

SECOND DIVISION

[G.R. No. 106296, July 05, 1996]

**ISABELO T. CRISOSTOMO, PETITIONER, VS. THE COURT OF
APPEALS AND THE PEOPLE OF THE PHILIPPINES,
RESPONDENTS. [*]**

DECISION

MENDOZA, J.:

This is a petition to review the decision of the Court of Appeals dated July 15, 1992, the dispositive portion of which reads:

WHEREFORE, the present petition is partially granted. The questioned Orders and writs directing (1) "reinstatement" of respondent Isabelo T. Crisostomo to the position of "President of the Polytechnic University of the Philippines," and (2) payment of "salaries and benefits" which said respondent failed to receive during his suspension insofar as such payment includes those accruing after the abolition of the PCC and its transfer to the PUP, are hereby set aside. Accordingly, further proceedings consistent with this decision may be taken by the court a quo to determine the correct amounts due and payable to said respondent by the said university.

The background of this case is as follows:

Petitioner Isabelo Crisostomo was President of the Philippine College of Commerce (PCC), having been appointed to that position by the President of the Philippines on July 17, 1974.

During his incumbency as president of the PCC, two administrative cases were filed against petitioner for illegal use of government vehicles, misappropriation of construction materials belonging to the college, oppression and harassment, grave misconduct, nepotism and dishonesty. The administrative cases, which were filed with the Office of the President, were subsequently referred to the Office of the Solicitor General for investigation.

Charges of violations of R.A. No. 3019, § 3 (e) and R.A. No. 992, § 20-21 and R.A. No. 733, § 14 were likewise filed against him with the Office of Tanodbayan.

On June 14, 1976, three (3) informations for violation of Sec. 3 (e) of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act (R.A. No. 3019, as amended) were filed against him. The informations alleged that he appropriated for himself a *bahay kubo*, which was intended for the College, and construction materials worth P250,000.00, more or

less. Petitioner was also accused of using a driver of the College as his personal and family driver.^[1]

On October 22, 1976, petitioner was preventively suspended from office pursuant to R.A. No. 3019, § 13, as amended. In his place Dr. Pablo T. Mateo, Jr. was designated as officer-in-charge on November 10, 1976, and then as Acting President on May 13, 1977.

On April 1, 1978, P.D. No. 1341 was issued by then President Ferdinand E. Marcos, CONVERTING THE PHILIPPINE COLLEGE OF COMMERCE INTO A POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, DEFINING ITS OBJECTIVES, ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS, AND EXPANDING ITS CURRICULAR OFFERINGS.

Mateo continued as the head of the new University. On April 3, 1979, he was appointed Acting President and on March 28, 1980, as President for a term of six (6) years.

On July 11, 1980, the Circuit Criminal Court of Manila rendered judgment acquitting petitioner of the charges against him. The dispositive portion of the decision reads:

WHEREFORE, the Court finds the accused, Isabelo T. Crisostomo, not guilty of the violations charged in all these three cases and hereby acquits him therefrom, with costs de oficio. The bail bonds filed by said accused for his provisional liberty are hereby cancelled and released.

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 13, R.A. No. 3019, as amended, otherwise known as The Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, and under which the accused has been suspended by this Court in an Order dated October 22, 1976, said accused is hereby ordered reinstated to the position of President of the Philippine College of Commerce, now known as the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, from which he has been suspended. By virtue of said reinstatement, he is entitled to receive the salaries and other benefits which he failed to receive during suspension, unless in the meantime administrative proceedings have been filed against him.

The bail bonds filed by the accused for his provisional liberty in these cases are hereby cancelled and released.

SO ORDERED.

The cases filed before the Tanodbayan (now the Ombudsman) were likewise dismissed on August 8, 1991 on the ground that they had become moot and academic. On the other hand, the administrative cases were dismissed for failure of the complainants to prosecute them.

On February 12, 1992, petitioner filed with the Regional Trial Court a motion for execution of the judgment, particularly the part ordering his reinstatement to the position of president of the PUP and the payment of his salaries and other benefits

during the period of suspension.

The motion was granted and a partial writ of execution was issued by the trial court on March 6, 1992. On March 26, 1992, however, President Corazon C. Aquino appointed Dr. Jaime Gellor as acting president of the PUP, following the expiration of the term of office of Dr. Nemesio Prudente, who had succeeded Dr. Mateo. Petitioner was one of the five nominees considered by the President of the Philippines for the position.

On April 24, 1992, the Regional Trial Court, through respondent Judge Teresita Dy-Liaco Flores, issued another order, reiterating her earlier order for the reinstatement of petitioner to the position of PUP president. A writ of execution, ordering the sheriff to implement the order of reinstatement, was issued.

In his return dated April 28, 1992, the sheriff stated that he had executed the writ by installing petitioner as President of the PUP, although Dr. Gellor did not vacate the office as he wanted to consult with the President of the Philippines first. This led to a contempt citation against Dr. Gellor. A hearing was set on May 7, 1992. On May 5, 1992, petitioner also moved to cite Department of Education, Culture and Sports Secretary Isidro Cariño in contempt of court. Petitioner assumed the office of president of the PUP.

On May 18, 1992, therefore, the People of the Philippines filed a petition for certiorari and prohibition (CA G.R. No. 27931), assailing the two orders and the writs of execution issued by the trial court. It also asked for a temporary restraining order.

On June 25, 1992, the Court of Appeals issued a temporary restraining order, enjoining petitioner to cease and desist from acting as president of the PUP pursuant to the reinstatement orders of the trial court, and enjoining further proceedings in Criminal Cases Nos. VI-2329-2331.

On July 15, 1992, the Seventh Division of the Court of Appeals rendered a decision, [2] the dispositive portion of which is set forth at the beginning of this opinion. Said decision set aside the orders and writ of reinstatement issued by the trial court. The payment of salaries and benefits to petitioner accruing after the conversion of the PCC to the PUP was disallowed. Recovery of salaries and benefits was limited to those accruing from the time of petitioner's suspension until the conversion of the PCC to the PUP. The case was remanded to the trial court for a determination of the amounts due and payable to petitioner.

Hence this petition. Petitioner argues that P.D. No. 1341, which converted the PCC into the PUP, did not abolish the PCC. He contends that if the law had intended the PCC to lose its existence, it would have specified that the PCC was being "abolished" rather than "converted" and that if the PUP was intended to be a new institution, the law would have said it was being "created." Petitioner claims that the PUP is merely a continuation of the existence of the PCC, and, hence, he could be reinstated to his former position as president.

In part the contention is well taken, but, as will presently be explained, reinstatement is no longer possible because of the promulgation of P.D. No. 1437 by the President of the Philippines on June 10, 1978.

P.D. No. 1341 did not abolish, but only changed, the former Philippine College of Commerce into what is now the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, in the same way that earlier in 1952, R.A. No. 778 had converted what was then the Philippine School of Commerce into the Philippine College of Commerce. What took place was a change in academic status of the educational institution, not in its corporate life. Hence the change in its name, the expansion of its curricular offerings, and the changes in its structure and organization.

As petitioner correctly points out, when the purpose is to abolish a department or an office or an organization and to replace it with another one, the lawmaking authority says so. He cites the following examples:

E.O. No. 709:

§ 1. There is hereby created a Ministry of Trade and Industry, hereinafter referred to as the Ministry. The existing Ministry of Trade established pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 721 as amended, and the existing Ministry established pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 488 as amended, are abolished together with their services, bureaus and similar agencies, regional offices, and all other entities under their supervision and control. . . .

E.O. No. 710:

§ 1. There is hereby created a Ministry of Public Works and Highways, hereinafter referred to as the Ministry. The existing Ministry of Public Works established pursuant to Executive Order No. 546 as amended, and the existing Ministry of Public Highways established pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 458 as amended, are abolished together with their services, bureaus and similar agencies, regional offices, and all other entities within their supervision and control. . . .

R.A. No. 6975:

§ 13. Creation and Composition. - A National Police Commission, hereinafter referred to as the Commission, is hereby created for the purpose of effectively discharging the functions prescribed in the Constitution and provided in this Act. The Commission shall be a collegial body within the Department. It shall be composed of a Chairman and four (4) regular commissioners, one (1) of whom shall be designated as Vice-Chairman by the President. The Secretary of the Department shall be the ex-officio Chairman of the Commission, while the Vice-Chairman shall act as the executive officer of the Commission.

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§ 90. Status of Present NAPOLCOM, PC-INP. - Upon the effectivity of this Act, the present National Police Commission, and the Philippine Constabulary-Integrated National Police shall cease to exist. The