

Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**NINETEENTH CONGRESS**  
First Regular Session

**HOUSE BILL NO. 3713**



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**Introduced by HONORABLE REX GATCHALIAN**

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**AN ACT**  
**MANDATING THE FULL DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**  
**OF ALL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE BASIC EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS,**  
**APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

Most educators and learners have observed and participated in the shift to digital education in the modern age over the past few decades. The change was expedited and amplified when the COVID-19 pandemic caused schools and universities to close and implement distance learning. Digital education persists even today as the country continues to battle the pandemic. Despite earnest efforts by the relevant government agencies and local government units, however, there is still a great deal of educators and learners who are left behind either because of the lack of digital resources or the skillset to maximize the available resources.

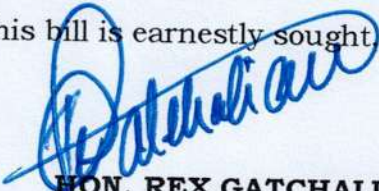
The government, through the Department of Education (DepEd), in collaboration with the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) and the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), should be at the forefront in ensuring that public and private basic education institutions adopt the use of digital technology to continuously deliver quality education towards the digital transformation of the basic education system. This measure seeks to implement the mandates to achieve this goal:

- (1) The abovementioned agencies shall digitally streamline and integrate their workflows and processes to promote efficiency in delivering basic education services;



- (2) The abovementioned agencies shall craft a multi-year roadmap to ensure the timely implementation of the proposed law, to be supported by annual work and financial plans;
- (3) DepEd shall develop training programs and conduct workshops or webinar sessions to equip teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills and enhance their virtual teaching capacity and competence;
- (4) DICT shall provide and maintain the necessary digital infrastructure to ensure the availability and accessibility of reliable and secure Internet access, thereby connecting the schools to the Internet;
- (5) DICT shall implement measures to accelerate the installation, deployment, and activation of the free public wi-fi in all public basic education institutions and escalate the building of the national infrastructure for information and communications technology by mandating the National Telecommunications Commission to identify the locations for the construction of telecommunications tower sites, giving due priority to the missionary areas which remain unconnected and unserved or underserved; and
- (6) DOST shall assist DepEd and DICT in using science, technology, and innovation in accelerating the digital transformation of the basic education sector, disrupting traditional teaching and learning processes, and boosting the sector towards the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

In view of the foregoing, approval of this bill is earnestly sought.



**HON. REX GATCHALIAN**  
*Representative*  
*1<sup>st</sup> District, Valenzuela City*



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**APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:*

1       **SECTION 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the “*Digital*  
2       *Transformation in Basic Education Act*”.

3  
4       **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** – It is the policy of the State to promote the right  
5       of all citizens to quality education at all levels, take appropriate steps to make such  
6       education accessible to all, and assign the highest budgetary priority to education.  
7       The State also recognizes the vital role of communication and information in nation-  
8       building, and shall provide the policy environment for the full development of Filipino  
9       capability and the emergence of communication structures suitable to the needs and  
10      aspirations of the nation – including the aspiration for the uninterrupted delivery of  
11      quality basic education in locations both inside and outside the physical premises of  
12      our basic education institutions.

13      The State shall therefore give priority to science, technology and innovation to  
14      accelerate social progress, and promote their adaptation from all sources to ensure  
15      that basic education institutions adopt and utilize digital technology to enhance  
16      learning and teaching and streamline their workflows and processes to create an  
17      equitable, effective and efficient learning environment. In the process, basic  
18      education institutions shall ensure that all data gathered in their information and  
19      communications systems are secured and protected.



1       **SEC. 3. *Digital Transformation in Basic Education.*** – The Department of  
2 Education (DepEd), in collaboration with the Department of Information and  
3 Communications Technology (DICT) and the Department of Science and Technology  
4 (DOST), shall ensure that public and private basic education institutions adopt the  
5 use of digital technology to continuously deliver quality education towards the digital  
6 transformation of the basic education system.

7       For this purpose, the DepEd shall mandate all schools to enhance and  
8 strengthen their Information and Communications Technology (ICT) capacity to  
9 implement distance learning to provide every learner flexible and equitable access to  
10 basic education. It shall be a system with minimal restrictions that emphasizes  
11 flexibility to eradicate problems caused by barriers such as age, geographical  
12 location, time, and economic situation. Distance learning may be delivered through  
13 modular learning, online learning, television- or radio- based instruction, or a  
14 combination thereof.

15       The DepEd shall likewise ensure that its bureaus, divisions and offices digitally  
16 streamline and integrate their workflows and processes, including but not limited to  
17 the following:

- 18       (a) set up electronic and online systems that will make the means of  
19       exchanging data and information between and among its offices, learners,  
20       and parents secure, efficient, and seamless;
- 21       (b) streamline procedures by adopting automation and digitization of its  
22       services to promote zero-contact policy and to facilitate their efficient  
23       delivery;
- 24       (c) build up its technology capabilities, including the establishment of data  
25       centers, data repositories, basic messaging and electronic mail facilities,  
26       encryption systems, and cyber-security facilities;
- 27       (d) invest heavily into developing organizational capability and personnel  
28       competencies that are well-suited to support digital transformation;
- 29       (e) promote and support the onboarding and training of personnel in using  
30       electronic services;
- 31       (f) obtain and monitor networking tools to create channels of communication  
32       with the general public and secure real-time feedback on their delivery of  
33       basic education services; and
- 34       (g) design service processes and procedures that will promote efficiency and  
35       a sense of expediency, including but not limited to matters pertaining to



1 enrollment, payments, documents submission, grades submission, and  
2 parent-teacher meetings.

3 The DepEd shall collaborate with the DICT, the DOST and stakeholders in the  
4 private sector to develop, adopt, and implement digital transformation in its  
5 organizational processes, especially for the distance learning system.

6 The relevant provisions of Republic Act No. 10650 or the "*Open Distance*  
7 *Learning Act*" shall be applied in complementarity with the provisions of this Act.  
8

9 **SEC. 4. Multi-Year Roadmap.** – To ensure the timely implementation of this Act,  
10 the DepEd, the DICT and the DOST, in coordination with other relevant national  
11 government agencies and private stakeholders, shall initiate the crafting and regular  
12 updating of a multi-year roadmap (roadmap), supported by annual work and  
13 financial plans.

14 The roadmap shall serve as a guide to implementing government agencies and  
15 private stakeholders for the effective and efficient implementation of this Act. It shall  
16 be part of and aligned with the basic education roadmap of the DepEd and the digital  
17 transformation strategy of the government, and consistent with the ICT development  
18 agenda of the country as provided in Republic Act No. 10844 or the "*Department of*  
19 *Information and Communications Technology Act of 2015*".

20 The roadmap shall likewise contain the current policy, practices, gaps, and  
21 challenges affecting the development, adoption and implementation of digital  
22 technology and set detailed targets and outcomes for a minimum period of five (5)  
23 years. It shall further provide public and private stakeholders specific actions and  
24 targeted interventions, including implementation and monitoring strategies and  
25 annual budgetary requirements.  
26

27 **SEC. 5. The Bureau of Digital Transformation as Implementing Bureau.** – The  
28 DepEd, through its ICT Service, and in coordination with the DICT and the DOST,  
29 shall implement, oversee, monitor, and evaluate compliance with the provisions of  
30 this Act.

31 Upon the effectivity of this Act, the DepEd shall convert its existing ICT Service  
32 into the Bureau of Digital Transformation to be headed by a Director who shall  
33 oversee, monitor, and evaluate the implementation of this Act.

34 The Bureau shall:

- 35 (a) implement and regularly update the multi-year roadmap as provided in this  
36 Act;



- (b) coordinate with other implementing government agencies;
- (c) ensure the conduct of training and capacity building of learners and teachers, and the training of trainers, administrators, and supervisors;
- (d) implement policies and standards for the use of distance learning modalities, including the training of teachers on distance education;
- (e) supervise, monitor, evaluate, and assess the compliance, operations, and performance of public and private basic education institutions on the use of digital technology pursuant to this Act, and regularly submit reports to the Secretary of Education (Secretary); and
- (f) perform such other necessary functions for the effective and efficient implementation of this Act.

Sec. 6. *Digital Transformation Infrastructure and Free Public Wi-fi.* – The DICT shall provide and maintain the necessary digital infrastructure for the implementation of this Act. It shall likewise implement measures to ensure the availability and accessibility of reliable and secure Internet access suitable to the needs of learners and teachers under the distance learning system. It shall further accelerate the provision of free public wi-fi as mandated under R.A. No. 10929 or the “*Free Internet Access in Public Places Act*” to strengthen teaching and learning, especially in the remotest, unserved and disadvantaged communities.

The expertise, systems, and facilities of higher education institutions offering distance or open learning shall likewise be tapped and adopted whenever necessary for the development and conduct of distance learning in basic education institutions.

**SEC. 7.** *Accelerated Provision of Reliable and Secure Internet Connection; Escalation of the Building of the National Information and Telecommunications Technology Infrastructure.* – To ensure the availability of a reliable and secure Internet connection suitable to the needs of learners and teachers for distance learning and digital transformation, the DICT shall implement measures to accelerate the installation, deployment and activation of the free public wi-fi in all public basic education institutions and escalate the building of the national infrastructure for ICT by mandating the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) to identify the locations for the construction of telecommunications tower sites, giving due priority to the missionary areas which remain unconnected and unserved or underserved by the Public Telecommunications Entities (PTEs), and require the PTEs to complete the building of the targeted number of towers within two years from the effectivity of this



1 Act.

2 The government, through the DICT, shall formulate and implement a system  
3 to provide financing or incentives to PTEs in the construction of telecommunications  
4 towers in the missionary areas.

5 PTEs refer to entities that are duly authorized to offer voice, short messaging  
6 system or text, mobile data, value added services, or any other mobile  
7 telecommunications services to the public for a fee.

8 For purposes of this section and pursuant to Republic Act No. 11032 or the  
9 "Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018", all  
10 relevant government agencies and local government units are required to process,  
11 approve, and issue permits and clearances for the construction of  
12 telecommunications towers within seven working days.

13

14 **SEC. 8.** *Free Access to DepEd's Online Platforms; Subsidized and Special*  
15 *Services for Learners.* – PTEs shall provide free access to the DepEd's online  
16 educational platforms, digital libraries, and other online knowledge hubs and sites  
17 without any additional financial burden on all subscribers. No data charges shall  
18 also be incurred in the download of data from these sites and applications.

19 Further, the NTC and the PTEs, in consultation with the DepEd and the DOST,  
20 are hereby mandated to create systems and establish procedures in making available  
21 special sim cards, plans, and services for distance education at minimal cost and  
22 with no data caps, including their expedited sale and availment. They shall also  
23 provide subsidized data plans to learners whose parents are listed as beneficiaries  
24 under the National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction, otherwise  
25 known as "Listahanan", under the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

26

27 **SEC. 9.** *Science, Technology and Innovation in the Digital Transformation of*  
28 *Basic Education.* – The DOST, pursuant to its mandate under Executive Order No.  
29 128 to "provide central direction, leadership and coordination of scientific and  
30 technological efforts and ensure that the results therefrom are geared and utilized in  
31 areas of maximum economic and social benefits for the people", shall assist the  
32 DepEd and the DICT in the conceptualization, planning and implementation of the  
33 digital transformation of the basic education system. It shall employ science,  
34 technology and innovation in accelerating such transformation given the  
35 development needs and existing capabilities and resources of the DepEd and the  
36 basic education sector, disrupt traditional teaching and learning processes, and



1 boost the sector towards the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

2  
3 **SEC. 10. *Digital Transformation Mapping.*** – The DepEd shall establish and  
4 maintain a mapping system to regularly determine the compliance of both public and  
5 private basic education institutions with this Act.

6 Upon the effectivity of this Act, the DepEd, the DICT and the DOST shall  
7 conduct a mapping of all these institutions to assess their preparedness for digital  
8 transformation, and determine their specific needs and access to distance learning  
9 tools such as ICT devices, connectivity, capability, and geographical location, among  
10 others.

11  
12 **SEC. 11. *Hiring and Training of Teachers, Para-teachers, and Other Personnel.***  
13 – The hiring of additional teachers or para-teachers, or both, to upgrade the  
14 organizational capacity of the DepEd to deliver continuous and quality education  
15 under a distance learning system is hereby encouraged.

16 The DepEd shall develop and conduct continuous training programs,  
17 workshops, or webinar sessions to equip teachers with the necessary knowledge and  
18 skills and enhance their virtual teaching capacity and competence. In addition, the  
19 Commission on Higher Education and the Technical Education and Skills  
20 Development Authority shall integrate such training programs into formal pre-  
21 service and in-service teacher training.

22 The DepEd shall tap the resources of other relevant government agencies, the  
23 academe, the industry, and other private sector stakeholders in the training design  
24 and delivery. It may also accredit training providers or content developers for this  
25 purpose.

26 The DepEd, in consultation with the Department of Budget and Management,  
27 may likewise create plantilla positions for the support staff to complement existing  
28 personnel.

29  
30 **SEC. 12. *Transitory Provision.*** – All public and private basic education  
31 institutions shall be given two (2) years to implement the provisions of this Act and  
32 its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

33 The DepEd, the DICT and the DOST shall assess the capacity and  
34 preparedness of these institutions to implement the provisions of this Act. They shall  
35 likewise conduct an inventory of existing learning materials, facilities, and  
36 infrastructure for distance learning and other alternative delivery modes.



1 A report of such assessment and inventory shall be submitted to the  
2 Committees on Basic Education of both houses of Congress within six (6) months  
3 from the effectivity of this Act.  
4

5 **SEC. 13. *Mandatory Review and Impact Assessment; Submission of Annual***  
6 ***Report to Congress.*** – The DepEd, the DICT and the DOST shall conduct a mandatory  
7 review of the implementation of this Act not later than two (2) years from its effectivity  
8 to determine its implementation status and impact.

9 An annual report of its implementation shall be submitted to the Committees  
10 on Basic Education of both houses of Congress until its full implementation in all  
11 public and private basic education institutions.  
12

13 **SEC. 14. *Appropriations.*** – The amount necessary for the implementation of  
14 this Act shall be charged against those authorized in the current appropriations of  
15 the DepEd, the DICT and the DOST. Thereafter, the amount necessary for its  
16 continued implementation shall be included in the budget of the DepEd, the DICT  
17 and the DOST in the annual General Appropriations Act.  
18

19 **SEC. 15. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within sixty (60) days after  
20 the effectivity of this Act, the Secretaries of the DepEd, the DICT and the DOST, in  
21 consultation with other concerned government agencies and education stakeholders,  
22 shall issue the rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act. The  
23 IRR issued pursuant to this section shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its  
24 publication in a newspaper of general circulation.  
25

26 **SEC. 16. *Separability Clause.*** – If any part, section, or provision of this Act is  
27 declared invalid or unconstitutional, the other parts thereof not affected thereby shall  
28 remain in full force and effect.  
29

30 **SEC. 17. *Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, acts, presidential decrees, executive  
31 orders, administrative orders, rules and regulations, or parts thereof inconsistent  
32 with or contrary to the provisions of this Act are hereby amended or repealed  
33 accordingly.  
34



1       **SEC. 18. Effectivity.** – Notwithstanding the non-issuance of the IRR, this Act  
2 shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a  
3 newspaper of general circulation.  
4

5       *Approved,*