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PRESS RELEASE

**Country's biggest biz groups warn of fragile economic recovery
with education sector in crisis**

Makati City, PHILIPPINES – Eight of the biggest business organizations in the country on Monday called for urgent and comprehensive reforms in the Philippine education sector, warning that the current learning loss threatens the country's economic growth for years to come.

“The growth trajectory of our nation is being threatened by the learning crisis. Will our workforce have the skills they need to keep up with the changing business landscape? Will our industries thrive on the back of our future workforce? Let me tell you now: if we do nothing to arrest the decline in our education system, the answer to these questions is a resounding no,” Philippine Business for Education (PBEEd) Chair Ramon del Rosario, Jr. said at the joint membership meeting on the Philippine learning crisis organized by PBEEd.

Representatives from the Employers Confederation of the Philippines, IT and Business Process Association of the Philippines, Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines, Makati Business Club, Management Association of the Philippines (MAP), PBEEd, Philippine Business for Social Progress and the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry participated in the online event, which called for a united business community to help address the learning crisis in the country.

With the COVID-19 pandemic deflating the country's gross domestic product (GDP) by 9.5% in 2020, the groups warned that the learning loss currently experienced by Filipino students portends a slow economic growth in the years to come, threatening the country's chances of a full recovery.

“It's not unreasonable to say that if future members of the workforce are not receiving the proper education right now, they are not getting the skills they need to secure employment in the future. Our businesses simply cannot be competitive if they lack the skilled workforce that will help them thrive,” PBEEd Executive Director Love Basillote said. “In addition, the longer our students are kept out of school, the bigger their losses will be in terms of future earnings.”

In its report titled '[The economic impact of learning losses](#)' published in September 2020, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development noted that “while the precise learning

losses are not yet known, existing research suggests that the students in grades 1-12 affected by the closures might expect some 3% lower income over their entire lifetimes. For nations, the lower long-term growth related to such losses might yield an average of 1.5% lower annual GDP for the remainder of the century.”

Former Education Secretary Armin Luistro, who is currently the brother provincial of the Lasallian East Asia District, said in his keynote address that stakeholders in the education sector must focus on five areas in reforming Philippine education. These are social equity, nutrition, budget, curriculum and school management. He added that poor students cannot keep up with the requirements of distance learning; 52% of learners are in poor health; the country spends less for education compared to its neighbors; our students have shorter pre-primary education; and our schools struggle with making the learning environment more inclusive.

“The learning crisis is big, multi-faceted, multi-player and multi-generational,” Luistro said.

MAP President Aurelio “Gigi” Montinola III called on the business community to reach out to other members of society and work together in ensuring that economic growth still remains inclusive.

“Almost 3 million Filipino students have been left behind; our teachers are put under enormous stress to adjust their teaching methods; families are scrambling for resources to keep up with distance learning; and the entire education system is grappling with the herculean tasks of improving accessibility and the quality of education. Unless we come up with something urgent and comprehensive, we are throwing away the future of an entire generation of Filipino learners,” he said.

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