

Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 8695



Introduced by Representative Kenneth T. Gatchalian

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Mobile devices and other electronic gadgets have increasingly become valuable tools in education, enhancing both teaching and learning. They enable flexible course delivery, allow access to online platforms and resources, and facilitate digital interaction. ¹However, despite these benefits, rapid technological advancement has also introduced distractions that can negatively affect learning, particularly among students in basic education.

Studies conducted in other countries indicate that excessive mobile device use undermines student performance in two ways.² First, there is a direct impact, as frequent phone use while studying is associated with lower grades or scores. Second, there is an indirect impact, as overuse can impair the cognitive skills and abilities necessary for academic success.

Data from the Philippines, based on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022, show that 8 out of 10 Filipino learners aged 15 reported being distracted in class due to their own smartphone use, while a similar proportion reported distraction caused by classmates using smartphones. Further analysis found that such distractions are linked to

¹ Darko-Adjei, N. The Use and Effect of Smartphones in Students' Learning Activities: Evidence from the University of Ghana, Legon. Department of Information Studies, University of Nebraska – Lincoln, 2019.

² Sunday, O.J., et. al., The Effects of Smartphone Addiction on Learning: A Meta-Analysis. 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2021.100114>

declines in academic performance – approximately 9.3 points in mathematics, 12.2 points in science, and 15.04 points in reading.

Beyond academic performance, access to mobile devices may also increase the risk of involvement in cyberbullying.³ For this reason, regulating the use of mobile devices and electronic gadgets particularly during class hours is necessary to strike a balance between leveraging technology and maintaining an effective learning environment.

Recognizing these concerns, the 2023 Global Education Monitoring Report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommends stricter regulation of mobile phone use in classrooms.⁴ The report notes that only 13% of countries have implemented laws that partially or fully ban mobile phone use in schools, while 14% have adopted policies or guidelines for similar purposes.⁵

To promote responsible technology use and improve student engagement and academic outcomes, the following measures are proposed:

- Prohibit the use of mobile devices and electronic gadgets by learners from Kindergarten to Senior High School within school premises during class hours, as well as by teachers and faculty during their assigned teaching periods, except in cases involving learning needs, health and well-being, or risk management;
- Direct the Department of Education to develop and implement guidelines on this prohibition, with private educational institutions required to adopt corresponding measures; and
- Impose appropriate sanctions on public and private educational institutions that fail to comply with the provisions of this Act, with

³ Englander, E.K., Childhood Access to Technology and Cyberbullying. Journal of Pediatrics and Pediatric Medicine, 2019.

⁴ 2023 Global Education Monitoring by UNESCO (2023), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385723/PDF/385723eng.pdf.multi>

⁵ World Economic Forum (2023), “UNESCO calls for a ban on phones in schools. Here’s why”, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/08/online-learning-digital-divide-mobile-phone-school-education/>

students likewise subject to disciplinary measures under existing school policies.

To ensure the responsible and regulated use of mobile devices and electronic gadgets in schools effectively providing transformative education, the immediate passage of this measure is earnestly sought.



KENNETH T. GATCHALIAN

Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 8695

Introduced by Representative Kenneth T. Gatchalian

AN ACT
PROHIBITING THE USE OF MOBILE DEVICES AND OTHER
ELECTRONIC GADGETS DURING CLASS HOURS FROM
KINDERGARTEN TO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN ALL PUBLIC AND
PRIVATE EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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

1 **SECTION 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the “Electronic
2 Gadget-Free Schools Act.”

3 **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** – It is the policy of the State to promote
4 and protect the physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social well-being of our
5 youth and learners. Towards this end, policies must be crafted to safeguard their
6 well-being and enhance their potentials and skills through eliminating distractions
7 caused by mobile devices and other electronic gadgets and protecting them from
8 the unwarranted effects of excessive online and gaming use.

9 **SEC. 3. Definition of Terms.** – For purposes of this Act, the following
10 terms shall mean:

- 11 (a) Mobile Device refers to any form of portable electronic devices such
12 as but not limited to smartphones, cellular phones, tablet computers,

1 pocket personal computer (PC), palmtops, smartwatches, virtual
2 reality (VR) headsets, smart glasses, wearable cameras, and other
3 similar devices which can store, send, receive, and move data through
4 the internet or wireless connection.

5 (b) Electronic Gadget refers to any portable electronic device that can
6 enable its user to make calls, capture photos, stream video, and play
7 games such as but not limited to laptops, video games consoles,
8 virtual reality headsets, smart glasses, wearable cameras, and other
9 similar contraptions.

10 **SEC. 4. Coverage.** – This Act shall apply to all public and private
11 education institutions offering any level of the basic education curriculum.

12 **SEC. 5. Prohibition on the Use of Mobile Devices and Other Electronic**
13 **Gadgets by Learners.** – The Department of Education (DepEd) shall promulgate
14 guidelines on the prohibition of the use of mobile devices and other electronic
15 gadgets by learners from Kindergarten to Senior High School within the school
16 premises during class hours except as provided under Section 7 of this Act.

17 The DepEd shall likewise ensure that private education institutions
18 formulate guidelines in accordance with this Act and include the same in their
19 respective handbooks and school policies.

20 School premises shall include classrooms, laboratories, bathrooms,
21 gymnasiums, canteens or cafeterias, designated school club rooms, swimming
22 pools, teachers' lounges, and school offices.

23 **SEC. 6. Prohibition on the Use of Mobile Devices and Other Electronic**
24 **Gadgets by Teachers and Faculty Members.** – Teachers and faculty members are
25 likewise prohibited from using mobile devices and other electronic gadgets during
26 their designated teaching hours in classrooms, except as provided under Section 7
27 of this Act.

1 **SEC. 7. *Exceptions.*** – Mobile devices and other electronic gadgets shall
2 not be used within the school premises during class hours save for the following
3 exceptions:

4 (a) *Learning-related exceptions*, such as classroom presentations or
5 class-based learning activities, requiring the use of such technologies,
6 or for learners for whom a reasonable adjustment to a learning
7 program is needed due to learning disability or difficulty;

8 (b) *Health and well-being-related exceptions*, such as learners with
9 specific health conditions that may require mobile devices and other
10 electronic gadgets, as certified by a medical doctor and duly noted by
11 the School Head; and

12 (c) *Exceptions related to managing risks*, such as in case of emergency,
13 in response to a perceived threat or danger, or in case of field trips
14 and other school-related activities outside the school premises.

15 **SEC. 8. *Sanctions for Non-compliance.*** – All covered public and private
16 education institutions who fail to comply with the provisions of this Act shall be
17 subject to sanctions that may be imposed by the DepEd. Learners shall likewise be
18 subject to appropriate sanctions provided in the school policies set forth by the
19 DepEd, for violation of Section 5 hereof.

20 **SEC. 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – The DepEd, in
21 consultation with the Department of Health, representatives from the Parent-
22 Teacher Associations, relevant government agencies, and other private
23 stakeholders shall promulgate the rules and regulations within ninety (90) days
24 after the effectivity of this Act.

25 **SEC. 10. *Separability Clause.*** – If any provision or part of this Act is
26 declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions or parts not affected
27 shall remain in full force and effect.

1 **SEC. 11. *Repealing Clause.*** – All other laws, executive orders, presidential
2 decrees, administrative orders, rules and regulations, issuances, or parts thereof
3 inconsistent with or contrary to the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or
4 amended accordingly.

5 **SEC. 12. *Effectivity.*** – Notwithstanding the non-issuance of the IRR, this
6 Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or
7 in a newspaper of general circulation.

8 *Approved,*