

## AN ANALYSIS OF DECS ORDER NO. 23, S. 1994 IN RELATION TO THE MANDATORY ROTC PROPOSAL

by:

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With the shift in the administration in the Philippines – from the Duterte to the Marcos administration, the revival of the Mandatory ROTC, which was scrapped in 2002 after the establishment of the National Service Training Program (NSTP), again surfaced and eyed as a possible part of the current administration’s legislative agenda.

As stipulated in DECS Order 23, s. 1994, the Mandatory Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) aims to provide military training, and related non-military services to students, as well as promoting nationalism to young Filipinos. The program further embodies the goal to develop the students’ involvement in the civic affairs as well as participation of the people’s social, economic and cultural development. Moreover, this also serves as a training ground for students that would lead to them, being a part of the country’s military reserve that may render military or civil service once the need arises.

Although the new written policy/ies concerning the proposal of the Mandatory ROTC were not yet submitted or brought up on public, various uproars from the masses made noise as the Filipinos heard the support of Vice President and DepEd Secretary Sara Duterte as well as CHED Chairperson Prospero De Vera on the approval of the projected policy.

To analyse the policy more, here are some projected outcomes:

*Promotion of Nationalism and Discipline to Young Filipinos*

As one of its primary goals, the Mandatory ROTC may result to being an avenue to promote nationalism to young Filipinos as well as discipline as it will engage students in doing rigorous and structured drills and activities similar to that of the military.

### *Enlistment of Reserve Military Forces*

As the name implies and the culmination of the Reserve Officers Training Corps, all students who will complete the program will become reserve military forces of the Philippines.

### *Violation of Child Protection Policy*

As cited by PhilStar Global (2018) and Center for Media Freedom (2022) ROTC resulted to an abuse to a cadet which even lead to his death – an issue that made a clamor on 2001. This scenario is a disturbing example how the word “discipline” becomes a pathway to abusing cadets in ROTC.

### *A More Congested Curriculum*

Although the placement whether the Mandatory ROTC will be instilled in the Senior High School or the Tertiary level, the placement of the Mandatory ROTC may be an additional burden to learners and educators especially since the learning institutions are still coping with the learning gaps brought by the pandemic.

### *Realignment in Education’s Budget*

This goes without saying that large programs such as this would demand large budget as it will demand new equipment, facility, training and insurance. This would result to realignment from one priority project to another.

Based on analysis, the following alternatives were generated:

### *Voluntary and More Structured ROTC*

Educators often claim that every child is special and we should always prioritize their individual differences and I believe that it should also be a consideration for the establishment of the Mandatory ROTC. The program would be better if in a voluntary basis that do not require the students to join as part of their curriculum. Also, ROTC may be more structured and give more defined and analysed activities and drills in its curriculum. It would be a great check and balance as to whether the implementers are following its goals and objectives in the implementation of the course.

### *Enrichment of Araling Panlipunan and Makabayan Subjects*

Since one of the purpose of the program is to promote nationalism and love for country, I believe that one of the primary and initial moves to be considered would be the development of the Araling Panlipunan and Makabayan subjects to ensure that all learners are learning relevant, contextualized and timely knowledge that would not only develop their social, cultural and historical competencies but make them have a sense of patriotism as well.

### *Crafting of ROTC Programs outside Basic and Higher Education*

As it is, the respective competencies of the basic and higher education may be considered congested. It would be better if policies on this matter would focus on audience outside education that would like to engage the endeavour on their own accord.

The purpose and intent of Mandatory ROTC is notable - it is for the country. However, forcing it to all the learners by making it compulsory would be in a way, violating the learners' rights and free will.

The purpose of the Mandatory ROTC may also be achieved with other alternatives that may be more effective and efficient. The context of the Philippines must be analysed and prioritized and focal persons may truly suggest the most optimal way to develop love for country. Comparing our beloved country to another would be tragic as there are

a lot of considerations and differences that justifies why some programs may not be applicable to us.

Although fingers crossed, if implemented, ROTC must inculcate love for the country and discipline to the learners, hopefully, it will not be an avenue for abuse or just another waste of resources that should have been allotted for more pressing needs in education.

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