

## **Achieving Institutional Effectiveness for Local Governance and Democracy<sup>[1]</sup>**

### **I. Introduction**

Institutions are established to perform specific functions and purposes. Because institutions are to achieve certain goals or objectives good management is an essential precondition to achieve institutional effectiveness.

The constantly changing environment of institutions also requires organizational flexibility.

Local institutions and public agencies concerned with local government management and democratic practices must possess organizational flexibility in addition to improving its cunning anticipatory or predictive capability to see much ahead of time opportunities and develop the necessary strategies to achieve certain and specific objectives.

These basic guidelines how an institution can optimally perform to accomplish its mandate are formulated as a management tool for the local government that may undergo review and evaluation.

Likewise these twelve (12) Guide posts for institutional effectiveness are designed specifically for local democratic institutions i.e. local government leagues involved in the formulation of the local management strategies for effective local governance.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Prepared by Dr. Gaudioso C. Sosmeña, Jr. for the KAS-EU Project on Local Governance and Democracy in Southeast Asia as a background as a thematic theme on Institutional Governance

## **II. Organizational Analysis**

An essential component of institutional housekeeping must know very well the whole organization itself. To do so, some of the following steps are suggested.

### **1. Revisit the legal mandate of the Institution**

Objective: To establish an accurate benchmark what is expected out of the existence of the institution. Examples are local governments and other local public institutions created either by constitutional provision or legal edit.

This is important not only in the process of program planning but also for the staff any local institutions to know, the legal framework of the tasks of the individual staff members.

Institutions like local governments must exist and act in accordance with public laws or the constitutions of the country.

### **2. Observe the cardinal principle in organizational management that structure follows function**

Objective: Remind local government heads and management analysts that the legal mandate should be understood first before the decision how local institutions should be organized. The work content likewise determines the divisions and units of the organization i.e. local government leagues and other institutions for democratic governance.

### **3. Set the policies, goals and programs of the organization**

Objective: Provide policy direction and goals of the organization including and what projects and activities the staffs are responsible to complete and attain.

Formulating the policies and programs of the organization is a step necessary to allow local governments or other local organization to perform their task much more effectively and efficiently.

#### **4. Design a competencies building program for the staff of the local governments and other local institutions**

Objective: To maintain the optimal effectiveness and the efficient productivity of the local governments and other local in local institution i.e. local government leagues as well as develop a culture of excellence in local government administration and in political leadership

The competencies building program should consist of training interventions which should be sectoral, strategy wise.

First competence building effort must be knowledge base. This is what educators called cognitive or an intellectual exercise.

It can be knowledge specific depending on the requirements of a certain position. For local government administrators it will be about local leadership and constructive politics. For police men it can be safety and protection of the community or fighting against crime.

Second is skills development or auto motor as the educators would again say.

This second\_training dimension has to do with technical or developing certain skills in both mental and manual jobs and or specific position requirements. Examples are computer skills and or effective decision making. Skills development supports knowledge base training.

The third training dimension is attitudinal or behavioural aspect. It has something to do with developing positive attitudes for specific positions.

At times behaviour modification is needed for one to be more productive in ones work.

There are five (5) minimum requirements for one to be able to perform ones work productively and satisfactorily especially if one is dealing with the public. These are:

- a) High or wide intellectual horizon
- b) Possesses power of analysis
- c) Must be resolute
- d) Must possess a sense of fairness
- e) Must have common sense which is not generally comes especially when one is trapped in a culture of legalism.

## **5. Task individual staff in local government with specific responsibilities.**

Their job descriptions and work content properly defined.

Objective: Allow individual staff member to know and understand their roles in achieving the mandate of the local governments and other local institutions.

When every staff member fully know their job, it limits the function of supervision to the minimum thereby allow supervisors to be much more creative and more concern with policy making or consulting local government constituencies.

## **6. Determine the necessary management tools for the local government organization.**

Objective: To upgrade the technology orientation and technical and geographic information system competencies of the local governments.

Digital equipment like computer, Global Position System (GPS) Gadgets are essential to modernizing local government institutions.

## **7. Decentralize appropriate functions and powers of the local governments to the appropriate operating units of the organization.**

Objective: Develop a hierarchy of decisions making levels which is part of a good management principle.

An institution or local governments whose functions and powers are properly decentralized assure the smooth and continuing operations of the organization even if the head of office or the local government leader is on travel or incapacitated.

Before a decision is made, three questions are generally asked as guide to good decision making.

1. Is the decision legal or is it in accordance with public Law?
2. Is the decision in accordance with good public management?
3. Equally important is the decision politically feasible?

## **8. Determine the Management Information System requirements of the local government institutions**

Objective: A data base which shall form part of the management information. An information system of any organization is essential to making quality decisions.

Local governments develop the information based power of the institution or organization which can make the local governments distinct and visible.

An effective Management Information System improves the image of local governments as well as makes the same organization distinct from other agencies.

## **9. Manage Local Government Budget Efficiently**

Objective: Manage scarce local government resources for optimal results

A local government budget is the life blood in local administration or of any institution or organization. Determining per capita budget to support individual staff performance is important for any agency in their budget and expenditure analysis.

## **10. Develop the performance measurement system of the local government Institution or any local organization.**

Objective: To be able to know whether the local government is highly performing or not performing at all.

Some criteria of performance which can be used in this regard are:

- a. Adequacy
- b. Responsiveness
- c. Equity
- d. Timeliness
- e. Efficiency
- f. Effectiveness

The local government in this regard may develop its internal system of reward and sanction. The aim is to provide financial rewards or psychological income to

employees who are highly performing. It also can provide sanctions to employees that have gone astray away from the notion of job responsibility and accountability.

## **11. Develop a Monitoring and Evaluation system**

Objectives: To measure institutional performance formulate implementation milestones i.e. success indicators. The output of a monitoring and evaluation system is important in replanning program cycle.

The local government must make its priority policy to be concerned with institutional performance. Knowing the cost of operations is a legitimate budget concern. A monitoring and evaluation system also allows the institutions to appreciate opportunity cost and what its implications mean to the local governments as public institutions.

## **12. Perform Management Audit**

Objective: Evaluate internal system of the organization and determine whether its mandate has been substantially accomplish over a period of time.

Management audit looks into systems and procedures of the local governments or local democratic institutions like local government leagues. The standard of performance of its employees are evaluated, cost benefit ratio, etc all undertaken to provide a scoreboard how the agency perform in its totality. The process keeps the local government as an organization always on its toe.

## **II. Implementation Procedure**

1. The twelve Guide posts need to be officially adopted by local governments or local public agencies as an essential cog of the organizations

management policy. This action is necessary in order to “legitimize” the twelve guidelines.

2. There are two controlling variables which greatly influenced the effective implementation of the twelve Guide Posts. These two variables are:

- a. The right time
- b. The right leader

When is the right time to implement institutional reform is institution specific. The total environment of the local governments or local institutions will either facilitate or negate implementation of this twelve guide posts. Budgetary limitation or some legal issues can be environmental obstacles to the implementation of the guide posts. On the other hand established policies on organizational reforms can facilitate the implementation of the adopted guidelines.

The second controlling variable is the right leader. This refers to the head of the local government or any decision maker who can influence the fate of the local government or local organization.

In this particular variable what is ideally expected of the right leader are positive or facilitating characteristics of a good political leader, such as:

- a) Possesses the ability to listen to the staff of the local government or local organization
- b) Learn from what is heard about the institution
- c) Genuinely willing to help improve institution’s total performance
- d) Act without hesitation in the implementation of desired reforms
- e) Above all, must lead in its reform endeavor.

Even if the right leader exists but the time is not right or vice versa or the local government may have the right time but not the right leader both situations will create an impasse on planned organizational reforms.

In the real world, local government and local democratic institution that is willing to make institutional or organizational reforms must have both controlling factors. One without the other impedes agency initiative

1. One alternative option to push for reform to achieve institutional effectiveness is a year round advocacy for organizational effectiveness in various public management fora in or outside the organization.
2. Exchange of experiences and information on successful organizational reforms in any public agencies at the State or central government levels will most likely trigger not only interest but also reform replication.
3. The assistance of the academe and other institutions of learning, no doubt can help local government and democratic institution in their reforms for institutional effectiveness.

### **III. Transparency and Predictability**

A public institution like local governments and its officials should maintain transparency in local governance. This is premised on the principle that a public office is a public trust. Local officials must all the time be transparent in their official actions and therefore publicly accountable.

Transparency makes public institutions i.e. local governments trustworthy.

Another important characteristic of good governance is predictability.

This means that institutions have established policies, rules and regulations that provide guides for the general public what are the regulations in transacting business with local governments.

Predictability also means that local policies should not be constantly changed at mid stream at the expense of confusing the general public.

Another notion of predictability for local governments is that mandatory obligations of local authorities must be faithfully complied even if such obligations were incurred by previous local government administration.

#### **IV. Useful Key Instruments**

Interviews, questionnaires including surveys regarding the local government, its staff, program or issues and problems in organization and management are some of the key instruments which are useful methods in implementing the guide lines.

Scenario building on the possible futures of the agency or the use of Delphi can encourage agency heads into initiating institutional reforms. Knowing the future of the agency is almost always a concern of the head of the local government.

#### **V. Implementation Rationale**

Most government agencies including local governments were established in the past and in different times. Many have not adjusted to their present environment and the multiple challenges of their affecting their existence. Modernization and Technology exert tremendous pressure on public agencies.

These challenges will compel and force these organizations to have an inner look at themselves. Otherwise these institutions will lose relevance in their constantly changing environment.

The twelve guide posts will help local government organization and democratic public organizations are currently relevant in their world.

-An imperative and urgent relevant and utility of this guide posts for institutional governance, is anchored in the implementation support of the various government decentralization scheme in Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. And in the implementation of the KAS-EU Project, local governance and democracy which also covers the five countries in Southeast Asia.

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