

**Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Batasan Hills, Quezon City**

**Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session**

HOUSE BILL NO. 5712



**Introduced by Honorable Representatives
DADAH KIRAM ISMULA (Akbayan Partylist)
JOSE MANUEL TADEO "CHEL" I. DIOKNO (Akbayan Partylist)
PERCIVAL V. CENDAÑA (Akbayan Partylist)
ARLENE "KAKA" J. BAG-AO (Dinagat Islands)**

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING SCHOLARSHIP AND RETURN SERVICE PROGRAM
FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES PURSUING TEACHER EDUCATION, AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

E X P L A N A T O R Y N O T E

Education is a fundamental Human Right. This right is protected by the Constitution and reinforced through various laws and programs aimed at making education more inclusive and accessible.

In 1997, the government passed the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA), which recognizes the rights of Indigenous Peoples (IPs), including their right to culturally appropriate education. The Philippines also adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), further affirming its commitment to protect and promote IP rights.

In 2015, Republic Act No. 10687, known as the Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (UniFAST) Act, was enacted to unify and streamline all government-funded student financial assistance programs. This was followed by the enactment of Republic Act No. 10931, or the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, signed into law in 2017.

While these laws have significantly improved access to higher education, they have not fully addressed the unique challenges faced by Indigenous Students. Many continue to struggle with hidden costs of education such as, accommodation, meals, transportation, uniforms, and even review and licensure fees, expenses that often prevent them from completing their studies. In addition, Indigenous Peoples face persistent barriers to education, including poverty, remote living conditions, displacement due to armed conflict, and language differences that hinder their learning and participation.

This bill aims to address these challenges by providing full scholarships to Indigenous students pursuing degrees in Teacher Education. These scholars will be equipped to return to their communities as educators, helping to expand access to culturally responsive and inclusive education, thus empowering Indigenous communities and upholding their Right to Education.

Thus, the immediate approval of this Bill is earnestly sought.



DADAN KIRAM ISMULA
Akbayan Representative



JOSE MANUEL TADEO
"CHEL" I. DIOKNO
Akbayan Representative



PERCIVAL V. CENDAÑA
Akbayan Representative



KAKA J. BAG-AO
Dinagat Islands Representative

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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 *"Katutubong Guro Act"*.

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is the policy of the State to recognize, respect, and uphold the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs), including their fundamental right to accessible and inclusive education.

SEC. 3. Definition of Terms. - For purposes of this Act, the following terms shall mean:

- (a) *Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples* – refers to a group of people or homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by other, who have continuously lived as organized community on communally bounded and defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied, possessed customs, tradition and other distinctive cultural traits, or who have, through resistance to political, social and cultural inroads of colonization, non-indigenous religions and culture, became historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos. ICCs/IPs shall likewise include peoples who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, at the time of conquest or colonization, or at the time of inroads of non-indigenous religions and cultures, or the establishment of present state boundaries, who retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and

political institutions, but who may have been displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled outside their ancestral domains;

(b) ***Indigenous Teacher-Scholar*** - refers to a qualified Indigenous Peoples (IP) student who has been awarded scholarship under the Teacher's Education Scholarship and Return Service Program.

(c) ***Teacher*** – refers to all persons engaged in classroom teaching, in any level of instruction, on full-time basis, including guidance counselors, school librarians, industrial arts or vocational instructors, and all other persons performing supervisory and/or administrative functions in all schools, colleges and universities operated by the Government or its political subdivisions; but shall not include school nurses, school physicians, school dentists, and other school employees.; and

(d) ***Teacher Education Program*** - refers to recognized academic programs, such as undergraduate and graduate degree programs, including certificate of teaching education or its equivalent, that enable pre-service teachers to meet the requirements for entry into the teaching profession and provide in-service teachers with the knowledge, skills and practical experience to strengthen their professional practice; and

SEC. 4. *Establishment of the Teacher's Education Scholarship and Return Service Program for Indigenous Peoples.* - There shall be established a *Teacher's Scholarship and Return Service Program* (TESRSP) for Indigenous Peoples (IP) students enrolled in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), or in partner Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) located in regions, provinces, or cities where no SUCs offer a Teacher's Education program. Provided, that the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) may designate more than one (1) partner Higher Education Institution (HEI) in a region, provinces, or cities including areas where SUCs already offer Teacher Education programs, as deemed necessary.

In all cases, priority in the allocation of scholarship slots shall be given to qualified applicants from Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs) that have no Indigenous Teachers or have a low number of Indigenous Teachers, to ensure the assignment of at least one (1) Indigenous Teacher in every Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs) across the country.

SEC. 5. Coverage. - The TESRSP established under this Act shall be made available to Indigenous Peoples students who want to pursue a degree in Teacher Education.

The student financial assistance for the TESRSP shall include the following:

- (a) Free tuition and other school fees;
- (b) Allowance for prescribed books, supplies and equipment;
- (c) One-time grant for a laptop and printing equipment;
- (d) Medical Insurance;
- (e) Clothing or uniform allowance;
- (f) Allowance for dormitory or boarding house accommodation;
- (g) Transportation allowance;
- (h) Financial assistance during mandatory teaching practicum;
- (i) Licensure exam for teacher's board review fees;
- (j) License fees; and
- (k) Other education-related miscellaneous subsistence or living allowances.

SEC. 6. Qualification Requirements. - To qualify for the Indigenous TESRSP, an applicant must meet the following qualifications:

- (a) Be a Filipino citizen residing in the Philippines;
- (b) Belong to an Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs);
- (c) Be any of the following:
 - i. A senior high school graduate or graduating student;
 - ii. A graduate of the Alternative Learning System (ALS); or
 - iii. An incoming second-year or higher-level student enrolled in a Teacher Education program, provided they meet the academic and retention requirements of their institution; and
- (d) Have passed the entrance examination and fulfilled all admission requirements of the State University or Colleges (SUC) or Private Higher Education Institution (PHEI) where they intend to enroll, including other requirements set by CHED.

SEC. 7. Conditions for the Grant of Scholarship. – Indigenous students accepted to the TESRSP shall be subject to the following conditions:

- (a) Must sign a scholarship agreement stating the terms and conditions of the scholarship on a form prescribed by the CHED, in accordance with this act.

- 92 (b) Must carry the full academic load required per semester by the SUC or PHEI,
93 and shall not drop a course which will result in underloading. However,
94 dropping a course that leads to underloading may be allowed for valid reasons,
95 subject to CHED's evaluation and approval.
96
- 97 (c) Must complete the entire Teacher Education Program within the prescribed
98 period set by the SUC or PHEI, in accordance with their retention policies.
99 Scholars may be allowed to defer enrollment or take a leave of absence for
100 valid reasons, either before initial enrollment or during the course of the
101 program, subject to CHED's evaluation and approval.
102
- 103 (d) Must take the Licensure Examination for Teachers within two (2) years after
104 graduation. However, the IP TESRSP scholar may defer taking the Licensure
105 examination for valid reasons, subject to CHED's evaluation and approval; and
106
- 107 (e) Must render return service as provided under Section 9 of this Act.
108

109 Any scholar who fails to pass the licensure examination on their first attempt shall bear
110 all necessary expenses for any succeeding professional licensure examinations.
111

112 **SEC. 8. Disqualifications.** - The scholarship grant shall be terminated, and the IP
113 teacher-scholar scholar shall repay the full cost of scholarship and related benefits
114 received, including all the expenses incurred during the participation in the scholarship
115 program in case of the following circumstances:

- 116 (a) If the scholar accepts another scholarship from other government or private
117 agency or entity while enjoying the benefits under this Act;
118
- 119 (b) If the scholar fails to meet the academic requirements or to complete the
120 course within the prescribed period without a valid cause as may be determined
121 by the SUC or PHEI, or the CHED, such as, but not limited to, absence without
122 notice, willful neglect or other causes within the control of the scholar;
123
- 124 (c) If the scholar fails to pass the Licensure Examination for teachers (LET) within
125 five (5) years from the time the scholar has completed the Teacher's Education
126 program: Provided, scholars may opt to render alternative service in the public
127 education system, such as teaching in day care centers, public schools or
128 participating in government-led education programs, for a period equivalent to
129 the required return service.; and

(d) While being a scholar, the scholar commits gross misconduct in a manner that would bring significant damage to the SUC or PHEI concerned or to the Indigenous Peoples Community as a whole.

SEC. 9. *Mandatory Return Service and Integration of the Scholar into the Department of Education.* - Upon passing the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) administered by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) and obtaining a license to practice the teaching profession, the IP Teacher-Scholar shall be integrated into the Department of Education (DepEd) teaching service system.

To ensure proper placement and support, DepEd, shall appoint scholars to appropriate Plantilla positions that align with their qualifications and competencies. Priority shall be given to placements in schools serving ICCs. IP Teacher-scholar shall be granted the corresponding civil service rank, salary, and related benefits.

The IP Teacher-scholar shall be assigned to a public school or any government accredited educational facility located in their hometown. If no placement is available in the hometown, the IP teacher-scholar shall be deployed to an underserved municipality within their home province, or to the nearest priority area identified by DepEd.

Priority areas include municipalities or provinces with a shortage of IP teachers. However, IP teacher-scholars shall not be required to serve in any area where there is a credible threat to their life or security.

Each IP teacher-scholar shall render a minimum of one (1) year of service for every year of scholarship received. Full-time teaching in public institutions, particularly in underserved and Indigenous Cultural Communities, shall count toward fulfilling this obligation. Upon completion of the required return service, the IP teacher-scholar shall have the option to remain in, or retain, their teaching position within the community they served.

SEC. 10. *Sanctions.* – An IP teacher-scholar who has availed the TESRSP but fails or refuses to comply with the mandatory return service requirement under this Act, without valid reason, shall be required to reimburse the full cost of the scholarship, including benefits, and all expenses plus legal interest incurred through participation in the TESRSP.

In cases where the refusal or failure to comply is due to valid reasons, including but not limited to force majeure, severe illness, natural disasters, armed conflict, displacement due to calamities, or other circumstances beyond the scholar's control, the scholar may be exempted from reimbursement obligations, subject to CHED's evaluation and approval.

CHED shall determine the validity of the reason and may, as it deems proper, recommend alternative arrangements, deferment, or partial fulfillment of the return service requirement.

SEC. 11. *Training While Serving the Mandatory Return Service.* – The Commission on Higher Education (CHED), in coordination with the DepEd, State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs), shall implement continuous training programs for IP teacher-scholars while they are rendering their mandatory return service under this Act. These programs must be culturally responsive and inclusive of ICCs/IPs culture, integrating local languages, traditions, and community-specific educational needs.

SEC. 12. *Role of the CHED.* - The CHED shall perform the following functions in the implementation of the TESRSP:

- (a) Conduct regular information dissemination and recruitment campaigns in SUCs and PHEIs to ensure an adequate number of culturally competent teachers serving Indigenous communities across all regions.;
- (b) Review, modify, and enhance teacher education curriculum standards to prepare graduates for service in IP communities, integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, mother tongue-based multilingual education, and culturally responsive pedagogy.;
- (c) Together with the DepEd, develop programs for the continuous training and professional development of teacher-scholars while serving their mandatory return service under this Act.;
- (d) Coordinate with DepEd, SUCs, and PHEIs to ensure the integration of teacher-scholars into the public education system, with priority deployment in Indigenous Peoples communities.;
- (e) Formulate, promulgate, disseminate, and implement the necessary policies, standards, guidelines, and rules and regulations for the effective implementation of the IP-TESRSP.;
- (f) Develop strategies to improve the quality of teacher education programs and implement a system of quality assurance for SUCs and PHEIs offering IP-focused teacher education.;

(g) Ensure the timely and adequate release of funds to partner SUCs and PHEIs for the implementation of the IP-TESRSP, and monitor the proper disbursement of these funds to scholar-beneficiaries; and

(h) Recommend, in coordination with partner SUCs and PHEIs, to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), the amount necessary for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 13. *Role of SUCs and PHEIs.* - The SUCs and PHEIs shall perform the following functions in the implementation of the TESRSP:

(a) Monitor the academic progress of all IP teacher-scholars, identify those with academic challenges, and provide appropriate counseling and support to improve performance.;

(b) Coordinate with CHED to ensure the timely release and accurate distribution of allowances and other benefits to IP teacher-scholars.

(c) Submit annual reports to CHED on the performance of IP teacher-scholars and other relevant data regarding the implementation of the TESRSP.

(d) Assist CHED in conducting regular information dissemination and recruitment activities for the TESRSP.

(e) Review, modify, and enhance the teacher education curriculum to prepare scholars for service in Indigenous communities, ensuring alignment with current educational standards and cultural contexts.

(f) Recommend strategies to CHED and DepEd to improve the implementation and impact of the TESRSP.

(g) Conduct tracer studies to track the deployment and service of their respective IP teacher-scholars after graduation and submit the findings to CHED.

(h) Recommend to CHED and DBM the budget necessary to implement the TESRSP in their institutions, based on projected capacity and funding needs.

(i) Perform such other functions as may be deemed necessary to ensure the success and sustainability of the TESRSP.

SEC. 14. Appropriations. - This Act shall be implemented initially within the framework of the CHED's budget for the fiscal year in which it is enacted into law. Thereafter, such amounts as may be necessary for its continued implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act under the budget of the CHED.

SEC. 15. Implementing Rules and Regulations. - Within one hundred twenty (120) days from the effectivity of this Act, the CHED, in coordination with the DepEd, and in consultation with the Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges (PASUC), Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations (COCOPEA), League of Municipalities of the Philippines, National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), DBM, SUCs, PHEIs, associations of teacher education institutions, organizations of education scholars, and other stakeholders, must formulate and issue the rules and regulations necessary to fully implement the provisions of this Act.

Provided, That the absence of the implementing rules and regulations shall not affect the effectivity of this Act and the grant of benefits provided therein.

SEC. 16. Separability Clause. - If any part or provisions of this Act shall be declared invalid or unconstitutional, the other parts or provisions hereof that are not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 17. Repealing Clause. - All laws, decrees, or rules inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 18. Effectivity. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,