

Lloyd Fernando

Dr. Lloyd Fernando retired in 1993, as State Secretary Ministry of Policy Planning and Implementation and Director General National Planning (posts held concurrently) and proceeded to Manila, Philippines to take up the position of Alternate Executive Director at the Asian Development Bank. On return to Sri Lanka, he held the position of Chairman Marga Institute (premier socio-economic research institute in Sri Lanka) for a period of five years. He was the Founder Director of the Institute of Policy Studies. He is currently Programme Director-Public Policy at the Postgraduate Institute of Management of the Sri Jayewardenepura University. His research publications cover, mostly, macroeconomics, development planning and public policy and administrative reforms.



The PIM extended my Learning Curve

I have, perhaps for some Karmic reasons, been a very privileged person in life. Attachment to the PIM is one of those privileges. It has helped me, above all, to extend my learning curve and to make a contribution to public service capacity building.

All my higher education (five years in Moscow and four years in Sussex) was generously financed by donor agencies. The government gave me the opportunity to enhance knowledge by regularly attending international conferences, seminars, workshops and bilateral negotiations.

My learning curve covered reading (40 percent), interaction with superiors and peers (30 percent) and association with juniors-assistants (30 percent). I am not an avid reader. I

am very choosy about what I read. I never neglected, however, to keep in touch with current news.

My greatest strength was derived from the privilege of associating, often quite closely, with world renowned academics and thought leaders such as Sergei Vasilchuk, Hans Singer, Dudley Seers, David Wall and Gamani Corea. My thought processes were stimulated through very close interaction with political leaders such as Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe, Pieter Keuneman, Dr. N. M. Perera, Bernard Soyza, Gamini Disanayake, Lalith Athulathmudali, Lakshman Kadirgamar and my erstwhile boss Ronnie de Mel.

My juniors-assistants, too numerous to be singled out, who ended up subsequently as renowned profession-

als, both locally and internationally, enhanced my knowledge base, through questions and supplementary detail.

What brought me to the PIM was a casual conversation with Prof. Gunapala Nanayakkara about eight years ago. I told him that my DEPS (Distance Education for Public Servants) Project, implemented through an NGO with NORAD funding, was coming to an end as the Norwegians were not going to continue their support. He told me "so why don't you come here". I was already a member of the PIM Board of Studies.

I spoke thereafter to Dr. P. B. Jayasundera and he arranged with the UNDP to fund a 'Diploma in Public Administration' for Treasury Staff.

Professor Uditha Liyanage who had only recently assumed office as Director, PIM, endorsed the idea very enthusiastically paving the way for my eight-year stint at the PIM. Thereafter, each year we were able to attract funding from different sources to conduct new or modified study programmes at the PIM. Professor Liyanage and Professor Sudatta Ranasinghe, who are unfortunately no longer with us today, encouraged me to experiment with a 'blended learning' system to reach out to senior public servants based in the northern and eastern provinces, as well. My association with these two eminent academics enriched my knowledge base.

I was supported in the initial period also by Professor Tilak Fonseka and Dr. Travis Perera. Professor Ajantha S. Dharmasiri extended his support by taking some MPA classes. Mr. K. A. I Kalyanaratne was at hand to help me with editing of course material. Most enjoyable and stimulating, however, were the little chats I had with him about Sinhala literature and cultural practices bringing back nostalgic memories of my tutelage

under Father Marcelline Jayakody when I was a student brat at St. Peters.

The most significant contribution of the Faculty was to the course content of the MPA programme, which was meant to deal with matters relating to public policy and administration. They enriched the content by introducing new dimensions based on knowledge derived from teaching in the MBA programme meant for private sector executives. This was new exposure to public servants who are mostly guided by stereotyped bureaucratic systems of administration.

The need for public administration reforms is a foregone conclusion. This recognition is not confined to Sri Lanka. Worldwide, there is a move to shift away from the traditional bureaucratic model to more dynamic approaches. Even in the United State there was a movement, which was initiated by Vice President Al Gore, to introduce what he called "entrepreneur government". In essence, it appeared to be an attempt to introduce private sector best prac-

tices to public administration. The PIM was uniquely equipped to introduce the new thinking.

Association with PIM Faculty also broadened my thought horizons. Most importantly, I was able to test some of my thinking on public policy and administration. While they questioned some of my ideas they also encouraged me to forge ahead with some new approaches. This emboldened me to place these ideas before the government through the National Administrative Reforms Council, which unfortunately is no longer in existence. One of the most important recommendations was the establishment of the Management Reform Cells (MRCs) initially in the Ministries, to be extended later to other government entities such as departments, district secretariats and provincial councils. These cells were to be guided by Chief Innovation Officers, trained by the PIM. Unfortunately, after completion of their training the beneficiaries were left in the lurch since the government was unable to establish the MRCs which they were expected to lead.



It is my view that it is the quality of the Faculty that has attracted a lot of eminent academics and senior public officers to participate in the PIM programmes. Eminent economists such as W. A. Wijewardena, Dr. Saman Kelegama, Dr. Indrajit Coomaraswamy, Richard Vokes, Dr. Fredercik Abeyratne, Dr. Rohan Perera and Indrajit Aponsu have raised the level of teaching at the PIM. Dr. Wickrema Weerasooria was already a visiting faculty member when I joined.

I benefited from Dr. Weerasooriya's wisdom long before I joined the PIM. I had the privilege of knowing him when he was Secretary, Plan Implementation. He introduced new approaches to public administration with his dynamic leadership, which saw the introduction of IRDPs (Integrated Rural Development Programmes), the Children's Secretariat, Women's Bureau and the Fertilizer Secretariat. He broke through bureaucratic barriers much to the envy of the old brigade and built up a team of highly competent officers through capacity development and motivation. His presentations at the PIM reflected his rich

experience, also as a top diplomat and teacher at Monash, which added further to my learning curve.

Teaching is not a one way knowledge transmission process. Teachers also learn while teaching. They acquire knowledge not only in the process of preparing the teaching material but also from their interaction with students. When the students have already acquired practical experience from their workplaces, they possess capability to combine theory with practice. Almost all participants in the MPA programme are senior officers serving in government ministries, departments and regional organizations such as the provincial councils, district and divisional secretariats. Participation has been further enriched by the enrollment of senior officers from the armed forces, such as Majors General, Brigadiers, Lieutenant Colonels as well as Commanders of the Navy. I learnt a lot from my interactions with these students.

The PIM is showing evidence of achieving greater success in the future in delivering high quality management training programmes un-

der the able leadership of Professor Ajantha S. Dharmasiri who likes to be called a 'servant leader.' The main characteristic of a 'servant leader' is empathy which the current Director displays in plenty. The other important ingredient is involvement and motivation of the 'followers'. He achieves them through constant dialogue and recognition of performance, not only of the academic faculty but also the administrative staff. The monthly (first of the month) open door meeting, attended by all staff, which begins with the singing of the PIM anthem, creates an atmosphere of collective involvement in all activities by being informed of the challenges and achievements. The breakfast that is served thereafter provides an opportunity for further discussion in an informal atmosphere. The 5 S programme and the non-academic staff training programmes reinforce the drive towards administrative excellence, while the Faculty has taken up the challenge of getting the AASC accreditation.

I wish I could extend the benefits of my learning at the PIM to improve the quality of public administration in Sri Lanka.

