Engagement in Beneficiary Participation of Philippine Nonprofits: A Pilot Study

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Abstract

There is a dearth of Asian literature on beneficiary participation. This pilot study aims to answer research questions on the beneficiary participatory mechanisms utilized by selected Philippine nonprofit organizations (NPOs), the level of beneficiary participation in these NPOs, and the factors that lead local NPOs to engage their beneficiaries to participate. Using a confirmatory case study, I interviewed officers in the management team of ten active NPOs in the National Capital Region and Calabarzon Region. I developed the conceptual framework based on related literature which were written mostly by Western scholars. From this framework, I derived six propositions on the determinants of the NPO's engagement in beneficiary participation. The results showed that Philippine laws and funders do not mandate beneficiary participation and thus, regulatory requirements and funding requirements are not relevant factors in the engagement in beneficiary participation of NPOs in the country. However, there is some evidence that trust in beneficiaries influences the NPO's engagement in beneficiary participation. On the other hand, there are some evidences that do not support three propositions. Therefore, I introduced refinements in these propositions as follows: industry-practice may be a determinant of beneficiary participation if the NPO is community-based or has an alliance with a public institution; management style, more than organizational structure, can lead the NPO to engage in beneficiary participation; and the desire for information from beneficiaries influences the engagement in beneficiary participation if the NPOs are aware of the practice of participatory mechanisms. Majority of the selected NPOs conduct meetings and workgroups with beneficiaries. Notwithstanding, the practice of beneficiary participation is not strongly casted in the selected Philippine NPOs. The study contributes to the emerging literature on beneficiary participation by providing empirical evidence in an Asian and developing country. It provides recommendations for policy, practice and future research.

Key Words: beneficiary participation, participatory mechanisms, Philippine NGO, pilot case study, nonprofit organization

Background of the Study

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) play a special role in civil society (Gidron, 2010; Gill, 2010). Mostly launched by private citizens or civil groups, NPOs contribute to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Its protagonists, however, encounter varied management challenges. Some face insecurity of funding resources (Lu, 2015; Parks, 2008). NPO

directors wrestle to maintain existing grants and find new donors (Parks, 2008). NPO leaders struggle to engage more in strategic human resource planning (Angelé-Halgand et al., 2010; Caucus of Development NGO Network (CODE-NGO), 2009; Clark, 2007), as well as improve staffing and training (Angelé-Halgand et al.,2010; CODE-NGO, 2009). Some NPOs are demanded by public agencies to perform with greater effectivity and efficiency (Cairns et al., 2005) and deliver better services despite meager resources (Angelè-Hangland et al., 2010; Hodges & Howieson, 2017). Furthermore, NPOs undergo the pressure of tightened accountability (Burger, 2012; Chapman et al., 2010). Despite a lean staff, entities need to beat deadlines in submitting monitoring requirements and documentation. Conventionally, the board and management study the strategic and operational direction of the organization. Employees and volunteers work together to implement the projects. Are there other members of the organization who can actively participate in addressing the NPO's concerns?

A unique feature of many NPOs is the presence of beneficiaries i.e., persons who receive a benefit or advantage as a result of the NPO's operations (Cambridge, 2019). Normally, beneficiaries pay minimal or nothing for the goods or services provided by the NPO (Wellens & Jegers, 2011). Beneficiaries are traditionally perceived at the receiving end. However, as members of an organization, could they also give? Could beneficiaries be more active than passive? Could beneficiaries help address the challenges faced by NPOs? Some scholars have considered beneficiaries as stakeholders whose voices have to be heard (Dowin Kennedy, 2015; Freeman, 2005; Freeman as cited in Wellens & Jegers, 2016; LeRoux, 2009). Some NPOs have involved beneficiaries in the management of projects or the NPO itself. They placed value in the participation of beneficiaries to improve performance (Wellens & Jegers, 2011). In this regard, beneficiaries may be the untapped and critical actors who can contribute in addressing NPO challenges on funding, human resource management, delivery of services and compliance of monitoring requirements. It is worth looking into the participation of beneficiaries in the organization and management of nonprofit organizations.

There are materials, though not voluminous, written on the advantages of beneficiary participation. Mercelis, Wellens & Jegers (2016) discovered that the participation of Vietnamese farmers in decision-making helped the Belgian nonprofit organization respond better to their beneficiaries' needs and sustain the project. Murtaza (2012) argued that the involvement of communities in need assessments, project implementation and evaluation lead to beneficiaries' satisfaction and ensure less policy changes after implementation. Kpinpuo and Sanyare (2015) concluded that Ghanians' role in planning, implementation and evaluation of NGO programs will better achieve socio-economic transformation in the community. Research studies uncover the impact of beneficiary participation on organizational performance. However, there is a lack of models depicting the factors that stimulate NPOs to engage in beneficiary participation. This study aims to fill in this gap.

In the past decade, Belgian scholars Jegers and Wellens (2011, 2014a, 2014b, 2016, 2017) stand out among colleagues for writing on beneficiary participation. They summarized and synthesized the positive, negative and neutral effects of beneficiary participation in NPOs in Belgium, US, Netherlands, South Africa (Wellens & Jegers, 2011, 2014a, 2014b, 2016, 2017), and Vietnam (Mercelis et al., 2016). Other authors on the topic predominantly come from Western

countries like USA (Bess et al., 2009; Murtaza, 2012), Canada (Veltmeyer, 2005), and Australia (Chu & Luke, 2018). Given the dearth of literature from Asian countries, Western frameworks are applied to studies in local NPOs. Differences in culture and research contexts between the West and Asia (Filatotchev et al., 2020) encourage research of local phenomenon to contribute to knowledge based on an Asian perspective. This will also pave the way for comparative studies between Western and Asian frameworks. Thus, studying the participation of beneficiaries in the Philippines, an Asian country, will enhance scholarship on beneficiary participation. This research aims to address this point.

Finally, academicians and practitioners have developed different methods of managing nonprofits engaged in development and poverty alleviation (Lewis, 2006). The first is a 'scientific' management approach (Lewis, 2006) which focuses on hierarchy, authority, command and control (Thomas, 1996). This denotes a top-down approach. The second approach is referred to as people-centered or 'enabling' management. (Lewis, 2006). This focuses on participation, consultation, and organizational flexibility. These approaches intertwine with different paradigms on NPO management (Lewis, 2006). One perspective embraces mainstream management where all management theories on businesses are perceived to apply to NPOs as well. Another is an adaptive paradigm of management which proffers that while generic management has useful concepts, not all will be relevant to NPOs considering its organization, culture and values (Lewis, 2006). A third view is that NPOs need new models and concepts considering the distinctiveness of nonprofit organizations (Gidron, 2010; Lewis, 2006). Studying the practice of beneficiary participation in the Philippines will illuminate the management approach in NPOs in a developing country.

This research aims to identify factors that lead to beneficiary participation in Philippine NPOs, provide literature on beneficiary participation in an Asian country, and discover the management approach in NPOs in a developing country. With these in mind, the research will be undertaken to answer the following questions.

1. What are the mechanisms utilized by selected Philippine NPOs to engage their beneficiaries?
2. What is the level of beneficiary participation in the selected Philippine NPOs?
3. Why do NPOs engage in beneficiary participation?

Significance of the Study

This study will assist selected Philippine NPOs to reflect on participatory mechanisms of their beneficiaries and consider its practice for the benefit of the organization and the beneficiaries.

This also provides researchers an explanation on why selected NPOs engage in beneficiary participation.

This pilot study will serve as a good preparation for a case study on participatory mechanisms in Philippine NPO and determinants of NPO engagement in beneficiary participation of NPOs in the country. This will provide insights for the framework and methodology of the case study.

Review of Related Literature

Beneficiary Participation

Beneficiary participation refers to the beneficiaries' involvement in or influence on planning, organization and decision-making performed by the entity (Mercelis, Wellens & Jegers, 2016; LeRoux, 2009; Cornwall, 2008). It is a participatory approach that allows beneficiaries to identify and possibly address their needs instead of entitling management to solely determine the beneficiaries' needs (Kilroy, 2015). The degree of beneficiaries' participation in operations or management of a project or the organization may vary.

Participation evokes the notion of inclusion. However, participation and inclusion are two different dimensions of engagement (Cornwall, 2008; Quick & Feldman, 2011). Participatory processes may entail group representation without much power (Cornwall, 2008), provision of inputs for policies and program content (Quick & Feldman, 2011), or a group's self-initiated efforts (Cornwall, 2008). On the other hand, inclusive management denotes a continuous process in engaging different sectors to discuss their viewpoints, know and appreciate different perspectives (Feldman, Khademian, Ingram, & Schneider, 2006), to establish relationship with one another (Feldman & Khademian, 2004; Feldman, Khademian, Ingram, & Schneider, 2006; Quick & Feldman, 2011), to feel part of community and build their capacity to form policies and solve problems (Feldman, & Khademian, 2004). Hence, participation does not mean the inclusion of all groups or sectors concerned (Cornwall, 2008; Quick & Feldman, 2011). Literature develops the discussion on beneficiary participation in the context of participation rather than inclusion.

Beneficiary participation can be well understood under the lens of stakeholder theory. Freeman (2005, p. 420) defined stakeholder as "any group or individual that can affect or is affected by the achievement of a corporation's purpose." Stakeholder theory highlights the need for organizations to nurture the relationship with their stakeholders (Westermann-Behaylo et al., 2016) and listen to their voice. Literature on stakeholder management underscores the active management of stakeholder interests and expectations on one hand, and balancing stakeholder interests and expectations on the other hand (De Brucker et al., 2013; McGee, 1998). NPOs exist for beneficiaries. Beneficiaries are affected by the decisions of the organization. Hence, beneficiaries are one of the multiple stakeholders of NPOs (Wellens & Jegers, 2014a). Engaging beneficiaries to participate enters into the sphere of stakeholder management.

A multiple stakeholder approach of NPOs extends the discussion to a "multiple principals" framework (Wellens & Jegers, 2014a). Principal is understood as "one or more persons who engages another person (the agent) to perform some service on their behalf which involves delegating some decision-making authority to the agent" (Jensen & Meckling, 1976, p. 308). The classic perspective of a principal-agent relationship refers to the association between the board (principal) and the manager (agent). In an NPO, however, the organization may be acting for multiple stakeholders. Wellens and Jegers (2014a) identified seven crucial stakeholders in NPOs who are the government, beneficiaries, private donors, board members, management, volunteers working at the grassroots level, and non-managerial staff members. These seven could be treated

as principals. As such, they have a role in governance. In this regard, beneficiaries are invoked to have a shared power in policy-making and in governance that affects other beneficiaries and the organization's effectiveness (Wellens & Jegers, 2011). Beneficiary participation is a participatory governance mechanism (Conroy, 2005; Ospina, Diaz & O'Sullivan, 2002; Wellens & Jegers, 2011) which means it is a mechanism "that beneficiaries use to communicate their expectations and experiences at different levels of organizational aggregation." (Wellens & Jegers, 2011, p. 176).

With the foregoing, the NPO is accountable to multiple stakeholders and multiple principals. Accountability refers to "the means by which individuals and organization report to a recognized authority and are held responsible for their actions" (Edwards & Hulme, as cited by Cornwall, 2018, pp. 79-80). Beneficiary participation is likewise studied as a mechanism of downward accountability (Ebrahim, 2003; Kilby, 2006; Mercelis et al., 2016; O'Dwyer & Unerman, 2010; Wellens & Jegers, 2014b). It is the organization's way to give an account to the beneficiaries regarding its actions on a particular purpose such as organizational mission (Ebrahim, 2010).

Dimensions and levels of beneficiary participation

Taking off from Kilby's (2006) model on downward accountability for nonprofit government organizations, Mercelis et al. (2016) explained that participation of beneficiaries may be examined based on the dimensions of depth and formality. Depth refers to the scope of topics discussed with the beneficiaries, frequency, degree of actual involvement and characteristics of the feedback given to them (Kilby, 2006). Formality refers to the right to access the organization in an official manner (Kilby, 2006) and level of ownership (Joshi & Moore, as cited by Kilby, 2006).

Levels of participation developed over time. Arnstein (as cited by Cornwall, 2008; Bess, et al., 2009) created an eight-rung ladder which can be categorized as non-power (manipulation, therapy), tokenism (placation, informing, consultation) and citizen power (partnership, delegated power and citizen control). Bhatt (1997), Pretty (as cited by Cornwall, 2008) and Ebrahim (2003) modified and developed other sets of levels of participation. Chu and Luke (2018) zeroed in on three levels of participation namely consulting, partnership and delegated control. Consulting involves understanding the community and the factors that affect them. This may be achieved through surveys or meetings (Chu & Luke, 2018). Partnerships with the poor or the beneficiaries involves working with them to arrive at areas for study and development; and forming workgroups (Chu & Luke, 2018). Delegated control involves providing them a role in decision-making and giving them opportunities to learn by experience (Chu & Luke, 2018).

Participatory mechanisms

There are formal and informal participatory mechanisms (LeRoux, 2009; Chu & Luke, 2018; Wellens & Jegers, 2014b). Formal beneficiary-related mechanisms that correspond to information and consultation include formal complaint procedures, satisfaction surveys, and meetings. Formal beneficiary-related mechanisms that correspond to partnerships are workgroups

or beneficiary council. Mechanisms that involve delegated control include participation in board meetings, advisory committee, and having an ombudsman. Participation in general assembly may be a weak or strong type of participation depending on the rights afforded to the beneficiaries (LeRoux, 2009; Wellens & Jegers, 2016).

Arguments for and against engagement in beneficiary participation

The arguments for and against beneficiary participation, based on the experiences of NPO board, management and employees, are summarized below.

Arguments for beneficiary participation. Engagement in beneficiary participation is favorable because
- it allows the NPO to comply with regulations and receive the corresponding reward (Wellens & Jegers, 2011 and 2014b);
- the NPO meets the donors' requirement to obtain funding (Murtaza, 2012)
- NPOs become aligned with the best practice in the industry (Claeyè & Jackson, 2012; Wellens & Jegers, 2011)
- it provides benefits to NPO board and management (Murtaza, 2012; Wellens & Jegers, 2014b) and
- it affords additional benefits to the beneficiaries (Elstad & Eide, 2017; Labonne & Chase, 2011; Mercelis et al., 2016; Wellens & Jegers, 2014b).

Arguments against beneficiary participation. Engagement in beneficiary participation is opposed because of
- its weak contribution to organizational effectiveness (Finsterbusch & Van Wicklin, 1987; Voss & Voss, 2000; Wellens & Jegers, 2014b);
- its negative effects on governance (Wellens & Jegers, 2014a);
- the limited time of staff (Hwang & Powell, 2009; Murtaza, 2012; Wellens & Jegers, 2014b)
- its negative effects on beneficiaries (Mercelis et al., 2016; Wellens & Jegers, 2014b); and
- barriers to the success of mechanisms (Wellens & Jegers, 2014b).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework depicts the factors that lead NPOs to engage in beneficiary participation. These factors are inferred from related literature. There are six factors namely regulatory requirements, funding requirements, industry practice, organizational structure, desire for information from beneficiaries and trust in the capacity of beneficiaries.

Figure 1 presents the proposed model. The scholars who wrote about the particular antecedent are cited under each factor.
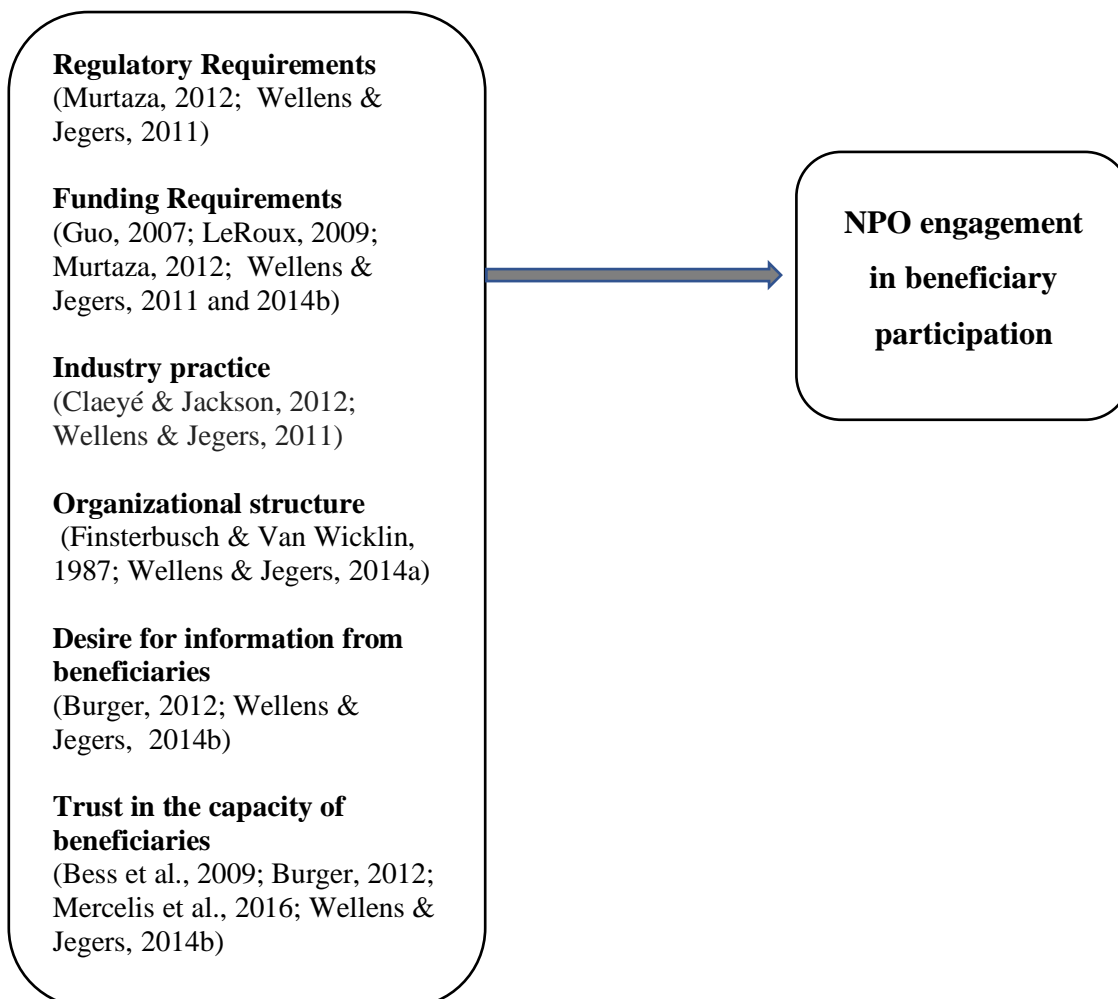
Propositions

This section presents six propositions based on literature. The paragraph under each proposition provides the support for it.

Proposition 1: Regulatory requirements influence NPO's engagement in beneficiary participation.

Countries with strong democratic values espouse beneficiary participation (Hwang & Powell, 2009). Belgium mandates beneficiary participation in order to be accredited as a welfare institution (Wellens & Jegers, 2011). Aside from civil laws, there may be other regulations from public accrediting agencies that require beneficiary participation for transparency and accountability (Murtaza, 2012).

Figure 1

Determinants of NPO engagement in beneficiary participation

Proposition 2: Funding agencies' requirements on participatory mechanisms influence the NPO's engagement in beneficiary participation.

Funding sources may promote or hinder beneficiary engagement (Guo, 2007; LeRoux, 2009, Murtaza, 2012). In some cases, government funding was positively associated with beneficiary participation (LeRoux, 2009) while other studies showed how it averted attention from the community (Guo, 2007; LeRoux, 2009; Wellens & Jegers, 2011). Simultaneously, dependence on wealthy private donors stirred a mission drift, change in NGO priorities, or failure to dialogue with the community (Chu & Luke, 2018; Gidron, 2010; LeRoux, 2009).

Proposition 3: Industry-practice on participating mechanisms influence the NPO's engagement in beneficiary participation.

Environmental changes have brought about institutional pressures and expectations (Hwang & Powell, 2009; Murtaza, 2012). What works well for one organization is explored by similar institutions. Studies showed how organizations tried to mimic best practices on beneficiary participation within the industry (Claeyé & Jackson, 2012; Wellens & Jegers, 2011).

Proposition 4: Bureaucratic organizational structures influence NPO's decision to engage in beneficiary participation.

Organizational complexity (Finsterbusch & Van Wicklin, 1987), which comes in the form of bureaucratic requirements or hierarchical decision-making (Wellens & Jegers, 2014a), hinders beneficiary participation. Open and flat organizational structures promote beneficiary participation.

Proposition 5: NPO's desire for information from beneficiaries, influences NPO's engagement in beneficiary participation.

The NPO's board and management benefit from receiving first-hand information, perception and insights from beneficiaries. Feedback leads them to respond more effectively to the needs of beneficiaries and deliver better services (Burger, 2012; Elstad & Eide, 2017, Mandel & Qazilbash, 2005; Wellens & Jegers, 2014b).

Proposition 6: Trust in beneficiaries' capacity positively influences NPO's engagement in beneficiary participation.

Boards, management and employees experienced difficulties in finding qualified beneficiaries with adequate intellectual and social qualities to influence policies (Wellens & Jegers, 2014b). Trust in the beneficiaries' capacity for participatory role is essential for the NPO to decide to embark on the process (Bess et al., 2009; Burger, 2012; Elstad & Eide, 2017; Mercelis et al., 2016).

Methodology

I employed a qualitative approach using multiple case studies Part of the requirements in preparing for a case study is to conduct a pilot case study (Yin, 2009). This research will follow the guidelines for a pilot study.

Case selection

Access to data needed to study the unit of analysis, is a crucial consideration for case selection (Crowe et al, 2011). The access afforded by gatekeepers is affected by the social interaction between the researcher and the participant. Guided by Filipino psychology (*Sikolohiyang Pilipino*), it is recommendable to do research with participants whom the researcher interact with in the level of *pakikipagpalagayan / pakikipagpalagayang loob* (Santiago & Enriquez, 1976) which is translated as "being in rapport" or "acceptance with the other" (Enriquez, 1978). This level goes beyond *pakikitungo* (civility), *pakikisalamuha* (interaction), *pakikilahok* (joining), *pakikibagay* (conformity) and *pakikikisama* (getting along with). With *pakikipagpalagayan / pakikipagpalagayang loob*, the actors maintain mutual trust as they consider each other as "the other" (*kapwa)* who is not an outsider, but rather "one of us" (*hindi ibang tao)* (Enriquez, 1978). Consequently, the participant is comfortable to share his/her thoughts and experiences, and the researcher need not second-guess the participant's narrative. Mutual trust yields trustworthy data (Enriquez, 1978). Thus, I considered case sites with gatekeepers in my social circles, and whom I interact in the level of *pakikipagpalagayan / pakikipagpalagayang loob.*

I proceeded with a purposeful selection of cases of NPOs whose directors or managers directly interact with beneficiaries above the age of reason. This sets the minimum condition for the organization to engage their beneficiaries to participate and will thus help answer the research questions. I followed heterogeneity sampling strategy (Quinn Patton, 2015) which allows the identification of common patterns that cut across varied cases (George & Bennett, 2005). I selected NPOs organized for social welfare, community development, health, skills training, formal education, and non-formal education and training. Four NPOs are schools that are geographically located in different regions.

I selected NPO classes that are similar to the nature of NPOs studied by Western scholars, which was the basis of the theoretical framework. The NPOs in the literature include educational centers (Wellens & Jegers, 2014b), community-based organizations (Bess, 2009, Burger, 2012; Claeyé & Jackson, 2012; Murtaza, 2012), welfare organizations (Wellens & Jegers, 2014b), health service providers (Wellens & Jegers, 2014b), and development nonprofit organizations (Finsterbusch & Van Wicklin III, 1987; Mercelis et al., 2016). This study includes one welfare organization, one health service provider, four community-based organizations, and four schools. Hence, the cases selected conform to the parameters used in the theoretical framework.

I limited the cases to ten since I am after analytic generalization and not statistical generalization (Yin, 2009). It would be difficult to manage more than 10 cases, given the volume of data (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Nature of inquiry

My unit of analysis is the NGO's practice in beneficiary participation. The scope of inquiry refers to items that will help answer my research questions. I used related literature to develop the survey and interview questionnaire. I submitted the questionnaire to an expert who reviewed the representativeness and suitability of the questions to help achieve construct validity (Yin, 2009). I used the term NGO instead of NPO in the survey since Filipinos are more familiar with the acronym NGO referring to nonprofit, non-government organizations.

Data collection

I used primary and secondary data for my research. For primary data, I used the survey questionnaire and face-to-face focused interview (Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, as cited by Yin, 2009) with the management personnel. I based the questions on the survey and probed the explanation behind their response. For my secondary data, I used the organization's brochures and websites. After completing the survey and interviews, I transcribed the recording and notes of interviews. I summarized the data and encoded the responses using Microsoft Office Excel 2010.

Data analysis strategy

My general analytic strategy involves relying on theoretical propositions. I employed simple pattern-matching through which I identified relevant themes and clustered related expressions. Color-coding, through Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, of interview results facilitated identification of related themes. I assessed if a response supports a proposition or offers insights on the research questions. Table 1 describes the variables.

Table 1

Description of variables

Regulatory requirements. The requirement of civil laws or public agencies for NPOs to enforce beneficiary participation mechanisms in order to grant a license or certification. This variable excludes the requirement of government agencies as a donor.

Funding requirements. The requirement of foreign or local, and public or private donors to engage in participatory mechanisms in order to approve the grant or donation.

Industry-practice. The practice of organizations within the industry to exercise participatory mechanisms.

Organizational structure. This refers to the bureaucracy of the organization through the length of decision-making process, formal and rigid rules regarding beneficiaries.

Desire for information from beneficiaries. The NPO's eagerness to know the situation, suggestions, and feedback of beneficiaries with the purpose of responding to it.

Trust in capacity of beneficiaries. The management's trust in beneficiaries who have intellectual and social capacity to engage in participatory mechanisms.

NPO's engagement in beneficiary participation. The decision of the NPO to engage in beneficiary participation through the

☐ frequency in utilizing the specific mechanisms; and

☐ the proportion of beneficiaries with capacity to engage in each mechanism

Results

Two presidents, five directors, one industry linkage and alumnae officer, one project coordinator and one social worker, who all form part of their respective management team, responded to the questionnaire and interview. Table 2 shows the profile of the NPOs. ACAY and FAMCOHSEF, NPO Numbers 1 and 2, agreed to reveal their identity. Pseudonyms are used to refer to NPO numbers 3 to 10 and the corresponding respondents. FAMCOHSEF includes beneficiaries from toddlers to senior citizens. The respondent kept in mind the parents of the toddlers and other adults in the community in answering the questionnaire.

Table 2

Nonprofit organizations that participated in the study

Number	NPO	Beneficiaries	Number of beneficiaries
1	**ACAY Mission Philippines (ACAY)**	Children in conflict with the law (CICL)	School of life: 12
		Young women victims of abandonment, negligence or violence/abuse	Second chance youth home: 20
		Orphans	Courts: 30
		Out-of-school youth	Families:10-25
		Parents of underprivileged students	Tacloban: Barangay Sta. Cruz
		Residents of poor communities	
2	**Family Cooperation Health Services Foundation (FAMCOHSEF)**	Aged	World Day of the poor: >1,500 families
		Women	
		Underprivileged students	Graduates of programs last 3 years: 120
		Parents of underprivileged students	Continuing education program: 550
		Residents of poor communities	
		Children below 5 years old	

3	**DC & Livelihood center (DC/LC)**	Aged Residents of poor communities Women	250 families
4	**Mga Kabataan (MK)**	Underprivileged students in the community	50 students, Grades 7-9
5	**Scholarship for the Youth (SY)**	Residents of poor communities	654 (Kinder, Elementary & High School)
6	**School A**	Underprivileged students	127 students, Senior High School
7	**School B**	Underprivileged students	200 students, Senior High School
8	**School C**	Underprivileged students	54 students, Vocational-Technology
9	**School D**	Underprivileged students	28 students, Vocational-Technology
10	**Young Achievers (YA)**	Underprivileged youth in the community	40 girls & boys, Grades 8-10

There are seven themes that emerged in the discussion. These are familiarity with beneficiary participation; knowledge of regulatory requirements on beneficiary participation; requirements of donors and funding agencies; interaction with similar NGOs in relation to the practice of beneficiary participation; organizational structure and flow of communications; managers' desire for information from beneficiaries; capacity of beneficiaries to articulate thoughts and sentiments; and interaction of beneficiaries among themselves and with managers through participatory mechanisms. These are elaborated on in the succeeding paragraphs.

Most of the respondents paused to reflect on the term "beneficiary participation". Some comprehended the concept after listening to the explanation, while others struggled with the notion despite an elaboration. School C director expressed that the practice is uncommon in the Philippines unlike in Australia, which she recently visited for professional reasons.

Regulatory Requirements

Nine out of ten respondents did not affirm the existence of any national or local law that mandates beneficiaries to participate in decision-making. ACAY respondent wrote RA 9344 but indicated that she was not sure if it requires participatory governance mechanisms. Eighty percent did not affirm that accrediting bodies require participatory mechanisms. Youth Achievers (YA) director (G. Lopez, personal communication, March 31, 2019) manifested that she is unaware of

any law and accrediting body requiring beneficiary participation. She expressed that what PCNC (Philippine Council for NGO Certification) requires and emphasizes is that the beneficiaries know the NPO's vision and mission.

Funding requirements

Fifty three percent of aggregate funding comes from private local donors. The donors ask for the status of the beneficiaries but they do not require participatory mechanisms. Italian patrons of Scholarship for the Youth (SY) only expect letters and pictures from their scholars. School A Coordinator (S. Almas, personal communication, April 3, 2019) added that "the donors trust us. They know that everything is for the students."

Industry practice

Majority of the NPO respondents are uncertain if beneficiaries in similar organizations are asked to give feedback. The school directors confided they are not members of any association where they discuss issues with other schools or NGOs. Few agree that other NPOs regularly ask their beneficiaries for suggestions, ask beneficiaries to co-administer projects together with employees, or train their beneficiaries to give constructive feedback.

Organizational Structure

Almost all the respondents disagree that bureaucratic practices exist in the NPOs. There is little variance in the response to the statement if they consult the board for minor decisions. ACAY founder mentioned that they have coaches from the business world. Nonetheless, they serve as advisers (Sister Sophie, personal communication, April 1, 2019).

Desire for information from beneficiaries

Majority of the respondents strongly disagree that they ask beneficiaries to evaluate the methods used in carrying out programs. However, all except for one confirm that management solicits suggestions from beneficiaries on how to improve services. School D director commented that she asks for verbal suggestions (K. Jose, personal communication, April 4, 2019). Majority strongly agree that they translate beneficiary insights to measurable goals. FAMCOHSEF president shared that it was a businessman who coached her to solicit insights from beneficiaries (R. Gonzalez, personal communication, April 5, 2019).

Table 3 presents the responses in relation to funding requirements, industry practice, bureaucracy in organization and desire for information from beneficiaries.

Trust in the capacity of beneficiaries

Majority of the NPO officers believe that nearly all or more than half of their beneficiaries have skills to respond to surveys. DC/LC respondent communicated that more than half can answer a survey for as long as the questions are apt for their age. She added "*Ang mga sampung taong*

gulang...matatalino sila. Nakakasagot sila kung ano ang kanilang puwedeng maambag sa pamilya at sa community nila." (Ten-year old children are smart. They are able to tell us what they can contribute for their families and their communities.) (M., Yu, personal communication, April 6, 2019). In contrast, School A officer is uncertain of the students' objectivity since they can be emotional (S. Almas, personal communication, April 3, 2019). *Mga Kabataan* (MK) director voiced out "Our beneficiaries are young, 11-16 years old… All they can do is to attend and practice what we give them; they are not capable of evaluating…" (A. Daez, personal communication, April 5, 2019).

Four respondents responded that more than half of beneficiaries while one said nearly all can contribute insights on how to improve their services and nearly all feel confident to speak out in meetings with employees. Mrs. Yu (personal communication, April 6, 2019) expressed that beneficiaries speak their mind for as long as the employees use comprehensible language and explanations.

Sister Sophie marked that nearly all beneficiaries can contribute insights on how to improve programs and speak up in meetings. She explained that they want the girls to be independent and so they train them in everything. She said "we also teach them to work with the finance officer and with our staff." (Sister Sophie, personal communication, April 1, 2019). With this training, the girls are able to express themselves to the ACAY team. Table 4 presents the respondents' perception on capacity of beneficiaries to participate in different areas.

Table 3

Funding requirements. Industry practice. Organizational structure. Capacity of Beneficiaries

NPO	1 AC	2 FA	3 DC	4 MK	5 SY	6 SA	7 SB	8 SC	9 SD	10 YA
Donor requirements on beneficiary participation										
1. Our donors expect us to consult our beneficiaries about the design of the programs intended for them.	D	D	D	D	D	SD	SD	D	SD	D
2. Our donors expect us to engage beneficiaries in organizing activities.	D	D	SA	D	D	SD	SD	D	SD	D
3. Our donors require participatory mechanisms for beneficiaries as a criterion for providing grants.	D	D	D	D	D	SD	SD	D	SD	D
Industry practice of beneficiary participation										
4. Other NGOs, of similar nature, ask their beneficiaries to accomplish feedback survey.	U	A	SA	U	U	U	U	U	SD	A
5. Other NGOs, of similar nature, seek suggestions from their beneficiaries through regular meetings with them.	U	A	A	U	U	U	D	U	SD	A
6. Other NGOs, of similar nature, give tasks to beneficiaries during projects such that they co-administer projects together with employees.	U	A	SA	U	U	U	D	SA	SD	A
7. Other NGOs, of similar nature, train their beneficiaries how to give constructive feedback on services they receive.	A	A	D	U	U	U	D	A	SD	U

NPO	1 AC	2 FA	3 DC	4 MK	5 SY	6 SA	7 SB	8 SC	9 SD	10 YA
Bureaucracy in organizational structure										
8. It takes time for management to respond to beneficiaries' complaints.	D	D	SD	D	SD	A	SD	D	D	D
9. We need to consult the board for minor decisions regarding beneficiaries.	SD	SD	D	D	D	SD	SD	SD	D	D
Desire for information from beneficiaries										
10. We ask for beneficiaries' evaluation on the methods used in carrying out programs for beneficiaries.	SA	D	SD	A	SD	SD	SD	A	SD	A
11. Management solicits suggestions from our beneficiaries to improve the delivery of services.	SA	SA	SA	A	A	A	D	A	A	SA
12. We use the insights of beneficiaries to translate our mission to measurable goals.	SA	SA	U	A	D	SA	SA	U	SA	SA

Legend: SA: Strongly Agree. A: Agree. U: Uncertain. D: Disagree. SD: Strongly Disagree

Table 4

Capacity of beneficiaries

| NPO	1 AC	2 FA	3 DC	4 MK	5 SY	6 SA	7 SB	8 SC	9 SD	10 YA
1. What is the proportion of our beneficiaries who have skills to respond to survey?	MH	MH	MH	AN	AH	MH	NA	NA	MH	NA
2. What is the proportion of our beneficiaries who can contribute insights on how to improve our services or programs?	NA	MH	LH	AN	LH	AH	LH	MH	MH	MH
3. What is the proportion of our beneficiaries who feel confident to speak up in meetings with employees?	NA	MH	MH	AN	AH	LH	LH	AH	MH	AH

Legend: NA: Nearly all. MH: More than half. AH: About half. LH: Less than half. AN: Almost none.

Beneficiary Participatory mechanisms

Figure 2 shows the responses on the frequency with which each NPO utilizes the beneficiary participatory mechanism. A response of 1 indicates that the mechanism is never used and a response of 2 means it is rarely used. Only the bars that reach 3 *(Sometimes)*, 4 (*Very often)* and 5 *(Always)* indicate the utilization of the participatory mechanism by the corresponding organization. FAMCOHSEF is the solitary NPO that utilizes all the mechanisms. ACAY utilizes five of the six mechanisms. DC/LC always uses three out of six mechanisms. On the other hand, SY does not utilize any of the formal participatory mechanisms while MK utilizes only workgroups.

Figure 2

Beneficiary participatory mechanisms used by each NPO
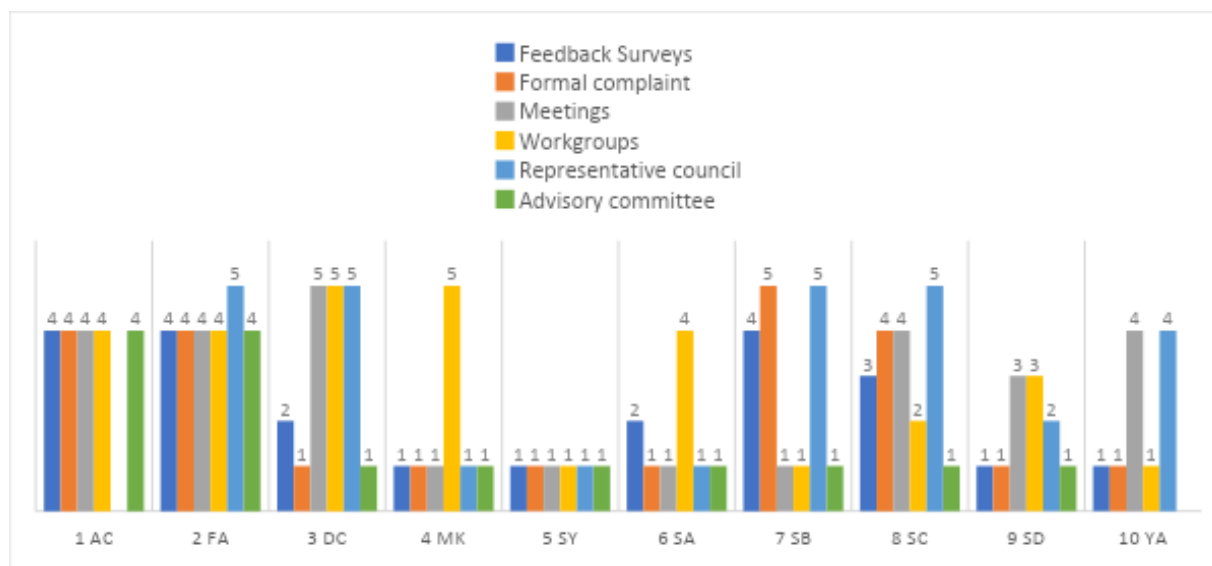
Feedback surveys. YA Director (G. Lopez, personal communication, March 31, 2019) said that they utilize verbal surveys as needed but not in a formal manner. Sister Sophie (personal communication, April 1, 2019) conveyed that "the girls have a debriefing every weekend. Programs and staff are evaluated every week to assess how the program is going on and identify areas of difficulties."

Formal Complaint Mechanisms. School B director (A. Sinto, personal communication, April 2, 2019) informed that the students often utilize an incident report. They report on the behavior of other students which helps them form the character of a schoolmate. Conversely, FAMCOHSEF (R. Gonzalez, personal communication, April 5, 2019) clarified that beneficiaries decline to write down their complaints. They prefer to verbalize their concerns to the social worker.

Meetings. Most of the NPOs hold meetings with beneficiaries in varying frequencies. Among the six NPOs who use it, four respondents said more than half of the beneficiaries have the capacity to attend meetings. School C director (R. Nazal, personal communication, April 3, 2019) stated that they have consultative meetings with beneficiaries once a week. School A officer

(S. Almas, personal communication, April 3, 2019) said that she visits and talks to the students in the training venue. She conducts an informal and one-on-one meeting with each student since the students are inhibited when they are gathered in a meeting. On the other hand, FAMCOHSEF started having focus-group discussions to find out why few attend the continuing education course (R. Gonzalez, personal communication, April 5, 2019).

Workgroups. Mrs. A. Daez (personal communication, April 5, 2019) informed that the girls are trained in catechism in the first year, then they work with their mentors to prepare the catechism classes they will teach to younger students when they reach second year. Mrs. Yu (personal communication, April 6, 2019) elaborated that beneficiaries are given assignments when they have a medical mission. Schools C and D directors work with students to plan fundraising events. Most of the NPOs hold workgroups with beneficiaries. However, there are two who said they never formed workgroups.

Beneficiaries' representative council. Schools B and C, as well as FAMCOHSEF and DC/LC always use beneficiary representative councils. Among those who always use beneficiary representative council less than half of the beneficiaries participate in this mechanism.

Conversely, ACAY has supervisors but does not have a representative council. "The girls are divided into committees such as marketing, budgeting, and finance. There are supervisors, usually the older ones, per committee. They meet with other committee members and work with volunteers. They are developed on how to manage a team" (Sister Sophie, personal communication, April 1, 2019).

Advisory Committee. Among the NPOs, only FAMCOHSEF has a committee of 3 beneficiaries who work with employees and give feedback to management (R. Gonzalez, personal communication, April 5, 2019). Except for FAMCOHSEF, the NPOs do not typically utilize an advisory committee where beneficiaries participate and offer advice to the management.

Table 5 shows the proportion of the beneficiaries who can participate in each mechanism.

Table 5

Proportion of beneficiaries

NPO	1 AC	2 FA	3 DC	4 MK	5 SY	6 SA	7 SB	8 SC	9 SD	10 YA
Feedback Surveys	MH	NA	LH	AN	AN	AN	NA	NA	AN	NA
Formal complaint	MH	AN	AN	AN	AN	AN	LH	AH	AN	NA
Meetings	MH	LH	MH	AN	AN	AN	AN	MH	AH	MH
Workgroups	MH	LH	LH	NA	AN	NA	AN	LH	MH	MH
Representative council	LH	LH	LH	AN	AN	AN	AN	NA	AN	LH
Advisory committee	AN	LH	AN	AN	AN	AN	AN	AN	AN	

Legend: NA: Nearly all. MH: More than half. AH: About half. LH: Less than half. AN: Almost none.

Discussion

The results of the study provide the response to the research questions.

1. What are the mechanisms utilized by Philippine NPOs to engage their beneficiaries?

Philippine NPOs utilize informal beneficiary participatory mechanisms such as solicitation of verbal feedback and oral complaints; one-on-one meetings with beneficiaries; supervisory assignments given to selected beneficiaries; and *ad hoc* committees where beneficiaries work with employees when the need arises.

Some NPOs use formal participatory mechanisms such as written feedback surveys, formal complaint mechanisms, consultative meetings about program design or implementation, workgroups where beneficiaries partner with volunteers or employees to co-design or co-administer programs, beneficiaries' representative council such as a student council, and an advisory committee that gives advice to management on certain issues.

The ten NPOs use different beneficiary participatory mechanisms. Most of the NPOs never utilized formal complaints and advisory committees. Majority of the NPOs conduct meetings and workgroups with beneficiaries. Four NPOs often use representative councils while one NPO use it very often. Three very often use feedback surveys while four never utilized it.

2. What is the level of beneficiary participation in Philippine NPOs?

Workgroups are participated by more than half of beneficiaries in three NPOs and nearly all beneficiaries in two NPOs. Four NPOs that conduct meetings say that more than half of the beneficiaries can participate while another four NPOs indicate that almost no one among the beneficiaries can participate in meetings. Four NPOs with councils say that less than half of beneficiaries participate, while five NPOs express that almost no one participates in beneficiary councils.

In accordance with the levels of participation described by Chu and Luke (2018) it may be said that Philippine NPOs carry out beneficiary participation in the level of consulting through meetings; and in the level of partnership through workgroups and beneficiaries' representative's council. Nonetheless, the manifestation of three NPOs that never utilized workgroups and representative councils, and four NPOs that never utilized feedback surveys and meetings signify that these mechanisms are not common practices among NPOs. Moreover, six NPOs never utilized formal complaints mechanisms. This gives an expression that the beneficiaries are not given an avenue to air out negative concerns. Furthermore, there are seven NPOs that never utilized advisory committees and YA indicated that advisory committee is not applicable to their organization. Hence, in general NPOs do not engage beneficiaries in the level of delegated control. The beneficiaries are hardly given a voice in management issues.

Beneficiaries contribute feedbacks related to their own concerns, observations on peers, improvement of attendance to programs, and program design. They participate by organizing and

executing fundraising or social projects. There was no mention of beneficiaries' contribution to looking for donors, preparation of regulatory requirements, and strategic human resource planning. As regards depth of participation (Kilby, 2006), the scope of topics discussed are varied while frequency is irregular. The schools engage their beneficiaries only in some extra-curricular activities. In terms of formality (Kilby, 2006), not all NPOs give their beneficiaries access to contribute to governance. The practice of beneficiary participation is not strongly casted in Philippine NPOs. The practice of beneficiary participation is rather low in these Philippine NPOs.

3. Why do NPOs embark on beneficiary participation?

There were 6 propositions presented on factors that influence the NPO's engagement in beneficiary participation. These are written in boldface print followed by a brief discussion of the results of this research.

Proposition 1: Regulatory requirements influence NPO's engagement in beneficiary participation.

Based on the responses, there is no known civil law that requires beneficiary participation. RA 9344 deals with participation of delinquents in community programs and education, but it does not speak of engaging juvenile delinquents in participatory governance mechanisms. Moreover, there is hardly accrediting bodies that require beneficiary participation. Since there are no regulatory requirements in the Philippines, there is no evidence to support this proposition.

Proposition 2: Funding agencies' requirements on participatory mechanisms influence the NPO's engagement in beneficiary participation.

The donors of Philippine NPOs do not look for beneficiary participation. There is no indication that funding requirements influence the NPO to engage in beneficiary participation. Some NPOs engage in beneficiary participation even if it is not a funding requirement.

Proposition 3: Industry-practice on participating mechanisms influence the NPOs' engagement in beneficiary participation.

ACAY, MK, Scholarship for the Youth, School A, School B and School C are generally unaware of industry practice in relation to participating mechanisms. Hence, the proposition does not apply to these cases. On the other hand, there is evidence to support Proposition 3 in three cases. FAMCOHSEF and DC/LC agree that industry-practice on participating mechanisms exist and both NPOs have high engagement of beneficiaries. School D expressed that participatory mechanisms are not an industry-practice, and shows a low level of beneficiary participation. Nonetheless, the proposition is not supported by YA. YA has low engagement of beneficiaries even if the industry engages in participatory mechanisms. Going back to the article of Claeyé & Jackson (2012), there was mimetic isomorphism in the case of a community-based NGO. Separately, Wellens & Jegers (2011) presented the case of a Norwegian association that formed an alliance with the health authority management engaging beneficiary user feedback that led to reform professional practice. YA is neither community-based nor allied with a public entity.

Industry-practice may be a determinant of beneficiary participation in community-based organizations or NPOs that establish partnership and support from a public institution.

Proposition 4: Bureaucratic organizational structures influence NPO's decision to engage in beneficiary participation.

There is some evidence to support Proposition 4 since there are four NPOs that engage in participatory mechanisms as result of a non-bureaucratic organizational structure. For example, DC/LC coordinator expressed that she herself, without the need to consult directors, explains things to beneficiaries when they complain regarding the lack of medicines *"Ini-explain naming na ang med rep ay marami ding binibigyan."* (We explain to them that the medical representatives give (medicines) to many others.) (M. Yu, personal communication, April 6, 2019). SY, on the other hand, has low beneficiary participation as it takes long for management to respond to complaints. However, the proposition is not supported by the some cases. MK, School D and YA have low beneficiary participation despite the absence of bureaucracy. Wellens and Jegers (2014a) referred to a study of a low-income community wherein bureaucracy hindered participation in decision-making in social service organizations. One might explain that bureaucracy will influence the engagement of beneficiaries in decision-making matters. However, most of these NPOs do not engage their beneficiaries in decision-making. Hence, bureaucracy as a determinant of beneficiary participation does not appear as a robust theory. The possible reasons why NPOs engage their beneficiaries could be due to the management style of the organizational leaders and not the organizational structure.

Proposition 5: NPO's desire for information from beneficiary influences NPO's engagement in beneficiary participation.

There is some evidence to support Proposition 5 since there are three NPOs that utilized participatory mechanisms as a result of their desire for information about their beneficiaries. FAMCOHSEF, for example, uses surveys, formal complaint mechanisms, meetings, workgroups, representative council and advisory committee. Mrs. Gonzalez (personal communication, April 5, 2019) explained "we now have an FGD with our choice beneficiaries to find out why few attend the continuing education course." On the other hand, there is evidence that do not support the proposition as in the cases of MK, School A, School D and Young Achievers. A possible reason why NPOs have low engagement in participatory mechanisms despite a strong desire to gather information from beneficiaries, is their lack of familiarity with formal practices of beneficiary participation.

Proposition 6: Trust in beneficiaries' capacity influences NPO's engagement in beneficiary participation.

ACAY, FAMCOHSEF, DC/LC trust more than half of their beneficiaries while Schools B and C trust that nearly all can answer surveys. ACAY, FAMCOHSEF and School B very often use, while DC/LC and School C sometimes use, feedback surveys. ACAY, FAMCOHSEF, DC/LC and School D have high trust in beneficiaries and all of them engage beneficiaries in meetings. In general, ACAY and FAMCOHSEF reflected very high trust in the capacity of

beneficiaries to participate in surveys, provide insights and attend meetings. Both NPOs deliberately utilize participatory mechanisms at a very high level. MK said that almost no one can share insights and speak up in meetings, and they engage in only one participatory mechanism. SY has very low trust in beneficiaries and it does not engage in any participatory mechanism. The aforementioned cases show support for the proposition. Hence, the proposition holds.

Conclusion

The study of ten cases of NPOs showed that there are no regulatory and funding requirements that mandate beneficiary participation. Thus, the constructs on regulatory requirements and funding requirements are irrelevant in the study of determinants of beneficiary participation in the Philippines. The study provides evidence that trust in beneficiaries influences engagement in beneficiary participation. However, there are evidences that do not support Propositions 3, 4 and 5 and thus I am introducing some refinements. Industry-practice may be a determinant of beneficiary participation if the NPO is community-based or establishes partnership and support from a public institution. Management style, more than organizational structure, can lead the NPO to engage in beneficiary participation. Finally, desire for information from beneficiaries influences the engagement in beneficiary participation if the NPOs are aware of the practice of participatory mechanisms.

Meetings and workgroups are the beneficiary participatory mechanisms used by majority of the select NPOs in varying frequencies. Nonetheless, these cannot be considered as a common practice among NPOs since there are NPOs that never organized meetings and workgroups with their beneficiaries. In general, the practice of beneficiary participatory mechanisms is not strongly casted in Philippine NPOs. NPOs follow more scientific management approach rather than people-centered approach.

The cases selected adhere to the parameters that fit the Western framework. Since the cases do not conform to the theory, there is a need to re-visit the theoretical framework which is Western-laden. Simultaneously, since anomalies have surfaced, there is a need to improve the categorization to build theory (Carlile & Christensen, 2005) on beneficiary participation.

Beneficiary participation and beneficiary participatory mechanisms are unfamiliar terms among Philippine NPOs. Notwithstanding, there are some NPOs that practice beneficiary participatory mechanisms with or without prior familiarity with the concept. The NPOs that deliberately engage in beneficiary participation are ACAY, FAMCOHSEF and DC/LC. The primary drivers of these NPOs are respectively the organization's pedagogical approach, recommendation of a coach from the business sector and consequent interest of the NPO to know the insights of beneficiaries, and the desire for the beneficiaries to contribute to the community and develop personally respectively.

Recommendations

Based on the insights from this pilot study, I recommend the following.

Policymakers

Local policymakers are not regulating beneficiary participation. I recommend that policymakers analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of beneficiary participation among local NPOs. This will aid them to articulate the direction of the practice of beneficiary participation in the country. They may include beneficiary participation among the criteria for NGO accreditation depending on the results of their study.

Practitioners

Majority of the NPO managers are not aware of industry practice. I recommend that NPOs actively participate in associations that facilitate exchange of ideas and best practices. This will allow them to learn trends as well as contribute approaches such as beneficiary participation. Furthermore, I recommend that managers pay special attention to and cultivate the aptitude of their beneficiaries to analyze issues, form opinions and speak up. In this way, they will contribute to the personal growth of beneficiaries. Moreover, this practice will assist NPO leaders to determine the capacity of beneficiaries to engage in participatory mechanisms. This shall help managers evaluate their level of the trust in beneficiaries and thereby select the mechanisms where beneficiaries can participate in.

Academicians and researchers

Heterogenous case selection is best achieved with maximum variation of cases. A multiple case study of a more varied nature of NPOs is recommended. The research can incorporate - as determinants of engagement in beneficiary participation- the constructs that emanated from this pilot study: awareness of beneficiary participatory mechanisms, management style, alliance with a public institution, partnership with businessmen, desire for the personal development of beneficiaries. Researchers may also develop a theoretical framework that encompasses the determinants of beneficiary participation, NPO's engagement in beneficiary participation and effects of beneficiary participation. I recommend that researchers conduct further studies on beneficiary participation and present these in conferences in order for NPO leaders to be more familiar with the practice.

Participation of beneficiaries in project operations and organizational management of NPOs may bolster beneficiaries as partners in sustainable development. It is worthwhile to identify the factors that lead Philippine NPOs to engage in beneficiary participation.

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