

**SPEECH BY**  
**PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.**  
**AT THE BASIC EDUCATION REPORT (BER) 2023**

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Thank you very much to our Vice President and the Secretary of Educa — *[Oh please, please sit down]* Secretary of Education. And we thank you very much for that most thorough and insightful report. And it gives us certainly a baseline – it may not be the best news that we had hoped to receive. But nonetheless, it shows us the directions in which we need to go.

Senate President Migz Zubiri and the other members of the Senate who are there today; the Excellencies of the Diplomatic Corps; members of the Cabinet; the Chair of the Senate Committee on Basic Education, Senator Sherwin Gatchalian; Pasay City Mayor Imelda Calixto-Rubiano; Basic Education and Culture Chairman, Congressman Roman Romulo and the other members of the House of Representatives; my fellow workers in government; ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

It is an honor to join you today for the first part of the Basic Education Report, and it is particularly important as we were noting while the Vice President was speaking that this has been the first conference of this kind for many, many years. *[applause]*

We deem it absolutely necessary that we have such consultations for the simple reason that we all know, must know, the situation that we face and the many problems that we need to solve. And only again by working together can we get that job done.

But at least the Department of Education, the Secretary Inday Sara, our Vice President, has provided us with this starting point. And it is now up to us to take that starting point and go from that starting point and to all of the programs that we hope to implement in the very near future for our children.

I think that if there is one thing that we took from the comments of the Secretary – Secretary-Vice President Inday Sara is that the Filipino is better than this. The children are better than this. And we cannot fail them.

And that is the main motivation that we should keep in our hearts. We have failed them. We have to admit that. We have failed our children and let us not keep failing them anymore. Otherwise, we will not allow them to become the great Filipinos that we know they can be. They will not become the great Filipinos that will be recognized not only by their fellow Filipinos but by many people around the world.

And thus, it once again reminds us that education is the most valuable service that the government can give to its citizens. If there is nothing else. After preservation of life and limb, education comes next. And with that, with a well trained – with a well trained populace, with a well trained and highly experienced workforce then everything follows. The Philippines will succeed.

So we in the Administration recognize the challenges and issues facing our education sector, all of which must be confronted with an open mind and compassion for those who might have fallen behind over the past few years.

I am confident that we will see noticeable improvements moving forward because our Department of Education that is spearheaded by no less than our hard-working Vice President Inday Sara Duterte is there.

Let me also acknowledge and convey my deepest appreciation to the men and women of DepEd, who are now in the hot seat [*laughter*] because pinakilala na kayo ni Inday Sara sa aming lahat. Kaya't pagka magkaproblema alam na namin kung sino ang lalapitan namin.

But all of you, the associations in the country, policymakers, the development partners, and all stakeholders, for your collective efforts and commitment to pursuing quality education for all.

I am pleased to see that you have gathered here for this very important event for the benefit of our learners.

Your attendance is a manifestation that addressing our educational challenges requires not only a multifaceted approach, but also the active participation of all.

It is my hope that my being here signals this Administration's determination and commitment to bridge the gaps that currently exist in the education sector.

Indeed, strengthening our education system warrants a whole-of-government [and] whole-of-society approach, with the highest degree of proactivity, motivation, and perseverance.

As our nation recovers and bounces back from the losses and adverse effects caused by COVID-19, we must now move full speed to equip our learners and educators with the capacity and tools they need to meet the challenges and opportunities we have in front of us.

As many of you know, I have been traveling around and trying to bring to the consciousness of our friends and partners around the world of the potentialities of the Filipino worker and of the Philippines. And at every juncture, I am confronted by the challenge of that the central key to success is going to upskill and reskill our workforce.

And that again brings us to the importance of education not only as a moral – not only as a moral imperative for government but as a practical one. Because without that skilled workforce, we cannot compete and we cannot succeed.

So I am gratified to see that that has become a very large part of the plans that the DepEd has for the future.

The pandemic also brought to our consciousness the importance of being able to adapt to new and changing realities, as well as unexpected circumstances.

So again we must consistently develop and adopt innovative paradigms and strategic reforms that will ensure the resilience of our educational landscape.

We must first act locally in order for us to be competitive globally.

We will work hard so that no Filipino is left behind, and to do even better, we will ensure that we are at par with global standards in basic education.

This endeavor will be at the forefront of our efforts to realize our vision of providing quality education for our children and for generations to come.

I have previously mentioned that this Administration will at no point scrimp on investment in our educational sector and in our young learners. And I am here today to reaffirm that commitment. *[applause]*

We will build infrastructure that will provide our learners, teachers, and the entire academic sector with a healthy and safe environment that is conducive to learning.

We will also invest in our teachers as we all know that is part of the most – that is part of our improving our educational system.

If you saw the Senate President and myself talking earlier, we are already planning on how we get the school building program off the ground so that the deficiencies that we saw in the report will somehow be mitigated. *[applause]*

Our teachers are there because it is a vocation. Teachers do not become teachers because it is their job. Teachers do not become teachers because they want to become rich. Teachers become teachers because they have to. It is a vocation.

And it is up to us to support them in that effort because they feel the need to educate young people. And we are blessed that we have such teachers and we should hold them close and do all we can to support them so that they can do, to the best of their ability, what they have pledged to do.

So we invest in our teachers. We will offer them multiple opportunities that meet both their personal and professional needs.

We will offer them the support they need in terms of resources, in terms of programs, and policies so that they can effectively perform their roles as teachers and mentors of our children. It is my firm belief that quality teachers yield hard-working, productive, and law-abiding citizens.

We will also invest in our learners by giving them the right tools and mechanisms that they need in their day-to-day schooling.

Let us take advantage of the new technologies and innovations that will provide them convenience and efficiency in their pursuit of learning.

Aside from advancing their academic competencies, it is also imperative that we hone them to become productive and responsible members of our society.

Let us embrace the DepEd's theme and a fine one it is, "*Bansang Makabata, Batang Makabansa*," in that way we can produce young citizens who are not only productive, but also harbor genuine love and passion for our country. *[applause]*

That is why I have always been consistent in expressing my full support to the DepEd's plans to take critical, bold, yet sustainable actions that will improve our country's educational sector and address learning challenges.

It is something that I have been espousing throughout my entire professional career. And at every position that I have ever held, the very first action I ever took was always to find a way to help our teachers.

I know the conditions that they have to work in, I know the difficulties that they have to face, and yet they come to school and look after our children. *[applause]* That is a blessing.

So I stand behind you as we come up with a long-term vision and forward-thinking solutions that will benefit our children.

I would like to emphasize however that the government does not – is not able to execute this task alone.

As I said earlier, strengthening our education system warrants the support of each one of us that are present here today.

All of us have roles to play, we have parts to contribute.

And so let me issue a challenge to you all to become active key players in this effort.

Let us join hands and act in unison as we build the best education system that the Philippines has ever seen.

We owe it to our children to prioritize their well-being and give them the highest possible quality of education so they may become the innovators and the leaders of tomorrow not only of the Philippines but of the world.

With our united efforts, I am confident that we will succeed and bring forth a better, brighter, and more prosperous future for our children.

Maraming, maraming salamat po sa inyong lahat at magandang hapon po sa inyo. *[applause]*

**— END —**