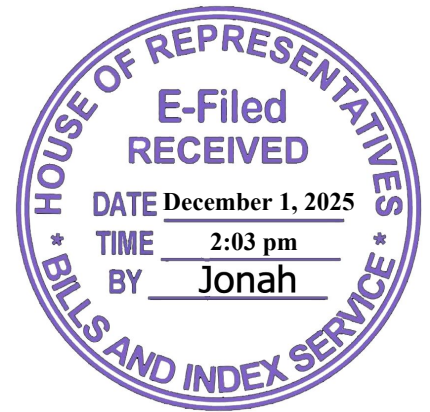


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 6498



Introduced by:

HON. CHRISTOPHERSON "COCO" M. YAP

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill establishes the Public Schools of the Future in Technology Act, which creates a unified national program for integrating digital technology into public basic education. Its purpose is to secure learning continuity during disruptions, elevate teaching and learning quality, and prepare Filipino students with the digital competencies required in a modern economy.

The measure builds on existing education and digital governance policies. It advances the learner centered goals of the K to 12 framework and the Enhanced Basic Education Act, while embedding education services within secure and interoperable platforms envisioned by the E Governance Act and the Data Privacy Act. The COVID nineteen pandemic revealed significant gaps in connectivity, devices, teacher skills, accessible learning materials, and data systems, underscoring the need for a permanent and standards driven program rather than temporary, crisis specific responses.

The program strengthens digital infrastructure, supports continuous teacher development in digital pedagogy, curates inclusive and localized digital content, and promotes data informed interventions for learners who need additional support. It also establishes interoperable data standards aligned with privacy and cybersecurity requirements and encourages collaboration across government and with the private sector in the provision of connectivity, devices, content, and research.

By institutionalizing this program, Congress will reinforce continuity of learning, reduce inequities, and improve student outcomes while cultivating a digitally capable workforce. The measure operationalizes the mandate for quality and future ready

basic education under Republic Act 10533 and integrates public education into an interoperable, privacy compliant digital ecosystem under Republic Act 12254.

In the Nineteenth Congress, the House of Representatives approved a similar measure on Third Reading as House Bill No. 6572 on January 31, 2023.

In view of the foregoing, **ug sa ngalan sa SERBISYONG TINUORAY**, the undersigned respectfully requests the immediate passage of this measure.


CHRISTOPHERSON "COCO" M. YAP
Representative, Second District of Southern Leyte

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HON. CHRISTOPHERSON “COCO” M. YAP

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

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.”

ARTICLE I
POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. — Cognizant of the necessity of adopting innovative technologies to attain development in more positive and transformative ways, the State shall:

- (a) Uphold the constitutional mandate to accord the highest priority to quality education by providing appropriate mechanisms and resources to ensure the enjoyment of quality education and services by all Filipino students, regardless of social and economic status;
- (b) Harness technological innovations, approaches, and instruments in the teaching and learning processes that would enhance the performance of students and teachers;

- (c) Provide all learners with the opportunity to enhance individual capabilities and knowledge through information and communications technology (ICT);
- (d) Create a system that shall promote and regulate the use of digital technology in public education;
- (e) Enhance the learning experience of students by providing them access to digitized copies of necessary reference materials and digital and online content through the use of ICT and other related technologies for the advancement of education in the country;
- (f) Provide an accessible complementary mode of learning to allow students to continue their education during national health emergencies;
- (g) Encourage the wider participation of private groups, local government units (LGUs), and community-based organizations in content generation and the utilization of the broader spheres of science and technology; and
- (h) Promote public and private partnership in improving access to quality education and lifelong learning.

SECTION 3. Objectives. — This Act shall pursue the following objectives:

- (a) Establish an Interagency Taskforce to craft and implement the road map for the PSOFT;
- (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) mechanism to facilitate the attainment of the objectives of the PSOFT Road Map.

ARTICLE II

DEFINITION OF TERMS

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 respond to problems or dangers related to the Internet and new media; and
- (d) *New media* – refers to emerging digital, computerized, or network information and communication technologies that often have interactive capacities, which includes e-mail, instant messaging, text messaging, web sites, blogs, interactive gaming, social media, cellphones, and mobile devices.

ARTICLE III

PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF THE FUTURE IN TECHNOLOGY

SECTION 5. Public Schools of the Future in Technology (PSOFT) Program. — There is hereby instituted a PSOFT Program in all public elementary and secondary schools.

The PSOFT Program shall adopt the following principles upon administering basic education in the public school system:

- (a) Establish a system of upgrading and replacing outdated technology;
- (b) Broaden and maximize the use of ICT to aid learning;

- (c) Provide technical support to maintain ICT and other technology;
- (d) Train and support teachers and students on ICT and other technology;
- (e) Develop educators to use ICT effectively in the classroom; and
- (f) Ensure that the balance between modern and traditional methods of teaching are equally utilized to obtain optimum learning outcomes.

SECTION 6. Creation of the PSOFT Inter-Agency Task Force (PSOFT-IATF). — There is hereby created the PSOFT-IATF.

The PSOFT-IATF shall, in consultation with concerned non-government entities, including private companies, non-profit organizations, and private education institutions, develop the PSOFT Road Map, a consolidation of development plans, programs, and projects to be implemented by various departments and agencies of the national government for the purpose of advancing digital technology and innovation in public basic education.

The PSOFT-IATF shall be composed of the Secretary of the Department of Education (DepEd) as Chairperson and the following as members: (1) Secretary of the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT); (2) Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST); (3) Secretary of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA); (4) Secretary of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM); and (5) 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 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 shall formulate a program extending assistance to marginalized and disadvantaged students to ensure that they may fully participate in the PSOFT Road Map.

SECTION 7. PSOFT Road Map. — The PSOFT Road Map shall serve as the basis for programs and projects aimed at improving the quality of education through the use of digital technology.

The PSOFT Road Map shall be subject to review and amendment, if necessary, every three (3) years.

SECTION 8. Components of the Roadmap. — The The PSOFT Road Map shall include the following:

(a) Physical and Technological Infrastructure

- (1) Universal Access to Internet for Public Schools
- (2) Annual Investment 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
- (2) Public Online Library

ARTICLE IV
PHYSICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

SECTION 9. Universal Access to the Internet in Public Schools. — All public basic education schools shall be provided access to the Internet for the purpose of reducing the disparity in computing and information technology knowledge among public school learners and raising the standards of Philippine education.

In addition to traditional means of accessing the Internet, such as commercially available connections or existing land-based initiatives of government programs to

expand access to the Internet, the PSOFT Road Map shall exhaust all options in ensuring internet connectivity for all public schools.

In order to provide the remote areas with digital connectivity, the PSOFT Road Map shall provide cost-effective options for establishing a telecommunication satellite or installing fiber optic technology infrastructure as part of the National Government Program under the DICT, DOST, and PhilSA.

The necessary funding for the conduct of studies to determine the feasibility of implementing a Telecommunication Satellite Program, through building, purchasing, or leasing of a satellite, shall be appropriated in accordance with the PSOFT Road Map.

SECTION 10. ICT Devices, Tools, and Equipment. — The DepEd shall provide the following equipment and services in all public elementary and secondary schools: personal computers (PCs), laptops, tablets, learning devices, digital classroom equipment, and internet and hybrid intranet connectivity.

The PSOFT Road Map shall include a plan for the procurement of PCs, laptops or tablets for the educational needs of all elementary and secondary public schools. All learners shall be provided with the necessary learning devices as stipulated in the PSOFT Road Map. Should budgetary constraints prevent the attainment of such target, the national government shall endeavor to meet a ratio of one (1) device for every two (2) learners from Grades 4-6 to ensure that learners can make use of productivity tools in the conduct of regular classes. The national government shall also maintain one (1) device for every fifteen (15) learners from Grades 7-12 to ensure that learners can avail of weekly classes on ICT topics that require higher computing power.

The PSOFT Road Map shall provide for the establishment of functional digital 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.

The PSOFT Road Map shall likewise provide for stable and reliable internet and hybrid intranet connectivity. Educators in public schools shall make use of ICT and hybrid intranet connectivity 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 in order to enhance organizational management and administration, and streamline front office procedures.

SECTION 11. 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 and shall fully comply with the requirements of Article IV in this Act, as follows:

- (a) The pilot school shall have full, unrestricted access to the internet and for this purpose shall be equipped with wireless technology or such other modes of connectivity that may be developed: *Provided*, That school administrators shall closely supervise the access of learners to content in order to protect them from inappropriate, violent, or immoral material;
- (b) Teachers shall be adequately trained in all technologies that the pilot schools shall adopt for the use of learners;
- (c) All pilot schools shall employ trained information technology specialists to assist faculty and learners; and
- (d) All pilot schools shall provide each teacher and learner with the appropriate ICT devices, tools, and equipment to ensure optimum satisfaction in both the teaching and learning experiences.

The DepEd shall, in coordination with NEDA, conduct an impact study of the pilot schools to determine its potential in improving the quality of education. Additional pilot schools may be established in the following years, subject to the availability of funds and through cooperative arrangements with LGUs and the public sector.

ARTICLE V

ENHANCED DIGITAL EDUCATION

SECTION 12. 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 and have a significant impact on skills requirements and on creating a range of opportunities for them in the future.

To better equip students to overcome the challenges enabled by ever-increasing technological change and to improve student engagement and achievement, they shall be provided with introductory courses on foundational technology that will enhance their future competencies. The DepEd shall determine the content and mode of

delivery of such foundational technology courses and shall introduce them in the curriculum in the school year following the effectivity of this Act.

To allow students to acquire the appropriate aptitudes and competencies on these courses, the PSOFT Road Map shall provide for the establishment of innovation hubs in every school to enable students to hone their skills and techniques using a wide variety of physical and digital tools and equipment. The innovation hubs shall allow teachers and learners to carry out technology-based projects that address local problems in the community.

In addition to the standard ICT curriculum taught for basic education in the public schools, the DepEd shall endeavor to include the following subject matters in its curriculum:

- (a) Respect for and protection of personal information on the Internet;
- (b) Understanding computer security systems;
- (c) Online gender sensitivity;
- (d) Proper use of social media and social networking;
- (e) Responsible and ethical use of the Internet, photographic equipment, smart phones, and other equipment of similar nature;
- (f) Insights of Republic Act No. 10175, or the “Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012” and other related legislation; and
- (g) Respect for intellectual property rights.

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 11-12.

SECTION 13. Training and Development of DepEd Personnel. — The PSOFT Road Map shall determine the training and development needs of school administrators, teachers, and personnel with respect to ICT.

To ensure that teachers are technologically knowledgeable and well-equipped with the right aptitudes and competencies, the DepEd shall establish an Education Technology Division that shall implement teaching programs and utilize technology-based instruction aids for the effective and efficient performance of teachers under the PSOFT Road Map. The DICT shall extend its support in the implementation of training for teachers on ICT, through its ICT Literacy Competency and Development Bureau.

The National Educators Academy of the Philippines shall carry out training programs for educators in public schools and integrate ICT in classroom learning and instruction to highlight the professional and educational benefits that may be derived from personally investing in ICT.

ARTICLE VI

DEVELOPMENT OF ONLINE LEARNING PORTALS

SECTION 14. DepEd E-Learning Resources. — The DepEd shall develop an online portal that provides access or links to Internet learning resources. The online portal shall include the following: e-books and videos, learning materials and teachers guides, materials for senior high school subjects ranging from math, disaster readiness, and science, materials on science, agriculture, creative industries, livelihood and information technology, interactive exercises on math, science, history, and economics.

The DepEd shall develop its own library to ensure the quality and safety of knowledge and information made available to learners.

SECTION 15. Public Online Library. — The PSOFT Road Map shall include the establishment of the Public Online Library.

The DepEd, DICT, DOST, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) shall, in partnership with the National Library of the Philippines (NLP), the National Book Development Board (NBDB), and other concerned government agencies, develop and maintain the Public Online Library, a repository of educational materials and digitized copies of books and publications suitable for Filipino students and researchers that shall enrich the learning experience by complementing the textbooks and reference materials prescribed for the elementary and secondary levels. The Public Online Library shall be directly connected to the website of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). The DepEd and the NLP shall have joint custody over the digitized copies of textbooks and references in the Public Online Library which shall be jointly managed by the DepEd and the DICT. In this regard, the DICT shall ensure the security of the online repository system to guarantee its integrity.

The DepEd may solicit additional reference materials and publications from the NLP, other agencies of the government, and the private sector to augment its resources.

The authors of the digitized books and publications shall be covered by the protection provided for in R.A. No. 8293, as amended, otherwise known as the “Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines.” The DepEd and all concerned agencies shall ensure that the authors of the digitized books and publications shall be properly remunerated in accordance with law.

ARTICLE VII

DIGITAL REFORM IN PUBLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

SECTION 16. Internet Safety Policy. — To advance the objective of providing a safe and secured education program under the PSOFT Road Map, the DepEd shall, within six (6) months after the effectivity of this Act, formulate and enforce an internet safety policy in order to regulate students’ access to content especially against visual depictions that are obscene, pornographic, and harmful to minors. In this regard, the internet safety policy shall be implemented to accomplish the following objectives:

- (a) Development and implementation of Internet safety education, including safe access to educational technology, multimedia and interactive applications, and online resources;
- (b) Development of online risk interventions for learners and children;
- (c) Training and support to stakeholders on peer-driven Internet safety education initiatives;
- (d) Undertaking of researches on online risks to form the bases for Internet safety education syllabi and instructional material development;
- (e) Development and implementation of a public education campaign to promote awareness of online risks to learners and children;
- (f) Education of parents to augment school initiatives on safe Internet use; and
- (g) Protection against online sexual abuse and exploitation of children pursuant to Republic Act No. 11930 or the “Anti-Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children Act”.

SECTION 17. Strengthening the Enhanced Basic Education Information System (EBEIS). — The EBEIS shall be the central school database of the DepEd and it shall contain pertinent personal data and school records of students. It shall be continually improved to ensure the efficient management of school records.

School administrators and personnel shall be trained on the operation and access of the EBEIS and be given access to student records and other related data in the EBEIS such as a student’s school attendance record, records pertaining to the character of a

student, the level of the student's digital literacy and proficiency, grade level, examination scores, school performance, immunization and health records, among others, for purposes of recording student biographical data, handling admissions and discharges, and transferring to other schools.

Any person who is caught illegally altering, falsifying, or misusing student information in the EBEIS shall be sanctioned in accordance with R.A. No. 10173, otherwise known as the "Data Privacy Act of 2012."

SECTION 18. Digital Alternative Learning System. — The DepEd shall institute a digital format of the ALS in the PSOFT Road Map. To attain this objective, the DepEd shall provide professional training to teachers and non-teaching personnel involved in this program and formulate the necessary guidelines for its implementation.

ARTICLE VIII

PARTNERSHIP MECHANISM AND ROLES OF PARTNERS

SECTION 19. Partnership Mechanism and Roles of Partners. — In the furtherance of the PSOFT Road Map, the DepEd may coordinate and enter into an agreement or contract with other government agencies, LGUs, private and non-profit agencies, institutions or organizations duly accredited or recognized by the government, civil society, business and industrial sector, and other concerned sectors.

The PSOFT Road Map shall define and delineate the areas of responsibility of government agencies in conformity with their respective charters and mandates. For purposes of this Act, these agencies shall have the following roles:

- (a) The DepEd shall be the lead government agency responsible for the proper and effective implementation of the various provisions of this Act and ensure coordination and collaboration among agencies of the government.
- (b) The DICT shall provide advice on matters relating to ICT and closely coordinate and collaborate in the implementation of this Act. It shall undertake the installation, maintenance, and operation of hybrid intranet connectivity in all public basic education schools, provide an efficient and reliable broadband connection, assist in the implementation of training and development for teachers concerning ICT and ICT assisted instructions, and coordinate and collaborate in the provision of digital connectivity in public schools.

- (c) The PhilSA shall advise and collaborate with the DepEd on matters concerning the use of space technology and relevant space-enabled services to implement the provisions of this Act.
- (d) The DOST, CHED, TESDA, Department of the Interior and Local Government, NLP, NBDB, PSA, Philippine Creative Industries Development Council, the LGUs, and other concerned government agencies mentioned in this Act shall provide support and assistance for the attainment of the purposes of the PSOFT.

SECTION 20. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) for PSOFT Program. — The DepEd may pursue PPPs from any of the modalities under R.A. No. 6957, as amended by R.A. No. 7718, entitled, “An Act Authorizing the Financing, Construction, Operation and Maintenance of Infrastructure Projects by the Private Sector, and For the Other Purposes.”

To this end, the DepEd shall, in consultation with the PPP Center of the Philippines created under Executive Order No. 8, series of 2010, entitled, “Reorganizing and Renaming the Build-Operate and Transfer (BOT) Center to the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Center of the Philippines and Transferring its Attachment from the Department of Trade and Industry to the National Economic and Development Authority and For Other Purposes,” establish a PPP Unit to coordinate all matters relating to PPP, in accordance with the PSOFT Road Map. It shall likewise coordinate with the Project Development and Monitoring Facility of the PPP Center in the conduct of feasibility studies and the preparation of tender documents for the PPP projects of the DepEd.

ARTICLE IX

AUTHORITY TO RECEIVE DONATIONS

SECTION 21. Authority to Receive Donations. — The DepEd is authorized to accept grants, contributions, donations, endowments, or bequests in cash or in kind from local and foreign sources in support of the development and implementation of this Act, subject to the regular auditing guidelines and procedures: *Provided*, That in case of donations from foreign sources, acceptance thereof shall be subject to existing government rules and regulations. The proceeds of such grants, contributions, donations, endowments, or bequests shall be used to finance the following:

- (a) Establishment of pilot schools as provided in Section 11 of this Act;
- (b) Research, development, and utilization of emerging digital technologies;
- (c) Provisions of computer laptop units and improvement of ICT infrastructure, including hardware and Internet connectivity;
- (d) Training and capacity building; and
- (e) Conduct of other activities necessary to carry out the objectives of this Act.

ARTICLE X

THE JOINT CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE AND REPORTORIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

SECTION 22. Joint Congressional Oversight. — Upon the effectivity of this Act, a joint congressional oversight committee to be known as the Joint Oversight Committee on the PSOFT Program or JOC-PSOFT, is hereby constituted. The JOC-PSOFT shall be composed of ten (10) members with the chairpersons of the Committee on Basic Education, Arts and Culture and the Committee on Finance of the Senate, and the Committee on Basic Education and Culture and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives as members and three (3) additional members from each House to be designated by the Senate President and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, respectively. The members of the Committee from each House shall have at least one (1) member from the minority party or coalition.

SECTION 23. Annual Report. — The DepEd shall submit a report to both Houses of Congress, or upon the request by the JOC-PSOFT, providing a detailed account of the status of the implementation of this Act.

ARTICLE XI

FINAL PROVISIONS

SECTION 24. Appropriations. — The Secretaries of Education and Information and Communications Technology and the Director General of PHilSA shall immediately include in their respective programs the implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

The funding for the implementation of PSOFT Pilot Schools under Section 11 hereof shall be charged against the current year's appropriation of the DepEd.

SECTION 25. Implementing Rules and Regulations. — Within one hundred-twenty (120) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DepEd and DICT shall, in coordination with other concerned agencies of the government and the private stakeholders, promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SECTION 26. Separability Clause. — If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, other provisions hereof shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 27. Repealing Clause. — All laws, decrees, orders, rules, and regulations or other issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 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,