

# **Towards a Theory of Praxis in Public Administration: Meeting Current Challenges of Redemocratization in the Philippines**

LUZVIMINDA G. TANCANGCO\*

*The paper explores the meaning of creative praxis, the transformative link between theory and practice, and its prospects for a conservative discipline like Public Administration. This was done through the aid of secondary data and information and actual experiences gathered in connection with the elections study series (the 1984, 1986, 1987-1988 Elections Project) conducted by the UP-CPA Research Team. The study reveals new areas for future exploration with creative praxis as a potentially powerful tool for analysis and guide to action.*

## **Introduction**

The relationship between theory and practice is one of the basic problematics in today's understanding of the social sciences in general and public administration, in particular. It has been observed that historical circumstances dictated a divergent pattern of development between theory and practice of Public Administration in this country.<sup>1</sup> Such a parallel course of development accounts partly for the slowing down of the process of indigenous theoretical formulation while limiting, at the same time, the relevance or impact of the study of public administration as an academic discipline to the practice of the profession.

The stance that theory and practice are inseparable not only underlines the link between the two, but also the manner of effecting their unity into a transformative process referred to as *praxis*. Consistent with this notion, this paper ventures to some of the concrete experiences encountered during the last five years in connection with the academic extension program and the election study series of the University of the Philippines-College of Public Administration (UP-CPA) as points of departure in evolving a theory of praxis in Public Administration. The 1987-1988 elections project, being the third in a series of election studies, has been designed to blend academic research, research utilization, and institution-building concerns into a single process. The intention is to combine in a systematic fashion, continuing research and academic interests with concrete efforts meant to maximize the project's influence on the on-going political change process.

---

\*Assistant Professor, College of Public Administration, University of the Philippines.

Using largely the experiences of the UP-CPA Elections Study Team, the task at hand involves an analysis of the theoretical and methodological framework that has been evolved through time. This paper will have already served an initial purpose if, after making known the gains, prospects and problems encountered by the project, a lively and healthy debate on the merits and pitfalls of alternative paradigms and research models in Public Administration will soon follow.

At this particular period of our history, the process of transition from authoritarianism to democracy offers profound challenges to students and practitioners of politics and public administration. The complexity of the mix of political, economic, and socio-cultural factors present in the Philippines today, exposes the inadequacy of established frameworks and methodologies to understand and explain them. Focusing the investigation on the electoral process and the relationship between the bureaucracy and democracy, the first challenge takes the form of finding an equally dynamic frame of analysis to be able to capture the dynamics of the transition process.

The second challenge consists of determining an appropriate entry point to enable the project to perform its role as a catalyzer of change. More specifically, this means active participation in the promotion of the integrity of the electoral process through dissemination of its research outputs on the administration of elections and political neutrality of the civil service among others, and through the organization of a string of nationwide politico-civic education campaign. The latter activity is part of the process of inculcating certain civic consciousness or ethical norms supportive of democracy starting with election officials, military personnel, and civil servants involved in the administration of elections.

Since the task of redemocratization calls for no less than concerted efforts among various groups and sectors, the third challenge calls for the operationalization of the collective responsibility principle in strengthening democratic institutions and processes. The idea is to explore and work out viable coordinating linkages with diverse groups and institutions, whereby talents, skills, and resources can be pooled together to hasten the process of redemocratization. This principle lends substance to the very essence of democracy i.e., the sharing of all kinds of power and resources in society - knowledge, political and economic - to ensure their responsible use and the equitable distribution of burdens as well as of benefits.

Bearing in mind the above challenges, this paper intends to present for further scrutiny the experiences and activities that provided empirical bases and, at the same time, stimuli to the evolution of a theory of praxis in Public Administration.

The succeeding section endeavors to discuss briefly the meaning of the terminologies used, the research framework, and the methodological postulates that guided the research team.

This is followed by a discussion of their application and continuous reformulation in the conceptualization and implementation of the 1984, 1986, and 1987 elections projects.

### **Clarification of Terms, Framework, and Methodological Approach**

#### *Meaning of Praxis*

Among the ancient Greeks, praxis denoted action itself. In the English language, the word practice is its closest translation while the use of the term praxis is reserved as a philosophical category.<sup>2</sup> For present purposes, it is the latter sense of the term that is adopted.

As a philosophical category, praxis belongs to a philosophy that seeks not only to interpret but also to transform reality. As such, it refers to a particular human activity that intends to understand, interpret, create or transform certain objects or realities as a product of certain human consciousness and concrete practices to meet particular objectives. Praxis thus "presents itself as material, transforming activity adapted to specific ends."<sup>3</sup>

Praxis is broader than practice in the sense that it goes beyond the latter's "common sense" point of view. Practice remains at the level of ordinary consciousness in so far as it treats everyday experience as a single event without theoretical content. Praxis, on the other hand, recognizes ordinary consciousness as a starting point and then elevates it to a philosophical type of consciousness. This elevation of ordinary consciousness is imperative because, as in every other spheres of knowledge, the essence is not established directly or immediately in appearance. Day-to-day practice serves to conceal that essence rather than reveal it. One should not be misled, however, that praxis ends at the level of idealist consciousness. By looking at the gap between social practice and social theory, the mystified form of such consciousness is recognized. Only by overcoming the restrictive and mystified aspects of philosophical consciousness can thought and action be united in consciousness.<sup>4</sup>

As praxis transcends the ordinary consciousness implied in a common sensical viewpoint, it also rejects the purely utilitarian dimension of practice.

This is because the criterion of utility implied in practice is limited to the satisfaction of individual needs. After all, practice is conceived simply as an individual activity whose subjective action is designed to satisfy an individual's practical needs on a day to day basis.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, praxis uses the notion of social utility as a gauge of the usefulness of theory as well as of practice. What becomes important therefore, is not utility per se because it may be limited to the satisfaction of individual needs but, more importantly, its consequence on the collectivity. Praxis, in this sense, becomes an objective and at the same time, a transformative activity in response to social problems and realization of a vision for humanity.

### *Praxis in Public Administration*

The nature of Public Administration as a scholarly discipline and as a profession breeds conservatism. Concerned primarily with the workings of the bureaucracy as a state apparatus in charge of running the day-to-day business of government, public administration has been associated with the preservation of the *status-quo*. Questions on the usefulness or even compatibility of such a dynamic concept as praxis to a conservative discipline like Public Administration then arises. To answer this, we may have to distinguish different forms of praxis. A distinction has to be made between a creative type of praxis and that of an imitative and bureaucratized form of praxis.

Vasquez suggests that the criterion for distinguishing between the above forms of praxis is the existence or absence in an extreme case of the following distinctive features of creative praxis. These are:

- 1) the indissoluble unity, in the concrete practical process, of objective and subjective internal and external elements;
- 2) the indeterminate nature of both the process and its results; and
- 3) the uniqueness of the product.<sup>6</sup>

Basic to the notion of creative praxis is the human being's ability to create and transform reality as a product of one's objective social practice and subjective consciousness. It is this trust in the capability and consciousness of human beings to transform their objective conditions and realities especially so when human actions conflict with existing economic, socio-cultural and political institutions, and therefore, take on a revolutionary form that makes praxis potentially powerful when correctly understood.<sup>7</sup> As a strategic route to the achievement of rational and humane social relations in a creative,

scientific unity of thinking and doing, creative praxis leaves much room for uncertain and unforeseen changes that may occur in the actual process which, in turn, affect the quality of the results. This recognition of the particularities of the mix of the factors that attended the process leads to an acceptance of the uniqueness of the product.

On the contrary, imitative praxis simply repeats or duplicates other acts such that all similar activities are governed by a single known law and thus remain within the set boundaries of past practices. Consequently, analogous products are produced. It is a second hand praxis that yields no new insights, nor provoke qualitative changes in the present reality much less transform anything in a creative sense.<sup>9</sup> There is no adventure nor risk in this kind of praxis.

Bureaucratized praxis is antithetical to creative praxis. Inasmuch as the tendency in a bureaucracy is to routinize processes and activities, praxis is reduced to a mechanical application of certain forms, laws and procedures derived from the past. So to the extent that formalism predominates, making formulas and standard operating procedures as its sole content, bureaucratized praxis is regarded as a degraded, inauthentic form of praxis.<sup>9</sup>

From the above, it becomes clear that excessive bureaucratization leads to a degraded type of *praxis*. The suggestion here is to balance concern for uniformity with innovation in handling diverse cases, to develop keen sensitivity to the objective differences in individual circumstances and to the nature of social problems. The reality is that even within the bureaucracy, clamor for change, flexibility, openness and innovations can be heard. This is an explicit call for creative praxis in public administration. In response, there are theoreticians and practitioners who are genuinely concerned with the issues of accountability and responsiveness in the government and are willing to institute concrete measures to integrate the masses in public administration and to ensure popular control of the bureaucracy. Theoretical activities and practical measures can therefore be united into a process of creative praxis in public administration. Needless to say, the philosophical consciousness of creative praxis that is definitely pro-people has to be diffused and inculcated to as many students and practitioners of public administration as possible.

Again, it is this trust in the capability of human beings to transform their objective reality that is the source of optimism to the applicability of praxis in public administration. Especially during this transition stage from authoritarian rule to democracy, theoretical activities about elections, and

inquiries into the relationships between politics and administration, between bureaucracy and democracy all assume relevance in the context of the Filipino people's struggle against authoritarianism. Studies on people power and its institutionalization in the civil service or in all the decision-making processes of government are regarded as part and parcel of the national democratic struggle. In the spirit of the 1986 People Power Revolution, the notion of creative praxis has much to offer. Theoretical and practical political struggles are integral parts of one and the same revolutionary process.<sup>10</sup>

### Quest for Appropriate Framework

Creative praxis calls for creative scholarship. This implies finding and developing appropriate analytical tools to increase not only the explanatory value of the product of the research process but also its value as a guide to certain ends.

Along this line, the proposition that reality is all process seems most promising.<sup>11</sup> Process is taken to mean as the totality of all "developments and interaction between human and natural worlds." Central to this conception of reality is an individual who is a socialized being whose private existence is dependent on his group, family and class relations; in short, the individual is an "ensemble of social relations."<sup>12</sup> Human society is seen to originate from the material conditions of existence - the totality of economic, social and political relations where a tense balance always exists between social consciousness and social structure. Reality as a totality is both an expression of the totality of action, thought and experiences bringing the contradictory elements of human history into a theoretical perspective. At the same time, reality is a process that represents the concrete unity of humanity and the natural world born in struggle to meet and overcome the constrictions of necessity.<sup>13</sup>

Such a framework that recognizes reality as a process in motion is, admittedly, more useful in analyzing the electoral process in the context of the on-going process of redemocratization in the Philippines. Its world view is broad enough and its categories are equally dynamic as the phenomena they seek to analyze. Its holistic perspective is capable of capturing the complex relationships among the actors involved in the process as their particular level of consciousness continue to bear upon the economic, political and socio-cultural structures of Philippine society. Complementing this processual approach are the methodological postulates of participatory research.

### *Participatory Research*

There seems to be lack of clarity with regard to the distinctive character of participatory research as opposed to academic research, policy research and consultancy. In Public Administration, the last three types are by far the most common.

Participatory research is an interactive process, a two-way process of learning, that begins right from the data gathering stage. The researcher, government functionaries and the people themselves are involved in the research process up to the utilization phase of the project outputs. Under this situation, the researchers do not relate as superior experts to election officials, National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) volunteers and the general public as well. In fact, the researcher's interaction with these groups in an informal way gives the former the greatest advantage of knowing a lot about them. Formulation of a research problem is done with all the participants based on actual experiences and concrete difficulties encountered in the process of administering elections or in organizing the people to get involved in poll watching in the interest of free, fair and honest elections. In this sense, the election studies start with a recognition of shared socio-political problem. Unlike in a purely academic research where the researcher alone decides the research area to be covered based on his/her own research interests. In participatory research, problem identification is a collective decision.

Participatory research takes the view from below. This makes explicit the scientific dimension vis-a-vis the ethico-political significance of this type of research.<sup>14</sup> Research which so far has been largely an instrument of dominance and legitimation of power by elites must be put to serve the interests of the dominated and the disadvantaged particularly the victims of oppression by the authoritarian ruler. Whereas policy researchers and consultancy activities are commissioned by certain government agencies to improve the delivery of standard public services or improve their organization and system of control over public programs and services, participatory research aims to use the research outputs for genuine popular empowerment. The concern of participatory research thus extends up to the utilization phase of the research findings.

The change of the *status quo* is adopted as the starting point of a scientific quest.<sup>15</sup> This makes participation research most appropriate to be applied to the study of elections at a time when the Filipino nation is struggling against Marcos' authoritarian rule or undergoing a process of transition from authoritarianism to democracy. This motto of changing the situation in order to be able to understand it, enables all those involved in the research

process to see the project as an integral part of emancipatory struggle against the forces of an oppressive authoritarian rule.

In line with the objective of changing the *status quo*, systematic study of elections and action are combined by taking into account the people's aspirations for freedom, justice and democracy. What is underlined here is the link between research and praxis. As an actively involved partner in the process, the researcher loses the privileged status of an expert, giving advice to election officials and NAMFREL organizers.

Thus, the researchers' participation in the research process is not in an advisory capacity as in a commissioned policy research or consultancy work trying to resolve practical administrative problems of the agency or institution. It is more of a collaborative role in diagnosing practical, administrative and political problems in preparing action plans and in making suggestions or specific measures to resolve problems identified collectively.

### **Initial Attempts at Praxis: Theoretical and Concrete Experiences Derived from the Elections Study Series**

#### *History of the Project*

Initially, the 1984 elections project was conceived within the research agenda of an umbrella organization for Public Administration in the Asia-Pacific Region known as the Eastern Regional Organization for Public Administration (EROPA) with Dr. Raul de Guzman, the Secretary General, providing seminal ideas to the project. The UP-CPA Research Team under Dr. Gabriel U. Iglesias took primary responsibility for an in-depth country study focusing on the 1984 elections as part of a comparative study of electoral systems participated in by 12 other countries in the Asia-Pacific Region and one country in Latin America.

EROPA's interest in elections as an area of inquiry in the Asian context has a historical significance. Elections, as a trademark of western-style liberal democracies, were institutionalized in most Asian countries as part of their colonial political heritage. After several decades of experiments with Western-style democracies, including the holding of periodic elections, a number of countries in the region succumbed to authoritarian rule and military *coup d' etats*. Authoritarian regimes, however, have not totally done away with elections as an avenue for eliciting manifest consent from the governed. Instead, elections are considered as a supplement rather than a substitute mechanism for people's participation in the complex process of governance.



Apparently, legitimacy is at the heart of elections as a form of political exercise even under a dictatorship. Although there has been a growing feeling that despite increased political participation (in elections, referenda, and plebiscites), the exercise might not be meaningful mainly because, increased participation by the public could be offset by growing political manipulation by the ruling elite.<sup>16</sup>

The general questions raised in EROPA's comparative study of elections address themselves to the issues of *appropriateness* and *effectiveness* of elections in Asian countries and to the problems of *accountability* and *social responsibility* of leaders to the people through elections. On the other hand, specific questions deal with freedom of choice afforded to the electorate, considerations of efficiency and effectiveness of procedural safeguards, and fairness of the "rules of the game" to protect the integrity of the ballot. These questions actually serve as "guidelines" to contextualize the study of elections in the Asian setting.

#### *1984 Elections Project*

In the case of the Philippines, the 1984 Elections Project focused on the May 11, 1984 *Batasang Pambansa* elections paid particular attention to the following areas of inquiry: a) administration of elections; b) political party system; c) the role of the bureaucracy in elections; d) political manipulation and violence; and e) the role of citizens' movement in elections.

Being the first in the series, documentation and research took a large chunk of the project's time. However, data gathering was integrated with the team's voluntary research service extended to NAMFREL. At that time, NAMFREL had embarked on a nationwide organizing activities to train volunteers for about 80,000 precincts for the 1984 electoral exercise. As a citizens' movement, it mobilized about 300,000 volunteers on election day. With NAMFREL relying mainly on voluntarism, collaboration with NAMFREL was worked out easily by the UP-Research Team by becoming a part of its Volunteer Research Team consisting of researchers from the University of the Philippines, De La Salle University and Assumption College. Through our NAMFREL involvement, the UP-CPA Team gained access to the wealth of election field data gathered by the NAMFREL volunteers throughout the country. Our main job was to classify and analyze them. In addition, we also participated in the de-briefing sessions among the NAMFREL field coordinators to generate additional data or verify available ones.

Immersion to empirical data served as eye-openers to detect relevant particularities of human observations, actions and motivations all wrapped in reported election events. Rather than ignore their distinctive characteristics

which could be done by classifying them neatly according to existing categories, these were examined in greater detail. In the process, we saw the need to redefine our pre-conceived categories to capture with closer accuracy the nature and dynamics of the events. Refinements in our definitions of abstract concepts like free, fair, orderly and honest elections have been discovered. Since the objective of the Research Team was to assess the integrity of the electoral process, specific indicators were identified to operationalize such abstract concepts and values. To illustrate this abstraction-concretization process, reference can be made to the operational definitions of the following criteria that were developed along with their specific indicators:

*Free.* The criteria refers to the public atmosphere that allows the full expression of political views and the unhampered exercise of the inherent right to vote or not to vote.

*Fair.* Fairness means equality in opportunities afforded to all participating parties/candidates in promoting their respective political platforms or candidacies throughout the election period.

*Orderly.* The criteria refers to the systematic and efficient management of the elections by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC), at the national level and by the Citizen's Elections Committee (CEC) and the Board of Canvassers (BOC) at the local level.

*Honest.* This criteria involves the unswerving commitment of the main actors in the electoral process to abide by the letter and spirit of established election rules. This criterion is distinguished from the criterion of orderliness. When the rules violated refer to administrative matters, the criterion of orderliness is used; when there is deliberate violation of administrative rules, the criterion of honesty is applicable. Honesty is broader than just being clean. It assumes a value judgment and connotes a high respect for democratic processes and their outcomes.

Based on the above definitions, specific indicators were identified at each phase of the electoral process. (See Appendix A) To indicate significant differences in the magnitude and patterns of electoral fraud and irregularities in the 13 regions of the country, an analytical frame for assessing the integrity of the electoral process and its impact on the results was also designed. (See Appendix B)

From the above, it was surmised that working with regional field data coupled with library research made the research activity a creative and transformative process. There was an element of adventurism as events

continued to unfold throughout the process. Given the context of the time to embark on a political research focusing on such a highly sensitive area as elections, certainly entailed risks. Believing in the cause of free, fair, orderly and honest elections, the research activity for the team members became more than just an academic exercise. It represented active and concrete participation in the national democratic struggle during the last two years of Marcos' authoritarian rule. For this reason, our research outputs have been used as references for the preparation of manuals or other training materials for NAMFREL volunteers or in political education seminars and public forums conducted in preparation for the 1986 special presidential elections.

Conscious of its disciplinary affiliation, one area of inquiry where the 1984 project took special interest was the relationship between the bureaucracy and the politics of democracy in the Philippines.<sup>17</sup> Since one principle that defined the complex relationship between politics and administration was the notion of political neutrality, an investigation of this principle in the Philippine context was done at the empirical and conceptual levels. The reason was obvious. The widening schism between the existing conceptual and legal meaning of political neutrality on one hand, and actual practices in the Philippine bureaucracy on the other, was so glaring that civil servants themselves were faced with a moral and political dilemma. This is because observance of political neutrality or partisanship among civil servants affects in a material way the fairness of the electoral contest. As civil servants find themselves locked in a problematic situation, they tend to look up to the academe to clarify the issue and to seek guidance as to what they could do. Since open advocacy of partisanship in the civil service was particularly observed during the Marcos authoritarian regime, the analysis was fully anchored in its historical context.

### *1986 Elections Project*

The 1986 elections project focused on the February 7, 1986 special presidential and vice-presidential elections. The second in a series of UP-CPA election studies, the 1986 project was expanded to include research and politico-civic education campaign components.

Whereas the utilization aspect of the 1984 elections project was largely dependent on NAMFREL and individual civil servants, the 1986 project had deliberately incorporated the utilization component in its research project design. Such a decision was greatly inspired by the felt need to reorient the civil servants and the general public into the democratic way of life after the end of Marcos' 20-year strong-man rule. Aside from the continuing academic interest on the elections nurtured by the project staff, it was increasingly recognized that part of the redemocratization process was the inculcation of

certain values and consciousness supportive of democracy. Thus the politico-civic education component of the 1986 project was a direct translation of the staff's commitment to contribute to the politico-civic education of the Filipino people as the nation charts new directions toward redemocratization.

The 1986 project was immensely interesting because of the historic and theoretical importance of the 1986 snap presidential elections. Nowhere in the history of Philippine elections that the basic democratic tenet of people's sovereignty had been clearly demonstrated than in the 1986 presidential elections. With the invincibility of the ruling party's political machinery, it became important to document how people power triumphed in the end through collective mobilization in an active but non-violent struggle. The people have succeeded to install directly the first woman President of the Republic of the Philippines.

Theoretically, the February 1986 political exercise provided a unique test case of the generally held thesis that under a dictatorship, no dictator ever loses in an election. This is because the dictator not only determines the date and draws up the "rules of the game" but also implements and interprets them. Electoral protests and disputes are supposed to be resolved through legal channels he himself has created. Likewise, public resources at his command can be marshalled for partisan ends with no effective breaks to check abuses. While these were all observed and documented in their most naked forms during the 1986 elections, people power defied to bring the argument to its logical conclusion. The 1986 polls provided a rallying point and an organizational force to unleash the emergent people power.

Apparently, the Philippine experience in the 1986 polls has shown the limitation of the existing theory of demonstration election which draws empirical support from the political experiences of other countries particularly those in Latin America. The 1986 project succeeded - adding its theoretical contributions to the existing body of literature through the study of Philippine elections. Indeed, the historical specificities of the 1986 elections rendered certain accepted generalizations as an oversimplification of the Philippine case. By avoiding scripted and mechanical analysis characteristic of imitative scholarship, new insights and new realities can be explained or discovered.

*Operationalization of the Collective Responsibility Principle.* During the implementation of the politico-civic education component of the project, it was seen fit to involve the COMELEC, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) primarily in the education campaign. The choice was logical because the targetted participants for the string of regional seminars were the election officials, teachers, enlisted men and civil servants who were directly involved in the administration of

elections. The rationale behind the decision to start the education campaign with the people directly in charge of electoral administration was to maximize the project's impact for the succeeding electoral exercises (e.g., the May 1987 Congressional Elections). Indeed, redemocratization involves the cultivation of appropriate working ethics and behavioral norms supportive of efforts to nourish back democracy in the Philippines.

After an acceptance by these agencies that the promotion of the integrity of the electoral process was a shared responsibility, an inter-agency working group was formed for the purpose. The UP-CPA prepared the concept paper detailing the objectives, activities and the cost sharing scheme among the participating agencies. These are the COMELEC, AFP, DECS and the UP-CPA. The COMELEC took the lead role. It was responsible for setting the schedule, authorization of the holding of the seminar, provision of supplies and materials for the seminar papers. The UP-CPA prepared the articles and put them together in a book of readings; the team also provided secretariat support to the inter-agency working body. For its part, the AFP made available its transportation and communication facilities to arrange the 11 regional seminars attended by 1,469 participants from various regions of the country. The DECS and the regional schools of Public Administration who are at the same time members of the Association of Schools of Public Administration in the Philippines (ASPAP) provided for the local venues, helped in food expenses and organized local secretariat for the regional seminars.

The experience was rewarding to all the organizers and participants. For the COMELEC and other agencies helping in the discharge of election duties, the regional seminars provided enlightening dialogues on how to improve inter-agency coordination to avoid inefficiency, a condition conducive to the commission of electoral fraud and irregularities. For the UP-CPA team, the seminars were also productive being a part of the data gathering strategy.

The topics expounded by speakers drawn from different agencies reflected their own roles and expertise in the electoral process. The topic "Election and Public Accountability: Upholding the Integrity of the Electoral Process," provided the theoretical framework for the seminar. This was taken care of by the representative from the UP-CPA. The speaker from the DECS tackled the role of teachers as reflected in the topic, "The Teacher as Trustees of Public Morality in the Electoral Process." The speaker from the military establishment elucidated on "The Military as Guarantor of Free and Honest Elections," while the representative from the Civil Service Commission dealt on "The Notion of Political Neutrality of the Civil Service." The open forum uniformly followed the lectures. The open forum proved to be very valuable in terms of clarifying administrative issues pertaining to the May 11, 1987 Congressional elections as raised by the participants from the DECS, the military and the civil service.

One major lesson from this collaborative endeavor was the realization of the advantage of a holistic approach in dealing with any problem or activity. It was candidly admitted that there was indeed an acute need for all field and local officials to conduct more informative dialogues to identify common problems, clarify the relationship of their functions and the services they render, and to promote a feeling of camaraderie while at the same time elevating their own consciousness as public servants.

### *1987-1988 Elections Project*

This project, being the third in a series of UP-CPA election studies had the advantage of consolidating in a systematic manner the continuing research/theoretical concerns with concrete plan of action. Such integration of theory and practice has the potential of maximizing not only the project's resources but also its impact especially during this critical period of coping with the legacy of authoritarianism and the challenge of redemocratization in the Philippines.

Enriched by the substantive and administrative experiences gained from the earlier studies - the proposed 1987-1988 elections project was better equipped to provide stimulus for advances in the frontiers of knowledge on the theory and practice, nature and dynamics of Philippine elections, politics, and public administration which, when put together, provide valuable data base for future policies, legislations, innovations and actions leading to popular empowerment. In the spirit of cooperation and mutual recognition of our collective responsibility to evolve a genuine workable democratic system, the implementation of the project utilizes the institutional linkages built by the project staff through the years. One lesson learned from the past which guides the present strategy for implementation is the knowledge of the inadequacy of a fragmented or highly compartmentalized approach in handling public affairs.

With the formation of an inter-agency working group on the initiative of the UP-CPA Elections Research Team to assist the COMELEC in the promotion of free, clean, orderly, and honest elections, the advantages of an integrated approach have been made manifest. Among these are: clearer delineation of responsibilities that avoid confusion; greater familiarity with the electoral process especially the gray areas which are often cited as sources of indiscretion and violations; on-the-spot resolution of problems raised during dialogues with all concerned, and the development of a collegial atmosphere and feeling of camaraderie among officials from various government agencies. Aside from the support already being extended by the central office of the COMELEC, Civil Service Commission (CSC), DECS, the AFP, and their regional field offices to the UP Elections Research Team in the implementation

of the regional politico-civic education component of the 1986 elections project, institutional commitments by other agencies was sought in the implementation of the 1987-1988 project.

The active participation of government instrumentalities and schools of public administration at the local/regional level in the research proper and research utilization components of the project was designed precisely to promote democratization of research skills as part of institution-building at the grassroots level, and full-scale dissemination and utilization of research findings to the general public. All these aimed to contribute in the inculcation of desired values and ethical norms supportive of genuine democracy.

Hence, the significance of the project inhered from its decisive effort to: 1) foster closer linkages between academics and practitioners on the one hand, and among government agencies at the local/regional level on the other, for better coordination of efforts in promoting free, fair, orderly and honest elections, and encourage more active participation of academics in the on-going national democratic struggle of the Filipino people; 2) aid regional institutions in building research skills through extensive documentation and analysis of the 1987 congressional and 1988 local elections and their implications on: a) the workings of the civilian and military bureaucracy; b) institutionalization of people power in the decision-making processes and service delivery systems; and 3) maximization of the utilization of empirical and historical election data by providing systematic data to interested parties and legislators as our contribution to the objective of equalizing political opportunities in this country which remained up to the present as a domain of the elites.

The project's emphasis on election and the relationship between politics and administration becomes understandable as it opens up wider democratic space that prevents violent political change. Equally important though is the realization that the kind of democracy we all hope to rebuild should, in form and substance, be more than the *status quo ante*. It should be one whose contours and elements embody the salient lessons and experiences of the Filipino people's struggle against the dictatorial regime and all forms of oppression.

Such synthesis between academic research and active participation in the political change, processed the well-knit relations among the following: 1) research areas to be covered; 2) research utilization scheme; and 3) institution-building of regional schools of public administration and field offices of certain government agencies. The above features of the project brings into sharp focus the trilogy of the politics-administration-people relationship which is central to a democratic society.

It is also worthwhile raising the issue of foreign funding to sensitive areas of research. It is an open secret that most researchers done by the university people or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) bank on foreign sources of funding like foundations.

For the last two completed projects, we have not encountered major problems with funding institutions in so far as orientation and determination of key areas to be covered are concerned. If ever, their only form of intervention is in the determination of the amount of the grant. While this affects the project coverage, the crucial point is that we maintain the prerogative to determine our priorities given the available budget. What we do is use the grant as seed money to generate local resources in order to implement what we have set to do.

It is this struggle for self-reliance and a good sense of independence that despite our wholesome and harmonious relation with foreign foundations, we still prefer that local research funds could be made available. Most foreign sources could still be tapped to supplement them in view of the scarce resources we have and the competing demands for them. What is crucial here is how to convince most of our legislators and government bureaucrats to pool resources together for shared purposes. It takes more patience, resourcefulness and morale boosting to carry on with this business of the inter-agency activities.

### Conclusion

For a conservative discipline like public administration, what are the prospects of evolving such a dynamic theory of praxis? Guided by this query, this paper has attempted to explore the meaning of praxis in terms of concrete experiences and theoretical activities undertaken in connection with the elections study series. The process of praxis could be a long uphill battle so with the completion of a widely accepted theory of praxis in public administration.

Keeping theory and practice united in an extricably complex process of creative praxis poses continuous challenges. The experiences and theoretical activities described in this paper are still very meager to warrant conclusive statements; but for the adventurous, they may be useful for exploratory purposes.

At a time when the country is in a process of transition from authoritarianism to democracy, the notion of creative praxis is a potentially powerful tool for analysis and guide to action.



### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Luzviminda G. Tancangco and Salahuddin Aminuzzaman, "Theory and Practice of Public Administration in the Philippines: 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>Adolf Sanchez Vasquez, *The Philosophy of Praxis* (New Jersey: Merlin Press, 1977), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 170-171.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 203; 225.

<sup>7</sup>A. Swingewood, *Marx and Modern Social Theory* (London: The McMillan Press, Ltd., 1975), p. 42.

<sup>8</sup>Vasquez, *The Philosophy...*, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 211-212.

<sup>10</sup>G. Novack, *An Introduction to the Logic of Marxism* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971), p. 29.

<sup>11</sup>L. Clark and L. Lange, *The Lexism of Social and Political Theory: Women and Reproduction from Plato to Nietzsche* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1979), p. 101.

<sup>12</sup>Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*.

<sup>13</sup>L. Clark and L. Lange, *The Lexism...*, *op.cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>14</sup>Maria Mies, *Towards a Methodology of Women's Studies* (The Hague: ISS, November 1979), pp. 6-7.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>16</sup>E. Etzioni-Halevy, *Political Manipulation and Administrative Power: A Comparative Study* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979).

<sup>17</sup>Luzviminda G. Tancangco, "Bureaucracy and Democracy in the Philippines: A Historical Analysis of the Notion, Practice, and Political Neutrality of the Civil Servants," Manila, 1986.

## Appendix A

## Indicators of Criteria Used by Electoral Phase

<i>PRE ELECTION</i>	<i>FREE</i>	<i>FAIR</i>	<i>ORDERLY</i>	<i>HONEST</i>
Procurement of Election Paraphernalia	-independence of COMELEC to discharge its constitutional duties	-representation of all parties concerned in the whole procedure	-realistic estimate of paper requirement	-absence of loopholes in the rules on procurement
	-accessibility of records to the general public for scrutiny	-observance of strict impartiality of the COMELEC	-established procedures of procurement where all interested parties are represented	-enforcement of the results of public bidding to the best advantage of COMELEC
			-timely release of budget so that COMELEC can prepare all requisite forms and materials for the procurement at the lowest cost.	-no connivance with suppliers
			-improved procurement process to achieve economy and efficiency	
Printing of Election Form	-do-	-do-	-printing subject to public bidding	-no overpricing of supplies
			-system of monitoring the printing of ballots, election returns and other election forms	-no switching of excess ballot allocation from one place to another
			-identification of printing presses with capability to deliver on time	-no irregularities in execution of job contracts
			-destruction of printing plates upon completion of all printing jobs in the presence of representatives of all political parties to ensure that no additional unauthorized printing will be done thereafter	-no unaccounted reserve ballots
			-the same serial number printed simultaneously on all sheets of election returns	
			-scheduled delivery and payment of printing job	

Distribution of election paraphernalia	-no snatching of election paraphernalia before the casting of ballots	-do -	-timely delivery of election forms and paraphernalia to all polling places	-no deliberate withholding of election paraphernalia
	-provision of adequate security measures for those in charge of distributing election paraphernalia	-representation of all political parties and distribution and shipment of election forms and materials	-well-planned shipping operations (i.e. for packaging, shipment, reception at determined destination)	-no artificial shortage of election paraphernalia
	-provision of security measures during the movement of election forms and documents (i.e., from the custodians to polling places to the offices of the registrars and city municipal treasurers and board of canvassers.)		-well documented report of deliveries and reception of election forms and paraphernalia	-no reports of unaccounted or excessive forms and other election paraphernalia
			-systematic planning and timely distribution of election forms to obviate improvisation of sensitive election forms and documents	-no intentional separate numbering of accountable forms (i.e., ballots, election returns and corresponding envelopes paper seals and tally boards)
Registration	-absence of intimidation of registrants and BEI members	-representation of all parties concerned	-adequacy of training of people in charge of registration of voters	-no unauthorized use of registration forms
	-absence of undue influence or pressure of barangay and other local officials or teachers	-impartiality of BEI members	-availability of precinct maps indicating territorial jurisdiction of voting centers	-strict enforcement of registration procedures rules and regulations
	-encouragement and support given to citizen's groups to serve as watchdogs during registration days		-availability of registration paraphernalia on days of registration	-no interference of barangay officials in the registration of voters
	-sufficient public information on registration schedule and requirements		-comfortable atmosphere in suitable places for registration	-no padding of voters' list
			-strict adherence to set rules and regulations	-no scrambling of names of voters
			-adequate period and procedure within which to decide challenges on applicants for registration	-no transfer of names of voters to other precinct without authority
Publication of Voters' list	-provision of voters' list to all requesting parties/candidates		-posting of the voters' list in several public places within the	-no deliberate removal of the voters' list already posted

			precincts to inform voters as to where they will cast their votes	-no deliberate alteration or tampering with the posted list
Cleaning Up of Voters List	-absence of pressures from politicians and superiors on the BEI members to clean-up voters' lists	-reasonable period within which to decide exclusion/inclusion cases	-no deliberate attempt to delay decisions on inclusion/exclusion proceedings	-no intended vagueness in the rules and procedures to leave rooms for legal maneuvering by the ruling party
Giving due course to candidacies	-encourage all interested aspirants, political groups/organizations to apply for registration to obtain juridical personality	-formulation of liberal criteria in the processing of applicants for registration as political party	-expeditious disposal of disqualifications cases	-no deliberate withholding of the implementation of decisions and disqualification cases
		-outright rejection or repeal of criteria which are tailored for or against persons/groups/organizations	-timely implementation and objective monitoring of the implementation of decision of the COMELEC in disqualification (i.e., immediate act of cancellation of names of disqualified candidates from the certified list of candidates)	
Political Campaign	-no intimidation -absence of private armies/goons -conducive atmosphere for public debates -strict enforcement of the firearm and liquor bans	-equality of media coverage -equal access to public resources -discriminate and impartial use of powers and prerogatives related to elections to prevent giving advantage to the party in power	-realistic campaign period -reasonable and systematic monitoring of campaign expenses -effective implementation to enforce rules on appointment, promotion, salary increases for some government personnel and creation of new offices and implementation of public works projects	-absence of black propaganda/mud-slinging -discussion of campaign issues -no deliberate effort to distort facts nor deceive electorate -coming up of political campaign under the guise of implementation of government programs and projects. -no discrimination in the enforcement of rules and regulations intended to give equal access to media -strict enforcement of the requirement for political parties to render reports on their electoral expenditures

<i>ELECTION PROPER</i>	<i>FREE</i>	<i>FAIR</i>	<i>ORDERLY</i>	<i>HONEST</i>
Casting of Votes	-no intimidation/harrasment of voters, BEI members and watchers -no violence among members and supporters of political parties -no violent encounters between government troops and the NPAs -ability of COM-ELEC to respond immediately in case of emergency in certain critical areas -capability of AFP to provide adequate security to voters, candidates and election officials	-impartiality of BEI members	-posting of voters' list at the door of the polling place -availability of election paraphernalia -distribution of ballots following sequential numbering -adherence to the rules intended to preserve secrecy of the ballot -strict enforcement by the BEI of peace and order within the polling place and 30 meter radius area.	-no vote buying by candidates -no vote selling by voters -no diluting of indelible ink -no transfer or substitution of election officials without cause -no ballot box stuffing -no switching of ballots -no carrying or of copying paraphernalia to duplicate ballots cast by voters -non-permission of voters pretending to be illiterate or incapacitated -non-announcement of the progress of voting
Counting of Votes	-no intimidation/harrasment of voters, BEI members and watchers	-presence of watchers during counting	-recording of votes in tally board and election returns in full view of the public -BEI members reading ballots assuming a position that allows watchers to read ballots without touching them -complete accomplishment of the data required in election returns -faithful recording in the minutes of any significant event that transpired during the proceedings.	-no misreading of ballots -objective appreciation of ballots marked spoiled ones; -accurate tallying of votes in the tally board and election returns

Transmittal	:	:	-accompaniment of ballot boxes and election returns by candidates, political parties and public	:	-delivery of ballot boxes	:	-no switching of ballot boxes and election returns while in transit
	:	:		:	-proper sealing and authenticated voting	:	
	:	:		:	-accomplishment of adequate security measures of ballot box	:	-no deliberate use of other election materials which are not prescribed by COMELEC
	:	:		:	-provision of adequate transportation and security for ballot box while in transit	:	
-----							
POST ELECTION	:	<i>FREE</i>	<i>FAIR</i>	:	<i>ORDERLY</i>	:	<i>HONEST</i>
-----							
Canvassing of Election Returns	:	-media access to canvassing	-representation of all interested parties during the canvass	:	-tally board in public view	:	-no tampering with election returns
	:	-no intimidation/harrasment of BOC members/and watchers	-sending of due notices on time and venue of canvass	:	-speedy completion of canvassing	:	-no switching of election returns in the place where election returns are kept during canvass
	:		-issuance of the due process in resolving pre-proclamation controversies	:	-adherence to rules in the examination of election returns for exclusion/inclusion during canvassing	:	-no arbitrary change or replacement of board of canvassers
	:		-adherence to time allotted for resolving pre-proclamation controversies	:	-adherence to the procedures in canvassing contested returns	:	-non-tolerance of dilatory tactics employed by counsels of candidates to buy time for commision of fraud
	:			:	-adoption of internal procedures in the systematic canvassing of votes i.e., by place and sequence of precinct number rather than random selection of returns	:	-no canvassing in secret places
	:			:		:	-no deliberate cut-off of light facilities
	:			:		:	-no preparation of certificate of canvass and statement of votes in rooms which exclude watchers and the public
	:			:		:	-no deliberate omission of supporting statement of votes

---

Proclamation	: -no intimidation	: -observance of rules	: -expeditious reso-	: -no grabbing of
	: nor harrasment	: and procedures in	: lutions of pre-	: proclamation
	: of winning	: pre-proclamation	: proclamation	
	: candidates after	: cases	: controversies	
	: proclamation			
		: -automatic disquali-		
		: fication of commis-		
		: sioners in the dis-		
		: position of cases in		
		: which he harbors		
		: sympathy or bias		
		: towards any of the		
		: party litigants.		

---

## Appendix B

## An Analytical Frame for Assessing Electoral Performance

<i>DESIRED</i>	<i>TOLERABLE</i>	<i>INTOLERABLE</i>	<i>ABUSIVE</i>
A desired situation is one where the conduct of electoral process is considered free, fair, orderly and honest. When these criteria are approximated to the fullest, the ideal conditions for the political exercise are thus obtained. At the same time, it is an accepted reality that contending parties in any electoral contest attempt to seek advantage over their rivals. Such attempt may result to commission of minor offenses which are generally expected to happen and with hardly discernible impact on the results. Limits to the commission of electoral offenses, and total absence or minimal incidents of violence are ensured by adherence to the established rules and respect for people's consent. Under this situation, the electoral process serves as a meaningful vehicle to ascertain the collective political will in leadership selection.	A tolerable situation is characterized by sporadic reports of suspected and actual violations of electoral rules which tend to undermine the criteria of free, fair, orderly and honest elections. The degree and nature of reported irregularities and violence are kept within certain tolerable limits though. Under this situation, aspirants display more or less equal capability to commit irregularities and coercion. The relative equality of capability and opportunity to violate electoral rules serves as countervailing forces as they check on each other's abuses. In the same cases, it is possible that one party enjoys structural advantages over the other particularly the party in power but actual and indiscriminate use of such advantages are restrained by the leaders' own sense of fair play, his respect for the rule of law and genuine belief on people's consent. Self-imposed restraints dictate that electoral violations and violence do not exceed the clearly drawn line of	An intolerable situation is one where the criteria of free, fair, orderly and honest elections are clearly violated. The electoral contest is indubitably lopsided in favor of the party in power for its control over the formulation of the rules of the game, access and concentration of information at the top level and its monopoly of the use of force. By exploiting all the structural advantages it possesses in its bid for power, the ruling party conveniently sets aside the legal and institutional safeguards which they themselves established. Rampant reports on the use of military personnel and para-military units, positive enticements and bribes by the dominant party constitute abuses in the use of position, power and resources that can effectively preclude the people's exercise of free choice. The gravity of reported and substantiated frauds are sufficient grounds to cast serious doubts on the results as true reflection of the	An abusive situation is one where the criteria of free, fair, orderly and honest elections are blatantly discarded. The prominence of the party in power in the entire governmental structure and its monopoly of force gave license to its candidates to win the elections at any cost. Rampant and grave reports of violence, fraud and irregularities mark this type of electoral process. Threat and intimidation along with the brazenness of abuses committed by the ruling party offend the basic sensitivities of the general public. A predetermined victor must win at all cost. Given the above, the essence of the electoral process is reduced to a farcical political exercise and makes a mockery of the people's right of suffrage. Elections, therefore, are considered a dismal failure in the sense that electoral results represent a complete subversion of the people's consent. In such situation, the crisis of consensus, which elections aim to resolve, worsens.



<p>: tolerance. In terms        : of its impact        : coercion of the        : dominant block and        : irregularities com-        : mitted by them are        : not sufficient to        : affect the results        : materially.        : Given the the above        : conditions the        : electoral process is        : considered as a        : workable selection        : yielding results that        : provides a tolerable        : facade of collective        : will and people's        : consent.</p>	<p>: people's will.        : Under this        : situation, the        : electoral process is        : regarded as a        : manipulative device        : to manufacture        : consent while the        : results are rendered        : as highly        : questionable.</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------