

In Jesus P. Estanislao (2016) *It Can Be Done: Bright Spots in the Governance Reform Movement in the Philippines* (Manila: Institute for Solidarity in Asia).

Foreword

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The best antidote to cynicism is an example of success.

When it comes to making government institutions work, the world is awash in cynicism. Even in countries where only a few percent of people report having paid a bribe, most of the same people think their government is corrupt. Politicians and parties, in particular, are objects of derision. And there's another source of cynicism: we scorn ourselves for going along with corruption. We say our culture is corrupt. We say it would take a change of mentality to make government work—but no one knows how a country can do that.

So, examples like the ones Jess Estanislao so ably presents in this book are needed, first of all, to attenuate that cynicism.

And they also have many practical lessons for policymakers, managers, and scholars. They depict a fascinating reform movement in the Philippines. At the local and national levels, many government institutions have adopted the Performance Governance System, with demonstrated results in better service, more citizen and employee satisfaction, and reduced corruption. The PGS is a version of the Balanced Scorecard, a business tool created for the private sector in the early 1990s. How the PGS has adapted (and perhaps improved) the Balanced Scorecard is of interest to scholars and practitioners of management. At a higher level of abstraction, the PGS is related to many movements in public administration and anti-corruption that have tried to link planning with performance indicators and flexible management structures such as teams and task forces. Here, this book says, is how it can work.

Second, the case studies demonstrate how reforms demand more than adherence to a formula, no matter how logical and attractive the formula is. The PGS does have a methodology, which was created by the Institute for Solidarity in Asia (ISA). The ISA facilitates the adoption of the PGS. The Institute sponsors “boot camps” to convey the

method, as well as “Master Classes” for practitioners who are progressing on the PGS “pathway.” ISA provides recognition for the fulfillment of various stages of that pathway.

But that methodology leads to flexible, contextualized results, through an admirable collaborative process.

- Design is localized. The creation of the local vision, mission, objectives, measures, targets, activities and projects, and implementing teams is designed by locals to yield locally relevant results.
- Implementation is hardly automatic; local leadership is crucial. The PGS disrupts current plans, processes, measures, and teams. The PGS should stimulate collaboration across government departments and to partnerships across the public-private-nonprofit divide, but experience shows that it is much easier to call for collaboration and partnership than to attain them. Both are built on relationships. In order to work, they require leaders to build and maintain trust, create new lines and perhaps “languages” of communication, and understand how others think and work. One can have the “formula” for change, and yet without the creative leadership to build trust, communication, and understanding, change may remain on paper only.

And so, the case studies in this book engage with classic issues of design and implementation. How can leaders help employees understand, embrace, and indeed guide change? How can governments work effectively with the business community? How can the most marginalized citizens be brought into the design and implementation of programs that affect them?

Readers should take note of two other success stories here. One is the ISA itself—what an impressive and effective institution it is. In particular, business people in other countries should be inspired by this example of how they can help government work better, instead of simply decrying bad governance.

The second exemplar is Dr. Jesus P. Estanislao. He is a success story—or better put, a whole volume of success stories himself. He was an exemplar leading institutions in government, development banking, and academia.

As the guiding light of ISA, he has demonstrated different brands of leadership and collaborative vision.

And as a human being, all who know him are inspired by his head and his heart, by his relentless pursuit of excellence and his equally relentless optimism and good will.

In all these ways, Jess Estanislao has shown us “it can be done.” Let us therefore resolve to put our cynicism on hold, read him carefully, and try to follow the successes he both presents and represents.