



G-Watch
Citizen Action for Accountability



Making the Elections an
Accountability Platform

FactCheck 2022

Presidential Candidates

Education

The **education** sector is one of the hardest hit sectors during the pandemic, with schools and learning institutions forced to close to prevent the risk of infection of COVID-19. In the Philippines, this meant further burdening a sector already in a state of crisis.[1] Even before the pandemic, the country already struggled with overcrowded classrooms, weak public school infrastructure, and low wages for teachers.[2] UNICEF points out that despite being a middle-income country, many Filipino children miss out on the opportunity to learn, with out-of-school children reaching 2.8 million as of 2019.[3]

The pandemic surfaced issues on distance learning, academic dishonesty, and quality of education, which became more apparent because of the remote setup.[4] The education sector dealt with mass layoffs of school teachers and workers; drops in enrollment; lack of resources for online learning; lack of accessibility for online learning; mental health of students, teachers, and parents; poor quality of modules; and learning loss, among others.[5] Most urgently, the Philippines is criticized for being the one of the last countries to reopen its schools in 2021 and for having one of the world's longest lockdowns, with fears of a "lost generation" hounding the sector.[6]

On 10 September 2021, the various student groups led by the Student Council Alliance of the Philippines (SCAP), supported by Multiply-Ed, a new multi-level accountability initiative in education, issued a statement [7] demanding the Duterte administration to "**declare an EDUCATION CRISIS** and address the utter disregard for students' needs" (emphasis in the original). Citing a study made by the National Research Council of the Philippines, the statement said that 90% of students lean less from remote learning, and that the said setup has affected the mental and physical health of 54.7% of all students.

To address the education crisis, SCAP and its allies proposed a four-point agenda, namely:

1. Safe reopening of schools. Include students, teachers, and staff in starting a clear roadmap towards the safe reopening of schools by ensuring a health-responsive and human rights-based approach to the pandemic.
2. Provide accessible mental health services for all students, teachers, and staff.
3. Restore budget cuts to the education sector, including a P10 billion slash from scholarship programs under CHED. Restore the student aid program for high school and college students. Allot the recommended 20% of the national budget to the education sector with close monitoring of its utilization.
4. Pass the Students Rights and Welfare (STRAW) Act.

Track Record

Out of all the candidates, **Domagoso** and **Robredo** show the most notable accomplishments in the education sector. Meanwhile, others show minimal to no track record in education, not being the focus of their advocacies in the past, as with **De Guzman** (labor issues), **Lacson** (law enforcement, security), or **Pacquiao**. Finally, while **Marcos** filed several bills relating to education, their impact on the sector is questionable.



As mayor, **Isko Moreno Domagoso** approved in December 2021 a Php2.5 billion special education fund to rehabilitate schools and supplement beneficiary programs for students and teachers in Manila. The fund was also meant to supplement the cellular data connectivity allowance of students and teachers and the free annual medical checkup of 11,000 Division City Schools teachers.[8] He also approved a Php5 billion budget for the construction of three modernized public schools the same year, along with the distribution of tablets, laptops, and wi-fi to public school students and teachers in Manila. His government also provided cash allowance to students during the pandemic.[9] Under his term, the Manila government built seven public schools.[10]



As senator, **Panfilo Lacson** co-authored in 2019 the GMRC and Values Education Act, which institutionalized these subjects in the K-12 curriculum. [11] He also filed a bill the same year (SBN 1247) to prioritize the acquisition and titling of school sites of the Department of Education, majority of which were untitled or unregistered.[12]



According to his website, **Ferdinand Marcos, Jr.** filed several bills as senator: SBN 3106, a bill to upgrade the minimum salary level of public school teachers; SBN 2531, a bill mandating continuing education for all teachers in all levels of education; SBN 2532, a bill making it mandatory for Congress to convert best-performing public elementary and high schools into first-class educational institutions; SBN 2188, a bill imposing a moratorium on the creation of new state universities and colleges; and SBN 1191, a bill authorizing a reduction of sentences for prisoners who would participate in a reading program.[13] As a member of the House of Representatives, he filed HB 12712, a bill to convert a school in Ilocos Norte into a national trade school; HBN 14290, a bill providing for nationalism subjects in schools; HR 00090, a resolution to urge the executive department to reinstate dismissed public school teachers; HB 06285, a bill to authorize the establishment of an agro-industrial high school in Ilocos Norte; and HB 07554, a bill to convert barrio high schools in Ilocos Norte to national high schools.[14]



In the House of Representatives, **Leni Robredo** was one of the authors of the Open High School System Act (RA 10665), an act establishing and appropriating funds for the open high school system in the Philippines which was enacted on July 9, 2015. Robredo also authored an earlier version of the Sanggunian Kabataan Reform Act (RA 10742), an act establishing reforms in the SK and meaningful youth participation in nation-building, through HB 00109.[15] As vice president, one of Robredo's key projects is Bayanihan E-skwela: an initiative that comprises of a gadget donation drive, instructional videos for teachers and parents, community learning hubs, and teaching training initiatives for online and modular teaching, among others.[16]

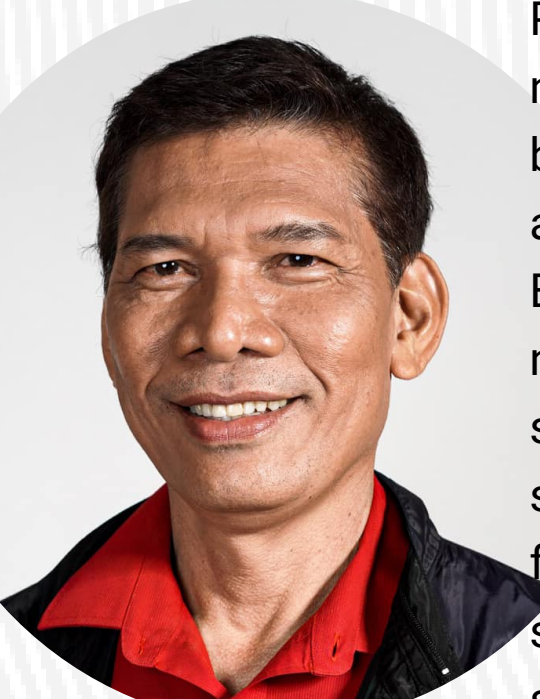
Robredo was also the only major candidate to recognize the “crisis” in education. On March 9, during a town hall meeting held at the Father Saturnino Urios University in Butuan, the Vice President said that she will declare an “education crisis” if she succeeds in her bid for the presidency. This means upgrading the training of teachers and ensuring that they will not be distracted by administrative work.[17] Robredo reiterated her call 10 days later. During COMELEC's PiliPinas Debate, the Vice President emphasized the importance of declaring an “education crisis” to improve the country's performance in international assessments. [18]

There is little to no available public data on other presidential candidates' track record on education. **Ernesto Abella** is a school owner (Southpoint School), a professor at Ateneo de Davao University[19] and served as officer-in-charge of the UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines.[20] **Jose Montemayor** is a professor of law in various universities and also taught managerial economics. [21]


There is no public data available on the track record of **Leody de Guzman**, **Norberto Gonzales**, **Faisal Mangondato**, and **Manny Pacquiao** on the education sector.

Platform & Plans


De Guzman has the most comprehensive and detailed agenda for the education sector, addressing education in the “new normal” and challenges for teachers and students. **Domagoso, Lacson, and Robredo** also have clear platforms to address gaps in the sector. Other candidates mention plans for education (when they do have clear plans); however, these are not clearly articulated as of the time of publication.




De Guzman, as part of Laban ng Masa, initially included in the Bagong Pulitika, Bagong Ekonomiya platform to “guarantee free quality formal and non-formal education up to the college level; re-fund and build more and better public schools [and] libraries” as part of his plans. In his website, he articulates his agenda for the education sector further via “Adyenda sa Edukasyon,”[22] where he outlines 10 points for education in the new normal; 12 points for the welfare of teachers; and 7 points for the welfare of students. Notable points in his agenda include retrofitting schools to ensure safety; allocating funds for utility expenses in blended learning; free tuition for all teachers pursuing higher studies; salary increases for teachers; job security for teaching and non-teaching personnel; establishment of students’ help desks; encourage internships with pay; and the realization of free education as a constitutional right.



“Kalayaan sa kakulangan sa edukasyon” is part of **Robredo’s** “Kalayaan sa COVID” plan. This part of her platform includes plans to open face-to-face classes in low risk areas; achieve a 1:1 student to gadget ratio in areas with high prevalence of COVID-19; extend a Php68 billion budget for educational assistance to students; and establish community learning hubs where students and teachers have access to educational materials and internet, among others.[28] Another aspect of her education platform, “Angat Buhay sa Edukasyon,”[29] also includes Robredo’s plans to allocate 6% of the GDP to improve the educational system; increase students’ test scores in math, science, and reading; launch a national learning assessment program to diagnose gaps in knowledge; and provide for sufficient training and pay for teachers.



Domagoso’s “Bilis Kilos 10 Point Agenda” includes education, specifically “inclusive, innovative, and industry 4.0-ready education”[23] and his oft-repeated plan to build more schools,[24] citing his example in Manila. In a debate, he also stated plans to increase the budget of education to GDP ratio, from 3.17% to 4.3%; to increase access to quality of education; to change the curriculum to focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); and to upgrade technical and vocational programs to prepare Filipinos for future jobs.[25]



Lacson’s “future proof” plans for the Philippines include a paid internship program, where poor and deserving college undergraduates, as well as junior and senior high school students, can undergo paid internships in government offices, private corporations, and businesses, to maximize their skills development and productivity.[26] Together with his vice presidential candidate, Lacson also banners an “Edukasyon Plus” program for Filipino youth, which would provide free tuition and a P5,000 allowance every month, as well as the mentioned internships, to cut the dropout rate.[27]

Other candidates’ plans for the education sector are not as detailed. **Abella** proposes to establish a national volunteer corps comprised of Filipinos aged 18 to 35, who would devote two years to community service, including mentoring students.[30] **Gonzales** seeks scholarships for teachers and implementation of “standard education” among students, i.e., no difference in treatment between rich and poor students.[31] **Mangondato** merely mentions he will focus on education [32] while **Montemayor** includes “educational advancement” in his 10-point agenda.[33] **Pacquiao** advocates for free education[34] and a “one student, one gadget” ratio.

There is no publicly available data on **Marcos’** plans for the education sector.

Endnotes

- [1] <https://cmfr-phil.org/in-context/the-philippine-crisis-in-education/>
- [2] <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/13/world/asia/philippines-students-remote-covid.html>
- [3] <https://www.unicef.org/philippines/education>
- [4] <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/iq/review-2021-issues-distance-learning-academic-freedom-persist/>
- [5] <https://cmfr-phil.org/in-context/the-philippine-crisis-in-education/>
- [6] <https://time.com/6124045/school-closures-covid-education-philippines/>
- [7] <https://www.facebook.com/SCAProgressives/posts/4588389671200911>
- [8] <https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/17/mayor-isko-oks-p2-5-b-special-education-fund/>
- [9] <https://pia.gov.ph/news/2021/07/20/mayor-isko-lays-out-public-education-plan-for-manila>
- [10] <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2021/11/13/2140921/isko-vows-invest-future-youth>
- [11] http://legacy.senate.gov.ph/senators/sen_bio/lacson_bio.asp
- [12] <https://pinglacson.net/article/legislative-output>
- [13] <https://www.bongbongmarcos.com/legislative-accomplishments/education/>
- [14] See House of Representatives website, at <https://www.congress.gov.ph/>
- [15] See House of Representatives website, at <https://www.congress.gov.ph/>
- [16] OVP Annual Report 2020 at <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1E1d8m00JYW9-GQxXwckiwl0jyFA5q0gu>
- [17] <https://www.rappler.com/nation/robredo-blames-unemployment-problems-despite-job-vacancies-education-crisis/>
- [18] <https://mb.com.ph/2022/03/19/robredo-many-filipinos-unable-to-find-work-due-to-education-crisis/#close>
- [19] <https://news.tv5.com.ph/bilangpilipino/candidates/president/abella-ernie>
- [20] <https://www.unesco.gov.ph/partners-forum-and-fellowship/partners-forum-and-fellowship-2/>
- [21] <http://www.joeymontemayor.ph/about>
- [22] <https://kaleody.org/statements/2022-03-18-adyenda-sa-edukasyon/>
- [23] <https://tayosiisko.com/bilis-kilos/>
- [24] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikFo8cKL6So>
- [25] <https://rmn.ph/tao-muna-mayor-isko-inilatag-ang-kanyang-10-point-bilis-kilos-agenda/>
- [26] <https://pinglacson.net/article/lacson-details-future-proof-plans-for-the-philippines>
- [27] <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2022/02/27/2163674/lacson-sotto-edukasyon-plus-cut-dropout-rate>
- [28] <https://lenirobredo.com/kalayaan-sa-covid>
- [29] <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2022/02/27/2161729/gobyernong-tapat-look-robredos-platform-and-people-around-her>
- [30] <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/02/19/22/presidential-bet-montemayor-pushes-for-better-ofw-aid>
- [31] <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/821206/norberto-gonzales-vows-scholarship-for-teachers-standard-education/story/>
- [32] <https://news.tv5.com.ph/bilangpilipino/candidates/president/mangondato-faisal>
- [33] <http://www.joeymontemayor.ph/programs>
- [34] <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/819158/free-education-housing-among-pacquiao-s-priorities-if-he-becomes-president/story/>

About MEAP FactCheck

G-Watch views the upcoming polls in 2022 as an extremely important terrain that has to be engaged, and that would complement other accountability efforts that are being undertaken before, after and beyond elections. In this light, G-Watch is undertaking a citizenship education initiative that aims to Make Elections an Accountability Platform (MEAP). The first round of MEAP focused on the conduct citizenship education sessions and the convening of multi-stakeholder dialogues.

The 2nd phase of MEAP is taking on the issue of the use of information to make elections an accountability platform. In February, G-Watch's annual awareness-raising campaign *Ako, Ikaw, Tayo May Pananagutan* took on the issue of fake news and disinformation. Hundreds participated in varied activities in 10 G-Watch local sites all over the country.

The other critical component of the 2nd phase of MEAP are activities to check on the candidates' track record and platform on critical issues and agenda: the conduct of Local Candidates Forum targeting local candidates in G-Watch sites all over the country and the production and release of FactCheck Briefs covering key presidential candidates.

The MEAP FactCheck Briefs review the position, platform and track record of key presidential candidates on issues and agenda G-Watch deemed important and critical. Position refers to the candidates' pronouncements about the agenda that can be found in printed materials like news, statements or online. Platform refers to the candidates' plans in tackling the agenda as stated in their official platform. Track record refers to the direct action taken by the candidates in advancing/ realizing the agenda. We determine whether the candidates have taken direct action in terms of bills filed, laws passed, decisions made, programs/ projects personally/ directly championed as stated in official or reliable/ verifiable records. List of references are provided in every Fact-Check Briefs.

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Make the 2022 Elections an Accountability Platform!

Statement of Government Watch (G-Watch) on the Upcoming May Polls

In exactly two months from now, Filipinos will once again go to the polls to elect the country's next President, along with the Vice President, 12 senators, 316 members of the Lower House, as well as 16,055 local officials. While every election is important, the upcoming poll is both unique and extremely crucial due to the ongoing pandemic, and the continuing threats to democracy and to our people's very survival.

The dismal performance of the national government in handling the COVID-19 crisis is going to be the backdrop of the 2022 elections. It has to be. The 2022 elections will also be critical in reaffirming many democratic values that has been under threat for the past years, such as inviolability of human rights, the rule of law, and the principle that a public office is public trust since all power emanates from the people.

The 2022 polls, in other words, has to be turned into an accountability process, where candidates have to be made answerable for their performance or lack thereof.

We call on voters to elect candidates that will restore checks and balances in government, strengthen accountability institutions, uphold merit-based public management, and support independent civil society monitoring and advocacy.

At the same time, G-Watch offers the following agenda for the next administration:

- Ensure access to relevant, useful and clear information.
- Pass the Freedom of Information Law.
- Bolster transparency mechanisms and efforts.
- Ensure that feedback, complaint and grievance redress mechanisms properly work so that the concerns of citizens can be adequately addressed.
- Enhance the capacity of accountability institutions, mechanisms and programs inside government.
- Ensure that the country's legal framework remains supportive, facilitative and enabling of progressive civil society, including independent citizen accountability efforts.

We also call on the Philippine development community to start rebooting, retooling and re-energizing civil society-government engagement to one that synergizes interdependent power which checks abuses at the top and uplifts the most marginalized.

If all these are done, then we can turn elections to what it should be—as a way to allow even the most ordinary of citizens to speak truth to power and change the course of the country's history.

** Adopted during the 2022 G-Watch National Meeting & Learning Exchange on March 4-8 in Pasig and Baguio Cities. G-Watch is an independent action research organization embedded in constituencies of civic and advocacy-oriented organizations all over the Philippines that aims to contribute in democratic deepening through the scaling of accountability and citizen empowerment. G-Watch has local sites and partner civil society organizations and government allies in Pasig City, Quezon City, Naga, Puerto Princesa, Cebu, Bohol, Tacloban, Dumaguete, Bacolod, Southern Leyte, Lanao del Sur, Samal Island, and Agusan del Sur.*