How to govern locally after winning an election: A guidepost

Gaudioso C. Sosmeña, Jr.

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Foreword

The Konrad Adenauer Stiftung is pleased to cooperate with Dr. Gaudioso C. Sosmeña, Jr., Founding Executive Director of the Local Government Development Foundation, now Chair of the Foundation's Board of Trustees, in the publication of this "**How to govern locally after winning an election: A guidepost**."

This publication is timely: The Philippines will have a new set of local officials after the May 2010 elections, who can use this Guidepost. And Konrad Adenauer Stiftung with support of the European Union, has initiated this year, 2010 a 30 months project (2010-2012) **Partnership for Democratic Local Governance in Southeast Asia** which can also use the Guidepost in the implementation of this project in the Southeast Asia Region.

The local governments no doubt will find this publication useful and interesting.

Dr. PETER KOEPPINGER
Resident Representative
Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

May 1, 2010
Makati City

How to locally govern after winning an election: A guidepost
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I. Introduction

Human frailties and weaknesses are obstacles to good governance.

T his Guidepost begins with a discussion of the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of local governments which is important in the adequate understanding of the nature and workings of local authorities.   This beginning, however, should not distract local government practitioners to appreciate the instructive value of this document.

Barbara Tuckman in her book, **The March of Folly**, made the observation that while mankind has made great progress and strides in literature, medicine, music and technology allowing man to travel to the moon and computer command spacecrafts to travel beyond the universe, man has not improved much in the management of human and public affairs including governance.

Tuckman's observation is worth noting in the context of modern times. The fact that the environment of governments is increasingly getting complex is beyond question.   This in turn makes governance a challenge and a complicated process. Climate change, global warming including international terrorism are compounding the Tuckman conclusion.[1]

This overall problem necessitates governmental reforms.   The bold ones will continue to trigger various attempts to resolve these challenges in government and public administration.

The Zen Buddhists have long learnt through meditation that if we will really put our minds into it, we can improve the ways we do things at present.   This philosophy advocates that the human person and institutions can be versatile in their abilities to adapt effectively to a given environment.

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[1] One of Tuckman's book on Asia is **The American Experience in China**

Since there is still a long journey in search for good governance and man is capable of improving how to make things better, a guidepost in governance is useful indeed.

Besides this Introductory Part, there are eight (8) Parts of this publication, which are the following local governance related subjects.

Part 2   Local Governments

This Part provides an explanatory distinction between form and structure of local governments.   This conceptual framework is useful in understanding the influence of form and structure in local policy formulation and decision making among local authorities. Theoretical concepts of local governments are always useful to local government practitioners to understand more the workings of local governments.

Part 3   Purposes of Local Governments

This Part explains the various functions of local governments and its increasing complexities in local governance due to its constantly changing environment.

Part 4   Profile of Political Leadership

This Part describes what are the ideal characteristics of a good political leader essential to local governance.

Part 5   The Art of Governing

This Part suggests some approaches and techniques useful in the practice of good governance and how good governance can be achieved.

Part 6   Executive Legislative Governance Agenda

This Part stresses the importance of establishing a common agenda between the Local Chief Executive and the members of the Legislative Council. A single development agenda is essential in achieving good governance and in the effective implementation of a mutually common governance platform.   It is important to marginalize partisan differences of local political leaders of various

political spectrum. Likewise a local policy audit, which validates the value of local policies, can help in formulating appropriate policies necessary in good governance.

Part 7   Local Government Performance Measurement

This Part suggests three (3) methods how local governments can measure their own performance overtime. The objective of this Part is to advocate the idea that measuring performance will guide local governments in attaining their governmental goals.

Part 8   Revisiting Public Accountability

This Part defines the notion of public accountability and why it is important in attaining good governance. It describes accountability of local officials in the performance of their official duties as mandated by the Constitution and other public laws.

Part 9   Local Politics and Citizens Empowerment

This Part suggests some mechanisms that will facilitate interactive governance such as a Citizens' Charter and establishing a grievance center as links between local governments and the people. This part also explains what substantive empowerment means.

The key focus and primary search in the use of this Guidepost is good governance in local government.

The concept of good governance in sum is the art or style of governing characterized by an awareness and conscious participation of the constituency or the citizenry in making policy decisions that concerned community based interests. This way an interactive relationship and cooperation between the governor and the governed is non-negotiable.

Good governance as viewed by international financial institutions concerns the effective and optimal use of public funds, the eradication of corruption in government and the efficient management of scarce government resources.

Among public administrators, good governance refers to the high performance of public offices.

The same concept is likewise concerned with the behavior of public officials and their public accountability to the polity.

This Guidepost is far from being perfect.   An experienced local government practitioner can easily enrich this document. However, this pioneering work will help those who for the first time are in local governance as well as interest other incumbents who will find some parts of the Guidepost essential to their work environment.

In times when government relevance is raised primarily because public offices are not satisfactorily functional, then political leaders and public administrators are constantly being challenged by an increasingly demanding pluralistic polity.

Urgent then for both central and local governments is to upgrade capacities to respond effectively and predict public interest.

The potential users of this Guidepost also include local authorities in Southeast Asia.   As such, the treatment of this document is generic with minimum reference to any specific country laws on local governments.

Local Governments

Local governments are levels of the governmental system closest to people.

The concept of good governance when applied to local governance needs to be preconditioned with a definition of local governments.

The advocacy of a "precondition definition" is important because local governments are the levels of government closest to the constituency. As such therefore, local governments must exemplify good governance.

The universal definition of local governments is that these are political units the principal characteristic of which is that these local institutions are political subdivisions of a central or state government, thereby subject to its respective supervision. This is the case in a unitary system of government. However, in Federalism, the principle of subsidiarity is very distinct.

Another distinct feature of local governments is their power to tax and raise their own resources. Its officials like governors or mayors are either elected by the electorate or appointed through a process of selection,

Local governments perform both governmental and corporate functions and powers.

To understand more fully how local governments operate knowing its forms and structure is essential.

Forms of local governments are basic as well as crucial in the search for effective local governance.

The study of public policy and politics finds meaning when the forms and structures of local governments are perceived to be important in enhancing the delivery of public services.

<u>Form,</u> when applied to local governments, refers to the type of local governments, i.e. a commission where the legislative and executive powers are fused or one and the same, as contradistinguished from the mayor-council type where some powers are separate and distinct in the local chief executive and the members of the legislative council.

In several countries like the Philippines or Indonesia, the commission type is generally adopted in large cities and metropolitan areas. The mayor-council type is usually found in smaller cities and towns.

<u>Structure</u> of local governments refers to the organizational framework within which local public policy is determined and implemented. Structures not only determine the relationship among local officials but also between local offices and national offices, which have offices at the local level.

Local government structures also balance opposing values found in local administration. The notion of local administration refers to the local offices of central government departments. At times, their administrative culture and values including policies hamper local government operations. Local government structures minimize incursion of central government values over local government administration.

Structure also has an important effect on how decisions are made, coordinated and carried out. Just like any other formal organization, local government structures have both the formal and informal organizations.[2]

The formal structure maybe reduced to a set of laws and organizational chart. The informal structure includes other bodies which affect the formal operations of local governments i.e. public-private associations like political parties, local government associations or non-government organizations.

In describing the structure, authority and power must also be distinguished as well as their overall extent in the local government organization.

Authority is a more formal static term referring to legal ability to make decisions. Competent authority refers to individual officials or offices which are "clothed"

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[2] See Final Report on Asian Development Bank (ADB) T.A. 4778, Manila, 2005

with legality to act or decide in their respective areas of expertise and/or as mandated by law.

Power is a more informal term referring to the critical ability to influence the decision making process in the local government system.

The meaningful dynamics and relevance of local government forms and structures in intergovernmental relations is very real and can be best appreciated in the formulation and implementation of public policies that necessarily require popular acceptance.

Considering current and future challenges local government needs to reevaluate its forms and structures.

Somehow local governments must navigate in search for the most viable options for good governance, in a more technologically oriented and highly differentiated environment in the future.

Figure I
21st CENTURY EXTERNALITIES OF
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS SYSTEM
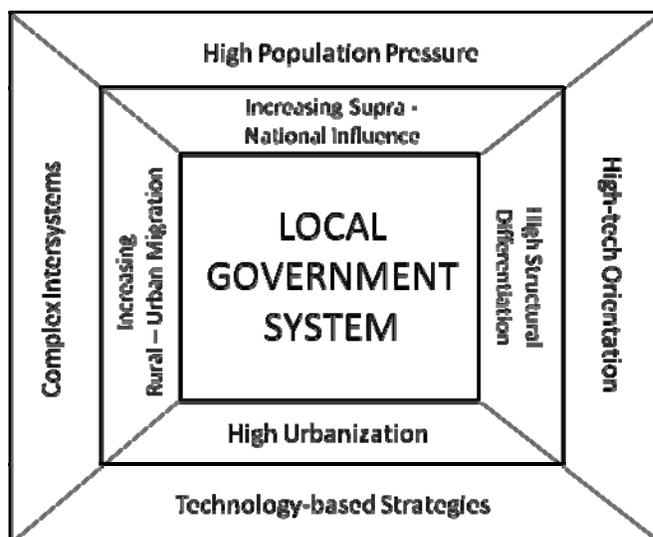
As societies continue to be highly differentiated and with population increasing, local government system is under pressure.   Rapid urbanization, the highly technological environment will force local governments to formulate strategies that will deal with its externalities, which are characterized by increasing complexities.

Purposes of Local Governments

Public institutions are created to achieve a specific or particular purpose.
Local governments perform both corporate and governmental purposes.

In a unitary system, local governments as political subdivisions of the State are crucial cog in the intergovernmental governance system. One of their significant relevance to governance is that local governments are the formal political institutions closest to the people.

As such, therefore, local authorities are tasked to perform essential public functions both administrative and political in character. Some of these functions and purposes are:[3]

1. Interest Articulation

One of the important political roles of local governments is interest articulation. It means that local governments are politically responsible in expressing the aspirations and wishes of their constituencies and bring them to the corridors of power for action or resolution. This particular responsibility of local authorities is one of the hallmarks of good governance and of a democratic society. Interest articulation is also a function of representation. In actual practice, political leaders act as conduit of their constituencies in providing solutions to community problems.

In the real world of politics, the ability of local officials to listen to their constituencies and act accordingly in response to the interests of their communities, is one gauge of a functional political leader. Local political leaders lobbying for the resolution of their constituencies interest is an

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[3] The "**Decentralization and Empowerment**", Local Government Development Foundation (LOGODEF), Manila, 1991.

example. Speaking for and on behalf of the interests of their constituencies in an official function is another example.

2. Service Delivery

The delivery of basic services is one of the primary functions of local governments. Provisions of health services, education or road facilities are examples.

There are three types of public services which the government generally provides.

First, are the <u>local services</u> which are expected from out of the existence of local governments? Municipal roads, local public markets or the efficient use of local taxes collected, illustrate this type of local services.

Second, is what is called <u>shared services</u> which are both the responsibilities of the national and local governments. Examples are education and health services or management and protection of the physical environment. Certain laws may have devolved these responsibilities, but sharing of responsibilities still exists.

Third, is what is classified as <u>national services</u>. Examples are national highways countrywide, construction and management of airports and other large physical infrastructures such as telephone communication facilities or power line. The efficient and effective delivery of these three services rests on a functional management system in all levels of government.

3. Economic Development Promotion

The promotion of local economic development is a corporate function of local governments. This corporate power has not been optimally exercised due to a continuing debate as to what extent should local governments be in business. Promotion of local economic development will lead to economic productivity in the communities and contribute to the accumulation of economic wealth of the country. It will also help local authorities achieve financial independence and political freedom from the central government.

Some economic development strategies may require the participation of the private sector including the use of domestic and foreign investments.

4. Green Governance

This is an emerging responsibility of local governments. "Greening" refers to the importance of conserving and protecting the natural environment. Climate change and global warming will be a more serious challenge in the future for local governance.

A set of colors is used to identify specific environmental programs. Local governments many initiate reforestation or planting trees identified as "green" activities.

The "brown" color may refer to efforts to minimize pollution and related environmental problems in urban areas.

Cleaning of coastal areas or sea shores are identified as "blue" activities.

5. Disaster Mitigation and Risk Management

Like the protection of the natural environment, disaster mitigation and risk management should be considered as a priority function or responsibility of local authorities.

Vulnerability to earthquakes, flooding and typhoons will force local authorities to be predictive in making polices and preparations before a disaster occurs. The ability to manage risks is central to saving lives during a disaster and after the disaster. Ideally, local governments should have a Disaster Mitigation Ordinance that defines the roles of individual officials before a disaster, during a disaster and after the disaster.

The responsibility of local governments to prepare for disaster and the need to develop the ability to predict risks should also include the element of local security considerations.

6. Development of Self-Reliant Citizenry

One of the most important pillars of democratic society is an empowered constituency and a self-reliant citizenry. Under these circumstances the local governments need not dip itself with issues and problems, which the citizens can take care of themselves.

Empowering self-reliant citizenry results or triggers the operationalization of the concept of local autonomy and the principle of subsidiarity.

However, the purposes of local governments continues to change and increase over time.

Policy of government decentralization can either increase or reduce the purposes or responsibilities of local authorities.

Areal decentralization or the creation of parastatal bodies operating region wide can alter the traditional purposes of local governments like economic development planning.

Likewise, degovernmentalization or delegation which involves the transfer of some local functions or purposes to non-governmental organizations or to the private sector reduces functions of local governments but also simplify local government operations. An example is privatizing janitorial services or security arrangements. Jail management can also be privatized.

In small isolated communities which take the initiative with or without help and get organized for their own development is an example of self-reliant activities. This type of decentralization called complementation can occur in very isolated communities where assistance of government is negligible. Complementation is the fifth accepted category of decentralization models.

The local action and the spirit of the people in these communities to mobilize themselves for their own development embodies to a great extent the essence of decentralization and local autonomy as a process and as an objective.

There are intertwining factors both formal and informal that color or influence purposes of local governments besides its legal mandate. Culture and tradition including community norms and values are some of these factors.

Sometimes corruption characterizes the delivery of public service. While politics may theoretically mean the greatest good for the greatest number, in some instances, it is the greatest good to local politicians' families and friends. The selfish political culture of some politicians denies good politics' noble intention.

Profile of Political Leadership

A tree is known by its fruits and man by his deeds.

The citizenry electing their political leaders through the exercise of suffrage or political right, sometimes called the second generation of rights, is a universally acceptable mode of choosing a political leader in democratic societies.

However, this process of electing local political leaders has a loophole. It does not guarantee that those who will win in an election know how to govern effectively. There is a big difference between winning an election and governing.

Money and personal charisma can help greatly a political candidate to win. But the winner might not possess the necessary knowledge and skills to govern, no missionary zeal to serve or the right attitude for public service.

In short, winning in election is easier than governing which is characterized by complex challenges, which require both brain and skills.

What then are the qualifications of a local political leader?

It is said that political leaders must be righteous men who have visions. Leaders who possess private virtues, which are the foundation of public virtues, which in turn is the strength of a strong republican government.

Local government is best governed by enlightened political leaders, who can articulate inspiringly to the citizenry, their alternatives to the *status quo* not simply in broad strokes but the big picture.

The local governments need political leaders, who are inspiring, clear and challenging, devoted to excellence and who honor the past but work for the future.[4]

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[4] See **Breaking the Cocoon: Bureaucracy Reborn,** Local Government Development Foundation (LOGODEF), Manila 1995

This type of local political leaders can expect and is entitled more accountability from the local bureaucracy than a leadership that corrupts and perverts political power to the detriment of the public.

Real politics is the art of government and governance. It is the noblest of all arts, if intended to mean the rational use of political power for the public good.

Politics, however, tend to corrupt political leaders and other local officials as well, since those who could draw upon such power risk losing their moral bearings.

That is why before power is conferred, the first relevant question to ask is whether such power is necessary for the public good. If the confirmation of power is necessary, the next question is how to safeguard the conferred power from being corrupted.

From this definition of what politics is, one can learn a lesson on good government and public accountability.

A former speaker of the House of Representatives, United States Congress, described what is a functional political leader. Speaker Gingrich mentioned the characteristics of a functional political leader as follows:

1. One who has the ability to <u>listen </u>to his or her constituency. Bring to the corridors of power the problems of the constituency, who can provide corrective measures.

2. One who has the <u>humility to learn</u> from what he/she heard.

3. One who is <u>willing to help</u>. After all helping is part of governing.

4. One who has the <u>propensity to act</u> and does not hesitate

5. Above all else a functional political leader <u>must lead</u>. One who is elected to position of power should lead instead of merely following and waiting.[5]

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[5] Part of a speech of Speaker Newt Gingrich during a luncheon in Washington D.C. in a Conference of the Advisory Committee of the Protection of the Sea (ACOPS) in the Summer of 1994

The governance continuum of an elected political leader starts from the time he takes his oath of office until he is separated from public service.

In his official journey until the end of his term, he will encounter many challenges.

First: he may ask himself whether he has the political will to muster his brain and skill to lead his constituency in changing the *status quo*.

Second: is he up to the challenges and complexities of local governance during his time?

Third: will he use his power for the public good and not corrupting it?

Local politicians must bear in mind that power is of an encroaching nature.

The motivation of political leaders who are concerned with good governance who really serve the public has the ambition to be famous.

In contrast are the contemporary politicians who sought not virtue but position, not honor but affluence, not fame but celebrity.

No higher honor is due an enlightened politician than fame.

Where do you find such rare breed of men and women? Fortunately, they do exist. They are all around standing and waiting to serve in their own time.

The Art of Governing

Politics is the Art of Governance.

Part 4 of this Guidepost described the profile of political leaders who can propel local government productivity and deserving of respect of the citizenry. Part 8 – Revisiting Public Accountability - is another connectivity on the legal and moral obligations in the art of governing.

In this part of the Guidepost what will be useful for discussion are administrative and technical skills including management tools, which are facilitative in the art of governing.

Newly elected local officials generally possess ideas of what they hope to accomplish during their terms.

Some develop their governance platform in clear language with development goals and objectives properly defined. Others keep their governance platform in their minds with no visible roadmaps of how to achieve them.

These two instances will lead one to ask the basic question: How does one govern or master the Art of Governing.

There are several useful guides for those who are administrators or managers of local governments.

1. **Governance Platform**

    It is a package of intention that an incumbent local official wish to complete and realize during his incumbency.

    A governance platform is also a roadmap designed to guide a local government administrator on how to attain preplanned objectives.

Theoretically, a governance platform may contain economic, political and social objectives intended for the benefit of the citizenry.

General experience will indicate that a good governance platform is usually an output of a series of consultation and dialogue with government technicians, political parties and the citizenry.

One manifestation of a governance platform is a visible documented plan for development.

2. **Territorial Scanning**

This is a step taken to explore the local government environment with the purpose of knowing the challenges, the resources available including the limitations and potentials of the local government territory.

Territorial scanning is a benchmarking exercise to find out where a local government stands at a particular time.

Data and information of the strengths and weaknesses of the local government territory are crucial in formulating the final governance platform.

Environmental or territorial scanning can be expensive. The optimal use of multisectoral data collected is highly advisable. A historical data of the local government territory is also strategic in long range development planning by local authorities.

3. **Data Banking**

The management and storage of computerized data and information about the local government is a must not only in development planning but also in investment promotion.

It is likewise a base for information power. Data about population growth rate and relating the same to service requirements is important. What taxes an investor has to pay or available skilled manpower including

power resource availability are essential information in local economic development.

These are data that are locally available but not usually processed. What is needed is to manage these data and information for optimal use.

The availability of economic, social and political data in a local government and its importance to development planning cannot be overemphasized

4.   Organizational Analysis and Management Planning

Good housekeeping is important in local government administration. This is an inward look into the capacities of local governments to perform its functions and powers.

One way of initiating organizational analysis is to undertake a SWOT. [6] Analysis of the strength and weaknesses of a local government as an organization is instructive in any plan to undertake organizational reform.

The functional link between organization and management can be achieved with the adoption of the international standardization for organization (ISO).

This link aims to develop an efficient and effective organization as well as quality management that can easily respond to its changing environment of public institutions.

Historically, local governments have been primarily organized to perform governmental functions and the exercise of its corporate functions and powers somehow relegated to the backburner.

It is said that local governments will continue to face age old problems like lack of water, solid waste management or problems in health. But all of these problems can be better resolved if modern tools of management

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[6] SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. See Local Government Capability Building Handbook, Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung (KAS)-Local Government Development Foundation (LOGODEF), Manila, 1991.

like computers can be a component in organizational and management reforms.

Digital techniques like geographic information system (GIS) or global positioning system (GPS) are commonly used in development planning among local authorities.

These development planning techniques are useful in such project as water banking. Robotics and computerized gadgets are currently being minuterized to allow mobile use of such digital gadgets i.e. the Personal Communication Network (PCN).

Assistory efforts in internal housekeeping in local government administration are the conduct of management audit.

There are guidelines and instructions that are useful as to how institutional effectiveness can be achieved, such as:

Twelve Guide Actions in Institutional Management and Housekeeping in Local Government Administration

1. Review the legal mandate of local governments.

2. In organizing local government offices, follow the cardinal organizational principle that organizational structures follows function.

3. Set Goals, Policies and Programs (Governance Platforms).

4. Design capacity building program (CBT) for the local bureaucracy.

5. Task individual staff with clear and specific responsibilities.

6. Determine the necessity management tools useful in local governance.

7. Decentralize the appropriate functions and powers of the local government offices to the appropriate operating units.

8. Install an Information Management System.

9. Manage Local Government Budget optimally.

10. Design a Performance Measurement System.

11. Develop a Monitoring and Evaluation System.

12. Perform Management Audit of the internal procedures and management system of the various local government offices.

5. **Optimal Utilization of Resources**

Two essential resources available in local government are the local bureaucracy and funds for development.

An efficient bureaucracy that manages the service delivery system assures adequate services to the citizenry.

However, public personnel at the local government level needs to be continuously capacitated. So a sustained competency building program is necessary.

Adequate local fund sources are the life and breathe of local autonomy. Many local authorities have very high financial dependency from the central government.

Local government administrators need to resolve this specific issue by both advocating a more favorable intergovernmental fiscal relation and increasing local fund sources by increasing local revenues from non-tax and tax sources. Local economic development projects can generate local economic productivity that may spur local government income.

Public-private partnership may also decrease local government expenditures or mobilize revenue generation.

6.   Program Administration

Program administration is practiced best if it begins with several goal definitions. Setting goals is important in providing a roadmap in program implementation.

There are several variables which are important in goal setting and in program administration.

a. Program and goals must be feasible

A feasibility study is a must if complex programs are to succeed and goals attained.

b. Both programs and goals must design a measurement system

Goals or programs must be measurable. This part of establishing a benchmark is necessary**.**

c. Institutional requirements properly organized

Organizations implementing programs should be properly organized to achieve efficiency and effectiveness. An option on designing institutional requirements for a project is a matrix (ad-hoc) organization which can be collapsed after project completion.

d. Adequate funds and resources

Financial capacity is another controlling variable in program administration. "Financial anemia" is not supportive in quickly completing a program that requires a sizeable amount of funds. Borrowing funds is of course an option. There are several loan windows available for local governments.

e. Program flexibility

Program implementation can be phased over a given period of time. This is usually resorted if funds are not available or if each part of the program or project can stand alone and operate independently.

Program parts, which can function or operate without waiting for the whole program to be finished, can be rationally implemented ahead.

One more variable which is important in program administration is alliance building and maintaining a policy of interactive governance. Both can provide strong support to program administration in local governments.

In some cases, alliance building is not practiced or resorted to because of the territorial behavior of some local officials, who can not appreciate cooperation beyond their respective political jurisdictions.

The art of governing also include such complex areas as:

1.	Greening the Environment

	Because of climate change and global warming, the protection of the physical environment also means protecting water sources, the preservation of the fauna and flora in the territory thereby maintain an ecological balance.

2.	Asset Management

	Local authorities should encourage their residents to paint their buildings and houses. This will improve health and sanitation in the community. The preservation of historical sites should be part of asset management to promote local tourism and preserve the history of the locality.

3.	Advocate development beyond the singular jurisdiction of one local government territory.

	These create interlocal cooperation between and among two or more local governments, thereby form a much larger investment area for foreign investors or locators. This action is more in the exercise of the

corporate powers of local governments, which should be supported by the central government.

4. Consolidate or merge local governments

    The opposite of this concept is the fragmentation of existing local governments to suit the wishes of politicians who want their own political kingdom through gerrymandering.

    Using 2009 price index, the costs of creating new cities, municipalities and provinces per estimate made from the cost of conducting plebiscite up to the first year of operations are as follows:[7]

    a. Provinces   -   1.2 billion
    b. Cities   -   9.5 million
    c. Municipalities   -   7.5 million

    Fragmentation of local governments has no strategic value. Instead, the result would be the creation of financially weaker local governments.

5. Develop institutional capability to predict and formulate anticipatory policies

    Government in general, central or local, are reactive institutions. Their responses generally are after the fact.

    The local governments need to develop their capacity to predict.

    In the study of public policy, policy analysts say that the present is the product of the past, and the present will control or influence the future. It means that local governments need to formulate the anticipatory or predictive policies and thereby be able to govern well and be predictively informed.

    Some strategies or techniques on how local governments can improve their capacities to predict are:

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[7] See Fragmentation vs. Consolidation, The Case of Philippine Local Governments, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS)-Local Government Development Foundation (LOGODEF) March, 2005

1. Extrapolation Techniques;
2. Scenario Building Strategy; and
3. Use of Delphi.

In using Delphi as a strategy to predict effectively involves the consultation with experts and the use of their perceptions in interpreting possible occurrences of an event and their potential consequences.

As the reader goes through the pages of Part 5, it will be clear that governing effectively requires knowledge management and honing skills.

The art of governing will continue to be a lesson for those who want to serve the public with honor and distinction.

Figure 2.

Schematic Presentation

Of the

Concept of Interactive Governance
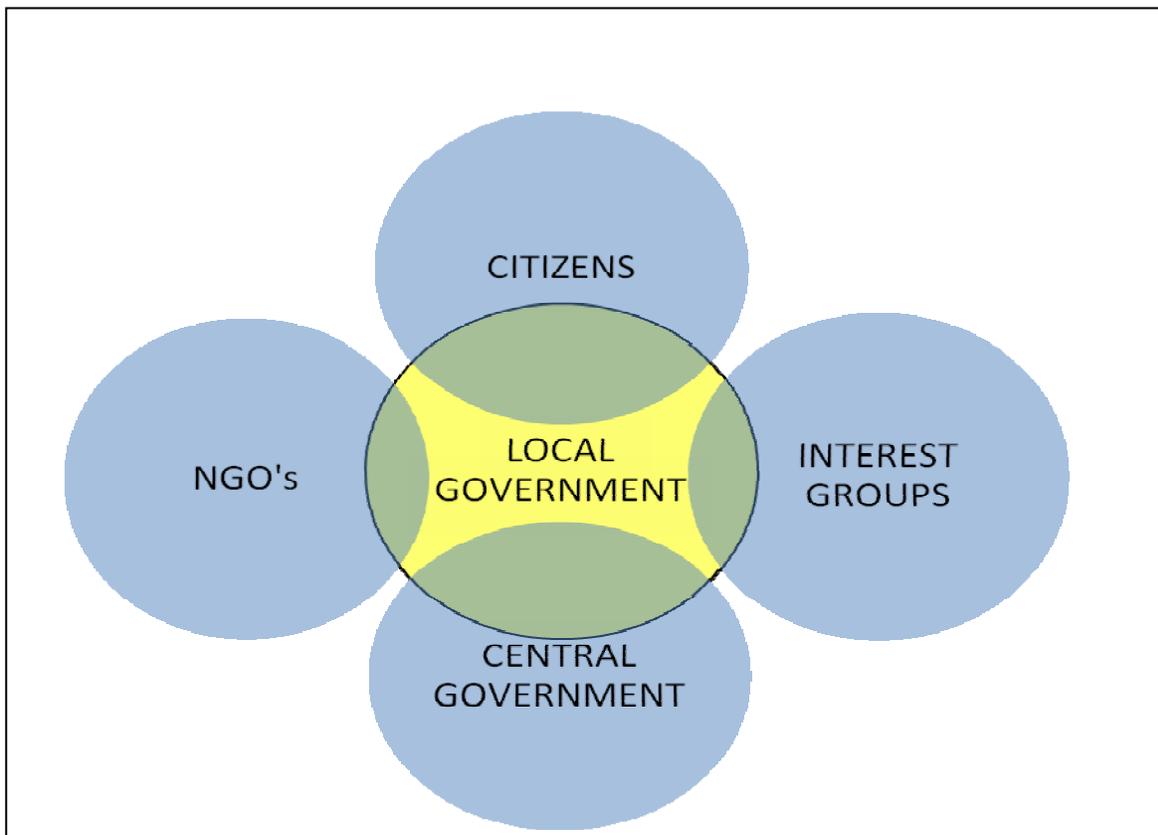
There are several ways where the citizens can actively participate in democratic government. Some basic examples are:

1.   Citizens duly elect their local political leaders;

2.   Citizens participate with their local governments in formulating the government platform;

3.   Citizens participate in collective policy making meetings;

4.   Citizens participate in resolving local and public issues; and

5.   Citizens participate accordingly as part of the power hierarchy in society.

These are examples of how citizens can participate in local governance.

Executive-Legislative Governance Agenda

Local policy making is a dual responsibility of the local chief executive and the legislative council.

1.   Forging a Common Program Goal

Forging a common program of action and local policy making are dual functions and responsibilities of both the local chief executive and the local legislative council. When local policies and programs of action are agreed upon by both local chief executive and the council members, the mutual agreement reached serves as the guidepost for governance in a locality.

In local governments when the local chief executive and the council members are of the same political party, or if most members of the council have the same political party as the local chief executive, policy making or legislating ordinances generally do not encounter major obstacles.

However, in situations where political parties differ between the local chief executive and council members, impasse in the approval of urgent legislative measures can occur.

In this instance, a local chief executive, whose program can be delayed by the inaction of the council members, is called to exercise his leadership. An option is to negotiate with members of the council for a mutually acceptable agreement. After all it is said that politics whether national or local is the art of compromise.

A set of common and mutually agreed program goals including tacit agreement between the local chief executive and the council members, as to how all these can be effectively implemented and goals achieved, is primordial.

Any working relationship between the local chief executive and the local legislative council that is not grounded on a cooperative partnership will not work and is likely bound to fail.

2.   Budget Appropriation and the Oversight Function

The Local Legislative Council approves the local government budget with the following conditions:

a.   Budget should not exceed estimated income;
b.   All statutory obligations be included in the budget; and
c.   Personnel services should not exceed the 45-55 percent limitations.

Other expenses contained in the approved local budget are deemed duly authorized after the budget approval.

There is, however, no local tradition where the oversight function of the local budget, primarily by the legislative council and the local chief executive, is effectively exercised to improve the local budget process.

After the budget is approved and budget allocation to all local government offices is made, the legislative council as a whole lost its "handle" of the budget and how the budget appropriation is spent.

Monitoring expenditure through the oversight function is important in finding out whether agency program goals are achieved efficiently and effectively.

Analysis of local budget will aid the local governments formulate their local fiscal policies wisely and in addition establish efficient financial management procedures.

The local government budget is the most important tool in program planning. Program execution is made easier once funds are made available and specific expenditures are properly defined.

3.   Local Policy Making and Policy Audit

Public policy is an essential instrument in government administration. It is a purposive course of action or inaction chosen by public authorities to address a given problem or interrelated set of problems.

There are three essential guide questions in formulating public policies. These are:

a.   Are the policies to be formulated consistent with the <u>Constitution</u> and existing laws?

Public policies must be based on public laws and the Constitution.

b.   Are the policies to be formulated in accordance with <u>good public management?</u>

Public policies must be within the time honoured principles of efficiency, effectiveness and economy in government administration. These principles are imperative more so if the public coffers are dwindling.

c.   Are the policies to be formulated <u>politically feasible</u>?

Public policies must not only inspire the local government bureaucracy, it should also be able to catch the imagination of the political leaders and thereby attain policy ownership among those who are concerned in the formulation and implementation of such policies.

Pertinent to this question of political feasibility is whether or not the leadership is right and the time is right. Political feasibility may require both the right leader and the right time before a policy is implemented.

A local policy designed to achieve a particular objective and purpose can be validated insofar as its inherent worth is concerned through environmental scanning and constituent consultation.

Optimal policies are based on information power. Scanning the policy environment is an essential approach in reaching an objective.

On the other hand, without policy decision, local officials will be forced to "muddle through" as they face everyday challenges.

Experience in general in local government administration suggests that there is no systematic appreciation of public policies as a crucial tool in public management.

The lack of local data as a policy base and the absence of a research tradition are the reasons for such inadequacies in the process of effective policy making.

Local policies can be thoroughly evaluated in three approaches:[8]

    a. Policy analysis

       Policy analysis refers to an examination or analysis of policies as a purposive course of action or inaction by public authorities to address a given problem or interrelated set of problems.

       Policy analysis assists policy makers determine the most optimal policy among a given set of policy alternatives.

       There are several approaches in policy analysis which includes:

       1. Analycentrical approach;
       2. Policy process approach; and
       3. Meta policy approach.

    b. Policy assessment

       This is a process to determine in measurable terms the value and utility of public policies; approaches which include performance based assessment and criteria referred assessment.

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[8] See "Local Policy Audit" in Strategic Studies Council, Policy Papers, Vol. 4 Local Government Development Foundation (LOGODEF), Manila, 2008.

c. Policy audit

This is a process or an evaluation of policies in general in order to ascertain the validity and reliability of specific policy.

The goal of an audit is to express an opinion or observation of a policy under evaluation based on performance or test.

Policy audit is much practical in this Guideposts. A policy audit is an evaluation of policies in general in order to ascertain the <u>validity</u> and <u>reliability</u> of a specific policy.

The goal of an audit is to express an opinion or observation of a policy under evaluation based on performance or test basis.

However, due to practical problems attendant to the process of evaluation, policy audit seeks to provide primarily and mainly reasonable assurance that an opinion or observation of a specific policy is free from substantive error.

That is why in the audit process statistical sampling is often adopted. This type of audit process is influenced both by quantitative and quality factors.

Relevant to this bifocal evaluation process of public policies, is the possible application of the axiomatic theory in policy audit. This theory argues that sustained occurrences of similar events or frequency of one single activity is a much more accurate empirical evidence to support a conclusion than tons of statistical data.

There are some thirteen sectors in local government administration, where established policies are advisable. A local policy audit framework can be established as follows:

Local Sector	Purpose/Objectives	Policy Form
Administrative Code	Guide in Local Internal Administration	Executive Order or Codified Local Laws/Ordinances
Code of Ordinances	Guide to Effective Local Legislation	Codified Ordinances
Local Revenue Code	Local Tax Administration Guide	Comprehensive Compilation of Local Tax Laws
Local Investment Code	Investment Guide for Investors	Code of Local Economic Policies
Environment Code	Guide on Conserving and Protecting the Local Environment	Compilation of National & Local Laws on Local Environment Management
Traffic Management Code	Maintain order in the use of local roads and safety management	Compilation of National Laws and Traffic Ordinances
Health Code	Protect Local Population from Diseases/Formulation of Community Health Program	Rule/Regulation on community sanitation contained in local ordinances
Land Use Code	Regulations in the proper use of land and physical plains, zoning rules, etc.	Compilation of Executive Orders and Ordinances
Public Market Code	Regulations in the management of public markets including abattoir	Compilation of Executive Orders and Ordinances
Sanitation and Drainage Code	Rationalizing solid waste management and the management of canals/drainage system	Mix of local and national laws and ordinances
Water Code	Efficient management of water as a resource	Mix of local and national laws and ordinances
Local Security Code	Local policies concerning public order and safety	Local ordinances National Government Regulations
Disaster Mitigation Code	Guide in Mitigating Disaster	Responsibilities of local officials defined
Social Services Code	Social services assistance	Code on social services

Formulation of the right public policies is critical in the search for the "relevant" government in an increasingly complex environment. Good governance will require more and more responsive public policies, as local governments attempt to respond to the rising expectations of their constituencies.

4.   Avoidance and Marginalization of Partisan Issues

Political differences are strong stumbling blocks in the constructive process of local legislation.   These exist where partisan issues and political differences are not resolved to the detriment of the public good.   At times, these differences are aggravated by lack of communication and inadequate knowledge and information of the subject at issue.

A major key to effective local legislation is capability of the legislative secretary and the staff.   Sometimes the manner of formulating the agenda, ordinance, or a resolution either triggers understanding or misunderstanding, which can be the beginning of partisan issues.

The standard practice, as in the case of the Philippines, is that the legislative agenda is given to the council members four to five days before a scheduled council session.

This practice does not provide enough time for the council members to study seriously the subject matters in the Council agenda.

This is one reason why the quality of ordinances and resolutions in the local councils is particularly low or nil.

A longer time to study the agenda will allow the members of the council to request the secretary for more information on the subject or what options are available if one or more council member take the "con" or opposite position of a public issue.

More information also means fully understanding an issue brought to the council for Resolution.

More time and more information will allow exchange of information and discussion of alternatives in committee meetings or caucuses prior to council deliberation.

Avoidance and marginalization of partisan issues in the process of local legislation is possible through:

1. Full understanding of the issue at hand by accumulating enough information as basis for rational decision making;

2. Where feasible or necessary, compromise or negotiate for the greatest good for the greatest number; and

3. Use "people pressure" to resolve partisan issues in the Council.

After all, "people pressure" is philosophically justified in the truism that the authority of government comes from the people. One of the common misconceptions of the man in the street is the belief that once government officials have been elected and already in power, there is nothing the citizens can do if these officials misbehave. Every citizen needs to be politically educated of their rights and powers how to counteract misbehaviour in public service. Certain laws allow a system of redress against erring local officials.

The unfortunate thing in this regard is if the citizenry default from their constitutional and legal rights to correct wrong-doings of public officials. Complete avoidance of partisan issues in legislation and politics can be difficult. But marginalizing partisan issues can be easier and must be encouraged among disputants.

However, among intelligent and rational politicians, the resolutions of many political issues are very possible. Political polarization should be avoided to achieve good governance.

Local Government Performance Measurement

A measurement system is essential in public management.

1. Concept of Performance Measurement

Measuring performance of local governments has been a global exercise for some time. This concept is used to determine the "health" of local governments including their productivity.

Measuring performance of local authorities is also used to gauge whether program objectives are achieved or determining the optimal use of scarce public resource.

There are some 35 known approaches or methods of measurement, depending on what is to be measured in local governance. Indicators of the performance of local governments have been a continuing interest in different countries. This interest has been manifested through studies and/or projects on performance measurement and in development indicators for adoption of such for implementation by national, state and local governments.

In 1998, the City of Seattle (Washington) undertook a project on indicators and published a report entitled "1998 Indicators of Sustainable Community." Using a participatory approach, an Indicators Task Team of 30 volunteers, was constituted from a list of 300 citizen leaders of different ages, culture and lifestyles. The Team identified 99 possible indicators, which were subjected to close scrutiny. Subjected through a winnowing process, out of these original indicators, forty (40) were finally selected. A "Community Report Card" based on these indicators was developed which citizens may fill out to assess the state of "health" of Seattle.

Also in the United States, the National Center for Public Productivity (NCPP) of Rutgers University, Newark, New Jersey, compiled Performance Measurement Manuals which provided the concepts, theories and general guidelines on performance measurement for federal, state and local governments as well as non-profit organizations. This compilation covers those in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

Of particular interest is the NCPP's "a Brief Guide for Performance Measurement in Local Government," designed to assist local government managers, elected officials and citizens in developing performance measurement systems. The Manual explains the (a) uses and values of performance measurement systems; (b) how such a system operates; and (c) a simple step-by-step process for developing a performance measurement system.

In Ontario, Canada, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing published a Handbook on Performance Measurement under its Municipal Performance Measurement Program (MPMP). The MPMP requires Ontario municipalities to measure and report to taxpayers their service delivery performance.

However, it is stressed that the Handbook is to serve only as an advisory guide that provides information for reporting municipal performance measurements.

The MPMP is a dynamic process of defining and refining performance measures that are relevant to municipalities. As of 2000, the MPMP had already come up with 40 performance measures in ten core municipal service areas.

In New Zealand, the Local Government Act of 1974 requires local authorities to report annual performance against targets by adopting and using indicators which must address quality, quantity, timeliness, and cost effectiveness that are measurable and policy relevant with the application of local wisdom.

New Zealand used performance indicators for environmental management, which adhered to the following guidelines:

    (a) Indicators must be measurable with available technology;
    (b) Indicators must be measurable at reasonable cost;
    (c) Indicators must consider local knowledge and wisdom; and
    (d) Indicators must be policy relevant.

In Australia, most local government units have adopted performance indicators to measure their performance in the delivery of services to their constituencies. The performance measurement of local government units was made through local councils. Each council has its own set of performance indicators and service standards. Australian federal law requires that the national, state, and local governments must evolve their own performance indicators and service standards.

In the United Kingdom (England and Wales), a paper discussing Local Performance Indicators states that performance measurement has been used widely since the 1980s to improve the quality and responsiveness of public service. Individual local councils with the help of the Audit Commission developed indicators on the performance of local councils, which are the governing bodies of local governments.

In Wales, the National Assembly promulgated Order 2001, which is called the Local Government Best Value Performance Indicators, which was enforced on April 1, 2001. It required local governments to measure their performance by referring to a list of indicators contained in a table categorizing these indicators according to functions such as corporate governance, education, social services, housing, environmental services, transport, planning, environmental health and trading standards, cultural and related services, housing benefit and council tax benefit, cross-cutting community safety indicators.

The Urban Governance Initiative (TUGI) developed a set of report cards for Good Governance as a tool to promote and facilitate genuine public participation, while at the same time bridging the communication gap and promoting cooperation between key actors within the city. The report card lists 16 positive references and indicators of progress.

The Report Card developed and used in Bangalore, India was patterned after a student's Report Card. Given the diffused and unsystematic feedback of the performance of government and its functionaries, a Report Card would provide a formal and periodic performance evaluation system for local governments. The Report Card enables people who use specific public services to give grades on categories of performances.[9]

2. Types of Measurement Tools

In the Philippines, there are three types of measuring local government performance.

a)   The Local Government Performance Measurement System

The Local Government Performance Measurement System (LGPMS) is an official measurement system regularly conducted by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) of the Philippine government. It consists of collecting extensive criteria on how local governments are delivering basic services, how they are protecting the physical environment, health conditions of communities and local government efforts to mobilize revenues including the promotion of local investments.

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[9] See Measuring Local Government Performance, Konrad Adenaeur Stiftung (KAS)-Local Government Development Foundation (LOGODEF), Manila, 2004

b)   Use of Service Standards and Per Capita Budget

National government standards for certain services can be too expensive for local governments to comply or follow. For examples

 - thirty-five (35) students per classroom or forty (40) gallons of water daily per household.

In the use of service standards, as advocated by the Local Government Development Foundation (LOGODEF), the applicable services criteria are Adequacy, Responsiveness, Equity, Appropriateness, Timeliness, Effectiveness and Efficiency. Figure 3. depicts the criteria as dimensions of a local government delivery system. Each of these criteria is described briefly:

a.   Adequacy – This criterion refers to the level of satisfaction that the local government service is able to achieve with respect to the service goals, the perceived outcome in the community as well as the expectations of the constituencies. A local government service is considered adequate if the effect of the service becomes generally acceptable to the service managers and the people in a local government.

b.   Responsiveness- This criterion is manifested by a service if it directly and actually meets the needs and/or problems of the target clientele. This is a prime attribute of the service that is client oriented.

c.   Equity-This criterion is concerned with the fairness and justness in accessing a service and in the enjoyment of resultant benefits by all constituents regardless of economic and social circumstances. That service is made available to the least that is served should be a paramount concern of local governments.

d.   Appropriateness-This is concerned with properly fitting and matching a service to solve a prevailing problem or to meet

a need consistent with the values and norms of the community in a local government.

e.   Timeliness – The criterion refers to prompt delivery of the service to the constituents at the time such service is needed. Local governments therefore should provide services to their constituencies without unwarranted delay. For instance, in education, it will be timely to address the shortage of classrooms prior to the start of the school year. A proactive stance may forestall the need or the problem from happening. It is said that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

f.   Effectiveness – A criterion according to which a delivered service results in maximum of a valued outcome. For instance, if the valued outcome is a 24-hour availability of potable running water in a municipality, then effectiveness will be gauged as to the extent to which this valued outcome has been achieved. If water is actually available on a 24-hour basis, then the service is 100% effective. If availability is only 12 hours per day, then water service is only 50% effective.

g.   Efficiency – A criterion based on the minimization of the cost of inputs but maximization of the outputs, which emanate from such inputs. The important thing to be considered here is the correct approach, strategy and methodology. Another approach is the minimization of wastage of resources that are utilized in the delivery of the service.

Figure 3
Good Characteristics of a Local Government Delivery System

What local governments can do is determine the level of services affordable to them given their level of technology. This means that local government can develop their own service standards based on what they can afford.

As their income increase and their level of technology improve, local governments can improve their own standard of services hoping to at least approximate the national service standards.

One pioneering indicator of the budgeting performance of local governments is the *per capita budget*. Per capita is the Latin term for "by heads." It is a measurement that is presented in terms of units per person, as opposed to a total aggregate figure.

Using Philippine experience in this regard the per capita budget can be illustrated as follows:

Computation Formula of a Sample Local Budget

1. Total Local Government Budget	Php 400,000,000.00
2. Maximum Allowable Personnel Salary Percentage – 55% of Total Budget (The man-dated ceiling for Personal Services)	220,000,000.00 (55% of P400,000,000.00)
3. Balance of the Budget after deducting Item No. 2 above which is for development and service delivery	180,000,000.00 (45% of 400,000,000.00)
4. Local Government Population	200,000
5. Balance of Budget (No. 3) divided by total population	900** Per capita amount In one year

Balance of the budget after Personnel Services (Php 180,000,000.00) over population (200,000) will be Php 900 per person in one year. Further analysis of the Php 900 per capita is that the same amount will still be broken into such expenses as health, public markets, parks and recreation, and medicine which are expected from out of the

existence of local governments which indicate that the service delivered are insignificant.

In the long, run, with the existing constraints and financial limitations of local authorities, local government leaders will be forced to review their capabilities to deliver services and spur local development.

The per capita budget analysis will be a useful tool to initiate such a review.

What may come out as possible options for local authorities to improve their service delivery and increase per capita budget for its constituencies is either to reduce the personnel services expenditure in their annual budget or increase the income level or revenues of local governments. Another option is to "degovernmentalize" certain local services expected out of local governments.

The service standards and per capita budget can be used in multi-year planning of service requirements in correlation with the population growth rate of a locality.

c)   Citizens Satisfaction Ratings

The third method in determining the extent of the performance of the city is to use the Citizens Satisfaction Rating.

Through random sampling and stratified population distribution and location, a series of questions can be asked how the citizens in general are rating or evaluating delivery of basic services like sanitation, garbage collection or health services. Any type of services expected from out of the existence of the city government and how these services are managed and delivered as rated by the citizenry is a good evaluation of city performance and is likewise a good performance measurement technique.

The local administrator's office in cooperation with the Local Budget Department and the Local Development Planning Department can

initiate a study as to the feasibility of adopting any of all these three methods as analytical tools in measuring performance of the city government.

A performance measurement system for local government needs to be adopted by all departments and offices subject to the approval of the Local Chief Executive and legitimized by the Local Legislative Council. There are no hard and fast rules on how often a survey can be conducted. The ideal frequency is for every semester.

3. Deficit and Net Gains in Governance

The use of any of these three approaches or a combination thereof will provide local officials either the "governance deficit" or what is lacking in their administration. The "net gains" is a measurement of the positive indication of satisfaction of the performance by their local government administration.

The performance indicators developed to measure performance will refer to legal edits like the Local Government Code (Philippines) of what are legally and morally expected out of the existence of local authorities.

Net gains in governance are achieved if the performance indicators will be of above average performance ratings.

4. Local Government Work in the Future

Local government work in the future will become highly differentiated and stratified. Technology orientation will prevail with e-governance coming of full age. This signals the death of the administrative man and the local government bureaucracy needs to have new management system and must be highly "wired" and technologically interconnected. Members of the local government bureaucracy will possibly develop "digitalized" thinking away from the old bureaucratic tradition. Analogue thinking among those who are entrenched in the old work tradition needs to be transferred to modernization.

The future work environment can be dehumanizing unless the human person maintain his spiritual capacity for liberalism, common sense and morality.

Revisiting Public Accountability

Public accountability is an elusive commodity in public service.

1.   Public Accountability Defined

In Chapter 2 of the book, **Breaking the Cocoon: Bureaucracy Reborn**, what is public accountability is substantially defined as:

> *"The concept of public accountability involves the notion that the actions of government officials must have basis in public law and the constitution. This is based on the philosophy that the administrative state should be held accountable for all its actions and that the citizens should be protected from any abuse of public officials. Public accountability is likewise the obligation of public officers to give answers and explanations concerning their actions and performance, to those who have the right to require such answers and explanations.*
>
> *Subsumed in this definition is a myriad of legal, moral and ethical obligations that come with the occupancy of a public office. In short, public accountability is the obligation of public officials to carry out assigned activities and the responsibility for the success or failure of activities undertaken.*
>
> *As such, discussion about 'accountability'" in the public service, cannot but consider the question of bureaucratic responsibility. There are two types of public accountability, i.e. internal and external accountabilities. Internal accountability means that at each level in a hierarchical organization, public officials are accountable to those who supervise and control their work. On the other hand, external accountability means being responsible to concerned authorities outside one's department and organization for actions carried out." (Hamid 1991:106)*

Public accountability also requires that inherent governmental functions should be performed by public officials and their subordinates and not by those who are outside government, except in highly and truly exceptional circumstances but where

political and legal accountability are ensured. <u>Public accountability</u> can be perceived as a control mechanism that regulates the required official behaviour in the public bureaucracy or public office. It functions as a check of any abuse of authority and misuse of power by those assigned to a public office. It also performs the role of putting to order the functions of the public bureaucracy including local government offices and making its action politically and legally acceptable or correct and thereof be accountable to the public. The concept is expected to provide a system of checks and balances in government instrumentalities. Public accountability also insulates the bureaucracy from partisan and unnecessary public censure. At the same time, it provides a framework for making government decisions and for implementing these decisions accountably and responsibly.

The concept of public accountability is to rationalize the bureaucracy or public officials in a way that they are able all the time to act legally. Accountability has many facets. It is a broad and complex concept which at the same time is also very elusive.   The accountability of public officials is essential in good governance.

There are five categories of accountability in public service.[10]

For an accountable public office to work effectively and as guide for public officials, a redefinition of the notion and objective of public accountability is an imperative. What is important in this regard is to identify and determine operationally the degree of accountability – liability in the interrelationships between and among the following accountability categories:

  a. Political Accountability
  b. Legal – Moral Accountability
  c. Administrative – Managerial Accountability
  d. Program Accountability
  e. Process Accountability

The whole notion of public office, in more ways than one, touches on all categories mentioned. Where does one category begin and another category of accountability end? How does an accountable system that is able to pinpoint accountability with precision be institutionalized or sustained? Some interesting answers to these questions have been suggested and to some extent several have been tried.

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[10] See The Local Political Institute, Local Government Development Foundation (LOGODEF) Manila, 1996

Inspite of the several definitions of what public accountability is, its full meaning and substance are very difficult to grasp. What occurs in public practice maybe a better indicator of the real meaning of the concept than any other theoretical argument. (Hayllar 1991:20)

Article XI of the 1986 Philippine Constitution has a provision on the accountability of public officers. Specifically, Section 1 of Article XI, provides that a public office is a public trust and that public officers and employees must, at all times, be accountable to the people, serve them with utmost responsibility, integrity, loyalty and efficiency, act with patriotism and justice, and lead modest lives.

This particular constitutional provision is more often violated than religiously observed.

2. **Achieving Public Accountability**

In Part 4 of this Guidepost, the profile of a functional political leader is a non-negotiable precondition in achieving political accountability as well as public accountability.

There are several worthwhile areas that can be explored or examined and which can help in attaining public accountability.

a) The whole constitutional provision on public accountability is a tall order and difficult to follow unless those who are elected to public office and those appointed to public offices have been schooled for public service.

Like the Chinese Mandarins, they were trained for years before actually governing or managing a public office.

There is, therefore, a need for continuous training for those who are in position of power in public service. Academic institutions and schools for good governance can undertake or initiate capacity building program highlighting the importance of public accountability in public service.

b) Good Housekeeping in local government administration is essential.

The determination of public accountability at the local government level may involve the accountabilities of various offices through which local public policy formulation and implementation occurs. This involves process accountability. Accountability may be institutionally shared making it difficult to pinpoint ultimate responsibility. That is why local chief executives should be good public managers and able to determine public accountability in different local government offices. The process of determination of public accountability goes beyond legality and outside the provisions of specific implementing rules and regulations.

Knowledge in public administration and a lot of common sense among public officials can help determine where final accountability and responsibility are lodged in cases when pinpointing accountability is beyond doubt.

c) The wisdom to delineate the linkage between administration and politics is crucial.

Administrators are held accountable to their hierarchical superiors and ultimately, to elected public officials. But what maybe asked is defining the right delineation in the public accountability continuum between the political accountability of those who legislate poorly and the administrative accountability of those in the executive branch, who implement the same laws and policies which results to nothing.

This delineation does not help determine where policy and program flaws occur and who should be held finally accountable in the end.

d) Every knowledgeable local political leader and experienced administrator will readily see that their work environment is a pluralistic society. A society consisting of competing interests, some demanding government recognition while others clamor for assistance and services.

This particular environment compounds the problem of defining public accountability holistically.

The local governments, which are not able to respond sufficiently to all pluralistic demands, may "color" an incumbent local officials definition of public accountability. There is then a possible tendency to redefine public accountability in a defensive manner that will justify non-performance of local incumbents.

In this case, the rule of thumb is to remember that good politics means the greatest good for the greatest number.

If there is a general acceptance and a societal satisfaction of the incumbent's performance, then public accountability is attained.

e.   Good public administration in real terms is generally made possible by one important variable which is resources.

This refers to the quality of public personnel and execution of public decisions and public policies. It also refers to financial resources.

Public personnel who merely eke a living and surviving on very low salaries can not be expected to understand self-fulfilment and political philosophies including good governance.

On the other hand, elected local officials who are managing financially anemic local governments are having difficulties governing effectively their constituencies. While under the law, these officials are publicly accountable local officials, constraints in resources are making it difficult for them to be accountable. One possible solution of this particular problem is to merge several non-viable financial local authorities into one single bigger and financially stable local government.

The solution to the problem of non-performance of public personnel is continuous competencies building and where possible increase remuneration or salary as part of the work incentive.

Another potential answer is to internalize public accountability and make it a feature in a working public office. This will make an agency conscious of the need to develop its capacity to make adjustments internally within the organization to ascertain its relevance and responsiveness to its constantly changing environment.

Absence of public accountability can be exemplified by the failure of a public institution to re-examine itself as to its current relevance in society. Another important aspect is failure to innovate and to move away from obsolescence.

Taking stock of both its past and present strengths and weaknesses should be a required exercise. It must be continuously undertaken if public accountability has to be preserved.

Another option is to improve the capacity of a public office to predict how it should carry out its programs in the future. This will make the public agency predictively accountable. The responsibility of a public official among others is for his agency to "wave" an institutional banner describing its mission and commit institutional resources in defining and achieving future visions. These are parameters of an institutionalized public accountability system.

3. **Politics and the Limits of Power**

The perception of the man on the street regarding politics is that it involves commitment to partisan issues, to passion and to serving parochial interests. On the other hand, local governments, as public institutions, should be impartial and efficient in performing governmental or public purposes.

For a democratic government to function properly, establishing a point of confluence between local politics and local government as a "neutral" or non-partisan institution is a political imperative.

If imbalance exists because of an excessive use of politics as a power tool, a question may be asked to what extent is political power useful. Or to what extent can political power be supportive in achieving good governance.

Power is defined as the capacity of some persons to produce intended and
   foreseen effects on others.

This definition requires detailed analysis to show how power holders cope with
major problems and confusion in the analysis of the conceptual framework of
power.

In this part of the Guidepost, it is enough to understand that the nature of power
is dispositional. It means that power is both latent and active.

There is still an ongoing debate as to whether power is a property or use in a
relation. Terms like authority, control or influence are synonymous with the
concept of power.

The internationality of power whether intended or unintended in the context of
good governance and in local government administration is to use political
power for the good of the commonwealth.

The limitations in the exercise of political power by local officials are defined by
the Constitution and appropriate public laws.

Local Politics and Citizens Empowerment

Man and politics are central to societal development.

Politics as a process is interactive. As such, consultation and dialogues between local political leaders and the constituencies characterize this political process.

Because local politics can be particularistic and personality oriented, it tends to be concerned mainly with primary groups, and the whole community becomes secondary.

This practice unless "controlled" tend to negate community development as a holistic objective simply because the common interest of the community is lost.

Competing interests at the grassroots level may exact political toll to the incumbents. This situation may require mending political fences among those who still have in their hearts their political accountability to their constituencies.

Political objectives can be very elusive and unclear until these are very well articulated. The necessity of articulating or expressing an incumbent's governance platform in a most effective means of communication is non-negotiable.

1. **A Citizen's Charter is one avenue of expressing an incumbent's governance platform.**

   Under this notion, an incumbent local official may express his government program in a covenant in which he pledges in writing his desire to fulfil his political obligation.

For politicians who have words of honor and who earned the trust of their followers, mere statements of promises are more than good enough.

A Citizen's Charter has no fast and hard rules whether written or unwritten. Its purpose is to make public a political leaders' commitment to govern well.

In communities where the concept of a Citizen's Charter has been developed over the years, the citizenry use the Charter as a guide or as a measure to what extent an elected local political leader performs during his term.

In politically developed societies, the concept of a Citizen's Charter is considered as a trust document.

A Citizen's Charter is a political contract between those who were elected to govern and the citizens of a community.

2.   **Grievance System**

Most citizens do not know where to address their complaints and issues against their government.

The usual practice is for a citizen to bring his gripes to a politician instead of addressing specific issues to the appropriate and competent authority. One reason for this is that many citizens do not know their local government very well and in what specific office their concerns will be presented for action. They usually only know where to pay taxes and get civil registry records and unfortunately not much more about local authorities that influence their lives.

There is a need to "educate" every citizen of their local government, what it is doing for them apart from collecting taxes or collecting garbage.

An effective grievance center is one that entertains all complaints of the citizenry and refers them to the appropriate competent authority for resolution.

Such a Grievance Center must perform or hear complaints which are economic, political and social issues.

Developing a referral service by the Grievance Center is not only good public relations but good politics as well.

3.   An Advocacy Center

An Advocacy Office in the local government is one that can perform the following:

-    Inform the citizenry of the position of their local governments in certain national-regional-local issues.

-    Provide information and educational services to the citizenry of their political rights and obligations as good citizens.

-    Broaden the horizon of the citizenry on international and regional governance experiences with high transferability potential in the community.

-    Educate the citizenry of political issues like modalities of government (Presidential-Parliamentary or Unitary Federal)

All these are proposed functions and responsibilities of a political party. However, in the Philippines, political parties are weak. In this case local governments for the time being should perform such responsibilities.

An added value of this effort is that local governments will have a constituency that will understand the limitations and/or opportunities of public authorities in serving the public.

4.   Meaning of Empowerment

In an Age of Protest when citizens express their demands and gripes against their government, the man on the street simply equates the protest rally as citizen's empowerment. Street rallies with multicoloured banners are perceived as the penultimate citizen's empowerment indicating action against their government.

However, the truth of the matter is that empowerment has a much deeper and substantive content than what is sometimes called people power.

Empowerment is an act or a process of actualizing the aspirations and decisions of a constituency or polity, without the intervention and interdiction of the coercive powers of the State. It is also an operationalization of the human ascent to full development. Empowerment is also liberating a community of individuals from the constraints of forces irrelevant to the concept of "home rule".

Empowerment may also refer to the capacity of the community power structure to produce intended and foreseen effects among its members.

The practical manifestations of empowerment in many societies are important in understanding the value of the concept of popular governance and the philosophy of government as an instrument of translating the political will into workable public policies.

There are three cardinal variables which are the basis of empowerment.

1. Educational Adequacy

Education is a precondition before community empowerment can take place and become institutionalized. This prerequisite determines the extent as to how empowerment may flourish or simply die in a given environment.

The histories of many countries, old and new, in their march to political development have given clear signals that an extensive preparatory base is necessary before individuals can be empowered. One example of these prerequisites is education as a base for empowerment.

2. Economic Viability

The observation is that poverty of a country or society is a great obstacle in achieving an educational base for empowerment.

In the Philippines, thirty (30%) percent of its nearly one hundred million population are below the poverty line. This problem needs to be addressed if empowerment is a goal.

It is difficult to talk about the value of empowerment and in its relevance to democratic government, to those who are barely making a living.

In developing democratic societies, the question is which should come first, economic development or political development or is it to achieve both at the same time.

3. Political Representation

The search for the ideal polity and the belief among the federalists that a perfect government must be a representative one are both major concerns in the subject of political representation.

The willingness of people to accept a representative government, including their willingness to do what is necessary to preserve it is important.

The peoples' choice of their representatives who are to speak for them in government is one cardinal manifestation of political empowerment.

The question of political philosophers like Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau on what makes it legitimate for one man to govern another has been partly answered by Aquinas who said that a social life cannot exist among a number of people unless government is set-up to look after the common good. The notion of government and political representation are western political thoughts which have been universally accepted including the Philippines.

The people have the political right to form their government. However, people can only have a sense of participation in government if they are members of an effective and reasonably steadfast majority – or of a minority with a good chance of becoming a majority. Citizens can get these generally through the party government, along with some strong defenses against the lies and the blandishments of unscrupulous political demagogues. The antidote of this political dysfunction is the party system, which is a manifestation of popular representation.

Empowerment can be achieved in the effective implementation of:

1. Civil rights or the first generation of rights i.e. right of abode or privacy of communication.

2. Political rights or second generation of rights i.e. exercise of suffrage or occupying public office.

3. Right to development or third generation of rights i.e. to aspire and ascent to self-fulfilment, the human person being the center of development.

Political sociologists argue that the meaning of empowerment is visible if:

   a.   Citizens are part owners of the machinery of production;

   b.   Citizens are involved in collegial and collective decisions in formulating public policies;

c. Citizens are in "home rule" communities free from the coercive powers of the State and the concept of subsidiarity prevails;

d. Citizens overall wellbeing is assured; and

e. Citizens are part of the power hierarchy in society.[11]

If government, both central and local, will energize the concept of empowerment and if local politicians will practice genuine politics, empowering the constituency can be an ultimate outcome.

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[11] See Decentralization and Empowerment, Local Government Development Foundation (LOGODEF) Manila, 1991

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DR. GAUDIOSO C. SOSMEÑA, JR.

Dr. Sosmeña is the Chair of the Board of Trustees and Founding Executive Director of the Local Government Development Foundation (LOGODEF). He is a Fellow of the Strategic Studies Group (SSG), National Defense College of the Philippines. Dr. Sosmeña served the government for 35 years, in various positions in the College of Public Administration, University of the Philippines, Presidential Arm on Community Development and as first Director of both the Bureau of Local Government and Bureau of Local Government Supervision. Retired as Assistant Secretary for Local Government in the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).

Moreover, he has extensive experience as International Consultant on decentralization, local government and community development in the Philippines, Cambodia, Indonesia, Mongolia, Thailand and Vietnam covering over a period of twelve (12) years. In early 2009, he undertook local government studies in Southeast Asia for United Cities and Local Governments, Asia Pacific Section (UCLG-Aspac) in Jakarta, Indonesia.

From May 2009 until October 2009, he was a member of a team of international consultants, assisting Mumbai, India design its disaster mitigation and risk management master plan.

His awards include the Konrad Adenauer Medal of Merit- awarded in Berlin, Germany in 1998, the 1982 Lingkod Bayan Award of the Philippine Career Executive Service and the National Cultural Medal of the Republic of South Vietnam awarded in Saigon in 1969.

His education attainment includes Doctor of Public Administration from Centro Escolar University, Master of Public Administration from the National College of Public Administration and Governance, University of the Philippines, and Diploma in Community Development from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and Bachelor in Science of Agricultural Administration from Araneta University. He authored several books including "Decentralization and Empowerment", "Breaking the Cocoon: Bureaucracy Reborn", "Measuring Local Government Performance", and "Handbook on Local Government Capability Building and Local Governance and National Security."