FULBRIGHT UNIVERSITY VIETNAM

Public Management

SESSION 10

Meritocracy: Good and Bad

Session 10

- Meritocracy – What is the definition of meritocracy and how has it been applicable to our daily lives? What is good or bad meritocracy?

- Singapore Example

- Application to Vietnam?

Lee Kuan Yew

> We are going to be a multi-racial nation in Singapore. We will set an example. This is not a Malay nation; this is not a Chinese nation; this is not an Indian nation. Everyone will have his place, equal; language, culture, religion.

Former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew
At The Announcement Of Singapore's Independence On 9 August, 1965

- https://youtu.be/RauxzvT5mgE

"In 1991, I was offered my first teaching job, a post as a lecturer in political theory at the National University of Singapore. Three years later, I was told to leave because I didn't "fit in." The truth is that I did not fit in. I strongly disliked the political system, and even more strongly disliked its founding father, Lee Kuan Yew.

More than two decades later, I returned to the National University of Singapore as a visiting professor and came to realize that my earlier judgments were rooted in a dogmatic attachment to the view that Western-style liberal democracy is the only legitimate form of government. Once that view is set aside, it becomes clear that Mr. Lee, as the Americans like to say, was on the "right side of history." And today, I am deeply saddened by Mr. Lee's death" (Daniel A. Bell)
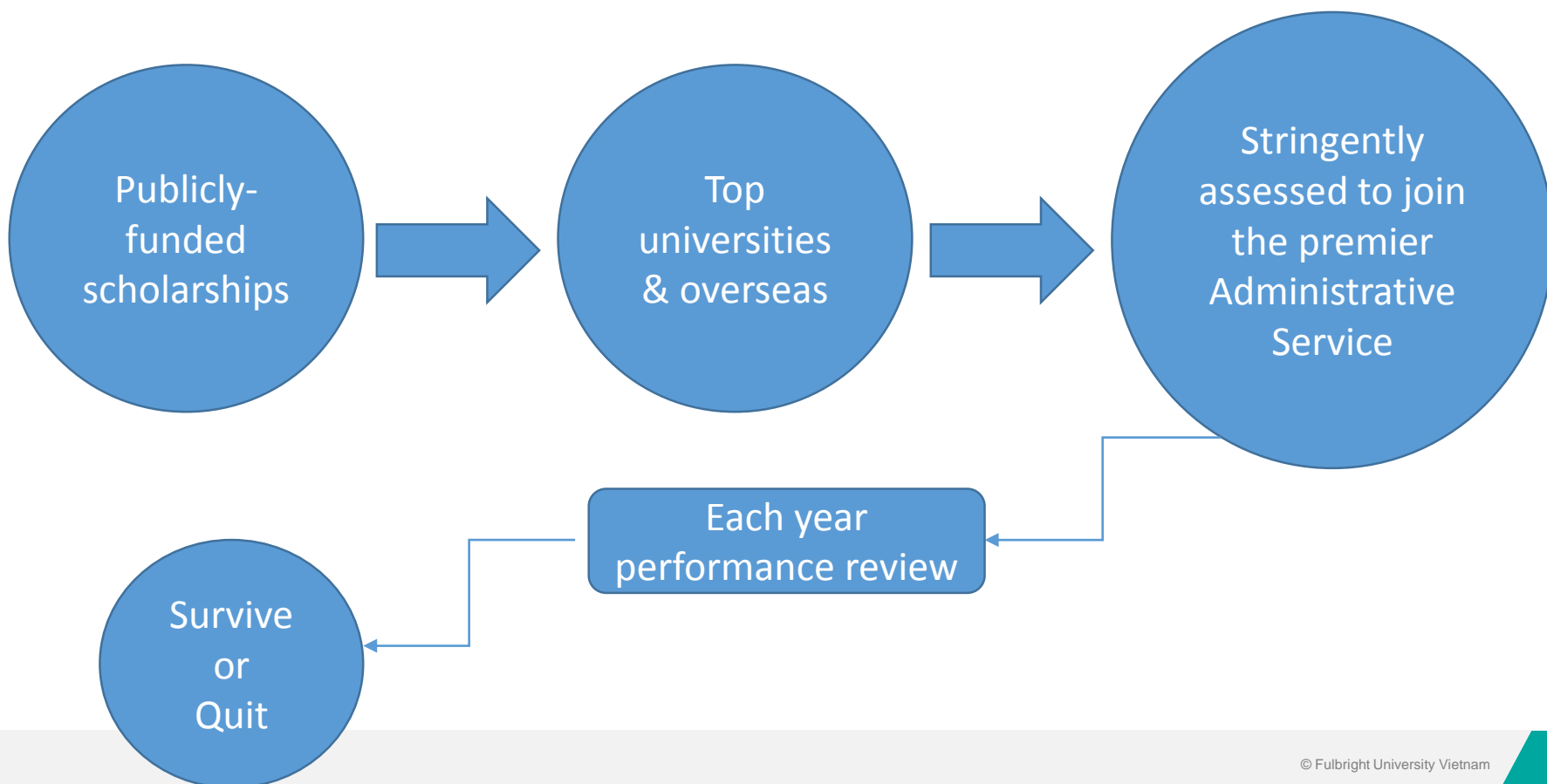
Meritocracy

- **Meritocracy**: a political philosophy which holds that certain things, such as economic goods or power, should be vested in individuals on the basis of talent, effort and achievement (Dictionary).

- Provide a successful way of combining rewards, incentives and competitiveness with equality of opportunity.

- Reward-type: when rewards are tied to one's ability and achievements – people are motivated to strive and be the best they can be.

Singapore's Meritocracy

- Acute sense of vulnerability since the independence in 1965.

- Meritocracy – in particular, education system – became a way of effectively developing human resources and efficiently allocating talent to where it was most in need (in the government, economy and society).

- Created competition culture, legitimizing basis of social stability, a principle of governance, and a pillar of national identity.

Publicly-funded scholarships → Top universities & overseas → Stringently assessed to join the premier Administrative Service

Each year performance review

Survive or Quit

Criticism

- Today, the Singaporean idea of meritocracy is criticized for entrenching structural limits on <u>social mobility</u>.

- For its overly narrow idea of merit and success.

- Elitism: for an increasingly self-regarding elite that seems too interested in staying in power and that citizens perceive as arrogant and unresponsive to their needs.

- "Pressure-cooker education system"

Fixing Bad Meritocracy

- Shifting toward "compassionate," "inclusive" and "lifelong" meritocracy."

- Beyond Math and Science: Broaden the undergraduate curriculum to include greater exposure to cross-disciplinary learning (from American liberal arts college education).

- Keep education fees very affordable

- Launching an extensive nationwide program to better connect education with careers and to encourage continuous lifelong learning, with the aim of enabling all Singaporeans to achieve skills mastery at any stage of their lives.

Discussion

- What would be an implication of 'good' and 'bad' meritocracy in Vietnam's context?

- How do we promote 'good' meritocracy in Vietnam?

Q&A