

**Professionalization of
the Philippine Local Government Workforce
Under Devolution**

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Abstract

Devolution occurred in the Philippines by virtue of the *Local Government Code of 1991*. Twenty years after the approval of the *Code*, one of the challenges under devolution is the professionalization of local government workforce. This paper posits that under devolution, the quantity and quality of local government personnel significantly determine the quality of services offered by local government units (LGUs).

Contractual or casual services mark the employment and workforce of LGUs. While contractual or casual services might be necessary, there is no clear indication that this trend in public personnel administration is indeed what local governments would like to see. The trend raises a concern not only for local government personnel administration but also the repercussion that local personnel administration brings on service delivery.

Among the policy measures that can be taken to promote professionalization of local government personnel are: (1) review of the current plantilla vis-à-vis the functions of LGUs; (2) special consideration in local government colleges and universities where distinctive qualifications of academic personnel are necessary; (3) performance review of local government personnel and departments to determine fitness and to ascertain the necessary capacity building measures; (4) mapping of personnel development and service delivery of LGUs to indicate the direction that LGUs would like to take and to define local capacity building needs and programs; (5) examination of incentives and disincentives for personnel development and excellent performance; (6) creation of programs that have implications on personnel and on costs should be scrutinized to rationalize personnel hiring and professionalization; (7) the LGU's personnel department should be capacitated to become responsive to the requirements of an effective human resource unit; and (8) the domains of accountability of devolved personnel should be established.

Introduction

Devolution occurred in the Philippines by virtue of Republic Act No. 7160, otherwise known as the *Local Government Code of 1991*. The *Code* was passed by the Philippine Congress on October 10, 1991 in response to problems associated with highly centralized governance. In its declaration of policy, the *Code* stresses that:

...the territorial and political subdivisions of the State shall enjoy genuine and meaningful local autonomy to enable them to attain their fullest development as self-reliant communities and make them more effective partners in the attainment of national goals. Toward this end, the State shall provide

for a more responsive and accountable local government structure instituted through a system of decentralization whereby local government units shall be given more powers, authority, responsibilities, and resources. The process of decentralization shall proceed from the national government to the local government units (Section 2(a) of R. A. 7160).

Accordingly, the responsibility for delivery of some services was transferred from the central to the local government, along with the appropriate personnel, facilities, records and other relevant assets, as well as liabilities. Five services were significantly affected by devolution: (1) health; (2) social welfare; (3) environment; (4) agriculture; and (5) public works.

Some field personnel of the affected national government agencies (NGAs) expressed opposition to devolution, primarily because of concerns about career security and advancement. To allay these fears, the then President Corazon Aquino issued Executive Order No. 503 (dated January 22, 1992), which provides for the rules and regulations for the transfer of personnel, assets, liabilities and records of NGAs whose functions would be devolved to the LGUs. The presidential fiat stipulates, among others, the following:

- **Mandatory absorption of devolved NGA personnel by the LGUs.**

For this purpose, the local government units (LGUs) had to create the equivalent local government positions, except when it was not administratively viable, or when there was duplication of functions. National government personnel who could not be absorbed by the LGU due to reasons mentioned above would be retained by the NGA concerned, subject to civil service law, rules and regulations.

- **Security of tenure of devolved personnel.**

Involuntary separation, termination, or lay-off of permanent personnel of NGAs affected by devolution was not allowed. Any reorganization undertaken by the LGUs after the devolution of functions would be governed by Republic Act No. 6656 — *An Act to Protect the Security of Tenure of Civil Service Officers and Employees in the Implementation of Government Reorganization*. Devolved permanent personnel would be automatically reappointed by the local chief executive concerned immediately upon their transfer. Devolved temporary personnel would be absorbed by the LGUs, subject to civil service law, rules and regulations.

- **Optional absorption of some non-career personnel.**

There was no need to devolve the contractual personnel of NGAs involved in the implementation of pilot projects in the LGUs. However, the LGUs had the option to absorb casual, emergency, or daily-wage personnel assigned in the field units of NGAs affected by devolution.

- **No diminution or impairment of rank, tenure or pay of devolved personnel.**

Reduction or impairment of rank or tenure, and diminution of pay of devolved personnel, would not be allowed.

- **Selective devolution of regional personnel.**

Regional personnel performing LGU-specific functions may be absorbed by the LGU concerned; but those performing primarily regional functions would be retained by the NGAs to form part of field units that would undertake monitoring and coordination of devolved basic services and would provide the necessary technical assistance to the LGUs.

- **Retention of Regional Career Executive Service Officers (CESOs) by NGAs.**

Regional directors who are CESOs, and other officers of similar rank, should be retained by the NGAs without diminution of rank, salary, or tenure.

- **Transfer of vacant NGA positions.**

Existing vacant positions in the NGAs, whose functions were devolved to the LGUs, were transferred to the LGUs concerned. In cases of duplication of functions, the corresponding budget allocated to the salaries of existing vacant positions may be realigned by the LGUs concerned to fund programs, projects and activities in the sector where the fund originated.

- **Exemptions from Rules on Nepotism, Residency, and Election Ban.**

Devolved personnel were exempt from the rules on nepotism and residency requirements under the *Local Government Code of 1991*. Likewise, transfer of devolved personnel within the period January 1 to June 30, 1992 were exempted from the election ban.

- **Separation and retirement benefits.**

When the personnel to be devolved opted for voluntary separation or retirement from the service, they were entitled to receive the corresponding retirement gratuities and other relevant benefits. In cases where the personnel were not eligible for retirement, they were entitled to separation pay pursuant to existing laws.

The all-out support of President Fidel Ramos (June 30, 1992–June 30, 1998) — the successor of President Corazon Aquino — also paved the way for the success of devolution in the Philippines. Serving as the framework for the continuation of the devolution process under the Ramos administration was the “Master Plan (1993–1998) for the Sustained Implementation of the Local Government Code of 1991.” The Plan identified three major phases of the devolution process: **Phase One: Change-over Phase (1992 to 1993)** — transfer to LGUs of devolved functions, with the corresponding assets and personnel; **Phase Two: Transition Phase (1994 to 1996)** — NGAs and LGUs institutionalize their adjustments to the decentralized schemes stipulated by R. A. 7160; and **Phase Three: Stabilization Phase (1997 onwards)** — LGUs build adequate capacities in managing local affairs, and NGAs provide constant support and technical assistance to LGUs (Aldaba, 2008).

Twenty years after the approval of the *Code*, the burning issue had shifted from devolution to capacity development of local government personnel. In this context, this paper posits that under a decentralized system of governance, the quantity and quality of public personnel that occupy positions in the local government significantly determine the quality of services offered by LGUs. This then requires an examination and possibly, a re-thinking of the manner by which the said positions

are filled and consequently, a review of the quality and the fitness of the personnel that go with effective personnel administration at the local level. Some forward-looking measures are considered to respond to local personnel administration highlighting the merit principle, of professionalism, and of strengthening competency through capacity building.

The Big Picture of Philippine Bureaucracy

The latest Inventory of Government Personnel in 2008 shows that the Philippine bureaucracy had remained a large employer with more than 1.3 million personnel. This, however, is smaller by about 11.0 percent compared to the 1,475,699 government workforce in 2004. As expected, the National Capital Region (NCR), otherwise known as the Metropolitan Manila Area (MMA), comprises the biggest number of personnel. This accounted for about 29.6 percent of the total workforce in 2004, and about 38.5 percent in 2008. The smallest number of government workforce was recorded in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) at 32,327 in 2004, and later in CARAGA at only 23,186 in 2008 (see Table 1).

Despite the devolution of personnel, the workforce of the NGAs has remained larger than the workforce of the LGUs. This can be attributed partly to the fact that personnel of state colleges and universities, as well as those of public schools at the

Table 1 Number of Government Personnel by Region: 2004 and 2008

Region	Number of Government Personnel	
	Year 2004	Year 2008
1	78,104	66,122
2	50,302	23,258
3	97,937	104,354
4	156,993	100,758
5	75,298	66,497
6	110,369	60,589
7	81,314	59,902
8	68,766	66,455
9	48,293	52,131
10	59,904	27,405
11	49,503	26,599
12	47,135	41,684
NCR	437,243	506,103
CAR	32,237	37,819
CARAGA	40,075	23,186
ARMM	42,226	50,676
Total Philippines	1,475,699	1,313,538

Source: Civil Service Commission, 2004 and 2008 Inventory of Government Personnel.

primary (elementary) and secondary levels, were not among the devolved personnel. The Government Owned or Controlled Corporations (GOCCs) registered the lowest share at only about 7.0 percent in 2004 and about 7.6 percent in 2008 (see Table 2).

Table 2 Distribution of Government Personnel by Major Subdivision: 2004 and 2008

Major Subdivision	Year 2004		Year 2008	
	No.	%	No.	%
NGAs	1,001,495	67.9	832,676	63.4
GOCCs	103,977	7.0	99,360	7.6
LGUs	370,227	25.1	381,502	29.0
Total	1,475,699	100.0	1,313,538	100.0

Sources: Civil Service Commission, 2004 and 2008 Inventory of Government Personnel.

There are two (2) broad categories of Philippine government workforce: the career and the non-career. Of the total government workforce in 2008, about 87.8 percent were career while only about 12.2 percent were non-career. It is interesting to note that more than half (about 68.1%) of the non-career personnel were hired by LGUs. On the average, the ratio of non-career to career local government personnel was about 1 : 3 (see Table 3).

Table 3 Distribution of Government Personnel by Major Subdivision and Category of Service: 2008

Category of Service	Major Subdivision						Total	
	NGAs		GOCCs		LGUs			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Career	798,584	95.9	82,457	83.0	272,610	71.5	1,153,651	87.8
Non-Career	34,092	4.1	16,903	17.0	108,892	28.5	159,887	12.2
Total	832,676	100.00	99,360	100.00	381,502	100.00	1,313,538	100.00

Source: Civil Service Commission, 2008 Inventory of Government Personnel.

Majority (about 67.3%) of the Philippine government personnel in the career service occupy the second level (i.e., professional, technical and scientific work positions). This is followed by the first level (i.e., clerical, trades, crafts and custodial service positions), the non-executive career group (i.e., career positions with Salary Grade 25 and above but are excluded from the career executive service, e.g., foreign services officers, members of the judiciary and prosecution service), and the third level (i.e., career executive service or CES positions), in that order. It must be noted that the distribution of local government personnel in the career service differs from those of the NGAs and GOCCs in terms of level of position. In the NGAs and GOCCs, majority of the career personnel are occupying the second level. In the case of the LGUs, however, majority (about 62.0%) are in the first level, followed by the second

level (about 37.4%) (see Table 4). This can be expected considering that the LGUs need enormous rank-and-file personnel for delivery of services compared to the NGAs whose main functions after the devolution had shifted to field performance monitoring and provision of technical assistance to LGUs.

Table 4 Distribution of Government Personnel in the Career Service by Major Subdivision and by Level of Position: 2008

Level of Position	Major Subdivision						Total	
	NGAs		GOCCs		LGUs		No.	%
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
First Level	148,528	18.6	33,275	40.4	169,021	62.0	350,824	30.4
Second Level	628,146	78.6	46,173	56.0	101,863	37.4	776,182	67.3
Third Level	10,305	1.3	2,080	2.5	931	0.3	13,316	1.15
Non-Executive Career	11,605	1.5	929	1.1	795	0.3	13,329	1.15
Total Career	798,584	100.0	82,457	100.0	272,610	100.0	1,153,651	100.00

Source: Civil Service Commission, 2008 Inventory of Government Personnel.

Majority (about 60.9%) of the workforce are casuals, otherwise known as emergency employees hired through job orders for a period not exceeding six (6) months, and paid on daily or hourly basis. This is observed in all major subdivisions, with the casual employees representing about 54.9 percent in the NGAs, about 59.5 percent in the GOCCs, and about 62.9 percent in the LGUs (see Table 5). There are several reasons for this, among which are: (1) patronage politics at both the central and local government level, which influences the hiring of political protégés who do not meet the qualification standards for regular posts; (2) the budgetary cap for personal services at the local government level which, in effect, limits the number of regular posts that LGUs can create and/or fill; and (3) lack of civil service eligibility on the part of some personnel despite their exemplary performance in their current jobs. Moreover, the local chief executive (i.e., provincial governor or city/municipal mayor) has the power to hire casual employees or laborers paid on a daily wage or piecework basis for local projects authorized by the *sanggunian* (local legislature) concerned, "without need of approval or attestation by the Civil Service Commission..." (Section 77, RA 7160). On the average, each of the 1,715 LGUs at the regional, provincial, city and municipal levels had about 40 casual personnel.

The LGUs are the largest employer of casuals, comprising about 70.4 percent of total government employees hired through job orders in 2008. Nonetheless, this is smaller by about 7.37 percent compared to the corresponding figure in 2004, which was about 77.81 percent. On the other hand, a slight increase in the casual personnel was observed in the NGAs (by about 3.26%) and in the GOCCs (by about 4.12%) (see Figures 1 and 2).

The second largest group of non-career personnel in the NGAs and in the GOCCs is the contractual group, which is composed of consultants and other personnel

Figure 1 JOB ORDERS
by Major Subdivision, 2004

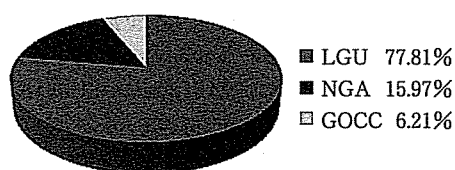
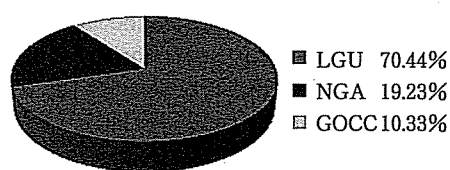


Figure 2 JOB ORDERS
by Major Subdivision, 2008



Sources: Civil Service Commission, 2004 and 2008 Inventory of Government Personnel.

hired to perform jobs that require special or technical skills not available in the agency, and to be completed within one year or less. In the case of the LGUs, however, the elective officials comprise the second largest group at about 18.8 percent of non-career personnel, compared to only about 0.9 percent in the NGAs and none in the GOCCs (see Table 5).

Table 5 Distribution of Government Personnel in the Non-Career Service
by Major Subdivision and by Classification of Position: 2008

Classification of Position	Major Subdivision						Total	
	NGAs		GOCCs		LGUs			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Coterminous	6,075	17.8	2,843	16.8	10,422	9.6	19,340	12.1
Casual	18,718	54.9	10,052	59.5	68,554	62.9	97,324	60.9
Contractual	8,036	23.6	3,849	22.8	8,997	8.3	20,882	13.0
Elective	322	0.9	0	0.0	20,425	18.8	20,747	13.0
Non-Career Executive	941	2.8	159	0.9	494	0.4	1,594	1.0
Total Non-Career	34,092	100.0	16,903	100.0	108,892	100.0	159,887	100.0

Source: Civil Service Commission, 2008 Inventory of Government Personnel.

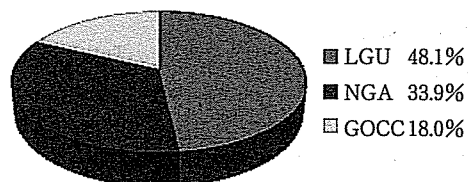
The enormous number of elective personnel in the LGUs is not surprising considering that the Philippines has 43,741 LGUs, and each LGU has its own set of elective officials. As of September 2011, the LGUs in the country consisted of: 1 autonomous region; 80 provinces; 138 cities; 1,496 municipalities; and 42,026 *barangays* or villages (NSCB, 2011).

For the lone autonomous region (i.e., the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao or ARMM), there are 22 elective officials: a governor, a vice-governor, and 20 members of the Regional Assembly. For each province and city, the number of elective officials varies, depending upon the number of legislative districts and income class of the province or city. The number ranges from 8 to 12 elective officials per province, and from 12 to 38 elective officials per city. The City of Manila has the largest number of elective officials, with a mayor, a vice mayor, and 36 city

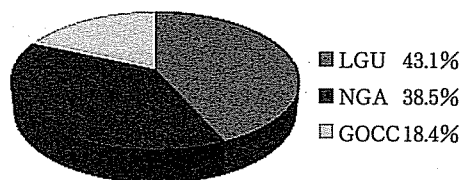
councilors. Each municipality outside the Metropolitan Manila Area (MMA) has 10 elective officials. Those within the MMA have 14 each. For each barangay, there are 8 elective officials, excluding the Chair of the Sangguniang Kabataan (Youth Council). But Table 5 does not include the elective officials at the barangay level, which would sum up to 336,208; otherwise the total number of elective officials in the LGUs would have reached at least 356,776. Moreover, the 2008 Inventory of Personnel (CSC, undated) noted that the elective regional officials of the ARMM were counted as NGA personnel instead of classifying them as LGU personnel.

Another interesting observation is that, while the LGUs had the largest workforce hired through contracts of service at about 43.1 percent of the total contractual personnel in 2008, this was actually lower by about 5.0 percent compared to the corresponding figure in 2004. On the other hand, the share of NGAs in the total contractual personnel increased by about 4.6 percent (from about 33.9% in 2004 to about 38.5% in 2008). Those of the GOCCs also increased slightly by about 0.4 percent (see Figures 3 and 4).

**Figure 3 CONTRACT OF SERVICE
by Major Subdivision, 2004**



**Figure 4 CONTRACT OF SERVICE
by Major Subdivision, 2008**



Sources: Civil Service Commission, Inventory of Personnel, 2004 and 2008.

Still, the message is that contractual or casual services mark the employment and workforce of local government civil service. While contractual or casual services might be necessary, there is no clear indication that this trend in public personnel administration is indeed what local governments would like to see. The trend raises a concern not only for local government personnel administration but also the repercussion that local personnel administration brings on service delivery.

The thesis of course is that service delivery, which is the core mission of local governments, depends on the capacity of local government unit and on the competency of its personnel to deliver and to meet the objectives of the local government units. Thus, local public administration reform should reckon with local civil service professionalization and with capacity and competency building of its personnel.

The Key Actors in Professionalizing Local Personnel

Human resource development at the local government level is governed not only by the pertinent provisions of R. A. 7160 but also by the personnel policies of the Civil Service Commission (CSC). As the name implies, the CSC is the country's central personnel agency, which is mandated to "promote morale, efficiency,

integrity, responsiveness, and courtesy in the civil service." It has been declared by the Philippine Constitution of 1986 as one of the three constitutional commissions, on a par with the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) and the Commission on Audit (COA). Being a constitutional commission with adjudicative responsibility, the CSC also renders final arbitration on disputes and personnel actions on civil service matters at both the central and the local government level (Philippine Constitution of 1986; Executive Order No. 292). The Philippine Constitution of 1986 explicitly states that:

...The civil service embraces all branches, subdivisions, instrumentalities, and agencies of the Government, including government-owned or controlled corporations with original charters. ...Appointments in the civil service shall be made only according to merit and fitness to be determined, as far as practicable, and, except to positions which are policy-determining, primarily confidential, or highly technical, by competitive examination (Section 2 (1)-(2), Title B, The Civil Service Commission, Article IX, Philippine Constitution of 1986).

The CSC administers all civil service examinations, including those that are required of career positions in the local government. The CSC likewise reviews the qualifications of applicants to career positions in the LGUs before approval of their appointments. As earlier mentioned, however, the provincial governor or city/municipal mayor has the power to hire casual employees or laborers paid on a daily wage or piecework basis for local projects authorized by the *sanggunian* (local legislature) concerned, "without need of approval or attestation by the Civil Service Commission..." (Section 77, RA 7160). In fact, virtually all of the non-career local personnel, including the coterminous, casual, contractual and elective personnel, as well as the non-career local executives, need not pass the competitive civil service examination before assumption of local government positions.

Various capacity development programs are being implemented to continuously professionalize both career and non-career personnel in the LGUs. Among the institutions involved in capacity building for LGUs are the following (Panadero, 2003) :

- **Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).**

In line with its mandate to "strengthen the administrative, technical and fiscal capabilities of LGUs, the DILG implements capacity building programs through its regional offices and field personnel at the provincial, city and municipal level, and through its Local Government Academy (LGA).

- **National Government Agencies.**

National line agencies, especially those whose functions have been devolved to LGUs, conduct training and other forms of capacity building programs as part of their technical assistance to local governments.

- **Leagues of Local Governments.**

The role of LGUs in capacity building is usually performed through the League of Provinces, League of Cities, and League of Municipalities, which

embark on capacity development programs for their respective members. The Leagues conduct seminar-workshops and conferences to determine the needs of local governments and to come up with a unified stand on issues and concerns affecting the LGUs. They also conduct policy dialogues with national line agencies to address policy issues and concerns, and venture on specialized areas such as urban management, particularly in the case of the League of Cities. Through alliances or "sisterhood", the Leagues also foster sharing of resources and best practices among the LGUs.

- **State Universities and Colleges (SUCs).**

In line with the "Town and Gown" concept wherein the "Town" represents the LGUs and the "Gown" represents the SUCs, the latter develops various programs aimed at enhancing the managerial and technical competencies of local personnel. In many cases, the SUCs focus on the training needs of elective local officials. Nonetheless, they can always customize capacity building programs that suit the needs of career officials in consultation with the LGUs concerned.

- **Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).**

The CSOs have become active in capacity building for local governance partly because they form part of the Local Development Councils which serve as planning and policy making bodies of LGUs. Hence, they have exerted efforts to improve their capacity to participate in local governance. They are actively involved in establishing networks and linkages among themselves as well as with the LGUs, and undertake community-based local development programs that include community organizing and capacity building for village officials and community members. Recently, the CSOs have focused on promoting transparency through participation of CSOs in local fiscal administration.

The Challenges to Local Government Professionalization

Despite the significant contributions of the abovementioned providers of capacity building services, however, there are challenges that need to be hurdled in order to promote local government professionalization. On top of these challenges is the lack of capacity, if not the lack of political will, of many local officials to ensure that only personnel with the right qualifications are appointed to local government posts.

The LGUs have been empowered through the Local Government Code of 1991, in determining for themselves, their needs, programs, and in making decisions on matters that govern the local government. Nevertheless, such powers do not justify an exemption of LGUs from the principles of merit, of professionalization, and of the accountability of the public officeholders.

Patronage and employment of protégé in the service is a long standing concern for civil service and local politics. The patronage system is sustained by a large pool of job orders and creation of posts that is dependent on whims, rather than as a result of a rationalized and thought-out process of position creation and that which

is responsive to the goals of local governance. This then makes LGU personnel and professionalism in local civil service a serious area of reform for the coming years.

The bulk of service delivery functions are downstreamed at the local level, thereby requiring not only sufficient number but more importantly, qualified and trained personnel who would deliver such services. The devolution of basic services and functions requires a corresponding and proper matching between quality personnel and effective service delivery. Some policy measures may be taken in the direction of professionalization of the workforce at the local level, thus:

1. A review of the current plantilla vis-à-vis the function requirements of agencies at the LGU level, taking into account the population of the area, the quantity and quality of services, and the resources at hand. The review should also include the hiring and deployment of personnel in local government colleges and universities whose personnel are often hired under contractual services or job orders arrangement. The job order and contractual services should be reviewed in the context of local resource and capacity on the one hand and fair labor practice on the other.

2. A special consideration in local government colleges and universities is the fact that distinctive qualifications of academic personnel are necessary and should be of prime importance in the acquisition and conservation of personnel. The local colleges and universities require personnel with particular qualifications and should meet the standards of academic institutions, regardless of or in addition to the special objectives of a local government unit. In this regard, it might be vital for local government units to seek the assistance of academic experts, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and the Civil Service Commission and be properly guided in the acquisition, retention, and professionalization of local government college and university personnel.

3. A performance review of the agencies and the personnel may likewise be in order, to determine fitness and to ascertain the necessary capacity building measures appropriate for local personnel and the positions and the jobs performed. It is a general observation that LGUs have a large share in the accommodation of personnel. Qualification and merit should be considered and placed at the forefront of such decision making.

4. The performance review should then lead to a mapping of personnel development and service delivery of LGUs to indicate in which direction LGUs would like to take personnel employment and development at their level. The performance review should also lead to a definition of local personnel capacity building needs and program.

5. The mapping should as well examine the incentives and disincentives of personnel development and excellent performance.

6. The creation of programs that obviously have implications on personnel and on costs should be scrutinized with the assistance of the personnel department and by the Civil Service Commission to rationalize personnel hiring and professionalization.

7. The personnel department of the LGU should itself be capacitated to become

responsive to the requirements of an effective human resource unit, upholding the highest standards of civil service and of professionalization.

8. Finally, the various domains of accountability of all personnel devolved from national agencies to the local governments should likewise be determined and established.

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