

# **Personnel Management Reform: The Strategy of Professionalization**

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*The strategy of professionalization which is a multi-pronged system aimed at efficient, effective, and responsive delivery of government services is the current thrust of the Civil Service Commission (CSC). As such, a package of personnel reform measures is instituted by the Commission which includes: the pursuit of merit, competence and performance; development and institutionalization of positive attitudes, ethical conduct and behavior; motivation through an integrated system of rewards and punishments; continuing human resource development; and the encouragement of public sector unionism. However, there is a need to review and assess the current efforts to find out if the Commission is really moving toward its avowed goals of deregulation, decentralization, and managerial and professional discretion rather than that of being more routinized or bureaucratic.*

## **Introduction**

The paper discusses the personnel management reform of the bureaucracy being undertaken by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) which is intended to professionalize the civil service. The strategy of professionalization is a multi-activity, multi-pronged systems approach directed at institutionalizing a deep sense of commitment to public service and accountability to the people among government officials and employees. It is aimed at providing prompt and responsive frontline services with utmost dedication and pride, as well as with efficiency and effectiveness.

The discussion is focused on the activities adopted by the Commission which include the following: upholding of merit in entry and personnel movement and progression; value orientation/reorientation and development of positive attitudes and ethical conduct and behavior; a motivational organizational climate that includes a system of rewards and punishments; continuing human resource development to ensure administrative capability; and the activation of a participative mechanism in decisionmaking regarding personnel matters through public service unionism.

The paper shall not evaluate the policy and action measures presently being implemented toward professionalization, but rather raise issues related to professionalization in general as against that of bureaucratization. Specific issues are directed on the efforts of the Commission to professionalize the civil service. Some suggestions accompany the discussion of the issues being raised.

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### **Legal Authority and Mandate<sup>1</sup>**

The CSC, a constitutional body, serves as the central personnel agency of the government. As such, the Commission is mandated to:

- (1) establish a career service;
- (2) adopt measures promotive of morale, efficiency, integrity, responsiveness, progressiveness, and courtesy in the civil service;
- (3) strengthen the merit and rewards system;
- (4) integrate all human resource development programs; and
- (5) institutionalize a management climate conducive to public accountability.

In response to its mandate, the Commission seeks to provide the government with competent, well-trained and motivated personnel, committed to the efficient and effective delivery of public services. In its statement of mission, a priority thrust is the professionalization of the civil service.

The Commission's blueprint for professionalization is a package of personnel reform measures which includes the pursuit of merit, competence and performance; development and institutionalization of positive attitudes and ethical conduct and behavior among civil service personnel; an integrated system of rewards and punishments; a continuing human resource development; and the encouragement of public service unionism.

The concept of professionalization of the civil service can be gleaned from the following objective: "the Commission shall lead in the promotion of government responsiveness to the needs of the people and shall instill a deep sense of responsibility and public service among government workers to achieve professionalization in the civil service" (CSC 1990-1994:3). It is hoped that by 1994, "government workers shall have instilled a deep sense of public service and accountability in themselves. They shall take pride in rendering frontline services to the public with utmost efficiency and effectiveness" (CSC 1990- 1994:3).

### **The Strategy of Professionalization**

The year 1988 was a tumultuous one not only for the Civil Service Commission but for the whole bureaucracy as well. The civil service was reeling from the "most sweeping and unsettling reorganization of the Philippine bureaucracy" (CSC 1989a:3).

The general feeling was of demoralization, anger and frustration over violations of the constitutionally-guaranteed principles of security of tenure and of due process.

Outcries against abuses committed by those in power regarding the placement, separation/retention, and transfer of personnel reverberated all-over the bureaucracy.

The clamor for a "professional corps of civil servants who will continue carrying out the business of government despite the periodic changes in the nations's leadership" (PDI 1990:4) has long been aired by various sectors, particularly from political scientists and public administrationists.

### *The Pursuit of Merit, Competence, and Performance*

*Tightening Entry Requirements.* The CSC responded through a statement of goal to professionalize the civil service. Two action measures were immediately undertaken: (1) removal of nonqualified personnel; and (2) raising the passing mark in civil service examinations from 70% to 80% (PDI 1990:4). A directive was issued in April 1989 to the effect that starting January 1990, no temporary appointments shall be issued (CSC 1989b). This means that henceforth all those entering the public service must have the requisite eligibilities (CSC 1989a:4).

This new passing grade requirement was applied for the first time to the three major national examinations administered by the Commission in 1989. The raised passing mark for the professional and subprofessional career service examinations saw an 8.25% passing rate among the total examinees. Some 40,847 out of 378,170 examinees made it (22,135 for the professional and 18,712 for the subprofessional career service.) A nationwide registration of civil service eligibles who are desirous of entering government service was undertaken and 11,548 responded. These moves sent clear signals that the CSC is serious in upgrading standards of recruitment into government service (CSC 1989a:5).

In addition to the career service examinations, there are special laws which grant eligibilities under certain conditions. They are: Presidential Decree No. 907 which grant eligibility to college honor graduates; Presidential Decree No. 1408 to electronic data processing (EDP) specialists; Presidential Decree 997 to scientific and technological specialists; and Republic Act No. 1080 which declares bar and board examinations as civil service examinations and passing these examinations would grant civil service eligibility to the persons concerned, among others. The conditions under which these eligibilities are operational are qualifications and experience of individuals and the requirements of public service.

The latest special law is Republic Act 6850 which grants eligibility under certain conditions to government employees under provisional or temporary status with at least seven years of efficient service. There were 17,345 employees who benefited from this law and who otherwise would have been terminated from service if they could not gain eligibility through appropriate examinations.

As observed by the CSC in its corporate plan for 1990-1994, the enactment and implementation of this law has in fact defeated the purpose of professionalizing the

bureaucracy. With its emphasis on the length of service rendered in the government, casual and contractual employees may also demand the same privilege extended by the law to temporary employees. In the case of temporary employees, there is the consolation that temporary appointments are extended to persons who are qualified but do not possess the appropriate civil service eligibility. Casual and contractual employees however, are hired based on the exigencies of the service and normally are recruited on the basis of political and/or bureaucratic patronage.

*Reaffirming Confidence in the Principle of Tenure and Developing a Culture of Performance.* The demoralizing and sweeping reorganization of the bureaucracy in 1988 under the Presidential Commission on Government Reorganization (PCGR) raised important issues on the violations of constitutional and human rights of individual civil servants. The relevant issues raised were those related to the principles of security of tenure and due process of law as guaranteed in the Constitution.

The arbitrariness of the reorganization process engendered distrust of the effort of the new government to trim and professionalize the bureaucracy. This distrust was substantiated by a CSC report on employee accession and separation for the period 25 February 1986 to 30 June 1987 which showed that while 37,885 employees were separated "to trim the bureaucracy," 78,440 were hired to replace them. Thus, for every employee separated, 2.07 were employed (Esleta 1988:14). The prime focus of the Commission's policies and operations at that time was to reaffirm and strengthen the security of tenure principle and to speedily adjudicate complaints cases filed regarding personnel displacement because of reorganization.

To alleviate the fear of the public personnel that the principle of security of tenure can be wantonly violated via reorganization, Republic Act No. 6656 was passed by Congress on 9 June 1988, signed by the President the following day, and took effect on 29 June 1988 (Lansangan 1988:4).

The Act declares it a policy of the state to protect the security of tenure of civil service officers and employees in the reorganization of the various agencies of the national and local governments, state colleges and universities expressly authorized by law, including government-owned or -controlled corporations with original charters, without sacrificing the need to promote morale, efficiency, integrity, responsiveness, progressiveness, and courtesy in the civil service pursuant to Article IX-B, Section 3 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution (Lansangan 1988:4).

To strengthen its efforts in engendering high performance, the Commission reemphasized that the *sine qua non* of security of tenure is job performance. This stand was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1989 so that throughout that year, the Commission's policies and programs pushed hard the fact that security of tenure is not an absolute right, but should be treated relative to employee's performance. Most of the Commission's directives during the year pertained to merit/competence and on work performance (CSC 1989a:5).

The emphasis on performance was also reflected in the Commission's quasi-judicial activities which posted a disposition rate of 82% from 29% of the previous year. The emphasis on performance was also made imperative by a vigilant and politicized work force, demanding for reforms in the administrative system and for increased job security and adequate wages. This is likewise enforced by clamor for bureaucratic reforms from a population long impatient for more responsive and efficient delivery of government services (CSC 1989a:3).

*Career Mobility and Merit Promotion.* The first two action measures described above were complemented with the institutionalization of agency merit promotion plans throughout the bureaucracy and a system of ranking positions for adoption in all public offices (CSC 1989a:18). Both systems are merit-based and are congruent to agencies' respective performance evaluation schemes.

Promotion also showed a breakaway from the traditional practice of career mobility and promotion based on seniority and next-in-rank principles. Recently, for promotions, the selection process is done on an organization-wide basis unlike the practice before wherein the selection was limited to the organizational unit where the vacancy exists. In cases where the specialization/expertise is not available in the organization, deep selection and movements across agencies of government are emphasized.

Promotions from within or "nurturing" had also given way to lateral entry, especially in positions requiring the latest technological expertise. This approach discouraged complacency and placed public officers and employees on positive competitive stand, nurtured by a quest for "excellence" through high performance.

The drive for merit and performance however, may be dampened by the passage and implementation of RA 6758 which grants step increments for government workers. Section 13, (c) provides for step increments based on merit and/or length of service effective 1 January 1990. Based on the guidelines for implementation promulgated jointly by the Commission and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) (1990), longevity pay shall apply only to officials and employees with permanent status in the career service. Likewise, a one-step increment shall be granted to officials and employees for every three years of continuous satisfactory service in the position. Such increments, however, shall not exceed the maximum step of the salary grade of the position.

At a glance, it seems that the provision of step increases guarantees gradual career progression. However, several dysfunctions which are demotivational to employees would exist as a result. Take the example of a university professor who was not promoted for 21 years because of poor performance, but who got seven steps increments within his professorial grade without even sweating it out in terms of teaching excellence nor research outputs. Colleagues of his get only a maximum of three steps promotion for meritorious performance in teaching and research. Still another dysfunction that the step increments brought is that in actual practice, the salary increases are based merely on length of service, since the satisfactory performance

requirement is completely overlooked. Besides, because of the lack of budgetary allocations for merit promotion, the step increases provided by the longevity provisions remain to be the only recourse.

The system of merit protection and promotion has been set in place. The combined effects of the higher entry standards, performance-based tenure and career mobility and promotion system are expected to safeguard the merit principle and system from the intrusion of political patronage and thus considerably reduce its influence in personnel decisions in the public service.

#### *Development and Institutionalization of Positive Attitudes, Ethical Conduct and Behavior*

*Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees (RA 6713)*. The passage of Republic Act 6713 or the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees on 21 February 1989 is a frontal strategy to counteract the perceived and actual behavior in the bureaucracy as characterized by arrogance, inefficiency, and graft and corruption. It is directed at strengthening the positive effects that the policy and action reform measures previously taken can elicit through similar changes in organizational and personnel conduct and behavior.

The declaration of policy in Section 2 intends that the State promote a high standard of ethics in public service as exemplified in the following conduct and behavior: "accountability to the people; discharge of duties with responsibility, integrity, competence, and loyalty; act with patriotism and justice; lead modest lives; and uphold public interest over personal interest."

Toward this end, two major programs are underway (1) value development programs for officers and employees aimed at strengthening the value of commitment to public service and the promotion of public interest; and (2) professional, scientific, and technical training programs aimed at enhancing professionalism, excellence, and skills in the performance of duties and responsibilities.

The organizational system is not spared in the value change effort. The Code requires every department, office and agency of government to conduct continuing studies and analysis of their work systems and procedures to improve delivery of public services (Rule III, Section 4). Such studies should identify factors which contribute to negative bureaucratic behavior, red tape, and low employee morale. Corresponding measures to correct negative factors so identified should be pursued to enhance a management climate that is conducive to public accountability (Rule III, Section 4).

The State itself is required by the Code to practice the value of transparency of transactions and to provide access to information subject to reasonable conditions. Openness in government transactions is expected to lessen the opportunities to commit fraud, graft and corruption, and other acts detrimental to public interests (Rule IV,

Section 2). The requirement for public access to information is not absolute and is limited whenever the national security, defense, and foreign affairs interests are at stake.

To deter the accumulation of ill-gotten wealth, civil service officers and employees are required to file under oath their statements of assets, liabilities and net worth as well as a disclosure of business interests and financial connections including those of their spouses and unmarried children (Rule VIII, Section 1).

A corollary provision is for public officials and employees to avoid conflict of interest which occurs whenever their private or business interests are affected or are opposed to their faithful performance of official duties. In case such conflict of interest arises, the official or employee should resign from his position in the private business enterprise and/or divest of his interests/shareholdings (Rule IX, Sections 1 & 2).

*Special Programs of the CSC.* To catalyze the delivery of professionalized, responsive, and effective public services, the Commission launched the following:

(1) Do Away With Red Tape (DART) - the program, launched during the 88th anniversary of the Philippine civil service was a deliberate, organized effort to engage the active participation of all sectors of society to get the bureaucracy deregulate itself, reduce inefficiency and red tape, and prevent corrupt practices.

Through the mass media, the public was encouraged to report cases of red tape to the DART Action Center which takes care of the complaints. Agencies often complained about are reported to the people via the media: print and radio. This way, the public can fiscalize the bureaucracy and hopefully reduce red tape and its attendant practices of corruption in public agencies.

(2) *Ang Magalang, Bow<sup>2</sup>* - started in April 1990. The program was intended to inculcate among government employees the importance of prompt and courteous service and do away with the stereotyped image of arrogant and inefficient bureaucrats. Print and broadcast media were likewise used to popularize the campaign. Selection of the most courteous employees by the clients they serve entitled the winners to raffle tickets for trips to local and foreign destinations. Besides instill courteous service, the special program also facilitated public service with its 216 public assistance counters.

(3) Citizen Satisfaction with Government Services - also a nationwide campaign designed to complement the two special programs described above. A major component of this campaign is the explicit access of the public to government executives and leaders at specified times during the workweek so their problems can be directly attended to.

(4) *Panibagong Sigla 2000* - seeks to identify areas of reform in the bureaucracy which will ensure improved services as well as a motivated and committed work force.

(5) *Silang Mahuhusay* - documents the attributes of organizations and managers demonstrating high performance despite the constraints in public governance.

*Motivation Through An Integrated System  
of Rewards and Punishments*

**Salary Standardization.** To give meaning to the professionalization thrust of the government, monetary rewards in terms of salaries and wages were standardized through Republic Act No. 6758 which took effect on 1 July 1989. Formally known as "an act prescribing a revised compensation and position classification system in the government and for other purposes," the law aims to standardize the different pay plans existing in the bureaucracy. The objectives of the law are to achieve equity in pay within the government service, and to make the monetary reward system in government comparable and competitive with those in the private sector.

At the time of its passage, national and local governments enjoyed lower basic salaries and less fringe benefits schemes compared to the Office of the President and its agencies; constitutional bodies like the Commissions on Civil Service, on Elections, and on Audit; and the government-owned and -controlled corporations and financial institutions.

The salary standardization law had set the minimum wage for the rank and file employees at ₱2,000. The conduct of a regular review of government compensation and benefit schemes to allow for inflation and other economic factors is likewise provided for. But even with a poverty line income at ₱5,825 today, government salary scales have not been reviewed to make them realistic.

Salary step increments are moreover granted to officials and employees based on merit/length of service. A one-step increment based on length of service is granted for every three years of continuous satisfactory service in particular position.

To alleviate the economic plight of government employees on account of inflation, and since the government cannot afford salary increases, cost of living allowances are being given temporarily. Another measure provided the government employees is the monetization of a maximum of ten days of the accumulated leave credits, tax-free.

The standardization law, in addition to compensation, provided for a new position classification system. Positions are categorized into four main categories, namely: professional supervisory, professional nonsupervisory, subprofessional supervisory, and subprofessional nonsupervisory.

In the implementation of the law, the classification failed to capture the existing substantial differences in professional competence, satisfactory work experience, and performance and potential. A case in point is the academe where positions are based on rank classification.

In state colleges and universities, the categorization collapsed dissimilarly ranked positions under the same salary grades: like associate professor positions at higher salary steps and full professor positions at lower salary steps which totally ignored rank. The



consequence was demoralization among the full professors whose entire academic lives were evaluated and reviewed before they were granted the full professor rank. The collapsing of academic ranks disregarded the highly valued rank system in the academe.

The allocation of positions to certain salary grades outside of Grades 33 to 30 (these are assigned to the President, Vice President, Supreme Court Justices, Senate President, Speaker of the House, etc., down to Secretary and Undersecretary levels), is the task of the DBM. The placement of all other positions below these grades into salary grades of "equivalent ranks" was seen to have been done arbitrarily, so that bureaucracy-wide complaints and appeals arose. At present, many such complaints and appeals have remained unresolved.

*Incentive Awards Scheme.* To meet the need of the work force for recognition, and to develop their esteem and high value for merit and exemplary performance, several intrinsic incentive awards are given to deserving civil service officials and employees. These are:

(1) *Lingkod Bayan* Presidential Award is given to an individual or group who/which has made an extraordinary contribution that has benefited the country.

(2) *Silangan* Presidential Award is given to an individual or group of persons 30 years old or below who have shown exemplary performance.

(3) *Dangal ng Bayan* Award is conferred to employees or employee associations as provided for in the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for demonstrating exemplary ethical behavior in the following norms of conduct: (1) commitment to public interest; (2) professionalism; (3) political neutrality; (4) responsiveness to the needs of the public; (5) nationalism and patriotism; (6) commitment to democracy; and (7) simple living.

(4) Special Presidential Award is conferred to agencies for institutional excellence in service to the public.

(5) *Pag-asa* Award is presented by the CSC to individuals and groups for dedication to service, innovativeness, and efficient performance. These awards are conferred to deserving winners during the annual civil service week celebration after a year-long nationwide search.

Runners-up to these awards are cited by their respective nominating agencies in simple rites during the week-long celebration. These nonmaterial incentives are expected to push forward the civil service quest for professionalism and exemplary performance as well as provide the recognition for government officials and employees and institutions for having demonstrated examples of professionalized and committed service to the public.

### *Continuing Human Resource Development*

Pursuant to the constitutional mandate for human resource development (HRD), the CSC had set in place a four-pronged strategy of HRD consisting of: manpower planning; training and other HRD interventions; performance appraisal system/contract; and research in aid of an improved HRD.

Manpower planning, a component of HRD, is a critical aspect of personnel management since it provides the information necessary for rational and responsive decisionmaking regarding personnel matters. Although a neglected aspect of personnel administration, the Commission is putting an end to its neglect by establishing a pilot program of manpower planning for itself. From its experience, policies and guidelines will be formulated for implementation by government agencies.

Human resource development has been traditionally met in the civil service through training directed at improvement of knowledge, skills, and attitudes of personnel at different hierarchical levels, functions/tasks being performed, and technologies being utilized. Government functionaries are provided with opportunities for professional growth and being readied for alternative use in higher positions in the future. There are seven broad categories of training programs in the bureaucracy: professional/technical/scientific; executive development; employee development; supervisory development; middle management; pre-retirement; and orientation/reorientation. Value internalization training is presently available to comply with the Code of Conduct and Ethics and the President's thrust to develop honesty and integrity in government.

To dovetail training activities to feed into agency needs, the Commission decentralized the training functions and gave agencies the autonomy and flexibility in their training and developmental activities. With decentralization, direct training activities by the Commission had been de-emphasized. Instead, priority is now redirected toward policy formulation, monitoring, and controlling of HRD activities of individual agencies.

The need for better personnel management despite the constricting budgetary allocations makes it imperative for the Commission to find alternative approaches to HRD. Thus, job counselling/coaching; distance education; job enrichment through job rotation, cross-posting/secondments, and productivity circles are now in the pipeline.

### *Public Sector Unionism*

The Constitutional call for public sector unionism as a positive force in nation-building and in promoting harmonious labor-management relations offered an expanded role for the Commission. It launched its program for the promotion of unionism in the public sector. As starters, seminars and symposia on the matter were conducted across the bureaucracy. From the outputs of these seminars, the Commission had set in place the grievance machinery as a preventive mechanism against strikes and walkouts. The basic ground rules in the exercise of union rights were likewise, laid down. The

Commission also declared that the right to self-organization shall always be protected, but that strikes and work stoppages shall be dealt with accordingly.

Through the encouragement and assistance offered by the Commission, 190 unions in the public sector were registered in 1990. Out of this number, 51 were accredited to act as agents of the employees in collective negotiations. The Commission also issued the policy guidelines in conciliation/mediation and the policy directions on the right to collective negotiations in the public sector.

To ensure that government employees and the general public get equal treatment in government irrespective of gender, religion, ethnic origin, or political belief, the equality advocates program (EQUADS) had been set up so that any victim of discrimination can get redress. This measure also acts as safeguard against inequality of treatment because of the reasons cited above.

### Issues on Professionalization

#### *General Issues: Professionalization vs. Bureaucratization*

Professionalization is pursued today as a valued goal in organizations. There is a strong trend away from routinization and toward increased professionalization in the private sector. Likewise, professionalization is also taking place in the public sector. There is considerable talk about problem-solving and adaptability; achieving excellence and maintaining high standards in recruitment, performance, and conduct/behavior. But routinization characteristic of the bureaucracy continues unabated with characteristic of a less visible shift toward professionalization (Benveniste 1987:3 & 4).

Professionalization and bureaucratization go hand in hand in a bureaucracy. Knowledge on the profession can help in maximizing the use of professionals in bureaucratic organizations as well as of the professionalization efforts underway in the Philippine bureaucracy.

A profession has structural and attitudinal characteristics. The structural elements are: (1) application of skills based on special knowledge; (2) requirements for advanced education and training; (3) formal testing of competence and control on admission to profession; (4) existence of professional associations; (5) existence of codes of conduct or ethics; and (6) existence of an accepted commitment or calling, a sense of responsibility for service to the public and humanity beyond pecuniary rewards or career progression in an organization (Hickson and Thomas 1987:33).

The professional attitudes and values are as follow: (1) the belief that the profession is a significant reference group and the source of major ideas and judgments; (2) the belief in service to the public; (3) the desire for autonomy in work situations; (4) preference for self-regulation, particularly for peer control and review; and (5) the notion of a calling, of a devotion to work even if less extrinsic rewards are provided (Hall 1987:44).

The civilian bureaucracy employs 620,815 professionals (or 49.37% of the work force) in the second level of its three-tiered personnel system. They are employed because of their special competencies, knowledge and skills. The application and utilization of their expertise is however regulated by the bureaucratic organization.

By training and professional specialization, the professionals behave predictably in uncertain and complex situations. Engineers remain calm and collected during power plant breakdowns; medical doctors respond almost intuitively to save lives in cases of emergencies, accidents, or natural calamities; social workers reach out to the victims of calamities with compassion; teachers zealously mold the youth; while human rights lawyers stand ready to defend victims of injustice and human rights violations despite real threats to their lives.

The civil service today confronts situations where task variability and complexity prevail, and where the environment is not only uncertain but even hostile. Problem-solving and flexibility are necessary characteristics required of the civil service. Thus, it needs to be action-oriented. But the civil service has not shed off its bureaucratic qualities: there is routinization through rules and regulations and standard operating procedures. There is a hierarchy of authority and responsibility, and a system of control from top management to rank and file passing through different hierarchical levels.

The issue of organization of work is critical to the efforts to professionalize the civil service. What alternative structural arrangements can maximize the participation of professionals in the bureaucracy? The conventional bureaucratic form of organization reduces the effectiveness of professionals to contribute to the attainment of goals. Hierarchy, rules and regulations, procedures, are control mechanisms which contribute to the narrowing of the area of discretion that professionals expect. The bureaucratic treatment of professionals is contrary to their expectation of autonomy in the work situation. The authority issue of what constitute managerial authority as against professional authority is another constraint to professional participation in public organizations. In the civil service, there is an overlap between managerial and professional authority. When professional knowledge is needed in managerial decisions, professional participation or delegation of managerial authority takes place (Benveniste 1987:67). This means sharing managerial tasks where professional values, knowledge, and skills are relevant and necessary.

The goal or mission of the organization, its environment and technology, and the relevance of professional tasks within the organization determine the extent to which management allows professional-managerial participation. But in a bureaucracy like the civil service, management controls professionals and routinizes participation. *Ad hoc* routines are established to elicit limited and routinized professional participation by the staff. If ever professionals are allowed to participate in decisionmaking, management determines the scope of such professional participation.

To increase professionalization of the civil service vis-a-vis bureaucratization, it is important to know which tasks are predictive and repetitive and thus could be

routinized. More complex tasks that require adaptation and problem-solving as well as taking on of responsibility on the spot are not easily routinized. These tasks are more appropriate to professionals who expect more discretion in their work.

Assigning complex and unpredictable tasks to professionals can also contribute to their utilization by management more as problem-solvers and risk/action takers instead of being paper shufflers and pen-pushers. Coordination and teamwork between managers and professionals can also be enhanced by such participatory arrangement.

Another issue is the domination of professionals by the bureaucracy and the dependence of professionals on the bureaucracy. Professionals in public organizations depend very much on their organizations to provide them with the equipment, technology, personnel, and rewards. A nuclear scientist, a medical doctor, science researcher, university professor, to mention a few, are provided by their organizations with the nuclear facility, hospital, laboratory, and academic space to be able to function professionally. They are also rewarded (intrinsic and extrinsic rewards) by their organizations which make professionals obliged to accept excessive bureaucratization. This situation is in direct contrast with professionals who are private practitioners (e.g., medical doctors and lawyers) and who therefore can operate independently of bureaucratic organizations. Thus, the domination of the professionals by the bureaucracy continues. Most professionals are in scientific, technical, and professional support functions and are often subordinate to management/managers. The extent to which the professions are dominated by bureaucracy had been documented before (Mosher and Stillman 1977:631-685; 1978:105-130).

Professionals in the civil service are also required to be accountable to the public and are expected to conduct themselves with utmost consideration of public interest first before personal interest. The public accountability required of professionals tends to make them protect themselves from legal suits and administrative charges by hiding behind rules, regulations and procedures, thereby resulting in more bureaucratization.

A corollary issue is the encouragement by the organization for the professional to innovate, be creative, and take risks. However, the rules and regulations governing their activities, together with the requirements of public accountability do not allow them to commit mistakes.

Punishments abound in case of errors: medical doctors can be delicensed, lawyers can be debarred, accountants and engineers can be expelled from professional organizations, and so with the academicians. Organizational rewards can also be used to punish: promotion, status, or career can be denied, while others may take the form of transfers or dismissal/termination from service. The bureaucracy does not reward risk takers. Only successful risk takers get rewarded. But risk-taking implies the uncertainty of success or failure. This is why risk avoidance is the common bureaucratic norm. Avoiding risk prevents organizational learning which is very necessary in seeking alternatives and in implementing change (Benveniste 1987:195).

Thus, any effort to professionalize the bureaucracy requires the provision of allowances for errors and a visible reward system for risk takers. This way, professionals may be encouraged to exercise wider latitude of discretion that may later result in acceptable debureaucratization in the civil service.

The bottom line issue is how can professionalization reduce excessive bureaucratization? Increasing professionalization of the civil service implies the substitution of discretionary roles for routinized roles. Professional roles rely on a knowledge base and discretion within the limited domain of that base. Professional roles also provide an ethical stance and assume a commitment that goes beyond organizational boundaries and economic rewards. Some basic attitudes and values of the professions which are internalized by the professionals are significant inputs to change conduct and behavior characterized by arrogance and inefficiency to one of commitment and performance.

The alternative to bureaucracy is a profession-oriented organization characterized by professionalized personnel involved in the core activities of the organization; structure that permits management to have access to professional knowledge and vice-versa; and a control system based not on rules and regulations, but on professional discretion, professional self-restraint, and professional regulation. This is assuming that the professions demonstrate exemplary self-regulation (Benveniste 1987:257).

Professionalization of the civil service goes beyond bureaucracy. The management of professionalized civil service must rely more on sharing between professionals and managers in meeting organizational tasks; less control but more discretion; more emphasis on intrinsic motivation, trust, and ethics; and improved personnel utilization through enhancing professional participation in core activities where their professional expertise can fine-tune policies and programs of public governance (Benveniste 1987:259-265).<sup>3</sup>

#### *Specific Issues: On Efforts to Professionalize the Philippine Civil Service*

The CSC has been on the fast-track toward professionalization. The Commission and its leadership should be congratulated for having accomplished so much in about three years. It had set in motion the administrative machinery and value goals required in its serious efforts to give the Filipino people the dedicated and responsive public service they deserved.

At a glance, the policy and action reform measures appear to move in a unified direction toward professionalization. A closer and longer look, however, shows some pitfalls and constraints. The whole strategy of professionalization seem to rest on controls: from recruitment of personnel to their utilization. The strict requirements for appointments at entry levels; the tightening of standards for permanency and tenure; the emphasis on high performance and excellence; and the requirements for ethical conduct and behavior, including public accountability have attendant rules and regulations and procedures which could lead to increased bureaucratization and routinization

in the long run. Despite various reorganization attempts to improve the bureaucracy, changes in the structural arrangements have not resulted in providing for more space which allow for professional participation in policymaking nor in the sharing with management in making decisions regarding core programs and similar activities. For the Aquino government, the only visible structural changes were the expansion of the upper tier of the bureaucracy (undersecretary and assistant secretary levels) and its increased size resulting from the creation of ad hoc task forces, committees, and commissions whose functions can be assigned to regular line agencies. New policies had been passed during the process of professionalization. Unfortunately, the sources of such policies are diverse: Congress, Office of the President, CSC, DBM, among others, such that the policies are divergent rather than convergent as far as results are concerned.

For example, the CSC tightened the entry and tenure requirements; while Congress relaxed the tenure requirements by allowing the grant of eligibility and permanency based on the criterion of length of service. For another, Congress had passed a salary standardization law by which the government envisioned to promote productivity and performance as well as attract the best qualified people to government service. In passing the law, Congress aimed toward pay equalization for similar work within the government and pay comparability with the private sector.

However, the DBM, in operationalizing the law, failed to conduct exhaustive consultations with the affected sectors. This therefore led to complaints and objections to its implementation because the resulting salaries and classification of positions did not reflect actual work/functional responsibilities, work experience and qualifications, competence and performance. Besides, the new salary scheme did not compensate for the rising costs of living because of inflation and other economic factors. The law provided for a regular review of the compensation scheme in order for it to remain competitive and able to meet employees' needs. But since its implementation on 1 July 1989, no such review has been made despite the very much decreased purchasing power of the peso.

Another component of the salary standardization law is the grant of step increments to government workers which weakened the thrust for merit and high performance, because the increments in practice were granted based solely on length of service. Besides, it remained temporarily the only way for employees to advance, but only in terms of salary increases allowable within each grade. Its effect had been to substitute merit promotion (which has achievement and rank components) with step increments (mostly monetary based on length of service without rank).

As a reward system, therefore, it has very limited impact since step increments for majority of the government employees (mostly rank and file) means a few pesos, while for managers and professionals, the step increments means inadequate extrinsic rewards but not the intrinsic rewards that they value more. The step increments in real terms do not spur the quest for excellence and performance but rather encourage the maintenance of "acceptable" performance. Step increases also feed on bureaucratic behavior and not on professionalism since as a career progression tool, increments create rank stagnation.

The discussions above raises the issue of policy coordination among the governmental agencies involved in policymaking and implementation. The professionalization effort should be moving in one direction and not in diverse directions in order to avoid policy results canceling each other out. The various measures for professionalization undertaken by government under the lead role of the CSC are on the surface very good measures. But underneath them are the accompanying rules, regulations, controls and routinized roles for personnel. The more controls there are to elicit professional behavior, the less professional discretion is left for the professionals. The result would be increasing bureaucratization. A case in point is the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards.

Under Rule VI, Sections 1 to 8, the detailed provisions on what the officials and employees can do and cannot do leave them no opportunity for an alternative behavior arising from exercise of professional and managerial discretion. The rules of conduct added more to the innumerable mandated responses and routinized rules already in force.

Rules VII and IX on public disclosure of assets and liabilities and on conflict of interest and divestment respectively, can be loosely interpreted as a lack of trust of the government regarding the inherent honesty of officials and employees in the civil service.

The effect of these regulations on the government employees is one of disgust since majority are occupying positions which do not give them undue advantages for personal economic gains nor for opportunities for graft and corruption. If the intent of the code is to elicit exemplary and ethical behavior in the bureaucracy, the government can think again. Compliance with the rules are made for the sake of compliance, so that the information contained in the statements of assets and liabilities may be half-truths. The same can be said when there is conflict of interest and of divestment.

Assuming that the statements are filled honestly and truthfully, the agencies do not analyze the filed statements for accuracy nor checked them out with the record of indebtedness or losses as claimed in the statements. Thus, they are not effective instruments to detect ill-gotten wealth.

As to the issue of public sector unionism, there seems to be a double standard in the treatment of the rights of government workers. While the work force in better paying government offices like public enterprises and financial institutions can go on strike and bargain collectively, the same rights are denied to workers in agencies performing regular governmental functions.

The ban on strikes for public sector *unions* makes them *pseudo* labor unions and are thus weak mechanisms to promote smooth labor-management relations because employees will always negotiate from a position of weakness and inequality. The value of labor unions to the professionalization efforts is for them to function as professional organizations which could enhance competence, integrity, ethics, and professional conduct and behavior in the civil service.



### Concluding Note

The Civil Service Commission had undertaken forward steps toward professionalization. If professionalization is interpreted to mean less bureaucratization, then the Commission's best efforts can only lead to more routinization, rules and regulations, bureaucratic procedures, and less and less of professionalized roles based on discretion rather than strict compliance.

What is needed at this point is for the leadership, political and bureaucratic/administrative, to review and assess its program of professionalization to find out initial results. It can also determine whether the program direction is moving toward deregulation, decentralization, and managerial and professional discretion.

The bureaucratic organization obtaining in the Philippine civil service which brings about the tendency to routinize governmental activities should be relaxed to make room for more discretion and power/authority sharing among critical actors. A professional-oriented organization, strengthened by joint management which ensures the participation of managers and professionals, is a first step toward professionalization. The development of an organizational climate and culture where the values of excellence and achievement, honesty and integrity, ethics and morality, and intrinsic rewards are basic, could be the Philippine model and answer to the existing bureaucratic pathology. Policies and action measures, properly calibrated to avoid and deflect the pitfalls of excessive bureaucratization, must be found if the program thrust toward professionalization is to be successfully achieved.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>See the Constitution of 1987; Executive Order No. 67; Reorganizing the Civil Service Commission; and 1987 Administrative Code.

<sup>2</sup>Literally means *the courteous one, take a bow*.

<sup>3</sup>These are characteristics of the profession-oriented organization as an alternative to bureaucracy.

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