

Enhancing Governance of the *Barangay*: Reflections of Academics

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Abstract

This paper presents the insights of selected academics on local governance of the *Barangay*, the basic political unit (BPU) in the Philippines. Participants were pre-selected and their representations were determined using the ethnographic technique with the property of conversation (*pakikipagkwentuhan*). This inquiry notes that good governance of BPU can be affected by the lack of capabilities of officials; indecisiveness during assumption of duties as officers-in-charge. influence of their siblings and family relatives; and sensitivity of the issues and concerns being addressed. The academics proposed that programs and projects (P&P) on capacity building of BPU officials must be accomplished vigorously in collaboration with the various higher education institutions (HEIs) and groups/organizations on local governance. Moreover, certain provisions for building upon the hard-earned achievement of these officials through budget allocation for the annual programs on merit and recognition of achievements are also suggested to enhance local governance and community development.

Keywords: Local governance, Philippines, *Barangay*, academics, participation, transparency

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Introduction

In general, governance refers to the task of running a government, or any other appropriate subset of the government entity whether the national, regional, provincial, city and local for that matter. It is the sound exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority to manage a country's resources for development. As defined by ADB (1995) and noted by Sto. Tomas and Mangahas (2002), governance involves the institutionalization of a system through which citizens, institutions, organizations, and groups in the society articulate their interests. In recent years, the concept of governance has gained attention and momentum in the academic circle and has diversified its meaning into a very dynamic concept. This paper presents the views of selected academics on transparency and participation in the basic political unit (BPU) of the Philippines (locally known as the *Barangay*). Transparency in operation is regarded as central to good governance leading to the attainment of maximum participation of the community. As the core principle in governance, transparency links how the local residents and BPU officials are held accountable for their actions and decisions in relation to their roles in the community in which they live. Studies dealing with views of academics on local governance could be insightful for practical recommendations in promoting transparency and maximizing participation vis a vis the management of higher education institutions (HEI) with their academic programs and other stakeholders on public administration, leadership and governance.

According to Delica (1999) the key elements of good local governance is transparency in operation, accountability to the people whom elected officials vowed to serve and commitment to citizens maximum participation. Good local governance must depict an image that is acceptable to the local people and positive role expectations to the general public. For instance, Dy (2001) revealed that the image of the Philippine government as an information and technology (IT) employer is far from the ideal because the ratings given by IT professionals were either negative or low positive, showing an unfavorable image. Further to this, Claustro (2001) discovered that factors contributing to the positive image of the government were political influence, social recognition, and job security. In contrast, physical working conditions, public exposure, interpersonal relationships, career advancement, meaningful work and compensation contributed to the negative ratings.

On the requisites of good local governance, Etemadi (2004) speculated that sustained non-governmental organization or NGO advocacy and participation produces better results and promotes inclusive governance. Participation as a vital element in governance provided the avenues of consolidated popular support from the local people without the aid of mutually rewarding ties, a strong political machine or a monopoly of power. The experience of a city local government official in Bicol Region, Philippines who secured the maximum term of office and improved the lives of his constituents by setting a new standard in governance. An e-Governance report (see Robredo 2006), note that a strong local commitment to transparency, accountability and participation (as hallmarks of good governance) can transform the use of information and communication technology (ICT) from being conventional management tools to effective instruments for engaging ordinary citizens. This is an instance that the principle of transparency through ICT becomes a tool to empower

citizens toward attainment of the goals and objectives of local government units (LGU). Several initiatives on local governance explored the engagements (or participation) of Philippine civil society at the local (sub-national) level of governance, that primarily facilitated by the advent of the decentralization law in the Philippines in 1991 (Abros 2003).

The *Barangay* is the basic political or administrative unit in the Philippines, totalling to about 42,000 all over the archipelago (Abros 2003). All levels of local government in the Philippines exercise the following general functions and powers on efficient service delivery, management of the environment, economic development, and poverty alleviation. Republic Act No. 7160 or Local Government Code of 1991 provides empowerment for BPUs (see Villarin et. al 2002). Success in local governance can be measured as to how LGU or BPU officials reduce the incidence of poverty. ADB (2005) claimed that the absence of good governance is the reason why third world countries continue to fail in their efforts at poverty reduction and in their quest for economic and human development. Similar reports underscored the strong link between the transparency in governance and poverty (UNDP-HABITAT 2004).

The various concepts, insights and notions on BPU governance elaborated some criteria of good governance and the components of BPU governance. The review gave us a clear view on the nature, characteristics and qualities of governance as it relates to the notions of transparency, accountability, participation, and adherence to the rule of law. Thus, this inquiry involved the selected academics (both academic teaching and academic service faculty) to elicit from them perspectives on local governance of BPU and community development that followed a qualitative approach of lively conversation.

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

We found that the concept of *postmodernism in politics* could be an appropriate framework as well as the paradigm of *postmodern critical theory* (Lindlof & Taylor 2002, Rowling 2008). Although, Philippine politics is not yet totally immersed into the postmodernist condition (Aguas 2001), there is a tendency that “minute” but genuine narratives in the functioning of the BPU do exist. It is a view of this paper that in the design or crafting of programs and projects (P&P) for BPU, the need for a renewed notion of *postmodernism in politics* is well recognized. Even in reconstructing the conditions in the BPU, the paradigm of *postmodern critical theory* is clearly valuable in the pursuance of this inquiry.

Considering the fact that Philippine politics is in a transition state, history indicates that politics has operated within the institutional parameters that often limited and shaped interactions to factions of the elite, who had always held on tightly to the reins of power (Simbulan 2007). It seems that it would certainly require a postmodernist framework both in *politics* and *critical theory* in order to address a multitude of needs in the dynamic Philippine society. There is no “real representation and participation” that exist for the people, as stressed by Simbulan in a work on contemporary politics in the Philippines (Arao et al. 2007).

In *postmodern critical theory*, it is recognized that social problems are politicized “by situating them in historical and cultural contexts, to implicate themselves in the process of collecting and analyzing data, and to relativize their findings” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 52). Meaning itself is seen as unstable

due to the rapid transformation in social structures. This is the reason why this inquiry was centered on local manifestations rather than broad generalizations. Subscribing to Rolling's (2008) critical work, we attempted to characterize BPU governance by the notion of "crisis in representation" which rejects the idea that a researcher's work is considered an "objective depiction of a stable other" (Lindlof & Taylor 2002). In most postmodern reports, scholars have adopted "alternatives that encourage reflection about the 'politics and poetics' of their work".

Lyotard (1984) gave a specific form and character to the postmodern condition in his analysis of social change and transformation in contemporary societies. It is in this discourse that our inquiry focuses on the notion of the changing (or reconstructed) nature of knowledge in the BPU wherein, differences between 'narrative knowledge' and 'scientific knowledge' are evident. Another kind of knowledge is found in 'narratives'. As used in our study, presentation of the key informant's narration of experiences, discussion, and to some extent the enumeration of individual 'tales' about BPU governance consists of the knowledge found in 'narratives'.

Finally, this inquiry subscribed to the body of thought that events are governed not by universal laws of cause and effect, but instead, by human intentions and by multiple concurrent and interacting influences. The meaning of these events can be understood only within their context; and that the detailed descriptions of the full range of these interactions and dynamics are the only way to accurately represent these events and their meanings (Bolster 1983; Stake 1978). Human knowledge tends to store their own knowledge in narrative form (Bruner 1985; Connelly & Clandenin 1990), that narratives capture life in the way that it is experienced. This study therefore, emphasized on the personal stories of the academics with experiences in various programs and projects (P&P) in the BPU, living near BPU offices (or *barangay* halls) and those who are knowledgeable about the local governance setting within and outside the *Barangay* whose stories can gain the attention to practitioners, researchers and policy makers on local governance and community development.

Methodology

We used the qualitative-ethnographic research approach involving key informant interviews, field work, storytelling, the use of narratives, and reviewing some secondary data. Field observations were carried out in various areas with the support of research assistants and local area resident facilitator (LARF) by interviewing ten (10) key informants or respondent-academics (Academic Teaching Faculty [ATF] and Academic Service Faculty [ASF]) from various schools in Luzon, Philippines. Purposively selected key informants were evaluated based on experience as member of the *Lupon ng Barangay* (Barangay Council), involvement in community leadership as adviser or committee chairperson of programs and projects; and the overall knowledgeability on local governance in the Philippines. In the selection process, each prospective key informant together with the LARF was requested to recommend other ATF and ASF in the vicinity of BPUs who could be involved. Suitability was determined based on the criteria given earlier for final selection and the information from the LARF. The following are the questions that guided the inquiry: 1.) What are the views on good governance in the BPU (*barangay*), in terms of transparency in operation and maximizing community participation? 2.) How do these academics perceive about the general image of the BPU in empowering the local people to propose and design program and projects for protection from potential risks or dangers during natural and man-made occurrences? 3.) How can we enhance local governance of the BPU in the Philippines by proposing P&P?

Certain properties of story-telling or conversation (“*kwentuhan*” or “*pakikipagkwentuhan*” in the Filipino language), an ancient method of conveying ideas and images, was employed in the present study. This ethnographic technique is a naturally occurring phenomenon or process of sharing and telling stories among individuals to figure out or to make sense about their world and their experiences. According to Javier (2004) *kwentuhan* (literally, story-telling in the Filipino language) is an occasion for exchange of information, ideas, insights and individual experiences. This is basically a lively and always a happy group discussion in which the participants are actively involved (such as in the classroom, in the public market, over meals and while resting in their abode as well as the workplace. The educative aspect of this process allows individuals to share personal experiences with others and make ideas part of the collective knowledge of a community (McEwan & Egan 1995; Mello 2001). Moreover, stories are hailed by practitioners and theorists as important teaching tools that assist in psychosocial and imaginative growth (Bettelheim 1977; Bruner 1990). In research, story telling can be situated at the heart of meaning-making (or constructivism) and the broader aspect of educative inquiry.

This inquiry includes a series of conversation and interviews using a semi-structured questionnaire as a general guide that involved the academics as to how they view governance of the BPU that enunciate the elements of 1.) transparency in operation, and 2.) maximizing community participation. In case studies, the small number of participants allow for particularization or illustration of the uniqueness of the individual cases as viewed by the academics. There was a tendency to undergo contextualization and subsequent generalization during the investigation. During the course of the study, many *ad hoc* questions were asked during informal interviews. These were carried out on field work together with the LARF whenever or wherever possible - over meals, during snacks in the canteen, on the corridors of government halls and in public places. In certain cases, telephone or cellular phones were used in the interviews of the research assistants with the LARF (that ensured trustworthiness and validity of the responses) to compensate for the absence of the researchers during working hours. There were reflections made, and the study attempted to keep the participant identities with confidentiality. In gathering data, quotations representing discovered constructs or concepts were placed together to form narratives. These stories, episodes or narratives are contained within the indented summaries. In dealing with human subjects that include controversial, sensitive or conflicting views, we decided to just remove, erase and completely destroy the audiotapes and other records.

The study took place from February, 2007 to March, 2008. In pursuing the research problem, extant literature related to governance and those available in the world wide web were used. During the initial phase, an ethnographic observation was completed by one of the authors, in selected BPUs of Luzon. This field work/community immersion was fulfilled to establish familiarity with the over-all operations of BPUs, specifically on the functions enumerated by Villarín et al. (2002).

Results and Discussion

Profiles of the key informants or academics as to gender, age, educational attainment and religious affiliation

Ten (10) academics (5 females and 5 males) were involved in our qualitative study (see Table 1). All our key informants have already obtained their first degrees or BSc/BA degrees. Only one informant

has received a postgraduate or postbaccalaureate (e.g. MA or doctorate degree). The other participants are still pursuing their master’s degrees. As to their religious affiliation, six informants are Roman Catholics, 3 informants are Born Again Christians and only 1 is a member of the Church of Christ (*Iglesia ni Kristo*).

Table 1
Summary of Characteristics of the Key Informants

Code	Age	Educational Qualifications	Religious affiliation
KIF-1	25	With BS degree	Roman Catholic
KIF-2	31	BA with MA units	<i>Iglesia ni Kristo</i> (Church of Christ)
KIF-3	38	BS with MS units	Born Again Christian
KIF-4	48	PhD candidate	Roman Catholic
KIF-5	56	With BS degree	Christian
KIM-1	26	With BA degree	Roman Catholic
KIM-2	29	With master’s degree	Roman Catholic
KIM-3	47	With doctorate degree	Roman Catholic
KIM-4	54	With units in MA	Roman Catholic
KIM-5	57	With Units in MA	Born Again Christian

Legend KIF= Key informant female; KIM=Key informant male

Although, the demographics of age, schooling and religious affiliation were known to have some influence in thinking and perceptions, this inquiry did not deal on such variables. In order to remove bias, the same number of key informants was allotted for both genders. We note that most of the females gave more of the negative ‘images’ about governance compared to the males who were reluctant enough at the instance to narrate some negative views on transparency in operation. Several notions were gathered for both genders, but the most controversial ones came from the female subjects. This may not be the trend if some issues were discussed during the study. In general, the bright side of BPU governance was also shown in the results.

Views on governance of BPU in terms of transparency in operation and maximizing community participation

Insights were gathered from the academics by giving concrete examples of how they viewed the relationships of the officials with local people. To protect anonymity and raise some aspects of the ‘dark side’ of governance the true identities of the officials and the exact location remain undisclosed. KIM-3 said that:

During campaigns to fight alcoholism, gambling, and drug pushing or addiction... I found out that the local community greatly participated in identifying from the community who are suspected perpetrators in the neighborhood ... I learned that the even *barangay* officials are also involved in some illegal activities... If a concerned citizen or local individual reported to the *barangay* hall by calling the hot line, the officials whose children and siblings are also involved on certain bad practices (e.g. substance or drug pushing/addiction, alcoholism, gambling and even kidnapping) are

not seen with the team of local officials visiting the suspects or raiding hot spot areas... However, in a very recent military raid in our place, one of the barangay officials pretended to be innocent of what is going on in our place... the said official even chat with the military people during the said event. It is very commendable that our new barangay captain upon assumption of his duties acted on the problem of drug pushing and addiction... It is known in our barangay, they (officials) acted immediately on the reports about drug trade... now it has significantly been reduced. [KIM-3]

As a pillar in governance, transparency allows stakeholders to gather information that may be critical to uncovering abuses and defending their interests. The above narration leads us to point out that access to information is important in the promotion of transparency when BPU officials are alleged to have connections regarding the unlawful activities. Transparency in operation ensures the availability of information to the public and clarity about government rules, regulations, and decisions (Sto. Tomas & Mangahas 2002; ADB 2002). It is a concept that relates to the notion of non-discriminatory and no-selective practice (Lundberg 2002; ADB 2005). As a principle in governance, it can be viewed that during P&P implementation, these BPU or local officials despite the involvement of their children or relatives in unlawful ways can achieve great success in eradicating the illegal practices by observing more transparency in the operation and maximizing participation of people who were previously engaged in those clandestine activities. Moreover, interviews reveal that there are BPU officials who still continue and 'pretend' to participate in the campaigns despite their 'petty' and full involvement and clandestine engagement in illegal transactions. Some officials appear to be ignoring the negative feedback from their past lives or family connections about controversial programs to eradicate these illegal activities.

In trying to relate capabilities with transparency and participation KIM-1 said that at the time when the devolution of powers happened in 1991, there were several problems that were encountered.

I was in the province then...and I could see the difficulties that my aunt (*Barangay* Captain) experienced trying to study the new Local Code of 1991. I feel that she was not knowledgeable about the powers given to the *barangay* particularly on the IRA (Internal Revenue Allocations). As I sense it, she did not know anything about the mechanisms involved ... In other words, lack of capability of this barangay captain was the prime reason for her inefficiency... however, looking into the element of transparency, it was very clear to me that the officials were open enough to discuss about IRA and would be willing to carry-out dialogues with the people on where to use to money... whether in flood control projects or wellness projects. [KIM-1]

This experience of KIM-1 in the lack of capacities link to the reports of ADB (2002) and Lucas and Tolentino (2002). Indeed some officials are not knowledgeable about the things that they do in their work as officials of BPUs. It provides importance to the lack of knowledge about BPU functions and even the basic skills in writing minutes of meetings, BPU Resolutions and Certifications. When transparency is promoted, citizen empowerment follows. Having the necessary and appropriate capabilities, BPU officials and the residents can participate, negotiate, influence, control and hold accountable for their leaders and institutions that affect their lives.

Similar to the study of Lucas and Tolentino (2002), we note that effective participation by the leaders can be seen in their ability to assert their rights and present new ideas during regular meetings. Likewise, the negotiation or mediation skills with other LGU officials (city or provincial officials) and how they mobilize their constituents during assemblies are required skills that officials must possess. As stressed by Grindle and Hildebrand, the four most widely cited capabilities are institutional, technical, administrative and political capacity. These capabilities that need to be developed by the public sector are essentials in order to undertake and accomplish the appropriate tasks/functions assigned to BPU. In our study, the academics identified lack of technical and administrative capacities as indicators that related to coherent policy framework and the so-called administrative microculture as described in extant literature. We could generalize that informed leaders and citizens about statutes and policies on local governance can be better equipped to deal with issues and concerns, opportunities, and exercise their rights.

In strengthening local capacities, Delica (1999) formulated the strategy to institutionalize the participatory principle in local governance. In the context of risk management, good governance should enunciate the principles of transparency, accountability and participation. It is known that participation is important on enhancing people's access to and influence on public policy processes. A key dimension in this principle is anchored carrying out development for and by the people. These principles are expected to be manifested in performing the various functions of BPU.

During our interviews, the key informants were asked to look for the various activities of the BPU or to consider the various functions of the different BPU bodies. Apparently, they did not elaborate on the work of the pre-qualification, bids and awards committee since only one of the key informants was directly involved in this function. Moreover, it appears that some controversial components can be brought out that our informants decided not to discuss.

It is evident in literature that transparency facilitates the maximization of community participation, but it appears to be limited as narrated by KIF-3.

Even at the *barangay* level, good governance will be evident if community participation in the identification of the various needs of the local people such as: (i) programs and projects that will reduce criminality, robbery, alcoholism and drug addiction in the neighborhood; (ii) projects that deal with sources of water during fires and other disasters; (iii) projects on peace and order; and (iv) projects on environmental protection. [KIF-3]

In another narration, KIF-1 said that:

In our community, I believe that clear mechanisms do not exist... that would allow the local people or the various stakeholders maximize involvement in designing and implementing plans intended to maintain peace and order in the community. [KIF-1]

Planning and imposition of 'curfew hours' in the locality became a part of the P&P without considering the various risks or potential risks of trying to 'militarize' or 'terrorize' the whole community. This is manifested by the constant visitation or monitoring of the areas under surveillance. Ostensibly, the informants believe that BPU community watchers and other security

personnel were not properly given orientation as to the general purpose or goal of imposing curfew hours in the community.

In a more controversial note, the youth council in the BPUs under consideration is expected to have great impact in good governance; however, our inquiry discovered that the presence of the “youth committee” or “youth council” in the BPU does not render positive and excellent addition and contribution to local governance. According to KIF-3 and KIF-5,

The addition of another sector in local governance involving the youth, creates more problems rather than provide facilitation, solutions or ease in eradicating bottlenecks in community development. The youth council...appears to have failed to reach out to the over-all needs of the local people in the locality. The youth were very much pre-occupied with activities that are not really meant to deal with serious endeavors such as the enhancement of the economic conditions of the area, reducing criminalities and improvement of peace and order. Although, socio-culturally and other aspects are targeted by these youth members, it shows that the development is lopsided towards the leisurely and “capricious” needs and “questionable projects” of the youth and not the whole community. [KIF-3 and KIF-5]

In their attempt to be involved in the overall activities of the BPU, the youth according to KIF-3 tend to be focused on disbursing their finances by supporting activities such as sports, cleaning, beautification, street dances, religious activities like ‘santacruzán’ or May Flower Festival, picnics in local resorts and even drinking bouts in the ‘*sociedad*’ or “‘*sosyudad*’, an informal group which meets every weekend for wine or ‘tuba’ (from coconut) drinking sessions and money collection. Fewer projects are geared towards educating the local people on improving the economic and livelihood activities of the local people.

On a positive note, KIM-5 further said that:

I am glad that both young and old appreciated the well-lighted areas of the community as well as the different boxes and cans that are used for garbage collection... when the young ones see that the Barangay officials are busy cleaning the garbage areas, they tend to come/approach or situate nearer and show willingness to help the old ones... They are even actively involved in the ‘*Atag*’ (a form or system of voluntary participation in the Philippines). [KIM-5]

Empowering the local people to propose and design P&P for protection from potential risks or dangers

Based on the results of the interviews conducted, it seems to us that the real image and genuine participation cannot be seen in the BPU in a single shot investigation. The sizeable number of BPUs of the country as the basic agency providing services to individuals is assumed to have substantial impact on the general image of local governance of the country. Specifically, a provision in putting-up street lamps or illumination system, the immediate action given to this concern could be perhaps due to the greater latitude given by the local officials to the local people in planning and the

implementation of projects. There is a strong support from various sectors and even the mayor of the municipality by extending assistance in putting up street lamps as revealed by the academics (e.g. KIM-4). Moreover, looking at the concept of ‘patronage’ or ‘alliance in politics’ (see Delica 1999 and Etemadi 2004); it can be presumed that the political alliance between the BPU chairperson (or *Barangay Captain*) and the city mayor has certainly helped to facilitate physical improvements in the community. KIM-4 has this to say,

I was surprised why there were lots of donors and pledges for the various programs and projects of the BPU, particularly in improving the environmental conditions or maintaining sanitation... during community assemblies we are allowed to discuss our problems and articulate to the officials about the ill-effects of having a dirty environment... I am also happy that some members of the neighborhoods are more organized than the others... and they have their own set of officers that certain street of block that easily facilitated the implementation of the project on street lighting.[KIM-4]

The story of a KIF-5 exemplified ‘empowerment’ by giving the local people the chance to decide who provides the resources (i.e. wooden and bamboo poles, light bulbs, etc.) for a street lighting project. All stakeholders worked together in the installation of the street lights. After proposing and generating the needed resources it points to the fact that peace and order and protection of the local people from burglars are salient concerns that needed immediate attention. If a project gets the attention of both the officials and the local people, this means that there is urgency of such concern which would not mean to have lengthy deliberation during assemblies.

In dealing with controversial issues, there was considerable opposition that could be felt. An example is the story of KIF-2 in dealing with stray dogs and the parking of vehicles along the road which needed some preferential attention.

I could not really understand why the officials did not bother to support the clamor of the neighborhood when I tried to suggest to report to the city hall those owners of vehicles parked along the road ... I was so ignorant that most of the officials and the ones attending the meeting have vehicles parked along the road...I was already becoming very disrespectful by shouting to the presiding officer during a meeting that this is an urgent matter to be dealt with... and ... I got very cold responses from the attendees... not knowing that I was alone in my plight. [KIF-2]

As revealed by the academics, the local people and moreover the BPU officials are also very selective of the issues to be tackled in general assemblies. The notion of non-selective and non-discriminatory in the element of transparency could be regarded as significant here.

In our inquiry, KIF-2 noted that:

The *barangay* captain and the councilors seemingly did not know what to do when a fire gutted a unit in the neighborhood ... In other words, the ability to operationalize the disaster committee and how it should coordinate with the other agencies of the government was nowhere to be found during certain disasters. [KIF-2]

The above narration goes back to the issue on the lack of capabilities of the BPU officials in the exercise of their duties during emergencies. On disaster preparedness, BPU officials are expected to harness and maximize the existing human resources in the community by carrying out human resource inventory of how many or whether these expertise are available or not. When a natural hazard is expected to be felt (typhoons, earthquakes, flooding, fires, etc.), there is already well established, well designed and well organized Disaster Coordinating Council or Committees.

Surveyed literature revealed that local authorities are left to themselves in setting up the disaster coordinating committees. The narratives highlight that BPU authorities have limited capabilities (both technical and administrative) and skills in organizing the committee, possibly lacking the coordinating skills. Much worse, is the condition of the inadequacy of material resources, as observed in all governmental levels (Aguirre 2005).

In reducing certain potential problems or risks, the urgent need to consider a well-defined management plan and targets for the utilization of community resources is nowhere to be found in some records of the BPU. The 'lukewarm' treatment, lack and even absence of the desired assistance provided by the BPU officials during complaints and reports of incidents on peace and order from the local people will spell out the difference in the efficiency of the needed participation of the community. Participatory mechanisms at the BPU level should be clear enough in order to maximize community participation. For instance KIF-4 complained about an altercation,

I was trying to convince the officer of the day in the community hall that something is happening in the neighborhood, but I did not receive a positive response... It was only a text message and followed up with a call that I sent... and I was thinking that it was received well (by the incharge) and could be acted upon until the time that the culprits were gone. [KIF-4]

The above incident is an act of indecisiveness since the officer of- the day is only an Officer- In-Charge Who considered it was not a serious incident and could have sent notice to the nearest police station.

Proposed programs and projects to enhance local governance of the BPU

Clearly, the aforementioned narratives that the issues and concerns in the local governance of BPU give emphasis to the critical importance and sense of urgency of building upon the hard earned benefits of being part of the bureaucracy. It is widely known that at the time when functions are devolved in the LGUs, there appears to be greater challenges that these officials must have as they served their constituencies. It cannot be denied that despite the negative image of the government (Claustro 2001, Dy 2001), it seems that the gains derived from the narratives give them the consolation to continue improving the performance by ensuring good governance of BPUs. The findings of ADB (2005) indicate the absence of good governance in LGUs, yet there are scenarios in this study that appears to be somewhat different. Previous reports that show the bleak images of local governance may not be supportive of the reflections of the academics in our inquiry. Notwithstanding, to certain negative meaning of the 'voices' presented, the gains of continuously

providing capacity building initiatives for the local officials on governance could be a good alternative in the coming years. The overall picture of governance of BPU has yet to be described in a more comprehensive and profound treatment. Our study, however, puts forth that there is a positive image ahead regarding transparency and maximizing community participation of the BPUs.

Consistent with the extant literature, although ‘patronage’ relationship of the head or chairperson of the BPU and the municipal mayor appears to have negative implications. Our data reveals positive impacts on the successful pursuance of P&Ps and reduction in the completion time. As seen in a study of Spanish welfare services (Calzada & Pino 2008), the perennial problem of inadequate material and human resources was also observed in BPUs . The academics suggested P&Ps on:

- a. training and hands-on seminars on capacity building;
- b. certain provisions to undertake regular activities on harnessing and maximizing the capabilities of local officials in cooperation with the various groups or organizations involved in research and development of local governance;
- c. provisions for building upon the hard earned achievement of the officials and the benefits being provided to the local officials; and
- d. the pursuance of budget allocation and concrete provisions on merit and recognition of achievement in the BPU to enhance good governance in the country.

As to the alternative for continuous training and hands-on seminars for capacity building of the BPU officials and local people, higher education institutions (HEIs) have invariably attracted clients to participate in seminars and/or courses offered regularly and those with nominal duration. Several HEIs with public administration programs engaged in several extramural programs on government accounting, local governance and public policy. We noted that BPU officials (*Barangay* Treasurer and Secretary) displayed keen intent to enrol in the Bookkeeping with National Certificate Level III (NC III) to enhance their capacities, provided that the BPU and the municipal officials with the support of the Philippine League of *Barangays* will finance such undertaking which is not within the BPUs operational budget.

We would also like to emphasize that a strong public-private partnership needs to be strengthened for enabling linkages which can eventually assist small and even ‘fledgling’ private HEIs in the provinces that develop their faculty while being co-host or convenor of these capacity building, monitoring and evaluation initiatives for BPU projects. This is within the belief that transparency has to motivate collective efforts and participation in building a strong academic community by identifying and enabling all stakeholders, including the LGUs towards the achievement of the educational goals following acceptable processes, desired results and outcomes for the community. Worthwhile benefits would accrue from such working relations that would be supportive to teaching, research and faculty development programs of small HEIs and continuous human capacity building in the BPUs involving the academe and other organizations.

Conclusion

Our study points to some noteworthy perspectives of the academics as to the notion of good

governance in the LGUs of the country, with implications on teaching, research, consultancies/linkages and community services in public administration, government accounting, local governance and community development. Perhaps more importantly, it can be added that the changes and subsequent progress of enhancing the capabilities and skills being provided by various HEIs and NGOs for the local officials towards improvement of dwelling units, increasing incomes, improvement of the satisfaction indices, and making a peaceful, safe and progressive community. The significance of maintaining good governance in the BPU in the Philippines cannot just be ignored considering the themes of accountability and adherence to the rule of law in local governance.

Since transparency and participation are affected by the lack of knowledge and capabilities of the BPU officials, empirical studies can be carried out in order to determine the direct relation of transparency in operation and increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of implementing programs and projects. Participation as an element of governance needs more emphasis in future investigation to assess how participation affects completion rates of BPU projects. Here we want to stress that the positive view of some aspects of BPU governance. That is why several research projects can be fulfilled by having collaborative regular monitoring and evaluation of BPU projects sponsored by the various HEIs within their service area.

Finally, regular activities of capacity building through trainings, workshops, courses with nominal duration, and degree or non-degree programs to be pursued in tandem with the various academic and non-academic organizations involved in local governance must be undertaken. As an addendum, annual recognition or merit promotions in the BPU can be carried out in cooperation with NGOs, LGUs, HEIs/HILs and other benevolent organizations. Short-term to long-term courses consisting on the competencies required for BPU officials can be designed by HEIs of CHED and TESDA for specific jobs or trades needed by these local officials.

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