

DISCUSSION

Discussants. Atty. Mariano Buban,
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Prof. Malaya C. Ronas,
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Moderator: Ferdinand Garrido,
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Atty. Mariano Buban: About the points mentioned by Mr. Go-Soco in his report, the aspect of decentralization. . . As found in his survey results, there seems to be a difference of opinion between the top managers and some field managers and even among themselves as to whether decentralization is effective and whether it is good for the agency. I would like to say that, at this point, the conclusion is premature. I know that the degree of decentralization in the region at this stage is not uniform. Some agencies are now exercising so much functions and powers while other agencies have been given so little authority. So any implications in the findings that will say that some regional directors want or feel that decentralization is effective or not effective is not really a fair and complete answer. Maybe the answers will depend on the extent and the degree of decentralization that has been given them by their central offices.

I would like to state also that besides the findings on the perception of top managers, middle managers, and field managers in the region, as well as their perceptions, feelings, and observations on decentralization, planning and budgeting, coordination and linkages, I think that it is also very important to consider the attitudes, in other words, the culture of the central office personnel. I think this is a very important aspect because in our case here, we would want decentralization. But then, I know that one roadblock here probably is the attitude of the central office personnel.

Before decentralization, all the powers, of course, were vested in one central body — the central office. And so the central managers had all the prerogatives, all the powers, in the office. Now with decentralization, some of these powers would eventually go to the regional offices. And I think that maybe, some of these managers in the central office might not want this, or they might wish to retain and maintain their hold or prerogatives, functions, and powers.

Another point mentioned here by Mr. Go-Soco is that in the field of planning, coordination, linkages, and budgeting, there seems to be a difference of opinion also between the top managers and middle managers. Generally, the findings on the regional managers say: "Okay, everything is good, everything is okay. Our linkages with other agencies are okay, plan-

ning and coordinating is okay. Everything is okay." I don't know. . . . But, probably, without in any way meaning to offend, it could be that our culture, our value system compels every regional manager to appear and feel that everything is okay. That is the image he would want the public to have. That is the image his central office would want him to have.

Furthermore, with regard to change, although all of them accept that there is a need to change, it seems here in the report that middle managers are more critical of the situation regarding decentralization, planning, budgeting, coordination, and linkages. They feel that their offices could probably improve more, that there is much more room for improvement.

On the other hand, it seems that the regional managers would feel that everything is very satisfactory. I don't know why this is so, but this may imply that many of our regional managers may not really be so receptive to change. They may not really want to make or initiate change because of a possible feeling that any change would be a reflection on their performance.

Prof. Malaya Ronas: The objectives of the study, I think, are quite ambitious if compared to the methodology used. For example, Objective No. 3 says that the paper aims to assess the administrative capability and needs of local and national governments. And this objective is supposed to be answered through the questionnaire method. I submit for example, that even President Marcos who has been in office for more than a decade cannot, all by himself, determine the administrative capability of the national government. At any rate, assuming that the methodology is reliable and valid, I am submitting the following comments.

One of the findings indicate a consistent internal bureaucratic tension in the perception of top management, on the one hand, and middle or field managers on the other, on several purportedly sensitive issues like decentralization, planning process, etc. Tables 3, 6, 7, 8 on planning, 10 on budgeting, among others, show that these perceptions tend to be if not diametrically opposed. I mean that the top management would tend to say satisfactory to certain issues, while a considerable percentage of middle managers would say unsatisfactory.

However, in the analysis of the survey results, these findings which I consider significant, is dismissed as a "case of misinformation, and should therefore be lightly regarded." On the assumption that a bureaucracy that is plagued with internal tension in the perception of roles and parts among managers cannot deliver or achieve its goals, these dimensions, I fully submit, should be subjected to closer scrutiny. And, therefore, to present a profile of managers at different levels in terms of educational background, socioeconomic origin, may yield important clues as to why these differences in perceptions exist. And if this output is made, I think the study would be more useful to planners and policy-makers.

It is also admitted by the paper itself, that the managerial processes in specific managerial programs in the region are linked to practices on a very

general plane. Another is the linkage between perception and delivery system of the regional bureaucracy on a program-to-program basis. In other words, I submit that the study should be based on a program-to-program basis, the regional plan, the Regional Plan A, the Regional Plan B, and so on and so forth. Again, I think that this would be more useful to planners and policy-makers.

There seems to be a pervasiveness of the training program mentality as may be gleaned from the responses of the different managers. Something like. . . there is a perception that there is lack of administrative skill, presto, we have a training program and that program will solve the problem. The administrative skills required, I submit, should be determined first, in no uncertain terms, before it can be established that the training program is really needed.

It appears also, that the planning process does not involve the private sector in a significant manner. Technocrats appear to monopolize the formulation of plans. In this connection, I would recommend that the private sector, more specifically the academe, and professional groups like the Philippine Political Science Association, should also be consulted. The input from this sector can assist planners in integrating socio-political dimensions to the development plans.

Finally, I would like to end my reaction with some rhetorical questions, questions which, I hope, can be helpful to Junie Go-Soco and his staff.

Are the reported perceptions desirable? In the first place what are desirable bureaucratic attitudes or perceptions? Is there a need to intervene and change the prevailing perceptions of managers? If so, what kind of technology of behavior should be utilized?

Another and one final question. Is there a congruence between the perceptions of managers and the realities of the regional bureaucracy? In other words, is there a solid basis for one to say that the perceptions of managers are correct?

Thank you.

Dr. Loretta Makasiar Sicat (Vice-President, PPSA): I think my question is very minor. It is more out of curiosity that I'm going to ask it. I notice in the tables presented, that the findings are almost uniform that the top managers seem to be very satisfied with the present state of affairs. Is this by any chance a reflection of their vested interests in the whole enterprise?

Mr. Go-Soco: Maybe, We can also say that they are human. And as stated by the discussant Atty. Buban of NMYC, the respondents want to project a good image. The analysis therefore would have to be made within this limitation, that there is possibly a bias in the responses. So we have to follow up the questionnaires with interviews to check whether in fact or indeed, the perceptions as written down in the questionnaires are the reality. And we hope to do that in the complete and final report to the RDC.

Atty. Buban: It was mentioned here that regional managers feel that they are doing enough work for the local governments. Some local

governments also feel the same way. However, Mr. Go-Soco's paper mentions that some local government officials feel that they are not properly consulted on projects and programs by the regional agencies in the locality and local governments. I think my observations here would be oblique because they are not mentioned in the report as a finding.

One observation I would make on this lack of consultation—although there is some but it is not really enough—with mayors and governors, is that this may stem from the fear of politics. Before martial law, politics was all-pervasive in government. Those in government, those development planners and implementors were afraid of the effects of politics in the implementation of their projects. But when martial law was declared, local politicians did not have as much hold, did not have as much persuasive power anymore over other government officials.

However, this fear of politics may not have totally vanished in some regional managers and other government officials who continue to insulate themselves from local politics. They are afraid that with so much local politics in planning and implementation, they would not be able to implement programs. And so with less politics, they feel that they would be more effective in implementing their programs.

Personally, I would say that this feeling on the part of administrators, I mean, among local agencies is not really that good. I know now that many of our local government officials, mayors, and governors are also development-oriented. And I know that they really do not want to give politics a very important aspect in the implementation or planning of programs.

Mr. Pacifico Maghakot (Samar Integrated Rural Development Project): My question is very simple. First in a study like this, the respondents would answer in three levels: (1) what they would like to happen, (2) what they are experiencing now, and (3) what they think you would like them to answer. Now I believe that most of the questions in the survey were formulated according to objectives, touching on the varied issues in government organizations. But the current governmental structures are new, therefore, they are being evolved; they are being developed as structures. I doubt if it is timely, although it's a very good study in the sense that the current issues are still maturing. In other words, when you ask a regional director on his experiences in managing a region, he will say! "Ah *noon*, administrative officer *lang ako, eh*. Now, I'm a regional director. *Natural*, under *ko silang lahat dito*." So the middle managers, when you ask them questions about their experiences in the region, will say: "*Kung noon* my boss was only one, he resided in Manila. Now I have two bosses: one in Tacloban, the other one in Manila." But now they have five bosses, one in the city, one in Tacloban, two in Manila, and one in Malacañang. So there would be biases in the answers. If you look at the tables, the middle managers will always get an average percentage. This is the interesting part. I think it is because they are neither regional bosses nor field bosses. They are in the middle. So the middle managers will answer based on their experiences, I think. The

regional directors' answers are based on what they think they are expected to answer because of the conditions they are in. They will put the new structures there but they have to develop it. So my suggestion is: Do your research ten years from now and you will have a very good book.

Mr. Ferdinand Garrido: The Mayor from Dolores... Mayor could you please limit your question to two minutes? We have no more time and there is one more paper to read. It's almost 5:00 o'clock.

Mayor Rivera: After Dr. Fernandez said this morning in his opening remarks that what will be taken up here will be ultimately given to the President for his consideration, I am hoping that this conference shall make it a consensus, in the word of Dr. Tadena, that the control of police forces be returned to the local executives. This is a need that must be considered. After all, if the only reason against my suggestion is that the police forces will be used for electioneering and there are no more elections, anyway, should we not have control over the police forces?

Garrido: Thank you so much for your suggestion Mayor Cruzada?

Mayor Cruzada: Since you make mention about local executives. . . The present development programs of the NEDA are coming from the top, not from the bottom. It is opposite to that of the DLGCD which starts from the bottom. That is the pyramid type. But in the NEDA, planning is from the top. I would like to suggest that we begin planning from the *barangay*, then up to the municipal then to the provincial, and then to the national level. As soon as all the *barangays*, the municipalities, and the provinces have submitted their plans these will already constitute the regional plan. It would be up to the regional director to set the final decision for the project. Is that agreeable?

Garrido: Dr. Tadena?

Tadena: To some extent you (Mayor Cruzada) are right. But I would like to mention that what essentially is happening now, is that the President and my good friend Lor's husband (Dr. Gerardo Sicat) provide the general guidelines, the general orientation which are then channeled down to the region, from the regions to the province, to the cities, and down to the municipalities. This is actually a two-way process. While guidelines are provided at the top, the nitty-gritty, the real essence, comes from the bottom. However, *ito ang ating problema ngayon*: I would admit that you, at your level, have your own set of priorities. *Hindi bale*, after all, we have the DLGCD. But then, at the provincial level, it is possible that you are going to have priorities only insofar as the totality of priorities is concerned. *Possible 'yon*. Then *pagdating* sa region, what is number one in the province may only be number two insofar as the total region is concerned. So that the problem here is how to make a diffusion because of the recognized need of the provinces and the cities. However, I'd like to tell you that when these are discussed as a continuing concern of reorganization, it is precisely because there is a need to evolve a system in which all these considerations in the planning process will be involved.