

E-PARTICIPATION FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

The Digital Praxis of Public Administration
in the Philippines

Abstract

This paper is about institutionalizing e-participation in the Philippines starting with the need to employ it in parallel with the implementation of the Full Disclosure Policy as part of the Philippines Good Government and Anti-Corruption Framework 2012-2016. It identifies primary drivers of the policy, various stakeholders as well as the current initiatives of its implementing agencies. Finally, a deliberative digital habitat is presented as a platform for e-participation with four aspects to institutionalize and sustain the digital praxis of public administration in the Philippines.

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I. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

In the Philippines, with recommendations of supra-national organizations and in line with its agenda to curb corruption and promote good governance, the current government is committed to transparency and open data. The Philippines is among the first eight founding members of Open Government Partnership. Among the country's flagship programs is the Full Disclosure Policy (FDP), enacted in 2010 and expanded in 2012.

The implementation of FDP can be greatly facilitated by Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and its impact can be further maximized by employing e-participation. This study aims to understand the drivers of FDP, the key stakeholders and the nature of their collaboration, and how the Philippine government use ICT as an enabler. The intended output is to design a deliberative digital habitat for e-participation and identify mechanisms to institutionalize and sustain the 'Digital Praxis' of public administration in the Philippines.

II. Description of Involved Philippine Administrative System Components

The Full Disclosure Policy is implemented and enforced by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG). The Local Government Units (LGU) must comply with the policy as part of their mandate. The Information and Communications Technology Office enables the DILG and LGUs through automation and by improving government websites. The Commission on Audit (COA) utilizes the LGU reports to monitor proper use of government funds. Members of civil

society including international organizations, local residents, and Filipinos abroad can use the available information in the Full Disclosure Portal of the DILG Website to understand the affairs of their community.

This is a short description of each major component. More detailed information is provided as appendix.

a. Full Disclosure Policy (FDP)

The FDP is a government's policy that requires local officials of provinces, cities, and municipalities to fully disclose particular financial transactions of their LGU to keep their constituents informed of how the LGU budget is managed. This was created through DILG Memorandum Circular No. 83 in 2010 and was amended through Memorandum Circular No. 141 in 2012 with a stricter guidelines and deadlines.

b. Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG)

The DILG monitors the compliance of all LGUs with the FDP. This is mandatory for a LGU to be eligible to receive the Seal of Good Housekeeping, a prestigious award part of the rewards system of DILG. This was renamed to Seal of Good Local Governance when the criteria expanded to include disaster readiness, protection of environment, and improvement in business climate of the community. The DILG together with COA also review these reports and check for any error or anomaly.

c. Information and Communications Technology Office (ICTO)

The ICTO, under the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), is mandated to provide technical assistance to public administrators including the design and implementation of the standard website template for the Philippine government. They help DILG maintain the website. They provide technical support to the LGUs – one of their projects is the creation of eLGU which aims to automate standard operational transaction within the local office.

III. METHODOLOGY

The data what presented in this paper were collected through library research, secondary data review and browsing of online resources available in the websites of national government agencies and other civil society organizations.

IV. APPLIED PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION THEORIES AND CONCEPTS

For the purpose of this study, we will use United Nation's definition of E-Government as "the use of ICTs to more effectively and efficiently deliver government services to citizens and businesses." The study also uses UN's E-Participation Framework. The goal of e-participation initiatives should be to improve the citizen's access to information and public services; and promote participation in public decision-making.

- **E-information:** Enabling participation by providing citizens with public information and access to information without or upon demand
- **E-consultation:** Engaging citizens in contributions to and deliberation on public policies and services
- **E-decision-making:** Empowering citizens through co-design of policy option and co-production of service components and delivery modalities.

SOURCE: United Nations (2014, November 27) Retrieved from <http://unpan3.un.org/egovkb/en-us/About/Overview/E-Participation>

The study will use the framework Locus and Focus of E-Government, as presented in "Paradigm and Practice: The Innovative Organization to Deal with E-Government" (Mele, 2002: 295) to assess how the DILG, ICTO and LGUs utilize ICT to implement the FDP as well as to identify areas of strengths and areas where it needs further attention. This framework will help illustrate how government uses ICT within the bureaucracy, in relations to its citizens, and how ICT is used by the external community.

The study will apply the framework "The Philippine Administrative System as an Enabling Institution" (Alfiler, 1999: 89) to lay out a governance ecosystem integrating the function of e-participation as a feedback mechanism to the FDP and the governance of LGU officials and DILG.

The author used the guidelines for designing deliberative digital habitats (De Cindio, 2012). These include three important aspects: first, free interaction over time and recognition of a common interest that bonds the digital inhabitants together through shared knowledge, experience, practice, history, ritual, and so forth; second, defined implicit or explicit policies to regulate their interaction; and finally, uses a system based on information and communications technology. These aspects can be called community, society and technology.

In the final section, public institutional theory and theories of public management, particularly the Group Theory, shall be used in coming up with recommendations on how online communities can be regulated and how e-participation can be institutionalized and sustained in the Philippines.

V. OBSERVATION AND ANALYSIS

The Full Disclosure Policy created a framework for compliance and mandated the LGUs to use similar forms and format for each reporting type. This makes the information easier to understand resulting to a convergence of the type of information being posted (Ching, 2014). In this section we will analyze the various stakeholders, identify areas for improvement in the use of information and communications technology, as well as establish an enabling framework to support citizen participation for good governance.

Stakeholder Analysis

The main driver of the Full Disclosure Policy in the Philippines is the Department of Interior and Local Government. As of DILG Memorandum Circular No 2012-141, the LGUs must submit 15 required documents on a regular basis within an allotted period of time. The LGUs must comply with this mandate; otherwise “local officials may be SUSPENDED or REMOVED from office on the ground of gross negligence or dereliction of duty in accordance with Section 60 of the Local Government Code of 1991.” The associations of various local government officials also have a stake in the FDP in line with improving fiscal discipline as well as promoting transparency and good governance in their respective communities.

The Commission on Audit uses these documents to monitor adherence to fiscal policy and to check for dubious transactions that could be a red flag for graft and corruption. Good governance is integral to President Benigno Aquino III Executive Order No. 43 where he defined his five Key Results Areas. This is described in detail in the Cabinet Cluster on Good Governance and Anti-Corruption Action Plan (GGAC, 2012). In this plan, there are three strategic objectives: curb corruption, improve delivery of public services, and enhance business and economic environment. The plan is founded on the three pillars of open government: transparency, accountability and citizen’s engagement.

In the global community, the Philippines is one of the first eight founding governments of Open Government Partnership, a multilateral initiative that aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. The United Nations conducts the E-Government Survey to assess how ICT is used by all of the 193 member countries in line with good governance.

FULL DISCLOSURE POLICY STAKEHOLDERS



The result of the stakeholders’ analysis is that the FDP is an integral part of the current plans and programs of the government, supported by international organizations, enabled by ICT for faster information dissemination, and already working in collaboration with some members of civil society.

Within public administration, FDP is supported by three major organizations the DILG, ICTO and LGUs. Transparency and good governance is one of the priorities included in the E-Government Master Plan and the Cabinet Cluster on Good Governance and Anti-Corruption Action Plan. These plans are operationalized within the bureaucracy as evident in the DILG Website, cross-LGU collaboration and knowledge management activities.

At the core of the public administration relations with Citizens, Business and Civil Society is the Full Disclosure Policy. The LGUs are accountable aided and supervised by the DILG. The required documents are consolidated in the FDP Portal within the DILG website. ICTO supports LGUs with their projects to improve the website, implement eBayad and eLGU, as well as the formation of Community e-Centers (CeCs) in the local communities.

There are stakeholders external to public administration as well. The main proponents are the United Nations and Open Government Partnership. To keep the Philippine government in check, they conduct regular assessments including the E-Government Survey. There are also several non-government organizations like Social Watch Philippines, and associations including Philippine Society for Public Administration and the Association of Schools of Public Administration in the Philippines.

In 2013 none of the provinces have fully complied with all the required documents. In terms of ICT, not all LGUs have a website, most use static website containing information to promote tourism and business investments. LGUs have yet to fully maximize their respective websites in improving efficiency in service delivery and transparency (Ching, 2014).

There is a big improvement since then with the enhancement of the DILG website and its initiative to consolidate all the FDP documents and have them centrally available to the public hosted in the FDP Portal. Browsing the FDP Portal is easy with a functionality to sort and filter the reports based on document type, location, and reporting period.

Still, not all LGU complies with all the documents required by FDP. To address this problem, the DILG made this a requirement to be eligible for the Seal of Good Local Governance.

Investigations and administering of punitive measures, for erring and negligent local officials, are coordinated with COA, the Ombudsman, and the Department of Justice.

There are non-government organizations involved with FDP including Social Watch Philippines, PDF, ANS-EAS and InciteGov. The Filipino community must also play its part to review these documents to become more vigilant and involved in the governance of their local communities. Professional and academic associations such as the Philippine Society for Public Administration as well as the Associations of Schools of Public Administration in the Philippines can take the lead in evaluating how the various LGUs are performing.

Ultimately the Filipino citizens must be educated, empowered and involved in the decision-making, policy-making as well as evaluating the results and outcomes of previous and current local administrators. They must learn and understand how their elected leaders are managing the affairs of their locality, how are they utilizing the budget that came from the taxpayers, and where are they leading the community based on their projects and programs.

Citizen Portal for Deliberation

Given that the government involves members of the local community in policy making and decision making – how about the rest of the community like those who are working abroad or are temporarily residing overseas but would like to participate in the democratic process? How about Filipino citizens who worked in a different city away from their current address, or people working in different time zones that they can't attend the face to face citizen consultation initiated by the government? How about the foreign nationals residing and working in the Philippines, how can they give their feedback and contribute to the betterment of society?

This is where e-participation comes in. Using the Locus and Focus of E-Government framework (Mele, 2002) to analyze how the E-Government Master Plan of the Philippines utilizes ICT to implement FDP, it was revealed that there is one area that requires further attention: there is no central platform for online deliberation external to public administration.

Applying the Locus and Focus of E-Government Framework to the Implementation of FDP

| Locus: | CONSTITUTIONS Institutions & Organizational Configurations | POLICIES Policy & Decision Making | MANAGEMENT Implementation & Operation |
|--|--|---|--|
| Focus: Within Public Administration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ICT Office - DILG - LGU | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E-Government Master Plan - Cabinet Cluster on Good Governance and Anti Corruption Action Plan (GGAC Action Plan) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DILG Website - Inter-LGU - Knowledge Management |
| PA relations with Citizens, Business and Non-Profit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DILG - LGU | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E-Commerce Act of 2000 - DILG MC No. 2010 – 83 Full Disclosure Policy - DILG MC No. 2012 – 141 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DILG & LGU Website - E-Bayad / E-LGU - Community E-Centers |
| External to the PA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open Government Partnership - Transparency International - UN / ADB / WB - Social Watch Philippines - ANSA EAP - Incite Gov - PSPA / ASPAP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UN E-Government - Open Government | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online Training - Community based training - Community Score Card <div style="background-color: red; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> NO CITIZENS PORTAL FOR DELIBERATION </div> |

SOURCE: Mele, Valentina 2002. "Paradigm and Practice: The Innovative Organization to Deal with E-Government"

Enabling Framework for FDP

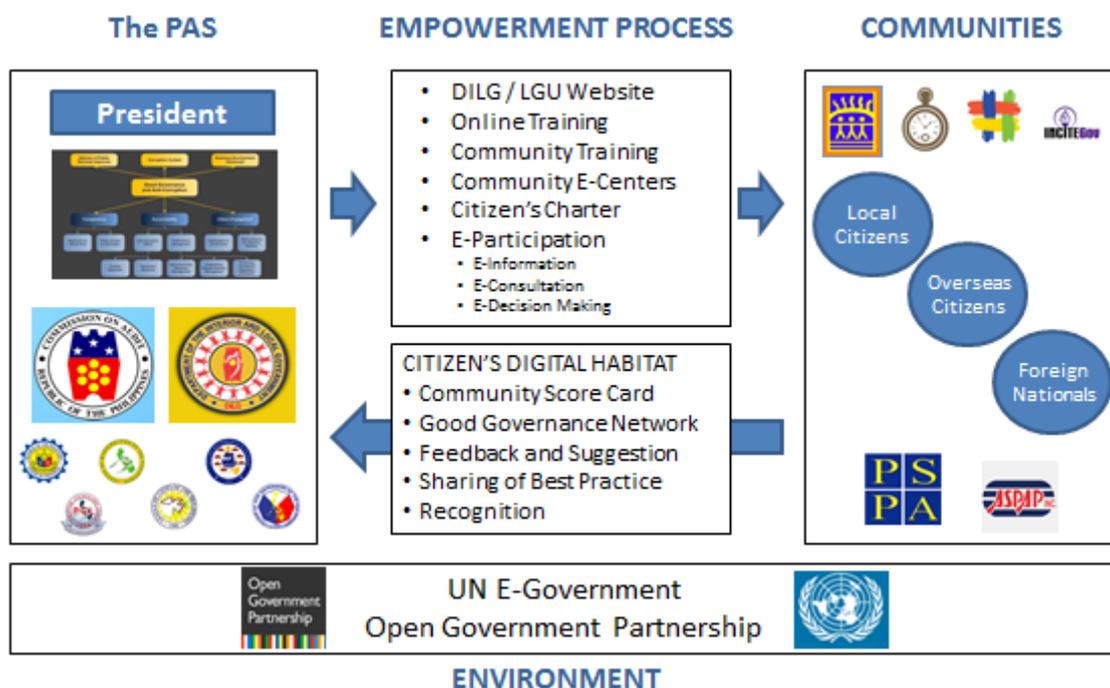
Applying the enabling framework (Alfiler, 1999: 89) to lay out the governance ecosystem to support FDP makes it easier to understand how the stakeholders can collaborate effectively and how e-participation can be promoted for good governance. The PAS include the president, DILG, LGUs and all the associations of local officials.

There are several community EMPOWERMENT programs sponsored by the government including the availability of websites and online training, creation of Community e-Centers, allocated budget for the delivery of training to local communities, use of Citizens Charter, and e-participation through social media accounts of the national agencies, government institutions and local officials.

Members of the COMMUNITIES include various non-government organizations, local citizens, overseas citizens and foreign nationals residing in the Philippines. The United Nations and Open Government Partnership were classified under ENVIRONMENT as they set the frameworks, criteria and guidelines for the global community. They are very influential as the

results of their assessments is a form of labeling that affects the credibility of a country to attract foreign investment as well as secure foreign loans as source of government funding.

THE ENABLING FRAMEWORK FOR FDP



Source: Alfiler, Ma. Concepcion 1999. "The Philippine Administrative System."

Looking at this framework, the study proposes to have a deliberative digital habitat at the core of the FEEDBACK mechanism that is inclusive, real time, documented and transparent. It must be hosted by a neutral organization separate from the Philippine administrative system to make the discussion more open. There must be an engagement policy and a credible facilitator to encourage educated discussions based on the information available in the FDP Portal and equal representation of opinions by local officials, members of the bureaucracy, international organizations, policy advocates, public administration scholars and professionals, and concerned citizens in the local community or out of town, and all other members of society.

We shall now present the proposed design of a deliberative digital habitat, introduce the concept of Digital Praxis in the Philippines, and identify ways to institutionalize and sustain it.

A PROPOSED DELIBERATIVE DIGITAL HABITAT

To maximize the impact of the FDP and promote good governance in the LGUs



To reap the benefits of democratic participation, opinion must be planted on facts, nourished through educated organic discussions, and harvested through an inclusive and transparent medium. This can be greatly aided by the use of ICT. The next section will introduce the concept of the Digital Praxis of Public Administration.

VI. DIGITAL PRAXIS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, "praxis" is defined as the application or use of knowledge or skills, a convention, habit or custom, and a set of examples for practice. This paper defines **Digital Praxis**, as the manifestation of "praxis" in the internet. These are the four aspects of Digital Praxis of Public Administration: open government, citizen's engagement, e-participation, and community learning.

Open Government

"Information must be transparent: accessible, searchable, and usable" to enable citizens to aggregate information and use them for any intended purpose (Noveck, 2009, 121).

The Full Disclosure Policy was enacted in 2010 and expanded in 2012 requiring LGUs to make their financial documents available to the public. In addition, the DILG centralized all required documents and created a FDP portal in their agency website to make it easier for citizens to access the information. Compliance of LGUs is steadily increasing – but the appreciation and utilization of these documents by members of civil society can still be encouraged further.

This is a good start that must be sustained through citizen's participation. Otherwise it will be another superficial adoption or policy transfer to seek the approval of the international community, to increase the credit ranking of the Philippines, and to be eligible to receive additional grants and loans from various funding agencies.

Citizen Engagement

The deliberative engagement among citizens and government is essential to the democratic process. These are the goals for citizen participation "... making democracy more democratic, redefining power structures, enhancing credibility and legitimacy, managing conflict and building consensus, eliciting feedback and consultation, and promoting accountability and transparency" (Buss, 2006, 9).

Typically people organize themselves according to common goals and shared values. These enable them to mobilize collective action to push for their agenda. There are different

modes of citizen participation such as through elections, public hearings, advocacy and public interest groups, surveys and focus groups, workshops and conferences, and citizen advisory boards, just to name a few. Governments can also mandate citizen participation, like in the case of the Philippines’ grass-root participatory budgeting.

However, citizens can become passive bystanders, active promoters or detractors. The poor are usually left out, and sometimes manipulated, until they enable themselves or are empowered to genuinely participate.

Let’s take a look into the factors that promote or impede citizen participation.

| Factors that Promote/Impede Participation at the Individual Level | |
|---|--|
| Promoting Conditions | Impeding Conditions |
| Realizes that what he thinks and feels is important and that he can think and talk intelligently. | Feels that what he thinks is not important; can hardly articulate his thoughts. |
| Is confident that he has the capability to mold himself and his environment. | Feels incapable of acting on his own or transforming the environment. |
| Is conscious and aware of the societal factors that impinge on him as an individual. | Is not aware of the socio-politico-economic conditions that influence his life. |
| Has actual experience in participating in group problem analysis or problem-solving situations | Has no notion nor experience in any collective involvement which entails discussion and analysis of issues with other individuals. |
| Source: Alfiler, Concepcion. 1983. | |

Another challenge in citizen participation is that “citizens from the middle class... may be preoccupied with work so as to treat citizen activism as an added burden that will take them away from their career commitments.” (Reyes, 2011, 12). This is true especially now with accessible opportunities such as personal loans to acquire land, build a house or buy a car. Not to mention, the enticement and ease to explore the world with comparatively affordable air travel.

For Filipinos who are working abroad and living abroad – their distance inhibit them from participating face-to-face at the community level. This also applies for people who travel to work daily to offices located in another city. They seldom are able attend city town hall meetings, deliberative polls or consensus conferences. Most likely, the only times they go to the city hall is

to get required documents, permits and to pay taxes as this will incur a personal leave from work or worse, leave without pay.

E-Participation

E-participation, in its simplest form, is citizen participation through the internet.

There is an abundance of e-participation practices. The 'policy wikis' enable distributed teams of individuals to craft a document together, 'civic juries' enable small-group citizen juries that convene to vet policymaking relating to complex issues, 'collaborative brainstorming' is when people contribute and build on each other's ideas in a structured conversation under the guidance of the moderator, the 'networked brain trust' mandates the universities to develop online systems for offering advice to the president, agency heads, and congressional staff (Noveck, 2009). It can be observed in these cases, that decentralizing participation and allowing a relatively open and free flowing discussion sustains and encourages e-participation.

Regarding the technical aspect, there are many benefits including real time interaction regardless of location, availability of information, documentation and transcription for future reference, crowdsourcing or the ability to tap multiple sources. Online participation is also more natural for today's generation and for people that can only be involved every once in a while.

The counter argument to this is that some contest that this is not inclusive as it requires having the means to connect to the internet and the ability to operate the required technology. There are several government plans and programs to address this. The ICTO-DOST, in line with the Philippine Digital Strategy, aims to provide universal access to the internet and digital literacy for all.

As of 2014, there are more than 100 million mobile subscribers, and more than 50 million Filipinos using social media (Kemp, 2014). This shows that 50% of the population is capable and able to access the internet. Certainly there will be members of the population that are at risk of being disenfranchised. We can still expect that the number of internet users will continue to grow with the implementation of ICT programs by the government and civil society organizations as well as continuous education of citizens in the academe and community.

Community Learning

Community learning is “a process of collaborative learning occurring at the community level” (Morse, 2006, 51). It is a vital part of democratic governance. As described by Mary Follett, democracy is not a product of the ballot box but an ongoing process of creative citizenship.

“The community process is one whereby citizens create new knowledge and transform collective understandings through communicative action – the process of collaborative learning” (Morse, 2006, 59).

According to Kenneth Wilkinson’s interactional approach, having three elements of community: a locality, a local society, and a process of locality-oriented collective actions, or the community field. A locality is defined as “a territory where people live and meet their daily needs together.” Local society refers to “a comprehensive network of associations for meeting common needs and expressing common interests.” A community field is “a process of interrelated actions through which residents express their common interests in the local society” (Wilkinson, 1999).

One example of community learning is through a deliberative digital habitat – or a platform for online forum. These are the advantages of creating a deliberative digital habitat in the Philippines:

1. A venue for dialogue and discussion where conversation threads are documented
2. Policy for discourse can be applied to facilitate and balance opinion
3. A culture promoting good governance can be cultivated
4. Available and accessible all the time, data can be backed-up and archived
5. A wonderful source of information
 - a. For DILG and local officials: To get feedback
 - b. For auditing agencies: To identify a potential problem
 - c. For international organization: To assess e-participation
 - d. For scholars and professionals: To advance Public Administration
 - e. For citizens: To learn and be empowered to participate

VII. CONCLUSION

To summarize, a citizen must have consciousness, competence and confidence to be encouraged and empowered to participate in public affairs. In the case of e-participation we need to add another 'C', among the required factors, for internet Connection. To sustain and institutionalize this requires yet another 'C' – community learning.

The availability of public information, citizen engagement and e-participation, and community learning are the four aspects essential to the digital praxis of public administration in the Philippines. The next questions are then, how can we evolve the levels of participation from tokenism to genuine involvement? How can we improve the quality of online discussion and discourse? How do we institutionalize a culture of active online citizenship?

Public administration scholars and professionals must take the lead in facilitating educated open discussions among the various stakeholders. They serve as the neutral organization, adept in using an objective lens for analysis, and equipped with the latest thoughts and trends in the industry. Likewise, they are also spearheading the training for government employees, politicians, and members of the community. Let's take a closer look at the Association of Schools of Public Administration in the Philippines (ASPAP) and the Philippine Society for Public Administration (PSPA).

Both these association have the following characteristics:

- They have common goals and shared values
- Members of these organizations can comprehend and evaluate the information made available by the government
- They have a grasp of good governance and can articulate it effectively
- They are capable and confident in affecting society and the environment
- Has actual experience in problem analysis and problem solving situations
- Can generate theories from practice and validate theories as practiced
- They are adept in using technology and are comfortable with online collaboration
- Coming from multi-disciplinary background, their members can extend and reach out to other fields of studies, sectors and industries

| SUMMARY OF DESCRIPTION OF ASPAP AND PSPA | | |
|--|--|---|
| | ASPAP | PSPA |
| History | <p>The Association of Schools of Public Administration in the Philippines, Incorporated (ASPAP) is a non-stock national organization of college and universities in the Philippines offering public administration/management education programs.</p> <p>ASPAP was organized on February 12, 1979 and registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission on December 5, 1980.</p> | <p>The Philippine Society for Public Administration (PSPA) is a non-profit professional organization dedicated to the improvement of public service.</p> <p>Registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission on 24 July 1981.</p> |
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage cooperation and coordination among institutions offering Public Administration (PA) and its related degree programs; ▪ Strengthen linkages with Schools of Public Administrations (SPAs) in the Asia Pacific Region; ▪ Develop instruction and research for the advancement of PA as a profession; ▪ Provide an atmosphere conducive to the upgrading of the quality of professional education of PA; and ▪ Identify (and discuss common problems and key issues) avenues for research, public sector information and involvement on issues, problems in Philippine PA and governance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achieve and maintain a high degree of professionalism in the study and practice of public administration; ▪ Provide a forum for the discussion of issues, problems and trends in public administration; ▪ Disseminate and publish research findings in the field; ▪ Promote improvements in the study and practice of public administration in the Philippines; and ▪ Stimulate and maintain public interest in the continuing improvements of public administration in the Philippines and elsewhere. |
| Programs and Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seminar Workshop on Instructional Methodology ▪ Library Development ▪ Public Lecture Series ▪ Research ▪ Scholarship and Faculty Development ▪ Linkages | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Conferences (International, National, and Regional) b. PSPA Special Lectures/Seminars on Public Administration and Governance (Classroom-based and/or Online-based) c. Continuing Education on Governance and Development (CEGD) d. Ladderized Education for Local Government Officials (LELGO) e. Youth Summit on Public Administration and Governance (YSPAG) f. Research and Publications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Books/ Monographs ▪ Philippine Journal of Public Administration (PJPA) ▪ PSPA Working Paper Series ▪ Raul P. de Guzman Best Paper Award g. Policy Advocacy h. Customized-Training Programs |
| Source: | <p>ASPAP Website http://www.aspap.org.ph/home/ Last checked May 14, 2015</p> | <p>PSPA Website http://www.pspa.ph/index.html Last checked May 14, 2015</p> |

VIII. RECOMMENDATION

The digital praxis of public administration is more than just a website of ASPAP and PSPA. It should be an online learning community, capable of mobilizing collective action, and continuously innovating and evolving to advance the field of public administration in the Philippines.

To maximize the utility and ensure that the digital praxis will thrive, we shall invoke and apply the theories of public administration to govern and regulate these online communities. This is potentially another conceptual definition of digital praxis of public administration, the application of the theories of public administration in the management, governance and regulation of online communities.

Institutionalizing E-Participation in the Philippines

“Reforms toward citizens’ participation... need to be operationalized, structured, and constructed on a platform of doable, concise, and workable policies and procedures where the contributions and voices of citizens in the shaping of public sector reforms will be given real meaning, will be institutionalized and incorporated into ongoing systems...” (Reyes, 2011, p26).

The Filipino behavior of sporadic and intermittent vigilance must be harnessed and cultivated through digital praxis. However, the levels of discussion should evolve from a simple ‘Like’ and posting comments to a more educational discourse. Evolving e-participation is similar to education and formation. The citizens must experience the ‘good online society’ in order for it to be emulated by other communities. Thus the academic community must initiate this to establish a benchmark, and then it can be replicated and expanded to the public sector, civil society and the international community.

STEP 1: Require Online Community Learning through ASPAP Website

The learning experience of a public administration student in the Philippines can increase exponentially through online collaboration with fellow students within and outside their campus. The ability to share resources, review and give feedback to papers at the conceptual level and the

opportunities of working together for people with common interests will greatly increase the advancement of the field of public administration. Having the submitted, published or unpublished, papers available online will make it easier to aid research, to detect plagiarism, to give recognition where credit is due.

The ASPAP recognized, based on their website, the difficulty of developing libraries of their member schools. Even the thesis of students usually get stored and left to decay in the shelves – relying on chance for people to stumble upon them. Having completed thesis papers, with consent, in digital format and available online will increase their use and impact to future studies and practical application. Members of the academe will have visibility of the scope and extent of the field of public administration in the Philippines enabling ‘taking stock.’

Step 1 is required to build a wealth of knowledge and processed information from works and published papers that will become available online; to establish a benchmark in terms of quality of intellectual discussions; and to form a community culture manifesting through online behaviors of its members. The intended outcome is that when a person joins the online community, there are already observable norms and values demonstrated by the current members that act as informal rules of engagement.

STEP 2: Engage Online Government Discussions through PSPA Website

Developing the digital praxis for PSPA follows a similar approach described in Step 1 but it will be expanded due to the purpose and goals of the organization as well as the composition of its membership. The PSPA website can serve as an online platform for discussion among public administration practitioners, members of the academe, private sector and civil society. It is essential for theory to be put into practice to validate its principles. The input from the members of the community is valuable in harvesting information to acquire new concepts and knowledge. I can't even fathom the potential wealth of information that could be accumulated by having these collaborations online and available for review and reflection.

STEP 3: Share the Information to All

The next step is to educate the local officials, community leaders, civil society and members of the community including those currently working and/or residing abroad. Training is already provided and funded by DILG. There are also numerous references from the United Nations and Open Government Partnership. DILG can also facilitate the sharing of best practices among the local government units to expedite the improvement of governance and development of skills of local officials.

To enable collective action requires a certain tipping point. Citizen participation, as well as the media, is necessary. “When groups interact with information, their members can leverage diverse skills to transform raw data into useful knowledge (Noveck, 2009, 11). To make this more effective, information can be visually enhanced through charts and info graphs in order for people to relate to it and make it more intelligible. The information can also be shared to international associations of public administration as well as other fields of study.

The Public Administration of an Online Community

To sustain e-participation by the members of ASPAP and PSPA requires applying the theories and concepts of public administration. We already enumerated the basic elements, the five Cs: consciousness, competence, confidence, connectivity and community learning.

Among the theories of public management, the Group Theory can be considered a good framework for managing and regulating the digital praxis. According to this theory, effective groups can develop shared goals, values, norms and behaviors. This mindset is different as compared to traditional management, where control is exercised by policy, rules and regulations.

The table below summarizes potential application of group theory to ASPAP and PSPA based on the characteristics of means of control, sources of control, position design, definition of duties, accountability, structure, power, responsibility, rewards, innovation, and member reaction to management.

APPLYING GROUP THEORY TO MANAGE ONLINE COMMUNITIES

| CHARACTERISTICS | GROUP CONTROLS | ASPAP | PSPA |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Means of Control | Shared goals, values, and traditions | To advance the field of PA in the Philippines | To achieve and maintain high degree of professionalism of PA in the Philippines |
| Sources of Control | Mainly internal motivation | Academe | Academe and Practitioners |
| Position design | Whole task; doing and thinking | Theory and Methodology | Theory formulation and validation |
| Definition of duties | Flexible, contingent | Interest groups Collaborative studies Project based | Collective action Project based |
| Accountability | Often in group | Scholastic excellence | Industry or Sector excellence |
| Structure | Flat; mutual layered influence | Equal status of universities Governing body of recognized experts in the academe | Equal status of academe, public servants and members of civil society |
| Power | Emphasis on relevant information and expertise | Content and substance of areas of study | Substance and application of current theory and best practices Ability to turn ideas into reality that will benefit the community |
| Responsibility | Performance of work unit or group | Education institutions Members of the academy | Local government units and national government agencies Civil society organizations Academic institutions |
| Rewards | Intrinsic | Scholastic prestige for student, professors and the academic institution Opportunities for grants | Best in class Government and industry awards Opportunities for loans and financing of projects |
| Innovation | More likely | Community learning Faster collaboration across educational institutions | Faster diffusion of innovation across industries and fields of study |
| Member reaction to management | Commitment | Commitment to the field of public administration | Commitment to PA, good governance and nation building |

IX. EPILOGUE

This call to action comes at a time when the current Philippine administration, with the support of members of civil society and the international community, are pushing for more transparency and accountability. Information and communication technologies are abundant. E-government programs are being deployed, government websites are now more frequently updated. There are government programs pushing for universal access to the internet and digital literacy for all.

To institutionalize e-participation in the Philippines requires several factors: having available data from the government, people having the consciousness, competence, confidence and connectivity to the internet as well as a learning community that will foster these behaviors. The next step is to establish a model online society that will serve as a benchmark with shared values, norms and behaviors that can be emulated by other online communities.

The success and sustainability of the Digital Praxis of Public Administration is aided by information and communications technology but it relies more on how these online communities are managed. This paper prescribed the Group Theory as one management style that can be applied to administer and to regulate online communities.

It makes sense to leverage two public administration associations in the Philippines, namely ASPAP and PSPA. Creating an online community will help evolve these organizations and expand their reach as well as speed up the learning process. This will open opportunities for collaboration to all members of the association enabling community learning, sharing of best practices as well as knowledge management to aid research and future studies. This can also provide better visibility of the field of public administration in the Philippines which can be used to further advance the study in the country.

It is time for ASPAP and PSPA to be the tip of the spear of e-participation in the Philippines. The age of Digital Praxis of Public Administration has arrived.

X. APPENDIX

ABOUT THE FULL DISCLOSURE POLICY

SOURCE: FDP Portal. (2014, November 27) Retrieved from <http://fdpp.blgs.gov.ph>

- What is FDP?

The Full Disclosure Policy is a government's policy that requires local officials of provinces, cities, and municipalities to fully disclose particular financial transactions of the LGU to keep their constituents informed of how the LGU budget is managed.

- What is the importance of FDP?
 - a) It promotes honest, transparent, and orderly management of public funds
 - b) It helps minimize, if not totally prevent corruption and misuse of public funds
 - c) It increases the people's awareness of the available public funds and the allocated amount for development projects in their localities.
- What laws require FDP?

Section 352, Republic Act No. 7160, otherwise known as the Local Government Code of 1991: "...posting within 30 days from end of each fiscal year in at least three publicly accessible and conspicuous places in the local government unit, a summary of all revenues collected and funds received, including the appropriations and disbursements of such funds during the preceding fiscal year."

Republic Act No. 9184, also known as the Government Procurement Reform Act: "...posting of the Invitation to Bid, Notice to Proceed at Approved Contract in procuring entity's premises, in newspapers of general circulation, the Philippine Government Electric Procurement System (PhilGEPS) and the website of the procuring entity."

Section 84, Republic Act No. 10155 (General Appropriations Act): "...Strict compliance with Sections 288 and 354 of RA No. 7160 and DILG Memorandum Circular No. 2011-134, entitled "Full Disclosure Policy relative to the posting of Local Budget and Finances, Bids and Public Offerings and Status of Programs and Projects", is hereby mandated: Such required documents shall be posted on billboards in all publicly accessible and conspicuous places in the local government unit, in the LGU website and/or in print media of national or local circulation.

Article III, Section 7 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution: "The right of the people to information on matters of public concern shall be recognized. Access to official records, and to documents and papers pertaining to official acts, transactions, or decisions, as well as to government research data used as basis for policy development, shall be afforded the citizen, subject to such limitations as may be provided by law."

- Aside from the portal, where should the documents be posted?
 The documents should also be posted in at least three (3) conspicuous places. Conspicuous places refer to the provincial capital, city hall, municipal hall, barangay hall, and government-owned facilities
- What are the documents need to be posted?

| Type of Report | Frequency of Posting |
|--|----------------------|
| A. Budget Reports | |
| 1. Annual Budget Report | Annual |
| 2. Statement of Debt Service | Annual |
| 3. Statement of Receipts and Expenditures | Annual |
| 4. Quarterly Statement of Cash Flow | Quarterly |
| B. Procurement Reports | |
| 5. Annual Procurement Plan or Procurement List | Annual |
| 6. Items to Bid | Quarterly |
| 7. Bid Results on Civil Works, Goods and Services, and Consulting Services | Quarterly |
| 8. Abstract of Bids as Calculated | Quarterly |
| 9. Supplemental Procurement Plan, if any | Monthly |
| C. Special Purpose Fund Reports | |
| 10. SEF Income and Expenditure Estimates | Annual |
| 11. Report of SEF Utilization | Quarterly |
| 12. Annual GAD Accomplishment Report | Annual |
| 13. Trust Fund (PDAF) Utilization | Quarterly |
| 14. 20% Component of the IRA Utilization | Quarterly |
| 15. Report of Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund (LDRRMF) Utilization | Quarterly |

- What are the penalties for non-complying LGUs?
 Concerned local officials may be SUSPENDED or REMOVED from office on the ground of gross negligence or dereliction of duty in accordance with Section 60 of the Local Government Code of 1991.

HISTORY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Source: DILG. (2014, December 9). Retrieved from <http://www.dilg.gov.ph/page/Who-we-are/19>

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) traces its roots from the Philippine Revolution of 1897. On March 22, 1897, the Katipunan Government established the first Department of Interior at the Tejeros Convention. In 1950, the department functions were transferred to the Office of Local Government (later renamed Local Government and Civil Affairs Office) under the Office of the President. On January 6, 1956, President Ramon Magsaysay created the Presidential Assistant on Community Development (PACD) to implement the Philippine Community Development Program that will coordinate and integrate on a national scale the efforts of various governmental and civic agencies to improve the living conditions in the barrio residents nationwide and make them self-reliant.

In 1972, Presidential Decree No. 1 created the Department of Local Government and Community Development (DLGCD) through Letter of Implementation No. 7 on November 1, 1972. Ten years later or in 1982, the DLGCD was reorganized and renamed Ministry of Local Government (MLG) by virtue of EO No. 777; and in 1987, it was further reorganized and this time, renamed Department of Local Government (DLG) by virtue of EO No. 262.

December 13, 1990, the DLG underwent reorganization into what is now known as the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) by virtue of Republic Act No. 6975. The law also created the Philippine National Police out of the Philippine Constabulary-Integrated National Police, which, together with the National Police Commission, was integrated under the new DILG, the Bureau of Fire Protection, Bureau of Jail Management and Penology and the Philippine Public Safety College; and absorbed the National Action Committee on Anti-Hijacking from the Department of National Defense.

Vision. The Department is primary catalyst for excellence in local governance that nurtures self-reliant, progressive, orderly, safe and globally competitive communities sustained by God-centered and empowered citizenry.

Mission. The Department shall promote peace and order, ensure public safety, and strengthen capability of local government units through active people participation and a professionalized corps of civil servants.

Its mandates include:

- Enhance LGU capacities to improve their performance and enable them to effectively and efficiently deliver services to their constituents
- Establish and prescribe rules, regulations and other issuances implementing laws on public order and safety, the general supervision over local governments and the promotion of local autonomy and community empowerment and monitor compliance thereof;
- Establish a system of coordination and cooperation among the citizenry, local executives and the Department, to ensure effective and efficient delivery of basic services to the public;

HISTORY OF THE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY OFFICE (ICTO)

Source: ICTO. (2012) E-Government Master Plan. Retrieved from

<http://icto.dost.gov.ph/introduction-and-overview-of-e-government-in-the-philippines/>

The Philippine government through Republic Act 322 created the National Computer Center (NCC) in 1971 to implement automation projects and computer-related training programs. In line with Philippines 2000 program, several elements were started to transform the Philippines to a Knowledge Society. These include Republic Act 7925 in 1995, known as the “Public Telecommunications Policy Act of the Philippines,” as well as the National IT Plan (1997).

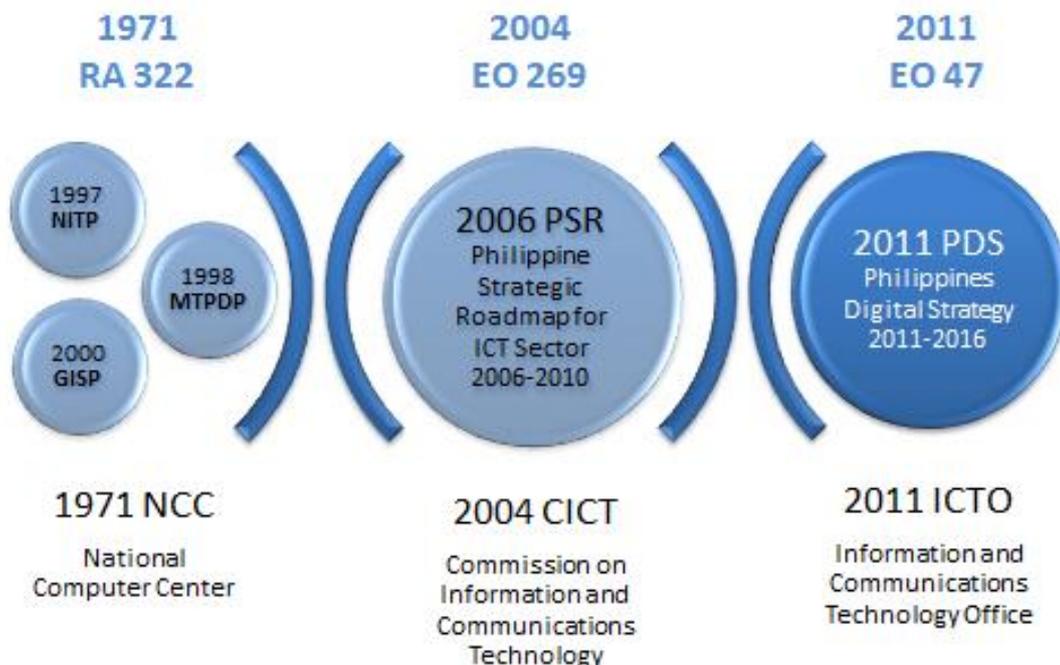
Recognizing ICT as a catalyst to develop new and deliver better public service, the Government Information Systems Plan (GISP) of 2000 envisioned to create an “on-line government” by 2004. In 2004, through Executive Order 269, the Commission on Information

and Communications Technology was established. The Philippine Strategic Roadmap (PSR) for the ICT Sector was created in 2006.

In 2012, through Executive Order 47, CICT was renamed to Information and Communications Technology Office (ICTO) and placed under the Department of Science and Technology. ICTO is mandated to implement the Philippine Digital Strategy 2011-2016 which has four strategic thrusts: Transparent Government & Efficient Services, ICT Industry and Business Innovation, Internet Opportunity for All, and Investing in People: Digital Literacy for All.

In line with the PDS 2011-2016, the E-Government Master Plan (EGMP) of the Philippines was created. The EGMP projects include the iGovPhil to integrate the ICT of the bureaucracy. There are projects to standardize government websites, eSerbisyo to enable online transactions of public services, and the eLGU to automate operational activities performed within the Local Government Unit.

The History of Information and Communications Technology Office (ICTO)



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