Reorganization in the United States and the Philippines: Same Basic Problem

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> A review of Harold Seidman and Robert Gilmour, *Politics, Position, and Power: From the Positive to the Regulatory State,* Fourth Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

All over the world governmental reorganization has always been thought of as a panacea by bureaucrats and politicians. Seidman and Gilmour's now classic work, *Politics, Position and Power*[1] tries to provide an inside view of the realities in the conduct ·of organizing new programs and reorganizing existing programs in all branches of the US government.

The book is a contemporary study since the data Seidman and Gilmour used have been updated, as far as the previous Reagan administration's attempts at organizing and restructuring is concerned. In addition, the book has been expanded to include the influence of the judiciary on the dynamic organizational system of government. The book is heuristic because current or future organizers and reorganizers could learn from the lessons and prescriptions Seidman and Gilmour provide, especially the guide questions on the evaluation of organization design and the authors' recognition of "the influence of the judiciary and the 'fourth branch' of government."

The theoretical bases of the authors blended well with their actual experience in and factual findings on US governmental bureaucracies. In historically evaluating reorganization attempts of different US presidents and sessions of Congress, Seidman and Gilmour have been successful in discerning the impact of the evolution of administrative thought on reorganization. This included correlations with the politics-administration dichotomy issue and awareness of the Reagan policy shift from major structural reforms to procedures and control of regulations.

Politics, Position, and Power expands the narrow understanding of students 'of public organizations that administrative reorganizations are only dealt with, by, and for the executive branch of government. The book accomplishes this by expounding on the roles of the legislature and judiciary, the two other autonomous branches of government. Moreover, the authors exposed the existence of a "fourth branch of government" and subgovernments composed of interest groups, bureaucratic cultures and personalities, administrative agencies, advisory entities, and intergovernmental bodies.[2]

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I would like to concentrate my critique of Seidman and Gilmour's work to the lack of consideration for the role of organizational humanist theory, specifically organization development (OD) as a reorganization tool. In their introduction, it seemed that Seidman and Gilmour were aware of the importance of organizational humanism to organization and reorganization since they included a chapter on organizational culture and personality. But, the chapter does not go deeply into the application of OD into governmental reforms. In ending the book, the authors even implied that "decisions should not be governed solely by the application of traditional organization doctrines" (Seidman and Gilmour 1986: 338). After stating this, Seidman and Gilmour's work only confirms the earlier studies of Loius Brownlow, et al., in "Report of the President's Committee on Administrative Management," Lewis Merriam's "Concept of Reorganization," and other organization theorists. These works provide critical lessons for future structural reorganizers such as: (1) the curtailment of functions and duties, (2) continuous reorganization, (3) executive control, and (4) modernization of contemporary management (Brownlow et al.: 90-95 and Merriam: 101- 106). Brownlow, et al. and Merriam's "lessons" were much like the concluding observations of Seidman and Gilmour previously discussed in the conclusion of the book.

A common denominator among all the three works, including Seidman and Gilmour's was the author's concentration on structures and functions. These were influences of the orthodox or classical school administrative thought which as explained earlier, neglected the importance of the individual and groups in the organization. Denhardt makes a similar observation in saying that,

> Policy analysts, though recognizing the increased role of bureaucracy in policy making, *concentrate on the scientific assessment* of the impact of established or proposed policies while suggesting implementation strategies that return directly to the days of administrative management (Denhardt 1984: 151). (*Italics supplied*).

Seidman and Gilmour should have taken into consideration organizational humanist techniques based on successful incremental and holistic application confirmed by numerous human relation school studies (Proehl 1980 and Nicolas 1982: 531-542). If OD is to be successful in integrating comprehensively a national reorganization plan, it should take into account the actual interrelationships in government organization, i.e., special interest group and the media forming a "fourth branch."

I must admit that there is really an inherent difficulty in applying organization humanist theory and hence the predominance of the more maneuverable orthodox theories. Seidman, Gilmour, Brownlow, Merriam, and Gulick were not only works "forced" to concentrate on traditional management principles. There are numerous other works on organizing and reorganizing government that have experienced the same difficulty of integrating OD with traditional prescriptions of structures, processes and functions advanced by the classical school.

July

In the last turnover of government in the Philippines, the Presidential Commission on Government Reorganization (PCGR) was mandated to complete massive bureaucratic reforms with "Five Guiding Principles" (Gonzalez and Deapera 1987: 257-278). These principles of Philippine reorganization were as contradictory as the principles Herbert Simon lambasted as mere "proverbs of administration." The same difficulty was experienced in coming up with a manageable bureaucracy which I attribute to the same "disease" that plagued governmental reorganizers in the United States: heavy reliance on orthodox dogma. A reexamination of the PCGR principles of privatization, decentralization, cost-effectiveness, and efficiency of frontline services shows inherent defects similar to those exposed by Simon in the orthodox principles of specialization, unity of command, span of control, and organization by purpose, process, clientele, and place (Simon: 164-180).

A common argument used against OD is its "application constraints in the public sector." Some public administrationists claim that OD is better suited to the business sector where it has reaped praises for its success. Golembiewski enumerates these constraints on public sector applications of OD in his book entitled *Humanizing Public Organizations* (1985: Chapter I): (1) *Structural constraints*, e.g., multiple access to multiple authorities, variety of interests, and reward structures, command linkages and competing identifications/affiliations, resulting in weak linkages between political and career levels; (2) *Habit constraints*, e.g., limited delegation and layering, legalities and legalism, need for security or secrecy, procedural regularity and caution, and sense of the "professional manager"; and (3) *Management-level constraints*, e.g., differences in the ecology of "games," differences in dominant conditions, and differences in characteristic cultures.

Other writers simply contend that public bureaucracies have an "organizational imperative" which dictate that government employees advocate for the status quo, i.e., systems maintenance:

> Pressures within society, they argue, are forcing the development of norms related to organizational membership and role which *run counter to the humanistic values underlying most OD approaches* (Hart and Scott 1978: Part I). *(Italics supplied.)*

Other experts on public administration still argue that organization relations theorists may have simply provided a more sophisticated array of techniques for administrators in securing more compliance from the bureaucracy (Denhardt: 151). But the more predominant theme was still taken from the classical theory. Did these techniques like manipulation, cooptation, and intervention not emerge from the human relations school? The comprehensiveness of *Politics, Position, and Power* in describing the dynamics of the US government's organization, reorganization, and political influences are its greatest strengths. Future administrative organizers will learn a vast amount of strategies that will help improve the next generation of structural governmental reforms.

1990

Despite my exposition of the constraints of OD, I still believe that a reevaluation on how to integrate this technique to the public sector could be developed by the authors in future editions of their work. The dysfunctions of public organizations are not always solved by rearranging organizational charts, creating new structures, increasing the budget, and introducing new technology. Serious reflections have to be made on how reorganizations can help people inside public organizations improve their behavior. Serious application of OD strategies combined with traditional structural and functional theories may start this much needed "humanizing" of reorganization.

Endnotes

[1] This book is an updated and revised edition of the original work done by Seidman in 1970.

[2] This concept is also popularly known in the US as "iron triangles" or subgovernments.

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