Leadership of Local Chief Executives in the Philippines: *A Literature Review*

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Abstract

Local leadership has proven to be a pivotal force of positive change in a locale. Local political leaders' actions shape the outcome for citizens considering their knowledge and familiarity with local conditions and their role in addressing the challenges in aspects of poverty, stability and peace, and employment, among others. In particular, the spread of the deadly COVID-19 placed local leaders at the forefront of the pandemic response. The local leaders' strategies or lack of them in addressing the crisis, underscored the impact of leadership in the lives of constituents. Through systematic literature review, this study attempted to review leadership and the Philippine local leadership literature, with emphasis on the leadership of Municipal Mayors, and has drawn the three key themes: (1) Notions of leadership, with focus on how the role of the leader and the people being led have shifted over time; (2) the evolution of the Philippine local government and the role of local leaders; and (3) leadership actions of a local leader (Municipal Mayor). This study concludes that despite numerous articles, biographies, and case studies written about leadership and local leadership, there is still a dearth of key materials focusing on the analysis of leadership actions, leadership processes, as well as leadership dynamics. The findings of the study tend to concur with the observations that focus on political leaders are on the illustrative side rather than the analytical category. Analytical studies are crucial as they may provide key inputs on the development of a responsive leadership framework that will help strengthen leadership at the local levels.

Keywords: leadership, leadership actions, local government, local leaders, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The country is beset with relentless challenges – poverty, climate change, corruption, and weak governance, among others. Challenges such as these require leaders who are willing to make tough choices and effect shifts in values, attitudes, and behaviors among their constituents.[1]

In the Philippines, the aftermath of the events of the late 1980s and 1990s[2] led to the enactment of the 1987 Constitution which gave a new emphasis on the local government and paved the way for the passage of the Philippine Local Government Code (LGC) of 1991.[3] The goal of the LGC is to empower local governments and provide for the political empowerment of constituents.[4] Local leaders in the Philippines are elected officers of the local government unit as provided for under Book III of the LGC of 1991: Barangay Captain (Punong Barangay), Mayors, and Provincial Governors.

With the onset of the pandemic during the first quarter of 2020, the Local Chief Executives were thrust into the pivotal role of administering COVID-19 response at the provincial, municipal, and barangay levels. The Philippine government, through the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), cascaded Memorandum Circulars (MC), particularly MC No. 2020-077 directing local leaders, specifically Provincial Governors, City and Municipal Mayors, Punong

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[1]Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), 2.

[2]These events include the 1986 Edsa People Power Revolution, the resurgence of non-government organizations (NGOs), people's organizations (POs) and non-traditional politicians.

[3]Proserpina D. Tapales, *"History and Evolution of Philippine Local Government Administration"* in *Strengthening Local Government Administration and Accelerating Local Government* (Quezon City: Local Government Center, University of the Philippines College of Public Administration, 1992), 33.

[4]Antonio G. M. La Viña and Joy Aceron, *"Building the Basics: Leadership, Local Governance, and Nation Building"* in *Agenda for Hope: Ideas on Building a Nation (Democratizing Governance),* eds. A.M. Rodriguez and T. *Lacandula-Rodriguez* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2009), 5.

Barangays, among others, to establish a local government unit task force against COVID-19. The local leaders at the provincial and municipal levels were tasked to spearhead the efforts to address COVID-19 concerns such as the formation and mobilization of teams to do contract tracing, testing, and monitoring of probable, suspected, and confirmed citizens with COVID-19.

Objectives of the Study

This study sought to understand through an in-depth inquiry local leadership and governance in the Philippines, with a focus on the role of municipal mayors. Through a review of key literature on leadership in general, and local governance in the Philippines, with emphasis on Mayors, the study unraveled research areas that needed to be focused on and given more emphasis considering the critical role of local governments in national program implementation and disaster response.

METHODS

This study made use of thematic analysis to review the literature on leadership and local governance. Emerging themes were recorded from the data wherein patterns were identified, similarities, as well as contentions, were recorded, analyzed, and classified based on grid labels.[5]

Study Findings

This section discusses concepts, assertions, and experiences that contribute to the understanding of the leadership of the Mayor. Three themes are addressed: (1) notions of leadership, with a focus on how the role of the leader and the people being led has shifted over time; (2) the evolution of Philippine local government, highlighting the

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[5]Deborah Anderson, Becky Lees, and Barry Avery, *"Reviewing the literature using the Thematic Analysis Grid"* in *14th European Conference on Research Methodology (ECRM) for Business and Management Studies* 11-12 (June 2015). Valleta, Malta.

roles of local officials from pre-colonial times to the present; and (3) leadership actions of a local leader (Municipal Mayor).

Notions of Leadership

Up to the middle of the 20th century, leadership research was dominated by the search for leadership traits.[6] Trait theorists argue that history is shaped by exceptional individuals. The rise to power of "great men" is rooted in a "heroic" set of personal talents, skills, or physical characteristics[7] that differentiate them from non-leaders.

Plato, who was the first to write about "job-fit" theory, argued that the state must select "natures which are fitted for the task".[8] Plato underscored characteristics he deemed important for leadership such as "courage, magnificence, apprehension, skill in asking and answering, bravery, keenness, noble and generous temper, and who exhibited dialectical reasoning."[9]

In contexts where chaos, tyranny, and instability prevail, as depicted in Plato's writings, the wise and the virtuous leaders were considered as bulwark against a fractious and tyrannical society. The people were not expected to play an active in governing the state, leaving the responsibility to their leaders.[10]

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[6]Bernard M. Bass, *The Bass Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research, and Managerial Applications,* 4th ed (New York: Free Press, 2008), 81.

[7]Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), 16.

[8]John Antonakis, *"Predictors of Leadership: The Usual Suspects and Suspect Traits"* in *The Sage Handbook of Leadership,* eds. A. Bryan, D. Collinson, K. Grint, B. Jackson, and M. Uhl-Bien (London, Delhi, Singapore, and Washington DC: Sage Publications, 2011).

[9]John Antonakis, *"Predictors of Leadership: The Usual Suspects and Suspect Traits"* in *The Sage Handbook of Leadership,* eds. A. Bryan, D. Collinson, K. Grint, B. Jackson, and M. Uhl-Bien (London, Delhi, Singapore, and Washington DC: Sage Publications, 2011), 269.

[10]Jean Hartley and John Benington, "*Political Leadership"* in *The Sage Handbook of Leadership,* eds. A. Bryan, D. Collinson, K. Grint, B. Jackson, and M. Uhl-Bien (London, Delhi, Singapore, and Washington DC: Sage Publications, 2011), 205.

Focus on leader behavior or Behavioral School of Leadership commenced in 1939[11] with the quest for universal leader behavior. These early studies point out that differing leadership behavior such as authoritative, democratic, and laissez-faire have differentiated effects on followers. More studies ensued in the 1950s (until 1980s) resulting into a dichotomy of leader behavior: people oriented/considerate behavior or task oriented/initiating structures behavior.

Proponents of the Situational School of Leadership view that the emergence of leaders is dependent upon the characteristics of the situations in which they function. The synthesis of the trait and situational theories brought forth the Contingency Theory, which posits that the appropriate style of leadership is contingent on the requirements of a particular situation.[12]

New paradigms have emerged combining more than one of the classic triads of trait, behavior, and situational variables while also going beyond the notion of exchange.[13] Sashkin argued that to some extent, these approaches were grounded in the work of the political scientist and social historian, James McGregor Burns.

In his classic study of political leadership in his 1978 book entitled Leadership (1978), Burns made an important distinction between "transactional leadership" which he suggested was the way most politicians led their followers – reciprocal exchange leading to the satisfaction of the leader's and the follower's self-interest, and "transformational leadership," which was practiced by political leaders

[11]Roya Ayman, *"Situational and Contingency Approaches to Leadership"* in *The Nature of Leadership,* eds. J. Antonakis, A. Cianciolo, and R. Sternberg (Thousand Oaks, London, and New York: Sage Publications, 2004), 150.

[12]Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), 18.

[13]Marshall Sashkin, *"Transformational Leadership Approaches: A Review and Synthesis"* in *The Nature of Leadership,* eds. J. Antonakis, A. Cianciolo, and R. Sternberg (Thousand Oaks, London, and New York: Sage Publications, 2004).

who were able to engage their followers not only to achieve something of significance but also to morally uplift them.[14]

With the emergence of modern democratic thought, values and practices, the role of leaders has shifted from being superior or at the center, to being the link that promotes working together to achieve collectively defined goals.[15]

Burns, in his more recent work, pointed out that though he recognized the central role of a political leader in social change, he emphasized the need to move beyond what any individual leader could do. He argued that "transformational change flows not so much from the work of a great man who single-handedly makes history, but from collective achievement of a great people." It is the role of the leader to spark hope and allow communication to take place towards attainment of common needs and wants.[16]

Rost (1991) defined leadership as a relationship where both leaders and followers influence each other toward mutually defined goals.[17] He asserted that in the new paradigm, followers and leaders do leadership. They do not do the same thing in the relationship, but both are essential to leadership. They are the ones who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purpose.

Adaptive leadership is the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive.[18] This leadership perspective

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[14]Hector Diaz-Saenz, "*Transformational Leadership*" in *The Sage Handbook of Leadership,* eds. A. Bryan, D. Collinson, K. Grint, B. Jackson, and M. Uhl-Bien (London, Delhi, Singapore, and Washington DC: Sage Publications, 2011), 299-300.

[15]Joseph Nye, *The Powers to Lead* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 30.

[16]Carol S. Pearson, ed., *The Transforming Leader: New Approaches to Leadership for the Twenty-First Century* (Berret-Koehler Publishers, 2012), 15-21.

[17]Joseph Rost, *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 102-103.

[18]Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* (MA: Harvard Business Press, 2009).

illustrates the need for political leaders to resist simplistic solutions and to challenge the followers to take responsibility. It rejects the pressure from followers for leaders to provide magical solutions to complex problems and instead work with stakeholders to take responsibility for solving them. This may include shifts in values, beliefs, or behavior to address these challenges.[19]

Bridging Leadership begins with individuals who are willing to take on societal inequity issues by examining the system and the stakeholders involved. Thereafter, the leader develops a vision statement, with focus on his/her role (mission) in addressing the identified societal divide. He/she then convenes the stakeholders involved through a series of multi-stakeholder dialogue until a collective response to said issues is identified. Bridging Leadership's main goal is to establish new institutional arrangements which will persuade institutions to be more responsive and the citizens more empowered and demanding of their rights.[20]

Parallel to bridging leadership is Chrislip and Larson's (1994) notion of leadership in collaborative efforts.[21] Collaborative leadership centers on the leader's role to design constructive processes for working together and convene appropriate stakeholders to help communities realize their vision, solve problems, and get results.

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[19]Jean Hartley and John Benington, "*Political Leadership*" in *The Sage Handbook of Leadership,* eds. A. Bryan, D. Collinson, K. Grint, B. Jackson, and M. Uhl-Bien (London, Delhi, Singapore, and Washington DC: Sage Publications, 2011), 207.

[20]Ernesto D. Garilao, *Bridging Leadership at Synergos: Experience and Learnings* (A Background Paper for the Synergos Twentieth Anniversary Reflection, 2007), 6-7, www.synergos.org.sites/default/files/media/documents/bridging-leadership-at-synergos.pdf.

[21]David D. Chrislip and Clark E. Larson, *Collaborative Leadership: How Citizens and Civic Leaders Can Make a Difference* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994), 5.

Evolution of Philippine Local Government from Pre-Hispanic period to the present

Local governance in the Philippines has evolved through the years. After four centuries of centralism foisted by Spanish and American colonizers,[22] the local governments slowly emerged from relative obscurity into playing a highly visible and critical role in public service reform.

Before the coming of the Spaniards in 1521, the Philippines was comprised of independent socioeconomic units called sultanates and barangays. The barangays were headed by a "datu" who served as head of government, legislator, judge, and executioner.

The Spaniards clipped the powers of the *datu* to amalgamate the barangays into a nation-state and imposed a centralized system of local government. The Royal Decree of 1583 organized the islands into "provincias" (provinces), "pueblos" (municipalities), "cabildos" (cities), and "barrios." The provincial level was headed by the "alcalde mayor," an office held exclusively by Spaniards. The "gobernadorcillo," a post natives and Chinese mestizos were eligible to hold, prepared the tribute list, recruited men "for polos y servicios"[23], served as the postal clerk, and judged in civil suits involving P44.00 or less. The "cabeza de barangay" headed the *barrio* government, and his primary role was to collect tribute for the *gobernadorcillo*.[24] Power was centralized in Manila, a setup which would characterize national-local relations for another century after the Spaniards left the country.

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[22]Proserpina D. Tapales, *"History and Evolution of Philippine Local Government Administration"* in *Strengthening Local Government Administration and Accelerating Local Government* (Quezon City: Local Government Center, University of the Philippines College of Public Administration 1992).

[23]Polos y servicios is a system of force labor under the encomienda system of the Spanish rule in the Philippines. Encomienda refers to a conquered territory considered as an administrative unit for the purpose of exacting tribute from the natives. The authority to award encomiendas was a prerogative of the Spanish King (Carlos 2004).

[24]Clarita R. Carlos, *Towards Bureaucratic Reform: Issues and Challenges* (Quezon City: Konrad Adenauer Foundation 2004), 11-12.

A plan for local government was drafted by Apolinario Mabini[25], when independence was declared in 1898 by Emilio Aguinaldo. The plan called for the organization of towns (to be supervised by commissioners), and the election of officials. The central government exercised full control until the arrival of the Americans.

During the American occupation, local governments had to be established in areas the Americans captured to ease the administration. General Orders No. 43, Series of 1899, provided for the creation of municipal councils for each town and composed of a president and the headmen of the *barrios* within the town. The Schurman Commission developed the blueprint for town organization which included the election of the president through <u>viva voce</u> (by word of mouth) by the residents, and whose powers included the creation of police force, collection of taxes, and enforcement of regulations on market and sanitation, schools, and lighting facilities, among others.

Despite political independence from the Americans in 1946, the centralist relationship between national and local governments remained. LGUs performed services but only acted as agents of the national government.[26] By 1970, efforts were undertaken to expand and focus the role of local government. After the declaration of Martial

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[25]Apolinario Mabini is President Emilio Aguinaldo's Chief Adviser

[26]Proserpina D. Tapales, *"History and Evolution of Philippine Local Government Administration"* in *Strengthening Local Government Administration and Accelerating Local Government* (Quezon City: Local Government Center, University of the Philippines College of Public Administration 1992), 26.

Law[27] came the integration of four cities[28] and 13 municipalities[29] under a political region and metropolitan system of governance which came to be known as Metro Manila. Moreover, Martial Law brought about confusing changes in the structure of Philippine local governments.[30] These changes resulted in greater centralization not only in terms of structures but likewise in terms of personality.

The events of the late 1980s and 1990s, such as the Edsa People Power Revolution[31], the resurgence of non-government organizations (NGOs) and people's organizations (POs), and nontraditional politicians, paved the way for the enactment of the 1987 Constitution, which gave a new emphasis on the local government and the passage of the LGC of 1991.[32] LGC gave new meaning to local governance by moving away from centralism and putting LGUs at the forefront of decentralization.

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[27]On September 21, 1972, then President Ferdinand E. Marcos placed the Philippines under Martial Law through Proclamation 1081. Under Martial Law, civil rights were suspended, and military authority was imposed in the country. Then President Marcos defended the declaration due to the need for extra powers to address the rising wave of violence allegedly caused by communists. Retrieved from http://www.philippine-history.org/martial-law-philippines.html.

[28]The four cities were Manila, Quezon City, Caloocan, and Pasay

[29]The 13 municipalities are Marikina, Pasig, Mandaluyong, Muntinlupa, San Juan, Paranaque, Las Pinas, Taguig, Pateros, Makati, Malabon, Navotas, and Valenzuela.

[30]These changes include change in function of the Department of Local Government and Community Development when it was renamed Ministry of Local Government, the creation of the Ministry of Human Settlements under then First Lady Imelda Marcos, which took over the role of community development, and the transfer of cooperatives' functions to the Ministry of Agriculture.

[31]The 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution gathered millions of Filipinos from all walks of life to march along the Epifanio delos Santos Avenue (EDSA), the main artery of Metro Manila, to end the dictatorship of President Ferdinand E. Marcos and begin a new era marked by true freedom and democracy. Retrieved from http://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/edsa/.

[32]Proserpina D. Tapales, *"History and Evolution of Philippine Local Government Administration"* in *Strengthening Local Government Administration and Accelerating Local Government* (Quezon City: Local Government Center, University of the Philippines College of Public Administration, 1992), 33.

Decentralization is defined as the rational downward transfer of power within and/or outside a formal organization.[33] Decentralization as embedded in the LGC takes three forms: deconcentration, devolution, and debureaucratization.[34]

Siedentof (1987) makes a clear distinction between deconcentration and devolution:[35] "Deconcentration means the redistribution of administrative responsibilities only within the central government agency while devolution "is strengthening or creation of independent levels and units of government. The most important feature of the 1991 LGC is the decentralization of five basic services, namely: health, agriculture, social welfare, public works, and environment and natural resources. Certain program components of these services were devolved to local governments, with the transfer of the corresponding manpower and financial resources to the local units.[36]

Debureaucratization is described as the sharing of public functions and responsibilities with "units not within' the purview of government, such as people's organizations, non-government organizations and the private sector.[37]

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[33]Gaudioso Sosmeña Jr, *Decentralization and Empowerment* (Manila: Local Government Foundation, Inc., 1991), 62.

[34]Antonio G. M. La Viña and Joy Aceron, *"Building the Basics: Leadership, Local Governance, and Nation Building"* in *Agenda for Hope: Ideas on Building a Nation (Democratizing Governance),* eds. A.M. Rodriguez and T. *Lacandula-Rodriguez* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2009), 5.

[35]Proserpina D. Tapales, *"The Nature and State of Local Government"* in *Introduction to Public Administration in the Philippines: A Reader,* eds. Victoria Bautista, Danilo Reyes, Ma. Concepcion Alfiler and Proserpina Tapales (Quezon City: University of the Philippines College of Public Administration, 1993), 361.

[36]Proserpina D. Tapales, *"History and Evolution of Philippine Local Government Administration"* in *Strengthening Local Government Administration and Accelerating Local Government* (Quezon City: Local Government Center, University of the Philippines College of Public Administration, 1992).

[37]Antonio G. M. La Viña and Joy Aceron, *"Building the Basics: Leadership, Local Governance, and Nation Building"* in *Agenda for Hope: Ideas on Building a Nation (Democratizing Governance),* eds. A.M. Rodriguez and T. *Lacandula-Rodriguez* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2009), 5.

Local government's Potential to Transform

Experiences over the past decade have shown that local governments throughout the country have risen to the challenge of the devolved set up. Innovative and creative ways were adopted by local governments to meet the challenges of the times. The awardees of Seal of Good Local Governance, Galing Pook, and other awards[38] attest that best and good[39] practices by the LGUs are seeds of good governance.

These best practices in local governance have been attributed, along with other factors, largely to leadership.[40] A capable local leader ensures a strategic outlook, well-managed stakeholders, result-oriented implementation, and efficient use of resources and government machinery. Moreover, leadership and political will play key roles in sustaining innovation that had been introduced.

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[38]Other awards include Health and Management Information System (HAMIS) Awards of the Department of Health, Kondrad Adenauer Medal of Excellence of the Local Government Development Foundation, and also the Rapid Field Appraisals (RFAs) conducted by the Governance and Local Democracy Project (GOLD).

[39]Good practices, which is also a mark of good governance, refers to "doing things better and more efficiently, and making use of, or improving upon existing policies and procedures." (Brillantes, 2003) and may be "more ordinary" compared to best practices.

[40]Alex Brillantes Jr, *Innovations and Excellence: Understanding Local Governments in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Center for Local and Regional Governance, University of the Philippines National College of Public Administration and Governance, 2003), 65. Antonio G. M. La Viña and Joy Aceron, *"Building the Basics: Leadership, Local Governance, and Nation Building"* in *Agenda for Hope: Ideas on Building a Nation (Democratizing Governance),* eds. A.M. Rodriguez and T. *Lacandula-Rodriguez* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2009), 6-7.

Leadership Actions of a Local Chief Executive (Mayor)

Presented below is an actual case[41] of how a Mayor led during his terms of office:

Mayor Jesse Robredo (1997 to 2000)

When Robredo began his first term of office in 1988, Naga City was classified as third-class city with a budget deficit of PhP 1 million.

Robredo, an unexpected mayoral aspirant, a late bloomer,[42] and a former Logistics Head of Magnolia Dairy Products[43], was transformed by the assassination of former Senator Benigno Aquino, Jr. and the subsequent Edsa Revolution of 1986. Two months after the uprising, Robredo went back to his hometown of Naga City to head the Bicol River Basic Development Program (BRBDP).

In 1988, the Villafuerte[44]-backed Robredo won against Ramon Roco for the Mayoralty post with a margin of only 947 votes and with only four allies in the Sangguniang Panglungsod. But despite his difficult

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[41]Joy Aceron and Francis Isaac, *"Breaking New Ground: A Profile of Mayor Jesse Robredo"* in *Frontline Leadership: Stories of 5 Local Chief Executives,* eds. A. Medel, M. Lopa-Perez, and D. Gonzales (Quezon City: Ateneo School of Government and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2007). Takeshi Kawanaka, *"The Robredo Style: Philippine Local Politics in Transition"* in *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies* 13, no 3 (1998): 5-36.

[42]In the article of Aceron and Isaac, Robredo was described by a cousin as a late bloomer with no prior interest in politics nor in leadership of organizations. He was more interested in basketball and was part of the De La Salle College of Engineering Basketball Team.

[43]Magnolia Dairy Poducts was a subsidiary of San Miguel Corporation.

[44]Jesse Robredo ran for the Naga City Mayoralty post upon the prodding of his uncle Luis Robredo Villafuerte, a former Minister of Trade of the Marcos Administration who during the first Aquino Administration of 1986 was appointed as a Commission Head. But during the early years of his first term as Mayor, Robredo had a falling out with Villafuerte on matters the latter's meddling with appointment of Police Chief which has bearing on Robredo's fight against jueteng in the city.

and challenging beginnings as Mayor, Robredo was able to turn around the situation.

Kawanaka narrated Robredo's description of his first three terms:

> First term was basically building the foundations for the city hall. We did not have enough money, but we told ourselves that we should build the right attitude as far as people are concerned. And during my first term it was a learning period. We focused on what was the most important for the people of the city. During my second term, we had access to more resources. We focused more on infrastructure building. All of the roads in the city were paved except those going to the mountains. We built new schools… hand in hand with this was our constituency from the urban poor. We had one of the strongest urban poor in the country. My third term was for sustaining development in the city. We were more open in relation to other towns and the city. We defined our role in relation to the development of the region. So, we were focusing more on banking service. We were focusing on quality education; we were focusing on preventive health care. We were taking a look at cleaning the rivers, improving the sewage management. These things were more on creating a healthy environment, a high quality of life rather than just the purpose of having.

Kawanaka furthered that Robredo had a distinct style of leadership that was characterized by good performance and approachability. He brought in a team of technocrats from the BRBDP to help him plan and implement the City's development plan. With his managerial skills and genuine concern for citizens' welfare, he introduced numerous innovations and projects, more prominent of which were the Productivity Improvement Program and People Empowerment Program. These programs entailed reinvention of systems and procedures in the City Hall Bureaucracy, corresponding shift in the way of doing things by the City Hall employees and transformation in attitude of citizens towards their local government.

Robredo, specifically during his first and second terms, focused on building organizations of residents by sector[45] to serve as channels for public service and city governance. The highly institutionalized organization work served as (1) a system to provide benefits to residents as part of public service; (2) an instrument to maintain ward leader[46] loyal to and active in the Robredo administration; and (3) a mechanism to gather information. He had likewise set up offices in the city government to directly deal with these organizations and provide directly the assistance the members needed (Kawanaka). These organizations over time became the city government's active partners in delivering the services on top of the priorities of the citizenry. Kawanaka emphasized that the organizations were provided with formal public services, not private favors and even non-members could avail of them. However, members had easier access to the city government. The city government, likewise, came up with a Citizen's Charter (as part of the People Empowerment Program) to describe the services available to the constituents, a step-by-step guide on how to avail of these services, standard response time to avail of these services, and the City Hall employees responsible for providing these services.[47]

The improvement in tax collection system resulted in increase of tax revenue from PhP 25,213,484.46 in 1988 to PhP188,845,116 in 1996, after almost three terms of Robredo. He improved tax collection through a stricter assessment of tax base.

As pointed out by Robredo himself, road infrastructure improvements were made priority during his tenure. The number of concrete roads significantly increased, and the cement-paved paths in urban poor areas were specially appreciated by the residents.

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[45]Kawanaka article outlined 12 people's organizations as registered by the Lingkod Barangay Office. These organizations include, among others, Lakas ng Kababaihan ng Naga Federation (15,000) members and was founded in 1989, Senior Citizens League (10,000 members), Barangay People's Organization (6,000 members) and Market Stallholders Federation (6,000 members).

[46]In Naga, it is referred as the leader or lider.

[47]"Galing Pook Foundation," www.galingpook.org.

Robredo slowly built his relationship with the citizens. He took time to get to know his constituents through his usual rounds of the barangays where he talked to residents and sometimes played basketball with the children. He faithfully attended wakes and celebrations, and his office was open to everyone who wanted to see him. There was no need to make an appointment. But in these everyday rituals of Robredo, he never handed out money or gifts to anybody at the wake, wedding or baptisms he attended.[48] Thus, Kawanaka asserted that the other advantage of Robredo aside from his good performance, was his approachability. He was perceived as sincere and sensitive to the people's needs. Even an estranged city councilor commented that Robredo had good conversational skills and could easily remember a person's name.[49]

Post-Jesse Robredo, Naga City has continued to thrive. The sustainability of the institutional changes introduced during Robredo's term may be attributed to the former Mayor's notion of leadership:[50]

> …his role as City Mayor is to come up with a good idea then make his constituents realize that they have stakes in whatever issues he wants to address, services he wants to improve, and sectors he wants to reform…… this is collective in nature… it can be different set of people serving at different periods of time. A leader is a person.

Naga City reinvented its bureaucracy through a Productivity Improvement Program (one of the Top Ten Outstanding Programs in the

[48]Joy Aceron and Francis Isaac, *"Breaking New Ground: A Profile of Mayor Jesse Robredo"* in *Frontline Leadership: Stories of 5 Local Chief Executives,* eds. A. Medel, M. Lopa-Perez, and D. Gonzales (Quezon City: Ateneo School of Government and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2007).

[49]Joy Aceron and Francis Isaac, *"Breaking New Ground: A Profile of Mayor Jesse Robredo"* in *Frontline Leadership: Stories of 5 Local Chief Executives,* eds. A. Medel, M. Lopa-Perez, and D. Gonzales (Quezon City: Ateneo School of Government and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2007).

[50]Joy Aceron and Francis Isaac, *"Breaking New Ground: A Profile of Mayor Jesse Robredo"* in *Frontline Leadership: Stories of 5 Local Chief Executives,* eds. A. Medel, M. Lopa-Perez, and D. Gonzales (Quezon City: Ateneo School of Government and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2007).

1995 Galing Pook Awards) for its 400 employees. The city instituted a merit-results oriented assessment system as basis for employee promotion and rewards, thus, veering away from political patronage in hiring personnel.[51] Through the program, the city was able to: (1) provide efficient services to meet the requirements of the population; (2) obtain optimum outputs with minimum expenditures; (3) produce quality results as planned; (4) make services accessible and acceptable based on the principle of the greatest good for the greatest number.[52]

Naga City government under the Robredo administration won many international[53] and national[54] awards from 1994 onwards.

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[51]"Galing Pook Foundation," www.galingpook.org.

[52]Joy Aceron and Francis Isaac, *"Breaking New Ground: A Profile of Mayor Jesse Robredo"* in *Frontline Leadership: Stories of 5 Local Chief Executives,* eds. A. Medel, M. Lopa-Perez, and D. Gonzales (Quezon City: Ateneo School of Government and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2007).

[53]International Awards received by Naga City government include: 1996 Habitat II Top 40 World Best Practices: Naga Kaantabay sa Kauswagan conferred by United Nations Center for Housing Settlement (UNCHS), Istanbul, Turkey; 1998 Dubai Internation Award for Best Practices: Naga City Participatory Planning Initiatives conferred by UNCHS and the Municipality of Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Asiaweek Magazine: One of the Most Improved Cities in Asia (1999); 2002 UNDP Cybercity Award for the Asia Pacific by the United Nations Development Program; among others

[54]Galing Pook Awards: Outstanding Program in Local Governance (2004) for I-governance and Reinventing the Naga City School Board Program, (2003) Award for Continuing Excellence, 1997 Galing Pook Hall of Fame Award for Excellence in Local Governance, 1996 Galing Pook Award for the Naga City Government Computerization Program (NGCCP), 1996 Galing Pook Award for the Naga Early Education and Development (Need) Program conferred by the Ford Foundation and Asian Institute of Management (AIM), 1995 Galing Pook Award for Productivity Improvement Program conferred by the Local Government Academy and the AIM, 1994 Galing Pook Award for the Metro Naga Development Council Integrated Area Development, 1994 Galing Pook Award for Naga Kaantabay sa Kauswagan conferred by the Ford Foundation and AIM, and many other awards conferred by national agencies such as DILG, DOLE, National Peace and Order Council, National Nutrition Council, National Disaster Coordinating Council, National Population Commission, the Department of Health, and the Department of Agriculture.

Then Mayor Jesse Robredo likewise received local and international recognition.[55]

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND REFLECTIONS

Local political leaders matter. This study, in particular, articulates that municipal leaders likewise matter. Municipal and city mayors have proven to be a pivotal force of change.[56] Biographical accounts of Daley[57] of Chicago, Maragall[58] of Barcelona, and Robredo[59]

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[55]Some of the notable distinctions, honors and awards of Mayor Jesse Robredo include: Jose Rizal Award for Excellence – Public Service (2002) conferred by the Manila Times and Filipino Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Parangal Para sa Marangal for saying NO to Jueteng Operation (2003 and 2005) by the Krusadang Bayan Laban sa Jueteng; Gawad Parangal for Outstanding Mayor (2004) conferred by the 8th National Social Welfare and Development Forum; Charles A. Reynolds Achievement Award (2000) conferred by the Albay Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Ramon Magsaysay Award for Government Service (2000); Konrad Adenauer Medal of Excellence (1996) conferred by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Manila; Ten Outstanding Young Persons of the World in Government Service (1999) conferred by the Gerry Roxas Foundation and Philippine Jaycees, Manila; Dangal ng Bayan Award (1990) conferred by the Civil Service Commision, Manila.

[56]Antonio G. M. La Viña and Joy Aceron, *"Building the Basics: Leadership, Local Governance, and Nation Building"* in *Agenda for Hope: Ideas on Building a Nation (Democratizing Governance),* eds. A.M. Rodriguez and T. *Lacandula-Rodriguez* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2009), 6-7. Czarina Saloma, Maria Elisa Lao, and Leslie Advincula-Lopez, *"How to Make Local Government Institutions Work: Some Lessons on Social Change"* in *Philippine Political Science Journal,* 34, no 1 (2013): 83-96.

[57]Richard Daley was the Mayor of Chicago from 1955 till his death in 1976. Chicago's transformation from "urban and economic decline to a city of economic rebirth and ambition" was attributed to his leadership. He was considered a master city-builder with iconic projects like Millenium Park, Navy Pier, and the Museum Campus, completed under his term (Florida, 2016).

[58]Pasqual Maragall was the Mayor of Barcelona in Spain from 1982 to 1997. His leadership was acknowledged as instrumental in the transformation of Barcelona into a tourist destination and global city through the hosting of the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. Maragall considered the Olympics as catalyst for the long-term development plans for the city (Hidalgo, 2014).

[59]Jesse Robredo was the Mayor of Naga City, Philippines from 1988 to 1998, 2001 to 2010.

of Naga City, give credence to claims that mayors can have a direct and positive impact in a city, town, or region they represent.[60] Many mayors have been important for poverty reduction, as their attitude towards the poor influences the possibilities of these groups getting or building housing, pursuing livelihood, and having access to water, sanitation, healthcare, and school.[61]

The pandemic put to test the capacity of municipal and city mayors to address an unprecedented crisis – a virus that wreaked havoc on the lives of citizens in barangays, municipalities, provinces, and countries of the world. The 2021 study of Alvarez, Guinto, and Capuno on the leadership of 25 selected city and municipal Mayors[62] pointed out that mayors who have many rivals or low vote margins during the previous elections tend to exhibit "oneupmanship" by implementing responses ahead of others. The study likewise explained that COVID-19 became an opportunity for some Mayors to demonstrate their leadership abilities, improving their re-election prospects and popularity.

From the documents reviewed and analyzed, it showed that despite the vast literature on leadership in general, and local governance and local leaders in the Philippines, there is still a dearth of analytical discussions on these topics. The findings of the study tend to concur with the observations that only a few books and articles analyze political leadership. Occasional references to political leaders are on the illustrative side rather than analytical category.[63] Most are biographies

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[60]Kevin Orr, *"If Mayors are the answer then what was the Question?"* in *Local Government Studies*, 30, (2004): 331-334.

[61]"What role for Mayors in good city governance?," Environmental and Urbanization Brief, last modified April 1, 2009, www.pubs.iied.org/pdfs/10579. IIED.pdf.

[62]Julian Thomas B. Alvarez, Jahm Mae E. Guinto, and Joseph J. Capuno, *"Don't let a "good" crisis go to waste: One-upmanship in local responses to the COVID-19 pandemic"* in *Asian Development Bank* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines School of Economics), 2021.

[63]Jean Hartley and John Benington, "*Political Leadership"* in *The Sage Handbook of Leadership,* eds. A. Bryan, D. Collinson, K. Grint, B. Jackson, and M. Uhl-Bien (London, Delhi, Singapore, and Washington DC: Sage Publications, 2011), 203.

highlighting the key milestones in the leadership life of local leaders but lack the discussion on the analysis of leadership actions nor of the dynamics involved in the leadership process. Analytical studies may provide key inputs on the development of a responsive leadership framework that will help strengthen and reshape leadership at the local levels – Mayors who can address adaptive challenges within the constraints, which in government are considered givens (limited resources, limited time, hard to reach areas in need of assistance, audit rules, and lack of technical capacity of staff).

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