SERVIAM: SERVICE IN LEADERSHIP[1]

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IMAGINATION AND ACTION

Mapagpalang araw po, Pilipinas, mga kapwa ko Pilipino.

Isa lang po ang mensaheng nais kong ipaabot sa lahat. Ito ay ang mensahe ng "serbisyo" na waring mas malalim at mas makahulugan kung gagamitin natin ang isa pang tawag dito – ang "paglilingkod". Ang sarap isipin kung ang bawat tao, lalo na ang bawat isang Pilipino ay isinilang na may angking kakayahang maglingkod.

If everyone around us has an orientation to serve, that is, the capacity to give service to others, then, probably, I could imagine a country of individuals who are able to see the connection between the self and society – ang koneksiyon ng sarili at lipunan – and a country that possesses a quality of mind able to see the connection between biography and history. This is the idea of sociological imagination by C. Wright Mills (1959), an American sociologist. It is interesting to note that this idea has been aptly captured by the writings and life of whom I consider as the foremost Filipino sociologist (and possibly in Asia) – Dr. Jose Rizal. This idea of sociological imagination has been operationalized by Gat Jose Rizal in many of his writings. But for Rizal, imagination should be combined with the concept of "action". For instance, we all know that Rizal once wrote, "The Filipino youth is the fair hope of the motherland" – na "ang kabataan ang pag-asa ng bayan". But this is an oversimplification of the meaningfully complex message of Rizal. This quotation is from his winning Spanish poem, *A La Juventud Filipina.*

I would like to take this occasion to reflect using this poem in order for us to realize that Rizal did not only think that the Filipino youth is the hope of the country but rather he admonishes us to do something about the sad state of our nation. Let me read to everyone the Filipino version of this poem, *Sa Kabataang Pilipino,* and see how fascinating his words are in encouraging us to move into social action, into serving our country.

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[1] This is a working speech reflecting Dr. Clarence Batan's views on service and leadership prepared for various schools, colleges and universities. This module was first presented during the 31st Annual National Convention and Seminar-Workshop for Campus Advisers and 15th Annual National Convention and Seminar-Workshop for Student Leaders, November 26-29, 2010 at Teachers Camp, Baguio City,

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SA KABATAANG PILIPINO[3]

Itaas ang iyong noong aliwalas
ngayon, Kabataan ng aking pangarap!
ang aking talino na tanging liwanag
ay pagitawin mo, Pag-asa ng Bukas!

Ikaw ay lumitaw, O Katalinuhan
magitang na diwang puno sa isipan
mga puso nami'y sa iyo'y naghihintay
at dalhin mo roon sa kaitaasan.

Bumaba kang taglay ang kagiliw-giliw
na mga silahis ng agham at sining
mga Kabataan, hayo na't lagutin
ang gapos ng iyong diwa at damdamin.

Masdan ang putong na lubhang makinang
sa gitna ng dilim ay matitigan
maalam na kamay, may dakilang alay
sa nagdurusa mong bayang minamahal.

Ikaw na may bagwis ng pakpak na nais
kagyat na lumipad sa tuktok ng langit
paghanapin mo ang malambing na tinig
doon sa Olimpo'y pawang nagsisikap.

Ikaw na ang himig ay lalong mairog
Tulad ni Pilomel na sa luha'y gamot
at mabisang lunas sa dusa't himuntok
ng puso at diwang sakbibi ng lungkot

Ikaw, na ang diwa'y makapangyarihan
matigas na bato'y mabibigyang-buhay
mapagbabago mo alaalang taglay
sa iyo'y nagiging walang kamatayan.

Ikaw, na may diwang inibig ni Apeles
sa wika inamo ni Pebong kay rikit
sa isang kaputol na lonang maliit
ginuhit ang ganda at kulay ng langit.

Humayo ka ngayon, papagningasin mo
ang alab ng iyong isip at talino
maganda mong ngala'y ikalat sa mundo
at ipagsigawan ang dangal ng tao.

Araw na dakila ng ligaya't galak
magsaya ka ngayon, mutyang Pilipinas
purihin ang bayang sa iyo'y lumingap
at siyang nag-akay sa mabuting palad.

[3] Online from http://www.activeboard.com/forum.spark?aBID=117200&p=3&topicID=18731519.

In my view, it is in understanding the complexities of this poem that we could locate the locus of "service". And if the vision is to become excellent campus advisers and student leaders, it is in the area of "service" (captured in variety of terms – extension services, volunteerism, advocacies, movements, etc.) that one could make a difference.

Pero hindi tayo isinilang na may kakayahang maglingkod. Ang ugali't karakter ng paglilingkod ay natututunan. Kaya't kailangan muna nating tignan: *Hinog na ba ang mga institusyong pumapaligid sa bawat isang Pilipino upang asahang meron na tayong mapipitas na konsepto ng "lipunan" at "pananagutan" sa kasalukuyang henerasyon?*

LIPUNAN (SOCIETY AND THE "SOCIAL")

As a young sociologist, I have always been interested in capturing the notion of "society" among my respondents. Ano ba ang itinuturing na "lipunan" ng aking mga sinasaliksik? In the series of Filipino youth studies that I conducted over the years, one of the most fascinating but sad findings that I documented was the deteriorating "trust" of my youth respondents to our government (Batan, 2010b). I call this process "disconnection", which is the state where young Filipinos feel a little or no sense of obligation to Philippine society, except to their respective families, the primary institution that supports them. I cannot blame my respondents because we live in a non-welfare state, where we cannot entrust all the basic social needs to the government. In this regard, I documented the credential and employment crises being faced by istambay educated youth. The lack of work in our country has driven the best minds abroad but for the educated youth who cannot find employment locally, they are driven to another state, not to the United States of America, but to the "state of economic inactivity", which is critical to the development of a nation.

Halimbawa lamang ito ng mga suliranin sa larangan ng pagkumbinse sa ating sarili na may pag-asa pa dito sa Pilipinas. Kasi halos 30 taon nang hindi gumalaw ang sosyo-ekonomiyang kondisyon ng ating bansa (Datamonitor Plc, 2009; Wallace, February 2008) kumpara sa ating mga karatig-bansa tulad ng Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, at Vietnam.

Dahil nalayo ako sa Pilipinas nang mahigit walong taon, meron akong na-obserbahan na maaari nating paghugutan ng paliwanag kung bakit meron tayong diskoneksiyon hindi lamang sa lipunan subalit sa mga pamayanang ating ginagalawan, maging sa paaralan at pati sa ating mga relasyon sa mga kaibigan. Napansin ko na ang lipunan natin ay "status-driven". Sobra sa pagkamal ng mga certificates, plaques of appreciation, at ng kung anu-anong mga awards. Siguro ito po ang dahilan kung bakit ang *Showtime* ng ABS-CBN ay "hit na hit" sa mga Pilipino. Dahil ang konsepto ng show ay hindi lang para maging sikat pero para din sa mga gustong magpasikat.

In these contexts, I see a lot of insecurities and discontent among us, Filipinos. I, too, have been oriented to strive the hardest, to reach the highest goal, to maximize my

capacity, and to reach the impossible dream. And at the end of the day I ask myself, for what purpose?
It was Time Magazine's "Man of the Millennium", Albert Einstein,who offered me an answer. He writes, "It is high time that we change the ideal of success for the ideal of service", and it is in this beautiful philosophy that I subscribe to.

PANANAGUTAN (RESPONSIBILITY)

The action component of the "social" will not be complete without the notion of "responsibility". Sabi nga ni Marx, "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it" (Marx, 1845). Sa Filipino, tinatawag natin itong "pananagutan". Kailan ba natin sinasabi na may pananagutan ako sa iyo o sa kapwa natin, o sa isa't isa?

Ako ay bahagi ng isang cooperative movement, ang Binangonan Development Cooperative (BIDECO). Dito naniniwala kami na "may kaluluwa ang utang hindi tulad ng five-six o naggagalang mga Bumbay, pati kaluluwa, kinukuhang pambayad utang" (Batan, 2010a: 128). Ang aming theme song ay ang simbahang-awit na may pamagat na, *Pananagutan*. Sa awit na ito ang kuwento, "Walang sinuman ang nabubuhay, para sa sarili lamang, walang sinuman ang namamatay para sa sarili lamang". Di ba ito ay totoo? Mula sa pagsilang hanggang sa pagkamatay, hindi tayo nag-iisa. Meron tayong kasaysayang hinahabi kabahagi ang ating mga magulang, mga kapatid, mga kapamilya, pamayanan, paaralan at sana, lipunang Pilipino. Ngunit ang kasaysayang ito ay walang kahulugan kung hindi tayo nagpakita ng pagmamalasakit at pagmamahal sa bawat isa. Ito ang hamon ng pananagutan.

"Social responsibility" is a tricky concept because it challenges us to first know who we define as part of our community (as part of our "social"), and only then that we shall be able to determine to whom we are responsible to. Thus:

- If you tell me that you do not feel part of your family, I do not see any reason why I should expect that you feel responsible to the well-being of your parents and siblings.
- If you tell me that you think you are not part of your school community, then, there is no point of encouraging you to be active in school.
- If you distrust our government, then I do not think that I should expect you to become active citizens of this country.

These are example social challenges that we, in the academe, continue to face. For my part I started young, doing and implementing community services to various communities. I believe in the power of education that is why, my projects these past 15 years are focused on education and youth development. Recently, I returned to a small school in Talim Island, the school that I helped build. I was pleased to see the school children, my research respondents – the entire community as I shared the gifts of school supplies from Canada. I consider Talim Island as my community, even if I was not born there. But whenever I return to Talim, there is one thing that I celebrate most. That is, according to the community, "I belong to them".

Para sa akin, ito ang tamis ng paglilingkod na kung saan, hindi ko hinahanap na ako'y maging sikat dahil ang anumang pakikibahagi ko sa pamayanan ay hindi tungkol sa akin. Ito ay tungkol sa pananagutang nakaugat sa pagmamalasakit at pagmamahal.

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