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Toward a Philosophy of Public Management Education for the 1990s

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Philosophy provides the basic ingredient of values that we need as a beacon for the progress of the science and art of administration. Some propositions which may constitute parts of a philosophy to guide the teaching of public administration in the Philippines embrace (a) the development of a philosophy integrating ethics, art and science; (b) a balanced mix of fusing or separating politics and administration; and, (c) a realistic combination of the trivial routinary and noble pursuits in public management. This multidimensional task of rooting in and anchoring on a philosophy lends stability and sustainability to Public Management education if it is to pass the test of time.

Why "Philosophize" and What Does This Mean?

Why should we philosophize on Public Management education? It is because, given the sorry state of our government and country, we need to have clear goals and objectives to guide curricular development on the way to the next century. And if I understand the term correctly, philosophy provides the basic ingredient of values that we need as a beacon for the progress of the science and art of administration.

At least, this is what one may glean from past and fairly current discussions of management in both the public and private sectors and from recent legislation to strengthen ethics in the Philippine public service. From the general literature, one learns that traditional American thinking on public administration was much stronger in theory than the British, but what the British lacked, they have made up for with an explicit orientation to values as a distinct though integral element as well as a grounding in certain factual assumptions about public administration.

Thus, according to a British author, traditional American doctrines assumed that "(a)dministration can be made into a science," and that "(t)he scientific study of administration leads to the discovery of principles of administration," which principles in turn "determine the way in which the goals of economy and efficiency can be realised" (Thomas 1978: 6). On the other hand, British doctrines argued that "(a)dministration cannot be reduced to science alone. It is based on science *and* ethics and this combination constitutes a philosophy of administration." Moreover, "(t)he philosophical study of administration leads to the discovery not only of scientific principles but also of ethical ideals," which include a qualitative rather than

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quantitative kind of efficiency due to the ethical element explicitly introduced by philosophy (Thomas 1978: 22).

American thinking has since been reoriented by the so-called "New Public Administration" to more substantive values such as social equity. But in private corporate management, Americans continually discover and appreciate the "importance of culture, value commitments, and ethics." Organizational cultures that stress more than the bottomline of profit and embrace values "representing responsibility to various social groups" have made a crucial difference for corporate "excellence" (McCoy 1985: 7, 11). "The excellent companies seem to have developed cultures that have incorporated the values and practices of the great leaders and thus those shared values can be seen to survive for decades after the passing of the original guru" (Peters & Waterman 1982: 26; McCoy 1985: 11). Still, American private managers suffer by comparison with the Japanese as well as the British in terms of the degree to which they institutionalize social, spiritual, and humanistic values as "superordinate goals" of their corporations (Pascale & Athos 1981: 125-129).

Before we proceed, we may note that philosophical discussions deal not only with ethical and moral or value questions, but also with ontological or factual issues and epistemological ones, i.e., questions of how we know. There are probably other kinds of issues besides. But not being a professional philosopher, and having neither the talent nor the time to discourse at length on a potentially wide range of philosophical issues even in a restricted field, I will state some propositions which may constitute parts of a philosophy, rather than present a menu of philosophies of Public Management education. These propositions selectively touch base with a few areas with which we have probably been particularly concerned in the teaching of Public Administration in the Philippines. My hope, though, is that this limited presentation would provoke alternative views on the subject.

We Have a Lot to Learn about Values

On the question of values, there is no doubt of the urgency of forming the appropriate values for the Philippine public service. Our recent laws and regulations prescribing ethical behavior, as well as previous ones, testify to the critical problems of graft, corruption, and other forms of mal- or misconduct that have bedeviled our government and society these past several decades. Thus, "values formation" and ethics courses are deservedly in fashion in training and education programs.

Just what values to teach, whether ethics should be a distinct course or an integral part of other courses, and how to get values observed and enforced as well as inculcated, may be important problems for crowded curricula. But more importantly, we have a great deal more to learn about values before we can teach them effectively. As I have pointed out elsewhere (1990), for example, we may not know exactly what or which values we wish to promote. Or, perhaps more precisely, it may be easier to

identify the range of values we wish to promote than to realize and reconcile their complex, competing, and often conflicting relationships. This is because values are not only carried aloft by common ideals, but are also rooted in diverse and divergent interests.

Even such simpler virtues as courtesy may collide with others, e.g., the need for time to do well in one's paperwork, unless we regard them as an integral part of doing a good job. For another example, when we try to get rid of red tape for the sake of dispatch and efficiency in service, and at the same time push for transparency and honesty in government, we may also embark on mutually frustrating courses of action.[1] Then it is time to relearn Herbert Simon's argument that we cannot maximize any one principle of administration without some sacrifice to others. Moreover, according to him, for a number of reasons (including cognitive limits or constraints on our ability to know), we can only optimize or "satisfice" (Simon 1954). Recently, though, there has been the more sanguine view that we can arrive at "super-optimum solutions" (SOS) beyond the results of traditional compromises and trade-offs among values (Nagel 1981).[2]

The problem of value relations becomes even more intractable when "modern" or universalistic institutional values are pitted against the more traditional, particularistic ones prevailing in the wider culture. The Japanese are reputed to have nicely reconciled the demands of their old culture by incorporating useful traditional norms into the "superordinate goals" of their modern institutions (Pascale & Athos 1981: 129). But our own persisting experience with corruption and incompetence in government and the diversity of Filipino culture would suggest that we may have to make more difficult choices between the values we want for the public service and the truly incompatible elements in our culture that hinder progress in government. Nepotism, political dynasties, private armies, and local and national oligarchies may have sprung from our love of the extended family; one would wish that this could be a more transcendent love of the Filipino nation as a truly extended family.

On the other hand, some caution is called for in how fast and how far we push public service values from the moral and ethical to the legal level. Codes of proper behavior in government can be misused if what is ethically improper is also made legal and stiff legal sanctions are applied against infractions. Then, codes of ethical conduct could constrain efficient performance and serve to obscure the really criminal malfeasances. For example, limiting the number of extra positions, e.g., corporate board directorships and compensation available to department heads may help prevent monopoly of power and pelf, but it may also inhibit the performance of necessary duties in the coordination of policy or in contributing technical expertise.

Moreover, the total amount of extra income possible from such positions may be nothing compared to the lucre obtainable from mere influence-peddling which "the big fish" could perpetrate without extra official positions. The point is that, in order to avoid such adverse incentives and obfuscations, we have to sift the "marijuana" from

the "crack," and may have to decriminalize minor breaches of good conduct or leave them to social and political rather than judicial mechanisms for correction.

Politics Should be Separate from Administration, But . . .

A starting point in philosophies of public administration is the relation between politics and administration. The politics-administration dichotomy has been a sore and abiding issue in our literature. We have to sort out what seems to be the confusion of normative position and empirical observation here. The prevailing view in much of the literature is that there should not be a dichotomy because it cannot be observed in actual practice. But I believe that this empirical observation is only partly and contingently true, and that politics could and should be separated from administration within proper limits. At the same time, mutual influence and interpenetration between the two processes are possible and should not only be allowed but upheld, but again within certain limits.

This apparently conflicting view is implicit in the constitutional design of liberal-democratic polities and governments based, like ours, on the simultaneous division and sharing of powers as a key mechanism to promote competition, induce deliberation, and build consensus behind policies. The legislature makes the laws, the executive implements them, and the judiciary interprets the laws. But at the same time, they also share the central function of making policies, with the chief executive's influence on the legislative agenda and power of approval, and the courts' opportunities to "make law" in grey areas of legislation and jurisprudence.

There should be no question about the basic pecking order between politics and administration. Politics should produce the policies that guide administration, and having more direct responsibilities to the people, politicians are superior to appointive administrators who are therefore duty-bound to obey the law. In a democratic system, politicians are subject to the people's wishes, so that they are transients on the public stage. Administrators are appointed by politicians to enable the latter to enforce their will. Most of those in the administrative service are there to stay to provide continuity and stability in the service. In exchange for career and tenure protection, they are governed by norms of political neutrality, which means loyalty to any party that legitimately gains office and faithful execution of the policies preferred by the party or political leaders in power.

These points deserve restating because of the bad reputation that politicians and politics have gained, the seamier side of politics having obscured its nobler aspects in practice. We have to disabuse the minds of our students of this one-sided view of politics, and reassert its meaning as gaining or retaining and using social power and institutional authority to articulate national values and pursue public purposes. But if only because the popular bias against politics is not entirely without basis, we also have to make and observe the necessary distinctions and qualifications.

"Obeying the law" applies (or should, if it does not) to both politicians and administrators, not to mention the rest of the people. Politicians should influence administration through their law- or policymaking powers,[3] which may penetrate deeply into the administrative process with very specific controls, e.g., statutory requirements of periodic reporting by executive agencies to legislative committees. However, when they exert influence for particularistic favors in violation of established rules, presumably including those of their own making, they exceed the bounds of propriety. In this sense, "political interference" is rightly denounced. But, not to forget, this goes also for administrators, who also share rule-making functions and could fill the many gaps often left in policies as they implement them—and thus also have opportunities for making self-serving rules.

For all these, the lines between politics and administration in the Philippine government have to be drawn more clearly, both structurally and functionally. Despite our adherence to the principles of separation of powers and checks and balances, politics of the partisan and personal kind has systematically intruded into administration through the erosion of the career service since the time of President Marcos. Presidential appointments have been extended to career levels that used to be protected by civil service law but are now subject to presidential dis/pleasure. Excessive recourse to the requirement of "courtesy resignations" from those regarded rightly or erroneously as "political appointees" has tended to disrupt both reform processes and bureaucratic routines. Since Secretaries have been changed in quick succession, each newcomer has demanded to bring in his or her own management team as though another party is coming into power, and the number of Undersecs, Asecs and assorted "political appointees" has proliferated, the civil service has been itself a veritable source of discontinuity, instability, and uncertainty in governance. The career service must be broadened, better protected, and its leadership structure streamlined, without depriving the President of the right to hire and fire key political executives.

Administration and Routine are Important

The foregoing suggests that there is a great deal more to administration than meets the jaundiced eye. That administration is important also bears restating because it has been another victim of bias, even in high places. Administration has been viewed as attending to trivial matters of routine, maintenance, and support functions. The whole field of "traditional" public administration was so reduced to disrepute that many schools switched to "development administration," "public management," "public policy" or "public affairs." Of late, the schools oriented to policy analysis have accorded a grudging recognition of the administrative as well as political processes, but in terms of "management," "organization," or "implementation"—any other word, it seems, to avoid "administration." Generally, the Americans prefer "management" as the "sexier" term connoting the more consequential roles of key officials, though the British and some of us have stuck to "public administration" without entirely rejecting "management" as a functional-enough equivalent.

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I personally share the latter preference for several reasons. First, "public administration" evokes the spirit of public service in the root word, e.g., to minister to the needs of the needy rather than the demands of the greedy. Secondly, substitute phrases like "development administration" have not done much better and may have done worse by putting down routine as inconsequential. "Development administration," for example, may have persuaded us of the importance of change-orientation at the expense of administrative routine, so that we have engaged in so many capital-forming projects without ensuring their operations and useful lives could be sufficiently sustained at least to recover their costs. The concept has brought other related prejudices that have formed part of the rules-of-thumb followed by "development-oriented" policymakers and evaluators, such as expenditures for big physical facilities are to be preferred to personal services budgets.

Since "sustainability" has become a deservedly fashionable value, we need to re-appreciate administrative routine as a contributory factor to sensible development programs. But again, we have to relearn March and Simon's lesson that after engaging in problem-solving, we have to routinize effective solutions so we can concentrate our limited cognitive faculties on new problems (March & Simon 1958). I am sure, those whose job is to develop algorithms and computer programs will appreciate the importance and difficulty of this task. To put it in terms of a wider canvass, the routinization of charisma, as Max Weber once said, is the basic problem of Presidents and leaders thrust to positions of power by sheer popularity. We refer to a similar challenge when we call for the institutionalization of technical innovations, new values, or what may otherwise remain merely as the personal style of a leader.

Although "management" could imply a partiality against labor and other lesser members of corporate hierarchies, we will not bedrudge its contribution to a reassessment of public administration as being engaged in high policy as well as trivial tinkering. Administrators must contribute their ideas and advice to policymaking because they have opportunities to develop the relevant values, knowledge, and technical skills to do so, especially if they are truly career officials. Given the accumulation of such resources in the executive branch and the relative transience of elected leaders and political executives, career personnel have a compelling advantage that they should put to good use.

However, as we have already implied, administrators do not have the right to substitute their own policy judgments for those of political leaders, assuming that the latter can make up their minds at certain points. Moreover, those in the executive branch should not underestimate the policy and administrative acumen that legislators could develop through successive reelection and seniority in legislative committees. Depending on the election and committee rules in force, some legislators may outlast political executives by generations, though we hope that they would not form dynasties.

Public Management Combines Trivial and Noble Pursuits

The introduction of policy analysis has denigrated "traditional" public administration where the former replaced or effectively eclipsed the latter, as in the case of many American schools where "the guys with the green eye-shades" took over the Institutes of Public Administration. Economic theory, quantitative techniques, and normative criteria were introduced with policy analysis to provide scientific rigor and stress the decisionmaking roles of executives. Lately, management has been reintroduced in token form through organization theory along with political analysis out of realization of the importance of "institutional literacy and modes of influence." Still, there has been lingering suspicion that these terms have smuggled old public administration in a new garb into the domain of policy analysis, where decision-driven policymaking continues to reign supreme as management (Elmore 1986: 70-73).

While this identification of management with policymaking may be flattering to managers, however, it may have misperceived the more modest role it has actually assigned to them and their apparently more trivial pursuits. According to Elmore, public and private managers "typically spend the majority of their time talking directly to people, not thinking, writing, analyzing, or deciding" (1986: 73). Most of their time is spent working in groups, interacting with subordinates and peers rather than superiors, and having flitting, fragmented, and unplanned encounters. They "actively seek current, specific, well-defined and nonroutine problems, rather than broad, amorphous, or routine ones," rely more heavily on oral and uncertainty-laden communication rather than written reporting procedures; and use different channels instead of a single formal network of information (Elmore 1986: 73-75).

This view of what managers actually do suggests a counsel of modesty for the functions conceived by both policy analysis and traditional PA schools. Management is not typically decisionmaking, command, or control. Rather, it is negotiation, bargaining, and a series of games played at different levels, where rules and decisions are implemented indirectly rather than directly. This is especially true in the public sector, where policies and programs are implemented through third party arrangements, e.g., contracts, intergovernmental grants, regulations, and various forms of subsidies. Thus, some authors have concluded that the lines with the private sector have been blurred and little is gained from distinguishing uniquely public from private skills (Elmore 1986: 74-75).

In this light, we may as well accept the tedium that often attends both managerial meanderings and administrative routine and that appears to fritter time better spent on more substantive pursuits. Academics, surprisingly including some of those in public administration, are especially susceptible to the feeling that administration wastes their time for scholarly research and rumination, and thus seem to despise department chairmanships, deanships, and other such posts while conceding their prestige value. Rather, we should at least take comfort in what an American

Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that we need a philosophy of public administration that combines ethics, art, and science, and presented various kinds of propositions about politics and administration, the importance of administration as routine, and the necessary mixes of trivial and noble pursuits in public management, and the need for scientific development to proceed along with the ethical and "artistic" elements of administration. These have tried to deal with selected issues of probably most concern to us Filipinos in our current and potential environment.

Over and above the questions of what, how, and why we should learn and teach, the issue of who should learn deserves at least a passing remark. My answer is implicit in the University of the Philippines College of Public Administration curriculum: We have restored the Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration (BAPA) degree program out of concern for shaping the value-orientations as well as technical competence of the young pre-service students. But this concern extends to our more mature Masters of Public Administration (MPA) and Doctor of Public Administration (DPA) students, who should be able to make sense of their administrative experience through ethical and scientific frameworks. We all need to philosophize, hopefully not always with the sense of surrender that "philosophical" acceptance of obstinate realities conveys.

The teachers themselves have the most to learn first before they can teach. Unfortunately, their academic base may not be forthcoming with help. PhD programs do not guarantee a strong grounding in philosophy. "Professional" DPA programs drop the pretense altogether, though degree titles could be deceptive.

Endnotes

[1]Excessive controls contribute to corruption as well as delays, but a modicum of red tape is needed to ensure honesty. The trick is to discover that "modicum" combination of dispatch and controls that would serve both values.

[2]Professor Stuart Nagel of the University of Illinois is the exponent of "SOS."

[3]Politicians do not always make policy, and laws do not always constitute policy, e.g., those naming places.

[4]William James as cited by Irwin Edman in *Philosopher's Holiday*. New York: Penguin Books, 1938, p. 137.

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