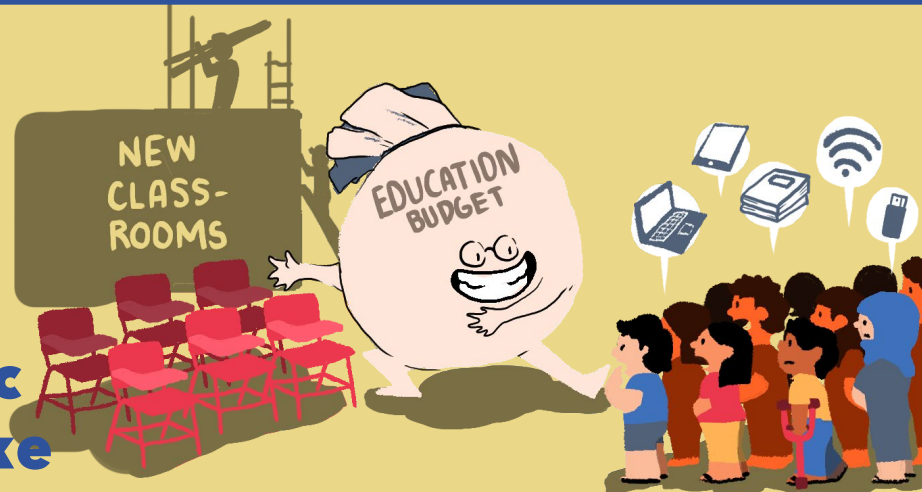


Increase public investments to upgrade the quality and coverage of basic education to make it more inclusive



CONTEXT

Based on the Annual Poverty Indicators Survey (APIS) 2017, children are not in school for various reasons, including marriage or family matters, high cost of education or financial concerns, and lack of personal interest. This is further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic which highlighted issues of inequality and access to education.

The gap between those who can afford to quickly adapt to the new learning modality and the less fortunate families has widened even more. Unless decisive measures and steps are undertaken, the less likely that the objective of inclusive and quality education for all will be achieved.

For 2021, the Department of Education will receive P605.7 Billion or 13% of the total P4.5 Trillion pesos. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) share of education for 2019 is at 2.69 %, way below the UNESCO's

recommendation of 5% of the GDP -and incomparable to Lao PDR, Thailand, and Brunei's which allocate 4.2%, 4.1%, and 3.8% of their respective GDPs. Ours is a far cry from Vietnam's 6.3% and Malaysia's 6.1%.

The dwindling funds and insufficient spending for education have caused the low performance of the Philippines in all PISA ¹ -participating countries and economies. In the 2018 results ² released by PISA, the Philippines scored the lowest in reading comprehension. The Philippines also placed second to last in Science and Mathematics in the PISA test results released in December 2019.

While it is true that the combined allotment for the education sector received the most amount for the 2021 budget, issues such as access -particularly for those at risk of exclusion- for children with disabilities and IP children in poor families and children whose parents may opt not to enroll them to school to help in family daily needs.

Table 1. DepEd Budget 2019-2021 (in Billions)

Particulars	2019 Actual	2020 Current	2021 Proposal	2021 NEP
Personal Services	410.942	418.448	357.177a	475.099
Maintenance and Other Operating Sevices	76.802	94.965	147.128	98.283
Capital Outlay	28.925	39.577	547.163	32.360
TOTAL	516.669	552.990	1,081.468	605.742

¹ Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

² philstar.com/headlines/2019/12/03/1974002/philippines-lowest-reading-comprehension-among-79-countries

BELOW ARE CONCRETE DEMANDS AND REQUESTS TO MAKE EDUCATION MORE INCLUSIVE AND WIDE-RANGING:



Improve ICT infrastructure across the country to ensure meaningful distance learning modalities.

Reliable internet connectivity for 55% Filipinos and 26% of schools with Internet has to be addressed by funding infrastructures. The minimal 3% increase in MOOE will barely cover the cost of addressing internet connectivity for those without an internet connection. Sufficient funds for blended and online learning should be allocated so that all children under formal schooling programs and Alternative Learning System or ALS can have access to education.



Seriously take concrete actions to meet the international benchmark of 4-6% of GDP allocation to basic education.

The 5-year Basic Education Development Plan 2025 being prepared by DepEd with support from UNICEF outlines the need to allocate sufficient funds for education. The PISA results are indicative of how low spending for basic education has resulted to poor performance of Filipino students in basic subjects such as math and reading.



Ensure the budget of Php 675.2 million for teacher training that will include a focus on improving the social and emotional skills of learners and implementation of the Child Protection Policy.

Ensuring a safe and protective environment for learners will necessitate a higher budget allocation for child protection which is less than 1% of the whole agency budget in 2020.



Protect the budget of Php 15.636 billion for Inclusive Education which was cut during the budget reallocation for COVID-19.

Ensure the inclusion of previously excluded children and address

further marginalization under the new normal. The budget will cover poor and marginalized learners in multi-grade schools, Learners with Special Education Needs (LSENs), and IPs. Also important is the budget for special hardship allowance for teachers. UNICEF recommends the expanded use of Hardship Index developed by DepEd with support from UNICEF to allocate the school MOOE more equitably towards most disadvantaged schools.

The Php 1.5 billion for last mile schools and Alternative Learning System budget should be protected as this is critical in reducing inequities for disadvantaged learners.



Ensure that funds for Early Childhood Care and Development are at par with international standard of 1.2% of the country's GDP.

In the Philippines, this is equivalent to P14,650 per child per year.



Ensure enough support for teachers.

The P 3,500 teacher allowance per year is not enough to cover the cost of internet, transport for home visits, nor gadgets for the new modalities.



Increase budget allocation for administrative and non-teaching staff.

This is so that more teachers can focus on learning delivery. This is also in line with DepEd's Edukalidad, which will ensure the continued professional development of teaching and non-teaching staff.