

Public Management Challenges in a Local Government Unit in the Philippines: Implications to the Educational Sector

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Abstract Public management challenges encompass all the pressing needs and demands of the citizens to be met for a better governance. This study is geared towards the determinants of the challenges of a Local Government Unit (LGU) along public management and the perceived solutions to the perceived challenges. Employing a total of 118 respondents under Descriptive Research design, the following are known: challenges along public management are addressed by a LGU in the Philippines *much better than expected* by the respondents and the solutions addressing the challenges in public management are exuded in a *great extent*. Owing to the foregoing findings, it is concluded that the LGU in the current study is exuding efforts to address the challenges along public management. It is further implied that educational institutions as prime entity in changing the landscape of public management are impinged to restructure the content of the curriculum in public management, reinvent and revitalize the teaching approaches, and forge collaboration with the industry and practitioners towards academe-industry complementation.

Keywords: *public management, Local Government Units, educational sectors*

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1. Introduction

The Philippine Government is on the midst of intractable issues as time unfolds with new challenges. With the changing of times, Local Government Units (LGUs) play a crucial role in the management of these drawbacks. It is averred that the world in which public managers function is vastly different from that contemplated by the early intellectual stalwarts of public administration [1,2]. Public agencies are expected to collaborate with each other, with non-profit organizations and citizen groups; and use modern technology to manage and deliver services strategically.

The potential as well as the challenges of digital technology for re-shaping relationships between governments and their citizens and the demand for socio-economic stability which is thwarted by global health and safety to include climate change concerns make public management more complex.

These complexities are fuelled by the effects of globalization, which mean that international, national and local problems are intertwined to an increasing extent, with implications especially for governments.

As new challenges have arisen and demands on government have increased, the public sector, however,

has often been in a reactive mode – struggling to adapt to a rapidly evolving international, economic, social, technological, and cultural environment. Over the next decade, it will be even more important for governments at all levels to improve their operations so that they can both tackle new problems in new ways and earn the public's trust [3].

Contributory to the improvement of government operations and service delivery is the Ease of Doing Business (EOB) pioneered by the United Kingdom (UK) in the 90's. The Philippine government's adoption of this through its Citizen's Charter under Republic Act No. 9485 otherwise known as Anti-Red Tape Act (ARTA) of 2007 recognizes the positive gains derived from the charters. Thus, the Development Academy of the Philippines launched a program dubbed as "Improving Public Service Delivery, Transparency and Accountability in Local Governance through Citizen's Charter" which was instituted to ensure that government services are responsive to the public's needs [4].

With global trends on E-Government, government's use of information technology to exchange information and services with citizens, businesses, and other branches of government, is regarded as a more efficient manner of managing the public sector. This may be applied in order to improve the internal efficiency as well as the delivery of public services and processes of democratic governance [5].

Public management challenges encompass all the pressing needs and demands of the citizens to be met for a better governance. However, the LGU is not a know-it-all entity but rather an avenue for the collaboration of public agencies and citizen groups. This is in line with the assertion of reference [6] that the purpose of collaborative governance is to generate desired outcomes together that could not be accomplished separately. The LGUs public management challenges are within four focus areas namely: a) Protecting and advancing democracy; b) Strengthening social and economic development; c) Ensuring environmental sustainability and d) Managing technological changes. Considerably, these challenges have significant implications to the educational sector as to how they can inspire action, enhance understanding, connect stakeholders and drive change. This is a challenge in the academe to create common language and communication between universities and stakeholders outside to build understanding, trust and respect among public agencies [7]. Public service education and training may then serve as a conduit to foster the spirit of social cohesion and bridge the capacity gap through knowledge transfer to other sectors.

In this regard, the educational sector for all of its intents and purpose has to rise and carry-out its mission in exercising academic freedom and become a catalyst in resolving public issues and challenges. It is in this premise that the researchers intend to examine and ascertain as to what measures the educational sector can help in facilitating better service delivery of a Local Government Unit in the Philippines.

2. Methodology

The Descriptive Research Design was used in this study as it tried to gather information on the public management challenges as perceived by the respondents during the time of the study.

This study was conducted in a Local Government Unit located in the northern countryside of the Philippines. The number of respondents was determined through G-power. A total of 118 samples were known.

The research instrument was adapted from the study of reference [3]. The instrument covers the determinant of the challenges of LGU along public management and the solutions to address the challenges of LGU along public management. Part I of the questionnaire has four areas with four questions: a) Protecting and advancing democracy; b) Strengthening social and economic development; c) Ensuring environmental sustainability and d) Managing technological changes. Moreover, the solutions contained in the questionnaire covers four areas with three questions: Inspire action, Enhance understanding, Connect stakeholders, and Drive change. In the current study, the reliability of the instrument is set at .796 through Cronbach's alpha. This means that the instrument used in the study is reliable. The gathered data were treated with frequency counts and mean.

3. Results and Discussion

Results in Table 1 present the challenges of a certain LGU in public management along protecting and advancing democracy, strengthening social and economic development, ensuring environmental sustainability, and managing technological changes. The grand mean of 2.9068 indicates that the concerned LGU exudes much better strategies to address the challenges as perceived by the respondents of this study. Peripheral to the parameters as stated above, it can be averred that the concerned LGU is in a state of recalibrating its strategies as indicated by the average means in the given indicators per parameter. This means that much are to be introduced in the systems and operations of the concerned LGU in order to fully combat the perceived challenges in their unit.

Table 1. Challenges of a Local Government Unit along Public Management

Challenges in Public Management	Mean	Description
Protecting and advancing democracy	2.9176	Much better than expected
1. Protect electoral integrity and enhance voter participation	2.9011	Much better than expected
2. Modernize the delivery of public service	2.9891	Much better than expected
3. Develop new approaches to public governance and engagement	2.9239	Much better than expected
4. Advance national interests in a changing global context	2.8901	Much better than expected
Strengthening social and economic development	2.9211	Much better than expected
1. Foster social equity	2.9111	Much better than expected
2. Connect individuals to meaningful work	3.0330	Much better than expected
3. Build resilient communities	2.8587	Much better than expected
4. Advance the nation's long-term financial capabilities	2.9167	Much better than expected
Ensuring environmental sustainability	2.9498	Much better than expected
1. Steward natural resources and address climate change	2.8710	Much better than expected
2. Create modern water systems for safe and sustainable use	2.8837	Much better than expected
3. Sustain environmental protection measures (Ecological solid waste management, pollution control, Greening/reforestation program, among others)	3.1333	Much better than expected
4. Enforce environmental zonal planning and management	2.9670	Much better than expected
Managing technological changes	2.8387	Much better than expected
1. Ensure data security and privacy rights of individuals	2.8602	Much better than expected
2. Make government information technology (IT) ready	2.8817	Much better than expected
3. Adopt measures in implementing IT initiatives	2.7912	Much better than expected
4. Institutionalize feedback mechanisms to improve IT initiatives	2.8352	Much better than expected
Grand Mean	2.9068	Much better than expected

In view of the New Public Management (NPM) scheme, an image of enmeshing a minimal government de-bureaucratization, decentralization, market orientation of public service, contracting out, privatization, performance management, etc. is conjured. These features signify a distinct difference with the usual model of a local government, which embodies a dominant role of the government in the provision of services, hierarchical formation of organization, centralization and so onward [8]. Thus, reinventing the paradigm of public organization is highly wanting: reinventing the field can greatly benefit from "a rapprochement between the administrative sciences and the humanities [9]. Moreover, it is suggested that there is a need to include an agreeable analysis of method of doctrinal change [10] if public management is geared towards the adherence of these organizations with the NPM schemes.

In the case of the current study, it can be gleaned that the LGU where the study is conducted has exuded concordances that is aimed at providing quality services among its stakeholders under the schemes of including new schemes that could revitalize the deliverance of their services. The vouched affordances of the unit are manifestations of its stride of reinventing functions and procedures vis-à-vis their office mandate.

Results in Table 2 present the perceived solutions of a certain LGU in public management along inspire action, enhance understanding, connect stakeholders, and drive change. The grand mean of 3.0672 (*great extent*) indicates that the concerned LGU is in dire need of giving solutions to their perceived challenges in the workplace. This means that much are to be done in the systems and operations of the concerned LGU in order to fully combat the perceived challenges in their unit.

Emphasis is given to the inter-sectoral solution of the section on stakeholders bearing a mean of 3.4066 which is interpreted as *very great extent*. This amplifies that there is a need to boost the connectivity of the LGU to its stakeholders if it wants to become prime practitioner

of change in their locality. In so doing, the LGU may expand its clout of networks here and abroad to come up with the innovations that they want to introduce bearing the baton of change in every system of procedures in their unit.

In light of the NPM scheme, government units need to be "community-owned" if unit wants to be prime in its odd of providing quality service among its clientele [10,11].

Moreover, one of the principles posited in the NPM scheme is geared towards maximizing the contribution of the widest probable figure of people and institutions in the policy-making procedure. In the case of the current study, it is perceived by the respondents that the inter-sectoral mode of connecting the stakeholders is of very great extent. In the light of the foregoing, it is envisaged that the unit will be in a concordance of involving sectoral groups in its planning peripheral to the thrusts and functions of the entity [3,12]. As such, collaboration will be at the helm of providing solutions to the perceived problem in public management. Moreover, a change revisit along the curricular offerings in public management education is also suggested [3,13].

On the other hand, the drive change as a thrust of the unit should consider benchmarking, research and other means as these ways and means put leverage at the center of its courses of actions of innovating long-term commitment for change [3,4,10,14]. Leveraging services and utilizing market-based policies in the delivery of public supplies is paramount to a sustained practice of quality service.

Concomitantly, the change on the landscape of the public management and the education relative thereto must center to the integration of technological advances, deepening social fragmentation, and a responsive and updated curriculum in a bar-none standard. Furthermore, it is underscored that the confluence of such trends has increasingly strained the public sector's capacity to respond to present challenges [7,15].

Table 2. Solutions to Address the Challenges in Public Management

Solutions to Address the Challenges in Public Management	Mean	Description
Inspire action	3.0287	Great Extent
1. Build collaboration between academe and LGU	3.0543	Great Extent
2. Draw sustainability measures for effective collaboration	3.0000	Great Extent
3. Educate and inform stakeholders	3.0444	Great Extent
Enhance understanding	2.9982	Great Extent
1. Conduct or support research to determine what works, identify key innovations, and disseminate effective practices and lessons learned	3.0220	Great Extent
2. Convene conferences and seminars on particular challenges and focus areas	3.0333	Great Extent
3. Create IEC materials	2.9560	Great Extent
Connect stakeholders	3.1522	Great Extent
1. Inter-governmental	3.0435	Great Extent
2. Inter-sectoral	3.4066	Very Great Extent
3. Academicians and practitioners	3.0333	Great Extent
Drive change	3.0598	Great Extent
1. Highlight successful innovations and promote effective practices	3.0110	Great Extent
2. Identify ways to scale up solutions	3.0659	Great Extent
3. Develop action plans and issue recommendations	3.0978	Great Extent
Grand Mean	3.0672	Great Extent

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following are concluded:

1. The LGU needs assistance from the academe to bolster its functions and services for the betterment of its services among its stakeholders;
2. A tripartite partnership among the stakeholders of the LGU is called for to further the deliverance of the functions and services of the agency; and
3. Intersectoral participation is highly needed by the LGU in upscaling the public management landscape in the locale of the study.

5. Implications to Program Delivering Institutions

Impinging the idea that educational institutions as prime entity in changing the landscape of public management, the following are implied:

1. There is need to re-structure the content of the curriculum in public management embodying the NPM scheme with emphasis on management, budget and finance, diversity and inclusion, change attrition, technological amplification and integration;
2. There is a need to reinvent and revitalize the teaching approaches and materials for use in class through research at the forefront of its pedagogical shifts;
3. There is a need to reformulate the extension programs of delivering higher institutions towards the propagation of corporate culture among public entities;
4. There is a need to redirect all educational undertakings in the public management program towards the grounds of transformational education. This will promote the absorptive capacity of the future public managers to promote organizational ambidexterity;
5. There is a need to forge collaboration with the industry and practitioners for immersion purposes. This shall serve as an academe-industry

complementation strategy along program specificity and efficacy.

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