

Aquino, J. L. (2001). *Development planning in selected provincial governments in the Cordillera Administrative Region*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). La Trinidad: Benguet State University.

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ABSTRACT

People's needs continue to increase, and yet, government's resources remain to be limited. In the midst of scarce resources, the government must prioritize the use of whatever resources it has to ensure that the most-felt needs of the citizens are satisfied. Development planning is one tool it can be use in determining the courses of action that will provide the maximum satisfaction to the most number of beneficiaries and in facilitating the achievement of development goals.

Recognizing the importance of development planning, this study aimed to find out the following: the adequacy of provincial government resources for development planning, the extent of involvement of non-government organizations and people's organizations, the extent of implementation of planning structures, the level of accomplishment of planning outputs, and the problems of local government units as regards development planning. The primary data were obtained from 84 respondents through a questionnaire, interviews with key informants, and content analysis of existing records and plans of local government units.

The local government technical resource and leadership support are perceived to be adequate, but financial resource is not. Perceived satisfactory are the extent of involvement of non-government organizations and people's organizations in development planning; the extent of implication of planning structures; and the level of accomplishment of planning outputs.

Although the technical resource is generally adequate, its determinants are perceived differently. Educational attainment and length of service of the planning staff are adequate, but training and actual work experiences are not. A great majority of the planning staff have been in the planning office for 11 years or more. Of the 14 training programs required for development planners to undergo, only three are deemed adequate, as follows: project proposal/ feasibility study preparation, development plan framework, and situation analysis. The technical staff's contribution in the formulation of development plan comes in the form of data collection, analysis, and dissemination.

As to financial resource, perceived not adequate is the budgetary support for activities such as accreditation and orientation of non-government organizations and people's organizations, conduct of forums and symposia on planning, hiring of consultants, and updating the provincial development council. On the other hand, perceived adequate is the financial support for the administrative requirements of the Provincial Planning and Development Office.

Leadership support is likewise perceived to be adequate as the Provincial Governors have manifested interest in long-term development planning and in enjoining other sectors in the local community to actively participate in development planning, except that of the Congressman or his representative.

The involvement of non-government organizations and people's organizations seeking accreditation from the local governments are more interested in partaking of rather than augmenting local government resources. In addition, local governments have fallen short in providing the non-government organizations and people's organizations the proper motivation to continue their participation in local planning activities.

The level of accomplishment of planning outputs is satisfactory with the Provincial Development Plans the most appreciated.

The problems perceived to adversely affect the development planning at the local level are lack of local funds to support planning activities, lack of interest and skills among Sanggunian Panlalawigan members to competently review development plans, and lack of funds to implement planned programs and projects which discourages long-term planning.

Conclusions

Development planning as responsibility of the local government has gained considerable attention, compared to the situation during the pre-Code period. This change has been manifested by how the subject provincial governments attempted to provide support to development planning, to involve the citizens, to put in place the prescribed planning structures, and to generate the planning outputs as prescribed by national laws and directives.

However, development planning in the provincial governments in the Cordillera Administrative Regions still has to be fully appreciated as a tool to fast-track local development.

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Provincial governments in the Cordillera have not reached their full potential for development planning. The technical capabilities of the planning staff, although perceived to be adequate, still need to be enhanced. Currently, the competence of the planning staff is limited to project proposal and feasibility study preparation, the outputs of which become relevant only during the investment programming period. The very basic of development planning, i.e., development planning framework, is a weak spot among the planning personnel. Fundamental concepts like development goals, development objectives and targets, and development strategies are still vague to the planning technicians so much so that articulation of the same concepts in the development plans come in confused forms. Likewise, the assigned tasks of the planning staff, excluding the PPDC, are limited to

data gathering and data analysis, thus hampering the development of the staff's potentials in the era of development policy analysis and formulation.

2. The present level of local government support to development planning in terms of financial resource for creating opportunities and venues for sharing and exchange of information on development with the broad mass of society is still far below than what is desired. Somehow, the income generating capacity of local governments affects their ability to provide support to such development planning activities.

3. The support of local leaders in development planning is important to make local development planning really work. When leaders are sincere in their desire to pursue local development objectives, the will to provide the necessary technical and financial resources will manifest. However, most of the local leaders have not really come out of the traditional thinking that decision-making for local development is their sole concern rather than shared responsibility. Local leaders are fearful that people participation in development planning may threaten their leadership position and weaken their power base.

4. People participation in development planning is more than ever apparent in development and development-related activities. The involvement of NGOs and GOs in development planning can make development plans more responsive to the community's needs. However, the area where citizen's groups are more interested in is not so much to argue but to partake of the scarce resources of the local government.

5. Local government planning structures are in place but not in accordance with the national prescriptions. Local leaders decide what and how planning structures are to be established. Such action may facilitate decision-making, but may also create suspicions about leadership motives.

6. The planning outputs produced by the local government still leave much to be desired. Lack of understanding of the basic development planning concepts results to poor quality outputs. In addition, plans remain to be political tools that ensure the reelection of elective officials who would always favor inclusion of infrastructure projects in plans. Preference for infrastructure projects widens the

disparity among development sectors, with the infrastructure sector receiving the lion's share of the scarce local resource.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are forwarded:

1. A Development Planning Manpower Training Program be formulated and implanted by the Local Government Academy of the Department of Interior and Local Government in coordination with the National Economic and Development Authority and the League of Local Governments. The program will be a package of basic development planning courses/strategic planning framework, situation analysis, policy formulation and analysis, project development, sectoral development planning, physical planning, rural development planning and urban development planning. It should also include a special module in development communication through which both the oral and written communications skills of development planners can be improved.

2. A special training package for local chief executives and Sanggunian members on their roles as leaders and as planners should also be institutionalized. It shall focus on the local leaders' functions and responsibilities as primary development planners and policy makers, motivators, resource allocators, and decision-makers. The training shall be conducted during the first three months of the term of newly-elected officials and rescheduled for updates every year. Relative to this, the Lakbay Aral Program for local officials may be enhanced by requiring the participants in the program undergo in-depth study and assessment of the different administrative and technical systems existing in the local governments they visit. These can include the development planning, financial, and project implementation systems, among others, about which a paper shall be prepared and disseminated by the program participants.

3. Local governments should set aside a portion of their IRA 20 percent development fund for development planning activities such as the regular conduct of symposia, forums, training programs, consultations- to enhance people

participation in setting and attaining the development goals of the local community. The appropriation for development planning activities will require the authorization from the national government through an Executive Order from Malacañang.

4. Local governments who comply with the development planning directives should be provided additional incentives. The quarterly releases by the Department of Budget and Management of the 20 percent development fund based on submitted Annual Investment Plans should be maintained to compel LGUs to prepare such plan. However, the generation of other local development plans may be enforced and reinforced through additional incentives like national fund grants for special projects of the local government or through discounted interest rates on LGUs loans from Government Financing Institutions, and similar motivational programs. Such incentives can also be applied to LGUs with intact planning structures like the PDCs and its committees, more so to LGUs who implement strategies that enhance participation of the broadest mass in development planning. The case of Benguet province in expanding the number of sectoral committees corresponding to the number of its municipalities so that each mayor can assume coordination responsibilities and where NGOs and Pos operating in locality can participate is worth mentioning as one good strategy.

5. Non-government organizations needs to be encouraged to participate in local development planning more than ever as their contribution in making the development plans more responsive to the community's needs has been established. The local governments should ensure that one-fourth of the total membership of the local development councils is properly allocated for NGOs. During council meetings, a regular part or agendum should be provided for the member NGOs. Such part come in form of a presentation of NGO programs and projects or of their development concerns, thus, enabling the citizens express their thoughts and share information to the planning body. Provision of such opportunities to NGOs during councils meetings will encourage attendance and active participation, not only in the meetings but also in other development planning-related activities of the local government.

6. The infrastructure-orientation of local governments, especially among politicians, must be corrected. The intervention to correct such orientation can be issuance of a national directive that not more than 50 percent of local government investment programs be allocated for infrastructure projects. Doing so ensures that other sectors like the social, economic, and development administration sectors receive proportionate attention.

Figure 3 presents a local development planning model that incorporates the foregoing recommendations. The model illustrates an input-process-output-outcome relationship of the variables that figured in the study.

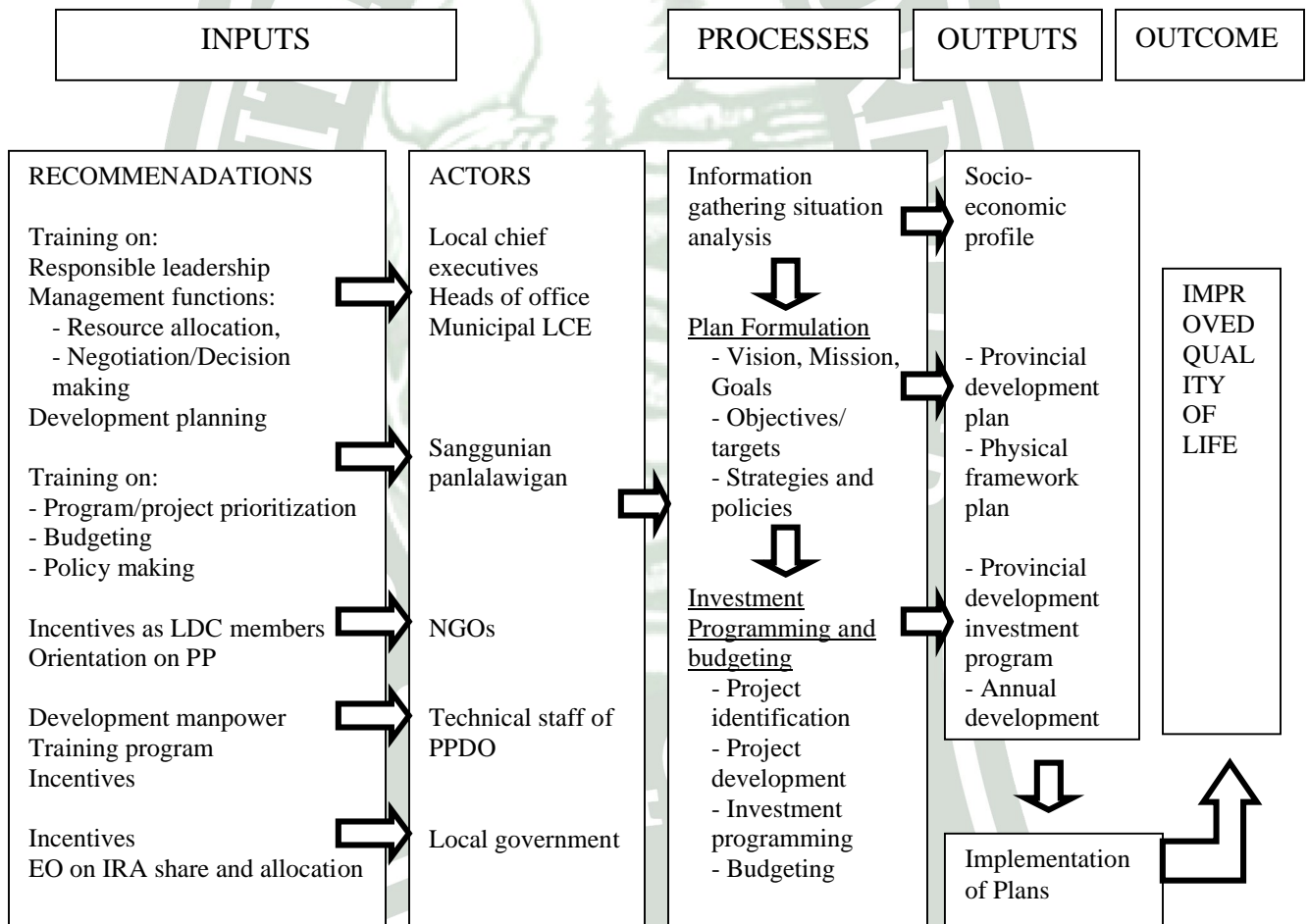


Figure 3. A proposed model for local development planning in the Cordillera Administrative Region.

The inputs are the recommendations of the research. Specific objects/projects are to be produced and implemented to enhance the skills and improve the attitudes of particular groups of individuals involved in local development planning at the local level. Equipped with the appropriate skills and attitudes, the concerned actors will be more prepared to undertake the various processes or steps in planning. These processes will result to tangible outputs in the form of documents. The process of gathering information on the existing situation in the community, including the resources, services, and needs of the population, ends with the generation of socio-economics profiles. The SEP is then used as a basis in the formulation of plans, which include the development plan and physical framework plans. To implement the plans, programs and projects that are responsive to the community's needs will have to be identified. These programs and projects are listed in the investment programs and annual plans with corresponding budgets.

Plan implementation is operationalized when the identified programs and projects begin to generate benefits for the community and its population. Such benefits are manifested through the changes in the lives of target population. Combined, the changes are shown through improved quality of life-the end product of the model.

7. Lastly, it is recommended that further studies on the status of development planning at the local level be conducted, with the inclusion of the municipal and barangay levels. Another researchable area that may be considered is a study on the number and types of NGOs and Pos existing at the local level with focus on their capability in development planning and project implementation. Such studies can provide more substantive information of and insights into the magnitude of development planning as it is being used as a tool to fast-track local development.