

22nd session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration

Written input by Eastern Regional Organization for Public Administration Inc. (EROPA)

Agenda item 7: Reinventing public sector workforce training and institutional learning towards changing mindsets in the public sector

Context/Issue

- Continuous capacity building has always been an imperative for institutions in the public sector largely due to the rapid changes and developments in the national and global environments. This note draws from the earlier capacity building efforts conducted in the region by EROPA including the training of trainers initiated by and conducted with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs in November 2022.
- Central to the capacity building interventions is the need to change the mindsets of public servants and the people. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs publication on changing mindsets (2021) underscored the need to change mindsets to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- The advocacy to incorporate the need to change mindsets, values, behaviours, and attitudes has always been central in the discourse of public administration reform theory and practice in the region as articulated by EROPA's long time Secretary General Raul De Guzman. He asserted that public sector reform incorporates "the need to change or re-orient the behaviour, and even value systems of the people in the bureaucracy." (Brillantes 1995). Public sector reform encompasses four fundamental areas, i.e., reforms of institutions, processes, procedures; mindsets, paradigms, and behaviour; leadership and political will; active citizens engagement (Brillantes and Fernandez 2010). EROPA stalwarts Reyes (2011) and Wettenhall (2011) underscored the need to take cognizance of civic engagement in public sector reform interventions.
- Governments are now being faced with unprecedented challenges and unique demands in order to continue public service delivery. Given that unpredictable phenomenon such as the COVID-19 pandemic can still occur in the succeeding years, government must be prepared and future-ready for any circumstances. Public service continuity is very vital.
- Within the context of the fourth industrial revolution, COVID-19 has been one of the catalysts for digital transformation. Therefore, it is very important to build upon the gains and opportunities to continue the advancement of digital governance that cuts across the four areas of reform suggested above, i.e., institutions, mindsets, leadership and citizens engagement.

Recommendations

- Maximize the Curriculum on Governance SDG toolkits of the United Nations Department of Social Affairs and the United Nations Public Administration Network. These toolkits can be used as foundations of the capacity building interventions for the public sector especially the modules on “Changing Mindsets in Public Institutions to Implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” and “Innovation and Digital Government for Public Service Delivery.” These toolkits will indeed serve as basic references for use of participants in the various capacity building interventions of public administration institutions in the region.
- Constitute and create cohorts of trainers from the different public training institutions and academe to disseminate – and more important, utilize - the toolkits and integration of SDGs in the curricula and training design. This will also align the messaging to the global discourse of the SDGs.
- Drawing from the cohort of trainers, constitute a pool of resource persons and experts who may eventually be tapped in the conduct of capacity building programs of partner public administration institutions. This has been conducted (and piloted) by the EROPA in partnership with United Nations Department of Social Affairs and the Asian Association for Public Administration earlier this year. There is a lot of promise in adopting this strategy of partnership and cooperation among the institutions with the guidance and leadership of UN DESA and the UN CEPA. It is envisioned that this will lead to the institutionalization of *a network of a community of experts* whose talents may be drawn upon not only in terms of serving as resource persons in the conduct of *joint* public sector workforce trainings but also in organizing study groups within the regional associations themselves.
- Appropriately contextualized, continue utilizing the *United Nations Report on Changing Mindsets in Realizing the 2030 Agenda* as a basic reference in capacity building interventions. Such report also contains a Public Sector Reform Framework which highlights the role of public administration schools, and of changing the values, behaviours, and mindsets as one of the key factors for reforming the public sector. Consider coming out with an updated report drawing from very recent experiences of the countries in the region.
- Strengthen the support of the government and development partners on digitalization strategies and efforts especially of the developing countries. Capacity building interventions for developing skills and competency for digital governance along with infrastructure investments should be among the main priorities of the government.
- Prioritize data governance and data analytics alongside strengthening digital governance efforts. Hence, there is a need for governments to focus and invest on data-driven training programs for civil servants.
- Maximize the role of the private sector, specifically of the IT industries. This will be a key factor in providing quality training programs on digital and data-driven governance.

References

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