

**UN/IASIA Initiative on
Public Administration Education and Training for
the Current and Next Generation of Government Leadership**

Aide-Mémoire

Introduction

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 excellent leadership that will be necessary for the successful implementation of the Millennium Declaration.

Even absent the considerable demands that the implementation of the Millennium Declaration will require of governmental leadership, both current and future generations of government leaders are facing extraordinary challenges. The demands which globalization, the worldwide growth in inequality, the continuing problems of widespread poverty amidst great wealth, the increasing emphasis upon decentralization and accountability in governance and the process of transforming formerly command economies into market economies all place extraordinary requirements for creative leadership upon both the current generation of top level government officials and future generations of governmental leaders.

These realities – the combination of the challenges posed by the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the dramatically increasing complexity of the environment in which current and future governmental leadership must function - create even greater needs for effective 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.

The Division of Public Economics and Public Administration of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA/DPEPA) and the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA) have recently agreed to initiate a four-year effort to improve the quality of education and training in public administration for both the current generation of governmental leaders and the next generation as well, including the United Nations Staff College which is developing as one of the centers where National Staff Colleges, Training Institutions, other international institutions and the corporate sector can converge to reflect how globalization is affecting the work of public servants, national as well as international. This would provide opportunity to embark on addressing the concerns of strengthening the United Nations System Staff College in its substantive programmes' content, and partnerships as expressed by members of its Support Group when they had a meeting with the Under Secretary General of UNDESA on 9 January 2002.

The goal is to strengthen institutional capacity and, in so doing, have a significant impact on the development of effective and transparent governance throughout the world – both now and in the future.

While it is widely recognized that education and training is an important precondition to 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, especially in the case of training activities, beginning or mid-level career civil servants. However, the current situation is such as to make 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 - a far too critical one 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. Consequently, the joint UN/DESA and IASIA initiative to improve the quality of public administration and training will be 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 areas of the world undergoing significant governmental or economic transition. The second part of this initiative will involve focusing upon the next generation of governmental leadership and the improvement of its education and training opportunities.

Background

This activity is organized in the framework of the theme selected for the ECOSOC debate in 2002 on “Contribution of Human Capital to Development”. In his opening speech, the Council President said that its role was to help ensure that globalization became a positive force for all. That meant “a focus on broad-based growth and poverty eradication, ... and particularly human resources development”.

In the Report of the work of the 15th Meeting of Experts on the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance of June 2000 (Report E/2000/100), it was acknowledged that the required managerial response to globalization encompasses technology, innovative systems and processes of work organization, and user-friendly methods of public service delivery... However, the Meeting of Experts took the view that the critical dimension in the governments' response to globalization lies in **building the capacity of their human resources**. All else was predicated on this fundamental prerequisite.

As participants in the meeting clearly recognized, however, this is not a task that can wait for the emergence of a new generation of governmental leadership. It must be addressed immediately and the focus must be upon both the current generation of governmental leadership as well as the next. In all too many instances, especially in the countries making critical transitions in both government and economic systems, current leaders have not had the opportunity to develop many of the skills necessary for effective leadership in a rapidly changing world.

Among the critical challenges faced by current and future governmental leaders include dealing with globalization, coping with increased complexity and ambiguity, changing values and professional behaviors, increased competition for knowledge workers, increased concern for respect of human rights and equal opportunity issues and the need for strong leadership and vision.

Participants at the Expert Group Meeting confirmed that human resource development and institution building are closely interdependent ... Apart from the lack of commitment to reform, a major cause of the weakness of the governments of developing countries and countries in transition is the scarcity of effective public managers. Much the same could be said of efforts to encourage decentralization, which have not always yielded the expected results, largely on account of the dearth of qualified personnel at both the national and the local government levels.

On the national level, downsizing also has taken its toll. In many developing countries, it has accelerated the weakening of the State and added to the brain drain, not only to the private sector and NGOs, but also to the West. Due to the critical needs of most developing countries, and countries in transition, a priority consists in building a framework of public personnel structures, policies and career paths able to *attract, retain, develop and motivate* a talented workforce.

Both current government leadership and the next generation of public servants must develop new interactive skills, which their predecessors neither required nor exhibited to the same extent. These include mediating, negotiating and interpersonal skills, ability to include and integrate a much wider diversity of actors in the decision-making process, language skills and technology literacy. Most importantly, given the scarce resources for training purposes, priority training areas must be established by governments, which may include: policy development capacities; resource management capacities (including financial and information resources); and the capacity for improved public service delivery (education and health in particular).

The United Nations can help, through policy advice and information sharing in the design of guidelines for such policies. The United Nations can also help governments develop frameworks, which respond and correspond to their several needs, as well as to divergent socio-economic and cultural environments.

Consequently, the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration and the Division of Public Economics and Public Administration of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations are initiating a four year joint effort to strengthen the quality of public administration education worldwide, but with particular emphasis on Africa, Asia, Latin America, Central / Eastern Europe and the Middle East. It is anticipated that this initiative will have two major parts – a first year of assessment activities and then three years of implementation of a variety of initiatives involving technical assistance and demonstration projects in the regions noted above.

The activities that have been and are to be undertaken as part of this effort include the following:

- 1) Extensive discussions between UN/DESA/DPEPA and IASIA regarding the specific elements of this initiative.
- 2) Special sessions at the annual meetings of the Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration for Central and Eastern Europe (NISPACEE), the Inter American Conference of Mayors and IASIA to seek input from relevant target communities.
- 3) A joint UN/DESA/DPEPA - IASIA established expert group of approximately fifteen individuals to address the highly complex question of how to provide the most effective forms of education and training for current senior level governmental leadership. This meeting, which will be held in Turin, Italy on 19 and 20 September 2002, will be organized in conjunction with the UN System Staff College there. It will focus on the topic of “New Challenges for Senior Leadership Enhancement for Improved Public Management in a Globalizing World”.
- 4) A UN/DESA/DPEPA – IASIA Conference on “Improving the Quality of Public Administration Education and Training: New Needs, New Approaches”. This conference will focus upon developing methodologies for improving the quality of public administration education and training in transitional countries throughout the world. This activity, which will be organized in conjunction with Fundacao Getulio Vargas in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (relevant regional associations will be invited to co-sponsor and participate), will take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on 10 and 11 February 2003 and will bring together leading figures in the field of public administration education and training from throughout the world.
- 5) A joint UN/DESA/DPEPA - IASIA initiative, to be carried out by IASIA, which will involve the establishment of a core research group to focus on improving the quality of public administration education and training through the development of standards of excellence and effectiveness in public administration education and training which take into account the different administrative cultures of the world. As part of its work, the group would review existing relevant materials such as accreditation standards, various codes of ethical and professional performance in the field (for example, charters for the public service; relevant ethics codes) and the like.
- 6) The production of two reports. The first would address the need for, and the means to respond to the education and training needs of the current generation of government leadership. The second would address the status of public administration education and training in the major regions of the world (excluding in all probability, North America and Western Europe). These reports would be jointly produced by UN/DESA/DPEPA and IASIA with appropriate co-editors.

- 7) The organization of additional high profile activities at which to discuss this initiative generally, but even more importantly, to collect input regarding the status of public administration education and training in various regions of the world.
- 8) The initiation of a program of education and training activities targeted upon current top level government leadership to be carried out through various UN organizations.
- 9) Beginning in Fall 2002, various efforts will be undertaken to seek external funding from sources such as the Ford or Turner/U.N. Foundations or the World Bank. The purpose of such funds would be to initiate in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Central/ Eastern Europe and the Middle East relevant initiatives, technical assistance and demonstration projects in the area of public administration education and training. It is anticipated that such projects will significantly improve the quality of public administration education and training in those regions and in so doing, improve the quality of governance and the quality of life for the citizens of those regions.

Assuming that substantial funding is obtained, then it is anticipated that some form of guidance mechanism will be developed to assist in identifying appropriate technical assistance and project development opportunities. This may well involve competitive processes, with decisions made by UN/DESA/DPEPA and IASIA, or some other appropriate mechanism that might be developed during the course of the project. Efforts will, of course, be made to both identify those potential projects that show the greatest probability of having broad impact and transferability.

I. Expert Group Meeting on “*New Challenges for Senior Leadership Enhancement For Improved Public Management in a Globalizing World*”

In addition to UNDESA and IASIA, the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC) will be associated to this activity. The UNSSC is the pre-eminent learning and knowledge-sharing arm of the UN system of organizations, which serves the system, by being a leading catalyst for sharing innovation and best practice worldwide. Its mission is to promote high standards of leadership and management for the UN of the 21st century. Its goal is to foster, through shared learning and developing key competencies, a cohesive and effective management system across the United Nations. The discussions and outputs of the Expert Group Meeting will be of great value to the United Nations Staff College in determining the substantive content of its leadership training programme and in putting the college’s work in a broader context of the emerging issues and needs of leadership development in the world. In turn the UN Staff College will enrich the Group of Experts with its substantive inputs in the meeting. It will also henceforth form part of the leadership development network through which the UN will influence the strengthening of leadership competencies globally and institutionally.

Objectives

The provision of education and training for senior level officials in government - be they elected, appointed or senior civil servants – is a complex and difficult task and one in which past results have not always been as productive as one would desire. The time demands on senior officials in government are very great and the pressures that are an everyday part of their positions are substantial. Consequently, even when senior level figures have a real interest in obtaining additional education and training, the task of delivering such services is a difficult one. Clearly, education and training for senior level governmental officials must be targeted both at their level of concern and their capacity to participate. One key factor in this regard is to determine just what are the most critical issues and areas of governmental activity in which additional education and training can benefit senior government officials.

As was noted at the outset, there are numerous areas that come immediately to mind in terms of issues that both a current generation of government leadership and the next generation will have to be prepared to address. These include the impact of globalization in a world demanding greater decentralization and accountability as well as the need to address critical issues of poverty and inequality occurring in a world of very rapid change. These realities require government officials who are unusually sensitive to issues of

citizen participation, information production and management, new approaches to inter and intra organizational negotiation and the ability to work in environments of great diversity and rapid change.

The objective of the Expert Group Meeting is to establish a core group of experts in public administration and training, with special interest in and knowledge of the education and training needs of senior governmental leadership, to design the methodology for the joint UN/DESA - IASIA initiative targeted at the current generation of senior government leaders. The meeting will promote the exchange of experiences and ideas and create opportunity for new thinking in order to produce an output which will be relevant for guiding countries to provide more effective education and training opportunities for their top level governmental leadership. The Expert Group Meeting also aims at identifying the implementation mechanisms of the initiative and the most effective manner of involving relevant regional organizations. Finally, by promoting exchange of country experiences and best practices, the Meeting will provide guidance as to appropriate strategic partnerships and the synergies which can result from them. The United Nations System Staff College will pursue the thinking of the Group of Experts in order to apply the conclusions and recommendations to the UN Staff and propose other activities in partnership with UNDESA/DPEPA and IASIA to finalize and enrich a Programme for Higher UN Executives.

Outputs

The Expert Group Meeting will serve to deepen participants' understanding of the total initiative (particularly as it applies to the current generation of governmental leadership) and create a core group, which will ensure the quality of the outputs and provide guidance for the overall process.

The Expert Group Meeting will generate a profile of training needs and appropriate curricular suggestions for the education and training of both the current generation of governmental leadership as well as future generations of governmental leadership.

The Expert Group Meeting will generate opportunities for the UN Staff College to better design its training programmes in line with identified needs for leadership development globally as well as within the UN system and to devise means of adjusting the training programmes of national and international institutes of public administration to fit new realities of globalization.

The Expert Group Meeting also will generate a background document with proposed priorities for the initiative, based on a methodological approach designed by the experts and provide suggestions for the development of a detailed and substantive Plan of Action for the following three years.

Participants

About 15-20 leading international experts from various regions of the world, selected jointly by IASIA and UN/DESA/DPEPA, will participate in the Expert Group Meeting.

Venue and Dates

United Nations System Staff College, Turin, Italy, 19 and 20 September 2002.

Language

The Expert group Meeting will be held in English. It is expected that the final publication will be made available in as many official UN languages as possible.

II. Conference on “*Improving the Quality of Public Administration Education and Training: New Needs, New Approaches*”

The first two years of the 21st Century has already witnessed the emergence of many new problems and demands, which need to be addressed by government. Without question, the next decade will present equally complicated and difficult challenges. Consequently, it is of critical importance that the next generation of governmental leadership receives the kind of education and training necessary to make it possible for them to adapt quickly and effectively to the needs of the citizenry of their countries and respond effectively to the expectations of the public. This requires, in many cases, the development of major new approaches to the education of future civil servants. Not only do they need to be exposed to new skills and new techniques of governance, but they also need to be trained to be comfortable with ambiguity and rapid change. They need to be trained to be creative and entrepreneurial leaders.

This conference will bring together individuals from every region of the world who are involved in new methods and approaches to education and training. It is anticipated that the conference will result in the development of a set of ideas and techniques that are appropriate for the education and training of the next generation of governmental leadership. The focus of the conference will be on both education and training activities and how to make them as relevant as possible to newly developing civil servants, recognizing of course the need for specific regional and cultural relevance.

A small leadership group, to be determined jointly by UN/DESA - IASIA will both guide the development of and then edit the papers of the conference. These will serve, in combination with materials developed through the expert group meeting noted above, as a source of materials for the development of a major report on new approaches to public administration education and training.

Outputs

The conference will serve as a source of information regarding new ideas about, and approaches to, public administration education and training. Individuals from throughout the world will provide reports on both the most contemporary approaches utilized in their countries as well as potential new initiatives and techniques for improving the quality of public administration education and training.

A major report on new approaches to public administration education and training will be prepared following the conference. It will include various proposals and suggestions for the types of technical assistance and demonstration projects, which will help to improve the quality of preparation of the next generation of governmental leadership. In addition to drawing upon materials from the conference and the expert group meeting in Turin, it will also draw upon materials produced by the IASIA working group on standards of excellence in public administration education and training.

Participants

About 25 leading international experts from various regions of the world, selected jointly by UN/DESA/DPEPA and IASIA will be invited to participate in the conference program. Additional individuals associated with Fundacao Getulio Vargas and relevant regional associations will also be invited to participate.

Venue and Dates

Fundação Getulio Vargas, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 10 and 11 February 2003.

Language

The conference languages will be English, Portuguese and Spanish

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Information about the initiative and the expert group meeting will be disseminated through UNPAN (United Nations Network in Public Administration and Finance) www.unpan.org and through IASIA www.iiasiisa.org ; or, www.iiasiisa.be