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EDUCATION AND THE NATION STATE: AN ANALYSIS OF PHILIPPINE PRESIDENTIAL SPEECHES

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ABSTRACT:

How do Philippine Presidents present issues on education in their presidential speeches? What are pertinent concerns in education sector that are identified and given attention during the speech? How do these issues relate to the overall approach of the address? As a qualitative study, this paper utilizes data gathered from online repositories, as transcripts of presidential speeches delivered through the State of the National Address (SONA) are available online. These materials include those delivered by President Arroyo, President Aquino, and President Duterte. The narrative of President Arroyo's SONA weaves economy and education. Strengthening the economy through strategic management and sound policies has been instrumental in achieving quality education. It is also strongly evident how the thrust of President Aquino in education is shown in his first three consecutive years of reports to the people. Various changes, huge or small still matter for they made significant propulsion and advancement in the quality of education for Filipinos. President Duterte's administration showcases preventive measures on crime, violence, and drugs by means of devising programs and laws for the eventual attainment of universal quality education.

Keywords: education, speech, state of the nation, president, public address

ABSTRAK:

Bagaimana Presiden Filipina menyampaikan masalah pendidikan dalam pidatonya? Apa perhatian penting pada sektor pendidikan yang diidentifikasi dan diberikan perhatian pada pidato tersebut? Bagaimana masalah ini terkait pada semua bagian? Dengan studi kualitatif, makalah ini menggunakan data yang dikumpulkan dari data online, karena transkrip pidato presiden disampaikan melalui Negara Alamat Nasional (SONA) tersedia secara online. Pada materi-materi pidato ini juga ada yang disampaikan oleh Presiden Arroyo, Presiden Aquino, dan Presiden Duterte. Narasi SONA oleh Presiden Arroyo menjelaskan sektor ekonomi dan pendidikan. Penguatan ekonomi melalui manajemen strategis dan kebijakan yang baik telah berperan penting dalam mencapai pendidikan yang berkualitas. Juga sangat jelas bagaimana Presiden Aquino dalam mendorong sektor pendidikan ditunjukkan dalam tiga tahun pertama laporannya kepada rakyat. Berbagai perubahan, besar atau kecil masih penting karena mereka membuat daya dorong yang signifikan dan kemajuan dalam kualitas pendidikan bagi orang Filipina. Administrasi Presiden Duterte menampilkan tindakan pencegahan pada kejahatan, kekerasan, dan obat-obatan dengan merancang program dan undang-undang untuk pencapaian akhir kualitas pendidikan.

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INTRODUCTION

Different forms of public address serve as a powerful tool in highlighting speaker-audience connection, along with determining the efficacy of communication. These addresses are delivered in the light of relating strong messages to the public about the public, and of the public. The contemporary time has witnessed great speeches and speakers that shape the history and form of public debate and opinion. As public opinion is formed after an address is delivered, speeches are considered as crucial vehicle in promoting a speaker's advocacy. (Fowler, 2012) stated that "different representations of experience" are being encoded by various discourse modes.

In a country, like the Philippines, engulfed by numerous political, social and cultural issues, public speeches are considered to be a springboard in advancing foundations for people to consume and digest arguments and eventually form informed and evidence-based perspectives. Studies on discourses have been explored in many disciplines, including humanities, social sciences, and others (Biber, Connor & Upton, 2007). A leader's State of the Nation Address serve as an avenue to present to the citizens the country's contemporary issues, achievements, and directions, while fulfilling identified goals for the people. It initially captures how the government has provided solutions to pressing issues while highlighting strategic directions to be taken in the next years. The way the speech is delivered is carefully crafted in the hope of effectively conveying messages to the people. Most importantly, the contents are meticulously written to fit vital and critical issues in an hour-length speech.

How do Philippine Presidents present issues on education in their presidential speeches? What are pertinent concerns in education sector that are identified and given attention during the speech? How do these issues relate to the overall approach of the address? These questions serve as a jump off point for the proponents of the study in crafting a systematic approach to this paper. (Vijayakumari & Manikandan, 2013) in their study consider education to be the "most important social investment as it determines the country's quality of human resources." Education and the national state are two inseparable concepts that contribute to contemporary Philippine society. How each concept is given attention provides a rationale on the daily lives of the Filipino people: we live like this partly because of the attention given to education and the nation. As (Bligh, Kohles, & Meindl, 2004) emphasize, leadership is an invitation for new and inventive research methods.

LITERATURE REVIEW & RESEARCH FOCUS

Crafting public speeches reflects the speakers ability (Kasanova, 2013). Language serves as a "powerful tool in politics" (Bev, 2008) and this is then presented to achieve achievement of particular goals and advantages. (Jasim, 2018) in a study found out that in order to appeal to emotions, ontological metaphors are used by President Trump in his speeches delivered before the American public. On the other hand, former President Obama employed both ontological and orientational approaches. These strategies are seen to be utilized so the audience would be able to "understand and experience one concept in terms of another." According to (Mio, Reggio, & Herndier, 2017), these metaphors contribute to perceived charisma. (Thompson, 2015) also noted that more words are chosen in conveying something the less power those words possess. Further study by (Rezaei & Nourali, 2016) stated that the use of persuasive techniques in public addresses is culture based.

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This inquiry affirms its significance and importance in the light of efforts to highlight the attention to education at the macro level, particularly on a national scale. The attention given to the education sector is dealt with chunks of evidence presented in presidential speeches. State of the Nation Addresses of Philippine Presidents typically confront social issues such as politics, economic growth, public welfare, among others, and it is high time to take a look at how education is viewed through the eyes of national leaders. ([Mio, Reggio, & Herndier, 2017](#)) recognized the power of political and presidential language in strengthening the power of persuasion.

On a greater scale, this paper places its importance in providing an academic discourse on education and presidential speeches, as it calls for genuine efforts to contextualize issues in education and analyse how education has been provided an avenue for discourse through public addresses. In a developing country like the Philippines, opportunities for education discourse are crucial and challenging since serious social and economic issues are the typical points of discussion. Arguments presented in this paper could serve as inputs in revisiting priorities presented on a national discourse. It will be an avenue to uphold commitment and advocacies related to education. Careful analysis is central to promote retrospective opportunities to political leaders and education stakeholders. The logic of this paper rests upon the assumption that once issues on education are given space and attention, especially when backed up by evidence and research-based inquiries, treating problems related to education quality, facilities, infrastructure, and other would be of great priorities.

Findings of the study could eventually raise awareness on the plight of the Philippine education system and the attention given to this sector. Eventually, it provides new perspectives on the way we view education, from the perspectives of our leaders, along with contemporary pressing issues and the provision of solutions. Presidential speeches are powerful vehicles in advancing a particular discourse. Philippine presidents, being regarded as the most powerful personality in the country, could create venues for discourses. National leaders are capable of directing powerful and strong ideas: their speeches are considered to be a great weapon in affirming viewpoints. Presidential speeches as the jump off point of this study perfectly capture how the education sector is being taken into consideration in the country. The framework of cohesion ([Halliday & Hasan, 1976](#)) provides an appropriate theoretical approach to this study. Through careful analysis of presidential speeches, ideas associated to each point of argument is scrutinized, along with associated meanings with what is being discussed. Elements of presidential speeches present cohesive features: there exists a relationship of meaning in presidential speeches and the interpretation of some elements depends on other elements identified forming cohesion. Meaningful connections and interpretations occur once presidential speeches are analysed.

Contextualizing this framework in the current study requires careful analysis in terms of depth and width of Philippine presidential speeches. How does each public address provide space for discussion on education? What particular aspects of education are mentioned? How does the attention given to education sectors can be compared to other inquiries in the context of the delivery of State of the Nation Addresses? These questions are answered following Halliday and Hasan's cohesion framework.

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RESEARCH METHOD

As a qualitative research in nature, this paper utilizes data gathered from online repositories, as transcripts of presidential speeches delivered through the State of the National Address are available online. These materials include those delivered by President Arroyo from 2004 – 2010, President Aquino from 2010 – 2016, and President Duterte from 2016 to present. Only the first three speeches of each president were included in the study. This limitation has been posed since current President Duterte has only delivered three addresses since he assumed office. As a part of the larger study, this paper only initially intends to present the context of each president. Future studies may explore to compare and contrast how each president pertained to education in their respective speeches.

The concept of education has been central towards achieving the goal of this research, thus sections of speeches pertaining to education were identified from the rest of the transcripts. The following key words also served as guide in identifying significant data from the manuscripts: schools, teachers, students, education, university, and others. Once identified, the context of each keywords were then analysed to establish connections and meanings. These were then used to emerge at themes and relate education to the overall speech framework.

Nvivo is also used in the analysis. The software was used in organizing and coding data generated from the transcripts of presidential speeches. Specifically, word frequency and themes were utilized to analyse the data. Through the software, prevailing themes were classified, sorted, and analysed.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the thorough analysis of speech transcripts three Philippine Presidents. Presentation is done chronologically, starting with former President Gloria Arroyo (2004 – 2010), former President Benigno Simeon Aquino (2010 – 2016), and current President Rodrigo Duterte (2016 – present).

President Arroyo: Strong Economy, Reformed Education System

The former President Gloria Macapagal - Arroyo or commonly known as PGMA was sworn into office on January 21, 2001, after then President Joseph Estrada was ousted. She ran and won as President in 2004. For the record, PGMA's longest SONA was her first SONA, having spent 1 hour and 6 minutes discussing her plans to provide jobs, education, housing, and food on her 2004 SONA. Her shortest SONA was the 25-minute, 55-second speech about charter change and the tale of two Philippines in 2005. PGMA consistently boasted of the country's economic growth in her SONA. She often asked Congress to pass revenue measures. She also consistently called for national unity and a stop to political bickering (GMA News Online, 2009). On her 38-minute 2004 State of the Nation Address in Batasang Pambansa Complex in Quezon City, she draw support from the Filipino people as she highlighted the story of Angelo dela Cruz, an OFW saved from a death row. The theme of her 2004 SONA was about "mamamayan muna" (citizen first); sacrifice, and reforms. In light of OFW Angelo dela Cruz's hostage taking and release, PGMA defended the pull out of RP troops from Iraq: RP's foreign policy is to defend national interest, including safety

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of OFWs. Further analysis of three speeches delivered revealed how Arroyo concentrated on the following top terms based on word frequency count:

Table 1. Word frequency of speeches delivered by Arroyo

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
government	10	493	0.58
now	3	429	0.50
people	6	409	0.48
I/me	3	355	0.41

PGMA's emphasis on the aspect of education was really highlighted on her intended five key reform packages: (1) job creation through economic growth; (2) anti-corruption through good governance; (3) social justice and basic needs; (4) education and youth opportunity; and (5) energy independence and savings. She later connects the role of the economy, through adapting the words of the Father of Modern Economics Adam Smith to the information age: *"The greatest improvement in the productive powers of labor seems to have been the effects of modern education."*

On her passage;

"We need to start early. And we need to maintain the highest educational standards. I ask the Congress to legislate an extra year of studies not by adding a fifth year of high school but by standardizing what is taught in the barangay day care centres." This obviously implied that lengthening and standardizing the educational programs and curriculum is foreseen as an indication of strong educational foundations."

An approach was being processed towards the end of her speech that;

"to expand youth opportunity, we need to focus on technical and vocational education; on strengthening English, Science and Technology, and love of country. Towards the end of her speech she said, there is a sense in which the society where we have failed the youth in their formative years, in growing up normally and productively; that in getting a good education, one must learn the habits of honesty and citizenship and civic discipline."

The theme of her 2005 SONA was 'Tale of Philippines' and charter change which took her 25 minutes and 55 seconds to deliver. PGMA described the country as divided – poised for economic take off but is beset with a degenerated political system. Half of the entire speech was devoted to pushing charter change. She also expressed her preference for charter change by way of Constituent Assembly. The following issues were also highlighted: economic growth, job

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generation, tax collection, housing, health, insurance, drugs, kidnapping – all mentioned very briefly and described in general terms. Though this SONA of PGMA was the shortest, still it tackled significant issues in education that based on her report, her administration addressed and attended for these concerns for the past years. She relatively refers to teacher trainings, pedagogies, buildings and infrastructures, and facilities, health and feeding, and pre-need educational program. She later on implied on her speech one of the ideals of Filipino people to graduate from college so as to get the key and create greener pastures towards success. But with this, the implementation of E.O. 358, which creates another path for Filipino learners to take technical-vocational trainings so as to address the world that experiences rapid technological changes. At the end of her speech, she solicited support and unity to the fellow countrymen, that hope and courage of every Filipino people lead us to unite – *“to be one people, one country, one Philippines.”*

In her 2006 SONA, 1 hour and 3 minutes was spent wherein she draws the theme “Super Regions”. PGMA detailed her plans for the “super regions” – North Luzon Agribusiness Quadrangle, Metro Luzon Urban Beltway, Central Philippines, Mindanao Cyber Corridor. The plan includes construction of infrastructure, roads, networks, airport, and bridges among any other priorities for development.

In the 2006 SONA, issues highlighted were foreign policies, revenues and debt allocations, anti-crime and terrorism campaigns, better natural energy generation, red tape prohibition, investment on infrastructure, tourism, and automated election. Other programs and accomplishments of the administration were ladderized educational system where students can continue to a collegiate level by which their years in taking vocational courses and job experiences will be equivalent to a level in college. There is also an emphasis on ICT as a key growth sector. Research funding, and development initiatives were also tackled as well as continuously increasing budget allocated for the advancement of science and technology and education. To sum it up, the following themes emerged based on the scrutiny of President Arroyo’s speeches:

Table 2. Major themes of speeches delivered by Arroyo

2001	2002	2003
job creation	agriculture	corruption
education	strong republic	terrorism
housing	land reform	illegal drugs
food security	education	public health

President Aquino III: Quality Education Through Government Support

Benigno Aquino III, also called PNoy served as Philippine President of the Philippines from 2010 – 2016. He was the son of Corazon Aquino, who served as president of the Philippines from 1986 to 1992. Aquino won the presidency by a wide margin in the elections held on May 10, 2010 (Albert, 2018). President Benigno S Aquino delivered his first three State of the Nation’s Address at the Congress of the Republic of the Philippines. SONA 2010 garnered 32 applauses from his 36-minute speech as he was able to build a formal and easily understandable rapport by

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using the national language - Filipino, which is very unusual among the previous Presidents of the republic.

Apparently, the first SONA of the president is highly focused on uncovering the irregularities allegedly committed by the previous administration. He claimed that some government agencies were overflowing with funds, while the whole nation suffered from a limited budget (Santos, 2015). 121 out of 3,770 or an approximate 3% of the total number of words in the speech tackles about education. This implies at least a good thrust of the government in giving support to the education sector of the country. Although the number seems to be slim as compared to the percentage of concerns the president put effort to express across the SONA, it is important to note that quality preceded quantity over this matter. Looking at the partitioning of the 121 words or the 3%, it seems to be heavy and substantial. Further analysis of three speeches delivered revealed how Aquino concentrated on the following top terms based on word frequency count:

Table 3. Word frequency for speeches delivered by Aquino

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
people	6	63	0.64
government	10	58	0.59
Filipino	8	43	0.44

Pantawid Pamilya, the Philippines' conditional cash transfer program (CCT) is one of the best-targeted social safety net programs in the world, befitting the country's poor and most vulnerable families was also given emphasis in the speech. Cash transfers boost school enrolment and attendance; increase live births in safer facilities; improve prenatal and postnatal care; promote regular growth monitoring of children during critically important early ages; and enhance food security (Worldbank, 2015).

In order to relieve the deficiencies in the classrooms, the Php 130 billion funding for classroom repairs, replacement, and construction was allotted to gain greater trust and credibility on the side of the President from of those the educational sector and also from the parents of students who are absorbing the struggles of classroom deficiencies. The most controversial and substantial thrust of the President to the entire Philippine educational system is his leap towards the standardization of extending the basic education curriculum from 10 to 12 years. This huge transformation is believed to increase the quality of education among Filipinos and increase the global competitiveness of the learners. K to 12 graduates will become globally competitive and are set to obtain spots in the stiff labor market. The government believes that K to 12 curriculum in the Philippines will put Filipino students at par with the rest of the world. Truly, investing in education is the key toward reaching national growth and development.

Another vital inclusion in the speech talked about the The Educational Service Contracting scheme, or ESC, a program provided for by Republic Act 8545 (amending R.A. 6728), or the "Expanded Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education, or GASTPE. Its main objective is to decongest public secondary schools by "contracting" the excess capacities of private high schools through the provision of subsidies for students who, otherwise, would have gone to the public high schools (FAPE, 2012). Because the president is really into Public-private

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Partnership, he strengthened support to private institution by giving extra-budget for private students to compensate the expenses in the private schools such as tuition, books, and other expenditures related to schooling.

In general education-related concepts in the speech can be categorized into three key ideas. First is the conception of the President on how learning opportunities provide job for the people. Second revolves around the deficit fund of education to support all the programs. Third is the description to resolve of finances for the future plans for education. Aquino began his second 2011 SONA by highlighting his campaign to fight the power abuse mentality in the government practiced by corrupt officials. Just like in his previous SONA, he continued to expose corrupt practices under the Arroyo administration ([Santos, 2015](#)). Receiving 48 applauses from his 53 minute speech in Filipino, he was able to deliver the speech in a very formal, brief, and concise manner while his calmness was maintained all throughout the speech.

The speech consisted 6175 words with various themes and point of purpose, while 435 talks about education. Having presented the salient features of the 2011 SONA, education related concerns present the support of the government towards advancement of education sector which leads to the blossoming trust and credibility to the thrust of the president to truly uplift the quality of education in the country. There are 435 education-related words in the speech are emphasizing the role of 4P's-Pantawid Pamilya Program of the Philippines. It is more of sustaining the previous proposal in the first SONA to elevate the quality of living of the Filipino people. Additional 1.3 million families are presumed in the list. Given that the program is not new to the people, this gives more aid and hope to the recipients of the program. At the same time however, some recipients becomes dependent to the fund.

Featuring how the entire country should treat a teacher in the SONA is something very extraordinary. This increases the morale of the teacher and proportionally elevates the description of the Philippine educational system. It is timely to emphasize the quote that goes “the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers” ([PISA, 2009](#)). It seems that the President is trying to convince the people on the missing value, which the country has forgotten regarding the treatment to and appreciation of the teacher. The emotional and ethical appeal that the he established is a strong indication of how he values the education sector in his agendas as President.

Another issue discussed focused on the Food For School Program (FSP), basically uncovered the malversation that occurred in the system as a result of poor governance from the previous administration. Food-for-School program is an intervention that is meant to address hunger among poor families. It is also meant to improve school attendance of the children of these households by providing one kilo of rice to families who suffer from severe hunger for every day that their children continue to attend school. In practical terms, the rice ration is provided to each eligible pupil after class. Thus, eligible households are assured of having rice on their tables every day as long as their children go to school or the day care centers ([Manasan and Cuenca, 2007](#)). Although it is not fully supported by facts and figures, the purpose is an evidence of persuading the people how unstable the educational system was before his term and how he is able to do something about it.

Aquino boasted about economic gains under his leadership. He claimed these gains were the result of government reforms that included cutting wasteful spending and making corrupt officials accountable for their acts. One of the most applauded parts of his speech was when he

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referred to "responsible parenthood" as a solution to backlogs in education. ([Santos, 2015](#)) He then mentioned about the public healthcare, mosquito traps and repellents for dengue, Sin Tax Bill, unemployment rate, properly paved roads, new airports that will be created while some existing will be upgraded and Crime volume. His speech created various reactions from the public, yet at the rate the population is growing, the pressure is on to keep the economies growing. Other idea in keeping the economies grow is to create more jobs for the people. This will bring more people out of poverty. The CCT program of the government will not be enough to increase the number of people who can spend and encourage the economy but providing permanent jobs can do that ([Bilaoen, 2012](#)).

Two public reactions from the Third SONA of President Aquino seem to be unsatisfied after hearing the 1 hour and 22 minute speech with accumulating 9243 words. Ironically this speech received the most numbered of commendation of 120 claps as recorded by the news authority- Rappler compared to the previous two eloquent. It is approximately 375% more than of the first SONA and approximately 244% more compared to the second SONA. Consistently, the president is able to maintain calm and formal tone in the duration of the speech, which reveals his stable composure and humility.

This third SONA approximately has 972 words which focused on education. It emphasized accelerating drive of the president to remedy the ailing Philippine education system. Education still played an important role that needs to be presented and be addressed to the people hence this year's concerns got the highest word count in the span of three terms. Highlighted as the top priority by means of number in the frequency 263 in word count, it is evident that the president is proud of the accomplishments his administration is able to provide. Being the apple of the president's eye, Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) thru 4Ps-Pantawid Pamilya Program ranks second in this year's SONA after being the most frequently discussed in the previous year, the limited decrease of focus is justifiable in a sense that people would really be dependent on it too much yet it is still undeniably commendable that his thrust toward this program is consistent.

It is also important to understand here that the administration is dedicated and committed to strengthen the life-skills of the Filipino people by revitalizing the role of Technical Vocational Courses (TechVoc) in the production of graduate having TESDA Specialista Technopreneurship Program that the TESDA is advocating. The TESDA Specialista Technopreneurship Program (TSTP) is one of the newest projects of the Agency. Essentially, it seeks to address the need for employment of skilled tech-voc graduates who were unsuccessful in landing jobs in the formal sector. It promotes self-employment and inspires the graduates to be involved in productive livelihood endeavors to help themselves and their communities.

TSTP is designed to generate livelihood enterprises to be managed by certified tech-voc graduates. The Specialistas shall receive full support from TESDA and the officials of the local government units where the graduates reside. An aggrupation is a cluster of related skills whose services are highly needed by households and residents, namely; building/house repair and maintenance, beauty care and wellness, appliance repair, computer hardware servicing, food and beverage services, automotive/vehicle maintenance, and small engine repair/servicing(TESDA, nd).

The President's speech included education-related words that still give a valuable impact on what the government is trying to do to remedy the transgression in the educational system. It can be noted that this same issue was brought to the speech in the previous year and now it is

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being presented again. The tone is serious but still calm and formal; his purpose really is to gain sympathy for his emotional appeal to the people. This can be labelled as unsubstantial that matters. It may not be that necessary to report on a formal speech but still gives a different flavor and mood to the audience. The heartfelt appreciation to teachers is one of the most gratifying features of President Aquino's SONA. This gives hope, motivation, and inspiration to the players of educational interventions and implementation in the grass roots. Furthermore, the following themes emerged based on the scrutiny of President Arroyo's speeches:

Table 4. Major themes of speeches delivered by Arroyo

2010	2011	2012
corruption	corruption	economy
national budget	justice system	reproductive
	national budget	health
	national territory	sin tax

President Duterte: Quality Education to Combat Social Ills

Rodrigo Duterte is the 16th President of the Philippines, in office since June 2016. In 2014, he gave a call for forming a federal form of government, which would reflect the aspiration of the Filipino people. The following year, he was asked to run for the post of President, though he was initially he was very hesitant. He eventually agreed due to the overwhelming support that he received from the masses. In summary, analysis of three speeches delivered revealed how Duterte concentrated on the following top terms based on word frequency count:

Table 5. Word frequency for speeches delivered by Duterte

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
I/me	3	113	0.72
government	10	99	0.63
country	7	56	0.36

Also, the following themes emerged based on the scrutiny of President Duterte's speeches:

Table 6. Major themes of speeches delivered by Duterte

2016	2017	2018
illegal drugs	illegal drugs	illegal drugs
terrorism	reproductive health	corruption
national territory	K-12 education	contractualization
tax reform	tax reform	federalism
federalism		

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In 2016, he became the President of Philippines, having a landslide victory. The Filipino people see in him the Philippine leader, who would get the country free from crime and drugs, the two menaces that have plagued their life for long. In his State of the Nation Addresses (SONA), conducted every last Monday of July each year, President Duterte gives a report on the achievements of his administration. He also gets to answer or give clarity to the questions being asked by his oppositions or critics.

President Duterte's 2016 SONA touched on big, transformational issues, wherein the President had to go off-text to make further elaborations on topics such as his campaign on the war on drugs and criminality, the prevailing corruption in the government and reduction of delays in doing public service, the need to give importance to universal health ([Sicat, 2016](#)). He also mentioned family, church and state relations, addressed the need to alleviate people from poverty through several economic and infrastructural agendas. He also gave the go signal for the unilateral ceasefire with the communist rebels, as well as mentioning his future plans in with regards the Bangsamoro Basic Law. Other major topics included his dropping of hints with regards constitutional reform towards federalism, preservation and protection of the environment, and his dealings with China with regards the West Philippine Sea ([PRCBoard.com, 2016](#)).

In terms of education, however, the President only gave two sentences (twenty-nine words) about it, comprising only 0.31% of his 9,266-word SONA. He vowed to "increase spending for basic education and incorporate mandatory education about the evils of drugs." He also mentioned that "the government will intensify and expand the education department's Alternative Learning System (ALS) programs" ([PRCBoard.com, 2016](#)). Despite his brief mention of his educational platforms, President Duterte nevertheless did not mean that he has totally neglected his duties to fulfil his plans for the country's educational system. With regards to intensifying the Alternative Learning System (ALS), Department of Education Secretary Leonor Briones has repeatedly accentuated the need to expand ALS, especially as it aims to cater students who might drop out of school because of the challenges of the K-to-12 program ([Geronimo, 2016](#)).

On the other hand, in keeping with his administration's onslaught on drugs, both the President and Briones said that schools should go beyond lessons in textbooks when teaching about the dangers of drugs. Briones specifically mentioned that teachers will need to be trained if they are to show students the real life stories of the effects of drug addiction through films, plays, and dramas. Duterte's 2017 SONA has been his longest so far, lasting for 2 hours, wherein he went on using more adlibs than staying to his script. It is also trivial that he was brazen in using expletives in this SONA. Nevertheless he gave importance in the following major issues such as his war on drugs and criminality, wherein he said that it will be "unrelenting," the Marawi siege that was on-going that time, the necessity for Martial Law in Mindanao, and the demand for the military to force to counter terrorism. He also gave emphasis on illegal mining, telling mining companies that they would face steep taxes if they do not spend enough on rehabilitating areas that host their operations. He once again urged government officials to give better, faster, and cleaner service to the public, holding them accountable to any failure or complaint that the public might experience with them. With regards health, the President mentioned again his on-going agenda towards forming a universal health bill, as well as lifting the two-year temporary restraining order on contraceptive implants, under the use of the RH law. He also reiterated his infrastructure plans, and stated his approval of the first batch of tax reforms, now called as the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion or TRAIN Law ([PRCBoard.com, 2017](#)).

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With regards to education, the President gave a paragraph of three sentences, consisting of eighty-two words. There is an increase compared to 2016, however it is still relatively low compared to other topic. Nonetheless, the K-12 Basic Education Curriculum made it to this SONA as the President expressed the government's commitment to fully implement the measure enacted during his predecessor's term. President Duterte also applauded the Alternative Learning System (ALS), wherein he believed that it has “widened the reach of skills training” due to the increase in the number of out-of-school children and youth who availed the program. This, together with his “sustained investments in higher education” is what he considers as the 'centerpiece' of education under his administration ([Geronimo, 2016](#)). Once more, these all imply that despite the scarcity of education being mentioned in his SONAs, President Duterte is still able to fulfil his role with regards to providing universal access to basic and higher education.

When it comes to his vision of educating the Filipino youth and children about the “evils of drugs,” the President declared that his administration would prioritize the rehabilitation of drug users, and that there would be mandatory education on the dangers of drug use. He then created the Interagency Committee on Anti-Illegal Drugs (ICAD) led by the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA). Under this is the Department of Education’s commitment to enhancing its existing drug education program that has been currently mandated for public and private schools. As part of the process, DepEd reviewed the learning materials—identifying their accuracy and of the content, and the appropriateness and relevance of their context. The department also reviewed the capacity of the teachers. The Bureau of Curriculum Development, on the other hand, has a technical working group that has designed the curriculum plan for drug preventive education. Lastly, DepEd also implemented mandatory, random sampling drug tests on teachers and secondary school students (Grade 7 to Senior High School) nationwide ([Bondoc, 2017](#)).

President Duterte in his 2018 SONA took a different turn from his previous SONAs since he became very straight-to-the-point and economical with his words this time. This was his shortest SONA ever, which lasted less than fifty minutes. He read most of it and gave not even a single expletive. This year, he focused on the operational details of his agendas, such as his “relentless and chilling” drug war, applauding the Congress for passing the Ease of Doing Business Act, the signing of the Bangsamoro Organic Law within "48 hours," the success of the ASEAN summit and its implication to the Philippines’ linkages with neighboring countries. He also recognized soldiers and police who were involved in the Marawi siege, and condemned the deaths and abuses suffered by Filipino migrant workers at the hands of foreign employers, which made OFW rights to be his "foremost foreign policy concern."

He reiterated the regularization of workers, including the formation of a law prohibiting all forms of contractualization after realizing that his executive order won't suffice due to some companies that still did not immediately follow suit. He gave emphasis on sustaining and preserving the environment, using Boracay closure as an example. This, together with other environmental issues led him towards devising a disaster and risk reduction management department with greater power and resources. With regards the economy, he presented how the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) Law has contributed to different sectors in the society. Lastly, due to the Consultative Committee’s draft on Federalism, the President made mention of the impending shift to federalism and insisting that Filipinos will support such a system of government.

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Education this time consisted only of three sentences (forty words). It may seem to be the highest compared to the past two SONAs, however this is still relatively low, since this is the shortest SONA. Education was only mentioned when the President applauded how the TRAIN Law contributed to the education sector of the country, and when he recalled the implementation of the “Free Tertiary Education Act” ([Philstar Global, 2018](#)).

President Duterte made this act into a reality during the ceremonial signing of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the 112 State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and 78 Local Universities (LUCs) to launch the implementation of Republic Act (RA) 10931 or the “Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act.” This covers the tuition and fees of undergraduate students enrolled in 112 state universities and colleges (SUCs), 78 local universities and colleges (LUCs), and all technical-vocational education and training (TVET) programs registered under the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) beginning school year 2018 to 2019. This act also provides free miscellaneous and other school fees, action programs for minorities such as the Lumads, the Muslims, the indigenous peoples (IP), persons with disabilities (PWD), and students from public high schools and depressed areas. Lastly, this act also specifies no increase in tuition fees in the next 5 years. Though not directly mentioned in his 2018 SONA, President Duterte, in his implementation of the “Free Tertiary Education Act,” can be seen as one who would want to further empower the youth by making quality education affordable and accessible to everyone, especially the poor ([PTV News, 2018](#)).

CONCLUSION

Careful analysis of available data could lead to various assumptions on the way the government addresses pressing issues in education. Overall, it can be assumed that government efforts across three administration periods are visible in highlighting attention given to education. The narrative of President Arroyo’s SONA weaves economy and education. Strengthening the economy through strategic management and sound policies has been instrumental in achieving quality education. President Arroyo is consistent at looking at quality education in the quest for stable economy fuelled by the labor force. In the long run, efforts directed towards improving the economy are seen to be central in uplifting the current state of education in the country.

Putting it into a nutshell, it is strongly evident how the thrust of President Aquino in education is shown in his three consecutive years of reports to the people. Various changes huge or small still matter for they made significant propulsion and advancement in the quality of education for Filipinos; thus include all of them with a significant ratio of inclusion in the National platforms and agenda. Consistently, Conditional Cash Transfer for the marginalized sector is one of the most noteworthy projects of the administration while extension of basic education curriculum in response to Global Standardization is the most controversial undertaking. An epoch-making shift of focus on technical vocational courses and projects is also highlighted as the president majorly considers the marketability of Filipino graduates. As per frequency of word count per year, the increasing number strongly signifies deepening commitment of the administration to improve the caliber of Philippine education system. Nonetheless, uplifting the status of Philippine Educational System had been the main point of the president’s undertakings in his three SONAs which he supported by concrete evidences of progression that makes it more

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convincing and promising to the people. Truly, investing in education is the key toward reaching national growth and development.

Ever since his first SONA, President Duterte has always believed that encouraging the youth to finish their studies will keep them away from being involved in crime and illegal drugs. Although it may not seem to be his immediate priority, President Rodrigo Duterte's State of the Nation Addresses, together with putting action to his agendas, nevertheless reflect and resonate his heart for quality education to be provided to all Filipinos. Although his direct and explicit mentions of education are relatively few and barely make up 1% of his speeches, this did not however mean that he has utterly neglected and failed to give importance to the education sect of the nation. "War on crime and drugs," being the central thrust of his governance, seems to be adequately ushered in his educational platforms. One can note that he does not only prioritize formal education, but also non-formal education, also known as "Alternative Learning Systems," to the point that he stresses out the need for Department of Education's budget to be used as well in strengthening the implementation of ALS nationwide. This could be a good indicator that Duterte actually focuses on "Education for All," since he believes that by ushering children and the youth into either formal or non-formal education, these will grow up into responsible citizens who would not defile themselves into various crimes and illegal drug uses. President Duterte's administration showcases preventive measures on crime, violence, and drugs by means of devising programs and laws for the eventual attainment of universal quality education.

It is high time for researchers to call for an exclusive venue for education concerns in the government, particularly in speeches delivered by elected leaders. Along with social and political issues, the education sector clamours for attention and solutions to pressing ills such as classroom shortage, quality education, books, teacher training, government funding, and others. SONA is a crucial platform which echoes social and political issues that require immediate attention. It is imperative that education issues occupy a big chunk of this public address.

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