

BUILDING OUR DREAM PHILIPPINES

*Through good governance
& responsible citizenship*

ALSO BY JESUS P. ESTANISLAO

Governance in the Philippines

Beyond Change

It Can Be Done

For Love

The Importance of Hope

Bridging the Gap

Designing Development

Building a National Legacy

Guideposts for Governance

Breaking Through

Believe: Making Nationhood Happen Everyday

Philippines 2030: Journey to Nationhood

Equipped for Battle

Responsible Citizenship IV

Responsible Citizenship III

Responsible Citizenship II

Responsible Citizenship

Towards a National Culture of Excellence

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& responsible citizenship*

Author & Editor

JESUS P. ESTANISLAO, PH.D.

Creative Producer
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Through good governance & responsible citizenship

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Foreword

Foreword

This book is about the future that we—as responsible citizens—can shape together, so that many of our dreams and aspirations as a people can be realized, within the lifetime of those who are just graduating from college today.

It speaks to a challenge, therefore.

Many of us still have to become responsible citizens as good governance demands. This is the first imperative we must meet if we are to address the challenge.

And what dreams and aspirations do many of us share? It is difficult for anyone to articulate what these might be in behalf of more than a hundred million Filipinos.

And among those who are graduating from college in 2018, few may have indulged in the luxury of thinking through—much less formulating—what their mission in life is, and what vision they have of themselves in the next 8 to 10 years. Moreover, only an unspecified

number may have reflected and prayed over the core values they really want to hold, as the firm foundation for the life of work that awaits them in the five decades or so ahead of them.

To help meet this challenge, a number of good governance advocates have put forward an initiative for our “Dream Philippines”. It invites individuals to start on a governance pathway by fighting to become—in word and deed—responsible citizens of our country.

It also extends an invitation to enterprises in business, government, and civil society to pursue their own transformation programs. From all these we can cull out what transformation of our polity and society can be delivered. And the very pursuit of transformation road maps on the part of enterprises in all three key sectors of society can point to the core values, the mission, and the vision that we—as responsible citizens—can stipulate for the Philippines.

The book puts forward a governance framework, which the contributors have used in proposing their ideas and suggestions on what our core values must be: what transformative changes we need to see made: and what strategic priorities we need to give due importance to. It opens up a process by which many others can also propose their own ideas and suggestions for the long-term future of our country. If many more would come in and offer their own ideas and suggestions, we can then pull all of these together for the more definitive version of this book, which we intend to put out in 2021. A transformation road map for our country may then emerge by 2021. It thus begins on the fifth centennial of the Christianization of our country; and it looks forward to the next 50

years during which we should all work together to realize our Dream Philippines.

There will be twists and turns on the way, so there would be a need for “refresh” and for renewal. That may have to be done every 5 or 6 years as we move through the long road ahead.

It is to initiate the process and give continuing impetus to it that our governance advocacy, through the Center for Excellence in Governance, is committed to be of service to all individuals and enterprises wishing to participate in this long, arduous path ahead.

Manila, October 2018

Introduction

Introduction

An opportunity to step back and think

We are in interesting times. Each day brings a new surprise: twists in policy orientation; dropping of old allies; naming of new preferred friends; continued rise in the body count from the anti-drug campaign; a rainbow of colors, with which public pronouncements are made and eventually clarified.

Then, there are those who generally are “in the know”: what they tell those who are willing to listen would be enough to make anyone’s hair stand on end. Perhaps without meaning to, they sometimes give the impression that everyone should be on edge, but that most people just do not know or do not care such that they carry on with life as usual.

Most of us during these interesting times engage in chatter. As part of our culture, we spice that chatter up with jokes and laughter. Indeed, many of us have the tendency to take things—as they are—lightly, and if possible with a sense of humor.

This is probably for our own good. However, for those who wish to discern and sift through the chaff that is thrown out to us on a daily basis, perhaps there are three better things we can do other than making a joke out of everything, and these are:

- *Wait.* Allow things to take their normal course, and allow them to sort themselves out. We are ordinary people, generally not in control of things. Since we can do very little about most things, we would be better off letting them pass, because in fact everything passes and moves on without our getting involved.
- *Pray.* While we are not in control over virtually everything, someone definitively is. That Someone listens to our pleas. He is open to our prayers. Thus, of the many things we do not like, we ask God to do something and change; and we simply entrust the whole matter to Him.
- *Act.* There may be a few things

under our control and on which we can act to make a difference. For instance, if we see that things are breaking down, we spend more time with our friends and colleagues to build up and strengthen. If we notice that the culture around us is becoming sullied and dirty, then we can create small circles that aim to raise the level of clean, clear, and cool culture that may appeal to the better spirits of many others among our fellow citizens.

These three things—wait, pray, and act—is a call for all of us to be responsible citizens, who care much more deeply about our land and about the country we are all aiming to build. Waiting is a recognition that people and events do pass: each person is given a very limited time on stage. Praying is also a recognition of the power of divine intervention: God is the one who stays on and guides the unfolding of our fate as a people. Acting is a recognition of our responsibility: there are certain things we can do, and these can make a difference, if we are diligent in living up to our duties as a responsible citizen.

But before doing anything, we should take the time and seize the opportunity to reflect on the things that are happening in our country: reflection leads us into thinking, and

thinking inevitably leads us to the governance of our public affairs as a nation such that we can build the Philippines we dream for ourselves and future generations of Filipinos.

Where governance helps

In thinking about what each one of us as responsible citizens can do to help build a Philippines we dream about, we need to consider these basic, normal facts:

- *Our interest is never focused only on ourselves.* There are many others to consider: family, friends, community, society and indeed the entire nation, if not the whole world.
- *Our time horizon is never limited to today and possibly also tomorrow.* There is also the long-term past to learn from; and there is a whole long-term future to shape.
- *Our focus cannot be confined to only one issue,* no matter how important that issue may be. In fact, the reality of life is shaped by many issues: they may be closely and dynamically inter-related with each other; but they are impossible to reduce into only one fixed issue.

What this means in actual practice may differ with many different

people. For instance, we cannot fix all of our attention on the anti-drug campaign, important and popular as it may be. Nor can we ever assume that there is no tomorrow or that the future will simply take care of itself. Much less can we allow all of our attention and concern to be riveted on only our limited interests. And when we take all these together—a broader coverage; a longer time horizon; and a richer diversity of issues to address and be concerned about—then we enter into the territory of governance.

This may strike most of us as surprising, especially since over the years we have applied governance to corporations and to public sector institutions. Corporate governance has in fact insisted on rules and regulations corporations need to comply with; and public governance has insisted on best practices to qualify them as “islands of good governance” or “hall of fame awardees”. But those who have been working on public governance have since discovered how important—and critical—it is to apply governance not only to individuals (with personal scorecards), but also to families and local communities (preferably anchored on well-governed educational institutions). But now, we are told that governance applies to responsible citizens, committed to the governance of the entire country, i.e. to national governance.

And, indeed, this is the call to all of us during these interesting times. We need to reflect together and work together for our country: if we don’t, then who will? And we will have to do so taking into account the principles and practices of good governance. These include these three guidelines:

- *A long-term view of the Philippines.* How long-term? The first immediate answer: to think beyond 2022; and to go even beyond 2028. Whether we like it or not, the Philippines will still be around many decades after 2028.
- *A focus on a few key choices we really need to make.* These basic choices would need to be framed by the type of game-changers we wish to see for our country in the few decades ahead.
- *We cannot go far from core values.* There can be no governance without hanging on to a few core values, those that we hold dear as a people.

The first of these guidelines is new territory for most of us. Very few take a long-term view of events and circumstances. In practice, all of us are used to grappling with issues of the “here and now”, yet there are a few occasions, such as the interesting times we find ourselves in, when it is prudent to take the long view, and

to realize that the country and our people are here for much longer, and that we therefore have to work really hard and smartly for our long-term future.

We are here for keeps

For good or for ill, we have become one people with a shared destiny. This may not have been so in the past, but historians tell us that while we may be a nation still in progress towards full nation-building, we have been feeling and thinking as one people since at least 150 years ago. And in this regard, despite all the current rage for federalism, there can be no turning back: we are Filipinos; and we have the Philippines to be fully responsible for.

If we are smart enough, the Philippines will be home to Filipinos for a very long while into the future; hopefully, for keeps.

All this may sound pedestrian and inconsequential. But in some sectors, there is a bit of excitement about 2021, when we celebrate the fifth centenary of the opening up of our country to the “West”. This gives us a perspective of how long our story as a people has been; and what we do today or what we fail to do can have consequences and ramifications on the life of our people for many centuries to come, just as what our

forefathers at the time of Magellan—and what they did and what they failed to do—still have reverberations into our life as a people today.

As a country, we think in terms of generations and of the best things we can pass on from one generation to the next. This is what national governance is about.

At the more individual, personal level, given the environment in which we live, after we graduate from college at about the age of 20–22 years old, we can now look forward to at least five decades (in the future, slightly longer) of active, productive work, by which each one of us can contribute to the building of our nation. Thus, despite our limited personal lifespan, we are challenged to think of at least 50 years of professional work. This is a good frame of reference, which brings and joins together the personal perspectives of any responsible citizen and the national perspectives of the country as a whole.

Taking a 50-year outlook into the future would apply to almost every age group. To those, who are in the autumn of their lives, they still can participate actively in doing something about national governance because of the wonderful legacy they wish to bequeath to their grandchildren and the children of their grandchildren. For those in

mid-career, their focus may well be on preparing a better and safer environment for their children who may just be starting up in climbing their own professional ladder. And for those who are just about to graduate or are fresh college graduates, they have to position themselves in a country that needs continued strengthening and re-invigorating, indeed a country they can help develop and bring up to a much higher level of prosperity, whose fruits they can directly partake of and enjoy. For the much younger ones, all this effort at improved national governance is basically for their benefit: they contribute to it according to their circumstances, i.e. by studying hard and working well such that they develop in all facets of their personal life.

The time horizon is long; the coverage of concern is wide. Once we take in these two perspectives, governance kicks in to help and guide us through. It leads us to ask three very basic questions:

- *What are the few priorities we have to give importance to?* Governance insists that in choosing, we keep proper balance and be comprehensive, taking into account all key facets of our life as a nation.
- *In what ways would these chosen priorities lead to a genuine “game*

change” such that real transformation occurs? Specifically, what are these transformative changes that we wish to see happen?

- *In determining the transformative changes, what core values do we hang on to?* In what ways are these core values going to affect the changes we seek and the choices we make?

No one person can by him- or herself come up with answers to these fundamental questions. But a few responsible citizens can and should put forward their ideas and suggestions so that the Filipino people themselves can make the final determination of the country they wish to build for themselves and for many future generations of Filipinos.

Balance in the changes we seek

All too often we find fellow citizens who have very clear and fixed ideas about the changes they seek for our country. These ideas can be all over the place. At the time of writing, we have someone who is focused on the anti-drug war; at other times, the over-arching interest was to restore and re-strengthen the democratic institutions of the country. And one business guru, when asked what he would do if he were President of the country, replied without batting an eyelash: “I would build sidewalks all

throughout the country”.

Each one of us is entitled to a choice of the change we want to introduce. But this basic reminder from governance can be of great use: any governance unit—from individual to family, from enterprise to nation—has many different facets that it has to take into serious account; and it is important for transformative movement towards genuine progress and development, that some proper balance is struck between these facets. In doing so, every effort has to be taken that improvement in each of these critical facets is secured. In other words, there has to be balanced development, since in reality all these facets are closely inter-related with one another.

Take an individual person: physical wellness is important; but so are family and social relations; financial capacity; professional development; and moral grounding. An individual cannot focus on only one facet in complete disregard of all the others.

The same holds for any country: its resources (both human and natural) would need to be properly taken care of and protected; its internal processes of making political and economic decisions will have to be strengthened; every care has to be taken that all constituents are served

in the best way possible; its financial house is in order and it has strong financial reserves; and above all, that the social and economic impact on all groups and sectors is fair, open, and equitable.

These are only guidelines, and they are broad. But they cannot be disregarded in making strategic choices for moving forward over the long term. In fact, they help in these very specific ways:

- They help us check whether we have prioritized certain areas to take care of in each of these facets; they signal any omission, and they help correct the situation.
- They can make us realize if we are giving too much emphasis on only a few priorities, and such a lack of balance could create problems in the future, perhaps sooner than later.
- They make us see how closely related and mutually supportive are the different priorities such that any progress in the pursuit of any priority can make the pursuit of the other priorities much easier.

Putting forward choices in each of the key facets that governance highlights will need to be guided. It is here where two basic questions need

to be faced, and some agreement—difficult as this may be to forge at times—will have to be made.

The first question: what fundamental changes—presumably for the better—do we wish to see effected in the process of transformation? In other words, in what specific way do we define a real, genuine “game change”?

The second question: what core values do we stress and hang on to as the North Star for making decisions and taking transformation actions?

These two basic questions can help us make the strategic priorities we need to pursue; they also help provide an ideal dynamic in the pursuit of those strategic priorities.