

Comments on the proposed Third Commission on Education (HBs 2584, 2910, and 4354) and EDCOM II Extension Act (HBs 4862, 5017, and 5227)

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14 November 2025*

EDCOM II, created by RA 11899 in 2022, was mandated to conduct a “comprehensive national assessment and evaluation of the performance of the Philippine education sector”. Three years later, the Commission has made significant strides, providing input for legislative reforms¹ and producing research². The latter has generated relevant insights and recommendations, although the majority of these remain to be translated into policy and practice. The studies conducted by PIDS alone have generated a wealth of evidence that requires translation into policy actions (see Appendix A for selected papers), including insufficient daycare/child development centers (Ulep et al., 2024), classroom shortages (Abrigo et al., 2025), persistent shortages in JHS science, SHS specializations, TVET, and SPED (Sinsay-Villanueva et al., 2025), and persistent education-occupation mismatch (Bayudan-Dacuycuy et al, forthcoming)

The preceding discussion underscores the pivotal role of a Commission at this juncture in continuing policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring of legislative, institutional, and fiscal reforms. House Bills (HBs) 2584, 2910, 4354 (creating EDCOM III) and HBs 4862, 5017, 5227 (extending EDCOM II) embody a strong commitment to ensuring that gains from EDCOM II’s comprehensive assessment work translate into lasting system improvements. The following observations may help refine deliberations and maximize the impact of the proposed amendments.

- HBs proposing the creation of EDCOM III aim for institutional continuity (i.e., not time-bound, clear funding provisions) and thus, may result in sustained follow-through and continuous reforms. The measures require the active participation of education agencies (DepEd, CHED, TESDA) and other key entities (DOST, SDG committees), underscoring governance harmonization and policy coherence across sectors.

However, potential duplication of roles, if not friction between the Commission and the education agencies, may arise due to overlapping functions. For example, EDCOM III’s function and powers include reviewing, monitoring, and formulating policies, agenda, and programs, which are mandates of the education agencies as well. Moreover, there is a need to ensure that the Commission’s recommendations are not relegated to advisory status but rather are treated as actionable policies. Thus, the measures should provide clarity on:

1. The Commission’s mandate which is currently articulated as “enhance and sharpen EDCOM II’s mandate”. A well-articulated mandate will clarify whether the

¹EDCOM 2 has filed several priority bills, with many already enacted into law: The Enterprise-Based Education and Training Framework Act (RA 12063), the Basic Education Mental Health and Well-Being Promotion Act (RA 12080), the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning Program (RA 12028), the Prohibition on the “No Permit, No Exam” Policy, and the Suspension of Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education (EDCOM 2, 2025a).

² EDCOM 2 has synthesized findings from 97 commissioned studies and 45 consultations conducted throughout 2024 (EDCOM 2, 2025a).

Commission will be coordinative/advisory or have implementing powers (and, if so, to what extent).

2. The education agencies' obligations. This will ensure that the Commission's recommendations do not remain advisory but are adopted and implemented.
- HBs proposing the extension of EDCOM II aim for depth in diagnostics (e.g., specifying further research and consultation as activities during the extension) and early monitoring of reforms. These measures do not entail institutional disruptions. However, implementation deficits can become a significant issue, especially for critical reforms that may require considerable time to implement. Thus, the measure should consider the following:
 1. Specify a realistic, meaningful horizon for legislative actions and program/policy implementation. One or two years of translating the findings/recommendations of studies for EDCOM II into legislative action may be sufficient. Implementing reforms and achieving outcomes requires time; therefore, monitoring these efforts should be given a longer horizon. For example, the Commission's National Education Plan draft has specified targets for 2028, 2031, and 2035. Providing the Commission with a lifespan aligned with the Plan's monitoring targets ensures the continuity of diagnostics when targets are not met.
 2. Specify the Commission's deliverables and timelines.
 3. Specify the role of the Commission in strengthening the link between learning and employment (i.e., ensure that the National Education Agenda serves as a learning roadmap that aligns well with industry roadmaps; engage the Department of Trade and Industry to help bridge skills gaps; improve National Education and Workforce Development Plan to include measurable indicators of how reforms improve employability and address skills mismatches, moving beyond output metrics (graduates produced) to outcome metrics (employment rates, earnings, employer satisfaction)
 4. Institutionalize inter-agency coordination. A key achievement of EDCOM II has been facilitating coordination among the three education agencies. The extension should ensure these coordination mechanisms become permanent rather than dependent on EDCOM II's continued existence. This includes establishing regular joint management committee meetings, shared data systems, and aligned budget planning processes among DepEd, CHED, and TESDA.
 5. Prepare a comprehensive handover for regular congressional oversight and review. After the extended term concludes, regular congressional oversight should resume rather than creating another special commission. Policymakers may wish to consider mechanisms for transferring EDCOM II's monitoring frameworks to standing committees, including research partnerships with PIDS, data collection systems, and annual reporting requirements for education agencies on implementation of recommendations.

To conclude, the proposed measures represent a timely opportunity to ensure that EDCOM II's substantial diagnostic work translates into system improvements. Taken together, the bills provide an opportunity not only to maintain reform momentum but to ensure systems for sustained oversight beyond any special commission's lifespan. With the Philippines' demographic window closing by 2045 and the learning crisis requiring urgent action, Congress can ensure that education reforms deliver on their promise of improving outcomes for Filipino learners.

Whether to create a new Commission or extend the existing Commission, the guiding principle is clear: harness the momentum to improve the country's educational ecosystem and ensure a productive, agile, and resilient workforce. Creating EDCOM III offers sustained reforms and institutional continuity. However, it requires careful deliberations as the Commission's mandate, powers, and functions may result in bureaucratic frictions and/or structural changes in existing agencies. Extending EDCOM II is the structural status quo, allowing the existing Commission to complete the work it has begun. However, implementation gaps that may occur once the extension expires cannot be overstated. Thus, a realistic horizon for the extension, ideally one that aligns with the National Education Agenda Plan, alongside provisions for institutionalizing inter-agency coordination and comprehensive handover to regular congressional oversight, is desired.

References

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Appendix A: Selected PIDS studies

PIDS recommendation/Sector	Policy/Action/Program Uptake	Necessary follow-through; Why should it be adopted
Basic Education		
Improve matching between students' mother tongues and schools' languages of instruction (RPS 2021-02)	Republic Act 12027, discontinuing the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction and providing its optional implementation in monolingual classes	Continuing review of the implementation of MTB-MLE in multilingual classes under RA 12027
Strengthen SHS linkages with future pathways (PN 23-15 ; RPS 2019-04)	Updated SHS curriculum to respond to requirements of future pathways (employment/entrepreneurship, further education, etc.)	Ensure that curriculum updates align with the requirements of future pathways and deliver the intended outcomes.
Adopt a long-term school building construction masterplan that accounts for projected demand, building obsolescence, and local geography (DP 2025-10)	DPWH-DepEd Joint Memorandum Circular No. 01, s. 2024 on "Formulation of a classroom masterplan and master list for the school's construction and repairs"	Continuous accomplishment review and updating of the master plan
Implement moder measurement tools in national student assessments (DP 2025-25)	Partially implemented by using item response theory in assessment design, but results are still reported in mean percentage scores.	Update student assessment design to allow comparison of test scores across cohorts and within-students over time
Teacher Education		
Develop a national teacher supply–demand model to guide TEI program offerings and DepEd hiring, addressing persistent shortages in JHS science, SHS specializations, TVET, and SPED. (DP 2025-03)	Used by EDCOM II in workforce analysis and early versions of the Teacher Education Reform Bill. Cited in discussions on CHED PSG review. Not yet fully internalized in DepEd, CHED, and DBM manpower planning.	Institutionalize a DepEd–CHED–DBM Teacher Demand-Supply Board. Require annual regional teacher demand projections to guide TEI program approvals. Prevent chronic shortages in science/TVET teachers and overproduction in low-demand areas. Ensure program rationalization among SUCs/LUCs.
Shift from generic INSET to targeted, needs-assessed PD aligned with NEAP and teacher competency standards. (DP 2025-14)	Integrated by EDCOM II in formulating National INSET reform recommendations. NEAP has begun adopting elements, but implementation is uneven across regions.	Establish a national INSET quality assurance and micro-credentialing system. Require region-specific diagnostics to determine teacher PD needs.
Technical and Vocational Education and Training		
Institutionalize employer engagement boards, dual training systems, and stronger quality assurance in TVET. (DP 2025-08 ; DP 2025-09)	Adopted partially in TESDA's EDCOM II reform agenda (industry boards, curriculum updates). Enterprise-Based Training reforms legislated.	Mandate industry participation in curriculum design, assessment, and certification. Establish a national TVET tracer and labor market information system.
Rationalize TEI and TVET programs using licensure performance, accreditation, and labor-market outcomes. (DP 2025-04)	Basis for EDCOM II mapping of High-Performing, Regulated, and Low-Performing TEIs.	Institutionalize a CHED–DBM–DepEd joint program review for TEIs and TVET programs.

Service through policy research

	Some recommendations are reflected in TEI quality assurance proposals. Not yet adopted legislatively.	Link SUC/LUC budgets to outcomes (LET performance, employability).
Higher Education		
Mitigate mismatches by establishing a solid foundation for skills data and improving the granularity of data (Forthcoming Bayudan-Dacuycuy et al. 2025)	Multiple agencies (e.g., DOLE, PSA, TESDA, CHED, DepEd, etc.) already collect vital data that can support the development of a labor market information system. There remains a need to consolidate these efforts and standardize existing information to make it more responsive and useful for policymaking (RPS 2025-03)	Develop a National Skills Taxonomy aligned with industry, occupation, and educational codes. Create an O*NET-like platform to compile detailed information on the skills, knowledge, and values required in education, training, occupations, and industries.
Make UniFAST an independent agency (DP 2024-22)	No uptake yet. Currently, UniFAST is an attached agency of CHED and operates under its supervision, compromising its primary role of independently harmonizing student financial assistance programs.	UniFAST must evolve into an independent agency as originally designed, with commensurate personnel for program and policy coordination purposes.
Pursuit of an ISO 9001 certification (Quality management system) by CHED (Forthcoming Bayudan-Dacuycuy et al. 2025)	No uptake yet.	Ensure that processes for delivering and monitoring quality services are in place; May result in effective and efficient development and updating of PSGs (through clearly defined documentation, inputs, outputs, review cycles, and incentives), leading to relevant academic programs.
Craft a national policy on the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and integrate this into the Philippine qualifications framework (PQF) (DP 2024-16 ; Forthcoming Bayudan-Dacuycuy et al. 2025)	No uptake yet. The PQF is currently focused on the linkages of qualifications obtained through formal learning.	Craft a system for RPL to integrate work experiences, professional qualifications, and qualifications obtained through assessments like the RPL, likely to increase the pool of teachers, currently limited to those with graduate degrees, by including industry experts and practitioners.
Develop a comprehensive framework to guide the use of the HEDF (DP 2024-41 ; DP 2024-22)	No uptake yet.	Use the fund to achieve long-term and sustainable impacts within the higher education sector, incentivize innovation and internationalization, and provide development support.
All education sector		
Create an integrated education-labor market intelligence system for TESDA, CHED, DepEd, and DEPDev. (PN 2025-17)	Referenced in EDCOM II Human Capital Development chapter. Not yet embedded in a single cross-agency system.	Persistent education-labor mismatch requires real-time analytics. Critical for planning for future skills (digital, AI, green skills, EV manufacturing, creative industries). Supports rationalization of TVET and teacher education programs.