

**Quality, Accessible, Relevant and Liberating  
Basic Education for All**

**by**

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**Our Key Deliverables in DepEd**

Today, DepEd is releasing a publication which embodies my assessment of the main challenges that confront basic education, and lays down a 10-point agenda that will guide the Department's programs and directions under my watch.

This document does not reinvent the wheel. It is guided by the mandates of our constitution and international commitments, and builds on gains and lessons from programs of past administrations. Nonetheless, this document also reflects a number of my ideas that I hope can contribute to the progress of our basic education.

As I emphasized in the document, I regard it as a consultation draft. Hopefully it will be a living document that will be further shaped by the inputs of all concerned through

consultative processes such as this Summit, and through action.

If you examine the narrative and the ten-point agenda, you will note that it is a combination of deliverables and the means by which we hope to fulfill these. I will focus my presentation today on our four core deliverables, and situate the various elements of the agenda around them.

Towards the end, I would make a few points on DepEd's attached agencies. Finally, I will provide some remarks on the need for the three education agencies to actively coordinate and work together.

### **Raise the quality of education**

Our first deliverable is to raise the quality of education.

One measure of quality, the National Achievement Test or NAT, show that the quality of education, in the sense of effective attainment of learning standards, will continue to be the foremost challenge for the current and longer term. (Slide: Performance in the National Achievement Test vs PDP Target)

Towards addressing the challenge of raising the quality of education, I have committed to pursue the full implementation of K to 12. K to 12 is not about simply adding school years to basic education to be at par with international

norm, but more about the content and the intended outcomes in terms of upgrading education quality. The program involved the overhaul of our basic education curriculum to make every learner ready for higher education or work anywhere, equipped with 21st century skills comprising learning and innovation skills; information, media and technology skills; effective communication skills; and life and career skills.

Our difficulty lies in the magnitude of our education system. We have a student population of over 25 million in basic education, of which over 21 million are served by public schools. You can imagine the massive education inputs that we need to deliver on account of overhauling the curriculum and adding to the years of schooling, in terms of constructing new classrooms, hiring and training of teachers, and providing textbooks, learning materials, laboratories, and computer packages. (Slide: Launching of Senior High School demands even more resources)

The present administration has given its immediate response by proposing an unprecedented 31 percent increase in the DepEd budget for 2017, from PhP 433.5 to PhP 569 billion. This will bring our proposed appropriation closer to the 4 to 6 percent of GDP ideal appropriation indicated by international standards, and reflects the high prioritization that the President accords to education. (Slide on budget increase from 2010 to 2017)

This belies any notion that this government is by any measure abandoning public basic education in favor of privatization.

The Constitution is very clear that the State shall assign the highest budgetary priority to education, and shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels. At the same time, however, the State recognizes the complementary roles of public and private institutions in the educational system, and we will continue to provide assistance within reasonable levels to our learners and teachers in private schools.

Mobilizing finance is one thing; spending it efficiently and in a timely manner is another.

Coming into the Department, I immediately saw the need for drastic improvement in our absorptive capacity. As of June 30, 2016, of the PhP30.3 billion adjusted allotment, PhP 17.6 billion remained unobligated. For the 2016 appropriations, of the PhP79.3 billion allotment for MOOE and Capital Outlay, PhP63.9 billion remained unobligated.

I am committed, and we have already started, to put in place financial management reforms that will ensure availability and timely delivery of infrastructure and learning resources both for formal and non-formal education. We are

introducing greater leadership supervision and oversight over Finance, Administration and Procurement. We are setting up an Education Program Monitoring and Delivery Unit to monitor budget execution and coordinate timely interventions when bottlenecks arise. We will develop and establish a Financial Management Information System able to track the status of the Department's budget releases real time. We are now in the thick of planning our 2017 activities with the objective of breaking free from the “catch-up” mode of budget execution that has do far characterized the Department’s budget performance.

### **Make education accessible to all**

Our second core deliverable is to make education accessible to all.

Even before catch phrases such as "no one left behind" has come in vogue, our constitution has put it in no uncertain terms: The State shall take appropriate steps to make education accessible to all.

There are clear indications that access to education has improved in recent years (Slide: More students complete schooling). Also, enrolment in the first year of Senior High School in 2016, which many believed will result in massive drop-outs, turned out much better than anticipated. (Slide: SHS enrollment)

Still, despite the efforts to ensure that every Filipino child completes at least basic education through a free public school system, this has so far never been achieved. According to the Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS), about 4 million Filipino children and youth were out of school in 2013. The same survey identified the top reasons why children and youth are not attending school. Marriage was the top reason, followed by insufficiency of family income to send the child to school, then followed closely by lack of personal interest. Marriage as a reason for not attending school was inordinately more pervasive among females.

When an out of school child reaches working age, he or she then joins the millions in the labor force who have not completed basic education, whether employed or unemployed. Based on PSA data, for April 2016, 16.59 million Filipinos or 39.03 percent of the labor force have not completed basic education.

Thus, we will continue the efforts to get our school-age children to school, and to keep them in school up to completion of basic education. But for those who are not reached by the formal basic education system, the Department of Education under my terms is determined to intensify and expand our Alternative Learning Systems for out of school children, youth and adults whom we are unable

to reintegrate to formal education. We will do this through better targeting of beneficiaries, broader coverage, prioritization of these programs by implementing units, partnerships, and modalities that fit the circumstances of target learners.

A highly successful ALS program will be one of the major legacies of the Duterte administration.

### **Make education relevant**

Our third core deliverable: Make education relevant.

While the state takes full responsibility over basic education as part of its duty to serve and protect the people, there is as well a clear public purpose for education to be relevant and responsive to the needs and aspirations of our country.

We are responding to the directives of President Duterte to strengthen and enrich further curricular reforms on anti-illegal drugs, reproductive health, and disaster preparedness. Specifically, we are strengthening the drug education component in Science and Health by providing real-life lessons via alternative learning methods, starting in Grade 4. We are strengthening gender and development component of school curricula especially in relation to sex education and teenage pregnancy. We are giving emphasis on environmental

awareness, disaster preparedness and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

In addition, our education needs to be mindful of the country's continuing challenge to address poverty and inequality. At the same time, we need to keep up with the opportunities that the knowledge and information age brings. Both will require a basic education that highlights competence in science and technology, innovation, creative imagination, entrepreneurial spirit, and a disposition to help our communities and sectors particularly those that are left at the margins of growth and development.

### **Make education truly liberating**

Our fourth core deliverable is to make education truly liberating.

Education serves not only a public purpose, but a personal one as well. Education intrinsically has that impact, but the content and methods that develop critical thinking are also key. It is therefore positive that K to 12 has a strong articulation of critical thinking in curriculum outcomes and competencies

I also have a special interest in Philippine culture, the arts and literature. Enriching appreciation of culture, arts and literature that spring from our diversity and rich historical



experiences as a people, as well as the explorations of the imaginative mind, should round out the scope of our basic education. The curricular content on culture and arts should be complemented with greater actual exposure to these, as well as to literature, by both teachers and students. These are essential in critical thinking. In the words of 2010 Nobel Laureate in literature Mario Vargas Llosa in his essay “Why Literature?”, “There is still another reason to grant literature an important place in the life of nations. Without it, the critical mind, which is the real engine of historical change and the best protector of liberty, would suffer an irreparable loss. This is because all good literature is radical, and poses radical questions about the world in which we live. In all great literary texts, often without their authors’ intending it, a seditious inclination is present.”

I am open to experimenting on new ideas and pathways to innovation in teaching delivery and content that can maximize the full potential of learners, for an education that truly liberates. Not all students can be doctors, or scientists, or engineers, or lawyers. We need to find ways to understand the disposition and interests of our learners, including being artistically inclined, or wanting to take up sports, and be able to offer avenues and teaching support to make those interests flourish.

A liberating education should not overlook the development of soft skills. In the current context of work that requires

problem solving, working with people and communities, working in teams, and working in different cultural settings, we need teachers that are able to teach and train our learners to effectively communicate, collaborate, and adapt.

All these four core deliverables we will pursue with a brand of leadership that is active, transparent, consultative, collaborative, and corruption-free. As part of making our bureaucracy capable, I am committed to expand the scope of employee welfare, to respond to felt and reasonable needs by our academic and non-academic personnel. We will also continue existing cooperation with the private sector and communities, as well as with bilateral and multilateral institution towards the fulfillment of our vision and agenda. We will expand working partnerships such as Adopt-a-School and *Brigada Eskwela*, as concrete mechanisms and expression of our cooperation and solidarity to advance the cause of basic education for all.

### **A few points on DepEd's attached agencies**

There are four agencies attached to DepEd: the Early Childhood Care and Development Council (ECCD Council); the National Book Development Board (NBDB); National Council for Children's Television (NCCT); the National Museum; and the Philippine High School for the Arts (PHSA). In some instances, agencies are attached to a bigger mother

unit for administrative convenience, with real ties lost in the process. To be frank, we have had limited interaction with our attached agencies in the few months that we have been in office. Let this Summit start to change that, and find among us greater mutual relevance and reason for common work.

### **The trifocal education agencies must coordinate better**

I will conclude by emphasizing the need for us in the education sector, especially the three lead agencies of DepEd, CHED, and TESDA, to coordinate better. It is abundantly clear that we face common challenges in our society, economy, and environment. None of us can meet these challenges alone.

Be it in providing pre-service and in-service education and training of our teachers, undertaking research and development, linking with the national and global economy, forging stronger ties with industry, working for common qualifications standards – all these require us to work together and in a coherent manner. Like a machine, we need to have inter-operability for us to perform effectively and efficiently. We are not lacking in mechanisms for coordination; what we need is to utilize these with greater purpose and regularity.