

Tribute

EDGARDO J. ANGARA

(24 September 1934–13 May 2018)

Statesman, Educator, and Institution Builder

Ma. Cynthia Rose Banzon Bautista

It is only fitting that in this maiden issue of the *Philippine Journal of Public Policy: Interdisciplinary Development Perspectives* (PJPP IDP), we give tribute to former University of the Philippines (UP) President and late Senate President Edgardo J. Angara, upon whose initiative and vision, the Center for Integrative and Development Studies (CIDS) was founded “to harness the multidisciplinary expertise of UP toward the resolution of the nation’s critical problems” during his presidency in 1985. By an auspicious coincidence, it was Angara who fully supported our idea of inviting Amando Doronila to edit the earliest issues of *Public Policy*, the predecessor of this journal.

In his investiture as UP president on 18 June 1983, Angara challenged the University to use its expertise to work toward the “reduction of social outrage to reasoned critique... of impassioned demand to [a] coherent program. The clarification of issues, the discovery of facts, the exposure of distortions and lies, and the presentation of reasoned alternatives”—an aspiration he strived to live up to in his service to the University and the country.

As UP president from 1981 to 1987, Angara secured fiscal autonomy for the University, enhanced the General Education (GE) Program, pioneered the Integrated Liberal Arts and Medicine (INTARMED) program, initiated the splitting of UP Diliman’s College of Liberal Arts into the College of Social Sciences and Philosophy, College of Arts and Letters, and the College of Science, and decentralized the administration of the University, creating a University System of constituent autonomous universities.

In his prolific work as the longest-serving post-EDSA senator, in education alone, Angara legislated the establishment of all major education institutions and the formulation of policies in the country today: the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the Free High School Act, the Early Years Act, the Kindergarten Education Act, the Enhanced Basic Education Act (K to 12), and the Government Assistance to Student and Teachers in Private Education (GASTPE).

A staunch advocate of science and technology, Angara also initiated and supported the Congressional Committee on Science, Technology, and Engineering (COMSTE). He pushed academic and professional leaders in engineering to aspire for membership in the Washington Accord in order to raise global awareness on the quality of our engineers. His final agreement to the inclusion of the CHED-based Philippine California Advanced Research Institute (PCARI) in the 2013 General Appropriations Act was critical in breathing life to an institute that has not only supported the recently inaugurated state-of-the-art Shared Genomics Core Laboratory in UP but also collaborative high-end research between the University of California in Berkeley, San Francisco and Davis, and Philippine research universities in the areas of information infrastructure development and health innovation and translation medicine.

But beyond these manifold contributions, Angara's exemplary service and affinity to the University of the Philippines remained truest and most lasting. From the halls of the Senate, he continued to support and guide the University, shepherding the passage of the UP Charter in 2008 (Republic Act No. 9500), and chairing the UP Centennial Commission (2008) and the UP Law Centennial Commission (2011), while actively participating in the Board of Regents in his role as chair of the Senate Committee on Education.

A known pacesetter, he pushed UP to innovate on programs that required pioneering study and leadership for the country, including the ladderized health education program in Baler, Aurora, the Institute on Aging (National Institutes of Health in UP Manila), and the UP Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea (UP IMLOS) under the UP Law Center. He was an ardent supporter of National Telehealth Project, the Engineering Research and Development for Technology (ERDT), and the UP Sports Complex, among many others. In his later years, he remained active in supporting the management of the President Edgardo J. Angara (PEJA) Fellowship Award, suggesting before he passed on its more focused attention on education.

On 28 April 2013, in his final year as a senator, the University of the Philippines bestowed on Angara the degree of Doctor of Laws, *Honoris Causa*, for his “resolute advocacy and enduring contributions to the cause of education in the country” and for his “distinguished service at the helm of the University, his alma mater, championing its tradition of academic excellence.” In his address, Angara admonished the graduating class to contribute toward reducing social inequalities and expanding the Filipino middle class, citing that “a strong middle class is the backbone of civil society; the bulwark against democratic decay; and the motive power of our people’s progress. A strong middle class is the voice of reason that moderates vested interests; the force of change that compels societies to invest in their own future.”

In this post-truth era of fake news and alternative facts, Angara’s words during his investiture as UP president are an excellent reminder of where the University stands: “... the University had declared its faith in the limitless fecundity of the free and disciplined mind, its resignation to the eternal elusiveness of ultimate truths, and its determination, nonetheless, to continue the search for them without ever blinding itself to the perennial provisionality of its findings. This is the University—an institution greater than any truth.”

May the life and the legacy of Senator Angara challenge and inspire us to cross disciplinary boundaries, in the search for policy, technical, and social solutions to persistent problems that plague our nation, in the service of the Filipino people.

Ma. Cynthia Rose Banzon Bautista, Ph.D. is the vice president for academic affairs of the University of the Philippines. She served as executive director of the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies from 1991 to 2000.
