

Comments on the Joint Senate Resolution No. 10, “Creating a Congressional Oversight Committee on Education to Reviews and Assess Philippine Education, Providing Funds Therefore and for Other Purposes”

Prepared by Aniceto C. Orbeta Jr. and Celia M. Reyes¹

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We laud the Senators for pushing for education reform and seeking better coordination in the trifocal education system. A better performing education and training system is what we all desire.

Should it be a Congressional Commission vs Governance Commission?

To our minds the answer to this question lies in our appreciation of the problems of the education system and what we want to achieve. Will a periodic reporting to a Congressional Commission be sufficient to solve our problems in the education sector or we need continuous management, coordination, and monitoring? If the later a Governing Commission maybe called for.

But beyond this is the more fundamental question whether our problem in the education sector is mere lack of coordination or lack of accountability? Coordination is enough if the components are working well enough and all that we need is to ensure that the components do not work against each other. However, if the components are performing well below its potential, what we need is accountability. We need someone who will be held responsible for the overall performance of the sector. A Governing Commission headed by a “Secretary of Education” who will be accountable for the outcomes of the entire system will be necessary. If a Congressional Commission is chosen, it will have to identify the person who will be held responsible for the outputs of the system. In the trifocal system, it is easy to point fingers, i.e. the tertiary education and TVET are not performing because basic education is not performing well; or basic education is not performing well because pre-service training of teachers is not done well. These are what are called spillover effects. The way to control spillover effects is to internalize it. An integrated system will internalize the spillover effects - the ultimate solution to finger pointing. One way to integrate the trifocal education system is to appoint a responsible person for the outputs of the whole system. Mere coordination without accountability will not go very far. It will not end the finger pointing.

Basic needs for better functioning education system

Regardless of the form we must define what is needed to make the education system perform better. One, we need timely data not just on inputs but also outcomes regularly publicized and made available to analysts. Analysis of these data will inform decisions. Two, we need innovation and research centers that looks at the whole sector and the interrelationships between subsectors. Three, we need a united front in budgetary discussions with other sectors such as health, labor and social protection.

PIDS Support

PIDS is open to providing research support to the unit that will be formed for this purpose.

¹ Dr. Aniceto C. Orbeta Jr., Senior Research Fellow and Dr. Celia M. Reyes, President, Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS). This has also benefited from the inputs of Dr. Vicente Paqueo and Dr. Elizabeth King.