IASIA Annual Conference

Public Administration:
Challenges of Inequality and Exclusion

THE UNDESA/IASIA INITIATIVE FOR
PUBLIC SECTOR LEADERSHIP CAPACITY
ENHANCEMENT

Introductory Remarks by
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Miami, Florida, United States, 14-18 September 2003
1. Background

The United Nations Millennium Declaration lays out an agenda for the next fifteen years that, if even partially achieved, will represent a significant step forward for human kind. It calls for economic development and the eradication of poverty; the insurance of environmental sustainability; the support of democracy, good governance and human rights; and the maintenance of peace and security. The unfortunate reality, however, is that, in far too many instances, governmental leaders in many countries will not have all of the skills and knowledge necessary to provide the kind of leadership that will be necessary for the successful implementation of the Millennium Declaration and achievement of the Millennium Goals.

These realities create greater needs for effective leadership and management education and training. Such education and training is critical to both the immediate and the long-term well being of the world’s people since the quality of public administration education and training has a very significant relationship to the quality of governance. In those regions where public administration education and training is the most advanced, the quality of governance is normally the most highly developed. The quality of governance, in turn, is often highly related to the level of development of a region. While there is no country in any region of the world, which can be absolutely satisfied with the quality of its governance, it is very clear that in those countries where governance is strongest and most transparent, economic development is greatest and poverty is neither as widespread nor as oppressive.

While it is widely recognized that education and training is an important precondition for effective public administration and governance, more often than not, its impact is a long term one rather than immediate. The reason for this is obvious. In most cases, the recipients of education and training initiatives are frequently the next generation of governmental leadership – students at University preparing for careers in government or, beginning or mid-level career civil servants. However, the current situation is such that
the need for the improvement of the quality of governance - especially in countries in the many parts of the world that are making the transition to democratic governance, or to a market economy or both – is far too critical to limit any initiative in the area of improving the quality of public administration education and training to simply the next generation of governmental leadership.

The reality is that there is a great need to improve the quality of education and training for today’s governmental leadership, as well as for tomorrow’s. In response to this critical need, at last year’s IAISIA annual conference, the Division for Public Administration and Development Management of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration initiated a four-year effort to improve the quality of education and training in public administration worldwide, but with particular emphasis on Africa, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. The joint UN/IAISIA initiative is designed to assist top level-government leadership to adapt most effectively to the many complicated problems that are facing contemporary governments in a globalizing world.

The joint UN/DESA and IASIA initiative is a two track one. The first important, and often overlooked, element of this effort will be to focus upon the education and training needs of the current generation of governmental leadership – particularly leadership in those areas of the world which are undergoing significant governmental or economic transition. The second part of this initiative will involve focusing on the next generation of governmental leadership and the improvement of its education and training opportunities.

Since then, a number of activities have been undertaken as part of the initiative and many others are being planned. Meetings have been held in Turin, Italy; Bratislava, Slovakia; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and New York City, which have focused on the development of a strategy for the improvement of public administration education and training. At the Expert Group Meeting on “New Challenges for Senior Leadership Enhancement for Improved public Management in a Globalizing World, which took place in Turin, Italy on September 19-20, the participants made efforts to define governmental leadership, to categorize the UN/IAISIA initiative in terms of target groups and to review key issues facing governmental leadership. The seminar on “Improving the Quality of Public Administration Education and Training: New Needs, New
Approaches”, co-sponsored by IAISIA, the Brazilian School of Public Administration, Fundacao Getuluio Vargas, and UNDESA/DPADM and held on 10-13 January 2003 in Rio de Janeiro, resulted in the development of a set of ideas and techniques that are appropriate for the education and training for the next generation of governmental leadership. It focused on both education and training activities and, most importantly, on the ways to make them relevant to newly developing civil servants. Within the framework of the joint UN/IAISIA initiative, a publication on leadership capacity enhancement in a globalizing world is under preparation.

A number of issues that directly concern Management Development Institutions, such as those that are members of the IASIA, have emerged from the various discussions that have been held under the initiative. I will highlight just a few.

2: Key challenges facing senior public sector leadership:

During the meeting in Turin, six main issues were identified as being key challenges facing public sector top leadership of developing countries in the next five years and they are:

(i) Development of future leaders
(ii) Promotion of horizontal management
(iii) Assessing and addressing the impact of HIV/AIDS
(iv) Introducing performance management in the public services
(v) Managing rapid change
(vi) Designing a strategic vision and developing own-thinking capacity.

3: Key issues:

The UNDESA/IASIA Initiative is premised on the belief that leadership capacity enhancement programs must be conceived and implemented with the aim of making leaders capable of effectively addressing the key issues facing the world today and that its planning and implementation must be interdisciplinary, international and inter-sectoral (involving public and non-profit organizations).

The following issues were singled out as some of the critical ones facing the leaders in the world, at least for the next five years:
(i) **Globalization**: Globalization needs to be understood in its nature, its impact, in the way it can be harnessed to limit its negative impact, and how benefits can derive from its positive effects on development. This is especially relevant for countries of the South, which have difficulty to influence globalization.

(ii) **Strategic approaches to poverty alleviation**: Leaders have to develop cross-sectoral approach to solving problems to reduce poverty. The following aspects need attention:

- Financing development
- Developing civic engagement
- Improving service delivery especially in water, health, HIV/AIDS, education, environment
- Promoting horizontal management

(iii) **Conflict prevention and resolution**: The specific case of countries in conflict or needing rebuilding was discussed and it was agreed that stability and security are key to promoting sustainable reforms. For those countries, special strategies need to be in place to ensure that the seeds of conflict are not planted again.

(iv) **Legitimacy of state institutions**: Creating legitimacy and trust is critical. This can be done by establishing strong participation mechanisms and by defining in a transparent manner the roles and relationships of different spheres of government. It includes also the development of an administrative culture based on the rule of law and a system, which ensures security to attract investment and encourage property ownership.

(v) **Leading in a world of increasing interdependency**: Taking into account the present political environment in an increasing globalizing world, new areas of leadership competency need to be strengthened, in particular:

- Diversity management
- Knowledge management
- Horizontal management
- Resource and information management
- Partnerships and negotiation skills
- Communication and ICT skills

(vi) **Leading large-scale transformations**: This challenge involves the following tasks:
• Working with stakeholders
• Balancing and managing long term and short term objectives in the context of change
• Communication skills
• Creating a shared vision
• Empowering employees

(vii) Leading with contradictions and paradox: The world is changing so rapidly that many contradictions emerge continuously. It is incumbent on leaders and all employees to be able to deal with more ambiguity. These following areas were singled out:
  • Economic liberalism versus social welfare
  • People getting poorer having with more voice
  • Managing change while ensuring stability and security

4: Strategies, approaches, and techniques for Leadership Training Programmes

Whether it is called training, competency enhancement, development or by any other name, leadership training needs to be undertaken with a clear understanding of the ultimate purpose it is pursuing as well as the impact of culture on leadership. The culture of politics varies from country to country.

Given the diversity of administrative cultures and based on a variety of societal environment, each country leadership has to be open-minded and look at all the potential solutions to their own problems. The key element is to develop a sense of direction for the public service of a given country which takes into account its history, its environment and its position in the global world in a realistic manner.

In this sense, the basic guideline on strategies, approaches, techniques and methodologies for leadership capacity development is that each situation, the needs it imposes as well as the composition and nature of the targeted audience should dictate the approaches, techniques, thematic content and training methods to be adopted. In designing, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of leadership development programmes, whether they be in the immediate, short term, medium term or
long term, should adopt a participative approach, involving the beneficiaries and target
groups of such programmes.

5: Framework for deciding on target audiences:

The Turin meeting essentially concluded that, in many circumstances, leadership
capacity development programmes need to target the following different levels:

- Potential leaders who are still at University and other tertiary institutions level
- Junior civil servants
- Senior civil servants
- Other policy makers such as Parliamentarians and Ministers in central and local
governments
- A mix group of leaders from public sector, civil society, and private sector

Each of the target groups would require a strategy, an approach and methodologies
that are congruent with their needs. Even the thematic content for the programme would
vary depending on the target group.

6: The Critical Role of Management Development Institutes

In the process of Public sector leadership capacity development, Management
Development Institutes have a critical role to play. They constitute the infrastructure in
their respective countries for management development, they have human resources
capable of doing management research training and providing technical advisory and
consultancy services in different aspects of management. Governments should count on
them for taking further initiatives such as the one that is addressed by this paper. Right
from training needs assessment, human resource policy design, personnel development
programmes formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, these institutes
should play a leading role. It is understood that some of them, in fact most of them will
require to have their capacities reinforced, but this does not in any way minimize the role
they are supposed to play. In addition they have networks at national and regional levels
through which they can pool expertise, facilitate exchange of successful practices and
share innovative practices. For this they should play a leading role in the public sector
leadership capacity enhancement initiative.
7: Some Suggestions from the Turin Meeting

In a brainstorming exercise, the following suggestions were made to improve leadership-training strategies and would be a starting point for experts from management development institutions to discuss the issue of what type of training and for what specific targets

- Design a week long flagship leadership training course
- Combine regional and national workshops
- Develop training of trainers
- Experiment with innovative approaches based on real cases based on local experiences
- Disseminate case studies and highlight best practices
- Use role playing as an effective technique
- Develop networks enabling leaders to exchange their views (UNPAN could play that role by creating chat groups on selected issues)
- Adopt a vertical system of training aiming at training organizations rather than individuals
- Further explore the subject by inciting researchers to work on the theme; especially on the way culture impacts on leadership and the way various societies may understand the concept of leadership differently.
- Focus learning on concrete issues, especially for programs targeting senior civil servants.
- The profile of ideal facilitators should be (i) A senior person who has respect of the target audience and (ii) one or two experts recognized for their expertise on the issue at hand. The two should work together and focus on problem solving.
- Support the leadership of national and regional institutions to meet the challenges of design, strategy, marketing and ensuring credibility of management development programmes.
- Pooling together institutions inside and outside a particular region including making effective use of the networks created by them.
• Carry out more research on leadership enhancement to make an inventory of innovative initiatives done by training institutions in the field.

8: The need for resource mobilization strategies and partnerships to support leadership capacity enhancement

Finally I have to point out that one critical reality acknowledged is that the kind of leadership capacity enhancement that would enable countries have critical masses of capable and competent leaders would require a substantial amount of resources especially in financial terms. One of the issues that need to be discussed therefore is how such resources can be mobilized and how various linkages and partnerships can be forged to mobilize the resources. Probably this should be among the issues that a group of management development institutions on the should be encouraged to discuss.