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ADMINISTRATIVE CAPABILITY OF THE BARANGAY GOVERNMENTS IN JOLO

By Kadafi A. Basaluddin, Ph.D.

Director, Office for Planning and Development

Mindanao State University-Sulu

I. INTRODUCTION

The issue of administrative capability has always been a problem of the LGUs particularly in the barangay level. There are still barangay governments which have not live up to its role “as the primary and implementing unit of government policies, programs, projects and activities in the community and as a forum wherein the collective views of the people may be expressed, crystallized and considered and where disputes may be amicably settled.” (LG Code) In Jolo, there are eight barangay governments and received regular internal revenue allotment from the national government to a tune of million pesos each barangay unit. Each barangay unit is capable financially to maintain cleanliness, feeding program for the poor and to impose disciplinary action against violations of local ordinances. Barangay response to these problems however is not efficient and effective.

Barangay government is the basic political unit facilitating the direct involvement of the people in running the affairs of the community by managing their own undertakings, in realizing their aspirations, and in availing government services on a face to face basis. With the barangay system in place, both individual and community issues and concerns are promptly resolved as the stool of governance is within everybody’s reach.

The objective of this study is to assess the administrative capability of the eight (8) barangay governments comprising the Municipality of Jolo. The assessment is entirely anchored on the performance of the basic functions delegated to these units as prescribed in the LGC as indicators of the extent of their capability. Finding out the factors adversely affecting the capability of these units is also within the realm of this research.

This research utilized a descriptive method. The data were generated via a Six-Point Likert-Type Questionnaire, Interview Checklist, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and the researcher’s objective observation. Purposive Sampling method was employed as the respondents were chosen on the basis of their knowledge of the desired information.

II. ADMNISTRATIVE CAPABILITY OF THE BARANGAY GOVERNMENTS IN JOLO

The underlying concept behind local autonomy is to maximize popular participation in governance and to ensure efficient and effective delivery of basic services down to the grass-root level. The Local Government Code (LGC) of 1991 was formulated to devolve powers and functions from the central government to the local government units (LGUs). With the code, it is assumed that LGUs will be able to attain their fullest development as self-reliant and self-sustain

communities and transform themselves into dynamic partners of the central government in the attainment of national development.

On the basis of the devolved duties and responsibilities to the barangay government as stipulated in section 17 of the LGC, this portion presents the assessments of the administrative capability of the eight barangay governments in Jolo as ascertained by the respondents. The Code mandated all barangay governments in the country to perform the following functions:

1. Agricultural system support service which includes planting, material distribution and operation of farm produce, and collection and buying stations;
2. Health and social welfare services which include maintenance of barangay health center and day-care center;
3. Services and facilities related to general hygiene and sanitation, beautification, and solid waste collection;
4. Maintenance of Katarungan Pambarangay
5. Maintenance of barangay roads and bridges and water supply systems;
6. Infrastructure facilities such as multi-purpose hall, multi-purpose pavement, plaza, sports center and other similar facilities;
7. Information and reading material center; and
8. Satellite or public market, where viable.

a. Agricultural System Support Services

This component includes planting, materials distribution and operation of farm produce, collection and buying stations. With 1.00 mean score, the respondents claimed that these services are not applicable to them. They confirmed of not performing these functions in their respective area. This is highly expected because the subject barangays are located in a partially-urbanized municipality of Jolo. Most of these units lie within the coastal periphery of the municipality, while others are within the economic zone of the town. As such, the performance of agricultural services to their constituents does not certainly make sense, if not illogical. In spite of this, the barangay residents - in an FGD sessions - averred that funds intended for agricultural services can be diverted to the fishery services. For instance, each barangay especially those in the coastal area can establish a buying center for fish and other aquatic goods in their respective areas. In addition, the barangay can also provide financial assistance in the form of loans (for capital) to fishermen, fish vendors, and those making life by going to the sea every day should efficient delivery of basic service is to be truly pursued.

b. Health and Social Welfare Services

The respondents confirmed, with a mean score of 5.62, that they are maintaining both barangay health center and day-care center. They asserted that these centers are well staffed by competent personnel hired on the basis of their impressive educational and technical how-know. The respondents likewise claimed with a mean score of 5.31 that their health and daycare centers are properly equipped with facilities and amenities necessary for its proficient

operation in spite of their limited fiscal resource. To them, said centers are fully functional with satisfactory performance.

The residents considered these centers as very essential community need. Unfortunately, they asserted that little or no amount is earmarked for the maintenance of these centers. They likewise claimed that people manning these centers are mostly relatives and supporters of the barangay officials with no credible credentials and experiences for the job thereby affecting the delivery of health and social services in their area. To them, they have health center that cannot cater to their “first aid” medical needs, and a day-care center that cannot inspire toddlers to learn to socialize in preparation for formal learning.

With the donation from the provincial government, all barangays in Jolo have their emergency vehicles to transport residents (with no personal service) with urgent medical necessity and other related purposes to the nearby hospital. The barangay officials averred with a mean score of 6.00 that they have been serving their constituents with utmost efficiency and fairness, and promptly attended to the concerns of their constituents at all times.

The residents, however, claimed otherwise. In most barangays, the residents asserted that access to this vehicle is never easy unless one is a relative or supporter of the barangay officials. Most often, these vehicles are used by the officials for personal purposes. In addition, in most barangays the residents claimed that social service such as *Pantawid*, 4Ps, senior citizen application and others are not actually reaching its intended recipients – the poorest of the poor and the old folks. Instead, said government benefits are often given to family members, relatives and supporters of the barangay officials even though they are not qualified to avail such benefits. It is said that most actual beneficiaries are denied of mentioned social privileges.

Although these programs are under the tutelage of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), identifying the beneficiaries or recipients is left to barangay officials since it is assumed that they (barangay officials) know their own constituents, and they would be just to them. Fortunately, the study also discovered that not all barangays in Jolo are perpetrating this disgraceful act of injustice.

c. Services and Facilities

These functions cover general hygiene and sanitation, beautification, and solid waste collection. In terms of hygiene and sanitary services, only few barangays in Jolo are maintaining it as confirmed by the residents. This is in contradiction with the claim of the barangay officials that they are all in active pursuit of said component as indicated by a mean score of 5.81.

With regards to beautification, the residents averred that their barangay do not have the drive towards beautification of their community. They claimed that not even once a beautification contest is launched for the purpose when it actually brings prestige to their community and pride to the residents.

Most barangays in Jolo display deficiency regarding waste management. But, the barangay officials asserted otherwise. The program of the national

government on the “Three O’clock Habit” of cleaning every corner and street of the barangay is only upheld for a month in most barangays in Jolo in spite of their compensated barangay street sweepers. As observed, only few barangays in Jolo that are continuously doing the practice regularly.

As to solid waste collection, a with a mean score of 4.62 indicates that all barangays in Jolo practice proper garbage disposal and collection. However, their constituents claimed that they can just dispose their garbage anywhere as no designated area for garbage disposal and collection is available wherein waste is properly segregated.

Garbage disposal in the municipality is located near the public market where residents have to spend money disposing their waste. With no designated area, people in the barangay would just throw their trashes anywhere. These barangays do not have a garbage truck collector. Garbage collection is done by the municipal/provincial government which sometimes last for days before such garbage is collected. For their counterpart in this process, the barangay will provide manpower in the collection and disposal of garbage. Unfortunately, only few barangays in town are doing this.

d. Maintenance of *Katarungan Pambarangay*

With a mean score of 5.97, the barangay officials confirmed that they are maintaining a *Katarungan Pambarangay* (Barangay Justice System). They claimed that they are often preoccupied with the settlement of disputes every day. They also asserted with a mean score of 5.62 that most of them have handled amicable settlements which usually involved marital problems, family disputes, youth troubles and thievery. To them, they are regularly attending to an average of four civic problems every month. They also confirmed with 2.31 mean score that cases involving killing were beyond their capability to resolve.

Conflicts involving influential families in their area were usually elevated to the municipal or provincial government for resolution as confirmed by the barangay officials. Maintenance of peace and order in the barangay is enforced by the Civilian Volunteer Officers (VCOs) – who are mostly the relatives and supporters of the barangay officials as claimed by the residents. These CVOs have no training in handling conflict settlement as asserted by the residents. Consequently, residents in most barangays in Jolo claimed that they are not contented with the way barangay officials handle dispute settlements, more so if it involves their relatives (barangay officials), supporters, and affluent family in the community.

a. Maintenance of Barangay Roads and Bridges and Water System

Construction of rock-cause-way and foot bridges as indicated by a mean score of 5.67 has been the common project among barangays in Jolo. Construction and maintenance barangay roads are often handled by either the municipal or provincial government.

As indicated by a mean score of 1.02, no barangay in Jolo maintains a water supply system. Barangay officials averred that water supply in their respective area is not a major concern since their constituents are availing the sufficient water service of the Jolo Mainland Water District (JMWD)– a government owned and controlled corporation operating in Jolo and in nearby municipalities. However, the residents asserted that they are in desperate need of accessible water supply. They averred that the JMWD can no longer meet the demand of the annually increasing numbers of people in Jolo. They claimed that they have to buy water from private deliveries which costs them an average of 100.00 pesos every day.

Although in some barangays deep-wells are in place, these outlets are no longer functional because it has been left unattended for decades. According to the residents, this is also one of the reasons why fire incidents are difficult to contain because there are no functional water outlets available in the barangay for the fire department personnel to utilize.

f. Infrastructure Facilities

This component comprises multi-purpose hall, multi-purpose pavement, plaza, sports

center and other similar facilities. With the highest mean score of 5.53, the barangay officials assailed that they have implemented infrastructure projects in their respective area. Only one barangay in Jolo maintains a public plaza.

Most barangays in Jolo do not have a multi-purpose hall and sport centers as confirmed by a mean score of 1.00. Their pavement and drainage system are poorly maintained which often triggered and worsened flood incidence in their area. Most of the time, drainage system is maintained by the municipal government.

As asserted by the residents, most of the projects implemented in their area do not necessarily represent their urgent needs. To them, Waiting Shed, Welcome Sign, and the like do not address their priority needs. They claimed that there are more pressing problems that continuously affect their daily life but there is no necessitate immediate action from their community leaders.

The barangay officials asserted, with a 4.13 mean score, that their development plans are mainly geared towards the construction of low-budget projects. However, the residents believed that most barangays in Jolo do not have actual development plan. They claimed that if there was any planning, it is nothing but a mere product of a spur of moment decision made by few influential local leaders, notably the *punong barangay*. This is in spite of the Code's provision expressing clearly that the function of the barangay officials is to approve the plan (if any) conceptualized by the Barangay Development Council (BDC), not to do the job of the council.

The purpose of the Council is to generate more information that covers the determination and prioritization of needs to be addressed, and identification of potentialities and opportunities. In return, this enables the barangays to optimize

the utilization of the resources at the right time. The Council shall exercise the following (ICBP, 1993:5):

1. Mobilize people's participation in local development efforts;
2. Prepare barangay development plans based on local requirements;
3. Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the national or local programs and projects; and
4. Perform such other functions as maybe provided by the law or competent authority.

The data confirmed that such Council does not exist in most barangays in Jolo. Not surprisingly, most barangay officials averred with 1.53 mean score that they do not have consultation or assessment scheme as a requisite for project/program conception and implementation in their respective area. In addition, they likewise confirmed with 1.27 mean score of not having a scheme of assessing the social impact of the project or the "input-output analysis." This points out that the planning and program management aspects of these units are apparently weak.

g. Information and Reading Center

As confirmed by a mean score of 1.23 together with the FGD sessions result, all barangays in Jolo do not have information and reading material center. In spite of this, the barangay officials asserted that they are planning to construct said center as soon as they have the sufficient funds for it. While the residents consider such centers as another important service, most barangay officials deemed it as a less priority projects, and thus, it can wait.

h. Satellite or Public Market

Only few barangays in Jolo have satellite market. Others asserted that constructing a mini market is beyond their financial capability as attested by a mean score of 2.21. Most barangay officials claimed that a mini-market is not viable in their area and may only worsen their concern regarding community pollution. This claim, however, is contradicted by the residents. They averred that having satellite market within their reach will absolutely save them time and transportation expenses. They asserted that their barangay can actually afford to establish one should they wish to really make the lives of their constituents easier and more convenient.

III. ADMINISTRATIVE CAPABILITY OF THESE BARANGAYS

Based on the data, the study found out the following as adverse factors affecting the administrative capability of the barangay governments in Jolo:

a. Scarcity of Resources

Scarcity of resources is one of the problems faced by the barangay governments in Jolo. With a mean score of 5.52, most barangay officials claimed difficulties to meet the expectation of their respective constituents due to lack of allocated fund. It is found out that all local units in Jolo merely rely on their annual IRA for their revenue of which most barangay officials considered it to insufficient as indicated by a mean score of 2.10. Most barangay officials claimed that their

IRA can only cater to the personal services (salary and honorarium, etc.). To them, this is one of the main reason why many of their planned programs and services cannot be delivered.

Resources – human and material - are the most important assets of every organization regardless of its nature of operation. Resources are considered to be the life blood of the organization. It is regarded as . . . another force in the work environment. (Newstrom and Davis, 1972:330) Highly competent personnel will be of no use without the necessary resources. Its contribution to the organization, however, depends largely on how said resources are managed and utilized.

b. Inadequate Training

Barangay officials in Jolo are inadequately trained as manifested by their mean score of 2.38. Although there was training in the field of barangay administration, interview with some personnel of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG)-Sulu confirmed that the Barangay Administrative Training Program (BATP) was only conducted once, and there has been no follow-up training program since then. With a mean score of 5.71, the barangay officials confirmed that training will certainly uplift their ability to efficiently administer their affairs. To them, higher authority should initiate regular training program particularly in the field of planning and management, administration, and other relevant areas.

c. Insufficient Political Support

LGUs as political subdivisions of the state have inherent quasi-political power. But for more effective implementation of policies, political support from higher levels of governance is always a necessary.

The study found out that the barangay government in Jolo received less political support particularly from upper tiers of local government in the province. As a consequence, barangay officials find it difficult to implement and enforce barangay resolutions especially on critical issues that demand criminal punishment like drug trafficking and other grave offenses. It was further noted that there were times when upper authority refused to extend political support to some barangays for unknown reasons. As confirmed by a mean score of 5.47, barangay officials claimed that with adequate political support and the backing of police personnel, they are more than capable of solving problems related to some serious offenses in their respective area.

d. Poor Inter-Governmental Coordination

Although the LGC enjoins governmental coordination among local units with line agencies and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), barangay officials claimed with 2.44 mean score that they are struggling to establish strong inter-governmental ties with government instrumentalities in the municipality, let alone with those in other areas. In an interview with the Jolo MLGO revealed coordinative effort among local units and with government agencies is absent except during the conduct of the BATP. The barangay officials claimed with a mean score of 4.35 that government agencies and other organizations seldom coordinate with them

in the implementation of certain programs. This is due to the lack of confidence on their ability as confirmed by most barangay officials. In fact, the barangay officials asserted that most of their coordinative efforts with the line agencies were not given proper attention, if not out-rightly ignored.

e. Lack of Accountability

Another factor that affects the capability of the local units in Jolo is the lack of the sense of being “answerable” to their constituents. While barangay officials claimed with a mean score of 5.51 that they are aware of the concept of accountability and that they are fully accountable to their constituents, countless irregularities in the performance of their tasks showed otherwise. For example, the residents in most barangays in Jolo asserted that IRA is seldom used for public welfare endeavors. Local fund is often misused, misappropriated, and used for personal gain. They averred that most barangay officials perceived IRA as their personal belonging, to be used any time for whatever purpose they see it fit.

The residents claimed that most barangay officials are lenient in performing their duties regularly while continuously receiving their monthly salary. In some barangays, the CVOs - who are supposed to aid the barangay officials in maintaining peace and order in the locality - are not doing their job in spite of their monthly honorarium.

The residents claimed that in the resolution of marital issues in most barangays, if a case is presented to a specific barangay official like a *kagawad* (barangay councilor) for instance, he alone solves the case. Other barangay officials are passive as if they are not answerable. The residents claimed that the same pattern of addressing local problems is also perpetrated in other barangays as well. However, most barangay officials asserted that this practice is part of their attempt to divide functions and duties among themselves for greater efficiency.

Residents in most barangays asserted that some cultural norms like familism, personalism and favoritism are common practices among barangay officials in Jolo. These norms hinder efficient delivery of basic services as they influence the commitment of barangay personnel. In addition, these norms deprived the barangay of having qualified employees in their work force.

By failing to perform in accordance with the acceptable norms, the barangays lose the confidence and respect of their constituents. What makes public institutions unworthy of respect is their practice of deceit and use of public office for personal gains. The actions of barangay officials, therefore, must follow the will and interest of the people to whom they are ultimately accountable to.

IV. ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO LEDEARSHIP

Since Jolo is a Muslim dominated town, Islamic leadership is the right alternative approach to enhance the administrative capability of the local officials. From the Islamic perspective, leadership is a requisite when a group comprises of two members, let alone when it reaches a hundred. In fact, among the purposes of God in sending thousands of Prophets in various phases

of human history is for mankind to have a leader that guided them to the light of truth, faith, and salvation.

In Islam, leadership is geared towards the implementation of the divine teaching of the Almighty in order that a God-fearing society will exist. This notion requires a leader with exceptional qualities that are seldom found in the common man. A leader must have a strong faith and sense of worship. He must be just and knowledgeable in *Shari'ah* (Islamic Law). He needs to have such traits because he has to stand as a role model for his *Ummah* (constituents). Leadership in Islam is founded on some principles that require strict adherence, such as:

a. Consultation

Consultation constitute a fundamental principle of leadership in Islam. Islam requires that all decisions concerning the daily activities of the community especially critical issues must be resolved through consultation. The process of consultation is described in the Holy Qur'an: *"And consult them in affairs (of moment) then when thou hast taken a decision put thy trust in Allah. For Allah loves those who put their trust (in him)"* (Qur'an, 3:159)

Consultation is also a guiding doctrine in the selection of a leader. Although Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) provides no specific procedures about it, it must be ensured that in selecting a leader, leadership competencies, knowledge of Islamic laws, and piety must be given huge consideration. As Bara (1993:183) pointed out, non-adherence to this principle will likewise open the gate of leadership to the warmongers or to the false leaders who know how to manipulate the situation. Consequently, the rise of inefficient and incapable leader to power will be encouraged. It is, however, saddening to witness that this condition (incapable leader) is apparently becoming the prevailing trend in the local units. With these realities, it is high time to introduce necessary changes in the leadership selection process at the barangay level for a start. In fact, the residents claimed with a mean score of 5.62 that public consultation makes them feel important to their community leader, and that it has to be done to ensure effectiveness of decisions and responsiveness of projects and programs.

b. Accountability

Accountability, if fully internalized, averts mal practices like graft and corruption in public and even private offices. In effect, public interest will have priority over individual whims. Enforcing public accountability through the inculcation of sense of commitment, competence, responsiveness among political officials has always been the primary concerns of the central government.

Along this line, the barangay officials confirmed with a mean score of 5.41 that internalizing accountability among them can improve their administrative capability. They likewise claimed with a mean score of 6.00 that accountability in Islam covers the following concepts: 1. a leader is accountable both to his God and his constituents; 2. governance means responsibility to the public, and 3. leadership must be founded upon justice.

“Fear of God” is at the core of all aspect of administration in Islam. The ruler is bound to protect the interest of the ruled and is further required to serve his constituents to the best he can with sincerity and honesty. He must not abuse his authority in order that his subjects will obey and respect him. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in his Hadith (Cited in Sharaf Annawawi, 1983:183) narrated by *Hazrat Ibn Umar (R.A.)* said: “. . . *A ruler is also a steward (and accountable for those who are put under his charge) . . .*”

This statement emphasized that the leader is accountable to all his subjects, and that all public funds must be utilized in the furtherance of the interest of the constituents. Moreover, accountability of the leader in Islam is not only towards his subjects, but also to God almighty. As the Hadith (Cited in Sharaf Annawawi, 1983:374) narrated by *Hazrat Abu Yaala Ma’qil bin Yasar (R.A.)* clearly pointed out: “*A person who is appointed in the authority over people, and he betrays them, will not be allowed to enter paradise after his death.*”

c. Trust

In all aspect of governance, trust constitutes one of its important pillars – that is, trust of the Almighty and trust of the ruled. Trust is one of the commandments of Allah that is inherently embedded in the political and administrative authority of a leader. It also permeates the social-economic activities outside the administrative system. Hence, those who are given the trust must at all cost discharge it accordingly. As the Holy Qur’an (8:27) stressed: “*O ye who believe! Betray not the trust of Allah and the apostle nor misappropriate knowingly things entrusted to you.*”

This revelation calls those in authority to exercise the trust of God righteously. Otherwise, they will betray none other but God. Without knowledge of this divine teaching, a leader is bound to violate it. The barangay officials, therefore, must be made aware of the nature and inherent divine duties of a leader.

d. Authority and Responsibility

Authority and responsibility is another basic Islamic principle of administration that is inseparable in nature because authority connotes responsibility. Authority may be inherited or by nature. Inherited authority refers to those delegated by the higher authority to its subordinates as the secular concept of the delegation of power. Authority by nature is best portrayed in a husband-wife relationship where the husband has the authority over his wife and at the same time responsible in providing the wife’s needs. On the other hand, the wife is responsible in serving her husband. From this setup, it is clear that the exercise of authority and responsibility is a dual obligation. A person who exercises authority is responsible to Allah and to his subordinates/constituents. On the other hand, the subordinates/constituents are also responsible to Allah and to their superior/leader.

Although Islam commands the ruled to obey and respect the authority so as to establish an orderly and disciplined society, the ruler must properly exercise

the entrusted authority. It is not amazing therefore, that Abubakar (R.A.), the first caliph, in his inaugural address said: "Obey me for as long as I am obeying the laws of Allah and His Messenger, and do not obey me as soon I deviate from it." (Alih, 1951:19)

e. Administrative Values

Internalizing Islamic administrative values certainly halt leaders to abandon his duties and responsibilities. Foremost of these values is *taqwa* (Fear of Allah). *Taqwa* prevents an individual from committing illicit deeds. It prompts him to discharge his responsibility religiously. *Taqwa* is supplemented by its sub-values such as *sabar* (patience), *Ukhuwwa* (brotherhood) and *ikhlas* (sincerity). With these values instill in one's heart, his commitment in accomplishing his assigned task in the best way possible will be unprecedented. As Bara (1993:195) emphasized, efficiency and effectiveness are difficult to achieve if one's commitment is not well-cultivated.

f. Administrative Principles

In the parlance of Western Public Administration, administrative principles refer to the rules and policies forged by higher authority in the organization. These principles serve as guide for the members in performing their duties. These principles likewise prevent undesirable activities among public servants that are detrimental to the attainment of the organizational goals. In Islam, administrative principles are more authoritative in nature as it pertains to the laws set by Allah which served as command or guide for the person vested with authority. As command, administrative principles require people in authority to carry it out to the best possible extent; and as guide, this means that everybody should act in accordance with its established norms and values.

V. CONCLUSION

Barangay government is the basic political unit facilitating the direct involvement of the people in running the affairs of the community through direct consultation and governance. With the barangay system in place, both individual and community affairs are promptly resolved as the seat of governance is within everybody's reach.

Findings of this study show that the administration of the barangay governments in Jolo is affected by the issues of lack of administrative capability. Among the major factors affecting the administrative capability are lack of knowledge of most barangay officials in Jolo about the LGC, their inability to apply the taxing powers of LGUs, scarcity of resources and graft and corruption.

Generally, the barangay dwellers in Jolo do not feel fully served by their barangay officials whose administration is characterized by gross inefficiency, nepotism, patronage system, favoritism, and graft and corruption. The administrative capability of these units requires further improvement if they are to become successful ally of the central government in nation-building and in-service delivery.

The task of developing the capability of these barangays will be effectively facilitated if the identified factors be properly considered as springboard in the formulation of practical strategies. Equally essential is willingness and enthusiasm of the local units concern to support the capability building effort. Without these two important elements, attempt to strengthen these units will be rendered difficult, if not totally impossible.

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