

The Realm of Federalism: appreciation to a prospective shift on the form of Philippine Government

O reino do federalismo: apreciação por uma possível mudança na forma de governo filipino

El reino del federalismo: apreciación de un posible cambio en la forma de gobierno filipino

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ABSTRACT

The current administration of the Republic of the Philippines is seen as an ardent advocate of federalism. This research study purports to explore the appreciation and understanding of the youth – specifically the Liberal Arts students in higher educational institutions who have the knowledge on the government forms, laws, and history of our system of government as regards a possible shift in the system of government. This study utilized descriptive qualitative design through Giorgi's method of data analysis. Findings show that informants having perceived the possible shift on the system of government of the Philippines, have led to three clustered themes namely: (1) federalism defined, (2) benefits of federalism, and, (3) possible challenges during the transition period. Moreover, it is concluded that informants defined federalism as a system of government where powers are being decentralized to the local government and the latter being independent from the national / central government. Standardized local legislation, increased economic status, and responsive local government were identified as the benefits of federalism. Lack of proper knowledge, constitutional proceedings and amendments, and, costly and time-consuming were cited as the possible challenges during the transition period on the shift in our system of government. We suggest that, in order to actualize federalism, there is a need to enhance governance capabilities through transparency and accountability and a clearer definition of local autonomy should be observed.

Keywords: local government; central government; federalism; system of government of the Philippines; prospective shift; government transition; challenges during transition; benefits of federalism

RESUMEN

La actual administración de la República de Filipinas se considera una ardiente defensora del federalismo. Este estudio de investigación pretende explorar la apreciación y comprensión de los jóvenes, específicamente los estudiantes de artes liberales en instituciones de educación superior que tienen el conocimiento sobre las formas de gobierno, las leyes y la historia de nuestro sistema de gobierno con respecto a un posible cambio en el sistema de Gobierno. Este estudio utilizó un diseño cualitativo descriptivo a través del método de análisis de datos de Giorgi. Los hallazgos muestran que los informantes, habiendo percibido el posible cambio en el sistema de gobierno de Filipinas, han llevado a tres temas agrupados a saber: (1) federalismo definido, (2) beneficios del federalismo y, (3) posibles desafíos durante el período de transición. Además, se concluye que los informantes definieron el federalismo como un sistema de gobierno donde los poderes se están descentralizando al gobierno local y este último es independiente del gobierno nacional / central. La legislación local estandarizada, el estatus económico mejorado y el gobierno local receptivo se identificaron como los

benefícios del federalismo. La falta de conocimiento adecuado, procedimientos y enmiendas constitucionales y costosos y lentos fueron citados como los posibles desafíos durante el período de transición en el cambio en nuestro sistema de gobierno. Sugerimos que, para actualizar el federalismo, es necesario mejorar las capacidades de gobernanza a través de la transparencia y la rendición de cuentas y se debe observar una definición más clara de la autonomía local.

Palabras clave / identificadores: Gobierno local; Gobierno central; federalismo; sistema de gobierno de Filipinas; cambio de perspectiva; transición de gobierno; desafíos durante la transición; beneficios del federalismo.

RESUMO

O atual governo da República das Filipinas é visto como um ardente defensor do federalismo. Este estudo de pesquisa pretende explorar a valorização e compreensão dos jovens - especificamente os estudantes de Artes Liberais em instituições de ensino superior que têm conhecimento sobre as formas de governo, leis e história de nosso sistema de governo no que diz respeito a uma possível mudança no sistema de governo. Este estudo utilizou um design qualitativo descritivo por meio do método de Giorgi de análise de dados. Os resultados mostram que os informantes, tendo percebido a possível mudança no sistema de governo das Filipinas, levaram a três temas agrupados, a saber: (1) federalismo definido, (2) benefícios do federalismo e, (3) possíveis desafios durante o período de transição. Além disso, conclui-se que os informantes definiram o federalismo como um sistema de governo em que os poderes estão sendo descentralizados para o governo local e este último sendo independente do governo nacional / central. Legislação local padronizada, status econômico elevado e governo local responsivo foram identificados como benefícios do federalismo. A falta de conhecimento adequado, procedimentos e emendas constitucionais, e custosos e demorados foram citados como os possíveis desafios durante o período de transição na mudança em nosso sistema de governo. Sugerimos que, para efetivar o federalismo, é necessário aprimorar as capacidades de gobernança por meio da transparência e da prestação de contas, devendo ser observada uma definição mais clara de autonomia local.

Palavras-chaves: governo local; governo central; federalismo; sistema de governo das Filipinas; mudança em perspectiva; transição governamental; desafios durante a transição; benefícios do federalismo

1. INTRODUCTION

The Philippines has a democratic form of government with a unitary system where local affairs are in control by the central or national government. It is also a Republican state with Presidential form of government where the powers of state were equally divided among three branches of the government, namely: (1) executive; (2) legislative; and, (3) judiciary. Since independence from colonizers, the country maintains its unitary system of government; however, talk is a buzz in academic, political and business circles as regards a possible shift in our system of government to a federal system (Tayao, 2016). This move is one of the major changes promised during the presidential campaign of Rodrigo Duterte (Poblador, 2016).

President Duterte has been consistent to his criticism on unitary and presidential form of government saying that it is no longer working and has led to unequal distribution of wealth (Lacorte, 2016). The existence of federal culture and respect of the Constitution is very significant to ensure the success of the federal systems (Ahmed, 2016). However, there is a need to enhance governance capabilities through transparency to actualize decentralization, which is a next step towards federalization (Du, 2013). The transition on the system of government is challenging. Every state must accept and adopt a constitution suited to its political culture (Tayao, 2016).

In order to secure the blessings of liberty, the law must contain proper mechanisms; otherwise, it will be constrained (Castillo, 2011). And this constraint always happens under the system of government of the Philippines where power indicates national government as they hold vast or majority of the powers of state and full autonomy on local governments is not fully seen. It was the reason of unresponsive governance and the malfunctioned form of government in the Philippines that there has been responsible for the continuing decline of trust in the government (Lacorte, 2016; Brillantes & Fernandez, 2011). The voices of the people are not always heard; peasants are not well-represented as well as to other unions and the youth. In order to provide for a functionalize democracy, other measures of good governance such as freedom and equality; trust in government, accountability and responsiveness are considered more important (Pietsch, 2015;

Brillantes& Fernandez, 2011). Thus, this research study also encompasses to youth who have a clear notion and a better understanding on the transition of government specifically those who are knowledgeable on laws, form of governments and history of the present structure of government.

With the above explications, this research study explored the appreciation and understanding of Liberal Arts students to a prospective shift from Democratic to Federal form of government. Specifically, it tries to determine the perception of the Liberal Arts students on federalism as a system of government as well as its benefits and possible challenges to be experienced during the transition period from unitary to federal system.

2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Federal System of Government

Federalism is considered as a form of government that is often adopted by countries with great diversity in geography, language, culture and religion (Thom-Othuya, 2013; Tayao, 2016; Ahmed, 2016; Castillo, 2011). It facilitates devolution of legislative and administrative power, and de-concentration of economic powers while uniting the varied regional units (Castillo, 2011; Du, 2013; Ahmed, 2016; Boex & Kelly, 2013). This system is not only suitable for countries that have multi-nationality, multi religion, multi-culture and languages. It also reflects on the current conditions in the world and in the context of the Philippines where it determines the best way in pushing for political and structural reforms, (Ahmed, 2016; Tayao, 2016; Bednar, 2011). The need to enhance governance capabilities through accountability of public officials and transparency as well as providing solutions to the serious problem of patronage politics in the region and centripetal federal and centrifugal state forces is the need to actualize decentralization (federalism) (Du, 2013; Ikeanyibe, 2016).

In the study of Yilmaz and Venugopal (2013), it was found out that in federalism, entrenched culture of power accumulation has resulted to the politicians being elite to capture the local level thus, local levels have caused serious impediments in downward accountability of local governments. The progress towards federal structures is more a story of self-interested politicians involved in a multi-arena contest for political benefits and this problem should be solved before any further conscious programme can be developed (Ardanaz, Leiras, & Tommasi, 2014; Lippi, 2011).

Philippines Democratic Form of Government

No country in Southeast Asia has experienced democracy more than the Philippines. However, the practice of democracy in the Philippines was dispirited from the Marcos regime. Filipinos know both the promise of democracy and the problems of making democratic structures work for the benefit of all (Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2011) so the Philippine Democratic spirit were restored during the People Power I at EDSA.

Concerns on quality of democracy have been central to political discourse in the Philippines (Dressel, 2011). According to Timberman (2016), Duterte's disdain on human rights and democratic checks combined with his promises to make changes quickly may lead to weakening democratic institutions and processes. Moreover, a country that already exhibits formal features of electoral democracy and economic reforms which are significant to democracy fails to translate democratic impulses into democratic deepening (Curato, 2015; Guiliano, Mishra & Spilimbergo, 2012). In order to provide for a functionalize democracy, other measures of good governance such as freedom and equality; trust in government, accountability and responsiveness, wide participation and encouragement on citizen to participate in politics are considered more important (Pietsch, 2015; Brillantes& Fernandez, 2011, Kittilson, & Schwindt-Bayer, 2010).

Transition to a Government Form Anew

A change of regime involves rearrangement of interactions in the institutions that can influence a reformation of the institutions and it is argued that this is the campaign project (which can be best appreciated) promised during the presidential campaign of Rodrigo Duterte (Poblador 2016; Teehankee, 2016). It was the reason of unresponsive governance and the malfunctioned form of government in the Philippines that there has been responsible for the continuing decline of trust in the government (Lacorte, 2016; Brillantes & Fernandez, 2011). The Philippines as a case study was also studied by Nye (2011) on which ideal reforms would be considered as most likely to be implemented. However, according to Hutchcroft and Rocamora (2011) there is no assurance that the country's political institutions will be able to respond to the needs of the Philippine citizenry—particularly the poor and the excluded mass of the population. It was also found out that reestablishment of government will be an obstacle rather than a prosperous one (Dahiye, 2014; Mohamoud, 2015). But the peacemakers and advocates understand and approach legal issues on constitutional reform and socio-economic reforms and effort to improve the Philippines' inter-governmental framework that will have to settle for sub-optimal incremental measures within the inefficient revenue assignment arrangement (Bell & Matsuda, 2011; Faguet, 2014).

According to James (2011) in order to make the citizens avail of the opportunities and to help themselves and their communities, they should embrace a cultural shift and a political engagement especially the younger ones (youth in particular). In support of this study, youth can produce institution building according to Christens & Dolan (2011). It also shows that minorities like youth has a greater voice in the democratic society and social change into a unified organizing cycle which have three main rationales, namely: (1) right to be nurtured, protected and treated with respect, be involved and consulted, (2) improvement of services for young people requires their views and interests to be well articulated and represented, and, (3) developmental benefits arising from participation, for both the individuals themselves and for civil society as a whole (Christens & Dolan, 2011; Head, 2011; Checkoway, 2011; Ruiz-Rufino, 2013). However, transition in the new form of government can have drastic effects not just to the whole government system, but also to the lives of some sectors such as the vulnerable groups (Medrano, Villanueva & Tindowen, 2016) and indigenous peoples (Tindowen, 2016).

3 METHODS

This research study utilized a descriptive qualitative design which was conducted in the different Higher Education Institutions in the Philippines. This study involved Senior Liberal Arts students who manifested interest to participate on the conduct of this research study. Data saturation was achieved when researchers commenced with the analysis of available data.

Table 1. *Profile of Informants*

School	Code	Course
1	C001	Political Science
	C002	Political Science
	C003	Political Science
	C004	Political Science
	C005	Legal Management
2	C006	Political Science
	C007	Political Science
	C008	Legal Management
3	C009	Legal Management
	C010	Legal Management

	C011	Legal Management
	C012	Political Science
	C013	Political Science
4	C014	Political Science
	C015	Political Science
	C016	Political Science
	C017	Political Science
5	C018	Public Administration and Legal Management

The study utilized guide questions on in-depth interviews involving audio recording in order to gather the needed data of the study. One-on-one face-to-face interview sessions were conducted and transcription was done by the researchers every after interview. During interview session, the researchers jotted down cues based on the actions of the informants. According to Sampa (2013) and Polit and Beck (2010; 2013), field noting is done to add up to the credibility of the research findings. The researchers also sought permission from the informants if the interview session can be audio-recorded. According to Polit and Beck (2013) and Sampa (2013), audio-recording allows the researchers to focus on the interview session.

The researchers utilized Giorgi method of data analysis. This involves six steps, namely: (1) sense of the whole, (2) discrimination of meaning units within a psychological perspective and focused on the phenomenon being researched, (3) transformation of subjects everyday expressions into psychological language with emphasis on the phenomenon being investigated, (4) synthesis of transformed meaning units into a consistent statement of the structure of the experience, and, (5) final synthesis.

In ensuring rigour, the researchers went back to the informants for the aggregated and analyzed results. This ensures that the analyses are the same with what the informants conveyed during the interview sessions. Further, ethical considerations were employed by the researchers. Informed consent was also sought from the eligible informants. Anonymity of the informants and confidentiality of information was assured to them. The interview transcript will only be accessible to the researchers, adviser, and promoter. At the conclusion of the study, all transcripts will be destroyed (Nieswiadomy, 2008).

4 RESULTS

This research study explored the perceptions of Senior Liberal Arts students as regards the prospective shift on the Philippine system of government. After a careful review of the informant's responses and a careful analysis of the interview transcripts, commonalities were clustered together and the researchers came with major themes. These were: (1) federalism as a system of government, (2) benefits of a federalist government; and (3) challenges during the transition of government.

Theme 1. Federalism as a System of Government

Informants defined federalism as a system of government having an autonomous authority.

Table 2. *Informants' perception on Federalism as a system of Government*

Perceptions	Frequency	Rank
Independent local government	17	2 nd
Decentralization of powers	18	1 st

Independent local government

Local governments are being independent from the central government.

Some of the verbalization of the informants are as follows:

C001: *“Federalism is the local government unit is independent from national government unit. The local government unit has autonomy to control its affairs and have power to impose their own policy. The national government can only attend for international relation for other state.”*

Federalism is a system where local government is autonomous to impose their policies and independent from the national government.

C010: *“For me federalism is a form of government whereby, wherein each region is an independent state and the national government as well is given autonomy.”*

Every region will be an independent state having autonomy.

Decentralization of Powers

Powers will be equally decentralized among local governments

Some of the verbalizations are as follows:

C018: *“Federalism is a form of government where the power is actually decentralized. When we say decentralized it means the power of the government is actually delegated into states. Federalism is actually a form of government that is design to allow communities of state to formulate of their own policies that made them essentials. What I mean about my answer is that federalism is a form of government wherein it allows an active participation of the citizens wherein people would participate on the formulation of their policies.”*

Powers of the state will be delegated to the local governments where it allows wide participation of the people to formulate state policies.

C011: *“Federalism is a... delegation more of power compared to the form of government we have right now is unitary from the word unitary only one. Federalism mas na invest the power to local government or the independent state nagawin ‘yong mga.... Plano nila with the state na... with their jurisdiction so yunlang more on even deligation of power to those local government units.”*

Federalism delegates more power to the local government to independently plan for their states with their jurisdiction.

As shown in Table 2, the informants perceived federalism as a system, where local government is being independent from the central government. Local government with autonomy to govern itself, having self-control on affairs, central governments’ non-interference but focusing on international matters were cited as their understanding why it makes the local government independent.

All informants claimed that local and central governments being independent in their own sphere of jurisdiction shall have certain powers. There were differences however on how they described the distribution of powers. Informants cited that authority to extract revenues, manage and solve issues, legislate and impose policies that are regional and local in nature, were characterized as powers that local government possess.

Theme 2. Benefits of Federalism as a System of Government

Informants shared what they know are the benefits of federalism.

Table 3. *Perceive benefits of Federalism as a system of government*

Benefits	Frequency	Rank
Standardized Local Legislation	14	1.5 th
Increased Economic Status	14	1.5 th
Responsive local government	12	2 nd

Standardized Local Legislation

Local governments have the authority to legislate laws according to the needs of their community.

Some of the verbalization of the informants are as follows:

C001: *“Yes. Of course they can have control on their economic and on their own funds and they have power to legislate laws economically and politically.”*

Local governments can control their affairs and can legislate policies on their own politically and economically.

C011: *“Federalism will benefit Philippines. To render services on the people by legislating laws that would be the first, - the efficient services to people, because they know the needs of their constituents for they deal with them and they focus on them so that it will be efficient.”*

Rendering efficient services through legislating policies to address the needs of the people will be the benefit of the federalism.

C016: *“Every region will have six senators because today we have 24 and most of them came from the Visaya region then they will enact laws for Luzon. However, it is impossible that they will enact laws for Luzon region before their region, of course, they will enact first for them. It will be hard to pass the bill here because they do not know the issues for enacting or passing the bill, so it will consume more time.”*

It will be difficult and bias for the legislators to pass a bill which is inconsistent to address the problem situated on other localities.

Increased Economic Status

A gradual growth in local governments economy is fully seen.

Some of the verbalization of the informants are as follows:

C002: *“Maybe to increase our economic growth, because if we are in federalism, in our region for example, our product is rice and we can develop it, it will help the Philippines because we are going to export rice and these results in an increase on economic growth.”*

Regional products can help local governments increase their economic status.

C005: *The main BENEFITS or benefit of federalist government is that it will really strengthen and most especially it will bring change in national government and local government. Because if we have a decentralized government like US, we can see a great shift from our government not only to our government but also to economy as a whole.”*

There will bring a great change on both governments as regards economy.

C007: *“Maybe its benefit will increase the economic status. Good international relations can help it increase because of federalism.”*

There will be economic growth, and international relations can also help increase it.

Responsive Local Government

Local management is reachable.

Some of the verbalization of the informants are as follows:

C012: *“It will lessen the corruption. Because there will no longer be centralization of people and tyranny will be eradicated. So as what I have just said, the political leaders will be more accountable to the people because the people knew their leaders. It is just like our current system, there are lots of national leaders that are unknown to the people then they just win immediately. Whereas, when we are already in federalism, we know our leaders very well, so they will be terrified to the people since the people knew them and they would be accountable unlike in our present situation when we just vote and vote without knowing the background of the candidate.”*

Eradication of corruption and tyranny and accountability of leaders to the people will be seen by people’s background checking on leaders.

C008: *“Since there is an independent state, there will be immediate response on the needs of their constituents; there might be a high possibility to achieve progress on regions.”*

There will be an immediate response on the needs of the constituents and achieve progress on regions.

Given the results in Table 3, informants verbalized that in federalism, local government can make laws that will address the problems and needs of their constituents and they also added that it

should be in accordance of the culture and practices of their locality. Informants also cited the passing of Bangsa Moro Basic Law as an example of making laws according to the peoples' culture.

Informants shared that federal or independent states maximizing their own resources and utilizing the generated funds efficiently, will expand their economic status. They also emphasized that local taxes should not be directly given to the central government, thus it will increase the economic status of the local government. Informants also verbalized that by developing common products on every local government can help them achieve an economic growth, and it can help them generate their own use of funds to effectively implement their projects and programs.

Federalism as verbalized by the informants is where local government can easily attend and respond to the needs of their constituents. Three aspects were pointed out repeatedly by the informants, particularly: (1) senators of each local government can experiment legislative and administrative methods, (2) corruption will be lessen through Duterte's perseverance in eradicating graft and corruption; and, (3) leaders can focus more on peoples' concern and problems.

Theme 3. Possible Challenges during the Transition Period

During the interview, being aware on what and how does government shifts, informants came up with three aspects of the challenges that the government would face during the government transition.

Table 4. *Challenges to be experienced during the transition period*

Challenges	Frequency	Rank
Lack of proper knowledge	8	3 rd
Lengthy constitutional proceedings and amendments	9	2 nd
Costly and Time consuming	14	1 st

Lack of Proper Knowledge

People are unaware of federalism as a system of government and the government transition.

Some of the verbalizations are as follows:

C005: *“For me, that the government is going to face will be the period of adjustment of the people and most especially the people themselves because they do not concisely know about this and we all know that the Philippines in the social media especially there were a lot of bashers and in life situation, you cannot just push someone if she/he doesn't really want it for example your pushing someone on the things he is not contented or he is not totally wanted it.”*

There will be a great adjustment on the part of the people who are unaware on federalism whom are not pushed to like something they do not want.

C012: *“In informing the people about federalism because we cannot inform them or they will not know immediately about federalism because they are already used in presidential form of government, so maybe that*

would difficult because there is a big gap on the difference of the two.. our present system and the federal form.”

People will not easily adapt the proposed government for they are used to the current government.

Lengthy Constitutional Proceedings and Amendments

Legislators can come up with series of proceedings in amending the constitution

Some of the verbalization of the informants are as follows:

C017: “There should be amendments on the constitution first before it will be passed but I think it would consume more time.”

Amendments on the constitution are needed before federalism will be passed.

C011: “*To the Congress maybe, it will have lots of debates not only to the congress but on all stakeholders.*”

There will be a lot of debates in Congress being the law making institution and to stakeholders.

Costly and Time-consuming

Constitutional procedures to shift a government will consume much time and money

Some of the verbalization of the informants are as follows:

C010: “*First, it will be time consuming and it will be costly as expressed by the former president of the UP, I forgot the last name. It will take you less than 10 years to shift a federal form of government because we have to consolidate it to the people we have to consolidate it to the congress and to other political subdivision and political units.*”

Much time and money is needed for it to be passed because it will be consolidated first to different political institutions.

C016: “*It will not prosper easily. It would take more time before it will be adapted. The people will also have some queries if why there is federalism.*”

Passing of federalism is not easy, it would take more time before it will be passed.

Table 4 shows that the informants came with fewer challenges during the government transition. Informants pointed out that peoples’ lack of knowledge on what and how does federalism works will be a challenge during the transition since people are used in the current system (unitary) of the government and hence, they justified that there will be a great adjustment on the part of the people in adopting federalism when it prospers.

Being aware on the administrative and legislative functions of the government, informants shared that before federalism will be adapted in the Philippines, it will undergo series of proceedings and amendments on statutes and on the constitution. Informants stated that there will be a call for constitutional convention and constitutional assembly to carefully revise and amend the constitution. They also cited that people have the power of plebiscite as to whether they are going to accept or reject the proposed federalism in the country.

Another challenge that the informants posted was the costly and time consuming process. They claimed that a demand for constitutional amendments and revisions will also call for greater money to be spent during the proceedings. Relevant to this, informants rationalized that it will be time consuming or it will go through a hard time in adopting a new system of government.

5 DISCUSSION

This research study grasps the informants' understanding on the prospective shift on the Philippine system of government and revealed three (3) major themes: (1) federalism as a system of government, (2) benefits of federalism, and, (3) possible challenges during the transition period.

Federalism as a System of Government

Federalism as perceived by the informants is a system where the local government is independent from the central or national government and a system in which there is a decentralization of powers. Parallel with similar researches (Castillo, 2011; Du, 2013; Ahmed, 2016; Boex & Kelly, 2013), there will be a devolution or distribution of legislative, administrative, and economic powers to the local government in such a way that local governments will be autonomous in implementing their projects, programs and policies. Findings show that informants' characterized: authority to extract revenues, manage and solve issues, legislate and impose policies that are regional and local in nature, as powers that local government possess. These show that, what informants cited are elements of administrative, economic and legislative powers – that was also expressed in the study of Boex and Kelly (2013).

Relevant to the devolution of powers, federal states will be independent from the national government in their own sphere of jurisdiction and scope of authority. This explains that the power is being divided in each region or states to have their own governing process. Similar to the studies of Diaz-Serrano & Rodriguez-Pose (2015) and Sorens (2011), independent states are given the freedom to rule their own locality. This fundamentally explains that each independent state is given sovereignty and makes decisions which they believe is the best for their region. Philippine is an archipelago. In securing independence, federal states are being divided according to their geographical area and representation of diverse groups within that society that put inherent differences in ethnics, cultures, social, economy, and politics (Rifqinizamy, 2013; Thom-Othuya, 2013; Tayao, 2016; Ahmed, 2016; Castillo, 2011). Given the privilege to be independent among other local government, the central government does not interfere with the actions of the former because they have their own sphere of jurisdiction and the latter mostly takes actions on international matters. Unless, conflict arises and the local government cannot handle, subsequently, the central government must make actions in solving that problem.

Benefits of Federalism

Findings show that standardized local legislation, increased economic status, and responsive local government are the perceived benefits of federalism. Federalism being defined should also have its advantages or benefits. Informants shared their perceived benefits on federalism based on their observations on other federalist state, readings, and researches. Similar studies reveal that

federal states have the power or the function to legislate policies that are suited only within their respective locality specifically on their culture, practices and needs, given that they are independent from the central government (Jeffery, Pamphilis, Rowe, & Turner, 2014; Kaufman, 2013; Thom-Otuya, 2013; Tayao, 2016). Informants rationalized that this can eventually lessen the burden in the central government in making policies for every region and supervise all its implemented projects and programs in the local level. Informants also enunciated that there are lots of policies that are not applicable in many places like in the NCR region where agriculture is not the main product. It is nevertheless questionable why do senators who are mostly from the Visayas region make laws for the whole Philippines, yet it is not applicable in cities or urban areas? Informant C015 suggested that it would be better if Luzon will be a state in order for the people to easily adapt its culture and make laws that can be effectively implemented. The Bangsa Moro Basic Law (BBL) that the informants have also cited was also seen as an instrument for the government in actualizing federalism. Informants cited this as an example of legislating laws that are beneficial for the Moro people in adapting its own culture in which, if it was effectively implemented on the area will also be beneficial in other cultural areas. This BBL can be a trigger in federalizing the country but not just to benefit the Moros but the nation as well.

To increase economic status is beneficial in federalism because every local government can maximize their use of resources that can generate their own use of funds to effectively implement their projects and programs (Boex & Kelly, 2013; Giuliano, Mishra, & Spilimbergo, 2012). Informants shared that from this power of taxation of every independent state, generated tax of every state will not be directly given to the central government; instead, most of it will remain for the local government for more implementation of projects and programs. However, unknown to the informants, fiscal power can only be determined or be meaningful when the central government cannot undermine regional authority (Sorens, 2011; Bell, 2011), thus Eleccion & Sudhipongpracha (2013) recommends a shifting on the system of government to federal for a realization of genuine local autonomy.

In federalism, local government will be responsive in addressing the needs and problems in their sphere of jurisdiction (Christin & Hug, (2012), because the senators of every region are already at hand and management is reachable. Similar to the result of the studies of Feld (2014), Nye, Christens, James & Head, (2011), and Ruiz-Rufino (2013), informants also imparted that federalism allows a wide participation of people to exert in political activities especially in decision making which helps the legislation in producing laws. Experiencing the current administration, informants added that Duterte being a witness of the anomalies in the government (Teehankee & Timberman, 2016), they shared that he started cleaning the bad practices of the officials locally where the power will be delegated during the transition of government as well as the officials in the national level especially in the legislative department.

Informants revealed that in federalism there will be corruption on government leaders since the national government will not hold the local funds. However, similar studies revealed that there will be a solution to the serious political conditions of the Philippines and that lack of local and national capacity has caused serious impediments on downward accountability of local governments (Yilmaz & Venugopal, 2013; Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2011; Brillantes, 2011). Informants also mentioned that Duterte is winning on his strategy in eliminating drugs and bad practices in the government. Previous studies offered similar findings which revealed that there is much to be desired in actualizing decentralization and the need to enhance governance capabilities, through accountability of public officials and transparency, which will pave way in providing solutions to the serious problem of patronage politics in the region and the level of corruption (Du, 2013; Neudorfer & Neudorfer, 2015; Von Hagen, 2016; Ardanza & Lippi, 2011; Oktem, 2014; Leiras & Tommasi, 2014).

Challenges during the Transition Period

This research study also revealed the possible challenges to be experienced during the transition period, this involves: (1) lack of proper knowledge by the people, (2) lengthy constitutional proceedings, and, (3) costly and time consuming. This study revealed that there will be a period of adjustment to people who do not have accurate knowledge or background on federalism and the proposed shift on system of government. Informants cited that there will be difficulties on the part of the people in every region on the immediate acceptance of the people which is also similar to the result of the study of the Abragan, Bracero, Sinconieque&Villoria, (2013) and Von Hagen (2016). It also suggested that in order for the people to have knowledge on federalism, it posts for the government to have series of talks and seminars on every geographical area of the people. In a most democratic way, it also posts that leaders of the government should address this challenge in an adequate way (Emmerson, 2012; Von Hagen, 2016).

Informants being aware on legislation process, agreed that it would let the legislators have a long length of constitutional proceedings before a new system be approved. The findings of this research have also found out that during constitutional proceedings, informants suggested that there should be plebiscite as a reserved power for the people on whether to accept or reject the passing of federalism. As expatiated by the informants, there is a need for a constitutional assembly, constitutional convention of the constitutional commission. Since our government is a unitary system then, the constitutional commission and the people by virtue of plebiscite – as a manifestation of direct democracy, amends or revises the constitution procedurally. Nye & Bednar (2011) and Feld (2014) reflected to bottom-up approach in addressing problems from the local level that needs response from the legislators to thoroughly develop an effective and adequate constitutional evolution which was also agreed by the informants – to address the concerns of the people through proper authorities.

Relevant to the budget of the country, it was found out that it could also be a burden on the part of federal states when conflict arises in terms of insufficient local and national funds, and the central government cannot prevent the fact that it would be time consuming during the constitutional proceedings and definitely it will be costly. Informants argued that a statute takes months before it will be passed, how much more in amending, revising or repealing provisions of the constitution which is the highest law of the land (Matsuda, Bell & Bednar, 2011). Fundamentally, informants also shared that it is not just easy to change a system. It takes years for the government to adopt a new system of government. When it took years for the country to pass federalism then it is unquestionable that the government will also take ample amount of money for the compensation of legislators who are in the proceedings (Matsuda, 2011; Mohamoud, 2015).

Expanding and increasing our interest in the government makes us somehow appreciate the advantages and disadvantages on what federalism would bring. Federalism is not an immediate answer to the country's political perennial problem but may be a solution to age-old disparities in the country like the unending peace talks with our Muslim brothers, over-concentrated government power and the ever recurrent level of corruption. It may take years for its slow movement to prosper however when adopted. It should be practicable in a way that Filipinos and the civil society accept it. But before it will be adopted, the credibility of advocates regarding this possible shift in our system will depend on Filipino's decision through plebiscite to change the constitution, because it is upon the will of the people to know and to decide on how his government really works. Responsible citizens make the democratic Philippine nation strong and stable. Then, the prospective shift on the Philippine system of government increases the awareness of every Filipino especially in the practice of politics which involves greater participation of the people in decision making that our regime and the change would bring.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the perspective of this research, informants having in lined with governance, comprehend their understanding on the prospective shift on the system of Philippine government. Unaware on how the country be divided into regions, they cited the benefits and challenges of a federalism government according to their readings, subject topics, and observations on other successful federalist state.

It is therefore concluded that federalism is not an immediate answer to the country's political perennial problem but may be a solution to age-old disparities in the country like the unending peace talks with our Muslim brothers, over-concentrated government power, unresponsive local government and the ever recurrent level of corruption.

The researchers optimistically recommend that in order for the Liberal Arts students to suffice their understanding on federalism as a structure of government, a symposium as regards this topic shall be further promulgated. It is hoped that through this symposium, one can find or address his concern on the effects and acceptance of the youth's readiness in this government transition. Additionally, through the outcome of this research study, government leaders and agencies should take action in reaching the information as regards the possible government transition to the people. This bear out that young people like the informants requires their views and interests to be well represented for the improvement on the government assistance. Moreover, with the advent of federalism, researchers found out that a shift on a new system of government is not the panacea on the perennial problems of the Philippines. Instead, a clearer definition of genuine local autonomy and to enhance governance capabilities through transparency and accountability should be properly observed.

A thorough discussion in a classroom set-up on federalism as a subject topic on Liberal Arts programs should be clearly viewed impartial with the unitary system. For one of the findings of this research revealed that they have differences in explaining the definition of federalism. Philippines is not experiencing federalism yet, thus for future researchers who want to conduct similar study can come up with a tool and a different instrument involving phenomenological analysis and an open-ended questionnaire to further refine informants' perceptions.

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