

Comments on Senate Resolution No. 252, a Resolution Directing the Committee on Basic Education to Conduct an Inquiry, in Aid of Legislation, into Public-Private Partnerships as a Key Strategy to Address Classroom Congestion in the Country

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1. We strongly support the adoption of public-private partnerships (PPPs) as one of the alternative modalities of addressing classroom backlogs in the Philippines. Our research since 2022 have consistently supported this. See for example:

School Infrastructure in the Philippines: Where Are We Now and Where Should We Be Heading?

Discussion Paper version available at <https://www.pids.gov.ph/publication/discussion-papers/school-infrastructure-in-the-philippines-where-are-we-now-and-where-should-we-be-heading-t>

Research Paper Series version available at <https://www.pids.gov.ph/publication/research-paper-series/school-infrastructure-in-the-philippines-where-are-we-now-and-where-should-we-be-heading>

2. Particularly, we recommended that the government "utilize PPPs to ramp up school infrastructure investments while contextualizing the financing mode based on needs and options, factoring in lessons learned from PPP experiences here and abroad, and ensuring that the PPP mode internalizes pedagogical capacity building within the education system" (see page 54, Navarro 2024).²

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DISCLAIMER: The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the PIDS.

² Navarro, A. 2024. School Infrastructure in the Philippines: Where Are We Now and Where Should We Be Heading? Research Paper Series No. 2024-06. <https://www.pids.gov.ph/publication/research-paper-series/school-infrastructure-in-the-philippines-where-are-we-now-and-where-should-we-be-heading>

3. We are also glad to note that the Department of Education (DepEd), as reported during the February 9, 2026 public hearing on Senate Resolution No. 252, has adopted some of our recommendations, including creating a dedicated PPP unit in DepEd, ensuring that independent consultants are engaged in the early stages of program implementation, and incorporating pedagogical capacity and learning environment improvements by tendering complete school infrastructure packages (i.e., classroom construction packaged with ICT and electricity accessibility; water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities; and furniture and fixtures).
4. To further improve the design of the upcoming PPP for School Infrastructure Program (PSIP) of the DepEd, we have the following additional recommendations:
 - a. Aside from classroom congestion, include in the targeting criteria the: (i) projected classroom gaps or inadequacies relative to projected student population; and (ii) the estimated “for-condemnation school buildings” and “for-demolition school buildings” or those that are to be replaced due to disasters and wear and tear. Note that numerous buildings of such kind are present in Visayas and Mindanao (see pages 19-20, Navarro 2024). Including these criteria in the targeting system will address the concern of the Senate Committee on Basic Education that the current targeting criteria of DepEd (i.e., based merely on classroom congestion) results in Luzon-centric targets.
 - b. To proactively address right-of-way (ROW) or site availability issues, the DepEd must treat ROW as a long lead item that requires early preparation (e.g., land search, title checks, appraisal, negotiation of donation/purchase, and in some cases, litigation and expropriation). Landbanking via advance purchase in fast-growing areas can be resorted to. Dedicated funding lines and escrow or trust for ROW payments can also be established so that sellers are paid promptly and non-payment or delayed payment disputes are avoided.
 - c. Appraiser capacity nationwide also needs to improve. DepEd must examine the concentration of appraisers in some regions and inadequacy in other regions. The uneven geographic distribution of appraisers and local capacity constraints matters and if unaddressed, it has the potential to slow down valuations or result in contested valuations. Slow scheduling and conduct of appraisals and delays and contestations in

the delivery of valuations can be a real cause of ROW delay. Timely ROW acquisition requires timely and defensible valuation and just compensation.

- d. Administrative coordination and judicial review are also activities that delay ROW acquisition. Project delays occur when contested valuations, title issues, or third-party claims go to court. Assigning acquisition responsibility early to appropriate officers could reduce coordination gaps. Community and LGU engagement in negotiations could also reduce resistance or overpricing later on and help avoid lengthy expropriation proceedings.
- e. Lastly, contingent payment for extraordinary payments, to cover ROW compensations that are higher than originally projected, should be part of the overall PSIP design. Setting aside this amount will mean that the DepEd will not have to go back to the Investment Coordination Committee (ICC) of the Economy and Development Council every time an ROW compensation adjustment per subproject exceeds the ICC threshold. The experience in allocating and utilizing this in PSIP Phase 3 should inform the design of such contingent payment in succeeding PSIP Phases.