



# BRIDGING EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND EDUCATIONAL REALITIES: A RIGHTS-BASED AND IMPLEMENTATION GAP ANALYSIS OF RESOURCE INEQUITIES IN PHILIPPINE GIDA SCHOOLS

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## ABSTRACT

*This policy perspective paper examines the persistent gap between educational rights guaranteed under Philippine law and the educational realities experienced by learners in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA). Anchored on a rights-based and implementation gap framework, the paper argues that educational inequities in teacher deployment, infrastructure, information and communication technology (ICT) access, learning resources, and educational opportunities continue to undermine the realization of the constitutional right to quality education.*

*Drawing on constitutional provisions, national legislation, Department of Education policies, international human rights instruments, and empirical evidence from EDCOM II, PISA, TIMSS, and national assessment reports, the paper demonstrates that despite strong legal commitments, many learners in disadvantaged communities continue to experience unequal educational conditions. The analysis employs Rights-Based Analysis, Governance Failure Analysis, Implementation Gap Analysis, Political Economy Analysis, and Comparative Policy Analysis to explain why legal guarantees have not consistently translated into equitable educational outcomes.*

*The paper concludes that educational inequity in GIDA schools is not merely an administrative concern but a question of rights realization, governance effectiveness, and educational justice. It recommends needs-based educational funding, strengthened teacher deployment systems, targeted infrastructure and connectivity investments, improved accountability mechanisms, and participatory educational governance to bridge the gap between educational rights and educational realities and ensure that no learner is disadvantaged by geography, poverty, or circumstance.*

## 1. THE POLICY PROBLEM

This paper argues that a significant gap exists between educational rights guaranteed under Philippine law and the educational realities experienced by learners in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA). Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA) refer to communities that are physically remote and characterized by limited access to basic services, transportation, communication networks, economic opportunities, and social infrastructure. In the educational context, GIDA schools often face challenges related to teacher deployment, infrastructure deficits, limited ICT access, and reduced availability of educational support services, which may affect learners' opportunities to fully realize their right to quality education. While the Constitution and various education policies recognize quality education as a fundamental right, systemic inequities in educational resources, infrastructure, teacher deployment, and learning opportunities suggest that these commitments have not been fully realized in many disadvantaged communities. Consequently, educational resource inequity in GIDA schools should be understood not merely as an administrative concern but as a rights-based and implementation challenge.

**Legal:** Article XIV of the 1987 Philippine Constitution establishes education as a fundamental right and imposes upon the State the responsibility to ensure equitable access to quality education for all citizens. Section 1 mandates that the State protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education

and take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all. This constitutional guarantee implies that access alone is insufficient; learners must also be provided with adequate educational conditions necessary for meaningful learning, including qualified and appropriately deployed teachers, sufficient instructional materials, functional infrastructure, equitable access to technology, and supportive learning environments.

The challenge becomes more apparent in geographically isolated and disadvantaged communities where educational resources and opportunities may not be distributed equitably. Within Davao Region, and particularly in the Division of Davao del Sur, Region XI, schools located in remote and underserved areas continue to face contextual challenges related to infrastructure, connectivity, transportation, and teacher deployment. In Sulop District, Sulop, Davao del Sur several schools serve learners from rural and geographically disadvantaged communities, making the realization of educational rights more difficult compared to schools located in urban and better-resourced settings.

Furthermore, Article XIV, Section 5(5) provides that the State shall assign the highest budgetary priority to education and ensure that teaching attracts and retains its rightful share of the best available talents through adequate remuneration and other means of job satisfaction and fulfillment. This provision recognizes that educational quality depends not only on adequate funding but also on the recruitment, development, and



retention of competent teachers. Consequently, continuing teacher specialization mismatches and difficulties in retaining appropriately trained and subject-specialized teachers in GIDA schools raise concerns regarding the full realization of this constitutional mandate.

**Empirical: What data documents the problem?**

Empirical evidence indicates persistent educational inequities and weak learner outcomes despite constitutional guarantees of equitable access to quality education. The EDCOM II Year One Report (2024) reported that approximately 91% of Filipino children at age 10 experience learning poverty, while EDCOM II Year Two Report (2025) identified an estimated 5.5-year learning gap and found that about 62% of junior high school teachers teach subjects outside their area of specialization.

International assessments reinforce these concerns. In PISA 2018, the Philippines ranked among the lowest-performing countries in reading, mathematics, and science, while TIMSS 2019 reported a Grade 4 mathematics score of

297, among the lowest globally. National assessments likewise reveal continuing gaps in learner proficiency.

Although these findings reflect national conditions, educational inequities may be more pronounced in geographically isolated and disadvantaged schools. Within Davao Region and the Division of Davao del Sur, some schools continue to encounter challenges associated with teacher specialization mismatches, inadequate infrastructure, limited ICT resources, unstable internet connectivity, and transportation barriers. In Sulop District, learners from remote and underserved barangays may experience reduced access to educational opportunities and support services compared with learners in more accessible communities. These conditions may contribute to disparities in educational outcomes and limit the full realization of learners' educational rights.

Taken together, these findings suggest a substantial gap between educational rights guaranteed by law and the educational realities experienced by many learners, particularly those attending schools in geographically isolated and disadvantaged communities.

**Key figures**

Assessment	Year	Finding
EDCOM II Year 1	2024	91% learning poverty among Filipino children
EDCOM II Year 11	2025	5.5-year learning gap; 62% teachers outside specialization
PISA	2018 (reported 2019)	Philippines ranked among the lowest-performing countries in reading, mathematics, and science
TIMSS	2019 (reported 2020)	Grade 4 Mathematics score 297, among lowest globally

**Rights: Who Bears the Burden of the Problem?**

The burden of educational inequity is disproportionately borne by learners in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas, low-income communities, Indigenous Peoples (IP) communities, and remote rural schools. Within Davao Region and the Division of Davao del Sur, learners residing in geographically isolated barangays may face greater barriers to accessing quality education than their counterparts in urban and better-resourced areas.

In Sulop District, these barriers may include teacher specialization mismatches, inadequate school infrastructure, limited ICT access, insufficient learning materials, transportation difficulties, and poverty-related constraints. Such conditions can reduce educational opportunities and contribute to weaker learning outcomes despite learners possessing the same educational rights as their peers in more advantaged communities.

These disparities raise concerns regarding the realization of the constitutional right to quality education and the State's obligation to ensure equitable access to learning opportunities. From a policy perspective, when educational outcomes are influenced by systemic disadvantages rather than learner ability, the issue extends beyond academic performance to educational equity and social justice. Bridging the gap between educational rights and educational realities therefore requires equity-based interventions that provide proportionately greater support to disadvantaged schools and communities, including those within the Division of Davao del Sur and Sulop District, Sulop, Davao del Sur, Region XI.

**2. LEGAL & CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK- EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AS THE NORMATIVE BASELINE CONSTITUTIONAL LAYER**

The central argument of this paper is that a gap exists between educational rights guaranteed by law and the educational realities experienced by learners in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA). To assess the existence and extent of this gap, it is necessary to establish the legal and constitutional standards against which educational conditions should be evaluated.

The 1987 Philippine Constitution recognizes education as a fundamental right and imposes legally binding obligations upon the State to ensure equitable access to quality education. Specifically, Article XIV, Section 1 provides: *"The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all."*

This provision establishes education not merely as a public service but as a constitutional entitlement. Consequently, the State is obligated not only to provide access to schooling but also to ensure that learners receive adequate educational conditions necessary for meaningful learning. These conditions include qualified and appropriately deployed teachers, sufficient learning resources, functional infrastructure, equitable access to technology, and supportive learning environments.

Moreover, Article XIV, Section 2(1) requires the State to: *"Establish, maintain, and support a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of the people and society."*

This provision implies that educational systems must be both adequate and responsive to learners' diverse



circumstances. Therefore, persistent disparities in infrastructure, learning resources, teacher deployment, and educational opportunities in GIDA schools raise important questions regarding whether constitutional guarantees are being fully realized in practice.

Article XIV, Section 2(2) further mandates the State to establish and maintain a system of free public education in the elementary and high school levels. While tuition-free access has significantly expanded educational participation, many learners in GIDA communities continue to face indirect barriers such as transportation costs, limited connectivity, inadequate learning resources, and geographic isolation. Thus, the constitutional guarantee of free education must be understood not merely as freedom from tuition but also as the provision of conditions that enable meaningful participation in learning.

Further, Article XIV, Section 5(5) provides that: *"The State shall assign the highest budgetary priority to education."*

This constitutional mandate recognizes educational investment as essential to national development and social equity. Consequently, persistent resource inequities affecting disadvantaged schools may indicate not only resource constraints but also implementation gaps, allocation inefficiencies, or governance shortcomings that hinder the realization of educational rights.

Additionally, Article III of the Constitution reinforces principles of equal protection and due process, supporting the expectation that educational opportunities should not be distributed in ways that systematically disadvantage particular groups, communities, or geographic locations.

### Philippine Jurisprudence

While Philippine jurisprudence contains limited cases directly addressing educational resource allocation and equity in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA), the constitutional and statutory framework governing education establishes a clear legal basis for evaluating educational inequities. Article XIV, Section 1 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution recognizes education as a fundamental right and mandates the State to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and to take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all. This constitutional provision establishes the State's responsibility not only to provide access to schooling but also to ensure that learners receive educational opportunities of acceptable quality.

Moreover, Article XIV, Section 2(1) requires the State to establish, maintain, and support a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of the people and society. This provision implies that educational resources, infrastructure, teachers, and learning opportunities should be distributed in a manner that enables all learners, including those in geographically isolated communities, to meaningfully participate in education.

The Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 (Republic Act No. 9155) further operationalizes these constitutional mandates by assigning responsibility to the Department of Education, Regional Offices, Schools Division Offices, and schools for ensuring the delivery of quality basic education. Consequently, persistent disparities in teacher deployment, infrastructure, instructional resources, and

educational services may be viewed not only as administrative concerns but also as challenges in the implementation of educational governance responsibilities.

Similarly, the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (Republic Act No. 10533) emphasizes learner-centered, inclusive, and contextualized education designed to address the diverse needs of Filipino learners. The realization of these objectives depends on the availability of qualified teachers, adequate learning resources, functional infrastructure, and supportive learning environments. Where such conditions are lacking, particularly in GIDA schools, the ability of learners to fully enjoy their right to quality education may be compromised.

Taken together, Article XIV of the Constitution, Republic Act No. 9155, and Republic Act No. 10533 provide a more direct and relevant legal foundation for assessing educational inequities affecting GIDA schools. Consequently, educational disparities should be evaluated primarily against these constitutional and statutory mandates rather than through jurisprudence unrelated to educational resource allocation.

### Statutory and Regulatory Layer

Several Philippine laws operationalize constitutional commitments to educational quality, equity, and inclusion.

#### Republic Act No. 10533 (Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013)

RA 10533 institutionalized the K to 12 Basic Education Program and requires curricula that are learner-centered, inclusive, developmentally appropriate, contextualized, and culturally responsive. These objectives presume the availability of adequate educational resources, qualified teachers, and supportive learning environments. Persistent inequities in GIDA schools may therefore limit the realization of these statutory goals.

#### Republic Act No. 9155 (Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001)

RA 9155 decentralizes educational governance and assigns responsibility to Regional Offices, Schools Division Offices, and schools for ensuring quality educational delivery. As such, continuing disparities in educational conditions may reflect governance challenges, implementation gaps, and weaknesses in accountability systems responsible for translating policy commitments into educational outcomes.

#### Republic Act No. 11650, "An Act Instituting a Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education"

RA 11650 strengthens the State's commitment to inclusive education by ensuring accessible, equitable, and quality educational opportunities for learners with disabilities. The law mandates the provision of appropriate support services, accommodations, and learning environments that enable learners with disabilities to participate meaningfully in education. Persistent barriers to access, participation, and learning among learners with disabilities may therefore raise concerns regarding the effective implementation of inclusive education policies and the realization of their constitutional right to quality education. While RA 11650 primarily protects learners with disabilities, it also reinforces the broader principle



that educational systems should be responsive to the diverse needs of all learners.

### Republic Act No. 8371 (Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997)

RA 8371 recognizes and protects the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs), including their right to culturally appropriate and relevant education. Section 28 guarantees equal access to educational opportunities and requires educational systems to respect, preserve, and promote indigenous cultures, traditions, languages, and identities. This provision is particularly relevant in geographically isolated and disadvantaged communities where Indigenous learners may face barriers associated with remoteness, poverty, limited educational resources, and cultural marginalization. In parts of Davao Region, including communities within the Division of Davao del Sur, the realization of educational rights for Indigenous learners depends not only on access to schooling but also on the provision of culturally responsive educational programs that acknowledge and respect their unique identities and lived experiences.

### DepEd Order No. 62, s. 2011 (National Indigenous Peoples Education Policy Framework)

DepEd Order No. 62, s. 2011 operationalizes the educational rights recognized under RA 8371 by promoting culturally responsive, community-based, and inclusive educational programs for Indigenous learners. The policy seeks to ensure that educational services are responsive to the unique contexts, cultures, languages, and learning needs of Indigenous communities. This policy is particularly relevant in GIDA schools where Indigenous learners may experience multiple and intersecting forms of disadvantage arising from geographic isolation, socioeconomic conditions, and limited access to educational support services. Consequently, effective implementation of the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program is essential to bridging the gap between educational rights guaranteed by law and the educational realities experienced by Indigenous learners in disadvantaged communities, including those within Davao Region and the Division of Davao del Sur. Although Sulop District may not have the same concentration of Indigenous learners as some neighboring upland areas, the principles embodied in RA 8371 and the IPEd Framework remain relevant in ensuring that all learners from culturally diverse and geographically disadvantaged communities receive equitable and context-responsive educational opportunities.

### DepEd Policies

Several Department of Education policies further operationalize educational quality and equity, including:

- DepEd Order No. 010, s. 2024 (MATATAG Curriculum)
- DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017 (Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers)
- DepEd Order No. 35, s. 2016 (Learning Action Cell Program)

Collectively, these policies seek to strengthen teaching quality, learner outcomes, and educational responsiveness, particularly in underserved communities.

### International Human Rights Framework

The Philippines is likewise bound by international commitments recognizing education as a fundamental human right.

Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) recognizes education as a human right and requires States to ensure educational availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability. These principles were later articulated through Tomasevski's 4-A Framework, which provides a useful benchmark for assessing whether educational rights are realized in practice.

Similarly, Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) require equitable access to quality education and emphasize the reduction of educational disadvantage.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) requires inclusive education without discrimination, while Article 14 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) protects Indigenous Peoples' rights to culturally appropriate education. These provisions are particularly relevant in disadvantaged and Indigenous communities within Davao Region, including areas served by the Division of Davao del Sur.

Furthermore, Article II, Section 2 of the 1987 Constitution incorporates generally accepted principles of international law into the law of the land. Consequently, international educational obligations reinforce domestic constitutional commitments toward educational equity and inclusion.

### Synthesis

Taken together, constitutional provisions, statutory mandates, DepEd policies, and international human rights commitments establish a clear normative expectation that all learners should have equitable access to adequately resourced and quality education. These legal standards represent the educational rights guaranteed by law. Therefore, persistent disparities affecting GIDA schools, whether in teacher deployment, infrastructure, learning resources, or educational opportunities, may be understood as evidence of a continuing gap between educational rights and educational realities. It is this gap that forms the central concern of the present policy analysis.

### 3. EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE: Documenting the Gap Between Educational Rights and Educational Realities

The legal and constitutional framework discussed in the preceding section establishes a clear expectation that all Filipino learners should have equitable access to quality, inclusive, and adequately resourced education. However, empirical evidence suggests that the educational realities experienced by many learners, particularly those in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA), often fall short of these guarantees. The following evidence



illustrates the extent to which educational rights recognized in law have not been consistently realized in practice.

The Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II) Year One Report (2024) identified a severe learning crisis within Philippine education, reporting that approximately 91% of Filipino children at age 10 are unable to read and understand age-appropriate texts, a condition referred to as learning poverty. This finding suggests that while access to schooling may have expanded, many learners remain unable to acquire the foundational competencies necessary to fully benefit from their right to quality education.

The gap between educational rights and educational realities extends beyond literacy. EDCOM II Year Two Report (2025) estimated a 5.5-year learning gap and identified systemic challenges affecting educational quality, including shortages in educational infrastructure, insufficient school leadership positions, and mismatches between teacher specialization and teaching assignments. Approximately 62% of junior high school teachers teach subjects outside their area of specialization, raising concerns regarding the quality and effectiveness of instruction received by learners.

International assessments reinforce these concerns. Results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 revealed that the Philippines ranked among the lowest-performing countries in reading, mathematics, and science. Likewise, the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2019 reported weak mathematics and science performance among Filipino learners. These outcomes suggest that educational participation does not consistently translate into meaningful learning, thereby raising questions regarding the extent to which constitutional commitments to quality education are being fulfilled.

National assessments similarly reveal persistent learning deficits. Findings from ELLNA and NAT indicate continuing challenges in literacy, numeracy, and subject-area proficiency. Collectively, these indicators suggest that educational inequalities remain deeply embedded within the system and continue to affect learner achievement.

The gap between educational rights and educational realities becomes more pronounced in geographically isolated and disadvantaged communities. Within Davao Region, including the Division of Davao del Sur, schools located in remote and underserved areas frequently encounter contextual challenges such as:

- mismatches between teacher specialization and teaching assignments;
  - inadequate classrooms and school facilities;
  - unstable internet connectivity;
  - limited access to ICT resources;
  - delayed distribution of instructional materials;
  - transportation barriers affecting learners and teachers;
- and
- reduced access to specialized educational support services.

### Local Evidence from Sulop District

The educational challenges confronting Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA) are also evident in Sulop District, Division of Davao del Sur. At present, Sulop District serves learners across twenty-five (25)

barangays through twenty-five (25) elementary schools, four (4) Junior High Schools, and three (3) Senior High Schools. Despite ongoing efforts to improve educational access and quality, several challenges continue to affect the delivery of equitable educational opportunities.

Among the most common concerns are teacher specialization mismatches in secondary schools, where some teachers are assigned to teach subjects outside their area of academic preparation due to staffing limitations. Schools also experience shortages in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities, limited internet connectivity, and insufficient instructional materials necessary to support effective teaching and learning. These conditions may hinder the implementation of technology-enhanced instruction and reduce learners' access to digital learning resources.

Geographic barriers likewise continue to affect educational accessibility. In several remote barangays, some learners travel considerable distances to attend school, often walking approximately three (3) to five (5) kilometers each day. Others are required to traverse rivers and difficult terrain, particularly during periods of heavy rainfall, which may disrupt school attendance and increase safety risks. These circumstances illustrate how geographic isolation continues to influence educational participation and learning opportunities despite constitutional guarantees of equal access to quality education.

The situation in Sulop District demonstrates that the challenges identified in national reports such as EDCOM II are not merely national concerns but are also reflected in local educational realities. Teacher specialization mismatches, inadequate ICT resources, limited connectivity, insufficient instructional materials, and geographic barriers collectively contribute to disparities in educational opportunities among learners. Consequently, these local conditions provide concrete evidence of the continuing gap between educational rights guaranteed by law and the educational realities experienced by learners in disadvantaged communities.

These local conditions underscore the need for targeted interventions and equity-based resource allocation to ensure that learners in geographically isolated communities within Sulop District are able to meaningfully enjoy their constitutional right to quality, accessible, and inclusive education.

The foregoing local conditions illustrate how geographic isolation and resource constraints continue to affect educational opportunities in some communities within Sulop District. Although learners possess the same constitutional and statutory educational rights as those in urban and better-resourced schools, the conditions under which they learn often differ substantially. Such disparities may restrict educational opportunities and contribute to unequal learning outcomes.

The Department of Education has recognized these challenges through policies promoting inclusive, contextualized, and equitable education. Nevertheless, persistent disparities suggest that educational policies do not always translate into equitable resource allocation and educational opportunities. Consequently, learners in disadvantaged schools continue to experience barriers that limit the realization of their educational rights.



From a rights-based perspective, these findings raise concerns regarding the State's ability to ensure the availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability of education as articulated in Tomasevski's 4-A Framework. Persistent resource inequities affecting GIDA schools therefore indicate potential gaps in the realization of educational rights.

From an implementation-gap perspective, the evidence suggests that the challenge may not lie primarily in the absence of legal protections or policy commitments. Rather, the persistence of educational disparities points to difficulties in translating constitutional guarantees, legislative mandates,

and policy reforms into educational realities that are experienced equitably by all learners.

Taken together, findings from EDCOM II, PISA, TIMSS, national assessments, and documented challenges affecting GIDA schools demonstrate a continuing disconnect between educational rights guaranteed by law and the educational realities experienced by many Filipino learners. These inequities indicate that the challenge confronting Philippine education is not merely one of academic performance but also one of rights realization, implementation effectiveness, governance capacity, and educational justice.

**Key Empirical Indicators (summary table)**

Indicator	Finding	Source
Learning poverty	91% of children unable to read age-appropriate text	EDCOM II (2024)
Learning gap	5.5 years below expected competency	EDCOM II (2025)
Teacher Specialization Mismatch	62% teaching outside specialization	EDCOM II (2025)
PISA Reading	340; Rank 79/79	OECD (2019)
PISA Math	353; Rank 78/79	OECD (2019)
PISA Science	357; Rank 78/79	OECD (2019)
TIMSS Math	297; among lowest globally	Mullis et al. (2020)
GIDA barriers	Teacher Specialization mismatches, ICT gaps, infrastructure deficits	DepEd/Local reports

**4. ANALYTICAL LENS: Understanding the Gap Between Educational Rights and Educational Realities**

This paper adopts a multi-dimensional analytical framework consisting of Rights-Based Analysis, Governance Failure Analysis, Implementation Gap Analysis, Political Economy Analysis, and Comparative Policy Analysis to examine why educational rights guaranteed under Philippine law are not consistently realized in the educational experiences of learners in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA). Collectively, these perspectives help explain how disparities in educational resources, opportunities, and outcomes persist despite constitutional guarantees, statutory mandates, and policy reforms intended to promote educational equity.

**4.1 Rights-Based Analysis: Educational Rights and Their Realization**

A rights-based perspective conceptualizes education as a fundamental constitutional and human right rather than a discretionary government service. Under this approach, the State bears legally binding obligations to ensure equitable access to quality education for all learners regardless of geographic location, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, disability, or other circumstances.

This analysis draws upon Tomasevski's (2001) 4-A Framework, which argues that educational systems must ensure:

**Availability**

Education should provide:

- sufficient schools;
- qualified and appropriately deployed teachers;
- adequate infrastructure;
- instructional materials; and
- educational facilities.

Persistent shortages in classrooms, learning resources, and subject-specialized teachers in geographically isolated schools may indicate limitations in the availability of educational opportunities.

**Accessibility**

Education should be:

- physically accessible;
- economically accessible; and
- accessible without discrimination.

Learners in GIDA communities frequently encounter barriers associated with remoteness, transportation difficulties, poverty, and limited educational services, which may restrict their access to quality education.

**Acceptability**

Education should maintain:

- quality;
- relevance; and
- cultural responsiveness.

Teacher specialization mismatches, inadequate instructional support, and insufficient learning resources may reduce the quality and relevance of educational experiences.

**Adaptability**

Educational systems should respond to:

- local contexts;
- diverse learner needs;
- Indigenous communities; and
- disadvantaged populations.

Persistent inequities affecting GIDA schools suggest challenges in ensuring that educational services remain responsive to the circumstances of marginalized learners.

Viewed through this lens, educational resource inequities represent more than administrative shortcomings. They may



signify a failure to fully realize educational rights guaranteed under Article XIV of the 1987 Philippine Constitution and reinforced by international human rights commitments. Consequently, the gap between educational rights and educational realities becomes a question of rights fulfillment.

#### **Duty Bearers and Accountability for Educational Rights**

Under a rights-based framework, educational rights are accompanied by corresponding duties and responsibilities. The primary duty bearer is the State, which is constitutionally mandated under Article XIV of the 1987 Constitution to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education.

Responsibility for implementing educational rights is shared among several actors. Congress is responsible for enacting laws and appropriating adequate educational funding. The Department of Education is responsible for policy formulation, implementation, teacher deployment, curriculum delivery, and resource allocation. Regional Offices and Schools Division Offices are responsible for ensuring that national policies are translated into effective local implementation. School heads are responsible for school-level planning, resource management, and instructional leadership. Local Government Units support educational programs through local initiatives, infrastructure assistance, and partnerships. Communities, parents, and School Governing Councils also play important roles in promoting accountability and supporting educational improvement.

Consequently, when learners in GIDA schools continue to experience shortages in teachers, infrastructure, learning resources, or educational opportunities, accountability extends beyond individual schools and involves multiple institutional actors responsible for ensuring the realization of educational rights.

#### **4.2 Governance Failure Analysis: Why Rights Do Not Always Translate into Educational Realities**

Governance Failure Analysis examines whether educational inequities emerge because institutions responsible for implementing policies fail to allocate resources effectively, coordinate interventions, or ensure accountability.

Although Philippine educational policies consistently promote inclusive and equitable education, persistent disparities suggest possible governance weaknesses involving:

- resource allocation mechanisms;
- monitoring systems;
- accountability structures;
- teacher deployment policies; and
- educational planning processes.

From this perspective, the challenge may not stem from the absence of legal protections or policy commitments but from the inability of governance systems to effectively operationalize those commitments.

Consequently, educational disparities affecting GIDA schools may reflect:

- weak institutional coordination;
- inefficient educational governance;
- inconsistent implementation; and
- limited accountability mechanisms.

Thus, the gap between educational rights and educational realities may be understood partly as a governance problem rather than solely a resource problem.

#### **4.3 Implementation Gap Analysis: When Policy Commitments Fail to Produce Intended Outcomes**

Implementation Gap Analysis focuses on the difference between policy intentions and policy outcomes. It examines why laws, regulations, and educational reforms that seek to promote equity do not always result in equitable educational conditions.

Although constitutional provisions, legislation, and DepEd policies establish strong commitments to educational quality and inclusion, empirical evidence demonstrates continuing disparities in educational resources and learner outcomes. This suggests that the challenge may lie not in policy formulation but in policy execution.

Within GIDA schools, implementation gaps may be reflected through:

- uneven resource allocation;
- delays in infrastructure development;
- teacher specialization mismatches;
- insufficient ICT resources; and
- limited access to support services.

From this perspective, the persistence of educational inequities represents a disconnect between educational rights recognized in law and the educational realities experienced by learners.

#### **4.4 Political Economy Analysis: Resource Allocation as a Question of Prioritization**

Political Economy Analysis examines how political priorities, institutional interests, budget decisions, and socioeconomic inequalities influence the distribution of educational resources.

This perspective suggests that educational inequities may persist because resource allocation is influenced not only by learner needs but also by:

- fiscal constraints;
- political priorities;
- geographic accessibility; and
- institutional capacity.

Consequently, geographically isolated communities may receive fewer educational investments despite experiencing greater educational disadvantage.

From this perspective, the gap between educational rights and educational realities reflects not merely technical limitations but questions of prioritization, power, and distribution. It raises important policy questions:

- Who benefits from current resource allocation patterns?
- Which communities remain underserved?
- Whose educational needs receive less attention?

(Bardach & Patashnik, 2020)

#### **4.5 Comparative Policy Analysis: Learning How Other Systems Bridge the Gap**

Comparative Policy Analysis examines how other educational systems address disparities in educational opportunity and resource allocation.

Countries demonstrating stronger educational equity frequently implement:

- needs-based funding;



- targeted interventions;
- differentiated resource allocation; and
- contextualized educational support.

Comparative evidence suggests that equal resource distribution does not necessarily produce equitable educational outcomes. Rather, schools experiencing greater disadvantage often require proportionately greater support to achieve comparable educational opportunities.

This perspective provides insight into how educational systems can move from formal recognition of educational rights toward their actual realization in practice. Consequently, comparative evidence supports equity-based allocation mechanisms rather than uniform distribution approaches.

### Synthesis of the Analytical Lenses

Collectively, the analytical lenses suggest that educational resource inequities in Philippine GIDA schools reflect a persistent gap between educational rights guaranteed by law and the educational realities experienced by learners. The Rights-Based Analysis highlights the State’s obligation to provide equitable and quality education, while Governance Failure and Implementation Gap Analyses explain why legal and policy commitments do not always translate into equitable educational conditions. Political Economy Analysis demonstrates how resource allocation is influenced by competing priorities and institutional constraints, whereas Comparative Policy Analysis highlights the value of targeted and needs-based interventions. Together, these perspectives indicate that bridging the gap between educational rights and educational realities requires effective governance, equitable resource allocation, strong implementation mechanisms, and sustained commitment to educational justice.

## 5. EVALUATION OF POLICY OPTIONS: BRIDGING EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND EDUCATIONAL REALITIES IN PHILIPPINE GIDA SCHOOLS

Persistent disparities affecting Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA) schools suggest that constitutional guarantees, legislative mandates, and educational policies have not consistently translated into equitable educational conditions for all learners. As demonstrated in the preceding analyses, the challenge extends beyond educational performance and reflects a broader gap between educational rights guaranteed by law and the educational realities experienced by disadvantaged communities.

Guided by the Rights-Based Analysis, Governance Failure Analysis, Implementation Gap Analysis, Political Economy Analysis, and Comparative Policy Analysis, this section evaluates alternative policy responses aimed at strengthening the realization of educational rights through more equitable resource allocation, improved governance, and effective implementation mechanisms.

### Evaluation Criteria

The policy options are assessed using the following criteria:

- **Legal Feasibility** – consistency with constitutional, statutory, and policy mandates;
- **Political Feasibility** – likelihood of obtaining institutional and political support;

- **Effectiveness** – potential to narrow the gap between educational rights and educational realities;
- **Equity** – responsiveness to the needs of disadvantaged learners and GIDA schools;
- **Cost** – financial implications and sustainability;
- **Administrative Feasibility** – practicality of implementation within existing governance structures.

### Policy Option A: Legislative Reform

#### Proposal:

**Enact legislation institutionalizing needs-based educational resource allocation that prioritizes GIDA schools.**

This option proposes a statutory funding framework that incorporates indicators such as geographic isolation, infrastructure deficits, poverty incidence, teacher specialization mismatches, and concentrations of disadvantaged or Indigenous learners. The objective is to ensure that educational investments are distributed according to need rather than through uniform allocation mechanisms.

#### Strengths

- strengthens the legal foundation for educational equity;
- institutionalizes long-term policy continuity;
- enhances accountability for educational resource allocation.

#### Limitations

- lengthy legislative processes;
- potential budgetary resistance;
- political constraints.

### Policy Option B: Administrative and Regulatory Reform

#### Proposal:

**Strengthen DepEd policies on teacher deployment, infrastructure prioritization, and educational resource allocation.**

This option includes revising teacher deployment systems, prioritizing investments in GIDA schools, strengthening monitoring mechanisms, and improving accountability structures without requiring new legislation.

#### Strengths

- faster implementation;
- fewer legislative barriers;
- greater administrative flexibility.

#### Limitations

- dependent on administrative commitment;
- vulnerable to leadership changes.

### Policy Option C: Fiscal Reform

#### Proposal:

**Adopt equity-based budgeting through needs-based educational funding.**

This option reallocates educational resources toward schools experiencing greater disadvantage, including those affected by geographic isolation, infrastructure deficits, teacher specialization mismatches, and limited access to educational services.



**Strengths**

- directly addresses the rights-reality gap;
- improves equity and efficiency in resource allocation;
- prioritizes disadvantaged learners.

**Limitations**

- may require increased educational investment;
- potential resistance from better-resourced areas.

**Policy Option D: Institutional Reform**

**Proposal:**

**Strengthen governance, monitoring, and accountability mechanisms.**

Key strategies include:

- strengthening Schools Division Offices;
- improving monitoring and evaluation systems;
- enhancing transparency;
- establishing educational equity indicators.

**Strengths**

- addresses governance and implementation weaknesses;
- improves policy execution and accountability.

**Limitations**

- institutional resistance;
- gradual organizational change.

**Policy Option E: Community-Based Reform**

**Proposal:**

**Increase participation of LGUs, communities, and stakeholders in educational planning and resource mobilization.**

Strategies include:

- community monitoring;
- LGU support and partnerships;
- stakeholder engagement;
- local resource mobilization.

**Strengths**

- promotes contextualized solutions;
- strengthens local ownership and participation.

**Limitations**

- uneven local capacity;
- sustainability concerns.

**Comparative Evaluation**

Among the policy options, Fiscal Reform through needs-based educational funding demonstrates the strongest potential to bridge the gap between educational rights and educational realities because it directly targets the conditions that disadvantage GIDA schools, including resource shortages, infrastructure deficits, teacher specialization mismatches, and unequal educational opportunities.

This option aligns most closely with:

- Article XIV, Section 1 of the 1987 Constitution (right to quality education);
- Article XIV, Section 5(5) (highest budgetary priority for education);
- Rights-Based Analysis (equitable realization of educational rights);
- Comparative Policy Analysis (targeted funding produces stronger equity outcomes).

However, fiscal reform alone is insufficient. Sustainable improvements require complementary administrative and institutional reforms that strengthen governance, accountability, and implementation capacity.

**Preferred Policy Direction**

Based on legal feasibility, effectiveness, equity impact, and administrative practicality, this paper supports an integrated policy approach centered on needs-based educational funding, complemented by administrative reforms and strengthened accountability mechanisms.

This approach recognizes that equal treatment does not necessarily produce equitable outcomes. To bridge the gap between educational rights and educational realities, schools experiencing greater disadvantage, including many GIDA schools in Davao Region, the Division of Davao del Sur, and similar underserved communities, must receive proportionately greater support. Educational equity therefore requires differentiated investments that enable all learners to meaningfully enjoy the educational rights guaranteed under law.

**6. RECOMMENDATIONS: BRIDGING EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND EDUCATIONAL REALITIES IN PHILIPPINE GIDA SCHOOLS**

The evidence presented in this paper demonstrates continuing disparities in educational resources affecting geographically isolated and disadvantaged schools despite constitutional guarantees of equitable access to quality education. Addressing these inequities requires coordinated reforms involving legislative, administrative, fiscal, and institutional actors.

Although not yet enacted into law, the proposed GIDA Schools Act (Senate Bill No. 1937) provides useful policy directions for addressing the unique challenges faced by geographically isolated and disadvantaged schools. Its provisions on differentiated funding, teacher incentives, infrastructure development, and targeted interventions for disadvantaged communities are generally consistent with the recommendations advanced in this paper. While the bill does not yet have the force of law and therefore cannot serve as a legal basis for the present analysis, its policy objectives may serve as a useful reference for future educational reforms aimed at promoting educational equity and improving educational outcomes in GIDA schools.

Guided by constitutional mandates, existing educational laws, and the empirical evidence presented in this paper, the following recommendations are proposed.

**Recommendation 1: Institutionalize Needs-Based Educational Resource Allocation Specific Action**

Develop and implement a national needs-based educational funding framework that allocates resources according to educational disadvantage rather than uniform distribution. Allocation criteria should include:

- geographic isolation;
- poverty incidence;
- teacher specialization mismatches;
- infrastructure deficits; and



• Indigenous Peoples and other vulnerable learner populations.

#### Responsible Actors

Congress and the Department of Education (DepEd)

#### Basis

This recommendation supports Article XIV of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, RA 10533, and findings from EDCOM II (2024, 2025), which highlight widespread learning poverty, resource disparities, and unequal educational opportunities.

#### Expected Outcome

More equitable distribution of educational resources and improved realization of educational rights among disadvantaged learners.

#### Recommendation 2: Strengthen Teacher Deployment and Support Systems in GIDA Schools

##### Specific Action

Enhance teacher deployment and retention policies through:

- hardship and transportation incentives;
- housing assistance;
- professional development opportunities;
- support for subject-specialized teacher deployment;

and

- retention mechanisms for GIDA schools.

#### Responsible Actors

DepEd Central Office, Regional Offices, and Schools Division Offices

#### Basis

Teacher specialization mismatches and unequal deployment patterns contribute to disparities in educational quality and learning outcomes.

#### Expected Outcome

Improved teacher availability, instructional quality, and educational opportunities in disadvantaged communities.

#### Recommendation 3: Prioritize Educational Infrastructure and Digital Connectivity

##### Specific Action

Implement a GIDA Educational Infrastructure and Connectivity Program focusing on:

- classroom construction and rehabilitation;
- internet connectivity;
- ICT facilities and learning technologies;
- electricity access; and
- digital learning support systems.

#### Responsible Actors

DepEd, Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), Local Government Units (LGUs), and development partners

#### Basis

Infrastructure and connectivity limitations continue to restrict educational accessibility, quality, and learner participation in many GIDA schools.

#### Expected Outcome

Improved learning environments and expanded access to educational opportunities.

#### Recommendation 4: Establish Educational Equity Monitoring and Accountability Systems

##### Specific Action

Develop educational equity indicators and institutionalize annual monitoring of:

- teacher distribution;
- infrastructure conditions;
- ICT access;
- learner outcomes; and
- resource allocation patterns.

#### Responsible Actors

DepEd, Regional Offices, Schools Division Offices, and LGUs

#### Basis

Persistent implementation gaps suggest the need for stronger monitoring, transparency, and accountability mechanisms.

#### Expected Outcome

Improved evidence-based decision-making and greater accountability in achieving educational equity.

#### Recommendation 6: Strengthen Localized and Participatory Educational Governance

##### Specific Action

Increase the participation of:

- Local Government Units;
- School Governing Councils;
- Indigenous Peoples communities;
- parents; and
- other stakeholders

in educational planning, resource prioritization, and school improvement initiatives.

#### Responsible Actors

LGUs, Schools Division Offices, School Heads, and community stakeholders

#### Basis

Inclusive and participatory governance enhances contextual responsiveness and promotes more equitable educational planning.

#### Expected Outcome

Stronger local ownership, improved responsiveness to community needs, and more effective implementation of educational programs.



**Structured Summary of Recommendations**

Recommendation	Responsible Actor	Basis	Expected Outcome
Needs-based funding	Congress, DepEd	Constitution, RA 10533, EDCOM II	More equitable resource allocation
Teacher Deployment and Support	DepEd, Schools Division Offices	Teacher specialization mismatches	Improved instructional quality
Infrastructure and Connectivity	DepEd, DICT, LGUs	GIDA infrastructure and ICT gaps	Enhanced educational access and quality
Educational equity monitoring	DepEd, Divisions, LGUs	Implementation gaps	Stronger accountability and evidence-based planning
Participatory Educational Governance	LGUs, Schools, Communities	Contextual and community needs	Improved local responsiveness

**Duty Bearers Responsible for Implementing Educational Rights**

Recommendation	Duty Bearer
Needs-Based Funding	Congress, DBM, DepEd
Teacher Deployment	DepEd Central Office, SDO Davao del Sur
Connectivity Program	DepEd, DICT, LGUs
Monitoring System	DepEd Regional Office XI, SDO Davao del Sur
Participatory Governance	GU, School Heads, SGCs

**Synthesis**

Collectively, these recommendations recognize that bridging the gap between educational rights and educational realities requires more than expanding access to schooling. Educational rights can only be meaningfully realized when learners are provided with adequate resources, qualified teachers, supportive learning environments, and equitable educational opportunities. Consequently, policy reforms should move beyond uniform resource distribution toward equity-oriented approaches that provide proportionately greater support to schools and learners facing the greatest disadvantage. Such an approach is particularly relevant for GIDA schools, including those in Davao Region and the Division of Davao del Sur, where educational challenges continue to affect the realization of learners' constitutional right to quality education.

**7. CONCLUSION**

This paper has argued that educational resource inequities affecting Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA) schools in the Philippines represent enduring gap between educational rights guaranteed by law and the educational realities experienced by many learners. Despite constitutional guarantees, statutory mandates, and policy reforms promoting equitable access to quality education, significant disparities in teacher deployment, infrastructure, ICT access, learning resources, and educational opportunities continue to affect disadvantaged communities, including those within Davao Region and the Division of Davao del Sur.

The legal and constitutional framework establishes a clear obligation for the State to ensure that all learners have access to quality, inclusive, and equitable education. However, empirical evidence from EDCOM II, PISA, TIMSS, and documented challenges affecting GIDA schools demonstrates that educational participation does not always translate into meaningful learning opportunities or equitable outcomes. These findings suggest that the challenge confronting Philippine education is not the absence of legal protections or

policy commitments but the continuing difficulty of transforming these commitments into educational realities that are experienced equitably by all learners.

The analytical lenses employed in this paper further reveal that educational inequities are shaped by interconnected issues involving rights realization, governance effectiveness, policy implementation, resource allocation, and institutional prioritization. Consequently, educational disparities should not be viewed merely as administrative or technical concerns but as matters of educational justice and constitutional accountability.

Addressing this challenge requires a deliberate shift from uniform resource distribution toward equity-oriented approaches that provide proportionately greater support to schools and learners facing the greatest disadvantage. Needs-based funding, strengthened teacher deployment systems, targeted infrastructure and ICT investments, improved accountability mechanisms, and participatory educational governance are essential strategies for narrowing the gap between educational rights and educational realities.

Ultimately, the success of educational reform in the Philippines will not be measured solely by the existence of laws, policies, or budget allocations, but by the extent to which learners in the most disadvantaged communities are able to meaningfully enjoy their right to quality education. Bridging educational rights and educational realities therefore requires sustained political commitment, effective governance, and equity-centered decision-making that ensures no learner is left behind because of geography, poverty, or circumstance. Educational equity must become not only a constitutional promise but a lived reality for every Filipino learner.

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