

# **Enhancing the Competence of Government Leadership: New Approaches to an Old Problem**

A Report on the Joint “UN/IASIA Initiative on Public Administration Education and Training for the Current and Next Generation of Government Leadership” to the First Meeting of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration  
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by

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Honorable Committee Chairperson, Distinguished Prime Minister of Uganda, Mr. Nsibambi;  
Distinguished Members of the Committee of Experts; Observers, Mr. Bertucci and Secretariat  
Organizers:

It is a particular pleasure to be invited to present an overview of the joint initiative that the United Nations (UN), through the Division for Public Economics and Public Administration (DPEPA) of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), and the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA) are undertaking to improve the quality of public administration education and training for both the current and the next generation of government leadership. Obviously, the task is a significant one, but the potential rewards of a successful initiative are even more significant. One only needs to have been present in this room and listened to the various comments that have been made, not only this afternoon when we have been talking about human resource issues, but at our initial morning session as well, to get a sense of the very real importance of the initiative that the UN and IASIA are jointly undertaking.

Our colleague, the distinguished Vice Minister of Finance of the Peoples Republic of China, made reference to the issue of corruption in corporate governance. While he was gracious enough not to mention a particular country, I suspect that he may have been thinking of my own home country – the country in which this meeting is occurring. Obviously the problems my country faces in this regard

are very severe and they are ones that have caused the US government to take significant action to enact new regulatory reform legislation. But the problems involved here are also ones of adequate training. Indeed, just this past weekend, it was announced that the principal government organization which regulates such matters, the Securities and Exchange Commission, would be hiring 200 new investigators. However, as many knowledgeable observers have noted, and even the news media briefly mentioned, a critical issue has been the lack of needed training for current investigators and the need to improve significantly the quality of preparation for future ones.

Also this morning, our colleague from Ukraine, the distinguished State Secretary of the President of Ukraine's Cabinet, mentioned in his statement about the need to train officials in his country to more effectively implement important initiatives with regard to government decentralization that are underway in Ukraine. Coincidentally, I spent last week in Odessa and Kiev in Ukraine working with individuals from the Ukrainian Academy of Public Administration's Odessa Regional Institute on the design of a program that would encourage the decentralization of policy making for healthcare in the Odessa Oblast. One of the issues that was discussed at some length by my colleagues from Odessa was the need to train Oblast and rayon officials on how to effectively manage decentralized governance. Indeed, on several occasions it was noted that one of the things holding up the process of decentralization in Ukraine was a lack of understanding on the part of regional and local officials on how best to respond to such initiatives.

We have also heard frequent reference today to the UN Millennium Declaration. Clearly, that important Declaration of Member States lays out a complex agenda of activities for the next fifteen years: significant economic development to facilitate the eradication of poverty; the insurance of environmental sustainability; the increased support of democracy, good governance and human rights; and the maintenance of peace and security. Most assuredly, any efforts to implement the extraordinarily important agenda of the Millennium Declaration will require highly skilled and highly sensitive governmental leadership. Such leadership does not spontaneously emerge in most instances. Rather, in more cases than not, such leadership is developed over a long period of time and only as a consequence of continued significant efforts at strengthening the knowledge and skill base of the individuals involved.

Unfortunately, in far too many instances, the complexities of a globalizing world simply do not provide the luxury, especially in terms of time, for the implementation of significant efforts at building the skill and knowledge base of the present or the future generation of governmental leadership. It is for this reason that the UN and IASIA have undertaken our joint initiative in public administration education and training for both the current and the next generation of governmental leadership. Perhaps, before beginning to note some of the specific activities that will be a part of this initiative, I should perhaps say a word about IASIA as an organization since, while certainly some of you are very familiar with it, I know that some of you are not. IASIA is the principal worldwide organization that brings together schools of public affairs, academic programs in the field located within universities and national government institutes of public administration. It is composed of approximately 120 institutions from sixty countries. Its headquarters are in Brussels, Belgium, where it operates in association with the International Institute of Administrative Sciences.

The joint UN/IASIA initiative is designed to assist top level government leadership – both present and future – to adapt most effectively to the many complicated problems that are facing contemporary governments in a globalizing world. We are all very familiar with many of these so I will not go into them at great length here, but it is useful to just mention some of the key issues. Obviously, the globalization of both national economies and cultures has added a new complexity and a new urgency to contemporary governance. Likewise, the demands for greater accountability and responsiveness, the rise of multiethnic communities, the growing need to focus on the preservation of the environment and the significant growth in income and resource inequality in the face of great unresolved problems of poverty all are key concerns that are going to demand the highest level of competence from all levels of governmental leadership. When one places all of this within the context of growing public demands for greater ethical behavior, and the rapid emergence of new modes of relationships between the public and private sectors, one becomes profoundly aware that the array of issues facing top level government leaders – both current and future – are extraordinarily complex and difficult ones. They are ones that urgently require new approaches to the enhancing of the competencies of current leadership and the developing of the skills of future leadership.

Consequently, the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration and the Division for Public Economics and Public Administration of the Department of Economic and Social

Affairs of the United Nations have initiated a four year joint effort to strengthen the quality of public administration education and training worldwide, but with particular emphasis on Africa, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. It is anticipated that this initiative will have two major phases– a first year of assessment activities and then three years of implementing 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 the first phase of this effort include the following:

- 1) Extensive discussions between UN/DESA/DPEPA and IASIA regarding the specific elements of this initiative.
- 2) The holding of 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) The creation of a joint UN/DESA/DPEPA - IASIA established expert group of approximately fifteen to twenty 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 group will meet in Turin, Italy in September 19 – 20, 2002, at the UN training center 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 and developing countries throughout the world. This activity, which will be organized in conjunction with Fundacao Getulio Vargas in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (relevant regional associations – Centro Latinoamericano de Administracion para el Desarrollo (CLAD) and the InterAmerican Network for Public Administration Education (INPAE) - will be invited to co-sponsor and participate), will take place November 18-19, 2002 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 will 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.
- 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 defining and initiating 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 2003, 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, Central/ Eastern Europe, Latin America 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 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. Efforts will, of course, be made to both identify those potential projects that show the greatest probability of having broad impact and transferability.

Before concluding my presentation, it is perhaps useful to tell you a tiny bit more of what will be the next two major activities of the joint UN/IASIA initiative. The first of these will be the Expert Group meeting on “New Challenges for Senior Leadership Enhancement for Improved Public Management in a Globalizing World” which will take place in Turin, Italy on September 19-20 and will bring together a group of 15-20 experts who will focus on how best to enhance the competencies and abilities of senior governmental leadership. The specific areas of concern which the experts will address will include:

- a) defining the concept of leadership; as well as the defining of the target group or groups upon which the deliberations of the Expert Group meeting will focus;
- b) the identification and outlining of key issues facing top level government leadership;
- c) the outlining of specific areas of competency enhancement necessary to better equip top level government leadership to function in today's increasingly complex governance environment;
- d) the exploration of various strategies to facilitate the most effective forms of competency enhancement for top level government leadership; and,
- e) the development of a proposed program of activities that will produce significant initiatives in the area of competency enhancement for top level government leadership in transitional and developing countries.

The second major activity will be the conference on “Improving the Quality of Public Education and Training: New Needs, New Approaches” which will take place in Rio de Janeiro on November 18 - 19, 2002 at Fundacao Getulio Vargas. This conference will bring together individuals from every region of the world who are involved in new methods and approaches to public administration 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 will be on both education and training activities and, most

importantly, 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 and IASIA will both guide the development of and then edit the papers from 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. This report 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. A proposed program of technical assistance and demonstration projects to improve the quality of public administration education and training and a strategy to seek funding to implement the proposed program will be developed.

In conclusion, I would like to note that while we have developed a considerable number of activities as part of the first phase of the joint UN/IASIA initiative, we are still very much seeking suggestions and guidance regarding ways to shape the very important second phase in which we will be attempting to implement many of the ideas that emerged during the first phase. Consequently, both I, on behalf of IASIA, and my colleagues from the United Nations, would be extremely appreciative of any ideas or suggestions that you may have for us. We also would very much appreciate your continued involvement in this effort. Thank you very much for your attention.