

# **New Challenges to Teaching and Research in Public Administration**

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*We have so much applied research to the point that we hardly have room for the basics. If we aspire to build theory, we must have more basic researches. There is need for documentation of experience, for indigenization of content as well as of methodology. We should not lose sight of the fact that public administration operates within the larger framework of national as well as international politics and economics. The theories on Third World development and underdevelopment which we teach should, however, be preserved for they provide the methodology to enable us to examine and analyze the roots of socio-economic problems for which we must prescribe solutions.*

## **Introduction**

Somehow, we always start with Wilson's essay written exactly 100 years ago. Although examinations for the public service were held in China long ago and the Cameralists in Europe trained people for government jobs, public administration as a field of study started with Woodrow Wilson's call for a science of administration.

The starting point of Public Administration (PA) in the Philippines is inevitably Wilsonian, since the civil service system as we know it today is an American implant into our shores. Moreover, public administration as a field of study in the Philippines started with the call of an American survey mission in the fifties and subsequently taught by professors from the University of Michigan.

But to repeat a question raised by Tancangco and Aminuzzaman in the last National Conference on Public Administration in 1982,<sup>1</sup> must we end with Marini and the new PA? The new wave of redemocratization behooves us to rethink our premises and redirect our teaching and research into timely and relevant areas. Historical evolution and peculiarities of the Filipino psyche should prod us to look into our methods of teaching and subjects of research. Since PA is an applied field, it must not lose sight of the impact of the socio-economic-psychological milieu as well as the continued relevance of aspects of the discipline which must be taught or studied deeper.

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### The Paradigms We Teach

We can boast that we have not been left behind, as our teaching of public administration has kept up with the "in" themes in the West. Sadly, they come to us just before they are changed with newer themes.

Our students study the changing paradigms of public administration, from Wilson's politics/administration dichotomy to the new PA. Through the years, our themes have followed the Western trends - efficiency and economy and the universality of the principles of administration; behaviorism as an approach to understanding administrative situations; quantitative approaches to public policy studies and social research.

The Philippine context is explained in the applicability of the paradigms. We have understood Philippine PA as prismatic, following the Riggsian model, since Riggs got his inspiration from his experiences in Thailand and the Philippines and magnanimous values of social equity and client orientation are equally the concerns of Philippine PA.

Let this not be interpreted as saying that we have been theoretically unproductive. Some of us have done researches leading to possible grand theories. One such aspect of PA theory is the concept of the public which has been enlarged to mean the delivery of services to the people in alternative ways.<sup>2</sup> Cariño discussed public accountability in its different contexts<sup>3</sup> and operationalized the concept of people power.<sup>4</sup> Relating this to the broader issue of social justice, Ocampo<sup>5</sup> defined the concept as it applies to Philippine problems. Access to public services and its theoretical underpinnings were studied by Alfiler.<sup>6</sup> The politics/administration dichotomy is reexamined by Reyes<sup>7</sup> and Cariño.<sup>8</sup>

We can build up materials to lead to a theory of Philippine public administration. This has been done for *Pinoy* (private) management although the approach is simplistic. But theory building need not be one grand shot deal. It can come from a series of seminars where new ideas are thrown for discussion, in the manner that *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Filipino Psychology) has grown. Alas, one problem is that we have so much applied research we hardly have room for the basics; if we must build theory, we must have more basic researches.

### The Values We Impart

Whatever our flaws in theory building, we have made up for at least in the teaching of values for nation building. In the years of authoritarian-

ism when the bureaucracy was called upon to perform more political (in the sense of policy-making) roles, we used the regime's reorientation seminars to the goals of the new society to direct civil servants to the larger cause of commitment to the clientele.<sup>9</sup> We have taught ethics in the public service, if not in full-blown courses, in areas where we can.

However, while training programs have used more field exposure as learning techniques, our academic courses have been confined to classroom discussions.

We have also not been remiss in putting relevance to our course content. In the UPCPA, we teach models of development and seek to analyze our problems through alternative development theories, though, those also come from overseas. Unlike other (analytical) disciplines, however, we are called upon to act, to seek solutions. In some of our courses we discuss economic and social reforms beyond the customary. Frustration comes in reaching too few who are able to implement them. An optimistic note is seen in the increasing number of students graduating and getting promoted to positions of responsibility. But touching minds and reaching hearts are two different things, and we can only hope that in our attempts, the minds we mold direct their hearts to feel.

In the UPCPA, we have institutionalized a course on the Philippine bureaucracy from historical, sociological and psychological viewpoints. Conversely, member schools of the UP Management Education Council have been taking out Ecology of Administration as a required course, since ecological explanations are already enmeshed in several courses. It seems the question to ask is not whether ecology is taught, but whether enough of it is used in the analysis of bureaucratic processes and behavior.

How much of Filipino ecology can we infuse in our teaching as we continue to use American textbooks and continue to keep up with American trends? In budgeting, we taught Program Planning and Budgeting System (PPBS) just when it was losing its prestige in the United States. In Organization Development (OD), we use western style frankness in criticism. In Organization and Management (O & M), we are enamored by flat organizations when our psyche is used to deference to (hierarchical) authority.

We also have to look at our language of instruction. Can we really teach Filipino values and apply them to Philippine situations while we teach in a foreign tongue?

### The Political System We Move In

Amidst the *coups*, rumored and real, the present administration has remained afloat on the strength of continued popularity among the people who propelled it to power. If we were able to co-exist with the old regime and succeeded in introducing reforms via academic programs and extension services, there is no reason why we cannot use the present system to introduce needed change.

The present climate of redemocratization (a tide which, alas, seems to be less buoyant) calls for the teaching of new values. What should we now teach in PA? We may for instance resuscitate forgotten values like bureaucratic responsibility to the political leadership, just as we continue to teach public accountability and ethics. We may also explore avenues for greater citizen efficacy in bureaucratic decision-making.<sup>10</sup>

The more difficult aspect is in seeking solutions within the priorities of our government, to which we may have varying opinions, like in the oft-repeated theme of privatization. However, we may put this in the context of what Chancellor de Guzman calls a larger interpretation of the term "public," which can mean looking for alternative systems of delivery of services to the people.<sup>11</sup> We can have courses on government - Non-government Organizations (NGOs) interface in the delivery of basic services.

Putting PA clearer within the political realm and getting more people to be aware of issues which affect them are likewise important concerns. Courses on public enterprises and public debt are now being offered at the UCPA.

In research, de Guzman and Tancangco have spearheaded studies on the politics and administration of elections.<sup>12</sup> There are projects on the pipeline on the legislative, the presidency, and the administrative culture. The Local Government Center is still hot on the trail of autonomy and popular participation.

Where are all these going? There is need for documentation of experience, for indigenization of content as well as methodology. We must produce textbooks to share our experience and to reach out faster. We must explore answers for wider dissemination of research findings.

### Putting PA in the Larger Milieu

Moreover, what we should not lose sight of is the fact that public administration operates within the larger framework of national and interna-

tional politics and economics. The theories on Third World development which we teach should be continued, because they provide the methodology to enable us to examine and analyze the roots of socio-economic problems for which we must prescribe solutions. In many of our courses, we use material from colleagues in other disciplines which provide the same analytical framework.

But beyond studying and teaching is the action part. Many of us in the College are fortunate to be of assistance to members of the new legislature, as consultants, technical assistants and advisers. In such activities, we are able to play a direct hand in agenda setting and policy formulation, just as we have always lent a hand to government agencies. These activities, instead of extracting from us our expertise, actually provide us with experience which can enrich our own teaching and research. It is one avenue by which we are able to continue making PA dynamic.

To the learning and teaching functions must be added one more dimension - teaching and learning beyond the confines of the University, in sharing what we learn to others in academic and grassroots environments and getting, in return, lessons from the field. It is sad to note that we did more teaching outside when we were helping in institution-building than we are doing now. If the academic institutions have been built, there are still the masses waiting to be taught and to teach. We have to fashion new methods of teaching to reach out to them.

### Conclusion

Chancellor de Guzman, in his answer to the question "Is there a Philippine PA?" puts all these pieces succinctly together. He said:

There is still the continuing problem of achieving relevance and realism in the teaching of public administration in the country. The needs are the following: 1) getting faculty members who have both the academic qualifications and administrative experience; 2) the production and use of indigenous teaching materials; 3) the use of innovative teaching methods and techniques; and 4) the formulation of relevant models and analytical concepts.<sup>13</sup>

So much indeed, has to be done. Perhaps, in meeting some of these challenges, we will find that, one day, Philippine PA has become a full-blown concept. Perhaps, through our studies we will find that we have some other richer experiences to draw upon, that we won't even have to start with Wilson, after all.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Luzviminda G. Tancangco and Salahuddin Aminuzzaman, "Theory and practice of Public Administration: A Review of the State of the Art," paper presented at the Second National Conference on Public Administration, PICC, Manila, November 30-December 3, 1982.

<sup>2</sup>Raul P. de Guzman, "Is There a Philippine Public Administration?," *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. XXX, No. 4 (October 1986), pp. 375-382.

<sup>3</sup>Ledivina V. Cariño, "Administrative Accountability: A Review of the Evolution, Meaning and Operationalization of a Key Concept in Public Administration," Professorial Chair Lecture, Commission on Audit, 1983.

<sup>4</sup>Ledivina V. Cariño, "People Power and Government: Towards the Long-Term Efficacy of a Revolutionary Tool," paper presented at a DAP symposium on People Power, 1987.

<sup>5</sup>Romeo B. Ocampo, "Social Justice: An Essay on Philippine Social Ideology." *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. XV, Nos. 3 & 4, July-October 1971.

<sup>6</sup>Ma. Concepcion P. Alfiler, "Universalistic vs Particularistic Norms in Bureaucrat-Client Interaction in a Service Agency," Master's thesis submitted to the College of Public Administration, University of the Philippines, August 1975.

<sup>7</sup>Danilo R. Reyes, "Bureaucracy and Transition: Some Reflections on Redemocratization and Politics Administration Dichotomy," paper presented at the Third National Conference on Public Administration, Holiday Inn, Manila, September 29-30, 1987, also published in this issue of the *PJPA*.

<sup>8</sup>Ledivina V. Cariño, "Bureaucracy and Balance: Bureaucratic Power for Political Development," paper presented at the Third National Conference on Public Administration, Holiday Inn, Manila, September 29-30, 1987, also published in this issue of the *PJPA*.

<sup>9</sup>Ledivina V. Cariño, "The Politicization of the Philippine Bureaucracy: Corruption or Commitment?," *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, January 1985. Proserpina D. Tapales, "Assessing Authoritarian Rule on Government: What Efficiency? What Accountability?" paper presented at the Mid-Atlantic Conference of the Association for Asian Studies, Washington, D.C., 1985 and "The Philippine Bureaucracy in the Politics of Privatization," paper presented at the 16th Anniversary Conference of the Journal of Contemporary Asia, Quezon City, Philippines, December 9-11, 1986. Victoria A. Bautista, "Public Interest Perspective and A Neglected Dimension in the Study of Corruption," paper read in the Sociology Conference, Faculty Center, UP Diliman, September 7, 1983.

<sup>10</sup>Ledivina V. Cariño, "How Can We Use the Bureaucracy We Now Have? Issues as We Search for Means to Get the Public Servant Moving," paper presented at the Seminar on Modernizing the Bureaucracy sponsored by Solidarity, Manila, August 9, 1986.

<sup>11</sup>Raul P. de Guzman, "Is there a Philippine Public Administration?," *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup>Raul P. de Guzman and Luzviminda G. Tancangco, "Assessment of the 1986 Special Presidential Elections," paper presented at the Conference on the Current Challenge to Democracy in the Philippines: Upholding the Integrity of the Electoral Process, An Election Seminar Series, 1987.

<sup>13</sup>Raul P. de Guzman, "Is there a Philippine Public Administration?," *op. cit.*