

PROFESSIONALISM IN THE WORK FROM HOME ARRANGEMENT

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COVID-19 pandemic has affected all aspects of human experiences. It has even changed the course of office management. In the government offices the typical set up of eight (8) hours office operation, now it is congested through six (6) hours. It even breaks it through an alternate work arrangement wherein personnel is only required to report three (3) days only in a week. The setting has moved all personnel to maximize their work engagement by promoting more productivity with the highest efficiency (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Not only that, with the extreme COVID-19 cases, work from home arrangement is implemented. It is to safeguard them from any exposure that makes them susceptible to acquiring the virus. Nonetheless, the very question is how can employees win over their own personal work to their administrative obligation while they are in the very comfort of their home. The very answer is professionalism.

It is stipulated in the Republic Act 6713 or the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees that all public employees have to be professional. The law exclusively defined professionalism as performing and discharging their duties with the highest degree of excellence, professionalism, intelligence, and skill (Act Establishing a Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees, 1989). It is also added that they need to practice the highest devotion and dedication to their duty as public servants. They also need to respect each other's rights and refrain themselves from any temptation of acting contrary to the law, morality, customs, policies, public order, and interest. They need to avoid any form of bias and self-serving decisions (Wang et al., 2017). They ought to promote government interest and give in high preference to the common good.

Implementation of work from home in relation to professionalism is not actually an issue of whether public employees will be doing their responsibilities in the comfort of their homes. It is because by all means that whether they are in their respective offices or in the comfort of their homes, they are imperatively moved by their responsibilities attached to their positions. To promote professionalism is to be reminded of one's duties and responsibilities (Brandman University, 2020). Hence, it is a form of maturity. It means that if the public employee thinks naturedly and has a high standard of responsibility, even in their home, they will perform their function. They work effectively and efficiently without the strict monitoring of their superiors. They accomplish reports on time and maximize their working hours attending to all office needs.

Exercise of professionalism is the awareness of the sworn duties and responsibilities. Part of the appointing process in the government agencies is the pledge of a newly hired employee to "serve in such capacity with all the rights, privileges and responsibilities". The statement converges the very core of public offices as public service. It capsulizes the epitome of Cardinal Sin's very word "Bayan muna bago sarili" wherein institutionalized in the Department of Education through DepEd Order 30 s. 1990 titled Bayan Muna, Bago ang Sarili: Educational Commitment. Therefore, if public employees are aware of their sworn duties and responsibilities, even in the exigence of performing their duty in their respected houses, they will fulfill their duties and responsibilities. They will not treat work from the home arrangement as an extension of their vacation or free day. They will promote the interest of their respected agencies and fulfill their mandate defying location and situation.

Professionalism in relation to work from home arrangement during the pandemic is indeed a challenge. It is a challenge to continue in becoming steadfast and faithful to one's duties and responsibilities. It is very tempting to just ignore and make many alibis to excuse oneself in performing one's function. However, it is also an opportunity to be mature and to be aware of one's status as a public servant (Davis, 2011). It is because

professionalism is not just a mandate or obligation that ought to be followed but a lifestyle and social imperative that has to be realized and be practiced by public employees.

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