



# Legislative Competencies of Newly-Elected Officials Among First Class Municipalities in Region 3

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**Abstract:** This study assessed the legislative competencies of newly-elected officials among first class municipalities in Region 3.

The researcher employed the descriptive research design, quantitative method to assess the legislative competencies of the newly elected officials among First Class Municipalities in Region 3.

The study found out that, the respondents were predominantly 51 and above years of age, males, college graduates, either employed or owned a business prior to employment and have attended legislative-related training prior to being elected and a large majority had sponsored resolutions. However, they need to undergo more training on effective local legislation since significant positive correlation has been noted, under legislative functions, jurisdiction of assigned committees, presiding over committee meetings and relationship building, the more number of hours of legislative training the newly elected officials have, the more adept they are in making laws and policy decisions, and enact these laws on our behalf.

In summary, even though the majority of them have college degrees and their competency level is noticeably higher, they still lack the necessary abilities to put their knowledge to use. In order to advance and produce a continual improvement in the local legislative system as a whole, it is recommended that there be a continuous education and development focused primarily on the knowledge of parliamentary rules and procedure and skills training on effective communication.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Local Governance draws strength and focus from quality local legislation. More than a mere procedural act or legislative formality, legislation is concerned primarily with substance, where its main objective is general welfare and well-being, according to the Task and Responsibilities Checklist of the Sangguniang Panlungsod Newly Elected Officials (NEO), 6th Edition.

The competency of local elected officials is key in the accountability-responsibility linkage in public administration (Dunn and Legge 2001). If the training offered by public service outreach institutes significantly advances the level of competency and professionalism of participating local officials, then practitioners and scholars may want give greater attention to the outcomes of these programs in all regions. In a state and local government review of Battaglio (2008) he underscored that local elected officials have many opportunities to acquire deeper and broader knowledge about government operations. Such programs should help them become not only more informed, responsive actors in the policy process but also more effective agents of oversight. Further, by participating in specialized courses, local managers and service chiefs may be able to devise strategies for improving local services.

According to the Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington (MRSC)(2023), in order to prevent needless conflict and misunderstanding, it is essential to understand how executive staff and municipal and county elected officials' roles and degrees of authority differ from one another. The state constitution, state statutes, local ordinances, and (for home rule cities/counties) local charters all contribute to these tasks and obligations. Roles and responsibilities that are unclear or poorly understood can cause conflict and lower productivity. A clear understanding of duties and responsibilities, on the other hand, can promote more collaboration and boost the productivity of all participants.

In the Philippines, the task of legislation lies in the Senate and Congress on the national level, and the Sanggunian on the local level. There is a Sangguniang Panlalawigan for the whole province, a Sangguniang Bayan for municipalities and Sangguniang Panlungsod for cities.

As for the Sanggunian members, required qualifications are that he/she must be a Filipino citizen, at least 18 years old on election day, a registered voter in the district where he/she intends to be elected, resident of the district where he/she intends to be elected for at least one year before election day and able to read and write in Filipino or any other local language or dialect (Local Government Code of 1991).

To compare qualifications vis-à-vis the functions of the Sanggunian with a focus on the municipal and city levels, the same code lists down the following responsibilities that should be performed by the members of the Sanggunian. They must 1) read and know byheart the powers, duties, and functions of the Sanggunian as enumerated in Section 447 of the Local Government Code of 1991. 2) Organize the Sangguniang Bayan. There is a need to structure the Sanggunian to ensure optimum performance.

With sectorial concerns being the important aspects of local legislation, they must become either members or chairpersons of the committee on appropriations, women, and family, human rights, youth and sports development, environmental protection, and cooperative. 3) Institutionalize a legislative tracking and analysis system, meant to assess the effectiveness of a legislative measure, and create a backstopping committee to act as the research arm of the legislative body. 4) be familiar with the ordinances enacted by previous legislators.

If local sanggunian members are to play an important role in the government of their localities, they must be armed with the basic knowledge, understanding, skills and motivation required of effective development legislators (Ilago, 2006).

Tuquero (2021) further summarized the powers and responsibilities of councilors in the Philippines as follows: approve ordinances and pass resolutions for an efficient and effective municipal government, generate and maximize resources and revenues for the municipality's development plans, program objectives, and priorities, grant franchises, enact ordinances authorizing the issuance of permits or licenses, enact ordinances levying taxes, fees, and charges, regulate activities related to the use of land, buildings, and structures within the municipality, approve ordinances ensuring the efficient and effective delivery of basic services and facilities.

The researcher firmly believes that due to the vast duties and responsibilities of a legislator and its critical role in the churning out of policies towards the promotion of the general welfare of the people, it is high time that their qualification standards should be elevated.

The researcher, who is currently employed as Local Legislative Staff Officer III under the Local Legislative Support Services Division, Office of the Secretary to the Sangguniang Panlungsod, City Government of Tarlac, believed it was appropriate to conduct this study at this point so that it could be used to assess the legislative competencies of newly elected officials among first-class municipalities in Region 3 as they begin their new roles as public servants.

With the enormous powers and functions given to the members of the Sanggunian, there was a need to take a closer look at their competence in embracing their responsibilities. It is within this context that the researcher conducted the study on the legislative competence of newly elected officials among first municipalities in Region 3, with the intention of looking into some ways to assist them to cope with their new responsibilities through research-based capacity development programs.

### 1.1 Conceptual framework

This section presented the paradigm of the conceptual framework of the study. The first box contains the independent variables with the profile of the newly elected officials in terms age, sex, highest educational attainment, total number of hours of training relative to legislation, previous work experience, source of income prior to being elected, and number of resolutions and ordinances authored/sponsored. The second box contains the dependent variables in terms of knowledge in the process of legislation, parliamentary rules and procedures, legislative functions and jurisdiction of assigned committees and under skills namely, effective communication, presiding over committee meetings, relationship building, presentation of legislative proposals along influence.

The input was achieved through the process of data gathering using a questionnaire and to be coupled with an interview with the respondents. Responses in the questionnaire was analyzed using statistical tools such as the frequency and percentage distribution, weighted arithmetic mean, and ordinary ranking. The output would be a proposed program development plan for the enhancement of the legislative competence of Newly-Elected Officials (NEOs), legislative and the local government unit as a whole.

## II RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology section presented the subjects, sources of data and instrument which was used in collecting data. The research design, research locale, respondents of the study, methods of gathering data, and statistical analysis used in this study were also provided.

### 2.1 Research Design

The researcher employed the descriptive research design and quantitative to assess the legislative competencies of the newly elected officials. Descriptive research involves the description, recording, analysis and interpretation of the present nature, composition or processes of phenomena which focuses on prevailing conditions, or how a person, group or thing behaves as it functions in the present. It often involves some type of comparison or contrast. In other words, descriptive research may be defined as purposive process of gathering, analyzing classifying and tabulating data about prevailing conditions, practices, beliefs, processes, trends and cause-effect relationships and then making adequate and accurate interpretation about such data with or without the aid of statistical methods (Kakkar, 2019). The descriptive research was done to determine the profile and the legislative competencies of the newly elected officials.

## 2.2 Population and Sample

The respondents of the study has a total population of 576, wherein it is composed of nine (9) per municipality which includes eight (8) sanggunian member and one (1) Municipal Vice Mayor, with a total population of 432 elected officials, wherein, 153 of which are newly elected officials and 279 are 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> termers. While three (3) members of the Office of the Secretary to the Sanggunian, consisting of the Secretary to the Sanggunian and two (2) local legislative personnel who are directly responsible for the business of the sanggunian, make up 144 of the total population for local legislative personnel.

## 2.3 Data and Sources of Data

The researcher used the questionnaire checklist, documentary analysis and interview as methods to collect data. The researcher paid a visit to various libraries to read and search on various thesis, books, journals and periodicals that the researcher deemed important as reference for the related literature and studies.

**Questionnaire.** The researcher designed a questionnaire checklist for the respondents to choose on the appropriate answers pertaining to the description/assessment of the legislative competencies of newly-elected officials among first class municipalities Region 3. The main instrument used in this study is a questionnaire. There were two (2) sets of questionnaires, one for the newly-elected officials and another for the 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> term officials and local legislative personnel.

The questionnaire for the newly-elected officials determined the demographic profile of the newly-elected officials in terms of age, sex, highest educational attainment, total number of hours of trainings attended relative to legislation, previous work experience, source of income prior to being elected, and number of resolutions and ordinances sponsored/authored. The questionnaire for group 2 responders delved on the level of competence of the newly-elected officials in terms of process of legislation, parliamentary rules and procedures, legislative functions and jurisdiction of assigned committees and in terms of skills competencies namely effective communication, presiding over committee meetings, relationship building and presentation of legislative proposals along influence. Items for this part were extracted from the duties and responsibilities of the Sanggunian as stipulated in the Local Government Code of 1991 and the book of Benedicto M. Gonzales Jr. entitled: "Local Legislation and Governance: Catalyst of National Development". For the competence on effective communication, relationship- building and policy research and analysis, items were taken from the study of Guinid (2018). The last part sought the suggestions and insights of the respondents on how to improve the level of legislative competence of the newly- elected officials.

**Documentary Analysis.** The researcher visited various libraries to read and review several books, journals and unpublished theses and dissertations that are related to the topic. In addition, the researcher also opted to search on the internet to gather data virtually as well as personal visit to all concerned local government units among first class municipalities as well as to concerned government agencies such as Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) to conduct survey and gather the necessary information.

**Interview.** The researcher conducted unstructured interview to the respondents namely, newly-elected officials, SP staff members and local legislative personnel and other personnel directly responsible in the local legislative processes.

A letter of request allowing the researchers to conduct an interview and distribute questionnaire to the newly-elected officials of first class municipalities in Region 3 and other concerned personnel was sent to the Municipal/City Vice Mayor and Presiding Officer to allow them to participate in the study. Questionnaires were either personally administered and/or facilitated online depending on the preference of the respondent, hence, the retrieval of the questionnaires was swiftly done.

## 2.4 Statistical tools

Statistical Treatment that was used in the study was Likert Scale, Mean, Frequency, Percentage and Rank. Question Number two (2) involving the assessment of knowledge competencies particularly on process of legislation, parliamentary rules and procedures, legislative functions and jurisdiction of assigned committees and in terms of skills competencies namely effective communication, presiding over committee meetings, relationship building and presentation of legislative proposals along influence wherein Likert Scale and Mean was employed.

Finally, the frequency ranks were used to analyze the respondents' responses as to their suggestions in enhancing the legislation competence of the Newly-Elected Officials (NEOs). A 5-point likert scale was also use to answer the level of legislative competencies of newly-elected officials among first class municipalities in Region 3.

## 2.5 Ethical Consideration

The study focused on the level of legislative competencies of newly-elected officials among first class municipalities in Region 3. The subject of the study might affect their credibility as elected officials. The second/third term officials and local legislative personnel assessed the newly-elected officials and since this might compromise their relationships with their colleagues/heads/superiors an ethical clearance was secured from all those involved. This included an assurance that any information gathered from them shall be dealt with strict confidentiality according to the ethics of research and the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Participants were allowed to withdraw anytime if he/she feels uncomfortable filling up the questionnaires. Also, any potential respondent who will refuse to participate was replaced.

Further, to maintain the academic integrity of the study with no infringement of intellectual property rights, the different authors and other references was properly cited and acknowledged by the researcher according to standards of the American Psychological Association (APA).

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Summary of Findings

From the data analyzed, the following findings were drawn:

1. The majority of respondents (37.78%) were above the age of 51, with a mean age of 44.44, and a majority of them (71.85) were males. College graduates made up the majority, making up 76.30 percent.
2. The majority (54.07 percent) of respondents had worked in the private sector before being elected, while more than half of respondents (53.33 percent) had had prior legislative training totaling 10 hours or less. Prior to being elected, the majority (80.74%) had a job, while 17.04% were business owners. A largemajority (90.49%) had sponsored resolutions.
3. In general, under knowledge competencies, newly-elected officials were rated "Very Satisfactory" in the process of legislation, parliamentary rules and procedures, legislative functions, and jurisdiction of assigned committees with a grand mean rating of 3.39.
4. While "Excellent", under knowledge competencies, in terms of legislative functions and jurisdiction of assigned committees with particular attention in attending all regular and special sessions of the sanggunian with a mean rating of 3.65 percent and holding of public hearing or ocular inspection either on a joint or independent manner depending on the referral with a mean rating of 3.50, respectively.
5. In general for the skills competencies, Newly-Elected Officials were assessed to be "Very Satisfactory" on the indicators of effective communication, presiding over committee meetings, relationship building and presentation of legislative proposals along influence with grand mean ratings of 3.24, 3.27, 3.39 and 3.32, respectively.
6. While, "Excellent", for skills competencies, under relationship building with particular attention on the indicator of maintaining a proactive and harmonious working relationship with their colleagues and constituents with the highest mean of 3.52 rating.
7. As to age, educational attainment and number of ordinances made, there has been a significant positive correlation noted ( $r=.177, p<05$ ), ( $r=.189, p<05$ ), ( $r=.175, p<05$ ), respectively, all in terms of jurisdiction of assigned committees.
8. While, under hours of legislative training, four (4) significant positive correlation has been noted, legislative functions, jurisdiction of assigned committees, presiding over committee meetings and relationship building.
9. For previous work experience, significant positive correlation noted ( $r=.169, p<05$ ) under presiding over committee meetings.
10. No significant correlation for the indicators of gender, and number of resolutions made.

#### 3.2 Conclusions

In view of the foregoing findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The respondents of the study were predominantly 51 and above years of age, males, college graduates, either employed or owned a business prior to employment.
2. They have attended legislative-related training prior to being elected and a largemajority had sponsored resolutions.
3. Under knowledge competencies, newly-elected officials in general, are "Very Satisfactory" in the process of legislation, parliamentary rules and procedures, legislative functions, and jurisdiction of assigned committees.
4. But are "Excellent" in terms of legislative functions and jurisdiction of assigned committees with particular attention in attending all regular and special sessions of the sanggunian and holding of public hearing or ocular inspection either on a joint or independent manner depending on the referral.
5. Under skills competencies, The newly-elected officials in general, are "Very Satisfactory" in effective communication, presiding over committee meetings, relationship building and presentation of legislative proposals along influence.
6. They are "Excellent", for skills competencies, in terms of relationship building with particular attention on the indicator of maintaining a proactive and harmonious working relationship with their colleagues and constituents.
7. There is a significant positive correlation noted between age, highest educational attainment and number of ordinances made of the respondents and their jurisdiction of assigned committees.
8. While, under hours of legislative training, four (4) significant positive correlation has been noted, legislative functions, jurisdiction of assigned committees, presiding over committee meetings and relationship building.
9. For previous work experience, significant positive correlation noted under presiding over committee meetings.
10. No significant correlation for the indicators of gender, and number of resolutions made as against their skills and knowledge competencies.

#### 3.3 Recommendations

In view of the foregoing findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are hereby presented for consideration.

1. To possibly amend the Philippine Constitution, focusing mainly but not limited to requiring basic tertiary education, possessing integrity in personal and career life, and with interpersonal and communication skills as a requirement for candidates for public office.
2. For the Department and Interior and Local Government (DILG) in collaboration with the Local Government Academy and Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP) being its implementing arm, and other similar academic institution such as University of the Philippines -National College of Public Administration (UP-NCPAG) to kindly consider creating/ updating

- a new program for newly elected officials specifically for the legislative department with special emphasis on its existing five (5) program components, namely, (1) Ensuring smooth transition, (2) Jumpstarting Local Governance, (3) Looking forward to better governance, (4) Sharpening the Saw, and (5) Enhancing LGU Performance.
3. That before approval for registration in the elective position, a thorough and rigorous short course training with a proficiency examination on legislative procedures and the duties of elective officials be required to ensure readiness and competence in the performance of their duties upon assumption of office;
  4. That at the conclusion of the local government unit's rating period, newly- elected officials be required to submit Individual Performance Commitment and Review (IPCR) forms as a tool to assess their dedication to the achievement of office goals and objectives and accomplishments.
  5. For newly elected officials to possibly undergo mandatory training, seminars, orientations, short courses, and training on basic law, effective communication and parliamentary rules and procedures, as well as continuing education on subjects falling under the purview of their designated committees, to improve and broaden their understanding of all facets of legislation.
  6. Employment of a capable and sufficient number of legislative staff members with expertise in local legislative affairs to further provide a more effective and efficient policy and program formulation.
  7. Sangguniang Bayan and Sangguniang Barangay to possibly hold discussions and consultations to Sangguniang Panlungsod and/or Sangguniang Panlalawigan on a regular basis to discuss and confirm the urgent pressing needs of their residents so that they can adequately address through legislation, this is also to intensify the collaboration and coordination of the legislative body of the government.
  8. The SB Secretary and local legislative personnel to be required to have a continuing education on the basics of law and other relevant training in order to effectively fulfill their important role as the secretary of the sanggunian.
  9. The Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals be incorporated into and/or aligned when local and national policies are being developed, with a focus on the goal of addressing the needs and aspirations of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to address their own needs and aspirations.
  10. That this study may be carried out on a national scale with emphasis on the evaluation of elected officials' legislative competencies and aspects that were not done in the current research.

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