

**PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF  
GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION\***

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Since its ascension to power, the Aquino Government has initiated a spate of reorganizations the impacts of which upon employee morale and organizational dynamics have become the subject of much controversy.

Executive Order No. 5 of March 1986 created the Presidential Commission on Government Reorganization tasked to provide staff assistance and consultative advice to the Government on development administration and facilitate the implementation of newly introduced organizational changes. On the surface, the goals laid down by the Executive Order were scientific and technical in nature, yet it may be asserted that as a psycho-political process, reorganization was important to the Revolutionary Government for three reasons: (a) as a necessary mechanism for the consolidation of power of the ascendant elite; (b) to dismantle the base of autocracy and corruption used to support the Marcos regime; and (c) to enable it to institute organizational reforms more congruent with its own goals and management approaches.

In any case, structural changes instituted in an organization — for whatever reason — have significant impacts on the people comprising it. Drawing from psychological theory on organizational dynamics, this paper discusses several of the scenarios observed of

bureaucratic agencies which underwent or are undergoing reorganization under the instigation of the new Government.

The impacts of change are particularly apparent in a specialized type of organization like the bureaucracy which is designed to carry on the business of government through a system of high specialization, a rigid hierarchy of authority, elaborate rules and controls over operations and relationships within and across the rungs of organization (adapted from Davis K., 1972). It is also characterized by impersonality, a separation of the office and the incumbent (from Max Weber, *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*).

Within such a framework, bureaucratic officials and employees operate day to day according to their abilities, motivations, and morale, as conditioned by the organizational dynamics pervasive therein. *Abilities* represent the individual's preparedness to handle a given job, and stem from prior education and training, acquired skills and experience. *Motivation* refers to the conditions which influence the arousal, direction and maintenance of behaviors relevant in the work setting (McCormick, E. and D. Ilgen, 1980). *Employee morale* is a reflection of worker motivation, and therefore mirrors the extent to which the organizational climate is hospitable to the inner strivings of workers.

Reorganization — instituted to conform to an agency's newly defined goals — usually involves the removal of duplications in func-

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### *Room for Innovation and Modernization of Procedures*

On the optimistic side, re-organization may open new avenues for instituting innovations or modernizing structures and procedures. As a result of planning programs and development workshops, new responses and strategies to old issues may evolve. Totally new interventions may also be designed in response to new concerns. Employee morale is especially enhanced when they are encouraged to participate in these planning processes.

**Recommendations:** Modern management approaches, including participatory approaches to goal identification and performance appraisal, must be utilized to heighten individual commitment and stimulate organizational growth.

### *Improved Performance*

Impending re-organization may, on the one hand, improve personnel performance either as (a) coping mechanism to the risk of lay-offs; (b) as a display of support to the new leadership; or (c) as a means to justify existing offices and positions. Changes may also improve worker motivation on the assumption that those retained are perceived to be of significance to the agency.

On the other hand, if the re-organization process is not implemented in a rational way, the resulting conflicts between old and new procedures may only confuse personnel and delay transactions, degenerating the quality of public service instead of upgrading it.

### *Power Play and Power Ploys*

Perhaps one of the most deleterious effects of reorganization on human relationships within the government bureaucracy is the inevitable wrangling over vacant/vacated

or newly-created positions by those with access to power and influence. In the worst of cases, after the smoke of the battles have cleared, better qualified persons would find that the choice positions have been appropriated by persons who do not even comply with the basic civil service requirements. Their morale, along with those of the unaffected ones, would invariably plummet, weighed down by feelings of unfairness and the irrationality of the ongoing re-organization. This low morale may again be expected to translate into poor performance and grudging public service.

**Recommendation:** New officials with appointing powers must institute objective and rational methods for filling-up positions. Otherwise, re-organization may be used as a shield for purges that are without sound foundation. It may also be abused to advance the personal ambitions of a few individuals in complete disregard of the goals of efficiency, economy and effectiveness.

In conclusion, psychological theory points out that re-organization may affect behavior in government bureaucracy in both positive and negative ways. Despite the rationality of avowed purposes, re-organization is seen to spawn either of these results depending on approaches to and processes of implementation. It is strongly exhorted that care be taken in the course of effecting changes, to enhance the desirable features of the organizations, instead of encouraging spurious ones. In addition, (perhaps, most importantly), although re-organization also functions to entrench the goals and styles of the new Government, in contradistinction to those of the old regime, this must be done in full accordance with the cornerstones of people's power: participation, justice and respect for human rights.

tions, the abolition of structures no longer consonant with the new goals, and the creation of organizational features which adhere to new mandates and functions.

As a result, the lines of authority in a department or agency may be redefined, abolishing certain levels of positions in the hierarchy while creating new ones perceived to be important for newly-fashioned objectives. Corollarily, it may also necessitate the re-evaluation of existing specialties, and result in the modification, strengthening or abolition of certain functions within particular levels of the agency. The network of rules and controls governing the bureaucracy may then have to be re-examined, giving way to a new mesh of procedures and protocols suited to the emerging hierarchy and its functionaries in the fulfillment of their mission.

The consequent repercussions of these moves have significant effects on the morale and motivation of concerned officials and employees, which, in turn, directly determine the way they use their abilities to usher the goals of the organization. Some of these repercussions include the following:

#### *Poor Fit of Workers to Jobs*

Changing the lines of authority, or worse, abolishing certain links in the chain of hierarchy, may either elevate officials to new positions, reduce their scope of operation, or assign them to entirely new designations. In any case, the ensuing displacement will necessitate adjustments which may take a certain length of time.

Tremendous anxiety and insecurity may be experienced by demoted functionaries, while those promoted or re-assigned, may be apprehensive over their lack of preparation for expanded tasks and responsibilities.

**Recommendation:** Such situations necessitate human resource training. Investments will have to be made by the bureaucracy to re-tool its manpower, which, on the positive side, may bring forth the potential for advancing the skills, knowledge and managerial abilities of its executives through appropriate training programs.

#### *Uncertainty in Organizational Relationships*

The abovementioned changes, on the other hand, may have a different set of effects on subordinate employees. For one, the new leadership may demand new modes of behaviour and interactions both among the employees and in relation to authority. For another, the new leader may not effectively communicate the newly-defined goals and functions to the employees, leading to discrepancies in outlooks, expectations and targets. The resulting uncertainty and ambiguity in relationships and behavior expectations may bring about dissatisfaction with the work situation, alienation from organizational goals, and end with poor motivation to work. Work flow may slow down due to confusion regarding systems of procedures, checks and controls. Long-term planning and the organization's capacity to respond speedily to new needs of the public, are also affected by the faulty exercise of leadership.

**Recommendation:** To prevent these negative developments, it is important that re-organization proceed quickly but rationally, with full consideration for employees who find themselves torn between old and new goals, norms and practices. The newly-placed officials must use all means available to orient their subordinates fully to the new mission and vision of the agency, and give them the opportunity to participate in re-organization decisions affecting procedures, controls and performance.