

Building up the Filipino Public Sector Leader



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“What should be the competencies of a Filipino public sector leader?”

It was an event that’s one for the books. Over fifty public sector leaders – mayors, governors, president of state universities, executives of government-owned and controlled corporations – gathered together for the first time at the Civil Service Commission to answer the important, yet often overlooked, question: “What should be the competencies of a Filipino public sector leader?”

It was the first time that the country’s top leaders reflected – “Why am I a mayor? Why am I an assistant secretary?” The leaders reflected, exchanged ideas, discussed experiences, and at the end of the day, came up with a list of five competencies that every Filipino public sector leader should have with “Leading change” on top of the list.

This was Executive Director Agnes Padilla’s re-entry action plan (REAP) in action. In partnership with the Philippine Society for Training and Development (PSTD), ED Padilla sought to find out the competencies that make up a Filipino public sector leader. Through the once-in-a-lifetime gathering of public servants, they found the answers straight from the leaders themselves.

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CASE STUDY

AGNES PADILLA

Civil Service Commission



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Benchmarking in Australia

ED Padilla's passion on leadership was sparked when she went to Australia for the Facility's intervention called Top Management Benchmarking of HR Practices in Australia in 2011. ED Padilla, along with 11 other leaders from the Civil Service Commission including Chairman Francisco Duque, went on an eye-opening trip to Australia to observe how strategic human resource and organisational development were practiced in public and private organisations in a developed country. This unique intervention brought the 12 officials to Brisbane, Canberra and Sydney for organisation visits, information gathering and benchmarking.

“It was my first time in Australia and I was so impressed by the structure of their government. They really gave much premium on HR. In fact, I was impressed by their performance management system because they don't have the kind of monetary incentive that we have in the Philippines. Instead, it was competency-based. That got me thinking – if they could do away with that, maybe a competency-based program could also solve some of our issues here. So for my REAP, I decided to focus on what should be the competencies of a public sector leader,” said ED Padilla.

“In public service, you have to see to it that the people in your organisation are serving the Filipino people. Given the importance of a leader, how does the Philippine government build up its leaders?”

Leadership, according to ED Padilla, is crucial. A leader has resources at his or her command; a leader has authority that when abused may lead to corruption. Public sector leaders, unlike private sector leaders, are not into profit but public service. “In public service, you have to see to it that the people in your organisation are serving the Filipino people. Given the importance of a leader, how does the Philippine government build up its leaders?” This was the question ED Padilla reflected on during the conceptualisation of her REAP.

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“When we were in Australia, we talked about our observations on how their leaders think, how their leaders act professionally. I told myself, when I go back, I want to train our leaders to be like that, too,” she said.

According to ED Padilla, there are around 1.4 million public servants in the entire Philippine government system, but only 400,000 (or less) leaders. The scope of responsibility of these leaders, therefore, is big.

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“I’m not just talking about the secretaries because we also have leaders down the line...in fact middle managers are already leaders. The challenge is there is no leadership program yet for the greater mass of leaders. In CSC, we have management programs but no leadership programs. So I told myself, I am going to develop a leadership program...a program that doesn’t look at the incumbent leader but at the emerging leader,” said ED Padilla.

Fruitful experience

ED Padilla used her background in training in developing CSC’s leadership program. With the set of five leadership competencies in place – leading change, leading employees well, delivering customer satisfaction, communicating and building relationships, continuous learning – ED Padilla led the development of a training module for each competency. These modules are now used as reference of CSC’s leadership program, which the Civil Service Institute, CSC’s training arm, offers to build up incumbent and emerging government leaders.

Through ED Padilla’s REAP the government now uses the leadership competencies as reference for recruitment of talent and decision at leadership, basis for scholarship programs as leaders should be continually educated, and now as basis of a certification program.

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ED Padilla was one of the firsts who finished her REAP, and the fruits of her labor have been integrated in the other interventions such as the competency-based modelling and profiling and the certification program. “When I was conceptualising it, I just wanted a leadership program which could be the basic requirement for one who will be appointed to a leadership post. I did not expect that it would be this big.”

“I must say the benchmarking intervention started it all for CSC. If it was not for benchmarking, our minds would not be opened on how we can be strategic in our function at CSC. Sure, we’ve been sent abroad for various conferences before. But there were no deliberate attempt to observe. In the benchmarking intervention, we were all students – even our chairman. It was a very fruitful experience, and it will not have been possible without the support of the Facility,” she added.