

Philippine Judicial Academy- In Retrospect*

Justice Ricardo C. Puno, Sr.
Chair

Department of Civil Law, PHILJA

I. INTRODUCTION

The Philippine Judicial Academy (PHILJA), from its early beginnings as a tender seedling all through its growth into a verdant sprawling tree, has spanned the career tenures of five (5) Chief Justices: Querube C. Makalintal (1973 to 1975), Fred Ruiz Castro (1976 to 1979), Marcelo B. Fernan (1988 to 1991), Andres R. Narvasa (1991 to 1998) and Hilario G. Davide, Jr. (1998 to present).

II. CLASSES IN THE DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY OF THE PHILIPPINES

The first two-week long seminars for the training of Executive Judges were held in the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP) in Tagaytay City during the last two (2) years (1974 to 1975) of the Makalintal Court. I was then “Judicial Consultant” (predecessor of today’s “Court Administrator”) and Chief Justice Makalintal made me take charge of the 1975 “DAP II” class, as the shortened name for each class was conveniently termed.

“DAP III” and “DAP IV” were continued at the Development Academy of the Philippines during the tenure (1976 to 1979) of Chief Justice Fred Ruiz Castro and I, still as Judicial Consultant, retained over-all supervision of the seminars. The four (4) DAP classes, each composed of at least fifty (50) senior trial judges, pioneered the Judicial Education system, and produced eminent executive jurists who later ascended to the appellate courts, among them Justices Lorenzo R. Relova, Venicio T. Escolin, Josue N. Bellosillo and Oscar M. Herrera, Sr.

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Other concerns then took center stage in the intervening years until Chief Justice Fernan again took up the gauntlet and issued Administrative Circular No. 6 on October 11, 1988, establishing a “Continuing Judicial Education Program” requiring all newly appointed trial judges to undergo “orientation programs” and all incumbent judges to undertake special studies in “career programs.”

III. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ACADEMY

The seed finally took root when Chief Justice Narvasa created the *ad hoc* Committee to draft the Administrative Order creating the Philippine Judicial Academy. On March 2, 1993, the Committee, composed of Justice Ameurfina A. Melencio Herrera, as Chairperson, and Justices Lorenzo R. Relova, Irene K. Cortes, Ricardo C. Puno, Sr., Bernardo P. Pardo, Alfredo L. Benipayo, and Court Administrator Ernani C. Paño as Members, submitted the draft.

On March 12, 1996, the Narvasa Court issued Administrative Order No. 35-96 to take effect immediately, establishing PHILJA as a unit of the Supreme Court, “charged with the formulation and implementation of a continuing program of judicial education for justices, judges, court personnel and lawyers.”

IV. INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE ACADEMY

Attempts of the Philippine Congress to legally “institutionalize” PHILJA began as early as May 28, 1996, when House Bill No. 07109 for the establishment of a “Judicial and Prosecutorial Academy of the Philippines” was introduced and sponsored in the House of Representatives by Congressmen Edcel C. Lagman, Lualhati R. Antonino, and Rodolfo Albano (a retired Judge).

After discussions of several varied versions, the counterpart measure in the Senate took final form almost two (2) years later as Senate Bill No. 2428 and entitled “An Act Establishing the Philippine Judicial Academy,” and was favorably recommended for approval by the Committee on Justice and Human Rights and Committee on Finance on January 6, 1998. In his sponsorship speech on January 20, 1998, former Chief Justice and then Senator Fernan reiterated and emphasized the need to “institutionalize” by law the Academy.

Senate Bill No. 2428, authored by Senators Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, Ernesto E. Herrera and Marcelo B. Fernan, was certified for immediate enactment by President

Fidel V. Ramos, and was finally approved on February 26, 1998 as Republic Act No. 8557.

This Act “established a Philippine Judicial Academy x x x which shall be a separate component unit of the Supreme Court and x x x shall serve as a training school for justices, judges, court personnel, lawyers, and aspirants to judicial posts.”

Section 19 of the Act provides that:

It shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation whichever comes earlier.

R.A. No. 8557 was published in the newspapers, Malaya and Manila Times, on March 7, 1998 and in the Official Gazette on July 13, 1998.

V. EXECUTIVE OFFICES AND CAMPUS, GOVERNING BOARD, AND OFFICIALS

Standing on solid rock as an institution created by law, PHILJA holds executive offices in the Centennial Building of the Supreme Court, and maintains its own school campus in Tagaytay City under Transfer Certificate Title No. T-50184 in the name of the PHILJA Development Center, Inc. (PDCI) issued by the Register of Deeds of Tagaytay City on January 21, 2004 cancelling the old title of the Ridge Sports and Country Club Corporation (RSCCC) as previous registered owner.

The Governing Board of the Academy is the Board of Trustees headed by the Chief Justice as *ex officio* Chairman. At the helm of the Executive Offices is the ageless and indefatigable Justice Ameurfina A. Melencio Herrera, Chancellor since March 1996 up to the present, assisted by Judge Priscila S. Agana as Executive Secretary. Three (3) Vice Chancellors namely, Justices Irene R. Cortes, Nathaniel M. Gorospe, and Antonio M. Martinez, served the Academy in successive terms from March 1996 to April 2005. The incumbent Vice Chancellor is Justice Justo P. Torres, Jr. who assumed office in May 2005.

The PHILJA executive officials, hand in hand with the Department Heads composing the Academic Council and the Corps of Professors, have compiled an achievement record that speaks for itself.

VI. SEMINARS CONDUCTED FROM 1996 TO 2004

For the nine (9) years of operation, from 1996 to 2004, the scoreboard reads as follows:

Year	No. of Seminars Conducted	No. of Participants
1996	11	Total: 748 Judges: 579 Court Personnel: 168 Observer: 1
1997	42	Total: 8,553 Justices and Judges: 3,237 Court Personnel: 5,316
1998	26	Total: 6,162 Justices: 8 Judges: 1,803 Court Personnel: 4,351
1999	29	Total: 3,432 Judges: 1,977 Court Personnel: 1,455
2000	52	Total: 8,725 Justices: 57 Judges: 1,663 Court Personnel: 6,073 Lawyers: 202 Others: 730
2001	92	Total: 7,117 Judges: 2,673 Court Personnel: 3,901 Lawyers: 543

Year	No. of Seminars Conducted	No. of Participants
2002	87	Total: 15,818 Justices: 150 Judges: 3,061 Court Personnel: 11,740 Lawyers: 556 Others: 311
2003	53	Total: 10,403 Justices: 16 Judges: 2,235 Lawyers: 97 Court Personnel: 7,448 Others: 607
2004	83	Total: 9,560 Justices: 74 Judges: 2,257 Court Personnel: 4,311 Lawyers: 625 Others: 2,293
SUMMATION:		
Total No. of Seminars Conducted from 1996 to 2004		----- 475
Grand Total No. of Participants		----- 70,518

VII. CONSORTIUM WITH OTHER EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

According to Section II of the Republic Act No. 8557, PHILJA may enter into consortium agreements with educational and training institutions dedicated to missions for continuing judicial education. Pursuant thereto, the Supreme Court *En Banc* passed a Resolution in “Administrative Matter No. 04-3-I5-SC-PHILJA” dated 23 March 2004, approving the Consortium Agreement for Masteral Program in Law entered into between PHILJA and the San Beda College Graduate School of Law. The Graduate School, under the competent Deanship of PHILJA’s own Fr. Ranhilo C. Aquino, is now in full operation with its academic standards in the capable hands of PHILJA faculty members occupying the San Beda Professorial Chairs installed and commissioned by the Very Reverend Rector and President, Father Anscar J. Chupungco, OSB.

VIII. CONCLUSION

From seedling to full grown tree – this epic narrative is still unfinished, but the later chapters that last unfolded owe their glowing success stories to the present Chief Justice, the Honorable Hilario G. Davide, Jr. to whom this Valedictory Lecture Series has been affectionately dedicated.