Controversies in Public Administration: Enduring Issues and Questions in Bureaucratic Reform

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Everybody deserves good governance vis-a-vis public administration. Moves to institute reforms in the government bureaucracy have been initiated here in the Philippines where it has always needed improvement and in the American federal government where public service generally is much better than it is hither, but in more ways than one, wants rectification. Several fancy labels used to describe better public administration like reinventing, reengineering, refounding and reframing are now becoming by-words in government circles. Certainly, it can be said that there exists today in the discipline a wealth of ideas, but its direction continues to be impoverished because many of the underlying notions that have surfaced in recent years have not just generated appeal and attention, but skepticism and misgivings. The perception therefore is that any initiative today must be guided by the wisdom of the past for many of these movements have not matched the expectations of their proponents and adherents in changing/ reforming public organizations. In the spate of controversies surrounding these propositions, the single thorny question that remains hanging is: why is bureaucracy in most governments today not living up to expectations and what we are going to do with it?

Introduction

The reform of bureaucratic institutions remains a prominent and recurring concern in the study and practice of public administration today. Over the years, a vast and prolific amount of literature in the discipline has been produced addressing the already convoluted and often cumbersome problematic of reforming governments and their bureaucratic machineries in both developed and developing societies.[1]

As discussions ebb and flow, raging controversies on the subject have spawned intense and colorful debates on how public bureaucracies are to be transformed to adapt to the demands of an increasingly volatile information age characterized by enterprise economies, much innovation and rapid technologies. Their traditional structures and values, generally characterized as large, rigid, complicated, hierarchical, authority-centered, rule-driven and often centralized,

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have practically rendered them incapable of matching the pressures and complexities of modern and modernizing societies. Morgan proclaimed over a decade ago that "the bureaucratic, control-oriented ethos which underlies the drive to overcome problem through a redundancy of parts, is not well equipped to deal with conditions of turbulence" (Morgan 1982: 529; Little 1996: 329). As it is, there is now an emerging consensus that contemporary bureaucratic models have become obsolete, resembling the extinct Brontosaurus, a creature from the Mesozoic period pictured as having "a large body and a small brain" (Green and Hubbell 1996: 57).

The challenge has become increasingly acute and almost overwhelming as bureaucracies today remain to be perceived by their publics as ill-adapted to the vicissitudes and realities of prevailing market and enterprise dynamics. Fortunately, the profession and its academic community never give up, even if their object of attention — the bureaucracy of governments — remains suspended in time and space.

This article aspires to look at and review the major philosophies and issues that are currently preoccupying the discipline and its agenda of bureaucratic reform. In so doing, it hopefully seeks to contribute possible insights for a reform agenda that can be considered in the Philippines. In recent years, these perspectives have increasingly shifted in the direction of managerial competence vis-a-vis governance, which has been described as "administering in a political context" and directing competence toward the "broadest possible public interest" (Green and Hubbell 1996: 38).

This article hopes to dwell on these issues which have now been marked by much controversy simply because they offer a whole array of propositions with which a vision for bureaucracy and governance can be collectively forged. Unfortunately, while many efforts have generated a battlefield of seemingly new principles, models, philosophies and alternatives in other countries in bureaucratic reform, there has not been much comprehensive discussion of the issue in the Philippines within the profession or even the academic community. Except for passing and embryonic commentaries that are often superficial, politically motivated and pertaining relatively to subject or sector-specific concerns (i.e., accountability, red tape, etc. in this or that agency), no comprehensive effort and analysis have been sustained, with most of the advocacies not passing beyond the stage of fancy rhetoric.[2]

Reform efforts in the Philippines and their fatal obsession with reorganization or organizational restructuring have undoubtedly time and again merely accentuated operational discontinuities without instituting genuine transformation because they have often been launched without a solid philosophy anchored on sound assessments and studies of the system dynamics besieging the bureaucratic milieu. A monograph released two years ago by the

Presidential Committee on Streamlining the Bureaucracy (PCSB) and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) proposed and outlined a new paradigm of government. This material cited what appears to be important principles in bureaucratic transformation (DBM 1995). This however ended with just that — principles and parameters — without any coherent plan of action or strategies that can spell out what must be done and what results can be expected.

As it is, while both scholars in American Public Administration and professionals in the Clinton administration in the United States are now busy evaluating and implementing, respectively, the reform blueprint for the American federal bureaucracy based on reinventing principles as contained in the report of the National Performance Review (NPR) committee submitted by Vice-President Al Gore in 1993, there is no equivalent or even attempt to have one in the Philippines.[3] While other societies are busy dissecting their respective bureaucracies as a way of offering solutions to their problems, we have been preoccupied with bashing them with a series of attention grabbing congressional investigations and media exposes that often do not result in practical alternatives and proposals.[4]

In fact, we can stretch this further by pointing out that there is no substantive discussion on the mode or motif of reform that can help flesh out a concrete, "do-able" and implementable action plan.[5] What we have now are scores of impoverished proposals for reorganization, which, as experience in the past has shown us, tend to lapse into creating, diluting, merging, abolishing and moving structures here and there, and sometimes done to give way to favored political appointees without regard to how they are to affect the interaction between the citizenry and the bureaucracy. Most of these efforts do not touch or disturb antiquated government rules and regulations that tyrannize not just the citizenry, but the bureaucracy as well.

One thing is certain however: if solid socioeconomic transformation is to occur in Philippine society today, bureaucracy must assume a significant role, not as an interventionist agent of government as we have known it in the past serving to hamstring and stymie other progressive sectors, but to facilitate the process of modernization. If the liberalization of the economy is a paramount concern today, then it is logical to expect that government and its bureaucracy as mediators of this process must likewise be liberalized. To do this, it must be guided by a coherent agenda of reform grounded on fundamental philosophies that are consistent with the character and demands of the polity. This paper then addresses the crucial question of finding a philosophy of reform using referents from other countries where discussions on the subject remain alive, elaborate and dynamic.

Unraveling Unsettled Questions
in Public Administration Today

A century has passed since the publication of Woodrow Wilson's celebrated treatise calling for fuller civil service reform during the stormy years of the American progressive movement. He prescribed the scientific study of administration to separate administrative functions from the hurry and strife of politics (Wilson 1887). Wilson, in his time, wrestled with the fundamental issue of "running a constitution" much as what we are having today, and asserted that the field of administration must be transformed into a field of business. Today, Wilson's admonitions remain relevant, and his call continues to resound and echo important questions, even if his views, particularly the matter of dichotomizing politics from administration, have been regarded as "intellectually and governmentally untenable" (Rosenbloom and Ross 1994: 148). Public Administration today continues to be confronted by unsettled alternatives that remain unwieldy in spite of the wealth of experience and wisdom that have accumulated through the years. The field of Public Administration has received academic acceptance but its subject matter continues to struggle for relevance, validity and credibility, as it confronts what some would refer to as "big questions" in the discipline (Behn 1995; Kirklin 1996; Neumann 1996).

In recent years, Public Administration literature has been drenched with a flood of concepts that have circulated about in fashionable and fancy labels as "reinventing," "reengineering," "refounding," and "reframing." Overnight, the discipline's consciousness has absorbed such mind-boggling themes as steering and rowing, entrepreneurial governments, managerialism, civism, neo-Taylorism, privatization, contracting and principal-agent theory, among others.

Certainly, it can be said that there exists today in the discipline a wealth of ideas, but its direction continues to be impoverished because many of the underlying notions that have surfaced in recent years have not just generated appeal and attention, but skepticism and misgivings. This caution is understandable because of the experiences of the past. As the Gore report unabashedly declares in its polemic, "for years, the federal government has studied failure, and for years, failure has endured" (NPR 1993: 5).

The perception is therefore that any initiative today must be guided by the wisdom of the past for many of these movements have not matched the expectations of their proponents and adherents in changing public organizations. At best, they have evolved as faddish and passing prescriptions because they have not been guided by a careful and meticulous scrutiny of outcome and consequences. Ingraham and Romzek make this observation in their analysis of reform movements in the United States.

> Public management reforms in the United States have often been
> marked by three characteristics: they have been based on an
> inadequate or inaccurate view of what public organizations really do,
> they have failed to recognize the very fundamental constraints that
> civil service systems place on public managers and their activities, and
> they have been based almost exclusively on models borrowed from the
> private sector. Each of these characteristics has serious implications
> for effective reform. In combination, they have distorted many efforts
> to change public organizations and the public service (Ingraham and
> Romzek 1994: 3).

Given the spate of controversies surrounding these propositions, the
single, thorny question that remains hanging is: why is bureaucracy in most
governments today not living up to expectations and what are we going to do
with it?

Many of the issues that are currently explored in the arena of bureaucratic
reform represent enduring and unsettled ones that have been redefined to suit
the temper of present challenges and opportunities. Most of them have been
invigorated to incorporate new dimensions fine-tuned to present day realities.
Some of them do not necessarily reject standard norms of the past but tend to
emphasize the significance of public organizations as a network of open systems
that must interact and take into account the impact of the larger environment.
Such staple concerns as efficiency, effectiveness and economy that have served
as guiding principles in public administration theory and practice for almost a
century are perceived to remain relevant, but have been claimed to be
inadequate to meet the current stress for better bureaucracies (Rosenbloom and
Ross 1994; Wamsley 1996).

Recent value advocacies, for example, have espoused the conviction that
the traditional focus on the "3-Es" is "dangerously incomplete [if pursued]
without normative grounding" on important democratic values such as the "3-
Rs" of responsiveness, representativeness and responsibility (Wamsley 1996:
355; Rosenbloom and Ross 1994: 156). Wamsley maintains that a constitutional
order must be concerned with the 3-Rs over the 3-Es, "though not unmindful of
the latter" (Wamsley 1996: 398, endnote 4).

Ingraham and Romzek again point out that "values from earlier in this
century — economy and efficiency — are central to many of the reform ideas"
(Ingraham and Romzek 1994: 2). The prominent distinction however lies in the
fact that virtually most of these reformist visions have required "new flexibility
and discretion" in contrast to cherished traditions of standardization, stability,
complex rules and regulations and routine (Ingraham and Romzek 1994: 2). In
effect, reform efforts have been characterized by a steady filtering of those that
remain important and need to be reconciled with present realities, side by side
with a rejection of those deemed incompatible such as the fascination for
hierarchical and centralized systems that have been the hallmark of

administrative structures during the early periods of public administration orthodoxy.

Approaches to Bureaucratic Reform: A New Dichotomy

The academic community in the discipline has developed, by accident or convenience, a way of ordering controversies in their subject matter in dialectical fashion. These Hegelian moorings in the discipline find their roots in such standard fares as Wilson's politics-administration dichotomy, Simon's fact-value dichotomy or even the POSDCORB (a mnemonic device used to denote the functions of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting) versus decisionmaking conflict.[6] Complex issues are generally pieced together to form one synthesis and pitted against an antithesis. Current propositions and their ensemble of concepts can likewise be analyzed in this manner for the sake of conceptual convenience, and admittedly, it is not difficult to fall into this kind of typologizing since the polarization of concepts offers a distinct opportunity to weigh the merits of each proposition. The more difficult task however is finding a grand synthesis that will maximize the best of competing perspectives without diluting their strengths.

The continuing erosion of public confidence in government's capability to address day-to-day and long-term problems has given birth to these efforts which have now evolved into something of a cottage industry among consultancy circles. New themes emerge. They are challenged, revised, refined and even recycled to the point that there occurs a blurring of the fundamental philosophies of the original prescription. What do these current ideas represent?

Stripped of their glossy language, the themes can be dichotomized and simplified into two competing perspectives with which performance in modern bureaucracies today can be improved. These are: the *micromanagement approach,* which essentially highlights the managerialist or agency perspective — the institution-based initiative for change. The second, the *macromanagement approach*, argues that no significant improvement in the affairs of the bureaucracy can be accomplished without taking into account the larger political environment. Admittedly, these propositions can be looked upon as a redux reminiscent of the principles of management tradition that flowered during the 1930s in the United States and challenged later in the pre- and post-war eras by the consciousness that public administration and organizational practices cannot be divorced from its political setting.[7] This debate is thus extended and expanded to the present time, and continues to bedevil the imagination of scholars and practitioners in the field. It would do well for us to assess these options first rather than embarking on a full-scale reform project that can again fail and frustrate bureaucracy.

A better appreciation of these perspectives is also suggested by Wamsley *et al.* (1992) in their polemic for a legitimate role for bureaucracy in democratic governance. Wamsley and his colleagues argue that two dominant and contradictory perspectives — they refer to these as "models" — must be appreciated towards understanding "how government should work and be structured" (Wamsley *et al.* 1992: 61). The first is that which focuses on *administrative efficiency* and assumes that pluralist democracy "has been subject to abuse and has failed, and that being the case, there must emerge a strong administrative system that will assume, in the Wilsonian sense, business-like procedures and rational decisionmaking where the prime value should be efficiency — 'the greatest output at the least cost'" (Wamsley *et al.* 1992: 62). The focus of this approach is micromanagement at the agency level, of improving bureaucracy through the power of managerial techniques and innovations as what reinventing, reengineering or total quality management advocates prescribe for public organizations.

The other model is the *pluralist-democracy model* which assumes, among others, a bureaucratic machinery that operates within an environment of "multiple, diverse, and competing interest groups in the political process," and would present multiple power centers (Wamsley *et al.* 1992: 61-62). In this sense, bureaucracy serves as a mechanism to frustrate the concentration of powers in any branch of government where "public administration is subservient to no single branch, yet is responsible to all" (Wamsley *et al.* 1992: 77; Little 1996: 336). It is also maintained that through public organizations, "the structure and flow of agency processes rest on a continual interpretation of the political-institutional context and the particular situation" (Clay 1996: 94), and therefore, public administration, to a large extent must be viewed as "a political process rather than simply as a managerial one" (Rosenbloom and Ross 1994: 156). The view here is that any reform effort must take into account the larger polity and that bureaucratic inefficiency can be traced not simply to internal dynamics, but to the dynamics of the larger political system which impose constraints and limitations on the operations of public organizations.

Offhand, these competing perspectives and their postulates suggest a zero-sum game that may be difficult to reconcile. But in a way, they both represent philosophies for reform, in that they are possessed with the conviction that "old organizations, old systems and old attitudes are all targets of change" (Ingraham and Romzek 1994: 11). Most of them are conscious of the term "governance" which has now sneaked quietly into our consciousness. It is however the areas of intervention and their strategies of how good governance is to be attained that complicate matters.

In this regard, this discussion will focus on the micromanagement model using the reinventing movement, the latest flavor in this genre, and the propositions and prescriptions of the Blacksburg Manifesto to represent the

macro side of reform. Concededly, there are now a number of aspirant paradigms that can substantiate both models, but the sheer volume of their propositions cannot simply be cramped in a single paper.

Reinventing Micromanagement in Public Agencies

Micromanagement in the discipline perhaps represents, to a large degree, the response of American Public Administration to the Wilsonian call for a scientific study of administration. Gaining ground during the ascendancy of the principles of management tradition in the United States with the popularity of the POSDCORB proposition, the influence of Taylorism and of Weberian bureaucratic principles, as well as behavioralism, its methods sought to focus on the organization as the basic unit of intervention. Thus, as Rosenbloom and Ross account, "by the mid-1920s, it was a staple of American administrative thought that 'the study of administration should start from the base of management' and that public administration was an art being transformed into an applied science" (Rosenbloom and Ross 1994: 149).

During the post World War II period, this was shattered by growing views that public administration must be treated as a political process rather than simply as a managerial one. It was also the perception that "micromanagement has been used to political advantage, [and] a tool for legislative control of administrative policymaking and implementation" (Rosenbloom and Ross 1994: 155). But it did not die a natural death there and then, for its appeal remains engaging, particularly for those advocating agency-specific reform efforts.

Of late, micromanagement has been resurrected with unanswered questions then and now, bewildering both the academic and professional communities. Behn (1995) for instance takes issue with the micromanagement perspective by firing a series of what he claims are big questions that ought to be addressed. He focuses on the micromanagement question by isolating three major issues, classified into micromanagement, motivation and measurement, and poses the following simple but loaded questions:

> 1.   Micromanagement: *How* can public managers break the micromanagement cycle - an excess of procedural rules, which prevents public agencies from producing results, which leads to more procedural rules, which leads to...?
>
> 2.   Motivation: *How* can public managers motivate people (public employees as well as those outside the formal authority of government) to work energetically and intelligently towards achieving public purposes?
>
> 3.   Measurement: *How* can public management measure the achievements of their agencies in ways that help to increase those achievements? (Behn 1995: 315).

The latest episode of initiatives attempting to answer these questions can be found in the highly popular yet controversial doctrine of reinventing by Osborne and Gaebler (1992) and which has been given forceful attention in recent years in the discipline that is almost suffering from paradigmatic burn-out. Like the principles of management tradition in the 1930s, reinventing government is focused, not on government *per se*, but on its executive and bureaucratic institutions. This resurgence has somewhat been given strength not simply by its package of reform initiatives, but more so by the enthusiastic response of the Clinton administration as has been discussed earlier. The reinventing government paradigm has been given a good measure of legitimacy by the Clinton administration and has now branched out expectedly to weld with the reengineering concept designed by Hammer and Champy (1993) for private sector organizations.

Osborne and Gaebler maintain that they are offering "an essentially new form of governance drawn from the experiences of public managers in the frontlines." Organized under ten principles, it advocates the philosophy of steering, or policymaking and supervision as the primary role of government, with the execution or implementation — rowing in Osborne and Gaebler's language — being left to competent and professional service providers belonging to the private sector and other sectors of society. They also propose transforming clients into customers, who would have choices, are empowered and are treated as having the capability to influence agency decisions as they would influence market trends, business decisions and product preferences in the private sector. More than these, Osborne and Gaebler also prescribe a whole gamut of advocacies that seek to celebrate the triumph of mission over rules, of finding results rather than inputs, of entrepreneurial earning instead of wanton government spending, of focus on prevention instead of reactive response to problems, of decentralizing organizations instead of centralized structures, and of instituting challenges for change through market-based incentives.[8]

Reinventing finds affinity in Hammer and Champy's concept of reengineering which, among others, capitalizes on rejecting "outdated rules and fundamental assumptions that underlie current business operations" and advocates "the fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of business processes to achieve dramatic improvements in critical, contemporary measures of performance, such as cost, quality, service and speed" (Hammer and Champy 1993: 3; 32). Simply put, reengineering aspires for a review of prevailing work methods and systems among business companies by recognizing and eliminating unnecessary steps in business processes, from production to sales, from marketing to distribution, from financing to public relations to make them more competitive. Seen in this light, Hammer and Champy elevate and expand Taylor's Scientific Management from the shop room and functional foremanship levels to other dimensions of managerial and business activities. It is therefore not difficult for it to appeal to adherents of reinventing, for ultimately, both

propositions reject archaic rules and procedures in organizations, public or private. In a way, reengineering can be seen as a form of neo-Taylorism because of its fascination with studying and redefining the work process and eliminating those that are redundant, bureaucratic and impractical.

Osborne and Gaebler's celebrated treatise, in a way, offers a revolution of philosophies and practices in government outlook based on the centerpiece theme of entrepreneurial governments. This theme rejects the terms of reference of the Weberian bureaucratic model and promises, if adopted, a host of dramatic changes in the way government is run. For one, the adoption of methods from the private sector hopes to breathe life and motivation into the bureaucracy by injecting new rewards and punishment systems in contrast to prevailing rigid and standardized salary structures made indiscriminately available in most bureaucratic setups to both performing and non-performing employees and agencies. The approach also hopes to address the constant limitation of funds of government agencies caused by wastage and massive spending. The only question is: will it work?

Undoubtedly, reinventing has ignited lively and animated debates on the philosophies, strategies and principles of reform. As it is, reinventing and reengineering have collected a growing number of both adherents and skeptics on their perceived merits and weaknesses, to the point that they have attracted the attention of other governments, the Philippines included.[9]

Unfortunately, while the reinventing proposition presents a neat and almost logically tidy package of values, philosophies and prescriptions, many of its premises and assumptions have recently been subjected to scrutiny and it is now the object of controversy in the fastidious realm of the intellectual community. Its appeal in recent years has been diminished, as new issues and criticisms are raised as to its feasibility, especially in the arena of a complex political system where it is supposed to operate.

To begin with, its propositions have been criticized as "recycled versions of what had been said before" (Reyes 1994: 83). It is, in Green and Hubbell's terms, "an artful blending of the philosophies and insights of Peter Drucker, Tom Peters, James Q. Wilson, W. Edwards Deming, E.S. Savas, and a host of public choice theorists" (Green and Hubbell 1996: 41). The steering-rowing analogy for instance reminds us of the politics-administration dichotomy reincarnated in the present time, transformed and given a more cosmetic flavor within the bureaucratic milieu. People empowerment and decentralization of course have been common and perennial themes in the political and social rhetoric of many developing societies, while strains of market-based management can be seen in the public choice models of the seventies.

A serious attack against the reinventing model however is its propensity for making sweeping generalizations based on isolated empirical referents. Its

principles, says Moe, "are not stated in a theoretical manner (that is, propositions subject to empirical proof or disproof), but rather are offered as statements exhorting the reader to acceptance and action" (Moe 1994: 112). Moe tasks Osborne and Gaebler's penchant for using elaborate "success stories" as a way of validating their principles. Thus, Moe continues:

> The technique used to support this approach is to provide the reader with a series of snapshots of successful entrepreneurial projects that political leaders and public sector managers can refashion to work in their particular circumstances.
>
> Thus, their book is largely a series of success stories resulting from the application of these principles, managerial actions which turned a hierarchically managed activity into an entrepreneurial one. Most of the success stories (critics view these stories more as anecdotes) are based on local service delivery systems and are not analyzed in any systematic fashion (Moe 1994: 112).

Green and Hubbell also cite James Fallows' review of the material, who says that "the tone of the book reminds me of an Amway or a Dale Carnegie sales pitch, or a TV infomercial, [where] every story is a success story. Before the change everything is bad. After the change, everything is good" (Green and Hubbell 1996: 58). Fox also expresses doubt on the empirical quality of the reinventing principles so much so that he asserts that "no dissertation committee on which I have served would approve it because it has no consistent theory that strings together the little pearls of uplifting stories it recounts" (Fox 1996: 257). He adds that Osborne and Gaebler's style of presenting their case is not different from those of "self-help books, business best sellers, and Sunday sermons." It is like, in Fox's terms, "the growing phenomena of 'motivational' speakers, that strange mixture of entertainer, provoker of cathartic laughter, and trainer, with well-rehearsed slick speeches that earn grand fees at increasing numbers of professional association meetings" (Fox 1996: 258).

But if there is a devastating criticism of the Osborne and Gaebler model, perhaps the most severe is its simplistic assumption that the executive branch can be reformed on the basis of the power of ideal managerial principles and techniques. "Reinvention is not simple and cannot be approached in simplistic ways," as pointed out by Ingraham and Romzek (1994: 12). Throughout the discussion, Osborne and Gaebler do not consider the realities of bureaucracy, for instance, the phenomenon of graft and corruption, for to them, redesigning reward systems could serve as a motivation for public sector employees to give their best and refrain from committing aberrant behavior. Unfortunately, as Dennard suggests, "the real world of administrative life is riddled with political games and people vying for power and interest. It is beset by corruption, greed, ambition, inequity, petty crime, and narcissism" (Dennard 1996: 314).

The weakness in the micromanagement alternative, particularly Osborne and Gaebler's prescriptions, is that it focuses on the executive branch as if it

were the only unit that matters for effective decisionmaking in government, and that when rules become tedious, all they have to do is abandon them (Green and Hubbell 1996: 59). Certainly, the executive branch and its bureaucracy which reinventing wants to change is but part of a larger political environment which can be obtrusive, disruptive and hostile to status-quo disturbing and threatening innovations such as market based incentives, income generating projects and other such initiatives that potentially raise the possibility of lapses in accountability or those that may diminish the powers of politicians. Green and Hubbell stress this point by saying that Osborne and Gaebler assume apparently that:

> Congress, state legislatures, and local councils and boards will eventually see the light and simply ratify and delegate to managers the various techniques of financial flexibility [that Osborne and Gaebler] describe throughout their text. Nowhere do they mention the perennial political battles fought among legislators, executives, and the courts over such powers. Nowhere do they acknowledge that legislative bodies are naturally jealous of such fiscal power - that they were designed to be so in order to preserve a prudent balance of powers (Green and Hubbell 1996: 44).

It is in this respect that Osborne and Gaebler fail to locate the context of their reform visions. The roles of the three branches of government are important considerations in any agenda of reform in the bureaucracy, because "battles among the branches form the stuff of constitutional and administrative politics," and "(t)hese battles remind us that all three branches participate in administration, and that decisions about means and ends are always connected and always institutionally mediated" (Green and Hubbell 1996: 45). It should be noted that the foundations of bureaucratic action, more often than not, lie in the mandate vested upon it by congressional action. It is for this reason that reinventing critics like Moe and Gilmour remind and warn us that "the purpose of agency management is to implement the laws passed by Congress as elected representatives of the people," and that "the entrepreneurial management model is not and cannot be a substitute for political and legal accountability" (Moe and Gilmour 1995: 138). Thus, these authors also point that:

> Congress has been, is now, and will continue to be a central player in the politics and management of the administrative state. No promises, rhetoric, or behaviorist posturing will change this reality. The real issue is how to make this legal system, with its hierarchy and rules, work to the advantage of the federal manager, not the disadvantage. It is a legal problem calling for a legal answer (Moe and Gilmour 1995: 143).

Obviously, these arguments remind us and similarly-situated democratic societies that in our collective desire to eliminate "mindless constraints" of the bureaucracy, we have to be mindful of the rationale and the processes by which these constraints have been established. Micromanagement prescriptions would

therefore have to accommodate the realities and tensions impinging on bureaucratic organizations in their strategies and approaches, for whether we like it or not, public organizations are part of a larger environment. They are captives of this setting, and initiatives have to be reconciled and mediated with this setting. It is perhaps for this compelling reason why approaches to macromanagement — those that seek to understand pluralist dynamics within a democratic framework — become critical considerations in any movement for bureaucratic reform.

The Macro Perspective

Much effort has been invested in conceiving bureaucratic theories of reform in a more "democratic vein." Elaborate discussions have been pursued on such value-laden and normatively burdensome propositions such as "democratic representation," "participatory bureaucracy" and the "New Public Administration" movement of the late sixties. Despite these, says Kravchuk, "little progress has been made in reconciling democratic promise with bureaucratic realities" (Kravchuk 1992: 374). Today, the conflict remains alive, steeped in John Rohr's term, and cited by Kravchuk, in "primordial controversy" (Kravchuk 1992: 374). This is understandable for democratic systems are often replete with tensions that cannot simply be contained in what reinventors would refer to as "one size fits all" methodologies. Bureaucratic reform in a democratic framework would have to find itself grappling and struggling with such highly charged concepts as pluralism, citizen participation, empowerment, accountability, separation of powers and a whole menagerie of values that cannot be compartmentalized in cozy segmentations but would have to be treated together.

The so-called *Blacksburg Manifesto* issued by academics led by Gary Wamsley and his colleagues at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, is an attempt to raise our consciousness on these issues. Circulated sometime in the 1980s, but generating much attention even to the present time,[10] the Blacksburg Manifesto sought to find "a legitimate role for bureaucracy in democratic governance," arguing that the legitimacy problems of modern public administration are not only those stemming from effective management as the reinventing proponents would like us to believe, but that of governance or an administration in support of, and operating within a polity and the framework of a constitutional order (Stivers 1990: 247). To Wamsley, governing is:

> ...the ability of the political elites to create circumstances that evoke the kinds of relations among citizens that allow us to maintain a collective coherence, establish our identities individually and collectively, and generally foster conditions that ultimately permit us to discover ourselves and the meaning of our lives. Good governance by this

definition is about evocation of human potential more than steering a course. Good governance should also enable us to occasionally transcend, renew, or recreate ourselves individually and collectively in ways that maintain democracy while fostering human development and fulfillment (Wamsley 1996: 369) (italics in original).

Obviously, this is a very highly normative stance that would be difficult to operationalize and put in practice. As such, Wamsley and his collaborators aspire to, among others, the "refounding of public administration" based on the foundations and demands of governance and of the constitutional order (Green and Hubbell 1996: 38). Whether we can bring this down from its level of abstraction to more concrete and definable terms is another thing, but the focus is clear: the attempt is to strengthen the democratic polity in which bureaucracy and public administration must be part of. It is therefore compelling to consider the nature of the political system as an important consideration in bringing about reform because this is the way to achieve a good measure of legitimacy in administrative conduct.

"Theorists of public administration" says Stivers, "are much occupied these days with a quest for new bases of legitimacy" (Stivers 1990: 246). These legitimacy problems stem from what have been called "contextual tensions" inherent in a constitutional representative democracy committed to both individual freedom and justice and to national prosperity and stability (Stivers 1990: 247). For these reformers, the major agenda of government does not lie simply in making bureaucracy work, of providing it with managerial techniques and capabilities to contain spending, to check anomalies, or to deliver services efficiently, but finding a balance on "how to govern a political economy that requires a strong administrative system while providing for as much democracy and efficiency as possible" (Wamsley *et al.* 1992: 63).

The assumption here is clear: administration is not only part of politics but central to governance, and in this milieu, its reform agenda must take stock of how to negotiate this tension. Obviously, the notions of efficiency in public service have dominated public administration as overpowering and influential mindsets that provided the field and its profession a relatively limited vision of good governance. Unfortunately, the political arena demands larger-than-life bureaucracy perspectives that must blend, integrate and relate to the idiosyncrasies and intricacies of a complex pluralist order demanding diversity, compromise and flexibility.

In this light, there is a need to have a better understanding of the predicament of bureaucratic organizations distinct enough from the pressures besetting private organizations. Public organizations, for one, generally experience "a web of expectations and accountability" which must be taken into consideration in any reform effort. Unlike private companies which are often made accountable to, first, their investors and board of directors, and second, to

their customers, public managers are expected to be accountable to a number of stakeholders: elected officials, organizational superiors, professional peers, co-workers, clientele groups, special interest groups and to the large body of citizens (Ingraham and Romzek 1994: 6). It must be noted that these stakeholders often conflict in their aspirations, expectations and priorities, and reconciling them has never been, or never will be easy. Thus, the public sector endures numerous overlapping and sometimes conflicting accountability structures. Again, Ingraham and Romzek point out:

> An accountability mechanism frequently presents a trade-off of efficiency and flexibility for responsiveness and responsibility. One stakeholder sees a particular personnel policy (the employee's right to a hearing before dismissal, for example) as unnecessary and time-consuming; another sees the same policy as essential to accountability (Ingraham and Romzek 1994: 6).

In this sense, public administration is construed as "the administration of public affairs in a political context," and being a part of governance and this political context, the "Public Administrator must engage not in a struggle for markets and profits but in a struggle with other actors in the political and governmental processes for jurisdiction, legitimacy, and resources" (Wamsley *et al.* 1990: 36). As it is, Public Administration has been "criticized as consistently producing knowledge that emphasizes control, order, and technical rationality..., at the expense of politics, democracy, participation and representation" (Lee 1995: 544).

While the approach is rich and almost extravagant in symbols, in normative ideals, and in value premises, it remains wanting in real and tangible prescriptions. The Blacksburg Manifesto, for one, seeks to implant a more responsive bureaucracy through the power of active citizenship, through the building of better frameworks for interaction between the bureaucracy and the public (Stivers 1990), or through active political discourse to bring about a more effective citizenship (Fox and Miller 1995). Unlike the micromanagement perspective which offers concrete proposals and targets, the macro view is wanting in immediately actionable and dynamic proposals. For this matter, it remains underdeveloped, and in need of distinct set of proposals other than rhetoric.

But its assumptions and premises are viable enough, and as Kirklin pontificates, "the big questions of public administration must be rooted in achieving a democratic polity" (Kirklin 1996: 417). These ideas are of course not new, but instead, are enduring and unsettled questions. Waldo, as early as 1948, during the demise of the principles of management tradition, decried that "over-attention to administrative processes was harmful to democracy," while Appleby declared strongly that "politics and policy-making interpenetrate public administration" (Kirklin 1996: 417). The implicit suggestion here is that

bureaucracy as we know it today has generally been isolated from its public, from the political system, from its environment, because it has been "troubled by the dominance of narrow methods of inquiry occasioned by [its] embrace of behavioral social science approaches" resulting, to a large degree, "in the loss of the nuanced appreciation of public institutions in a democratic polity" (Kirklin 1996: 417).

In making rules and regulations that often affect the lives of people, bureaucracies have alienated themselves from the people that they are to serve. The enactment of legislation in democratic settings such as the Philippines for example, undergoes a complex ritual of public consultations, characterized by endless committee hearings and dialogues that seek to allow the articulation of views by various sectors, particularly affected ones, on potential policies. Bureaucratic rules which often serve as supplementary legislation, however are promulgated within the inner cabals of agency offices, more often than not, without any pronounced consultation with the public. Is this a legitimate exercise of discretion? One can say that this may be stretching the gift of democracy far too much, for any such consultations may be tedious and time-consuming.

How can bureaucracy then reform itself while helping reinforce the very democratic framework which nourishes it and its society? This is a big question, and macromanagement, at this time, apparently does not have enough specifics for these. It is however incumbent for reformers to work on the premise that the foundations of administrative practice lie in public law, and which Public Administration theorists and practitioners must take into account, must "rediscover," as Moe and Gilmour bluntly admonish us (Moe and Gilmour 1995). In this sense, bureaucratic reform cannot simply be realized without considering the modification of laws that govern the polity. Again, as Moe and Gilmour pontificate, in the case of the United States, "[l]aws intended to provide a foundation of public administration and a framework for managerial accountability, equity, and fairness in dealing with citizens have been eroded substantially" and that "such laws have suffered over the years from particularistic increments with little interest shown by either the president or Congress in periodic comprehensive reviews and integrative updating" (Moe and Gilmour 1995: 138).

Undoubtedly, this would strike us as a clarion call for a more comprehensive effort that would seek to "reinvent government" in the real sense of the term, not just its executive branch or its bureaucracy, as Osborne and Gaebler would want to do. Indirectly, it also spells out the need for interlinking bureaucratic reform with genuine government reform.

Conclusion

Many of these questions will be left hanging. They will remain controversies that will always haunt reformist visions. This paper has attempted to simplify them, although the implications can be far more staggering than what can be articulated in a single article. The important issue however is that bureaucratic reform must be founded on serious, well-crafted strategies instead of "political moods dominating ideas" (Rosenbloom and Ross 1994: 146). Can we thus reform bureaucracies today using the power of managerial tools and techniques alone, as reinventing proponents advocate? Or, must we first look in the direction of the larger governmental organization, the citizenry and its sectors, and the foundations of public law? Can we aspire to change these and the habits that have been so ingrained in the past?

In pursuing reinventing in the American federal bureaucracy, the Clinton administration through Gore's committee, established what it calls "reinventing laboratories" in the agencies it reviewed much in the same manner that reengineering proponents seek the creation of "reengineering teams" in companies that aspire to change their systems.[11] The only problem in this arrangement is that these initiatives appeared to have been more focused and limited to consultants and federal employees and officials. The citizenry was left out, but then it can be said that this may be part of the phase that can be undertaken later on. But one good thing can be said about this: at least they have a plan and a philosophy of reform to talk and debate about, to revise and redefine, and try to implement.

On the other hand, can we ever design an administrative system anchored on constructive pluralism, one that begins with conflict and concludes with consensus? Is this far too ideal and far-fetched from a world ridden with imponderables? How are we to arrest the growing and almost disruptive culture of hyper-pluralism pervasive in most democratic societies today?

These are issues that the Philippines and similarly situated societies, modern and modernizing, may have to confront in the coming years as new pressures, new burdens, and new challenges come into play to complicate governance and service delivery systems.

The easy way out, of course, as most dichotomists would suggest is to merge and blend the best of both worlds. That is again easy to say, but will they ever meet?

Endnotes

[1]There is abundant literature on the subject that encompasses the various dimensions of reforming bureaucratic organizations. The fairly recent ones that can be cited as explicitly relevant to the present discussion include the collection of papers in Wamsley and Wolf (1996, 1990); Blunden and Dando (1995); Ingraham and Romzek (1994); and Hill (1992). Those in Fox and Miller (1995); Dilulio (1994); Dilulio, Garvey and Kettl (1993); Thompson (1993); and Owen (1994) can likewise be cited as part of the literature that have come out on the subject in recent years. Scores of articles in various journals, represented by such "think" pieces as Kravchuk (1992); Moe and Gilmour (1995); Adams (1992) and Grindle and Hilderbrand (1995) can be listed as part of this burgeoning collection. Of course, we cannot leave out Osborne and Gaebler (1992), National Performance Review (U.S.) (1993) and the other articles and papers on both reinventing and reengineering that are cited elsewhere in this paper. There are also several materials on the subject representing countries in the Asia-Pacific region. See for instance the two-volume collection of papers in Zhijian, de Guzman and Reforma (1992). This passing list is by no means comprehensive, but it, more or less, highlights the perdurability and currency of the subject.

[2]Bureaucratic reform has been pointed out as part of the major agenda of transformation of the Ramos administration, as cited in several State of the Nation addresses.

[3]As a backgrounder, the NPR Report is now the subject of controversy in the United States. Adopting Osborne and Gaebler's blueprint of reforming the American federal government, President Clinton, early in his first term, assigned Vice-President Al Gore to lead a National Performance Review Committee and submit recommendations as to how the reinventing model can be operationalized in American bureaucracy. Gore's efforts, aided by a team of nearly 200 consultants from both academic and professional circles and scores of detailed federal employees produced, late in 1993, a 168 page report containing over 800 recommendations involving 27 federal agencies that promised to cut down government costs by at least 108 billion dollars once implemented. The Report has been published under the title *From Red Tape to Results: Creating a Government that Works Better and Costs Less* (1993), and is now treated as the cornerstone in the agenda of reform of the American federal government. The mechanics and strategies of how the Committee went about with its work can be found in NPR (1993). See also NPR (1996). Independent accounts of the NPR are also made by Ingraham (1996), Thompson and Ingraham (1996), and Kamensky (1996).

[4]There are several long overdue bills pending and languishing in Congress seeking to reform Philippine bureaucracy. These include Senate Bill nos. 1111 (An Act Reorganizing the Bureaucracy for Better Governance Granting and Defining the Authority of the President Thereof and for Other Related Purposes); 1170 (An Act Reorganizing the Government Creating for this Purpose a Joint Legislative - Executive Reorganization Commission Defining its Powers and Functions, Appropriating Funds Thereof and Providing for a Transitional Work Schedule Pending the Completion of the Reorganization and for Other Purposes); and 1374 (An Act to Reengineer the Bureaucracy for Better Governance Creating and Defining the Authority of the President Thereof and Other Related Purposes). House Bill No. 5671 (Reorganizing, Reengineering Bureaucracy) remains pending. I am certain that I probably missed other bills which have bearing on the present discussion, but the point is clear. We do not have a better alternative for reorganization.

[5]There are however interesting commentaries that come few and far between. I can cite for instance the soul-searching yet underappreciated efforts of Varela (1996) on administrative culture and the political system, and that of Sosmeña (1995) on bureaucracy and public accountability.

[6]There is not enough space in this paper to explain these concepts and their provenance. The reader, unfamiliar with the history and developments in the field of Public Administration, may however refer to Rosenbloom and Ross (1994), and Reyes (1995b) for a background of these

concepts. The dichotomy approach is very popular in American Public Administration to the extent that it has become contagious. I have also used this approach in analyzing the development of Public Administration in the Philippines, where literature and scholarly perspectives have been dichotomized into the inward-looking and the outward-looking orientations. See Reyes (1995a).

[7]For an incisive and analytical review of these concepts and the history of the development of American Public Administration, see again Rosenbloom and Ross (1994). See also Reyes (1995b).

[8]These ideas are discussed by Osborne and Gaebler chapter by chapter supported by glowing examples of success stories from specific agencies which adopted some of them. One may ask as to how Osborne and Gaebler came to use the term "reinventing." Apparently, David Osborne picked it up from the title of a book written by John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene, *Reinventing the Corporation* first published in 1985. Osborne admits he has not read the book although some of its prescriptions, involving ten "considerations" seem to be similar to Osborne and Gaebler's. See Naisbitt and Aburdene (1985: 52-91). See also Nathan (1995).

[9]These include the following articles on reinventing and reengineering in the public sector: Boer (1995); Hammer and Stanton (1995); Bovaird and Hughes (1995); Butler (1994); Callender and Johnston (1995); Caroll and Lynn (1996); Frederickson (1996); Fox (1996); Green and Hubbell (1996); Halachmi and Bouckaert (1995); Halachmi (1995); Ingraham (1996); Jordan (1994); Moe (1994); Nathan (1995); Rhodes (1994); Schachter (1995); Linden (1993); and Thompson and Ingraham (1996), among others. In the Philippines, the following can likewise be cited: Sta. Ana (1996); Reyes (1996); Department of Budget and Management (1995); Reyes (1994); Sajo and Tabaldo (1994).

[10]The Blacksburg Manifesto has undergone revisions through time but apparently, the original can be found in Wamsley *et al.* (1987). A revised version however can be found in Hill (1992).

[11]A good account of the NPR's work can be found in Kamensky (1996), while another evaluation is provided by Ingraham (1996).

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