



Assessing the Managerial Skills and Decision-Making Ability of the Local Chief Executives: The Case of the Third District of Nueva Ecija

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Abstract

The research is about the assessment of the Managerial Skills and Decision-Making Ability of the Local Chief Executives of the Third District of Nueva Ecija, Philippines. The study argued that Managerial Skills and “Decision-making Ability” must go together to effect change in the local governance and as an important domain of leadership. The leadership of the Local Chief Executives of the Third District of Nueva Ecija could be measured in terms of managerial skills and decision-making ability. This must go together to effect change in local governance. The study used the Descriptive Survey Method. This method involves the collection of data in order to test hypotheses or answer questions. With devolved powers from the national government, the local government officers specifically local chief executives such as mayor and barangay chairmen, together with the public administrators of their respective units, are expected to manage their work, people, and environment effectively, efficiently lead them towards the achievement of their goals and be able to relate these with local governance buzzwords like transparency, accountability, participation, equity, efficiency, effectiveness, and development. Data were collected by means of a survey questionnaire. The study confirmed that managerial skills and decision making ability are essential qualifications in good governance. The offshoot of the two domains is the essence of effective leadership which stems from the fact that leaders have the capacity to translate visions into actions. Central to this is their ability to make sound decisions and manage with efficiency the work of a civil servant.

Subject Areas

Politics

Keywords

Managerial Skills, Decision-Making Ability, Local Chief Executive, Leadership

1. Introduction

There is a tradition of treating leadership and decision making as two fundamentally distinct phenomena on the premise that in general it requires specialization. However, local chief executives must commit themselves to achieve far-reaching goals for the good of the community. The dichotomy between the two areas may seem strange. Leaders are almost always involved in decision making and organizational decisions typically involve leaders, whether formal or informal. Deciding to become a leader is also a very important life decision. We must remember that local chief executives are leaders primarily because they chose to be by virtue of success in the democratic process of election. The essence of effective leadership stems from the fact that leaders have the capacity to translate visions into actions. Central to this is their ability to make sound decisions and manage with efficiency the work of a civil servant as they partner with various stakeholders. It is the kind of leadership that builds and cultivates on learnings, good governance, partnership and service. They must value the participation of institutions and communities to link together for the common good of the people and country.

The Constitution of the Philippines recognizes the importance of local governments. To assure their fullest development as self-reliant communities, Art. 1, Section 25 provides that the State shall ensure the autonomy of local governments [1]. Local governments constitute the foundation of the entire structure of the government. The acts of the local government units affect the ordinary citizen more directly than those of the national government. Republic Act No. 7160 otherwise known as Local Government Code of the Philippines under Section 15 provides that every local government unit is created or recognized under this Code as a body politic and corporate endowed with powers to be exercised by it in conformity with law. As such, it shall exercise powers as a political subdivision of the national government and as a corporate entity representing the inhabitants of its territory [2].

The diversity of roles and services currently offered across all local government units in the Philippines within the context of increased government accountability, diminishing resources and increased public demands point to the role of the Local Chief Executives as being both dynamic and complex requiring high levels of managerial competence as well as strong leader capabilities. Benis, Goleman & O'Toole stated that leadership from a systemic perspective entails two components: developing and leading organizations as well as leading people in the context of these organizations [3]. More than equivalent roles of

government or business, the Local Chief Executives are also required to operate and interact within active community stakeholder and political systems that are intertwined with the operational demands of local government unit. The principle of new public administration must lean towards reformation of the Local Chief Executives who played the lead roles in local government. In a research study conducted in the United States, there were undeniable demands for public managers as a political leaders and senior executives to adopt innovative strategies to maximize human resource capacities [4]. Managerial skills and decision-making ability is important domains of leadership and must always part of the professional growth and development. The dichotomy between the two domains must remain at bay while training and education programs are instituted to the level of the two leadership domains thereby improving considerably the performance [5].

The Local Chief Executives as the agent of the government and citizens in service delivery performs a decisive role not only in the execution of government function but also in the area of deliberative and democratic governance as well as in civic engagement [6]. The pursuit of excellence in local governance starts with a clear vision among our local leaders for a governance of truth, development and service. It is of utmost importance that our local chief executives nurture in them the dedication and commitment in carrying out their responsibilities and be of service to the people. Alongside with this is the need for them to be knowledgeable of their defined tasks and be capacitated in their managerial skills to help them become effective leaders as well as catalysts for change towards peace and progress. Hence, there is a need for Assessing the Managerial Skills and Decision-Making Ability of the Local Chief Executives to heed the need for a formidable leader and a skillful manager who possesses indisputable competence and integrity. Managerial skills involve systems and hierarchy while leadership deals with people and its culture. For this reason, Local Chief Executives must be effective in both areas, being a leader and a manager [7]. Having good governance is dependent on the and Managerial Skills and Decision Making ability of the Local Chief Executives because they are the core of public administration, and the heart of good governance.

The study aimed to focus on the Managerial Skills and Decision-Making Ability of the Local Chief Executives. The study argued that managerial skills and decision making ability is an important realm of effective performance of functions of Local Chief Executives. The offshoot of the two domains is the essence of effective leadership stems from the fact that leaders have the capacity to translate visions into actions. Central to this is their ability to make sound decisions and manage with efficiency the work of a civil servant.

The leadership capability of the Local Chief Executives shall be measured in terms of Managerial Skills and Decision-Making Ability. The two domains of leadership are essential to maintain performance level of Local Chief Executives and in this study the case of the Municipal Mayors of the five municipalities of

the Third District of Nueva Ecija.

The study posed the following problems, to wit:

- 1) What is the level of competence of Local Chief Executives in terms of Managerial Skills and Decision-Making Ability as perceived by their Barangay Chairmen and Public Administrators?
- 2) Is there a significant relationship between the Managerial Skills and Decision-Making Ability of Local Chief Executives as to their leadership capability?
- 3) Is there a significant relationship between the Managerial Skills of the Local Chief Executives and their Decision-Making Ability?

2. Significance of the Study

The study assessed the Managerial Skills and Decision-Making Ability of the Local Chief Executives in the 5 Municipalities of the Third District of Nueva Ecija, Philippines and may guide the Department of Interior and Local Government in determining the efficiency and competencies of the local government chief executives. The study may also serve as a tool for the Filipino people and government to know the capabilities of their public servants and make the necessary actions in case of incompetence. Furthermore, the academe and researchers will benefit by anchoring future researches on this study.

3. Methods and Procedures

3.1. Conceptual

Leadership in the context of the study is measured by the manner Local Chief Executives maintain Managerial Skills and Decision-Making Ability leading to efficient and effective management of their respective local government unit. As Dr. Alex Brillantes, Jr. pointed out, it was in the reformation of institutions, processes and procedures that an institution can be at par with the private sector in terms of standard of performance and, changing the mindset of the people are important factor in achieving the vision of good governance. The people will regain their trust to the government if they could see the character of a transformational leader to those in power. Thus, it will result into the active engagement of the citizen in order to restore the trust and build integrity in the government [8]. According to Brunsson decision making constitutes a verbal process that leaders use as an instrument to support their actions through creating visions for the future and mobilizing resources [9] [10].

3.2. Theoretical Framework

The study also heeds to the attribution theory of leadership. This theory contends that what happens to the organization is attributed to things which could either prevent or enhance realization of mandated goals [11]. Attribution is the process by which individuals explain the causes of behavior and events. It is often the case that local government units have different stakeholders and objectives which cannot be satisfied simultaneously. For this reason it is common that

leaders are forced to present and mandated to achieve various visions at different times. The way a decision process unfolds has an impact on how the local government units as a decision making body is perceived. Based on similar arguments, Weick had criticized the idea of organizational decisions as stable and objective phenomena. Instead, these decisions are highly subject to how individual leaders interpret them. Leaders create meaningful interpretations of organizational decisions based on their impressions and experiences. It is these interpretations that form the basis of how the leaders subsequently act in different situations. Thus organizations operate in environments of human interpretation. For Weick, the information process is central to all organizational activity. Organizations cannot be regarded as static systems as they evolve [12].

The following are the hypotheses, to wit:

- 1) There is no significant difference in the Managerial Skills and Decision-Making Ability of the Local Chief Executives based on the perception of their Barangay Chairmen and Public Administrators.
- 2) There is no significant relation between Managerial Skills and Decision-Making Ability of the Local Chief Executives.

Figure 1 shows the connection between variables. By using the systems model, the study considered Managerial Skills and Decision-Making Ability of the Local Chief Executives as measures of leadership. It is processed by measuring the other subdomains of competence and decision making ability. How the study would process the same would lead to the output which later on shall serve as another input to analyze leadership skills and office performance. Part of the output of course is the recommendation necessary to improve familiarity with their tasks and deliverables as the key to being an effective Local Chief Executives for they need to be able to relate these with local governance buzzwords like transparency, accountability, participation, equity, efficiency, effectiveness, and development.

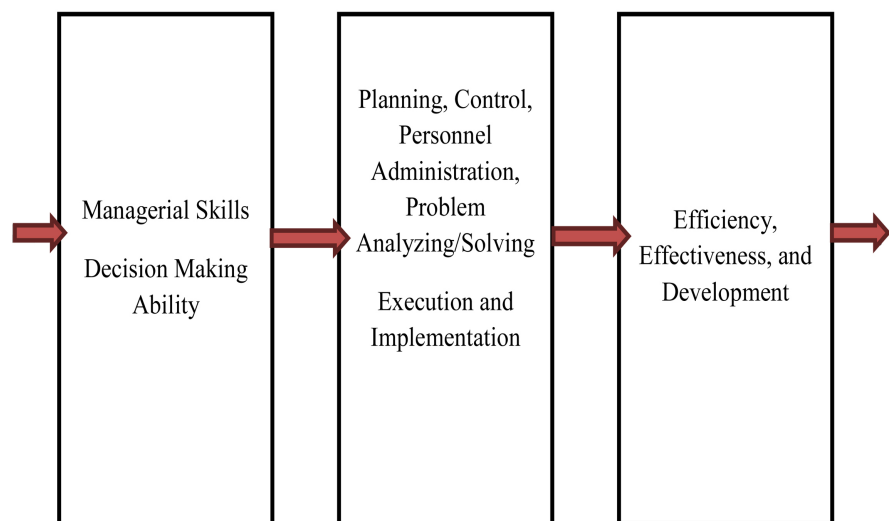


Figure 1. Research paradigm.

3.3. Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in the five (5) Municipalities of the Third Congressional District of Nueva Ecija, Philippines. The five municipalities include Bongabon, Gabaldon, General Natividad, Laur and Sta. Rosa. Nueva Ecija is a typical province in the archipelago having agriculture as the backbone of the economy. The map of the five (5) Municipalities of the Third Congressional District of Nueva Ecija is shown in **Figure 2**.

3.4. Research Design

The study used the Descriptive Survey Method. This method involves the collection of data in order to test hypotheses or answer questions. According to Kumar, this method can systematically describe a situation, problem, phenomenon, service or programs, or provides information or describes the attitude towards an issue [14].

3.5. Data Gathering Procedure

The study population were the Municipal Mayors in the five (5) Municipalities of the Third Congressional District of Nueva Ecija, 55 barangay chairmen, and 5 public administrators in the said respective municipalities. The instrument consisted of two groups namely: Managerial Competence with three areas and Decision-Making Ability with four areas. It used simple purposive sampling in selecting respondents from among the constituents in each barangay to avoid the odds of having bias respondents (see **Table 1** and **Table 2**).

3.6. Reliability of the Instrument

The questionnaire-checklist was tested to (6) Barangay Captains and six (6)

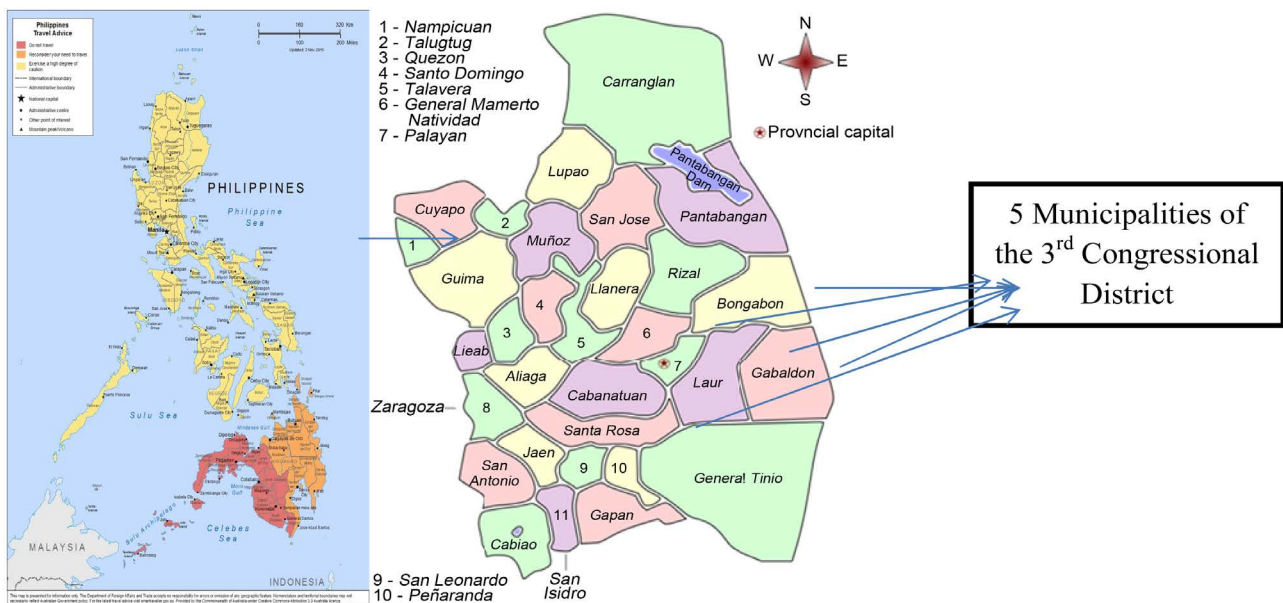


Figure 2. The map of the province of Nueva Ecija, Philippines. Source: Google map [13].

Table 1. Managerial skills.

Scale	Semantic differential	Verbal Description
3.25 - 4.00	Always	Carried out to a full extent
2.50 - 3.40	Very Often	Carried out to a good extent
1.75 - 2.49	Often	Carried out to a fairly extent
1.00 - 1.74	Rarely	Carried out to a very poor extent

Table 2. Decision making ability.

Scale	Semantic differential
3.39 - 4.00	Very Much Competent
2.50 - 3.40	Very Competent
1.75 - 2.49	Competent
1.00 - 1.74	Slightly Competent

Barangay Secretary from Laur, Nueva Ecija.

3.7. Statistical Tools

To verify the hypotheses, hypothesis number 1 was tested using the t-Test while Hypotheses 2 were verified through Pearson Product-Moment Correlation.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Level of Competence of Local Chief Executives on Managerial Skills and Decision-Making Ability

In terms of Managerial Skills, **Table 3** shows that both groups of respondents considered LCE's as Very Competent. Hence, LCE's carried out to a good extent the managerial competence areas. Barangay Chairmen and Public Administrators agreed that their LCE's are capable in managerial aspect; however, both the Barangay Chairmen and Public Administrators said that LCE's still have to improve in terms of public personnel administration with an area mean of 1.93 and 2.10, respectively. Public Personnel are responsible for the internal operations of the municipal government and they should be managed properly in order to ensure competence in the workplace. Area III shows the LCEs, Barangay Chairmen and Public Administrators perception on the LCEs capability along the line of public personnel administration. Of all the items, it is Area III that has the lowest mean which is 2.90, 1.93 and 2.10, respectively. At the helm of Public Personnel Administration in the Local Government Unit is the Local Chief Executive. The chief executive of every local government unit shall be responsible for human resources and development in his unit and shall take all personnel actions in accordance with the Constitutional provisions on civil service, pertinent laws, and rules and regulations thereon, including such policies guidelines and standards as the Civil Service Commission may establish. x x x" [15]. It is imperative that LCEs be equipped with basic knowledge on Civil Service Law and

Table 3. Level of competence of local chief executives on managerial skills and decision-making ability.

Areas	LCE's		Barangay		Public	
			Chairmen		Administrators	
	WM	Description	WM	Description	WM	Description
I) Managerial competence in management of planning procedures	3.53	VMC	3.25	VC	3.50	VMC
II) Managerial competence in organization control, and direction of structures	3.25	VC	2.40	C	3.25	VC
III) Managerial competence in public personnel administration	2.90	VC	1.93	C	2.10	C
IV) Decision-making ability in defining the problem	3.40	VC	2.40	C	3.40	VC
VI) Decision-making ability in making the decisions	3.25	VC	2.00	C	3.25	VC
VII) Decision-making ability in executions and implementations of decisions	3.40	VC	3.00	VC	3.40	VC

Rules that cover the four (4) Rs of human resource management, namely: (1) Recruitment; (2) Retention; (3) Rewards and Recognition; and (4) Retirement.

Pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government Code of 1991, every Local Government Unit (LGU) shall design and implement its own organizational structure and staffing pattern taking into consideration its priority needs, service requirements, and financial capabilities consistent with the principles on simplicity, efficiency, economy, effectiveness, dynamism, and public accountability, subject to the minimum standards and guidelines prescribed by the Civil Service Commission. Under Managerial skills in management of planning procedures both the LCEs and the Public Administrators perceived that they were VMC on management of planning procedures and VC on execution and implementation and with a weighted mean of 3.40, 3.00 and 3.40 respectively.

Local Chief Executives recognize their changing role to General managers are expected to possess leadership, visionary and other change management skills of an order not previously exercised in local government as the emphasis in their role is transformed from administrative compliance to managerial proactivity. It could be argued that the general manager now represents the glue that holds the whole organization together occupies a crucial position at the political-managerial interface of the council [16].

4.2. Significant Difference in the Managerial Skills and Decision-Making Ability of the Local Chief Executives as to Their Leadership Capability

Table 4 illustrates that Areas I and II have higher Computed Values other than

Table 4. Significant difference in the managerial skills and decision-making ability of the local chief executives as to their leadership capability.

Managerial Competency and Decision-Making Ability Areas	Critical t	Computed t	Decision	Interpretation
I) Managerial competence in management of planning procedures	2.144786688	8.88921E-06	Reject HO	Significant
II) Managerial competence in organization, control, and direction of structures	2.144786688	7.68932E-05	Reject HO	Significant
III) Managerial competence in public personnel administration	2.10092204	0.5736418	Accept HO	Not Significant
IV) Decision-making ability in defining the problem	2.262157163	0.5271789	Accept HO	Not Significant
VI) Decision-making ability in making the decisions	2.17881283	0.01446275	Accept HO	Not Significant
VII) Decision-making ability in executions and implementations of decisions	2.2281389	0.00235194	Accept HO	Not Significant

their respective Critical Values at 0.05 level of significance. The H_0 is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in the Managerial Competence and Decision-Making Ability of the Local Chief Executives only on the said two identified areas. Be that as it may, the Computed Values of Areas III, IV, V, VI, and VII are lower than their respective Critical Values at 0.05 level of significance, hence the H_0 is accepted. It entails that Local Chief Executives have the same perception as that of their Barangay Chairmen and Public Administrators on most of the areas of Managerial Competence and Decision-Making Ability.

4.3. Relation between the Managerial Skills of Local Chief Executives and Their Decision-Making Ability

Table 5 shows that Managerial Skills particularly in Areas I and II significantly correlates with Decision-Making Ability. This indicates that Local Chief Executives are capable in the Organization, Control & Direction of Structures and in Public Personnel Administration. Diversely, the rest of the areas within Managerial Skills and Decision Making Ability are not significantly interrelated which signifies that each area does not affect the other areas. It also signifies that Local Chief Executives who are competent in managerial aspect does not mean that they are also capable in decision-making or vice versa. Gorry & Scott Morton pointed out that decision making is the core of management and aims at selecting the best alternative to achieve an objective [17]. If a manager is short of making right decisions in his day to day functions, the business will die. In the same vein, if a scholar in the education industry fails to publish journal articles and academic textbooks, such a scholar would perish without promotion and

Table 5. Relation between the managerial skills of local chief executives and their decision-making ability.

Correlations	IV	V	VI	VII
	Defining the problem	Analyzing the problem	Making the Decision	Execution and implementation
I) Management of planning procedures	0.609	0.387	0.194	0.487
II) Organization, control, & direction of structures	0.84	0.768	0.671	0.738
III) Competence in public personnel administration	0.701	0.385	0.043	0.559
	0.853	0.824	0.654	0.739
	0.574	0.278	0.132	0.597
	0.804	0.729	0.619	0.651

recognition [18].

5. Conclusions and Recommendation

As the study argued that the leadership is an important realm of effective performance of functions of Local Chief Executives of the Third District of Nueva Ecija, hence it could be measured in terms of managerial skills and decision-making ability. This must go together to effect change in local governance. However, as the study showed, there is a seeming divergence between the two leadership domains. Thus, the dichotomy between managerial skills and decision-making ability must be rescrutinized. The Local Chief Executives of the Third District of Nueva Ecija are very competent in terms of managerial aspect and decision-making ability. It is, of course, necessary for a Local Chief Executives to know the do's and don'ts of his position especially the management aspect of it. They must be characterized with confidence, empowerment, vision span and good behavior, modest life, shared vision and will serve as an agent in reforming an institution. The re-engineering of the public sector relies on the transformational leaders and the active participation of the people [8]. Hence, Local Chief Executives must be proficient managerial skills and ethical decision-making ability. A very important decision for a leader is determining who should be included in the decision-making process, and how it is implemented [19] [20].

The fact that the study showed that Local Chief Executives are very competent in managerial aspect and in decision-making doesn't mean efficiency in public personnel administration. At the helm of Public Personnel Administration in the Local Government Unit is the Local Chief Executive. Thus, it is recommended that the chief executive of every local government unit shall be responsible for human resources and development in his unit and shall take all personnel actions in accordance with the Constitutional provisions on civil service, pertinent laws, and rules and regulations of the entire spectrum of a public organization's management of human resources from recruitment to retirement which involves manpower planning and forecasting, selection and staffing, training and devel-

opment, performance management, employee discipline, and promotion of employee welfare and productivity. It is imperative that LCEs be equipped with basic knowledge on Civil Service Law and Rules that cover the human resource management as it is relatively associated in the managerial skills and in some decision-making ability.

Finally, the study indicates that Local Chief Executives are capable in the Organization, Control & Direction of Structures and in Public Personnel Administration diversely, the rest of the areas within Managerial Skills and their Decision Making Ability. Thus, in order to effect reforms in the public administration, it is suggested that those future local leaders would be characterized with adept managerial skills and excellent analytical and interpretive decision-making ability to easily detect the issues that must be addressed and relate these with local governance buzzwords like transparency, accountability, participation, equity, efficiency, effectiveness, and development.

Reinventing local government, each unit must pursue for political relevance and adoption of reforms a better service to the public, giving great impact on the lives of their respective constituents [21]. Local Chief Executives also known as the elite corps of the civil servants in local governance may affect the motivation and empowerment. Reliable government requires a formidable leader and a skillful manager who possesses indisputable competence and integrity. Management skills involve systems and hierarchy while leadership deals with people and its culture. For this reason, government leaders national or local must be effective in both areas, being a leader and a manager [7].

Convincingly, the results convey that the Local Chief Executives, Public Administrators, and Barangay Chairmen of the Third District of Nueva Ecija possessed the competencies of managerial skills and decision-making ability as evidenced of the continuous economic, social and political development of their respective municipality. Effective decision-makers are generally aware of their power and use it in their efforts to influence and determine the outcomes of various decisions [22] [23] [24] [25]. Hence, a world-class leader understands that the key to energising an organization is to create a vision of the future that embodies the collective values and aspirations of its individual members as a shared mental picture of the future [26].

The study was limited to the assessment of the Managerial Skills and Decision-Making Ability of the Local Chief Executives in the five (5) Municipalities of the Third Congressional District of Nueva Ecija. This study did not cover other issues and concerns that their respective municipalities are facing.

The study may also be useful for other researchers by providing information in relation to the study. This study may be replicated in some other purviews.

1987 Philippine Constitution—The LawPhil Project.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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