

# Towards a Career-Oriented Public Service Program

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There is now a greater challenge for Philippine political science to play an active role in national development. The discipline has been commonly regarded as a "luxury course" because it has to be supplemented by another degree such as law in order to be useful. This attitude is, of course, a reflection neither of the degree to which the field of study has developed nor of the quality of instruction which the students receive from their Political Science instructors.<sup>1</sup> Rather, the image of the discipline results from the fact that Political Science graduates have much less job opportunities than do graduates of Economics, Psychology, and Sociology. These latter fields are found to be more practical and, especially with the advent of martial law, are considered to be less "sensitive."<sup>2</sup> It is our responsibility to our students to reexamine the content as well as distribution of our major courses, in the light of these realities.

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<sup>1</sup>The orientation of the discipline in the country is influenced by the fact that most Political Science teachers are lawyers. It is also estimated that about 97 percent of them are not engaged in organized research. See Remigio E. Agpalo, "Political Science in the Philippines," a paper prepared for and read before the Golden Jubilee Conference of the U.P. Political Science Department, June 14-19, 1965. Dr. Agpalo's findings are confirmed by this writer's own findings after his tour of major institutions in the country last March and August, 1974, for his Philippine Social Science Council project.

<sup>2</sup>This observation was made by Mary Hollnsteiner in her article, "The State of Social Science in the Philippines," in Volume 1, Number 1 of the *Philippine Social Science Newsletter*, 1971. Many private colleges and universities have, in fact, either phased out their Political Science program or integrated it with other majors. Dr. Eva Ventura, Chairman of the U.P. Political Science Department, has finished a comparative study of curricula of different schools in the country. On the subject of employability of our graduates, Socorro Leyco-Reyes has prepared as topic of her M.A. thesis for the U.P. Political Science Department, the utility of the Political Science major program to the present jobs of Political Science graduates in five schools.

### Sheer Academic Enrichment?

There are those who argue that Political Science, like most academic disciplines in the Liberal Arts, must not be regarded as a vocational field that prepares one for jobs.<sup>3</sup> Rather, its subjects should be taken for their scholarly value. Knowledge, after all, must not be weighed against the material remuneration it brings but against the intellectual development to which it contributes.

On the other hand, critics of this scholastic outlook claim that Political Science has little relevance to the needs of a developing country such as ours, where graduates must engage in more practical activities geared towards national objectives. Political development, they say, is ably guided by seasoned, interdisciplinary policy-makers who do not find any need for the overly theoretical courses offered by the formal discipline of Politics. Moreover, it is said that Political Science, as taught in our country, unduly stresses Western-imported concepts, such as notions of popular participation, findings on electoral and administrative behavior, and models of modernization. The peculiar conditions of a developing nation preclude the blind application of these concepts and analytical tools to local institutions and problems. Another subject of criticism is the research orientation of the field. A common observation is that local political scientists tend to copy their highly specialized Western counterparts in methodology and scope of research interest. It is unfortunate, according to some, that most scholars in our field do not take into account extra-political and extra-legal variables in their studies and, consequently, limit considerably the fields of competence open to them. Their political analyses fail to influence public opinion and hardly contribute to actual decision-making, both of which require a generalist's perspective, and a steady and prompt supply of data on the overall and continuing political situation.<sup>4</sup>

### More Responsive Curriculum Required

While this writer does not fully concur with these criticisms, he

<sup>3</sup>Elmer Vigilia, "The State of Political Science as a Discipline in the Philippines," M.A. thesis submitted to the Department of Political Science, University of the Philippines 1974. The study, which attempted to show that undergraduate political science teaching is "vocational," covered the U.P., Ateneo University, Silliman University, Philippine Christian College, St. Louis University of Baguio, the University of the East, and the Mindanao State University.

<sup>4</sup>An Assistant Executive Secretary and a career diplomat, who were invited to speak at a seminar on "Career Opportunities for the History-Political Science Graduate" at De La Salle College last year, made the observation that few Political Science graduates can offer basic expertise in political research that policy-making demands.

does concede that the discipline must be reoriented to serve the requirements of nation-building. Since only a few of them can aspire for a master's, doctoral, or a law degree, our graduates must at least be able to contribute to the pool of analysts as well as qualified public servants who are needed by the government. They must also be in a position to influence the teaching of Government and other Social Studies subjects in lower levels of education. This is where we, political scientists, seem to be wanting: the effort as well as the will to assist in upgrading the political education of pre-collegiate students. This objective, which is after all the rationale for the discipline, could be brought about by a redistribution and reorientation of the course offerings. It probably requires that the major course called Political Science be named "Public Service,"<sup>5</sup> instead. At the risk of alienating his colleagues in the profession, this writer dares say that such a step also necessitates great sacrifice on the part of all Political Science professors. Such a sacrifice entails admission of the fact that there are certain courses for which practitioners have been thoroughly trained that are dispensable for practical purposes. It also means that we should spend more hours relearning certain concepts from other disciplines and sharing with their practitioners certain courses for such a new program.<sup>6</sup>

### A Proposal

A "Public Service" program to take the place of the Political Science major does not duplicate the Public Administration course, although the former could be a better preparation for post-graduate work in the latter field. The Public Service major will do away with the nonessentials found in the regular program, but will retain the theoretical courses to give content to the practical courses. The courses will not only provide the rationale for good government but will also introduce students to the actual intricacies of ethical public service — with all the problems that it meets.

It must be made clear at this point that this paper does not seek the annihilation of the formal discipline of Political Science, which is a valuable field wherein graduate studies find academic fulfillment. What the author posits is simply a career-oriented, undergraduate program to which political scientists can fully contribute their talents

<sup>5</sup>The name is not to be associated with the 2-unit subject presently required by the government.

<sup>6</sup>It may be mentioned that the Political Science curriculum of the U.P. has long included cognate subjects in economics and other social sciences.

and resources. This step is not only fair to our students but also functional to the survival of Political Science in this country.

The "Public Service" program hopes to prepare its graduates for basic work in civil and foreign service, perhaps even to assist them in passing the examinations for these branches of government service. It also seeks to prepare them for an enlightened and well-rounded journalistic profession. The program might qualify them to do basic research for business as well as international organizations, and would have enough course mix to still qualify them for graduate studies in Political Science, Public Administration, Law, Foreign Service, Journalism, and even Business Administration and Economics. On the whole, the background will hopefully make the majors well-rounded citizens capable of giving positive inputs to public decision-making.

With all its avowed, ambitious aims, the proposed curriculum is by no means presented as the best program possible. Rather, it is broached here as a springboard for further exchange of ideas with colleagues who would like to broaden the horizons of Political Science in the Philippines.

Hereunder is the proposed curriculum:

#### **First or Second Year (General Education)**

Public Service 1: *Introduction to Public Service*

Principles of public service; theories of government and modernization; public ethics

Public Service 14: *Philippine Government and Politics*

Organization and operation of the Philippine political system

#### **Third Year (Major Courses)**

Public Service 161: *Political and Administrative Behavior*

Sociological foundations of administration and political participation; nature and development of political processes and movements in developing nations

Public Service 162: *Political Philosophy*

Review of selected political ideas relevant to modernizing states

Public Service 163: *Public Administration I*

Principles and practice of public administration on the national level; case studies

Public Service 164: *Selected Governments of Asia and the West*

Study of the political systems of the U.K., France, U.S.S.R., China, and Japan

Prerequisites: Public Service 161 and 162

Public Service 165: *International Relations*

Interaction among nations; political, legal, and economic problems; international organizations, with emphasis on Third World problems

Public Service 166: *Public Administration II*  
Administration on the local level; case studies  
Prerequisite: Public Service 163

#### Fourth Year (Major Courses)

Public Service 167: *Diplomatic and Consular Practice*  
Organization, functions and problems of diplomatic and consular practice, with emphasis on the Philippines  
Prerequisite: Public Service 166

Public Service 168: *Philippine Foreign Relations*  
Study of the direction and determinants of Philippine relations with other countries

Public Service 169: *Problems of Economic Development*  
Approaches to economic development, with emphasis on developing areas; the environmental challenge  
Prerequisite: Basic Economics

Public Service 170: *International Economics*  
Principles and problems of economic interaction among nations; regional economic organizations  
Prerequisite: Basic Economics

Public Service 171: *Government Accounting*  
Management of government revenues and expenditures; case studies; ethical problems  
Prerequisite: Basic Economics

Public Service 172: *Research Methods*  
Techniques in academic, business, and government research; problems of research in the Philippines; research needs  
Prerequisite: Senior Standing

Public Service 173: *Apprenticeship* (6 units)  
Prerequisite: Senior Standing  
Total required units for the major courses: 42 units

As indicated by the proposed curriculum, the majority of courses (30 units) will be handled by political scientists. Instead of being deprived of their regular load, present staff members might, in fact, have more classes to handle if the program becomes popular. (This writer is optimistic that with the career opportunities this revised curriculum promises, the Public Service program will draw more students than Political Science.)

In the junior year, all the offerings are Political Science courses. Only the distribution and content of the courses are changed. All subdivisions of the discipline are represented. But instead of having two *Political Philosophy* subjects, only one is proposed. Those

theories which find applicability in developing nations will be stressed in that single course. The area of *Comparative Government* is also limited to one subject (Public Service 164), leaving out those countries whose experience and institutions either practically duplicate those of leading states covered in P.S. 164, or find little relevance in the Philippine setting. Also excluded are countries whose political development is far behind that of the Philippines', undergoing as they do frequent changes in government. *Public Administration* is heavily represented (P.S. 161, 163, 166), in keeping with the rationale of the program.

Bearing in mind those who would like to enter the foreign service, three *International Relations* subjects (P.S. 165, 167, 168) are offered. They would also find utility in the senior courses on *Problems of Economic Development*, *International Economics*, and *Government Accounting*. Except the last one, these subjects are covered in the Foreign Service Officer's (FSO) examinations. Aspirants for the foreign service will also find *Government Accounting* a valuable background for the FSO subject, *International Banking and Finance*.

*Public International Law* and *Private International Law* were consciously excluded for a number of reasons. International Law, from the point of view of Political Science, is best studied within the framework of international politics. But for the purpose of legal studies, legal and government research, and the FSO exam, International Law is best studied in a law school where the approach is more legalistic. The Public Service graduate, anyway, would have to take post-graduate courses if he would like to be a career diplomat, given the age and degree requirements of the FSO.

Nonetheless, flexibility will be allowed in the senior year. Electives may continue to be offered. The student majoring in public service will be given the option to take those electives in his final year, which is about the time he might contemplate on post-graduation plans. If he intends to work for the government, *Public Administration* courses could take the place of *International Relations* courses. Conversely, the foreign service aspirant can take *Public International Law* to replace *Government Accounting*. The journalistically minded may opt for more *Political Philosophy* subjects instead of *Government Accounting* and *Consular Practice*.

But all majors should be required to take *Research Methods* and *Apprenticeship* in the last semester of their work. The two complement each other, and will provide students and their mentors

an idea of how useful the academic training provided by the program will be. Needless to say, the locale of the apprenticeship will be chosen by the students and approved by their advisers, depending on the academic and occupational plans of the senior after graduation. A total of six hours a week is to be spent in a government, business, research, or newspaper office. Periodic reports and evaluations are to be given to the adviser by the student and office supervisor, respectively.

It is obvious that while the Public Service program aims at giving the students a more well-rounded preparation for legal studies and job opportunities in government and private industry, it does not meet the needs of the minority of students who would like to take Political Science for its purely academic value. The Department could allow them to take more electives in Political Science to replace the Economics, Accounting, and Apprenticeship courses, and to graduate with a degree in Political Science instead of Public Service. Another alternative, which is open only to big schools like the University of the Philippines, is to preserve the Political Science curriculum and offer it alongside the Public Service program.

The Public Service program is ideal for most private schools, which can afford to offer only an integrated social-science program. Because of the limited career value of these programs, the direction has been towards the combination of these integrated majors with other practical fields, e.g., Commerce (as in De La Salle College) and Pre-Law (as in Ateneo University). The proposed program has a twofold advantage: teachers from different disciplines (Political Science, History, Sociology, Psychology, Economics, Accounting, and Management) can combine their expertise in a single, but useful, program; and students need not have two majors to assure themselves of employment. Whichever school may consider this proposal, the whole idea is to transform the program which political scientists have to offer from a major of "last choice" to one that is oriented towards career and nation-building.