to implement teacher-training programs and develop digital instructional materials.

The DICT shall support the DepEd through the ICT Literacy Competency and Development Bureau in the delivery of teacher training and digital literacy programs.

Training shall be conducted in phases, prioritizing geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas, and may be implemented through cost-sharing with LGUs and development partners.

1 The National Educators Academy of the Philippines shall integrate ICT in its
2 continuing professional development programs and highlight the benefits of technology-
3 enabled instruction.

4 5 **ARTICLE V** 6 **DEVELOPMENT OF ONLINE LEARNING PORTALS** 7

8 **Section 15. *DepEd E-Learning Resources.*** – The DepEd shall develop an online
9 portal that provides safe and inclusive access to e-learning materials, including e-books,
10 video lessons, teacher guides, and interactive content.

11
12 All content shall comply with standards for accessibility, child protection, and
13 intellectual-property observance.

14
15 The DepEd may partner with vetted public and private content providers to
16 augment its online library, subject to evaluation and approval by its Bureau of Learning
17 Resources.

18
19 **Section 16. *National Public Online Library.*** – The PSOFT Road Map shall include
20 the establishment of a National Public Online Library (NPOL) jointly managed by the
21 DepEd, DICT, and the National Library of the Philippines (NLP).

22
23 The NPOL shall serve as a centralized repository of digitized educational materials
24 and shall be linked to national knowledge portals, including those of CHED, TESDA, and
25 other partner institutions.

26
27 To ensure sustainability, the DepEd and DICT shall develop an open licensing
28 framework that permits lawful sharing, reproduction, and adaptation of materials for
29 educational purposes.

30 31 **ARTICLE VI** 32 **DIGITAL REFORM IN PUBLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION** 33

34 **Section 17. *Internet Safety Policy.*** – Within six (6) months after the effectivity of
35 this Act, the DepEd shall formulate and enforce an Internet Safety Policy to ensure safe,
36 ethical, and age-appropriate online engagement of learners.

37
38 The policy shall include:

- 39
40 (a) Development and implementation of Internet safety education, including safe
41 access to educational technology, multimedia and interactive applications, and
42 online resources;
43 (b) Development of online risk prevention for learners and children;
44 (c) Training and support to stakeholders on peer-driven Internet safety education

- 1 initiatives;
- 2 (d) Undertaking of researches on online risks to form the bases for Internet safety
- 3 education syllabi and instructional material development;
- 4 (e) Development and implementation of a public education campaign to promote
- 5 awareness of online risks to learners and children;
- 6 (f) Education of parents to augment school initiatives on safe Internet use; and
- 7 (g) Protection against online sexual abuse and exploitation of children pursuant to
- 8 Republic Act No. 11930 or the “Anti-Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of
- 9 Children Act”.

10

11 The Internet Safety Policy shall be mandatory for all public basic education

12 institutions and shall serve as a model for adoption by private schools.

13

14 **Section 18. *Strengthening the Enhanced Basic Education Information System***

15 **(EBEIS).** – The DepEd shall enhance the EBEIS as the central database for student records

16 and school management. School administrators and authorized personnel shall be trained

17 on EBEIS operation and data security.

18

19 Data collection and processing shall strictly comply with R.A. No. 10173 (Data

20 Privacy Act of 2012) and related issuances of the National Privacy Commission. Any

21 person who unlawfully alters, discloses, or misuses student data in the EBEIS shall be

22 subject to administrative, civil, and criminal liability under existing laws.

23

24 **Section 19. *Digital Alternative Learning System.*** – The DepEd shall develop a

25 digital format of the ALS under the PSOFT Road Map. To attain this objective, the DepEd

26 shall provide professional training to teachers and non-teaching personnel involved in

27 this program and formulate the necessary guidelines for its implementation.

28

29 ARTICLE VII

30 PARTNERSHIP MECHANISM AND ROLES OF PARTNERS

31

32 **Section 20. *Partnership Mechanism and Roles of Partners.*** – In the furtherance of

33 the PSOFT Road Map, the DepEd may coordinate and enter into agreements or contracts

34 with other government agencies, LGUs, private and non-profit institutions, civil society

35 organizations, and industry partners.

36

37 The PSOFT Road Map shall define and delineate the areas of responsibility of

38 government agencies in conformity with their respective charters and mandates. For

39 purposes of this Act, the following shall be observed:

40

- 41 (a) The DepEd shall be the lead government agency, responsible for the proper
- 42 and effective implementation of this Act and the overall coordination and
- 43 monitoring of PSOFT projects and programs;
- 44

- 1 (b) The DICT shall provide advice on matters relating to ICT and closely
2 coordinate and collaborate in the implementation of this Act. It shall undertake
3 the installation, maintenance, and operation of hybrid intranet connectivity in
4 all public basic education schools, provide an efficient and reliable broadband
5 connection, assist in the implementation of training and development for
6 teachers concerning ICT and ICT-assisted instructions, and coordinate and
7 collaborate in the provision of digital connectivity in public schools;
8
- 9 (c) The PhilSA shall advise and collaborate with DepEd on the use of space
10 technology and relevant space-enabled services to implement the provisions of
11 this Act;
12
- 13 (d) The DOST, CHED, TESDA, Department of the Interior and Local Government,
14 NLP, NBDB, PSA, Philippine Creative Industries Development Council, the
15 LGUs, and other concerned government agencies mentioned in this Act shall
16 provide support and assistance consistent with their charters; and
17
- 18 (e) The Department of Finance (DOF), NEDA, and DBM shall assist DepEd in
19 identifying cost-sharing, grant, and PPP modalities for implementation.
20

21 **Section 21. *Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) for the PSOFT Program.*** – The
22 DepEd may pursue PPPs under R.A. No. 6957, as amended by R.A. No. 7718, or under
23 any subsequent law governing PPPs.
24

25 The DepEd shall, in consultation with the PPP Center of the Philippines, establish
26 a PSOFT PPP Unit to coordinate all matters PPP-related activities, in accordance with the
27 PSOFT Road Map. The PPP Unit shall prioritize projects that promote equitable access to
28 technology, particularly in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas, and may
29 engage in joint ventures, lease arrangements, or build-operate-transfer modalities.
30

31 **ARTICLE VIII**

32 **AUTHORITY TO RECEIVE DONATIONS**

33

34 **Section 22. *Authority to Receive Donations.*** – The DepEd is authorized to accept
35 grants, contributions, donations, endowments, or bequests in cash or in kind from local
36 and foreign sources in support of the PSOFT Program, subject to government auditing
37 rules.
38

39 The proceeds of such grants, contributions, donations, endowments, or bequests
40 shall be used to finance the following:
41

- 42 (a) Establishment and expansion of PSOFT pilot schools;
43 (b) Research, development, and utilization of emerging digital technologies;
44 (c) Provision of computers, laptops, and improvement of ICT infrastructure,

- 1 including hardware and Internet connectivity;
2 (d) Teacher training and capacity building; and
3 (e) Other activities necessary to carry out the objectives of this Act.
4

5 All donations shall be recorded and published annually on the DepEd
6 transparency portal.
7

8 **ARTICLE IX** 9 **OVERSIGHT AND MONITORING** 10

11 **Section 23. *Joint Congressional Oversight.*** – Upon the effectivity of this Act, a Joint
12 Oversight Committee on the PSOFT Program (JOC-PSOFT) is hereby constituted to
13 oversee the implementation of this Act and ensure alignment with national education and
14 ICT development goals.
15

16 The JOC-PSOFT shall be composed of ten (10) members with the chairpersons of
17 the Committee on Basic Education, Arts and Culture and the Committee on Finance of
18 the Senate, and the Committee on Basic Education and Culture and the Committee on
19 Appropriations of the House of Representatives as members and three (3) additional
20 members from each House to be designated by the Senate President and the Speaker of
21 the House of Representatives, respectively. The members of the Committee from each
22 House shall have at least one (1) member from the minority.
23

24 **Section 24. *Annual Report.*** – The DepEd shall submit a report to both Houses of
25 Congress, an Annual Report on the Implementation of the PSOFT Program, containing:
26

- 27 (a) Status of program implementation;
28 (b) Performance indicators and outcomes;
29 (c) Financial utilization and cost-sharing details; and
30 (d) Recommendations for legislative or policy improvements.
31

32 **ARTICLE X** 33 **FINAL PROVISIONS** 34

35 **Section 25. *Appropriations.*** – The Secretaries of Education and Information and
36 Communications Technology and the Director General of PHiLSA shall include in their
37 annual programs the implementation of this Act, subject to the phased and prioritized
38 rollout defined in the PSOFT Road Map.
39

40 The funding for the pilot implementation and priority projects shall be charged
41 against the current appropriations of the DepEd and augmented through cost-sharing
42 with LGUs, grants, or PPP arrangements.
43

44 **Section 26. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within one hundred-twenty
45 (120) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DepEd and DICT shall, in coordination with

1 concerned agencies and stakeholders, promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for
2 the effective implementation of this Act. The IRR shall explicitly provide timelines for
3 each phase of implementation, monitoring indicators, and provisions for private sector
4 participation.
5

6 **Section 27. *Separability Clause.*** – If any part or provision of this Act is held
7 unconstitutional or invalid, the remainder thereof not otherwise affected shall remain in
8 full force and effect.
9

10 **Section 28. *Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules, and
11 regulations, or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby
12 repealed or modified accordingly.
13

14 **Section 29. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
15 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.
16

17 *Approved,*