



Uphold Safe, Equitable, Quality, and Relevant education amid the pandemic

(Manifesto of Unity)

We, the **Movement for Safe, Equitable, Quality, and Relevant Education**, assert the fulfillment of the people's basic right to education amid the pandemic. As teachers, students, parents and education advocates, we maintain that the government should place in its priorities the delivery of quality education in a safe and accessible manner while the country grapples with the uncontrolled pandemic and unprecedented jobs crisis.

The sorry state of the Philippine education system was magnified during the pandemic with schools unsafe for classroom learning. Its backward technological infrastructure is incapable of effectively facilitating distance learning. According to UNESCO, some 28.5 million Filipino school children remain unserved with class opening in the public schools being postponed twice. The deferments were caused by the serious risks posed by the inadequately-prepared school opening plans; as well as the lack of access of poor families to quality education. The education crisis worsens as four million more school-aged children add to the existing country's out-of-school children and youth population.

The private school system has experienced a devastating drop in the number of enrollees, with just about 43% of last year's four million enrollees coming back this year. Around 300,000 transferred to public schools. This has resulted in the retrenchment of thousands of private school teachers and employees, as well as the diminution of wages and benefits.

Such major problems in the education sector need to be addressed decisively in order to enable the public and private school systems in both basic and higher levels to deliver education to the youth as a basic social service. As the country shifts to safe and more flexible learning modalities, the government needs to undertake the following measures in line with the State's duty to fulfill the people's basic right to education:

1. Adequate government funding to subsidize education continuity in the basic education public schools and state colleges and universities;

2. Adequate preventive health measures in schools such as handwashing facilities, nurse and functional clinic, strict observance of minimum health standards;
3. Health protection mechanisms and benefits for education workers including health screening and mass testing, provision of hygiene kits and PPEs, sick leave for teachers and free treatment for infected education workers; and protection of basic labor rights;
4. Provision of adequate learning resources and appropriate teaching and learning strategies (including face-to-face classes in low risk areas and geographically-isolated areas) and other support mechanisms (like family literacy) to ensure relevant and quality education;
5. Fair and appropriate systems of evaluation and grading;
6. Education on pandemic in the curriculum;
7. Wage subsidy for teachers and other forms of assistance to small and needy private schools pre-conditioned on preservation jobs and prevention of further retrenchments; government financial aid and assistance in job opportunities for retrenched private school teachers;
8. Review student fees in private education and discard unnecessary charges;
9. Provide adequate support to parents/caregivers as they take on the role of home educators;
10. Ensure online safety and mental health of teachers and learners;
11. Expansion of government scholarships and financial assistance programs for students;
12. Genuine dialogue with and democratic participation of stakeholders. Uphold the democratic rights of students, parents, teachers, and education support personnel.


These steps should be undertaken immediately to make the October 5 class opening in public schools possible, and mitigate the adverse impacts of the current crisis to the education system.

In order for the country to overcome the present crisis and to build a pandemic-responsive education system, the government must endeavor to implement the following measures:

1. Employment of comprehensive health measures to control the spread of COVID-19;
2. Addressing the socio-economic crisis through provision of livable financial aid and job generation;
3. Filling in the shortages in facilities, personnel and equipment in the public school system;
4. Modernizing the education system and improving internet connectivity in the country

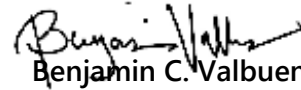
Instead of letting the pandemic prevent the nation from upholding the youth's basic right to education, the government must decisively act to fulfill this mandate. At a time of crisis when capacities of the people are severely diminished, the State has the duty to run the extra mile in delivering basic social services.

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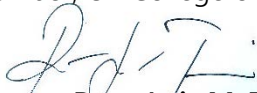
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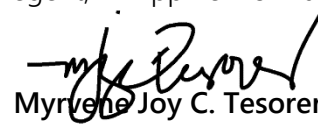
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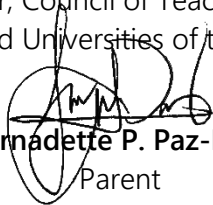
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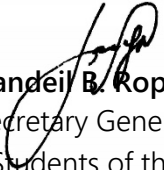
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1. UP College of Education Student Council
2. Agham Youth National
3. National Council of Churches in the Philippines
4. Amihan National Federation of Peasant Women
5. Akap sa Bata ng mga Guro Kalinga - Philippines
6. Bahay Tuluyan Foundation Inc.
7. Batibot Early Learning Center Inc.
8. Children's Rehabilitation Center Inc. (CRC)
9. Education Research and Development Assistance (ERDA) Foundation Inc.
10. Parents Alternative on Early Childhood Care and Development (PAECCDI)
11. Salinlahi Alliance for Children's Concerns
12. Tambayan Center for Children's Rights, Inc.
13. Educators' Forum for Development
14. Kilusang Mayo Uno

15. All Workers Unity
16. Metal Workers Association of the Phils
17. GABRIELA Alliance of Filipino Women
18. Caloocan Public Elementary and Secondary Teachers Federation
19. Malabon Public Elementary and Secondary Teachers Association
20. Association of Public Elementary & Secondary Schools Teachers of Navotas
21. Pateros Public School Teachers Federation
22. Break the Silence Network National Inc.
23. Quezon City Public School Teachers Association
24. Manila Public School Teachers Association
25. All UP Academic Employees Union
26. All UP Workers Alliance
27. Congress of Teachers for Nationalism and Democracy
28. Pasig City Public Secondary Schools Teachers' Association
29. Action for the Care and Development of the Poor in the Philippines (ACAP Philippines) Inc.
30. BatamPasig: Youth for Safe and Quality Education for All

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