POLICY CAPACITY AND E-GOVERNANCE: ASSESSMENT OF THE E-GOVERNMENT SERVICES OF VALENCIA CITY, BUKIDNON

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ABSTRACT

The rise of electronic governance has become a dominant force shaping the future of government. This study focuses on assessing the policy capacity of e-government services in LGU-Valencia City. It explores the competencies and capabilities of the local government in delivering basic e-government services, identifies strengths and weaknesses in their implementation, and provides recommendations for improvement. The findings highlight the analytical, operational, and political capacity of LGU-Valencia City in terms of e-governance, emphasizing essential competencies such as human resources, data management, policy support, technical expertise, and training. Operational capacity themes include organizational structure, financial and infrastructure resources, technology and information systems, and policy framework. Political capacity themes encompass leadership,

citizen participation, stakeholder engagement, transparency, and intergovernmental relations. The study also reveals the presence of government-to-government (G2G) e-services in Valencia City, emphasizing collaborations and partnerships among agencies. Strengths and weaknesses of different e-government types (G2B, G2C, G2E) are identified, alongwith challenges in citizen acceptance and the positive impact of e-governance on businesses and employee relationships. Overall, the study concludes that LGU- Valencia City demonstrates policycapacity and readiness for digital innovation. The study suggests future researchers adopt a multi- method approach, compare policy capacity across LGUs, engage stakeholders and end-users, and emphasize capacity-building. These recommendations aim to contribute to improving governance and public services by conducting relevant and rigorous studies on policy capacity and e-governance in LGUs.

Keywords: E-governance, e-government, policy capacity, triangulation.

INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) encompass a wide range of technical tools for generating, sharing, and exchanging information. ICT's role in globalization, advancing industries and permeating various aspects of life like finance, health, education, and governance, is evident. Electronic government (e-government) has emerged, integrating technology with governance systems, termed e-governance. This involves secure information operations from gathering to dissemination. ICT empowers citizens by offering information and services, and promoting engagement in administrative processes. Governments enhance services, reduce costs, and elevate living standards via digitalization and structural transformation. E-government's growth and streamlining of administrative tasks through ICT have considerable societal and economic impacts. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of digital governance, with effective e-government services aiding pandemic response and sustainable development.

In response, governments globally, including the Philippines, embrace digitalization. Senator Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go

filed the E-Governance Act of 2020 to enhance service provision during health crises. The House of Representatives approved HB No. 7327, institutionalizing e-governance for improved service delivery and recognizing ICT's role in national development. However, these efforts are limited at the national level, and e-governance at the local level faces underutilization.

To address this, a study assesses LGU Valencia City's policy capacity, identifying competencies and capabilities. Analytical, operational, and political skills, as well as capabilities at individual, organizational, and system levels, are analyzed. Evaluating strengths and weaknesses in implementing e-government services can guide improvements. This research aims to bridge capacity gaps in LGUs' e-government implementation and contribute to legislative frameworks, enhancing e-governance paradigms.

Statement of the Problem

The focus of the study was to provide an assessment of the policy capacity of e-government servicesin LGU-Valencia City. Specifically, it was intended to answer the following questions:

1. What is the policy capacity of LGU-Valencia City in delivering basic e-government services in terms of its competences?
2. What is the policy capacity of LGU-Valencia City in delivering basic e-government services in terms of its capabilities?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of LGU-Valencia City in implementing e-government services?

Objective of the Study

The study was geared towards assessing the policy capacity of e-government services of LGU- Valencia City. It was intended to accomplish the following objectives:

1. Evaluate the policy capacity of LGU-Valencia City in delivering basic e-government services in terms of its competences.
2. Assess the policy capacity of LGU-Valencia City in delivering basic e-government services in terms of its capabilities.

3. Determine the strengths and weaknesses of LGU-Valencia City in implementing e-government services.

Significance of the Study

This study can provide a significant contribution to assessing the policy capacity of e-government services in Bukidnon through the lens of the LGU-Valencia City to strengthen the E-Governance Act so that it can support possible further legislative frameworks for local government units in the Philippines. The researchers in this study understand the public value of e-government services and understanding e-government implementation through policy capacity allows in-depth analysis of the current government digital landscape of Valencia City, Bukidnon.

Moreover, it is perceived to be beneficial to the following entities: First, to the residents of the city, the study provides policy capacity assessment e-government services for them to give a better understanding of digitalization. Second, local government officials can gain necessary insights for the crafting of policies, implementing ordinance, and supporting resolutions that could address the gaps and weaknesses of the implementation of e-government of Valencia City. Third, lawmakers may look upon this study for the legal basis for pushing the legislative framework of digitalization in local levels to supplement the lacking specific national policies and laws for e-government. The application of e-government solutions has and will remained incremental (Agcaoili, 2022) if digital divide, inadequate ICT infrastructure, and out-dated laws have hampered the delivery of an efficient electronic government system (Philippine Institute for Development Studies, 2022). Lastly, researchers and academicians can utilize the background information of this research for future studies related to e-government. Egovernment can improve public trust through increasing transparency, citizen participation, and by providing the public with more control of actions and decisions of their government (Castelnovo, 2013).

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The study is primarily concerned with the assessment of the policy capacity of e-government services in Bukidnon particularly in the local government unit of Valencia City, Bukidnon. The study presents only

theviewpoints of the participants from the aforementioned locale and is not representative of the general perception of the entire country. Nonetheless, the results of this research may be used as a legislative framework in local government-level policies. Specifically, it only highlights the following objectives: evaluate the policy capacity of LGU-Valencia City in delivering basic e-government services in terms of competencies, assess the policy capacity of LGU-Valencia City in delivering basic e-government services in terms of capabilities, and determine the strengths and weaknesses of LGU-Valencia City.

The province of Bukidnon only has two cities and the researchers take into consideration having the locationof the study in a city rather than a municipality for it is more likely to have digital developments, thus choosing LGU-Valencia City. Respondents were only a total of 6 government-related workers as respondents through purposive sampling for the interview and 30 respondents were determined through simple random sampling for the survey. The study is purely qualitative utilizing triangulation method of data collection and analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

E-governance is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that requires a holistic approach to understand fully. Researchers and scholars have proposed various conceptualizations, identified benefits and challenges,and identified success factors for e-governance initiatives.

Conceptualizing E-governance

Scholars have conceptualized e-governance in various ways, depending on the context and purpose of its use. Heeks (2001) defines e-governance as the use of ICTs to transform government by improving efficiency, effectiveness, and democratic legitimacy. Similarly, Bhatnagar (2004) defines e-governance as the use of ICTs to enhance the reach and quality of government services, improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government processes, and increase citizen participation in governance.

Our lives have been completely transformed by the Internet, personal computers, and mobile phones. Governments all over the world are aware of the value and advantages of e-government and are searching

for solutions to improve their services to the public as a result of this innovation (Von, 2019). Using information technology (including Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) by government organizations is referred to as "e-government" and has the potential to change how individuals, businesses, and other branches of the government interact with one another (World Bank, 2015).

By increasing effectiveness, enhancing services, and enhancing accessibility to public services, e- government has the potential to significantly benefit society. Additionally, it makes government operations more accountable and transparent. However, it's vital to take into account any potential drawbacks, such as unequal internet access, the accuracy of information, covert government objectives, hyper-surveillance, cost, and inaccessibility for some groups of people. E-government adoption and implementation should be thoroughly evaluated to make sure the advantages outweigh the hazards, as with any new technology (Adam, 2023).

Various historical factors can be referenced to this government's reinvention (Heeks 1999). In order to provide economical and accessible services, data, and knowledge through information and communication technologies, governments throughout the world are faced with the matter of transformation and the necessity to reinvent government systems.

Electronic-government or e-Government as it is most commonly understood today emerged as an agenda for general reform of the public sectors of liberal democratic political systems during the early 1990s. U.S. President Bill Clinton's administration led the way with the 1993 National Performance Review of the federal bureaucracy. According to Evans and Yen (2006), it is important to evaluate the international scope of e-Government the common development of different form of government in different countries will have an essential impact on the ability of these governments to function well.

As shown in a survey conducted in Europe by the United Nations Subgroup C7 e-Government for a Greater Development and for the Government for Management and Sustainable Development, the quality of living of citizens is directly interconnected with the level of e-Government services and ICT-related opportunities. The study respondents identified the ability to change as the main obstacle in

implementing e-services and indicated that individual coherent strategy and public policy in the e-government field should be aligned to international standards and this shows the essential role of e-governance in bridging the digital divide and developing a citizen-oriented, equitable digital society. Developed countries having the resources have an edge in utilizing technology to push forward e-Government while developing countries continue to push forward their technology, information, and education strategy and will be moving towards levelling an e-Government system of those of the developed countries (Evans & Yen, 2006).

The government provides service in several ways and there are four widely accepted and established types of e-Government (Biswas, 2022). First, the G2C (Government to Citizen), with key objectives are to guarantee that all citizens receive information equitably, accept citizen comments, and enhance welfare services. Second, G2G (Government to Government) refers to improving the quality of government operations through cost reduction, performance management, and forging collaborative partnerships within the executive branch. Third, G2B (Government to Business) includes public key infrastructure, standards for electronic transactions, and secure payment methods. Fourth, G2E (Government to Employee) makes it easier for employees to manage their finances and receive information about pay and benefit policies online.

Considering the principle of the citizen is central to politics, government, and governance, the government is obligated to establish a relationship with its constituents through an open and accountable system (Gupta & Jana, 2003). The study of Gupta and Jana (2003) on a flexible framework of e-government evaluation is utilized to select a suitable strategy to assess the tangible and intangible advantages of e-Government. Evaluating the effectiveness of the system is vital to ensure the performance of e-Government that manifest good Government Resource Planning (GRP) system in this analysis (Gupta & Jana 2003). Most of e-government studies are focused in national governments and local government units except for cities/municipalities and barangays. However, it is still of significance using the results and evaluation of the study by Gupta and Jana (2003) is a step forward in determining if e-government has been implemented effectively or not, and whether it has been successful not just in the national level but also at the grassroots level.

Another interesting study to recognize is of Rotchanakitumnuai (2008), wherein he explored the users'value of e-government services in terms of their quality and risk perspectives, or the EGOVSQUAL-RISK model, which adds to the collection of data regarding these services. However, the disadvantage of this assessment is it is only limited by the determinants of the value of e-government services were developed employing small samples of demographics only concerning income taxpayers. Since Rotchanakitumnuai's (2008) study is primarily quantitative in character and only generates a database with minimal qualitative narrative, it is difficult for other researchers and academic academics to understand because it is so complex. By pursuing qualitative studies which the researchers are focusing on a very specific area, we can fill in the gaps in the aforementioned study.

According to Alpopi and Burlacu (2021), the effectiveness of e-government solutions at the international level always varies on the fund, technical and government resources that a specific country institution is ready to use, there must be eagerness from the government. Despite the challenging decline in equipment prices, in particular the lack of financial resources amid budgetary constraints in recent years due to the economic crisis, there are still problems, the crisis being considered at the time the biggest cause of the limitation of government locally. The pandemic health crisis has further changed and pushed the limits of technology, which has been transformed into a true universal panacea for solving relatively vital economic activities for a national economy in a global context. This generally means that the pandemic accelerated the need for digital governance. However, the modalities of action remain open. The study by Alpopi and Burlacu (2021) is particularly noteworthy for the extensive evaluation of its indicators. Since this study is being done at the global level, localizing it would increase its relevance and allow for replication in other local research.

As per Boldyreva et al. (2018), e-Government is important to make an exploration about citizen's interaction. These types of exploration work serve for studying the factors impacting citizens' intention to use electronic systems taking into account similar moments as trust, the anticipated threat and political Effectiveness. e-government initiatives do not often take off. It works well in developed nations but not in emerging nations because to key differences that affect the country's structure, electronic preparedness and citizen growth, public

personnel, and technologists, as well as the country's conceptual and practical challenges (Boldyreva et al., 2018). Citizens' intentions to utilize an e-government system may be influenced by variables such as their level of trust and perception of risk. The study by Boldyreva et al. (2018) suggests increasing citizen engagement, and it would be easy to account for the characteristics or aims of a specific study by focusing the study of e-governance at the municipal or city level.

E-Government in Philippine Context

E-government development can be traced back to the National Computer Centre, which was established in 1971 to begin automating government procedures in the Philippines. The year 1972 marked the declaration of martial law, and it was not lifted until the EDSA revolution in 1986. After the revolution, democratic institutions began to operate, and growth-oriented policies were put into place. In the past two decades, the Philippines has witnessed six ICT strategic plans and six implementation organizations (UN-ESCAP, 2018).

E-Government platforms have also been built by the Philippine government to deliver effective citizen services. The nation placed 71st out of 193 countries in the United Nations e-Government Survey 2016, which evaluated the state of each nation's telecommunications infrastructure, human resources' capacity to promote and use ICT, and the accessibility of its online services and information. Recent e-government studies have demonstrated that over time, both the government and citizens have benefited from it. Researchers have documented several notable effects of e-government on its stakeholders, including decreased corruption, faster service delivery, fostering good governance practices, increased transparency in government, and empowerment of the poor.

As emphasized by the Department of Information and Communications Technology (2014), a digitally empowered and integrated government that provides responsive and transparent online citizen-centered services for a globally competitive Filipino nation is how the Philippines' EGovernment program is intended to function. In the political arena, technology had a strong impact in its processes and operations. By offering a publicly accessible, simply useable, and current online platform of digital public records, the overarching concept of open government acknowledges that good governance stems from the principle of transparency (Capili, 2015).

Additionally, the Philippines came in at number 54 among the member countries for the evaluation of online service delivery, which highlighted the growing significance of integrated online service delivery (Reyes & Tangkeko, 2017). The national government agencies' initial experiences in developing, maintaining, and improving their websites show that, despite the present resource constraints in the nation, there is an optimistic outlook among them regarding achieving the full realization of the nation's vision for the Filipino people to benefit from e-information, e-services, and e-consultation in the future, depending on how one interprets the importance of ICT investments in the organizations (Mirandilla & Pascual, 2005).

However, the majority of the Philippines' government e-services continue to lack transactional features and exist in isolation from other related e-services, despite the country's overall improvement in the United Nations EGovernment Survey rankings over time. The creation of an e-government bill to specify how the government would manage and use information technologies to more effectively deliver services can be inferred from a closer examination of the government policies and agenda of the Philippines prior to the 2008 UN e-Government Survey, such as the Philippine ICT Roadmap. The measure was designed to solve important issues with data sharing across government agencies, data privacy, and system interoperability, which were then developing ideas in e-government and later gained popularity as the whole-of government approach (Reyes & Tangkeko, 2017).

The digital age has been a long time coming and the Philippines have also taken legislative steps to utilize the trend of digitalization. Senator Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go on Monday, July 27, 2020 files bills formalizing the government's shift to electronic governance; claims that the use of a digital platform will enhance service provision to Filipinos in the face of a health crisis. Recently, in the first State of the Nation Address (SONA) of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., there are 19 priority bills the President asked Congress to pass, one of which is the e-Government Act which will provide for the formation of the e-Government Master Plan, which will include all e-government services, activities and initiatives.

If the Philippine government's faith in ICT translates into serious and aggressive efforts to address the socio-political and economic

constraints, it is not impossible for e-government to contribute to the attainment of the country's Millennium Development Goals (Mirandilla & Pascual, 2005).

METHODOLOGY

This chapter concentrates on the question of how the problem was investigated. The methodology includes discussions on the following elements: research design, participants of the study, locale of the study, instrumentation, data gathering procedure, and data analysis.

Research Design

A qualitative study was used to examine the details of policy capacity and how dynamics of coordination and decision-making (Asmorowati, 2020) play out between policy-making and implementation in Valencia City, Bukidnon. This method enabled an in-depth analysis of the newly introduced government digitalization with the E-Governance Act whether it was well implemented or needs further development.

This research is principally qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive to evaluate the e-government services employed by the LGU-Valencia City. This research utilized a technique called triangulation includes gathering information from several sources to provide a more comprehensive picture of a subject matter (Carter, 2014). Moreover, these data sources were further analyzed independently before it was triangulated.

The first method was acquiring primary sources through interviews with local government officials/workers as sources of empirical data. The second method was a survey questionnaire to the local residents of Valencia City to collect the views of residents. The third method was exploring literature review, documents, communications, media sources, journals, articles, undergraduate theses, and online sources that are pertinent to and related to this study to be secondary sources.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in Valencia City, Bukidnon.

Participants of the Study

The researchers interviewed five participants who are government-related workers determined through purposive sampling. For the survey, there were 30 participants from Valencia City randomly chosen.

Instrumentation

The researchers prepared guide questions designed for the interview that allow participants to answer in an open-ended manner. This allows interviewees to fully express their ideas, opinions, and convictions regarding e-government in Valencia City, Bukidnon.

Questions in the survey utilized an open-ended format as well. The research instrument was subjected to the approval of the research adviser after which it was subjected to a thorough pre-test in order to determine its reliability to achieve the desired objectives. Subsequent revisions were made after the pre-test in order to achieve wordings that prevent bias context and achieve the desired result. Participants were given the option of viewing the transcript of their interview and were able to make modifications to their comments and answers.

Data Gathering Procedure

A letter of approval was sent to the City of Valencia for permission to conduct the study. The study involved gathering information from respondents using the structured questionnaire for the survey designed to collect data. This data collection included questionnaires, interviews, and research. The questionnaires was given to the participants and given enough time to answer the survey. The interview questions were used to explore the views, experiences and perceptions of all research participants. The interviews maintained an emphasis on understanding the participants' point of view surrounding their understanding of e-government services present to their city. Guide questions were prepared to structure the interviews; however, the approaches were flexible and semi-formal.

The participants in the study were asked to sign a consent form before beginning the interview. This allowed for the use of their personal understanding and narratives in the study, as well as their ideas, and perceptions regarding e-government in their city. The participants

were assured that complete confidentiality is maintained. Interviews were audio recorded for purposes of transcription, and all respondents were made aware of the audio recording before beginning the interview. All interview questions, as well as an outline of the interview process, methods, and reporting measures, were provided to participants prior to the agreed-upon interview date. A participant's inability or unwillingness to offer informed consent precluded him or her from participating in the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with a transcription of each interview to find significant data. These interviews were recorded with the permission of the interviewee. All audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, regardless of how intelligible the transcript may be when it is read back. In this study, data analysis was evaluated by the researchers with the aid of the Triangulation Method. The findings of the study were an exhaustive description of the matter under study.

For each transcript of the interview, significant statements that pertain to the themes of e-government were extracted. Each was read several times in an attempt to identify major code themes that served as the basis for the description and result of the study. For the survey questionnaire, descriptive analysis was used to help describe, show or summarize data points in a constructive way for e-government services of the people. Primary and secondary sources were obtained and validated through internal and external criticism of data.

The results and discussion of research regarding policy capacity and e-governance are important for improving public sector performance and enhancing the capacity of governments to address complex policy challenges. By providing insights into the relationship between these two variables, researchers can help to guide the development of more effective e-governance initiatives and support the achievement of policy goals.

RESULTS

All the relevant codes gathered which have undergone manual analysis is presented in this chapter. The results and discussion of research regarding policy capacity and e-governance are important

for improving public sector performance and enhancing the capacity of governments to address complex policy challenges. By providing insights into the relationship between these two variables, researchers can help to guide the development of more effective e-governance initiatives and support the achievement of policy goals. Results are presented in accordance to the order of the problems as stated to the themes that were identified, in-depth descriptive analysis was employed, and data sources were utilized. Tables are utilized by the researchers to show results and findings from interviews and surveys. The results and discussion is subdivided into 3 parts the generated themes of policy capacity of e-governance in Valencia City Bukidnon, descriptive analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of LGU-Valencia City, and substantiating findings from data sources. Researchers affirmed old propositions at the same time generated new insights into the ways in which public sector organizations function and how they can be improved in the context of LGU-Valencia City.

This study delved into the e-governance competence of LGU-Valencia City, drawing insights from interviews with government workers. Analyzing the data, five key themes emerged under analytical capacity: human resources, data collection and management, policy and decision support, technical expertise, and training. Government workers noted the city's adeptness in gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data to shape policy and decisions. Operational capacity, also gleaned from interviews, yielded themes like organizational structure, human and financial resources, infrastructure, technology, policy framework, and monitoring. Political capacity, the third dimension, highlights leadership, democratic processes, citizen engagement, stakeholder involvement, policy development, transparency, accountability, and inter-governmental relations.

The study found government-to-government (G2G) e-services thriving in Valencia City, emphasizing inter-agency collaborations. Strengths and weaknesses were identified in different government types (G2G, G2B, G2C, G2E), revealing the limited use of e-governance in certain areas, creating digital communication gaps, particularly during disasters. E-governance positively impacted businesses in the city, simplifying transactions and enhancing government-business interactions. Citizens actively engaged with e-governance through media, yet challenges persisted, such as citizens' hesitance to embrace e-government due to limited online technology skills. In the realm of

government-to-employee relationships, e-governance had a presence in Valencia City. Its existence was seen as a potential avenue for job creation, skill enhancement, and improved knowledge among employees.

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions were made based on the themes gained from the participants, descriptive analysis from the surveys, and data sources. The following conclusions are arranged in accordance to answer the research problems.

It is evident today that there is increasing use of information and communication technology to improve governance through strengthening the government involvement in service delivery, public administration and promotion of participatory in every undertaken of the government. In recent years, many LGUs in the Philippine significantly increased their web presence, a development made possible by the introduction of the Electronic Commerce Act in 2000 and the subsequent deployment of programs to assist the adoption of the law by government. Places all over the places starting and continually utilizing the capacity and capabilities of e-governance.

The policy capacity of LGU-Valencia City to e-government services in terms of its competences and capabilities shows its readiness towards the transition to digital innovation. Embracing its analytical, operational, and political capacity, it allows to ability of the government to develop, implement, and evaluate public policies effectively which is the current state of Valencia City. This has been made clear, but mostly to those who work in government. However, it still needs to reach organizational, individual, or system levels to exhibit the abilities and resources to thrive in important governance. The results may have been quite counterintuitive to Siar's (2015) contention that LGUs in the Philippines are underutilized. However, these insights may be used to comprehend e-governance in cities and integrate its strengths in implementing policies or filling up conceptual gaps.

The LGU Valencia is continually implementing the use of different types of e-governance like the Government to Government (G2G), Government to Business (G2B), Government to Citizen (G2C)

and Government to Employee (G2E). It shows that the presence of e-governance is continually felt by the people and able to identify and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of e-government practices and implementation.

To harness the full potential of e-government, it is crucial to address these weaknesses through targeted strategies. Governments should focus on improving digital infrastructure, promoting digital literacy, addressing security concerns, and engaging citizens in the design and implementation of e-government initiatives. By doing so, e-government can become a powerful tool for efficient and inclusive governance in the digital age. It cannot be denied that it would take time to eradicate the challenges or address the weaknesses of e-government as it is not simply an issue of connectivity, lack of access, or low computer and Internet literacy. It is a gap that, as Sy (2002) noted, is conditioned by traditional social divisions of class, income, education, gender, age, ethnicity, and social geography.

positive local governance efforts, and we wish them continued success in their endeavors. To our respondents, we express our gratitude for being approachable and cooperative. The time and effort you dedicated during the survey and interview process were crucial to the success of this research. Our greatest appreciation goes to our parents for their endless love, prayers, support, and sacrifices. Without their unselfish love and unwavering support, this achievement would not have been possible. Finally, the researchers acknowledge the Almighty God for providing strength, knowledge, ability, and the opportunity to undertake this research study. Without His guidance and mercy, this research and all our daily endeavors would not have been possible. To God be the Glory!

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