

Strategies of the sangguniang bayan members of pakil politics essay



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The strategies of elected officials at the municipal level in attaining good governance. The strategies of the Sangguniang Bayan members of Pakil, Laguna in attaining good governance. In the history of our government, we can be certain that over centralization is one of its most prevalent characteristics. Even before the Spanish era up to the American period, centralization is an established part of our administration and bureaucracy, together with hierarchal distinction which is one of our customary practices which is part of the behavioral characteristics engraved in our culture and tradition. Conversely, we can also be certain that local autonomy is a century-old vital part of our government. The barangay or barrio system of governing remained, which was later merged with the foreign system of government, although this was not thoroughly learned and accepted by the people. Thus, different laws were formulated and enacted to indigenize methods of governing along with the objective of promoting decentralization of the national government. This decentralization has become a major trend to address the public's assertive reaction to the irresponsiveness and ineffectiveness of the government in providing basic public services.

The Local Government Code (LGC) of 1991 was enacted following the provision in the Article X of the 1987 Constitution which declares that, " the State shall ensure the autonomy of local governments" (Brillantes, 2003).

The key features of the LGC were presented by Tom S. Villarín in an introduction on the book BEYOND GOOD GOVERNANCE Participatory Democracy in the Philippines (Estrella & Iszatt, 2004):

grant more powers, resources, authority and responsibility to Local Government Units (LGUs) to enable them to function with limited national support;

transform LGUs into local planning units for development and innovative governance;

institutionalize people power in local governance;

promote the interface and collaboration of People's Organizations (Pos), Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), and the private sector with LGUs through sustained partnerships;

promote ventures and undertakings between LGUs and POs-NGOs/private sector; and

provide measures to enhance fiscal autonomy of LGUs.

Furthermore, LGUs plays a key role in bringing about not just good but better governance to the people. This better performance is necessary because nowadays, elected officials in their respective LGUs are the ones who are responsible in providing solutions for the better implementation of health, livelihood, agricultural policies, etc. For this reason, innovative strategies for the development and progress of a certain province/city/municipality/barangay should be maintained and enacted by elected officials who are competent, accountable, and transparent together with the empowered citizens that are actively participating in the implementation of these strategies.

“Strategizing” may connote competitiveness, an attribute that speaks of striving to get the most out of given conditions, and is an attribute which is rarely found in the local government (Sajo, Santiago & Joaquin, 1998). But nowadays, strategizing for the development of the community has become a trend in LGUs. This process works in the viewpoint of involving everyone who is part of the dynamic organization known as government. Also its main objective is the reformulation of new sets of strategies that will apply in LGU’s purposes established on a specific vision and mission, which also considers the external and internal conditions of its environment, and works with the commitment to all the stakeholders in the LGUs (Sajo, Santiago & Joaquin, 1998). By doing so, this study will be able to examine or reexamine the grassroots of good governance in LGUs which will try to elaborate the governance that the national and local level have been executing. Hence, LGUs as part of the broad political spectrum is as dynamic as the national government, and focusing on this small but vital part of the society can direct us to a concrete understanding of governance with politics.

The locus of the strategies to be included in this paper is on the LGU’s basic and second most numerous component-the municipality. A typical municipality provides basic services for its citizens. Some of these basic services are maintenance of law and order, establishment and monitoring of health centers, providing of livelihood programs for the citizens, and above all, the power to tax. Municipalities are also categorized in terms of income class which will determine certain rules regarding some policies from the national government like the number of councilors it can elect and the designated amount of honorarium or salary the elected officials in the area

(Wit, 1967). Moreover, the occurrence of the overshadowing of the Local Chief Executive (LCE) or the mayor to the other elected officials serving in a municipality is very noticeable, which is similar to what is happening in the national government. The LCE overshadows the authority of the Sangguniang Bayan (SB) presided by the Vice-Mayor which consists of the municipal councilors, the Association of Barangay Captain (ABC) president, and the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) Federation president. Nevertheless, a municipality can directly present policies that need reformation, reevaluation, reengineering and worst, obliteration for the development of the entire Philippine state.

To illustrate further the dynamics of LGUs and its elected officials' strategies, this paper include some actual events which is happening or has happened in a particular municipality in Southern Luzon known as Pakil. This can be ideal illustration which will be a great help in tracing the roots of governance in the LGUs, and it can also reveal some real strategies that were being used by elected officials.

Pakil is a 5th class municipality which is part of the 4th district of Laguna. The status of being a 5th class municipality means that it has a minimal source of income, with just an appropriate land area occupied by its small population. This municipality is basically an agriculture-based semi-urban district located between the Sierra Madre mountain range and Laguna de Bay. Also, this municipality is subdivided into 13 barangays, 6 in Poblacion (Silangan) while the other 6 are part of the Barrio (Kanluran), and a small barangay located at the Sierra Madre mountain range.

Moreover, a part of the Laguna de Bay separates the Barrio into the town proper (Poblacion) of Pakil, and that separation of Pakil between Silangan and Kanluran usually results in disputes among the elected officials who are part of the SB. Alliances of members residing in those two different places is present in the SB. These disputes are can be rooted from the voting behavior of the people from both parts of the municipality. Silangan has less population of voters than Kanluran, and those voters from Kanluran always do block voting. This collective behavior had been viewed as one of the basis of SB members in dealing with issues for the development of the two Pakil. Also the support from the LCE is a significant factor that can determine the outcome of the issues that will be address by the SB. For this reason, the strategies of SB members for the development and progress of the municipality have been visibly or subtly affected by the dichotomy of their interests, the voting behavior of the public, and pressure from higher authority.

The elected officials at the municipal level primarily focus on their duty and function in the “ coordination and delivery of basic, regular and direct services and effective governance of the inhabitants within its territorial jurisdiction” (Sajo, Santiago & Joaquin, 1998, p. 12). The coordinating and delivering of basic public services is already a given function that needs to be accomplished by those elected officials. However, being an elected official in a certain area, a person is not just accountable in performing the duties attributed with his job, but there is also a need for an actual and public association with the inhabitants of that area to directly address their problems, issues, and concerns. Also an elected official is required to be

familiar with the territorial jurisdiction of the municipality. Every streets and sitios together with all the inhabitants of place within its jurisdiction must have a certain impact on the official's plan of action for the overall improvement of the municipality. Anything that the elected officials decide upon that involves any municipal subject matter will definitely affect the municipality as a whole.

In the case of the municipality of Pakil, a certain SB member although from Silangan, apart from serving and doing his duty in the municipal hall as the ' officer of the day' and aside from conducting committee meetings, also see to it that he has a time to visit and coordinate with the people on both places. By being able to do so, he would need to travel almost 10 kilometers to reach out to the people in Kanluran. Although time-consuming, through this strategy, that SB member promotes an innovative and direct information gathering strategy which is part of the participatory democracy system of governing. By hearing out the needs, concerns, and suggestions of the people, the SB members can prioritize a certain problem they should address. They can conceptualize and create a very comprehensive and specific solution for the improvement of the situation of the people. This SB member's strategy is a very effective and innovative way of involving citizens in local governance. Through this kind of information gathering, the elected official opens a new way approaching and answering the needs of the people, which can help them analyze a certain problem or crisis and come up with a good plan of action that will lead to the development and progress of the municipality.

Aside from implementing participatory democracy, SB members should have learned and mastered the importance of the skill of good structural planning for community development. This strategy is a requisite that should be broadly understood by the elected officials. Planning is the part where you can discover the strengths and weaknesses of a project, and most importantly, planning can also provide the elected official a chance to have a backup in case that unexpected circumstances happened. In the municipality of Pakil, meetings that were conducted by the SB members under their respective committees usually involve the planning part of the projects they want to initiate. The SB members need to have a good structural planning combined with a comprehensive plan of action which is an appropriate foundation in directly addressing issues and problems of the citizens from both Silangan and Kanluran. The attribute mentioned is a skill-oriented type of strategy.

Strategic planning method also involves: 1) evaluating the feasibility of the project, 2) envisioning the results of the project, 3) reviewing of other related project or projects implemented, and 4) speculating the feedback of the stakeholders.

The evaluation of the feasibility part of the project includes the budget assessment part. The budget has been the always the first thing to be considered before conducting a certain project. SB members have been able to control funds as committee heads, but the 5th class municipality status of Pakil is always faced by financial limitations which caused delays in projects implementation. To be able to initiate projects, although there is the never ending “lack of funds” problem, SB members have no choice but to knock <https://assignbuster.com/strategies-of-the-sangguniang-bayan-members-of-pakil-politics-essay/>

on the doors of the office of Governor and office of the Congressman. They just have to wait for the staffs to acknowledge them, and they just need to see to it that they will not get tired to get back and forth to the office to follow up their requests, because these two offices will definitely provide financial assistance for their project, but the assistance has a charge, the political gratitude needs a valid payment in the form of support for the next elections.

Another important factor involved in the feasibility of the project is the calculation of the time frame. Time frame considers both the length before and after the project's implementation. The period of time of the project and its characteristic of being a long-term or a short-term solution to a certain problem can also determine a project's success or failure. An appropriate timetable should be followed expansively to avoid disruptions in its duration. The time frame in public works project (e. g. farm to market road) and in a project that follows a fixed schedule (e. g. livelihood seminars and sports leagues), should be comprehensively calculated so that the funds that were intended for the benefit of the people would be efficiently consumed.

The second factor that is involved in the strategic planning is the envisioning of the results of the project. Cost-benefit analysis of what would be the outcome of the project is a must. The result of the project must guarantee the improvement of the situation of the people. The envisioning part should also be a determining factor of what is the more important project to be initiated. Another factor of planning is the review of related project which is closely connected with the second factor. By reviewing a related project that was implemented before in a nearby town or area, the project initiator can

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visualize the outcome he wants to achieve. He can also modify some portion or portions of the related project for its improvement and so that it can apply and be appropriate to the municipality setting.

Lastly, speculating the feedback of the stakeholders in the said project is an important factor that should be considered in the part of the planning strategy. Although the planning part is a strategy that is set aside to be done by the elected official, the reaction of the stakeholders is the first thing to consider before implementing a certain project. They are ones who would benefit and gain from the project, which is why assessment of their reaction is important. Stakeholders are individual or group of individuals that the elected officials have to serve, collaborate and work with, deal and bargain with, even compete with, or simply any entity that expects something from the LGU (Sajo, Santiago & Joaquin, 1998). They are always expecting something from the elected officials' way of governing; they have power that can relatively affect the decisions for a certain program, also they can influence the strategic plans of the officials which will serve for their own purposes and interests.

These four strategic planning methods can be applied by a certain SB member on the projects for the development and progress of Pakil. Evidently, the strategic planning to implemented in Silangang Pakil or Kanlurang Pakil should have different techniques but should be similar in nature. This strategy is certainly a proficient way of performing the duties and functions as SB members who practice authority and power in a manner which show the attributes of a good leader who have mastered the art and science of public management.

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Another requisite that is considered as an important strategy in the municipal level of governance is the capability of the elected officials as policy-makers in the local legislative process. The Philippine state and our Constitution vested the authority to the Sangguniang Bayan the power to enact laws known as ordinances. These ordinances are made to apply only in their territorial jurisdiction. But still local government has achieved its territorial powers based on the division determined by the national government. Juan F. Rivera included in his book a section from the article in the Lawyers Journal by Mr. Justice Laurel which explains:

“ A municipality cannot be set up in the position of an imperium in imperio. The municipality, even if it so desires, cannot completely emancipate itself from the central government. An autonomy, partial, sound and constructive, is the most that it can aspire for.”

Sangguniang Bayan or the Municipal Council is the legislative body in the local government. Its legislative duty is to deliberate and enact ordinances for the efficiency of the governance in the municipality. It is also the counterpart of the Congress of the national government. The legislators in the Congress author house bills, while the SB members as the local legislators authors ordinances. An ordinance is defined as an authoritative decree specifically employed in a municipality or a city to be regulated, implemented and followed in the area. An ordinance also varies its purposes and functions depending on the issue or problem in the subject matter it will going to address. Also, the local legislators, as mentioned earlier, is composed of the Vice Mayor who acts as the presiding officer of the SB, eight councilors (the number of councilors depends on the income and district of a <https://assignbuster.com/strategies-of-the-sangguniang-bayan-members-of-pakil-politics-essay/>

municipality), the SK federation president, and the ABC president. Moreover, an ordinance could only be enacted if it passed a deliberation conducted by the SB members which includes a voting process that needs two-thirds of the vote of the council members. This voting process should take place in a SB regular session. If the vote results allowed an ordinance to pass, then ordinance can be send to the office of the LCE to be approved or vetoed.

Typically, a SB member who heads a certain committee authors an ordinance that would directly address issues that involves his committee. Improving the competence of the SB members in making ordinances are made so that they would not waste their time, effort, money, and energy in the process. Probably, this legislative part of municipal governance is the factor that would require formality in its strategies. Thus, SB members should develop their competence in ordinance drafting to ensure its approval from both the people they are governing and the people who have higher authority on them.

Furthermore, an elected official as a good policy-maker should consider the following strategies in ordinance drafting and its implementation which consist of: 1) the technical knowledge of the elected official on the drafting of an ordinance, 2) the clarification of the purpose of the ordinance, 3) the validity and effectiveness of the ordinance.

A complete ordinance consists of parts which are: 1) the title or caption; 2) the preamble; 3) the ordaining or the enacting clause; 4) the command to do or not to do, and designation of subjects and objects of operations; 5) the penal if a penal ordinance; and 6) the naming of time when ordinance is to

take effect. This is the formal methodology of an ordinance, which is usually taken for granted by the elected officials in the municipality. The technical knowledge in ordinance drafting is important because, to implement a certain policy to the people and the place one governs, that elected official should already know and mastered the law he made. By doing so, the elected official is making sure that the content he had included in the policy would be enforced effectively. The elected official should also lead by example in order to make the citizens follow the ordinance he have authored.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, ordinances have different purposes and functions which depends in the conditions of the subject matter it will address. Ordinances can be generally classified into five classes namely: police ordinances, financial ordinances, administrative ordinances, franchise or contract ordinances, and improvement ordinances (Rivera, 1956). This is why clarifications on the purpose of the ordinance should be comprehensively explained. The different conditions or circumstances regarding the ordinance should be listed or enumerated, so that the drafted ordinance's similarity and distinction to the other laws could be properly presented or modified, if needed. Moreover, the ordinance should be concise, exact, simple, and consistent (Rivera, 1956). Consistency in the words used in the ordinance should be properly observed. Ambiguous and vague terms should be deleted to avoid perplexities in its context. Also, the ordinance is in its best form if it is written in the language understood by most of the citizens in the place where it would be implemented. This attribute is present in the municipality of Pakil, where almost all of the

ordinances, memorandums, and resolutions made by the local government are written in Filipino.

Lastly, the validity and effectiveness of the ordinance should be clearly presented. A valid and good municipal ordinance is a “ positive, general and equal in its operation as a law and reasonable in its terms” (Rivera, 1956 p. 221). The authority of the municipal ordinance is effective when the LGU and the SB members who make it are organized. The power of the ordinance should also conform to the different laws that were implemented by the national government, the provincial government and other higher government authorities. Most importantly, substance of the ordinance is more important than its form. The strategies on ordinance drafting that were presented will most probably result to a comprehensive ordinance that can be easily passed, enacted and implemented.

However, a certain SB member in the municipality of Pakil stated that although an ordinance has been well-craftedly made, other factors could determine its approval. Lack of alliances with the other SB members to achieve the vote of two-thirds is a huge factor that can affect the outcome of the drafted ordinance. If the ordinance will not be approved it can either be set aside for further motion or it can be ignored as if no one considered its content. And the most crucial determining factor is the approval of the mayor or the LCE on the said ordinance. In Pakil, there had been disagreements between the LCE and some members of the SB, resulting to the disapproval of certain ordinances although comprehensively made which can certainly provide beneficial things for the citizens. For this reason,

patronage politics is shown as concept that can be a subtle but a very
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powerful factor that is involve in the governance at the municipal level.

Although competence in doing their duties and functions is considered an advantage of elected officials as policy-makers in ordinance drafting, there are still many determinants of what would be the outcome, the approval or disapproval of an ordinance, which can set a huge impact in the development and progress of the LGU.

In addition to the strategies of the elected officials as good decision-makers and policy-makers, they must also be familiar or at least have knowledge on good fiscal management. Fiscal policies greatly affect the economic stability of the LGUs, which is why political influence and lack of serious analysis regarding their economic implications should be properly suspended (de Guzman, 1973). Also, the tax of the citizens serves as the bloodline of the LGUs, which is why the elected officials should strategize on how to use it efficiently. The financial and material resources in a municipality are usually very limited. Subsequently, the capacity to use these resources economically is necessary. The elected officials should still know the basics of local budgeting although they are not the ones who will administer the funds. This is necessary because budget estimates are made by the elected officials as part of the projects they are initiating. If the mentioned strategies will be properly followed and applied, the improvement and progress of the municipality can be truly achieved.

Although the strategies of the elected officials are indicator of progress in the way of governing a certain municipality, in general, good governance in the municipal setting is not just solely determined by their responsiveness in doing their duties and functions. The reactions and feedbacks of the citizens, <https://assignbuster.com/strategies-of-the-sangguniang-bayan-members-of-pakil-politics-essay/>

whether good or bad, affect the strategies they are using for the development and progress of the municipality. As stakeholders, the citizens have the capacity to bargain and lobby policies implemented to them. They have the resources, which is not limited financially or materially, that influenced the strategies of their elected officials. Yet, there is also another influential institution which is the one behind some strategies that were being applied by the elected officials in the LGUs-the Department of Interior and Local Government.

Department of Interior & Local Government (DILG) is basically the national government's institution assigned in taking care of the affairs of the LGUs, and other attached agencies in the local government. Its powers and functions includes, assisting the president in the general supervision of LGUs which also consists of the promulgation of policies, implementation laws for public order, security and safety, provides assistance with the local government legislations, the training of police force with civil and nationalistic character, and most importantly, the promotion and monitoring of LGUs' local autonomy (DILG Website).

Usually in a municipality, a DILG officer is assigned to monitor and guide elected officials in their governance. The DILG officer is the one who organizes seminars and trainings that are needed especially by newly elected officials. DILG provides strategies for the elected officials in the seminars and training they conduct, but these strategies are being modified and indigenized so that it could be applicable in the certain places the elected officials govern. The DILG also checks the ability and competence of all the government officials in the LGU he is assigned to. DILG sees to it that <https://assignbuster.com/strategies-of-the-sangguniang-bayan-members-of-pakil-politics-essay/>

the officials in the local government, especially the elected officials, who is part of the government temporarily, will give their best in providing the basic services for the citizens in their jurisdiction.

To achieve good governance in the municipality of Pakil, the DILG is also trying their best to link the gap between the LCE and the SB. To the end the disputes between the two branches of the LGU, the DILG organizes dialogues between these two factions. The SB members stated that they are being viewed as an opposing party to the LCE which concentrates the power and authority on the municipality with its office. This kind of misunderstanding between the LCE and the SB is not yet settled, but the DILG still see to it that the two groups, although have their opposing positions will continue to do their duties and functions to deliver basic services to the people.

Although the local government is established for the people and by the people, to directly deliver regular and basic services, the people, as part of the government, must also do their duties and responsibilities as good citizens. Their active participation is needed by the LGU in the monitoring and implementation of programs. This attribute is the most distinguished characteristic of participatory democracy. The system of participatory democracy is also a trend that is better than the traditional representative democracy which limits the responsibility of a citizen to just voting and paying of taxes. It also includes the people in the actual participation in the system of LGUs with the goal of attaining good governance. Through this kind of participation, the people are becoming empowered, which promotes the strict observance in the accountability and transparency of the officials they have elected.

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Affirmation