

Praxis in Local Legislative Governance: Measure of Organizational Effectiveness of the Component Cities in Nueva Ecija, Philippines

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Abstract – *The article discovers the congruence of governance principles and actual administrative practices in local legislative chamber in Nueva Ecija, Philippines. By using case study, it measured the influence of governance principles to legislative performance and organizational effectiveness. The good governance principles of citizens’ participation, accountability and transparency are correlated to legislative performance. Inspired by the organization theory of systems model, the result showed that there is a link between organizational effectiveness, legislative performance and observance of good governance principles. The study recommends that scientific inquiry be done to measure degree of convergence and divergence of theory and practice in Philippine administrative system.*

Keywords – *Local governance; transparency; accountability; civic engagement; case study*

INTRODUCTION

The governments of the world are confronted by the problem of transparency and accountability [1]. Transparency as prelude to accountability processes [2] and transparency and accountability as drivers of economic growth. These governance principles when paired with citizen’s participation develop public trust to public institutions. Inadequate accountability and transparency in governance create public distrust.

According to the World Bank, countries in Southeast Asia suffered from low governance scores in the areas of “voice, transparency and accountability, political stability, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption” [3]. This finding is supported by many studies in other southeast asian countries. In Malaysia, lack of transparency and accountability are perceived as hindrance to economic growth. In the Philippines, the declined of public trust to public institutions is attributed to prevalence of negative bureaucratic behaviors and the inability of public administrators to “grab the opportunities” to rebuild public integrity and trust to public institutions [4].

Transparency, accountability and citizens’ participation are proven correlated to improved performance. For instance, citizens ‘participation in Thailand and Indonesia improved the performance of the local government of *Praya Bunlou* and mobilize the support of *Forum Warga* for participatory development.

The success of government depends to a great extent on the observance of governance principles. That is the reason why world leaders are putting the issue of transparency and accountability, “front and center priority action” [5]. However, present state of researches on the issue shows bias for regional and national level of governance; [6] undermining to a certain extent, the vital role played by Local Government Unit(LGU) to countryside development. Anchored on the above argument, the study has the following advantages to realize: Firstly, to contribute to the dearth in literature on transparency and accountability practices in local context. Secondly, the result of the study would countercheck the significance of theory-practice gap prevalent in the findings of prominent scholars and Professors Brillantes and Haque [7][8]. Thirdly, the findings could generate insights on how to solve existing “trust

problems” on (LGU). Fourthly, it may provide benchmark for measuring LGU performance. The justification for the use of public funds [9][10] under the new era of market oriented Public Administrative System and New Public Administration (NPM Model). Fifth, the study may provide ideas on the community in regard to participatory governance. Finally, academics and students of the discipline may be provided with fresh insights upon which further investigation and tool for analysis may takeoff and develop.

The 1987 Philippine Constitution pronounces the Philippines as a democratic and republican State [11]. As such, it is composed of tiers of governance divided into national and LGU. The LGU is the political unit nearer to the people, perceived as more competent to solve local problems [12] and undertake programs “needing immediate results” while the central government acts on matters of national importance and is expected to bring about long term programs and results [13].

The *Sanggunian* (legal term for “council”) is a department of LGU performing the crucial role of providing policies and rules crucial to local development[14]; through the exercise of its power to decide to a certain extent the “government purse[15], it appropriates money for development projects, activities and programs aligned with the national government development directions. It is the body approving and disallowing budget proposal of the City Mayor. The *Sanggunian* also performs quasi judicial function. It reviews administrative cases involving barangay officials. As a collegial body, it can create an effective local governance system responsive to the demands of the people and ensure performance level of elected officials equal to the “value for citizens money”. A governance practice of political accountability [16].

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study measured the organizational effectiveness of local City Councils of the component cities of Nueva Ecija, Philippines. Five City Councils and 55 councillors are the respondents to the study. The variables measured are their commitment to governance principles namely; a) citizens’ participation , b) transparency, and c) accountability.

The objectives of the study are as follows: to describe the shared commitment to good governance principles of the local legislators; to determine the relationship between shared commitment to

governance principles and legislative performance; and to measure organizational effectiveness of the local legislative body by using organization theory and system’s model.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study local is in Central Luzon, one of the main islands in the Philippines where the five cities are situated. The pertinent information of the respondent- cities in the province of Nueva Ecija, Philippines where the local legislators served during the years 2007-2013 are presented below, to wit;

Table 1 Pertinent Information on Study Locale

Name of City	Land Area (Ha.)	Population	Income Class	Category
1.Cabanatuan	28,275	302,231	1 st	Component City
2.Gapan	16,444	101,488	4 th	Component City
3. Munoz	16,305	75,462	4 th	Component City
4. Palayan	10,140	37,219	5 th	Component City
5. San Jose	18,599	129,424	3 rd	Component City

PSA Active Stats.nap.psa.gov.ph [17]

Research Design

The study used qualitative and quantitative research methods. It employed Pearson Product Moment Correlation as statistical treatment. The qualitative -descriptive approach is used to describe the existing condition or phenomenon and inquire into the “how” and “why” of the subject of inquiry [18]. It also employed self –analysis survey and evaluation questionnaires to determine the observance of local governance principles in legislative work of the members of five City Councils. It described from the local legislators point of view, the importance of governance principles in law making.

Theoretical Framework

The study is guided by the principle of organization theory and system’s model of performance measurement. The model posits that an organization is a rational set of arrangements and activities oriented toward the achievement of common mandated objectives. According to Goodman [19]” *Effectiveness is measured in terms of accomplishment of outcomes and the focus is*

exclusively on the end results or outputs; achievement of goals and targets” hence the ultimate measure of effectiveness is the outcome of organizational activities in terms of quantifiable outputs. Organizational effectiveness therefore, is upheld when governance principles are observed and put into actual practice reflecting thereon outcome in terms of quantity of approved ordinances and codes implemented for the locality.

Research Paradigm

The study argues that an accurate measure of effectiveness is the number of concrete, tangible and countable outputs of the local legislative body.

The study adapts the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 Observance of governance principles affects legislative outcome/performance.

Hypothesis 2 The greater the number of positively correlated variables to governance principles of accountability, transparency and citizens participation, the greater the quantity of legislative output.

Hypothesis 3 The greater the quantity of legislative output, the higher the degree of organizational effectiveness.

The study adapts the following research paradigm, to wit;

Legislative Output as Measure of Local Legislative Effectiveness

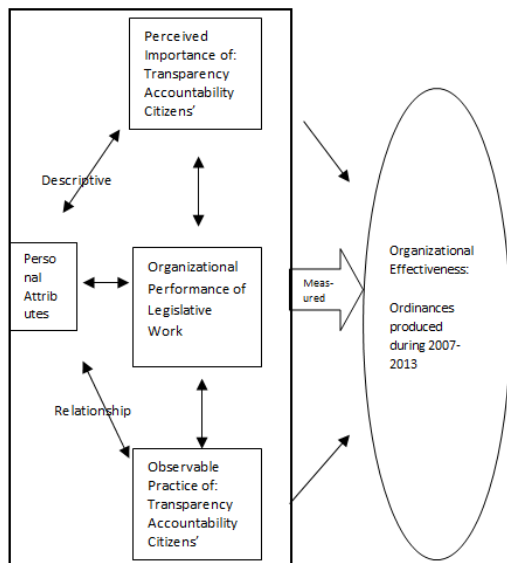


Figure 1 Research Paradigm

To determine the Local Legislative Body Organizational Effectiveness Index, the study applies the following formula:

$$\sum = (LO)_1 + (LO)_2 + (LO)_3 + (LO)_4 + (LO)_5$$

Where:

C_n is the City Council

LO is Legislative Output during the years 2007-2013

To determine the organizational effectiveness index and the range of legislative output, the formula used are as follows:

$$Av\ LO\ (Average\ local\ Legislative\ Output) = \sum LO / 5$$

(Total Legislative Output of Five Cities divided by the number of cities (five))

$$\text{Summation of Local Legislative Outputs} = \sum LO = (419 + 646 + 74 + 207 + 76) / 5$$

Average Local Legislative Output is equal to total legislative output divided by five cities is equal to 284.4 hence, (LO) = 1422 / 5 = 284.4

Where:

∑ (LO) is the total legislative outputs of all cities
i=1 is the numerical designation of City Council

Av LO is the average local legislative output of the 5 cities

Therefore, to compute the range of interval and devise a **Local Legislative Organizational Effectiveness Index**, the formula is used :

(Local legislative range of Interval) $LeRi = H5 - H1$ = Range of Interval, hence the Likert Scaling Index and computation are as follows:

To compute the range of interval:

Local legislative range of Interval is equal to the highest number of legislative output produced in a given period minus the lowest number of legislative output divided by the number of legislative bodies is equal to 114. Hence the range of interval is 114.

$LeRi$ (Local Legislative Range of Interval = $H5 - H1$) (Highest Legislative Output) minus $H1$ (Lowest Legislative output divided by number of cities, (5) . Therefore the local legislative range of interval is 114 ($LeRi$).

Based on the computed range of interval, the Local Legislative Effectiveness Index is developed with the following based likert scaling model in terms

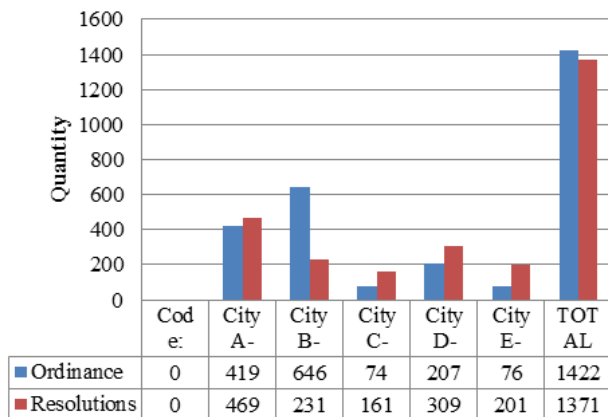
of Number of Legislative Output and its corresponding Verbal Description: 74–188: Ineffective; 189 – 303: Somewhat Effective; 304-418: Moderate Effective; 419-533: Effective; 534-648: Very Effective.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Description of Sanggunians in terms of citizens participation and organizational performance

Creation of Enabling Environment

The study argued that the greater the observance of governance principles the higher the legislative output. Presented below are the Summary Table of Local Legislative Outputs and the description of the five city councils as per the point of view of the participants, to wit;



Legend: A=Cabanatuan City; B= San Jose City; C= Palayan City; D= Science City of Munoz; E= Gapan City

Figure 2. Summary Table of Local Legislative Output (2007-2013) - Ordinances and Resolutions Distribution as Per Sangguniang Panglungsod

Figure 2 provides the legislative output of the respondent City Councils. City B had the highest number of ordinances approved while City C has the lowest number of outputs in terms of Ordinances and resolutions made. Meanwhile, the data presented on Table 2.A shows the respondents perception on the

importance of creation of enabling environment in local legislation. Thus, City B and D give premium to *peoples’ mobilization* as part of creating an enabling environment. It is shown by the weighted mean scores of 3.67 and 3.57 respectively, verbally described as “*very often*”. The high scores given to enabling environment by the two cities affecting the legislative performance depicts democratic practice. It has impact on governance. It has been observed in many jurisdictions that strengthening bureaucratic space produces resilient bureaucracy. However, creation of enabling laws in local government is not enough to create enabling environment. It must be accompanied by intensified people’s participation in decision making and active participation in local development program implementation [20]. Table 2.A is presented below containing weighted mean scores of the different enabling constructs.

The overall weighted mean average of the variable is lower across cities. It yields a 3.25 average weighted mean adjectively express as “*sometimes*”.

The system of government in the Philippines is designed to work for the interests and demands of the people conceptually expressed as the *sovereign power* [21]. It is a constitutional mandate arising from the social contract origin of state. All sovereign powers and authorities in a republican government come from the people themselves [22]. The creation of enabling environment for people’s participation in local legislation provides them sense of ownership of the policies useful for effective implementation.

Participatory local governance

This principle is the rationale behind the enactment of the Local Government Code of the Philippines. Bringing forth local autonomy perceived as a prerequisite to local development. The true essence of genuine local development revolves around genuine popular participation. Meantime, the Table that follows presents the councilors perceptions on the importance of participatory governance in legislative work, to wit;

Table 2.A Creation of Enabling Environment

Creation of Enabling Environment	City A		City B		City C		City D		City E		Overall	
	WM	AR	WM	AR	WM	AR	WM	AR	WM	AR	WM	Adjective
1. Partnership with PO,NGO,	3.00	S	3.89	VO	2.7	S	3.50	VO	2.94	S	3.20	Sometimes
2. Accreditation of NGO	3.00	S	3.67	VO	3.2	S	3.75	VO	2.94	S	3.32	Sometimes
3. Community consultations.	3.00	S	3.56	VO	3.6	VO	3.63	VO	3.00	S	3.36	Sometimes
4. Community Assembly.	3.00	S	3.56	VO	2.7	S	3.38	S	3.00	S	3.13	Sometimes
Average	3.00	S	3.67	VO	3.06	S	3.57	VO	2.97	S	3.25	Sometimes

Table 2.B Participatory Local Governance

Participatory Local Governance	City A		City B		City C		City D		City E		Overall	
	WM	AR	WM	AR	WM	AR	WM	AR	WM	AR	WM	Adjectival Rating
1. Attendance to community planning sessions.	2.89	S	3.50	VO	3.9	VO	3.13	S	2.81	S	3.24	Sometimes
2. Attendance during hearing in the Sanggunian.	3.33	S	3.44	VO	3.4	S	3.88	VO	3.19	S	3.44	Very Often
3. Presence of sectoral representatives in legislative sessions.	3.33	S	3.78	VO	2.9	S	3.00	S	2.94	S	3.18	Sometimes
Average	3.18	S	3.57	VO	3.36	S	3.34	S	2.98	S	3.29	Sometimes

The principle that members of the *Sanggunians* as mouth piece of the peoples’ interest is revealed by the “very often” attendance to *hearing and sessions* of the city council. The weighted mean score across cities is 3.44. This weighted mean score is way above the average weighted mean of 3.29 or “sometimes”.

The other domains of citizens’ participation have the weighted mean scores of 3.24 and 3.18 verbally described as “sometimes”. People’s participation in local legislation is a measure of participatory governance [23]. It is also a way to minimize “policy gap” [24] by transforming demands to actual policy. Citizen’s participation also provides political legitimacy and authority to the actions of elected local officials [25].

Transparency and Organizational performance

A “gold fish in a gold fish bowl” is the figurative representation of transparency. [26]. In other jurisdictions, transparency is observed not only by public organizations but also of private corporations dealing with government functionaries leading to “sunshine legislation” [27]. Transparency provides information helps the citizens make informed decision. The table 3 shows the transparency rating of the city councils.

As shown on the above table City A has the lowest adjectival rating of transparency. Meanwhile, City B has the highest rating given to *transparency principle* with a weighted mean average of 3.56 verbally described as *very often* observed. The finding is significant considering that lack of public trust is correlated to inadequate government transparency.

Accountability and organizational performance

It is a constitutional mandate that accountability to the people is a continuing requirement that brings reason to public officer to stay holding political power [28].

This principle however is seldom observed where street level bureaucrat mediates between public service and the public [29]. The lack of means to track the whereabouts of public officials during office hours is a problem of accountability. Local legislators of the 5 cities report to office only during session hours. To improve accountability, it is suggested that a link between government official’s exercise of discretion and accountability principle be established [33]. The table 4 shows the accountability rating of city councils.

Table 3. Transparency

Transparency	City A		City B		City C		City D		City E		Overall	
	WM	AR	WM	AR	WM	AR	WM	AR	WM	AR	WM	Adjectival Rating
1. On time submission of office financial report	2.44	R	3.56	VO	2.9	S	2.88	S	2.88	S	2.94	Sometimes
2. Posting of fiscal information on website	2.56	R	3.44	VO	2.4	R	2.50	R	2.69	S	2.71	Sometimes
3. Updated page, social networking sites	2.33	R	3.67	VO	2.2	R	2.75	S	2.88	S	2.77	Sometimes
Average	2.44	R	3.56	VO	2.51	S	2.71	S	2.82	S	2.81	Sometimes

Table 4. Accountability

Accountability	City A		City B		City C		City D		City E		Overall	
	WM	AR	WM	AR	WM	AR	WM	AR	WM	AR	WM	Adjectival Rating
1. Posting of legislative process/procedure.	2.78	S	3.56	VO	2.2	R	2.88	S	3.00	S	2.89	Sometimes
2. Observance of internal rules and procedures in .	3.11	S	3.67	VO	3.9	VO	3.62	VO	3.12	S	3.49	Very Often
3. Support to suspension of erring barangay official in the city.	3.22	S	3.67	VO	3.6	VO	3.75	VO	3.06	S		Sometimes
4. Support to "recall" election	3.22	S	3.11	S	1.9	R	3.12	S	2.75	S	2.81	Sometimes
Average	3.08	S	3.50	VO	2.90	S	3.34	S	2.98	S	3.06	Sometimes

The shared principle of accountability is “sometimes” considered important to legislative performance. An average weighted mean of 3.06 allows one to believe that such governance principle is not always observed. Among the accountability measures, observance of internal rules has the highest average weighted mean across cities. It has a weighted mean rate of 3.49 or “very often”. While among the five cities, it is the City B that gives the highest average mean score of 3.50 and is verbally described as “very often.”

Correlation Between the Sangguniang Panglungsod Commitment to Good Governance Principles and Organizational Performance

To create enabling environment in local governance requires not only creation of enabling laws but also intensified peoples participation [30]. Both private and public organization must give priority to creation of enabling environment to prevent corruption [31] The principle of participatory local governance can influence local development when it is made as a matter of legal right [32]. The discussion below shows the importance of the above factors of governance to local development.

Citizens’ participation and organizational performance

Under the construct “creation of an enabling environment” for community participation in development efforts, the following overall r values are arrived at, to wit: r values of 0.373 with a *little* degree of correlation for *mobilizing peoples participation* significant at 0.005; 0.543 with moderate degree of correlation for *transparency* significant at 0.000; 0.396 with *little* degree of correlation significant at 0.00; 0.396 with *little* degree of correlation significant at 0.003 for **accountability**;

and 0.493 with *moderate* degree of correlation at 0.000 for **participatory local governance**.

A *positive correlation* of NGO accreditation and legislative output on the point of view of city councils established a *positive link* to performance execution and measurement. The finding is supported by Brillantes and Tigno [34], showing that there is a widespread accreditation of NGO in local government units in the Philippines. The present study shows that local legislators believe in the accreditation process and its **positive correlation significant** at 0.005 with legislative performance.

Participatory Local Governance and legislative performance

Participatory governance is measured by looking into the importance of community participation and civic engagement. The following are the domains measured; a) “barangay hopping”; b) attendance to hearing and deliberation, and c) providing proper place for sectoral representation for community participation.

The Statistical procedures yielded the following coefficient correlation results of: a) 0.416 for city A with a degree of correlation as **moderate** and a significance level of 0.265 b) an r value of 0.492 also interpreted as **moderate** correlation for city C.

Meanwhile, the case of city B presents a higher correlation value of 0.87 significant at 0.002 with a degree of correlation of **very strong**. The finding shows the tendency of the local legislators to increase ordinance output as they observe the principles of participatory governance. There is a **strong positive correlation between principles of participatory governance and legislative performance**. Thus, the more local legislative body accommodates local demand for public choice, the greater the tendency for

the local legislator to perform effectively on his legislative function.

Transparency and Organizational Performance

The transparency principle is based on the measurement of three variables namely: a) early submission of financial report; b) posting of fiscal information on the website; c) updated e mail and social media for feedback and civic engagement.

It is a basic tenet in a popular democracy that transparency develops trust and confidence of the people. The following overall correlation results are arrived at to wit; 0.391 not significant at 0.298 having a correlation degree of *little* relationship to quantity of ordinance for City A; the same degree of correlation was found for the cities D and E. This significance, though little, shows a direct influence on the quantity of ordinance produced by cities A, D and E. Noteworthy is the findings for cities B and C having the r values of 0.719 interpreted as having **strong degree of correlation** for city B and 0.406 moderately significant at 0.168 respectively. In essence, the r values show a **direct strong positive correlation** between transparency principles and legislative output yielding an overall degree of correlation 0.543 and moderately significant at 0.000. It shows the willingness of the legislators to place its performance under the scrutiny of the voters. In this regard, city B won the prestigious Seal of Good House Keeping. In theory, citizens' participation in budget allocation heightens the government commitment to provide quality service and performance measurement. The more open the window of transparency the greater the degree of accountability.

Accountability and Legislative Performance

The accountability principles of a) posting of legislative procedure, b) observance of internal rules; c) suspension of barangay officials and d) support for recall elections are elements of accountability. Based on data gathered, the following overall r values are arrived at: a) 0.323 significant at 0.396 for city A ; b) 0.523 significant at 0.149 for city B ; c) negative -0.65 significant at 0.016 for city C; d) negative -0.327 not significant at 0.429 for city D and, e) 0.304 not significant at 0.253 for city E respectively.

The correlation of accountability principle and quantity of ordinance authored and approved per legislator are both negatively and positively showed. For the council members, *posting of procedure and observance of internal rules are negatively*

correlated to quantity of ordinances. The recall elections and support to suspension of erring barangay officials are **strongly correlated** to legislative performance. As a whole, cities A, and E manifested little positive correlation, this implies that among council members of cities A and E, they perceived accountability as related to quantity of ordinance produced. Though little correlation is attributable to the responses, it goes to show that there is plenty of room for cities A and E to consider accountability as part of legislative work. On the other hand, City B believes that accountability is *moderately* related to legislative performance having an r value of 0.523 not significant at 0.149. The principle of accountability in local governance is proven to affect parliamentary performance. In general, increase accountability pushes the government official to perform better while in office. Good governance principle of accountability works toward effective parliament duties [35]

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study showed that the five local legislative bodies of component cities in Nueva Ecija observed governance principles of; a) creation of enabling environment; b) participatory local governance; c) transparency and d) accountability. However, the description generated is somehow inadequate. It is rated as "sometimes" and deduced as inconsistent. Meanwhile, other than the principle of accountability where statistical treatment yielded "little to moderate positive correlation"; the other three principles generated a "strong positive correlation" to legislative performance. Sending a clear signal that the degree of observance of governance principles and legislative output is interlinked, Henceforth, the higher the degree of observance of governance principles; the higher the legislative output then, the higher the legislative output, organizational theory dictates, the more effective the local legislature as an organization. The case of City B showed the interplay between observance of governance principles, legislative performance and organizational effectiveness.

Governance principles are rules of conduct in the execution of legislative functions as an organization and subsystem of LGU having implications to local development and public trust. More than an individual set of principles, they are organizational norms upon which public trust to public institution is rebuild. The development of NPM model demands

that delivery of tangible result is the end all of performance. In the case of cities A,C,D,E, the study showed that there are plenty of rooms for improvement. As organizational norms and practice, consistency is desired. Not only because, it is a managerial imperative but also a political accountability of local legislators to the voters.

The system model of government is so designed that the subparts must work in harmony with the other component parts. The role of *Sanggunian* as an organization is indispensable to local development. It is a subpart and interlinked to the bigger system of LGU operation. Its malfunction delays crucial development program of the entire LGU system. On the contrary, its effective and efficient performance of functions may hasten local development. Lastly, ordinances are local laws that provide legitimacy to the use of public funds. Apropos, effective performance of legislative function provides life and spirit to the otherwise barren constitutional principle that "public office is a public trust".

It is recommended for the DILG to devise mechanism to tract the whereabouts of local legislators when not in session. Make the local legislative body an open system. Increase transparency and accountability as a matter of duty. Encourage and monitor NGO actual participation in local governance. It must go beyond 'the level of tokenism'. Create a local legislative body quality assurance team. This ensures quality of ordinances. Use social media and information technology to demand observance of governance principles among local legislators. The same study may be undertaken in other municipalities to level of standard of performance and include as variable *quality of ordinances*, which this study fails to include.

7. Finally, the study provides trajectory for future research. That is the applicability of western designed performance measurement to actual organizational practice.

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