

# RESTORING TRUST AND BUILDING INTEGRITY IN GOVERNMENT:

## ISSUES AND CONCERNS IN THE PHILIPPINES AND AREAS FOR REFORM

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### ABSTRACT

*In most general terms this article addresses the issue of the continuing decline of trust in government and the imperatives for reform. The decline on trust in government has been brought about by many factors including the inefficient and ineffective delivery of services, waste of public resources, graft and corruption, lack of integrity in government, poor leadership, excessive red tape, ineffective reorganization and structural changes, too much centralization, among other things. In summary, unresponsive governance has been responsible for the continuing decline of trust in government. The article introduces a framework of areas of reform imperatives with the general objective of restoring trust in government. These areas include the following: (1) reforms in institutions and structures, including reforms in organizations, processes and procedures; (2) reforms in mindsets, paradigms and behavior; (3) reforms in leadership at various levels; and (4) reforms among citizens, i.e., citizen engagement and/or citizen participation. We begin by reviewing various examples in the Philippines including continuing efforts to address graft and corruption, red tape, and inefficiencies in the government's politico-administrative environment.*

**Keywords** – Areas for reform, building integrity, citizen engagement, leadership, Philippine bureaucracy, restoring trust

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## INTRODUCTION

“More than at any other point in time, what the country needs is an opportunity to trust its public institutions...” (Emerlinda Roman, President, University of the Philippines, 2009)

Responsive governance is key to the restoration of trust in government. It is within this context that reforms on public administration are imperative to bring about responsive governance and in restoring trust in government. In a government blemished with corruption, inefficiency, and ineffectiveness, restoring trust is primordial. Poor public perception towards government is a challenge and restoring people’s trust is an equally important concern. Trust is upheld when a public official is brought to office or power through a democratic process such as election, however, the more important challenge is how to sustain public trust once that public official already holds the power.

In the Philippines for instance, the newly-elected President, Benigno Simeon Aquino III, has had the highest trust rating in the history of the Philippine government with 88% (very good) trust rating higher than those recorded by all his predecessors since 1989, including his mother, former President Corazon Aquino (Social Weather Stations (SWS) 2010)<sup>1</sup>. The Filipino people believed that President Aquino III shall introduce reforms in the dysfunctional institutions and systems of the Philippine politico-administrative sphere. The President himself has called for the adoption of a “straight path toward change” or in Filipino “*ang matuwid na daan tungo sa pagbabago.*” His campaign slogan has also been found to be effective as many would attribute such catchphrase to avoid redundancy of the term slogan to his winning in the Presidential race. His campaign slogan says “*Kung walang corrupt, walang mahirap.*” (If there is no corruption, there is no poverty). As such, one of the first few things that he has done upon assumption to office is “to do some housekeeping” by issuing Memorandum Circular No 1 which has declared that “all non-career executive service positions vacant as of 30 June 2010 and [extended] the services of contractual employees whose contracts expire on 30 June 2010.” However, the MC has led people into confusion since as President, it should have been issued as an Executive Order and not in the form of a Memorandum Circular. Hence, he issued his first Executive Order or EO No. 1<sup>2</sup> which mandated the creation of a “Truth Commission” which shall identify and determine cases of graft and corruption and is mandated to call upon any government investigative or prosecutorial agency such as the Department of Justice or any of the agencies for assistance in investigating the case.

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During his State of the Nation Address (SONA) and after 100 days in office, President Aquino expressed his fury at some anomalies involving Government Owned and Controlled Corporations (GOCCs) such as the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) for hefty and obscene bonuses and the National Food Authority (NFA) for questionable over-importation and oversupply of rice. Such initiative of the President to do “housekeeping in the government” has been cascaded down to his Cabinet. For in-

stance, in the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Secretary Jesse Robredo has initiated reforms that include the operationalization of a “full disclosure policy,” mandating all local governments to post in their websites all financial transactions and procurement in accordance to the fundamental governance principle of transparency. Additionally, he emphasized the imperatives of performance measured for local government with the establishment and promotion of the “Performance Challenge Fund and Seal of Good Housekeeping.”

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The above are indicative examples of efforts to reform public sector institutions to restore trust and promote good governance. Bureaucracies are given the responsibility to provide the fundamental needs of the citizens and they are expected to deliver services efficiently, effectively, and equitably. A more important consideration is that they have to uphold the public trust.

Still early on in his presidency, President Aquino III enjoys a high approval rating and is therefore presented a rare opportunity to restore trust in government.<sup>3</sup> As described by University of the Philippines Emerlinda Roman in 2009, what the Philippines needs is an opportunity to trust its public institutions. Does the positive survey result of the highest leader of the country provide once more an opportunity to restore trust in our institutions? Or would this be another missed opportunity? The Philippines has missed so many opportunities to implement fundamental economic, political and administrative reforms in the past brought about by the imposition of Martial Law in 1972, the People Power Revolution of 1986, and another People Power Revolution of 2001. As Mariano (2008) puts it:

The economic history of the Philippines reads like a litany of missed opportunities. The descendants of that magnificent generation of 19th-century reformers, revolutionaries and visionaries who established the first republic in Asia have all but squandered their priceless legacy. From a position of leadership, the Philippines now lags behind its neighbors, many of whom had once looked to it as a model. The nation that was once regarded as among the most modern in this part of the world now presents a sad picture of backwardness and poverty.

After President Corazon Aquino’s term as President from 1986 to 1992, the trust rating of the Presidents of the Philippines has continued to slip down. Former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (PGMA) has enjoyed a very high disapproval and distrust rating<sup>4</sup>. During the last months of her presidency, President Arroyo’s disapproval and distrust rating for October 2009 were at their highest since 2008, at 51 percent and 52 percent, respectively (Sy, 2009). Meanwhile, according to Pulse Asia survey, a sizeable majority of Filipinos (67%) expresses distrust in former President Arroyo. With regard to her performance, about two in three Filipinos (62%) are critical of the work done by former President Arroyo during the period April to June 2010 while around the same percentages either approve of the same or are ambivalent on the matter (16% versus 22%). This served as a challenge to present government, to restore trust in government which was taken away by the past administrations.

History has shown that governance in the Philippines has been characterized by excessive politics, patronage and family. This was described by Johnston (2005), in his book, *Syndromes of Corruption*, whereby he considered the Philippines as a country characterized by the domination of oligarchs and clans. Another concern is the Filipino culture of “pakikisama” or maintaining SIR (smooth interpersonal relationship), nepotism, “utang na loob” (debt of gratitude), and “kinship” which have contributed to a larger “partisan politics.” These characteristics or rather ambivalent values of a Filipino are difficult to disconnect from the bureaucracy. These features of a Filipino, when applied to the bureaucratic institutions become “negative bureaucratic behaviour”<sup>5</sup> as described by Cariño (1979; 1986) which would lead to a tangle of more serious consequences such as red tape, bureaucratic corruption, and inefficiency, among others or in a more liberal or obvious term, “bureaucratic corruption.” According to Lee (1986), bureaucratic corruption is due to the problems of incongruence between legal codes and folk norms. As a result, corruption becomes endemic and it develops into a “culture” of corruption. As Kim (2003: 483) defines it, “the culture of corruption refers to a society where the phenomenon of corruption has well-established its position as one of its major characteristics for it to function. In other words, it indicates a cultural structure where corruption is a normal daily occurrence in the form of bribery, malfeasance, nepotism and cronyism.” For instance, there is an open acknowledgement that corruption is endemic in road bidding, permeating the entire life of road projects, from bidding to completion (Coronel, 2000), however, the Filipino people tolerate it because they see it as something “normal.”

Given the above situation, it is not inaccurate to say that the Philippines is in crisis of trust and integrity. The Catholic Bishop Conference of the Philippines (2005) stressed that:

At the center of the crisis is the issue of moral value, particularly the issue of trust. The people mistrust our economic institutions which place them under the tyranny of dehumanizing poverty. They also mistrust yet another key institution, our political system. This mistrust is not recent. For a long time now, while revelling in political exercises, our people have shown a lack of trust in political personalities, practices, and processes. Elections are often presumed tainted rather than honest. Congressional and senate hearings are sometimes narrowly confined to procedural matters and often run along party lines. Politics has not effectively responded to the needs of the poor and marginalized.

This article addresses the case of declining trust in the government and the imperative to restore integrity in government. The article has four sections. The first deals with the discussion of the features of the public service ethos and the notion of integrity and trust in public service. The second part presents the case of the Philippines zeroing in on the most important value of public service ethics, i.e. integrity in public service. This is important to acquire and maintain the credibility of the government in serving the people and in restoring public trust. The third part cites some issues and challenges in public service emphasizing integrity and the article ends with a conclusion that values and virtues of public ethics must be upheld all the time. Finally, the article suggests ways on how trust can be engendered and maintained by governance mechanisms. It introduces a four-pronged strategy for reforms in the bureaucracy which include: (1) reforms in institutions and structures, including reforms in organizations, processes and procedures; (2)

reforms in mindsets, paradigms and behaviour; (3) reforms in leadership (at various levels); and (4) reforms in citizen engagement and citizen participation.<sup>6</sup>

## **TRUST AND INTEGRITY AS VIRTUES OF PUBLIC ETHICS AND PUBLIC SERVICE**

The administration of government differs, and must necessarily differ, from the activities of the business world, both in the object to which it is directed, in the criteria of its success, in the necessary conditions under which it is conducted, and the choice of instrument which it employs...There are certain crucial values which must underlie public administration...traditional standards of probity and integrity should not be relaxed in order to secure economy and efficiency.(House of Commons, Report on the Civil Service, 1994 as cited in Funnell, Jupe and Andrew 2009: 5)

In several countries, the Philippines included, public administration reforms have been accompanied by (and sometimes based on) a questioning of the very notion of “public service,” and “mistrust of civil servants.” The complex challenges faced by government in all countries cannot be met successfully unless the status of government service is revalued. In turn, this requires that the traditional public service ethos be reinforced. The specific core values associated with public service vary from country to country. Although there are several virtues and/or values related to public service ethics such as honesty, integrity, impartiality, respect for the rule of law, respect for persons, among others, values/virtues vary from one person to another and from one country to another. The generic values are, however, common to all countries: public servants are expected to treat all citizens with respect, fairness, and integrity; to be impartial and equitable in their actions; and to ensure accountability and effectiveness in the delivery of services (Bouder, Bertok and Beschel, 2001). A public servant has a duty that is supposed to go beyond his personal interest. A public servant must have a high sense of duty. “Duty” as described by Godwin as the application of the capacity of the individual to the general advantage, is the essence of trust that the citizens have in the public sector (Funnell, Dupe and Andrew 2009: 65). Bennis, Goleman and O’Toole note that the idea of duty in public service is as old as philosophy itself (e.g., in both *Plato’s Republic* and Aristotle’s *Politics*) and explained that a respect for duty in the Aristotelian world is inescapable if one is to leave an honorable and worthwhile life. (Bennis, Goleman and O’Toole, 2008: 41).

In today’s world, however, Funnell, Dupe and Andrew (2009) state that the public sector is no longer the place for selfless public servant but rather those in the private sector. The “corporatist culture” or “managerialist” movement (Pollitt, 1990) has severely tested the integrity of public servants who are under the scrutiny of normative moral standards of moral conduct as opposed to the blatantly self-interested behavior justified by measurable performance borrowed from business. As a result, reformist governments thrive and shift from being public service provider to prescriptive regulator to the role of managing change for the future, providing frameworks and at the same time overseeing the protection of the public interest. These governments promote efficiency and effectiveness. These are essentially the same values underlying all efforts to reform govern-

ment, including those suggested by Osborne and Gaebler (1993) in their seminal work on “reinventing government.”

Public service ethos such as integrity and trust are significant in introducing any kind of reforms. Public sector reforms, including reorganization that involve changes in structures, processes and procedures would be ineffective unless these area accompanied by reforms in behavior, mindsets and eventually values.

### **The notion of trust and integrity in public service**

According to Cox, La Case and Levine (2008), there is no perfect definition for integrity. Integrity is one of the most important and oft-cited terms of virtue. It is also perhaps the most puzzling. For example, while it is sometimes used virtually synonymously with “moral,” “acting morally” has also been distinguished from “acting with integrity.” When used as a virtue term, ‘integrity’ refers to a quality of a person's character; however, there are other uses of the term. One may speak of the integrity of a wilderness region or an ecosystem, a computerized database, a defense system, a work of art, and so on. When it is applied to objects, integrity refers to the wholeness, intactness or purity of a thing—meanings that are sometimes carried over when it is applied to people. These authors explained integrity in terms of; (i) integrity as the integration of self; (ii) integrity as maintenance of identity; (iii) integrity as standing for something; (iv) integrity as moral purpose; and (v) integrity as a virtue. These accounts are reviewed below. We then examine several issues that have been of central concern to philosophers exploring the concept of integrity: the relations between types of integrity, integrity and moral theory, and integrity and social and political conditions. More so, others would say that integrity is public service with honor. Still others would associate integrity with moral character. *We suggest that integrity is doing the right thing even if no one is looking, or even if others are not doing the right thing.*

On the other hand, “trust” in the Philippine parlance is called “*tiwala*.” The root word “*tiwala*” can be seen in the Filipino term “*katiwalian*” or in English “lack of trust.” The term “*katiwalian*” is also closely associated with “corruption.” The root word of “*katiwalian*” is “*tiwali*” or wrongdoing or an anomaly, or corrupt (noun) which is the opposite of “*tiwala*.” According to Hardin (1998), the first result of lawfulness is “trust” which means that the existence of law enables people to trust. For instance, they trust that the existence of law protects their lives and properties. We can associate this with John Locke ([1690]1988: 171; 381), when the society turns power over to its governors, “whom society hath set over itself, with this express of tacit trust, that it shall be employed for their good, and the preservation of their property.” Along with Locke (1690), earlier philosopher Hobbes (1651), and later Rousseau (1762), consider this as a social contract; however, Dunn (1984) suggested that the relationship of citizens to government should be one of “trust” not of contract.

Hardin (1998: 11) likewise considers “trust” as “a fundamentally cognitive notion,” such that an individual trusting is presumed to have some knowledge of the object of such trust. Cariño (2007) sees “trust” in a positive light, but something that has a limit. She then argues that one may trust an untrustworthy person and be led to ruin you. Thus, she suggests that a certain limitation of trust or a certain amount of distrust may be necessary not only to maintain interpersonal and even person-to-institution relationships but also to protect the parties in the transaction. Levi (1998) supports this by stat-

ing that “trust” implies a risk to the “truster.” There are instances when the trust is so low that we can consider it as “confidence” rather than trust. On the other hand, the risk is so high that we consider the “truster” as gullible. In this article however, the authors are more focused on “public trust” more specifically trust in government.

“Trust” is also associated with “social capital” (Coleman 1990; Putnam, 1993; Fukuyama 1996; Rothstein and Stolle, 2008). Fukuyama for instance affirms the important role of government institutions in lowering the personal investments and providing the assurances that make possible the trust that lubricants cooperation. Russell Hardin (1993) says that distrust breeds distrust. Fukuyama (1996) then suggests that to restore trust is to “build a social capital.” Levi (1998) explains trust in terms of “generalized” notion, i.e., “generalized trust.” Likewise, Coleman’s (1990) emphasis is family, Putnam (1993) intermediate associations, Miller (1992) leadership, and Kreps (1990), a corporate principle.

On a broader note, Cariño (2007) talked about trust as a “governance capital.” Governance as UNDP (1997: 9) defines it, “is the exercise of political, economic, administrative authority to manage a nation’s affairs. It embraces all of the methods- good and bad –that societies use to distribute power and manage public resources and problems.” Governance calls for accountability, participation, predictability and transparency (ADB 1995). From the definition itself, we can say that it takes a lot of “trust” from the people to entrust to the government institutions and its leaders the affairs of government that will affect the whole society –positively and even negatively. When there is trust, governing is easier. Trusting citizens give governments leeway in the programs and methods they use in carrying out their tasks. Their trust allows governments to be bold in instituting innovations or forwarding programs with time lags in producing benefits. They are more willing to cooperate in their programs and provide inputs (information, time, even taxes) to make them work (Ramesh 2006 as cited in Cariño, 2007).

## **INTEGRITY AND TRUST AS TRANSLATED TO THE PHILIPPINE PUBLIC SERVICE**

Trust lies at the nexus and the praxis (theory and practice) of public administration and governance. In the Philippines, this value is clearly stipulated in Art. XI of the 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines which holds public trust as the fundamental principle of office, and requires full integrity and accountability of public officers and employees. Sec. 1 states that, a “Public office is a public trust. Public officers and employees must at all times be accountable to the people, serve them with utmost responsibility, integrity, loyalty, and efficiency, act with patriotism and justice, and lead modest lives” (1987 Philippine Constitution). This provision is also mentioned in RA 6713 or the Rules of Ethical Standards for Public Officers and Employees. This means that integrity of *both* the politician and civil servant must be assured, as both carry a public responsibility. The distinction between politician and public administrator, however, is often difficult to define for the public. The general public do not make such distinction and holds the government responsible, and rightly so, as most public decisions involve both elected and non-elected officials.

The above provision in the Philippine Constitution carries with it a sense of duty and morality. The misuse and the abuse of power is a breach of trust from the citizens. In similar fashion, the above is also true at international and supranational levels. For example, in Europe, citizens often perceive the European Union Institutions as one single government called Brussels without making a distinction between the elected members of the European Parliament, the employees and the members of the European Commission, or national public officials meeting in the Council of Europe. International organizations, too, are viewed as a monolith. As a consequence, the integrity issue necessarily involves all components of a government, and attempts to deal with lapses in conduct should target all types of government officials. In the United Kingdom (UK), for example, the Committee on Standards in Public Life had a mandate to review standards at all levels of government activity. It is clear that the public cannot accept double standards for politicians and civil servants. However, when dealing specifically with public administration, politicians should be viewed more in the context of their relationship with the civil servants rather than as a specific target for attention, as the nature of their accountability is different. This leaves out of the scope of this article areas such as financing of political parties and political campaigns which in many countries raise profound ethical issues that go much beyond the integrity and effectiveness of the public administration apparatus itself. (Schiavo-Campo and Sundaram, 2001)

### **Issues and Challenges in Public Service Ethics in the Philippines**

Generally, civil society has been more vocal in expressing distrust in the government where there is no transparency and accountability. Indeed, civil society groups in the Philippines have historically been in the forefront of demanding accountability and answerability from the government. They became much more visible after the ouster of the Marcos dictatorship, with the democratic space provided by the Constitution of 1987 that recognized the imperative of direct civil society in governance. The withdrawal of confidence and trust in government was at the core of the people power revolution that resulted in the ouster of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986, popularly referred to as the 1986 “People Power Revolution” The same is true with the withdrawal of confidence and trust in the short lived presidency of Joseph Estrada that led to his impeachment in 2001, during the so-called People Power II Revolution. The extreme lack of trust in government was again manifested during the presidency of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, whose administration was riddled with allegations of massive graft and corruption. At the forefront of exposing such corruption were civil society groups including media. Former President Arroyo left a legacy of graft-ridden projects that ran into trouble because of political interference, corruption and weak capacities (Landingin, 2011). The book entitled, *The Seven Deadly Deals*, compiled by Newsbreak chronicled the stories of seven out of the many costly and chaotic contracts by the government that were conceived and implemented during the nine-year period of presidency of Macapagal-Arroyo. Among these infrastructure projects tainted by allegations of massive graft and corruption reinforcing distrust in government were the North Luzon Railways Project , the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal, and the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway and the Metro Rail Transit Project (Box 1).



**Box One**  
**Infrastructure Projects of the Arroyo Administration**

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|--|---|
| 1. The North Luzon Railways (Northrail)        | Overly delayed and marked with a huge cost overrun. Funded by the Export-Import Bank of China with \$900M soft loan that forms the bulk of original cost of \$1.18B making the Philippines the largest recipient of pledges of Chinese loan, investments, and aid in South East Asia from 2002-2007. Apart from the delays, the project is also running over the budget from \$1.18B to \$1.3B. |
| 2. Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal | Muddled full roll out. Built at \$565 M, NAIA 3 has become a symbol of everything that is wrong in the Philippine infrastructure; underutilized with only 55% floor area partially operating, structural defects, unsafe and unsound (not sure if the building will not collapse in the event of earthquake) and of course, the rising cost of the airport                                      |
| 3. The Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (SCTEX)   | Built on overoptimistic traffic forecasts at a huge cost more than twice the original budget. A cost of P34.1B and funded by P26.9 B loan from Japan, SCTEX is the country' longest tollway. The debt service payments are estimated to average about P1.2B/year based on current peso-yen exchange rates.  |
| 4. Metro Rail Transit (MRT)                    | The slew of subsidies for the privates-sector built MRT3 and the government's effort to stem the financial losses by acquiring the MRT Corp. Completed in 2000, the \$675 M has become what the World Bank , in a 2009 Philippine transport sector study as one of the "high exposure examples of projects that were poorly prepared and implemented."  |

Source: Landingin, 2011.

Indeed, a primordial concern and problem in the Philippine public service is graft and corruption. The Philippines for over a long period of time has been suffering from the ill-effects of corruption. Apart from corruption, public sector has been marred with bad image. People in the bureaucracy have, fairly or unfairly, been labelled as inept, corrupt and slow. There is crisis in public confidence and distrust in public officials and employees in different levels. Even among government agencies, there is distrust. For instance, the Department of Social Work and Development (DSWD), seemingly demonstrates continued distrust of the local governments in the implementation of the conditional cash transfer program (CCT) by going directly to the people and essentially bypassing frontline local governments who are in direct touch with the people. Another classic corruption case involving national and local governments is the massive overpricing of lamp posts in Cebu from an estimated cost of P83, 000 per lamp post to P224, 000 per lamp post – a blatant overpricing of over 300%! (PCIJ, 2010).

When there is corruption, the integrity of the government official is being questioned. This in turn, cripples the services of the government and affects the perception of its clientele (the public good). For instance, according to the Social Weather Stations (2010), the annual proportion of managers seeing “a lot” of corruption in the public sector has been steady at two-thirds since 2005. Almost all of them see it happening in the national level; progressively fewer see it at the provincial, city and barangay levels. The median reported provision for bribery in a government contract continues to be 20 percent. (See box 2 below)

**Box Two**  
**Highlights of the SWS Survey on Corruption**

- Managers’ assessments of government sincerity in fighting corruption depend on the agency the survey asks about; here I list the agencies from highest to lowest. The Supreme Court, Social Security System, Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Health and city governments have kept their grades of “good” (defined by SWS as Net Sincerity of +30 to +49). Trial courts and the Armed Forces of the Philippines have risen to “moderate” (+10 to +29) in 2009 from “neutral” (-9 to +9) in 2008.
- Agencies graded “neutral” in 2009 are the Sandiganbayan, Commission on Audit (down from “moderate” in 2008), Department of Education, Senate, Department of Finance (“moderate” in 2008), Department of Justice (up from “poor,” or within -10 to -29, in 2007-2008), Commission on Elections (up from “poor” in 2008 and from “bad,” or within -30 to -49, in 2007), and the Ombudsman.
- Agencies graded “poor” in 2009 are the Department of Budget and Management (down from “neutral”), Philippine National Police, Department of Agriculture, Department of the Interior and Local Government, and the Presidential Commission on Good Government (up from “bad” in 2008).
- Agencies graded “bad” in 2009 are the Department of Transportation and Communications (formerly “poor”), Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (“poor” in 2008, “neutral” in 2007), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (formerly “poor”), House of Representatives, Office of the President (“poor” in 2008, “neutral” in 2007), and Land Transportation Office.
- The agencies graded “very bad” (-50 or worse) in 2009 are, as in earlier years, the Bureau of Internal Revenue, Department of Public Works and Highways, and Bureau of Customs.

Source: Social Weather Stations (2010)

Trust in Filipino politicians has slide down and has reached its lowest during the Macapagal-Arroyo administration. As documented by Quah (2010), over the years, politicians in the Philippines continued to be among the most distrusted sectors of the country. In the same study cited by Quah, the Philippines ranked 130 among 133 countries as far as the distrust in politicians is concerned.

**Table 1: Public Trust of Politicians in the Philippines, 1999-2009/2010**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Score<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>No. of Countries</b>
1999	49	2.02	59
2000	51	2.00	59
2001-2002	52	2.10	75
2002-2003	69	1.50	80
2003-2004	94	1.40	102
2007-2008	119	1.70	131
2009-2010	130	1.60	133
Average	81	1.76	--

Sources: Drawn from Quah, 2010. Compiled from Schwab et. al. (1999: 327), Porter et al (2000:253), Schwab et al (2002:408), Cornelius (2003:619), Salai-Martin (2004:499), Schwab and Porter (2007: 379), and Schwab (2009: 349) as cited in Quah, 2010.

### **IMPERATIVES FOR REFORM**

It goes without saying that given the above situation – massive graft and corruption and declining trust in government – there is a crying need for reform in the public administration and governance systems of the Philippines. As we have suggested earlier, nowhere is this more true than after the nine-year rule of Macapagal-Arroyo.

Public Administration is an executive body of the government through which the government implements its plan, program, and projects. Over the years, we have seen how public administration and governance institutions have become unresponsive to the overall goal to rendering public service to the people. Challenges ranging from graft and corruption to failure or reorganization processes to lack of people participation to simple citizens apathy, and lack of trust in government have hounded reform efforts.

Locating this in a broader context, reform of public administration has become a continuing imperative for all the countries (Leong, 2006; Uphoff, 1996; Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). Reforms aim to bring about significant improvements in public service that makes it more efficient, effective, and economy. Reforms also make the public service more accountable and transparent.

It is within this context that a broader framework for public administration reform is suggested to go beyond the traditional targets of reform (organizations, structures and process) but also to include the imperative to reform public servants' behavior, mindsets and values, bring about transformational leaders coupled with political will, and encourage – and even agitate – the citizens to engage themselves in governance. All the above four dimensions of reform have to move towards a common vision; to bring about effective and responsive governance and to restore public trust in government. The fol-

lowing is a suggested reform framework<sup>8</sup> that may encompass these various dimensions of reform.

*Figure 1. Reform Framework for Governance*



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### **Reforming Institutions, Structures, Processes and Procedures**

When distrust in government becomes endemic, there may be no better move to weaken government substantially. “Elimination of agencies and powerful bureaus and bureaucrats will eliminate the objects of distrust.” (Hardin, 1998: 17) Thus, there have been moves on administrative reform to reduce the “trust deficit.” Administrative reforms must be an answer to restoring trust and in building integrity in public service. Administrative reforms also lower corrupt incentives. Continuing and ongoing initiatives to come up with more responsive public administration structures, procedures and processes must be prioritized by the government if it is sincere in working on the “trust deficits” such as bureaucratic corruption and political corruption. Negative consequences of corruption to institutions are prevalent through favoring vested or selfish interests of a person or entity. Officials and employees of the government tend to neglect the very purpose of civil servants and that is to serve the public interest with utmost fidelity. Tolerating corruption encourages negative and poor bureaucratic behavior. In effect, it ruins public trust and confidence in the government. With regard to public personnel, corruption undermines merit and fitness system and inhibits civil servant motivation to uphold integrity. Moreover, corruption leads to poor quality of programs, projects and services, and ineffective, inefficient and unaccountable administration (Brillantes and Fernandez, 2008).

Fukuyama (2004) explains that state-building is one of the most important issues for the world community because weak or failed states are the world’s most serious problems. In the Philippines, Nemenzo (2008) said that it is in a precarious state where government institutions are falling apart, the president’s legitimacy is in doubt, the country’s rating fluctuates between negative and very slightly positive, the judiciary no longer commands respect, and the bureaucracy reeks of corruption. With the above, the latter suggested that we need a State that is strong to implement fundamental reforms, to break elite resistance and to withstand imperialist pressure.

Fukuyama (2004) adds that nation building is the creation of new government institutions and the strengthening of existing ones. It is a response to promote governance of weak states, improve their democratic legitimacy, and strengthen self-sustaining institutions; thus, the imperative for reform in institutions. Reforming institutions includes reform in processes and procedures and improvement of structures. Reforms in public administration generally keep rank alongside the reforms of institutions, processes and procedures as a priority for action because of the growing recognition of their significant roles in the development (Manning and Parison, 2003: 6).

According to North (1994), “institutions are the humanly devised constraints that structure human interaction.” A decade earlier, Uphoff indicated that institutions are “complexes of norms and behaviors that persist over time by serving collectively valued purposes.” (Uphoff, 1986: 9). Referring to a definition of institution two decades earlier (1965!), Uphoff quoted Huntington’s definition thus: “...institutions are stable, valued, recurring patterns of behaviour.” In other words, institutions are formal and informal rules that may enable, or constrain, political, administrative, economic, and social interactions. They provide incentives and disincentives for the people to behave in a certain ways. Therefore, good institutions are necessary to establish an incentive structure which reduces uncertainty and enhances efficiency that strengthens the economic performance (North 1991). “There is also a need for institutions for the right policy formulation and to be implemented. (Chang 2005: 2).”

In recent days, the economic development in relation to institution is studied primarily with two perspectives: perceptions and assessments of public institutions: “how well they function and what their impact is on private sector behavior” (Khalil et al., 2007: 69). The empirical analysis uses three measurers of institutions: 1. governance quality – corruption levels, political rights, public sector efficiency and regulatory burdens; 2) the extent of legal protection of private property – law enforcement capabilities; and 3) the level of economic freedom.

However, compared to most Western countries, Asian public institutions are less neutral and more vulnerable to political influence because of their attempts to adopt the exogenous origin reformed administrative models of western context (Burns and Bowomwathana, 2001: 22). The top level policy makers in this region are required to access their own local contexts considering their citizen’s expectations, and thereby establish the best suited and more realistic needs based on administrative institutions, processes, and procedures in order to minimize (ultimately eliminate) the gap between theory and practices, and also the adverse results by such borrowed models in the public administration. Local contextualization that demands a critical scrutiny for the local potential benefits which tailors the borrowed models to be best fitted in the local context is very essential for effective functions and productivity in the local context. The local contextualization helps to understand what specific institutional settings, processes, and procedures will work best in a specific local context.

As mentioned earlier, corruption is one of the many reasons why people distrust the government. In the context of reforming institutions to combat corruption and to restore trust and build integrity in government, as early as 1979, Cariño and De Guzman recommended the following initiatives: (1) procedural changes to plug anti-corruption loopholes; (2) personnel’s areas of discretion; Improving technical expertise, standardi-

zation and clarification of decision rules; (3) increasing visibility by making rules and procedures clear; (4.) management audits as a “proactive” or preventive step; (5) ethics seminars to address moral lapses; Institution of rewards; and purges and variants. Recommendations to control systemic corruption were as follows: (1) attacking the agency’s administrative culture with a multi-pronged and concerted approach against graft and corruption; (2) attacking the political and administrative system by providing honest and effective leadership; (3) attacking the ethical-cultural system by harnessing cultural agents of church, mass media, bureaucracy; and (4) attacking the economic system by strengthening the government’s bargaining hand against the private sector. (Cariño and de Guzman, 1979).<sup>9</sup> Mangahas (2009) likewise suggests the following mechanisms in eliminating corruption. According to him, it rests largely on (1) the existence of well-defined and implementable rules and procedures in transacting with government; (2) a credible legal and judicial system that efficiently resolves corruption cases brought to it; (3) a professional and non-political career civil service; and a system of sanctions against erring agents, whether public or private; (4) a continuing review and rationalization of compensation and incentive structure for better performance; (5) credibility of the system to punish corrupt behavior; and (6) insulation against political intervention and a deliberate reduction in the scope of political appointments.

Institutions should be able to provide clear and practical recommendations on how the aforementioned action areas can be promoted. The civil society for instance should likewise be able to actively engage in the process of restoring integrity in government. Needless to say, restoring trust in government in these areas require deep appreciation of systems and processes.

## **REFORMING MINDSETS AND BEHAVIOR**

One of the most challenging imperatives in restoring trust in the government is reforming the behavior and mindsets of the people both from the supply side and the demand side. Changing mindsets as well as behavior is difficult in general, especially, in a country where there is still a strong overlap of traditional social systems with modernization efforts. For instance, when it comes to administrative reform, merit reform is resisted in order to practice nepotism in civil service appointment and promotion. Additionally, public employment patronage that finances competition between political parties and factions continues to be a dominant feature. There will be a high practice of political appointments and compulsory political levies on civil service (Shepherd 2003). Culture in particular is a challenge. There is this so-called “culture of corruption” that is deeply imbedded in the system of the bureaucracy.

Reforming mindsets refers to the moulding of the individual and collective perspectives or paradigms of public officials in line with the demand of the changing context. It is also called reforming the “culture” (Pant, 2007: 82). There are two ways of reforming mindsets: individual mindsets and collective mindsets. Individual mindsets include desirable work behavior, positive thinking and attitude, emotional intelligence (self and social awareness – matured behavior), and moral intelligence (integrity, honesty, compassion, and forgiveness). These personal values help an individual in setting personal goals and daily conduct and conforming ethical code both at personal and organizational levels (Pant, 2007: 89). Pant says, “Collective mindsets should be the development of model work culture that manifests and fosters the type of organizational values and be-

havior performance by maintaining high ethical and moral standards and public image.” (Pant, 2007: 89)

In the case of the Philippines, reforming mindsets and behavior will surely be a long process. It involves the presence of equally important imperatives for reform such as political will, reformed institutions and engaged citizenry. Unless citizens participate then we can say that there is acceptance in any reform effort.

### **Leadership**

Trust and transparency are always linked together. Without transparency, people do not believe what their leaders say” (Bennis, Goleman and O’Toole 2008: viii). We therefore need a leader with personal integrity and who is not afraid to public scrutiny. CBCP (2005) says that the erosion of effective governance may be due to a lack of personal integrity or lack of competence. It could also be the result of a confluence of factors that have eroded trust and credibility and hence effectiveness. “When people decry the damage to public institutions under the administration of former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, they also express hope for some repair, if not restoration, under the leadership of the new president, Benigno Aquino III.” (Landingin, Romero, and Balane, 2011: 80)

Although, leadership is not emphasized substantially in the public sector (Terry 2003); it is an important issue, both with academics and practitioners (Van Wart 2003). Leadership is essential for all types of organizations, but even more important in public administration as the tremendous complexity and diverse issues are continually arising in the public sector. Leadership is a crucial matter in public administration to influence the capacity of governments that accounts the success or failure of the government. As an executive body of the government, PA helps the government to formulate and implement the policies, plan and programs. Effective leadership is central to effective and sustainable implementation. Thus, it plays a vital role in the success or failure of the government.

Another reason that leadership is important in restoring trust in government is that there is such a focus on performance not on the individual. The public organization is continually under scrutiny, again from within and without, as to how it is performing its functions and how well it utilizes its funds. Leadership is the key to performance and to ensuring that the organization operates at its maximum effectiveness. Effective leaders are able to mobilize collaborative forces of the public and private; and coordinate from the national to the local. The features needed for good governance and responsive public administration that include efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, and transparency are translated in reality only by the effective leadership. The key to successful organization is “leadership, leadership, and still more leadership” (Kotter, 1996: 31). To achieve the success in reforming public administration, the dynamism of leadership has to be transmitted to the reform process. Ahmad sternly says, “Given the opportunity and the right political support, the public sector can accept the challenges of change and reform” (Ahamd, 1997: 68 as cited in ADB 2007). Many times, political will refers to the right political support.

Innovative leadership is crucial in reforming public administration and tackling corruption. The leadership by example is a superb leadership example for leading towards change of mindsets and behavior and citizens’ engagement. A leader by example is a

leader who does as he speaks. He seeks to lead his people with their full potentialities. He helps them to realize their potentialities in the democratic process.

In view of this, the leadership of Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia may be evaluated in terms of their effectiveness in as law enforcers, sustainable development administrators and poverty exterminators. As we trace back the history of the developed countries, the role of effective leaders has been crucial in bringing their country into growth and development. Regardless of its kind of government, there are several leaders who have been successful in bringing about reforms in their country. One example is Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad (1981-2003) who contributed enormously in bringing Malaysia in its present state. He “believes firmly in leadership by example which became the slogan of his administration” (Ibid.) Another example would be Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore. Lee Kuan Yew was the first and longest serving Prime Minister of Singapore; and it was his leadership that brought Third World Singapore into a thriving metropolitan city in a stunning three decades.<sup>10</sup> He elevated the nation from the Third World to the First World league. Indeed, Singapore is one of the most successful former colonies. Lee is a symbol of Singapore’s success. When he stepped down in 1990, he left “gold standards”, a clean and efficient government, world-class infrastructure and a business-friendly economy (Oel, 2005). In Korea, there is Major General Park Chung-hee (1917-79) carried out a military *coup d'etat* followed by an anti-corruption campaign that was welcome by the general public (Liu, 2006). To its credit, the Park regime brought about considerable changes in Korean society, including rapid economic advancement. The Saemaul (“New Village”) program was instituted in 1971 as a self-help program for farmers. Although seen by some as a tool for government indoctrination, it did bring many benefits to the rural poor. The program later spread to fishing communities and then to urban areas. Due to various reforms, Korea became virtually self-sufficient in food production by the mid-'70s. Throughout the '60s and '70s, a reawakening of cultural activities was helped along by broadening mass communication and education.<sup>11</sup>

The leadership factor played a key role in the transformation of many local governments in the Philippines since the enactment of a Local Government Code in 1991 and its implementation in 1992 that brought about a regime of decentralization and local autonomy in the country as evidenced not only by the Galing Pook Awards that conferred recognition to outstanding local governments in the country but also by the Local Government Leadership Awards that recognized the key role of transformational leaders in the process of local development.<sup>12</sup>

In essence, leadership which is many times marked by one’s political will is indispensable in the politico-administrative milieu of government. Therefore, an effective leader who leads by example is crucial in restoring trust in the government as a whole. Beyond the problem of morality is one of leadership by example. The weak state apparatus which prevents the Philippines from providing an enabling environment that will improve the living conditions of the common Filipinos exposes the poverty-stricken public more vulnerable to corruption and abusive leadership. Leadership indeed matters.

Effective leaders are able to mobilize collaboration between the national and local public sector, the private sector and civil society to deliver goods and services to the public. Accountability, transparency, participation and predictability through rule of law are



translated into experience as processes, tools and instruments. Experience becomes scorecards and benchmarks for political, social, administrative, economic and cultural dimensions of governance. The outcome of effective leadership is decreased incidence of corruption, better service delivery, economic growth and development, and improved living conditions, and most importantly restoration of public trust.

## **CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT**

The changing patterns of political participation in the Philippines can be attributed to the lack of distrust in the political leaders. As Putnam (1995) puts it, it is “a social disengagement.” In the US, Putnam (1995: 68) has shown familiar evidence on changing patterns of political participation, not least because it is immediately relevant to issues of democracy in the narrow sense. Consider the well-known decline in turnout in national elections over the last three decades. From a relative high point in the early 1960s, voter turnout had by 1990 declined by nearly a quarter; tens of millions of Americans had forsaken their parents' habitual readiness to engage in the simplest act of citizenship. Broadly similar trends also characterize participation in state and local elections.

Engaging citizens is a new paradigm in our reform framework. We recognize, however, that engaging citizens is an unpredictable process. It does not happen systematically nor guided by rational choices and decisions, but it is more governed by unconscious factors. The family can play a significant role in transmitting the values and attitudes that fosters to be engaged citizens. Educational intervention (both formal and informal), media and publications, and external civil organizations also play a vital role in the development of citizens' engagement (New Perspectives for Learning, 2004).

Citizens can be engaged with the government in different ways. According to Meskell, “...they (government) knew that, for democracy to flourish, citizens must take an active part in public life, sharing their ideas and opening their minds to the opinions of others, and taking ownership in the well-being of the country.” (Meskell, 2009: 1) The survey of trust by the Pulse Asia and the Social Weather Stations are just two examples of the public involvement in the governance process. The survey results reflect their opinions on approval and disapproval of the President and that this should be a yardstick for the public official to improve performance. Another powerful medium where citizens can be engaged in the objective of restoring trust in governance is the internet. The internet offers social networks such as Facebook and Twitter which could easily transmit information about the public official. Information and communication technology (ICT) could be used as instruments for feedback mechanisms, which has cut off the expensive mechanisms for soliciting citizen inputs. Online communication has become most easier and economy useful tool for formulating and developing the public policy in developing countries (ibid.). Furthermore, online citizens' engagement gives more opportunity to understand governmental policies and processes so does the government understands of the “diverse public views and knowledge about complex problems”. Online engagement also offers interaction between the members and put group voice for mutual benefits without having headache of heap expenses and long distance travelling.

The full extent of engaging citizens in government can fulfil the notion of a famous slogan – “by the people for the people.” New public management has considered the peo-

ple as customer or client so they have their personal “stake” in the government. Therefore, meeting the needs of customers (citizens) should give high priority than giving the attention to the bureaucracy.

The United Kingdom (UK) has made strides in engaging citizens in their government. They turned government communication to citizens with the collaboration of internet service. According to Andrew Stott, director of Digital Government, “They use the internet to give citizens a voice.” They already saw the massive impact of using internet for public engagement on the democratic process. Similarly, P.K. Agarwal, California Chief Technology Officer, envisions the improved civic engagement through the mobile appliances and wireless technology in “Reinventing “We the People” program. Technology is being an essential to participatory government, but “data is not democracy,” Carolyn Lukensmeyer writes, “Civic participation still calls for in-person interpersonal engagement.” (Meskell, 2009: 2)

To restore the trust of citizens, reforming and engaging citizens is an equally important reform imperative; however, this challenge is not the sole concern of the government. The “governance” concept encourages the participation of citizens in the governance process. The fourth dimension of the framework - engaging the citizenry - is on the demand side, aimed at promoting citizens’ participation on governance processes, reforming government and restore trust in a government they begin to own and identify with because of their active engagement. According to Chene (2008), strengthening demand for good governance is a logical policy arena. She adds that:

In many developing countries, the public sector is perceived as distant, corrupt and unaccountable, leading to a widespread crisis of legitimacy between citizens and the institutions that represent them. The link between citizen voice, transparency and accountability has been recognized in this context as the core of good governance and improved public sector performance. There is a growing consensus that working on the demand-side of curbing corruption is a critical dimension of governance reform. This recognition has opened new opportunities for citizen involvement in recent years, with the proliferation of a wide range of accountability mechanisms aimed at increasing citizen voice and influence over public policies and the use of public resources. Such interventions share the common goal of empowering citizens to play a more active role in decisions that affect them, with the view to reducing the accountability gap between citizens and policy makers and improving the provision of public services. (Chene, 2008: 1)

Due to socio-economic, political, and cultural changes which brought the transitions in democracy, engaging citizens in the reform process is very powerful. People’s participation is now becoming an intrinsic part of the governance process. There are mechanisms to engage the citizens. A wide range of channels can be envisaged to support closer citizens participation including the media, political parties, citizen’s watchdogs among others. Chene identifies specific action areas that may be used to harness civil society participation in governance: harness the media, make government transactions transparent; decentralize governance structures and processes, and encourage participatory budgeting.

## CONCLUSIONS

We have discussed the four broad reform types: reforming institutions, processes, procedures; reforming mindsets and behavior; reforming leadership and political will; and engaging citizens. These four areas are united by a common vision: the attainment of good governance and the restoration of trust in government. The reform of public administration in these four categories makes public administration and governance more efficient, effective, effective, and more responsible. It elevates significantly the standard of public service which may lead to the restoration of trust in public and in building integrity.

Reformed institutions, processes and procedures are essential components for the effective functioning of the government. In the absence of good institutions, there are high possibilities of graft and corruption, inefficiency, incompetence, and redundancy in public service. Hence, the institutions, process and procedures are must also be transformed to target a standard of performance that are at par if not better than the service of the private sector.

People think how they see and understand things. In other words, their mindsets and behavior are the equally important factor in either contributing or hindering corruption.

Leadership is central to effective and sustainable implementation of programs, projects, and activities of the government. Therefore, an effective leader who knows how to lead by example is crucial not only in PA reforming process; but also for maintaining an effective, efficient and equitable delivery of public goods and services. The transformational leader's characters such as confidence, empowerment, vision span; and good behavior – modest life, shared vision, and being a change agent, make him fit in addressing the issues and concerns corruption. People trust in this kind of leadership as they could see in him the elements of good governance such as accountability, predictability, transparency, rule of law and participation. They play a vital role in reforming public administration whether it is in institutions, mindsets, leadership, or engaging the citizens. Reengineering triggers changes of many kinds of the job designs, organizational structures, and management systems – anything associated with process must be refashioned to fit with these erratic changes. The success of reengineering hinges on transformational leadership. Only if top-level managers back the effort and outlast the organizational cynics can reengineering succeed. Lastly, the implementation of reengineering is extremely strenuous that needs fast radical change which accelerates the dramatic improvements. And this lies in information technology as maximized in a reengineering effort under the guidance of transformational management that has vision.

Engaging citizens is significantly important to any reform efforts. The world is becoming global village with the contribution of highly sophisticated technologies particularly in communication and information system. We can tap the Information and Communi-

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cations Technology (ICT) in promoting restoration of trust initiatives, including anti-corruption efforts.

Above all, two of the most important virtues of public ethics in the Philippines are integrity and trust. Building integrity and restoring trust in the system of governance is very significant, which is why it is central in most advocacies for political-administrative reform in the country. The continuing challenge over the years has been implementation of reforms. As we suggest in this article, reforms should be targeted at four areas: institutions, structures and processes; behaviour and mindsets; leadership; and citizen engagement. All reforms should move in consonance with a common vision of restoring trust in government. After decades of failure and frustration, applying the four-pronged thrusts may likely result into successful reforms given the will of government to implement it over a reasonable period of time.

## NOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> SWS - a private non-stock, nonprofit social research institution which is one of the most active social survey institutes in the Philippines. See <http://www.sws.org.ph>
  - <sup>2</sup> The creation of the Truth Commission likewise has stirred many controversies primarily questioning its constitutionality. These administrative lapses (MC 1, EO 1, the Truth Commission) have been attributed to the lack of experience and hasty decisions of the Aquino administration.
  - <sup>3</sup> Aquino's predecessor, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, had the dubious distinction of being the most unpopular and distrusted President of the country during her term. There was essentially no way to go but upwards for her successor.
  - <sup>4</sup> This is according to Pulse Asia's "Ulat sa Bayan" (Report to the Public) in 2009.
  - <sup>5</sup> Negative bureaucratic behavior has been used as a euphemism to refer to graft and corruption during the Marcos dictatorship that lasted from 1972 to 1986.
  - <sup>6</sup> This framework was developed by the authors for a paper on anti-corruption, "Toward a Reform Framework on Good Governance: Focus on Anti-Corruption" Philippine Journal of Public Administration. Vol 54. Nos 1-2.
  - <sup>7</sup> The score ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) with this statement: "Public trust in the financial honesty of politicians is very high."
  - <sup>8</sup> This framework evolved from a study done by the authors on how to address graft and corruption. It was first discussed in the UP Forum, "Can we Really Solve Corruption, if so, how?" Vol 12. No. 2 (2009) with only the first three imperatives: (1) reform institutions, processes and procedures; (2) reform mindsets and behavior; and (3) leadership and political will. In the course of writing the article entitled, "Toward

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a Reform Framework for Good Governance: Focus on Corruption,” in the upcoming issue of the *Philippine Journal of Public Administration* (2010) Vol 54, Nos. 1-2, the framework has evolved into a four quadrant recognizing that citizens’ engagement is an equally important/imperative for reform.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. PIPA, July-October 1979: 377-385.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.leadership-with-you.com/lee-kuan-yew-leadership.html>

<sup>11</sup> <http://koreanhistory.info/park.htm>

<sup>12</sup> The Galing Pook Program was initiated by the Local Government Academy of the Department of Interior and Local Government in 1994 in partnership with the Asian Institute of Management. The whole goal of Galing Pook was to encourage – and recognize – innovations at the local level. Galing Pook has shown and demonstrated that because of decentralization, the good governance principles of participation, transparency, accountability have been operationalized at the local level. More than 200 local governments from all over the country have been recognized so far. We have seen that a key success factor that brought about innovation is leadership.

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