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“Now Who Wants to be a Public Servant Post-Corona?”

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“Now Who Wants to be a Public Servant Post-Corona?”

With all what is going on with the Corona virus pandemic, I am wondering who in his right mind would want to join the public service, or even take on a leadership position! Leaders the world over are under intense stress, very few are succeeding in dealing with the pandemic and no one knows anything. It is a very ambiguous situation. Citizens are fed up with the situation they are in, and with their governments. Additionally, working in the public arena has become not only a health hazard, but also life threatening for some. **Will this global pandemic affect the demand for public service jobs and, consequently, the demand for public administration and public policy programs of study?**

During the early introductory lectures to public administration, one used to cite the justifications for wanting to study and know more about the field. We convinced students that serving others is a noble cause, that you need to understand how the government works because it affects everything that happens to you in your daily life, that even if you work in the business sector you will still need to interact with government, so you should learn more about how it works. If you are working as a physician, or an academic, whether in the public or private sector, once you get promoted to become a department chair, or a unit head, you will need to have management skills, and an understanding of what public service is all about. You may also want to influence public policies.

I imagine my prospective graduate students listening to the news, absorbing what is happening and trying to find a reason why they should seek a job in public service. It is not going to be an easy endeavor by any means. Physicians, nurses, pharmacists and the medical staff at large are under high risk of contracting the corona virus. Many of them in different places around the world have been infected, and increasing numbers are reported to have lost their lives. Local leaders, mayors, governors, bank employees, ministers, prime ministers and even princes have gotten sick. Public servants, especially those in direct contact with citizens, are the most at risk.

Try to convince a new cohort of graduates to choose to work as public servants. What would you say? What would work?

- ***Serving others is a noble cause.*** Servant leadership is the name of the game. Politicians who aspire to win elections, and leaders who are seeking to consolidate their power, are those who can prove they are going to be the best servants to their people.
- ***Governments are taking on a greater role than ever before*** with managing the pandemic. We are not rolling back the state, but extending its scope and scale once more.
- ***Everyone is looking up to government for advice***, for support, for guidance and expecting it to continue to provide its services, whether health services, or regular services, to make ends meet. Despite being disgruntled with government, citizens are still looking up to government to provide them with quality services and a way out from the crisis.
- ***Stable and secure jobs in government, in all domains, will be sought out***, especially with the loss in jobs in the private sector, and increasing unemployment. When the private sector was letting its employees go, government employees were enjoying position security, more than anybody else.
- ***There will be an end to the pandemic***, sooner rather than later. This too shall pass. Life will go on and government jobs will increase in popularity.
- ***Numerous examples abound for dignified and exemplary performance by public servants during the pandemic.*** Public leaders who did a good job in managing their country's affairs during the pandemic, and public servants in the health sector who have lost their lives while trying to save others, have gained the respect and admiration of all, and their names will go down in history books in letters of gold.

- ***New recruits to the Civil Service with a different set of competencies are needed:*** We need a new fresh batch of government leaders and servants who can figure out the priorities right and stop squandering resources on “walls,” “bridges” and “military equipment.” They need to realize that ensuring a good quality of life for citizens, health wise, education wise and information wise, is what matters the most.
- ***After the Corona pandemic, there is a great probability that people will value public service and servants more than before.*** Already there are calls for public budgetary re-allocations to what matters—health, education and research. Developing countries especially need to show more respect to their public servants, especially their health professionals and educators, and revise their compensation packages, benefits and rights. They were the ones who stood the brunt of the pandemic blow, and they are the ones who should be valued most.

So, to the young generation out there, there is still merit in joining the public service, and if it is not very clear now, then it will definitely be in the near future, after the pandemic.