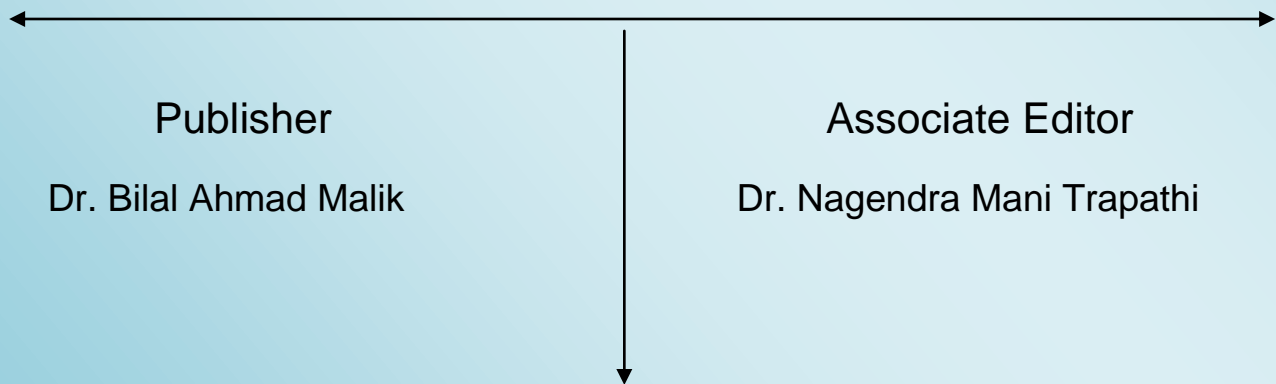


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MANAGEMENT AND DECISION MAKING STYLES AND TRAINING PREFERENCES OF BARANGAY OFFICIALS IN THE PROVINCE OF NUEVA ECIJA, PHILIPPINES

ARNEIL G GABRIEL, Ph.D AND EMINIANO DP MANUZON

ABSTRACT

Barangay is the smallest administrative unit in the Philippines. The Barangay officials' effective performance of administrative functions spells success of the entire Philippine political system. The study is done to determine the barangay officials' management skills, decision making styles and capacity building preferences. Factors affecting barangay management are identified. The respondents to the study are One Thousand Six Hundred Thirty Eight (1,638) barangay officials in the province of Nueva Ecija and Cabanatuan City. It utilized survey questionnaires, structured interviews and observation as tools to gather data. The results of the study could be used as a baseline data to offer Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration in one of the leading Public Administration Schools in the Region, the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology. The findings showed that: a) past experiences and management skills are factors for successful performance of barangay duties; b) educational training and consultation with other local leaders are influential in the domain of decision making; c) Barangay officials preferred skills training in public administration, law and order and financial management. The findings of the study could serve the National Government Agency (NGA) and Local Government Units (LGU) in the area of community governance where possible intervention may be made to improve social service delivery through capacity building and enhance realization of millennium development goals.

I. INTRODUCTION

Barangay officials are the intermediary of the government and citizens in service delivery. They perform a pivotal role not only in the execution of State function but also in the area of deliberative and democratic governance as well as in civic engagement (Gaventa 2004). Thus, effective performance of functions is desired both in terms of operational (technical know-how and leadership) and conceptual (enlightened capacity to solve critical community problems); skills which could only be achieved by means of providing them "informed discretion", appropriate training and education that academic institutions of higher learning could provide.

The Important role of barangay

The role of Barangay is important to strengthening local and participatory governance. Popular participation in local governance is seen as an important element in economic and political development of a country. Citizens participation in community programs and projects designed to develop the countryside at the same time widen democratic participation is best implemented in the barangay level (Gaventa 2004). The barangays are the sole indigenous and smallest political units comprising the entire governmental system (De Guzman et. al.1995); It is the foundation of a democratic system and a government structure nearest to the people (De Leon, 1997). Political personalism and political patronage prevail in the barangay. People in the barrio are united by common ties, whether by consanguinity or affinity; immediate or distant. It is a political unit which can easily mobilize resources (human or material) whether by means of politico- legal framework or socio- cultural orientation. The barangay remains the place where important developmental decision is planned, made and public involvement in governance is encouraged (LGC, 1991).

At present, there are Eight Hundred Ninety Four (894) barangays in Nueva Ecija. Theoretically speaking, people in the barangay serve as the foundation of all governmental powers (Article II, Section 1); and exercise the powers of government within the framework of a republican and democratic governance. As a political unit, it performs dual functions which could either be private or public (Albano, 1998). Public function when it represents the State in the exercise of sovereign powers while private function when it represents the interests of its members constituting the political unit. According to Thomas Jefferson,

“I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society, but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion.”

Thomas Jefferson, Letter to William Charles Jarvis, 1820

Indeed, in a representative democracy, people in the barrios are the sources of all strengths and stability of the entire political system (Article II, section 1). Barangay officials are in the nexus between barangay folks and national government. They are the people who are transforming citizens’ will into concrete programs of government ((Frederickson, 1982).

The need to develop management skills of barangay officials

The hierarchical and centralized orientation of public organizations, even after the implementation of RA 7160 or the Local Government Code, leads to the overconcentration of resources in the national government. As a result, barangay officials remain deficient in terms of education and capability necessary for political participation, resource mobilization, and local resources generation.

Today, more than ever, the shifting paradigm in public administration exerts more pressure upon barangay officials to update their knowledge and skills in public administration. Administrative skills learned under the New Public Management era might not be suitable and effective in this decade of public governance where *transparency, accountability, ethical leadership and participatory democracy* are the reigning social values replacing the old virtues of centralization, hierarchical structure of order and command or control oriented administration.

In the era of public governance;

‘...The traditional, hierarchical model of government simply does not meet the demands of this complex, rapidly changing age.’ (Emphasis supplied).

Similarly, as the basic political unit, barangay serves as the primary planning and implementing unit of government programs, projects and activities (Gabriel, 2013). Most operational decisions in the public setting are traditionally made and exercised by the bigger more robust municipal, provincial, or national government (De Guzman, 1995). Nowadays, decision making is no longer the sole prerogative of national government. Even barangay officials decide on certain issues or problems they commonly experienced. The national government concentrating on generating resources for service delivery while leaving to the barangay officials (LGU) the duty to manage people and implement development programs.

This significant change in public administration necessitates ’ retooling, relearning and fine- tuning of barangay officials management skills both in terms of theory and practice. For instance, inadequacies in structural mechanisms, attitudinal and perceptual skills of barangay leaders would hinder forging of genuine PO-NGO-GO partnership for local development (Brillantes, 1995); thereby losing the opportunity to create a more pro- active, effective, dynamic, flexible and network oriented decisions and countryside development. Finally, important governance principles of: the rule of law, transparency and accountability are products of a strong

interaction and active engagement between citizens and public institutions which could be done through the mechanism of barangay assembly. This necessitates the need to uplift skills and knowledge of barangay officials in governance.

OBJECTIVES:

The study aimed at describing the factors affecting barangay officials performance of functions, their decision making process, training needs and their expressed interest in the study of Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration.

Specifically, the study sought answers to the following:

1. How may the respondents be described in terms of personal profile?
2. How may the barangay officials described factors contributing to successful performance of assigned duties?
3. How may barangay officials perceived the factors influencing their decision making?
4. How did barangay officials describe the need to undergo skills training in Public Administration?

II. METHODOLOGY

The method employed was simple survey. Questionnaires were distributed and vague questions were explained by students- interviewers. The survey was participated in by One Thousand Six Hundred Thirty Eight Barangay leaders from Cabanatuan and Nueva Ecija distributed as follows: Fifty three (53) barangays are in Cabanatuan City; One Hundred Twenty Nine (129) are barangays of Nueva Ecija

Among the respondents, One Hundred Eighty Two (182) are barangay Captains while One Thousand Four Hundred Fifty Six (1,456) are barangay officials either councilors or appointed officials. The mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods were used. Percentile ranking was used to interpret gathered data and establish pattern of responses.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Profile of the respondents

As shown on Table 1, One Hundred Eighty Two (182) of the respondents are barangay chairmen while One Thousand Four Hundred Fifty Six are barangay officials whether elected or appointed. All in all, there are One Thousand Six Hundred Thirty Eight (1638) respondents to the survey.

Table 1 provides the data for the personal profile of the respondents as to their positions held to wit;

Table1. Profile of the Respondents as to the Positions Held

Positions in the Barangay	Respondents
Chairman	182
Councilors and officials	1456
Total Number of Respondents	1638

Meanwhile, a glance on table 1.1 reveals that many of the respondents- barangay officials are high school graduates attributing to Forty Seven percent (47%) of the total number of respondents equivalent to Seven Hundred Seventy One barangay officials. The courses finished are as follows: Five Hundred Ninety Seven (597) are college graduates. One Hundred Fifty Seven (157) are elementary graduates while Eighty Six (86) finished vocational courses. None of the respondents obtained a Master's Degree or Doctorate Degree.

Table 1.1 Barangay Officials Profile as to Educational Qualifications

Educational Attainment	Barangay Officials
a. Elementary	157
b. Secondary	771
c. Tertiary	597
d. Post Graduate	-
e. Vocational	86
Total	1611

As shown on Table 1.2, Six Hundred Sixty One of the respondents are newly elected and occupying the position for more than one year. There are Four Hundred Eleven (411) respondents who were reelected and had been serving the community for more than five years (5). Finally, Two hundred Eighty Nine (289) of the respondents have been serving the communities for two (2) years to three (3) years and (11) eleven months. The table below shows the length of years they serve as barangay officials, to wit;

Table 1.2 Profile of respondents as to the Number of Years in the Position

Positions in the Barangay	Respondents
Chairman	182
Councilors and officials	1456
Total Number of Respondents	1638

B. Description of area of assignment

As shown on table 2, only a minority of the barangay officials are engaged in functions related to finances or financial activities of the barangays. One Hundred Ninety Five (195) of them are either assigned as barangay treasurers or heads of finance committee (ways and means) in the barangay council.

The highest percentage of the respondents are dealing with barangay planning function or Seven Hundred Ninety One (791) of the respondents equivalent to Forty Eight percent (48%) of the total number of respondents. Among the cited reasons why there seems to have too many officials assigned in planning is the fact that respondents consider as part of their inherent function; to plan the development of the barangay regardless of the committee they are assigned. Based on follow up interview, most of the respondents have inadequate knowledge on how they could generate local resources to finance project other than through specific appropriations of barangay funds. Peace and order ranks fourth from the lowest in terms of work assignment in the barangays. It is equivalent to nineteen percent (19%) of the total number of respondents.

Meanwhile, a glance on Table 2.1 reveals the factors contributory to the effective performance of duties of respondent barangay officials. As can be culled out from the data, Seven hundred seventy six (776) of the respondents considered past experiences as an indispensable factor leading to successful execution of duties as barangay officials.

The choice with lowest response rate was consultation with “friends and cohorts” equivalent to four percent (4%) of the total number of respondents. The finding is inconsistent with the profile gathered, where there are only Four Hundred Forty One (441) barangay officials serving for more than five (5) years.

Table 2.1 Barangay officials responses on factor perceived to be contributory to effective performance of duties

Factors for Effective Performance	Frequency
a. Past experiences	776
b. Expert opinion/adviser	458
c. Advise of local leaders	109
d. Educational training	210
e. Friends and cohorts	57
f. Others	28
g. Total	1638

The result is attributable to the perception of barangay officials that after serving the full term of three years and then again re-elected, such re-elected official considers himself as “experienced”, and no longer a neophyte in the position and hence an “experienced barangay official”. Advise of local leaders is the second to the lowest number of frequency attributing to only 7% of the total number of respondents. This finding points to the fact that, “consultation” is not consider as an important factor for effective performance of functions of barangay officials. This is in complete contrary to the recent trend in public administration where participatory governance is observed and encouraged.

Experts’ opinion on the other hand ranks second to the highest number of frequency gathered. It has Four Hundred Fifty Eight (458) or 29% of the total number of respondents. According to the interview, majority of experts whose opinions were sought are: lawyers, government auditors, barangay development workers from NGO and GO and those from Interior and Local Government Office.

C. Barangay Officials Description of Factors Influencing Their Decision making

As shown on Table 3, there are unlimited choices on the factors to consider in making decisions. The choice other “local leaders” ranks the highest among the choices with Five Hundred Fifty Eight (558) responses or 34% of the total number of respondents consider consultation with other “local leaders “as a factor in making decision. This fact however puts a doubt on the result under Table 2.3.

Based on interview, "local leaders" as referred to by barangay officials are other officials of the barangay. It confirms the fact that important barangay decisions other than general barangay management decision is done through consultation during barangay council meeting.

Note worthy is the model of participatory governance developed by Sherry Ann Arnstein in 1971 where consultation made with other local leaders is described as "non participation". The model posits that such manner of consultation is not a genuine consultation because people consulted were also power holders themselves.

Table 3. also showed that educational training of barangay leaders is an important factor in making decisions. It has a total response frequency of Five Hundred Seventeen (517) or equivalent to 32% of the total respondents. This finding supports the data gathered on demographic profile that Five Hundred Ninety Seven (597) of the respondents are college level or graduates. The percentage however is too small if one would consider the movement to "professionalize" barangay administration.

Table 3 Barangay Officials Factors Affecting Official Decisions

Factors Affecting Decision	Frequency
Experiences	433
Educational training	517
Trusted friends and cohorts	98
Municipal mayor	96
other local leaders	558
others	12
Total	1638

IV. BARANGAY OFFICIALS DESCRIPTION ON THE NEED TO DEVELOP THEIR SKILLS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Table 4 showed the applicability of educational training to the performance of their functions as local leaders in the community. As the data showed, none of the enumerated degree courses ranked highest among the chosen degree related to performance of functions.

On Table 3. “Educational Training” (517), ranked high among the factors affecting decisions. Meanwhile, Table D.1 showed that in so far as general performance of functions is concerned “others” as an option is more related.

Be that as it may, the respondents’ perspectives showed that in terms of degree and general performance of functions, there are other courses or disciplines they consider related to their duties as barangay officials and shown by a total responses of One Thousand Three Hundred Seventy Six (1376) or 84% of the total responses consider “other courses” as much related to present performance of their duties. This also goes to confirm that experiences of barangay officials have something to do with the level of their performance.

Interview would enlighten us of their choice of “others”. According to them, suitability of course enrolled, not necessarily finished is of low level of relatedness. It is either many of them did not finish college or they preferred other course other than those enumerated as most suitable preparation for community service as barangay officials.

The result also confirmed the fact presented on demographic table A.1 where only Five Hundred Seventy Four (574) had a degree obtained or reached college level. The bulk of responses pointing to “others” are those who did not graduate from college or graduated but the degree obtained is not suitable to the demands of community management and service delivery.

Table 4 Barangay Officials Responses On The Relatedness of Educational Training and Performance of Functions

Relatedness of Degree Obtained	Frequency
a. Engineering	82
b. Doctor/nurse/	16
c. Social worker	69
d. Teachers	75
e. Others	1376
TOTAL	1618

Training adequacy

As shown on Table 4.1, barangay officials considered their training as “extremely adequate” having total responses of Six Hundred Ninety Three (693). This finding is, perhaps, attributable to the DILG sponsored periodic trainings and seminars.

Meanwhile, Seventy (70) of the respondents are not confident of their capability to perform the functions of barangay leaders for lack of training. While Three Hundred Thirty Six (336) of the respondents believing that they have adequate training for their respective duties and assignments in the barangay.

It is important to note that the DILG maintains a periodic training for barangay officials. That is why many of them felt the adequacy of skills in managing people in the barangay. Based on interview however, more than Three Hundred Forty Two (342) of the respondents still feel the need to undergo training to improve their skills and service delivery to the community. The 130 “others” responses either left the question unanswered for unknown reason or they just simply ignore the questions for lack of confidence that the answer would be treated with confidentiality.

This finding is a positive sign that barangay leaders are willing to learn despite the fact that they have already been elected and thus have all the reasons not to bother educating themselves to improve their management and conceptual skills to deliver service to the community.

Table 4.1 Barangay Officials Responses on Adequacy of Training

Adequacy of Training	Respondents
a. extremely adequate	693
b. slightly adequate	129
c. adequate	336
d. slightly inadequate	272
e. extremely inadequate	70
f. others	130
TOTAL	1630

As shown on Table 4.2, many or Four Hundred Fifty Seven (457) or 29% of the respondents felt the need to undergo training in “laws and order”. While Three Hundred Seventy Nine (379) or 23% of the total number of respondents perceived that training along development planning is desired than in other areas of barangay concerns.

The findings in Table 4.3 showed to the fact of training inadequacy of barangay officials if one would consider their importance both to the political system and participatory democratic process. The state of barangay officials in the Philippines is seemingly a result of lack of institutional funding for capacity building and structural improvement. Though, training seminars are regularly sponsored by the government, and many have undergone trainings, the same is inadequate compared to the multifarious challenging problems encountered by barangay officials in their day to day performance of duties. A boost in their capacity and capability is still necessary.

The result also suggests that community funding may be tapped to provide barangay officials training on “law and order”. Table 4.2 highlights the area where they felt the need to undergo training, to wit;

Table 4.2 Barangay Officials Perceived Training Needs as Per Area of Barangay Concerns

Area of training needs	Frequency
a. Financial Management	158
b. Laws and Order	457
c. Basic documentary analysis ,reading etc	240
d. Development Planning	379
e. Heath and sanitation	128
f. Others	30
TOTAL	1627

Meanwhile Table 4.3 provides the list of preferred training for barangay officials as per field of discipline. The data showed that majority preferred training in public administration and business management having total responses of Seven Hundred Seventy Six (776) and Two Hundred Fifty Seven (257) respectively.

The result is logical because barangay officials are in theory and in fact, already in the actual practice of public administration. The experiences they cited under 2.2 and 3.3 are the training opportunities which they considered part of being public administrators.

Unfortunately, training in public administration other than DILG sponsored training is not always available to them. Colleges and universities in Nueva Ecija lack the appropriate course offering for barangay officials. They have to go to Metro Manila to avail of training in public administration provided by colleges and universities in the metropolis. The NCPAG at UP is one premier College providing state of the art and advance trainings in community governance.

Table 4.3 Barangay Officials Responses on the Preferred Training as Per Course or Discipline

Training needed per course of discipline	Frequency
a. business management	257
b. public administration	776
c. nursing and allied courses	49
d. engineering and allied courses	189
e. others specify	94
TOTAL	1415

On the question regarding their interest to enroll in a degree program to be offered by NEUST to improve their performance as local leaders, it is Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration (BAPA) garnering the highest number of responses; Seven Hundred Sixty Three (763), followed by Accountancy with One Hundred Eighty(180) responses.

One would notice that the two courses are not offered in NEUST. Except that, in Public Administration, both Master's Degree and Doctor of Philosophy are degree programs existing and offered by the university but without a Bachelor of Arts degree in Public Administration.

V. BARANGAY OFFICIALS EXPRESSED INTEREST TO TAKE UP A FORMAL STUDY IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Table 5: Barangay Officials Preferred Course to Enroll in to Improve Performance of Functions

Course Preferred	Frequency
a. Engineering	156
b. Accountancy	180
c. Law and Order	168
d. Public Administration	763
e. Teacher education	114
f. others	
TOTAL	1638

Finally, Table 5.1 provides for the baseline data on the “willingness of barangay officials” and “their immediate members of the families to enroll in BAPA having One Thousand Two Hundred Twenty Two (1222) responses equivalent to 73% of the total 1638 respondents to the survey.

5.1 Barangay Officials’ Expressed Interest in the Degree Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration

Expressed interest to Enroll in BAPA	Frequency
a. Will enroll myself	408
b. Encourage immediate members of the family to enroll	814
c. Not interested	84
d. Do not know yet	195
e. Undecided	84
TOTAL	1585

It is noteworthy that post graduate degrees in Public Administration are offered in NEUST but without Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration Program. To enrol in Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration is the spring board to higher Public Administration degrees.

Offering of a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Public Administration follows the CHED vertical articulation scheme in evaluating quality of education provided by higher learning institutions.

The students enrolled in the NEUST Graduate School (Master’s and Doctorate Degrees in Public Administration) are professionals and employed in the government or private organizations. None of them are barangay officials. Hence based on responses of 1222 respondents, barangay officials have the keen interest in Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration not only because it would give them the opportunity to acquire a bachelor of arts degree but also to acquire new concepts and principles in the field. Concepts which at this point in time, they may have been using to their present functions including knowledge and skills which for them are noble and unconventional but applicable and suited to community development conditions.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The following results are shown by the study:

- a. Barangay officials consider past experiences and management skills as the two most important factors to achieving successful performance of barangay duties;
- b. Past experiences, educational training and consultation with other local leaders as important factors influencing their decision making;
- c. Barangay officials preferred skills development training in public administration than training in other disciplines and management training in “law and order” and “financial management” as preferred training related to barangay development. Finally, a certificate program and a degree program in Public Administration are given highest responses by the respondents barangay officials in so far as training per field of discipline is offered ;
- d. Barangay officials personally expressed keen interest in taking up a degree program in Public Administration.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the above findings, the following courses of action are respectfully submitted:

- a. To replicate the study using as sample population private organizations and Non Government Organizations to assess the need for the course.
- b. Survey could better be done using the internet to reach wider population with ease and speed;
- c. For the university to design and offer training program and modules intended to develop barangay officials’ skills in management specially along the area of local resources (finance and audit); law and order, and participatory governance. The training programs must fit in to the available free time of barangay officials. The project could be a partnership endeavour of PO-NGO-and the University;
- d. To offer Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration having as initial enrollees interested barangay officials and their immediate members of the family. Such degree course must be flexible in time and schedule of classes. There must be a separate executive class schedule for community administrators where classes are held in their barangay so that they could attend to the day to day barangay concerns. The program could be tied up with the Department of Interior and Local Government.

The BAPA program must also cater to the need of the regular high school graduates seeking a career in government, NGO, PO, Community Development and Foreign Service.

- e. Undertake reorientation program for barangay officials tailor –made to help them discard anti -developmental practices learned from past experiences. Introduce new concepts, principles and theories in public administration where the social values of transparency, accountability, participatory governance and ethical leadership shall be developed and imbued among local community leaders.

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