

Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City

**EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS**  
First Regular Session

**HOUSE BILL NO. 6749**



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Introduced by **REP. FRANCISCO “KIKO” B. BENITEZ, Ph.D.**

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**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

Education is key to upward social mobility and active citizenship to enhance democracy. Accordingly, the 1987 Constitution mandates the State to give priority to education “to foster patriotism and nationalism, accelerate social progress, and promote total human liberation and development.”<sup>1</sup> As such, the State shall promote universal access to quality and relevant education in the school system and through non-formal, informal and indigenous learning systems, with emphasis for vocational and civic education for adult citizens, persons with disabilities, and out-of-school youth.<sup>2</sup>

This comprehensive and integrated education system falls within the framework of education policy promoted by the United Nations. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically Sustainable Development Goal 4, calls for policies, programs and partnerships to ensure inclusive, equitable quality education, and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

SDG 4 signals the culmination of the long and arduous debate on the concepts of education and learning. The landmark 1972 UNESCO report *Learning to Be* by Edgar Faure and the 1996 Delors Report *Learning: Treasure Within* recognized that education should be universal and lifelong. However, the notion of education as a normative process that *always* involves a teacher and a learner remained the dominant discourse for decades.<sup>3</sup>

The UNESCO Education for All (EFA) global initiative that ran from 1990 to 2015, for example, endorsed this view. The EFA’s focus on primary education of children and adherence to the centrality of formal education proscribed reforms that could have promoted adult and informal education.<sup>4</sup>

SDG 4 frames the discourse on education reform within the philosophy of lifelong learning which recognizes that learning is a continuum, that learning takes place throughout life and everywhere, beyond the confines of the classroom, enabled by multiple modes and media. Lifelong learning sees school-based instruction and real-life experience as complementary

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<sup>1</sup> Section 17, Article II

<sup>2</sup> Sec. 2, Article XIV

<sup>3</sup> Ouane, A. (2011). Evolution of and perspectives on lifelong learning. In J. Yang and R. Valdes-Cortera (Eds.), *Conceptual evolution and policy developments in lifelong learning*. Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.

<sup>4</sup> Torres, R. M. (2011). Lifelong learning: moving beyond Education for All. In J. Yang and R. Valdes-Cortera (Eds.), *Conceptual evolution and policy developments in lifelong learning*. Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.



tools that empower individuals with knowledge and skills to meet the demands of life. Lifelong learning cultivates knowledge, skills and values, and thus facilitates not just intellectual or physical development, but also spiritual, moral, and artistic development. The right interventions along the learning process could transform individuals to become agents of sustainable development, social inclusion and democratic consolidation.

The Philippines has been adapting its education system to diversify learning settings and sources for all types of students. We have a strong technical-vocational education and training (TVET) program under Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, and an Alternative Learning System (ALS) under the Department of Education. The Commission on Higher Education has also been promoting Open and Distance Learning for those aiming for a college degree.

The need to adopt different learning modalities becomes more urgent as we deal with the COVID-19 pandemic that forces us to suspend physical classes or institutionalized educational activities. Information and communication technology (ICT) or digital technology is an indispensable tool to support out-of-school learning. Enabling remote access from their homes or communities to learning materials through digital technology, and creating learning opportunities in their neighborhoods will help minimize contact of students to carriers of the coronavirus outdoors.

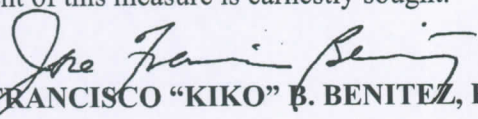
Building the necessary infrastructure to support lifelong learning, in the convenience of our home or in its close vicinity, becomes an urgent and necessary task for the Government.

Public libraries could very well provide the materials and technology to enable out-of-school learning. Republic Act No. 7743, enacted in 1989, had envisioned this. The law mandated the establishment of public libraries to serve legislative districts, cities and municipalities, as well as reading centers in every barangay. However, according to the National Library of the Philippines, by 2019, there are only 433 public libraries/reading centers throughout the country, or a measly 3% accomplishment of the target under RA No. 7743.<sup>5</sup>

There is therefore a glaring need to establish more learning centers in communities that will provide the public access to print and audio-visual learning materials. These learning centers will also be equipped with digital devices and reliable Internet connection and give students, who do not have or have limited access to the Internet in their homes, free access to digital learning tools and materials. It will help bridge the digital divide and democratize access to information and online learning. These community learning centers may also serve as a venue for ALS and TVET classes, exhibits, seminars, workshops, and small-group discussions.

Community learning centers make information available to all learners of all ages and all walks of life and cultivate lifelong learning. They will not be only repository of knowledge and fertile grounds for learning, but also a laboratory of ideas and a vehicle for social cohesion, sustainable development and democratic citizenship.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate enactment of this measure is earnestly sought.

  
JOSE FRANCISCO "KIKO" B. BENITEZ, Ph.D.

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<sup>5</sup> Macapagal, J. (2019). *Status of Philippine Public Libraries and Librarianship*. Manila: National Library of the Philippines.

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**AN ACT**  
**PROMOTING LIFELONG LEARNING, PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT**  
**OF COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,**  
**AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

**SECTION 1.** *Short Title.* This Act shall be known as "Lifelong Learning Act of 2020."

**SEC. 2.** *Declaration of Policy.* It is the declared policy of the State to give priority to education to foster human development. Accordingly, the State shall take appropriate steps to make quality education accessible to all, regardless of age, sex, ethnicity, culture, religion or ability. Towards this end, the State shall establish and maintain a comprehensive, integrated, holistic and inclusive system of education to support lifelong learning. The State shall harness different learning modalities and promote learning opportunities in all settings and throughout life to equip individuals with knowledge, skills and values to cultivate civic responsibility and adapt to the demands of changing economic and social conditions.

**SEC. 3.** *Definition of Terms.* As used in this Act:

- a) Lifelong learning refers to a philosophy that recognizes that learning is a continuum and not confined to a particular period in life and the school system but takes place everywhere, at all stages of life, "from cradle to grave." As a conceptual framework and organizing principle for educational policy, lifelong learning encompasses all modes of education, from formal to non-formal to informal learning, and rests on the diversity and flexibility of learning settings (home, community, workplace, school, leisure, and so on) and media (books, television, computers, web applications, games, and so on).
- b) Blended learning refers to the deliberate combination of online learning with face-to-face classroom-based learning.
- c) Distance learning refers to a mode of learning in which students and teachers are physically separated from each other. It is student-centered, guided independent study, making use of well-studied teaching and learning pedagogies to deliver well-designed learning materials in various media.
- d) Open learning refers to a philosophy of learning that is based on flexibility of access for equity in education, an educational system accessible to every individual with minimal restrictions and emphasizing the flexibility of the system to eradicate problems



caused by barriers like age, geographical location, time constraints and economic situation

- e) Technical-vocational education and training is the education or training process where it involves, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and acquisition of practical skills relating to occupations in various sectors of economic life and social life, comprises formal (organized programs as part of the school system) and non-formal (organized classes outside the school system) approaches.

**SEC. 4. *Establishment of Community Learning Centers.*** There shall be established at least one (1) community learning center (CLC) in every municipality and city in the Philippines; *Provided*, That additional learning centers shall be established such that there is one learning center per 50,000 persons in every city and every municipality with a population of more than 100,000 persons; *Provided, further*, That where CLCs already exist, its upgrading shall be undertaken, while existing public libraries and reading centers shall be converted into community learning centers; *Provided, finally*, That the CLC shall be constructed in geographically equitable and accessible locations, and in compliance with relevant building standards and specifications, including the requirements to support or enhance the mobility of persons with disability and senior citizens.

**SEC. 5. *Functions of Community Learning Centers.*** Community learning centers shall provide all persons a venue for lifelong learning, as well as provide underprivileged individuals access to information and communication technologies for e-learning, blended, distance, or open learning. It shall make available:

- a) printed materials, such as books, journals, newspapers, magazines, posters, maps, and charts;
- b) audio-visual aids or media, such as film, television and radio;
- c) digital devices, such as desktop or portable computers and electronic blackboards, equipped with appropriate software and stable Internet connection to access online courses, e-books, and other online resources, as well as enable web conferencing; and,
- d) shall be the venue for alternative learning classes, technical-vocational education and training, presentations, exhibitions, lectures, seminars, workshops, debates, and other learning activities.

**SEC. 6. *Implementing agencies.*** The Department of Education (DepEd), in coordination with the Department of Public Works and Highways, shall undertake the construction of community learning centers or the repair and rehabilitation of existing CLCs according to mutually agreed specifications, criteria and details; *Provided*, That the design of the CLC shall ensure a conducive learning environment, as well as provide sufficient space for educational materials, equipment and administrative services.

The National Library of the Philippines shall provide the standard set of relevant printed and audio-visual materials, and shall digitize its catalog and collections to provide free and full offsite access.

The Department of Information and Communication Technology (DICT) shall provide the necessary infrastructure to ensure reliable Internet connection and maximize digital technology in community learning centers. DepEd and DICT shall jointly develop digital educational materials for use in CLCs, as well as mobile applications and similar software that will enable remote access to CLC materials and other sources of information.

**SEC. 7. *Role of local governments.*** Cities and municipalities shall provide the site for community learning centers and shall undertake its operation and maintenance. Local government units may allocate such funds necessary for the operation and maintenance of CLCs from the Special Education Fund, upon approval and authorization of the Local School Board.

**SEC. 8. *Appropriations.*** The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of implementing agencies and shall be thereafter included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

**SEC. 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** Within sixty (60) days from the approval of this Act, the Department of Education, in coordination with the NLP, DICT, the Department of Interior and Local Government, and other concerned government agencies and civil society organizations, shall formulate and issue the necessary guidelines to effectively implement the provisions of this Act. The implementing rules and regulations issued pursuant to this Section shall take effect thirty (30) days after its publication in a national newspaper of general circulation.

**SEC. 10. *Separability Clause.*** If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or inoperative, the other provisions not so declared shall remain in force and effect.

**SEC. 11. *Repealing Clause.*** All acts, presidential decrees, executive orders and issuances inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

**SEC. 12. *Effectivity.*** This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,