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S.B. NO. 3228

Introduced by Senator EDGARDO J. ANGARA

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Inequality pervades in our society because opportunities are unfairly distributed. And to provide equilibrium in opportunities in all social spectra, education is being given the thrust -- said to be the great equalizer and balance wheel of social machinery.

But beyond the discourse of social equity, putting emphasis on education has an undeniable practicality because an educated citizenry correlates to a productive and stable society. It is more than just the perfunctory transfer of concepts and theories but rather a tool for transformation and empowerment of individuals and communities.

For this reason, if the government is serious in its commitment to rural development and empowerment, a fundamental step to be taken is ensuring equitable access to education in the countryside. Statistics have consistently demonstrated the widening gap between urban and rural development, and concomitantly, poverty incidence. The poverty incidence victimizes a bulk of the agricultural sector who mostly reside in the rural areas, resulting to a vicious cycle of worsening deprivation, marginalization and underdevelopment.

Education can also be used in ensuring sustainable agricultural productivity in the country for the coming decades by creating an educational system applicable and fitting to rural, agricultural communities. As such, the youth are not keen in taking professions in the agricultural sector. Proof of this is the dwindling figures of enrolment and number of graduates of agricultural courses. The already low figures of enrollees decrease furthermore as the academic years commence, resulting to disappointingly few graduates of agricultural courses.

Traditional educational systems have long been speckled throughout the country. But the rural communities need an educational system suited to their environment and realities. Hence, this bill proposes to promote Rural Farm Schools as an alternative delivery mode of secondary education without sacrificing quality of education.

The Rural Farm School shall be a parallel learning system and an alternative delivery mode of secondary education. It is a facilitative and experiential learning on the core subjects of social sciences, numeracy, literacy with focus on agriculture and patterned after the needs of rural, agricultural communities. It has four academic years with the last year being integrative learning with emphasis on farm entrepreneurship to encourage the youth to become local entrepreneurs in their respective rural, agricultural communities.

The teaching methodology provides a flexible alternative to the rigid structure of formal education. In the Rural Farm School, students engage in an alternating training cycle of home and school period. The student may go to learning centers as scheduled by the school to learn concepts and theories or the students may obtain modules from the tutors and take it home subject to the monitoring and assessment of the tutors. The other half of the cycle is the home period wherein the students shall spend half of the educative process at home as they work in their own farms or in other farms or enterprises to apply and practice the academic principles learned from school.

In consonance with the State's policy to provide free secondary education, the students enrolled in public Rural Farm Schools will not pay any tuition fee. Having minimal overhead expenses because of the flexible methodology and having no tuition fee lessen the financial burden on the parents especially since abject poverty is prevalent in the rural pocket sides.

And in furtherance of attaining social equity, the children and grandchildren of CARP beneficiaries are given preference in admission should the school exceed its allowable number of enrollees. They shall likewise be exempted from paying tuition fees in private sector-led Rural Farm Schools. Agrarian Reform Communities, on the other hand, shall be given priority in the site selection and establishment of Rural Farm Schools.

The Rural Farm School is, thus, a multipronged attack against poverty, inequity, agricultural decline, and economic constriction in the rural areas. Firstly, it provides opportunities for and access to learning, at minimal or zero cost, to the rural youth, equipping them with appropriate knowledge and practical skills that can be readily applied in their environment. Secondly, it entices the rural youth to engage in agricultural courses and/or enterprises leading to agricultural viability and sustainability. Accordingly, these will warm the social and economic engines of the countryside, lessening poverty incidence and empowering the rural communities.

In view of the foregoing, passage of this bill is fervently sought.



SEN. EDGARDO J. ANGARA

Introduced By Sen. Edgardo J. Angara

AN ACT ESTABLISHING RURAL FARM SCHOOLS AS ALTERNATIVE DELIVERY MODE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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 “Rural Farm Schools Act”.

2 SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared to be the policy of the State to
3 protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and take
4 appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all. Further to this, the State shall
5 establish, maintain and support a complete, adequate and integrated system of education
6 relevant to the needs of the people and society and encourage nonformal, informal and
7 indigenous learning systems, as well as self-learning, independent and out-of-school study
8 programs particularly those that respond to community needs.

9 The State shall likewise promote sustainable agricultural productivity and rural
10 development by empowering the human capital in the countryside through access to avenues
11 of learning suited to the needs and realities of the rural agricultural communities.

12 In furtherance of the principles of social justice and social equity, the State shall provide
13 the necessary support to the beneficiaries of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program
14 (CARP) including, but not limited to, the provision of access to a broad range of educational
15 opportunities to their children.

16 SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – For purposes of this Act, the following terms shall be
17 defined as follows:

18 (a) *Alternative delivery mode* refers to the nontraditional education program recognized
19 by the Department of Education (DepED) which applies a flexible learning philosophy and a
20 curricular delivery program that includes nonformal and informal sources of knowledge and
21 skills. An alternative delivery mode may include the use of facilitator-aided and interactive
22 self-instructional print and audio-based learning materials, video tapes, face-to-face
23 structured learning groups, semi-structured and unstructured discussions, one-on-one
24 tutorials, study groups and self-learning groups, demonstration sessions, home visits,
25 mentoring and remediation.

26 (b) *Rural farm school* refers to a parallel learning system and an alternative delivery
27 mode of secondary education. It provides for facilitative and experiential learning on the core
28 subjects of the secondary education curriculum with focus on agri-fisheries, designed to
29 address the needs of children in rural, agricultural or fishing communities.

30 (c) *Public rural farm school* refers to a rural farm school operated by the government or
31 any of its political subdivisions.

32 (d) *Private rural farm school* refers to a rural farm school operated by a private entity, a
33 nongovernment organization or a farm association. This is a school which is not funded by
34 the government or any of its political subdivisions.

35 (e) *Tutors* refer to facilitators or instructors who comprise the teaching staff of the rural
36 farm school. They are specialists in their own fields of endeavor and who facilitate the
37 educative process.

38 (f) *CARP beneficiaries* refer to farmers or their kin who had received Certificates of Land
39 Ownership Award (CLOA) or Emancipation Patents under Republic Act No. 6657, as
40 amended, otherwise known as the "Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of 1988".

41 (g) *Agrarian reform community* refers to a barangay or cluster of barangays where a
42 critical mass of agrarian reform beneficiaries is situated.

43 (h) *Farm entrepreneurship* refers to the intermingling of finance, business and
44 agriculture in setting into operation or motion a business venture involved in the production
45 of agricultural commodities or enterprises.

46 SEC. 4. *Establishment of Rural Farm Schools.* – Rural farm schools are hereby
47 established to provide an alternative delivery mode of secondary education. The public rural
48 farm schools shall be free from tuition and other school fees, except those fees which may be
49 allowed by the DepED. Private rural farm schools shall set a minimal tuition and other fees
50 subject to the approval of the DepED: *Provided*, That the relatives of CARP beneficiaries up
51 to the third degree of consanguinity in the descending line shall be exempt from payment of
52 the fees.

53 The DepED shall institutionalize high standards of quality assurance in rural farm
54 schools. These standards shall involve prescribing guidelines and policies on the operation
55 and management of rural farm schools as well as basic curricular content to ensure the
56 credibility and academic integrity of rural farm schools.

57 Within one (1) year upon the formulation of the implementing rules and regulations of
58 this Act, the DepED shall encourage the establishment of at least one (1) public rural farm
59 school in every province in the country.

60 SEC. 5. *Implementing Agency.* – The DepED, through the Bureau of Secondary
61 Education, shall regulate the organization and operation of the rural farm schools and the
62 implementation of its curriculum as prescribed herein.

63 SEC. 6. *Curriculum and Teaching Methodology.* – The curriculum of the rural farm
64 school shall follow the core secondary education curriculum of the DepED with add-on
65 courses focused on Agri-Fishery Arts.

66 The last two (2) academic years in the rural farm school educational system shall focus
67 on integrative learning across all subject disciplines in the curriculum with emphasis on farm
68 entrepreneurship theory and practice and its promotion as a tool in cultivating local
69 entrepreneurs, revitalizing rural economics and repopulating rural communities.

70 The rural farm schools shall apply a flexible learning philosophy which may include an
71 alternative delivery mode as recognized by the DepED.

72 SEC. 7. *Eligible Students.* – Graduates of elementary school education, regardless of age,
73 shall be eligible to enroll in the rural farm schools for their secondary education.

74 Relatives of the beneficiaries of the CARP up to the third degree of consanguinity in the
75 descending line shall be given priority in admission when the rural farm school cannot
76 accommodate all of those applying for enrollment.

77 SEC. 8. *The School Head.* – Every rural farm school shall have a school head to oversee
78 its operations and management. The school head shall be tasked to facilitate the tutors'
79 participation in professional development activities including technical skills training and
80 extension services by the DepED, the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of
81 Agrarian Reform (DAR). The school head shall also ensure that the curricular program is
82 properly implemented and sufficient and adequate educational resources are available and
83 accessible to the students.

84 SEC. 9. *The Tutors.* – The tutors of the rural farm school shall be specialists in their
85 fields of endeavor. They shall act as teachers, guidance counselors, rural developers,
86 livelihood project proponents, marketing specialists and/or project consultants. They shall
87 establish a working partnership with the parents by conducting parent-tutor dialogues and
88 parent workshops.

89 SEC. 10. *Salary of Rural Farm School Personnel.* – Public rural farm school personnel
90 shall receive a monthly basic salary based on the compensation prescribed under the Salary
91 Standardization Law, as amended, in addition to other benefits prescribed by law.

92 In the case of private rural farm school personnel, they shall receive the salary and other
93 benefits prescribed under the Labor Code of the Philippines.

94 SEC. 11. *Skills Training and Extension Support.* – The DepED, the DAR, the DA, the
95 Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and the Agricultural
96 Training Institute (ATI) shall provide continuous technical skills training and provision of
97 extension materials including, but not limited to, books, student workbooks, teaching session
98 guides and other materials or equipment on the subjects offered, and other extension services
99 to the tutors of rural farm schools.

100 SEC. 12. *Accreditation of Rural Farm Schools.* – The DepED shall set the requirements
101 for accreditation of rural farm schools and accredit those that shall meet the prescribed
102 requirements. Rural farm schools may not operate unless accredited by the DepED.

103 The DepED may withdraw or downgrade the accreditation of a rural farm school if it
104 fails to maintain the standards set for its accreditation.

105 All accredited private rural farm schools, their mentors or facilitators and students shall
106 be eligible for subsidies under Republic Act No. 6728, as amended by Republic Act No.
107 8545, or the “Expanded Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private
108 Education Act”.

109 SEC. 13. *School Monitoring and Evaluation.* – The DepED shall conduct regular
110 monitoring and evaluation to determine continuing compliance with the requirements on
111 accreditation status of the rural farm schools and to determine whether or not the rural farm
112 schools adhere to the standards of quality assurance prescribed by the DepED.

113 SEC. 14. *Tax Exemption.* – Any donation, contribution, bequest or grant which may be
114 made to a rural farm school duly accredited under Section 12 of this Act shall be exempt from
115 the donor’s tax and the same shall be considered as allowable deduction from the gross
116 income in the computation of the income tax of the donor in accordance with the provisions
117 of the National Internal Revenue Code (NIRC) of 1997, as amended: *Provided,* That the rural
118 farm school has likewise been accredited by the Philippine Council for NGO Certification
119 (PCNC).

120 SEC. 15. *Appropriations.* – The Secretary of Education shall immediately include in the
121 Department’s program the operationalization of the public rural farm schools, the funding of
122 which shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

123 SEC. 16. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days after the
124 effectivity of this Act, the DepED, in consultation with the DA, the DAR, the TESDA and the
125 ATI, shall formulate the rules and regulations needed for the effective implementation of this
126 Act.

127 SEC. 17. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or
128 unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall
129 remain valid and subsisting.

130 SEC. 18. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws or parts thereof, decrees, orders, rules and
131 regulations inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified
132 accordingly.

133 SEC. 19. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
134 publication in the *Official Gazette*.

135

136 Approved.