

Federal Philippines? Benchmark metrics drawn from three Federalist models

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ABSTRACT

This research is an input to the proposed “Federal Philippines,” specifically addressing the gap on what model of federalism is suitable for the country. Recognizing that consultation from the grassroots is an important aspect of policymaking, a validated survey questionnaire that has passed a statistical reliability test was personally administered to 400 qualified respondents within a multicultural community. The result revealed which among the American, German, and Nigerian models is most favored. However, considerable differences arose within each model, with certain indicators being accepted and least accepted. Thus, a matrix of the most favored and less favored indicators is presented for strategic considerations.

1. Introduction

In a unitary system, such as the Philippines’, the majority of authority is wielded by the central government and can transfer some power and obligations to local governments, allowing the national government to head over local governments effectively. However, with various issues confronting the unitary system, there have been attempts to modify the Philippine governance structure, seeing Federalism as a viable solution. Unlike unitary, Federalism delegates sovereignty to several levels of government. The self-governing states, each with its own government, and the federal government as a whole share power. Given that in federalism, there are established ordered links such as representation through the election process between different levels of government, political and economic disparities may be addressed. Scholars believe that federalism protects civil liberties, inhibits majority control, and fosters peace. It is also argued that it promotes accountability, effective government, and human rights protection (Burgess, 2006; Friedrich, 1968; Kelly & Witko, 2012; Mayeux & Tani, 2016). However, Abueva (2005) noted that federalism is neither a panacea nor a cure-all for a nation’s various maladies. And, the structure of the federal government is a major factor that could greatly influence its failure or success. It is then important to envision what a federal Philippines would look like. Rodrigo Duterte, the former president, then named France as a model to look into however, scholars were keen to point out that France has a hybrid unitary system rather than a federal one (Roxas, 2016). Brillantes (2016) suggested, “We develop our model while learning from others.”

The gap is evident in the thought-provoking query that seeks an answer to what federal country the Philippines should benchmark from. It is important to emphasize that there needs to be a public consultation on the preferred model of federalism so that it would form part of the considerations in designing the Philippine model. This research was then conducted as an input to bridge the gap on the preferred model of federalism. According to the concept of good governance, the government should pay attention to both the majority and the minority, as well

as to those at the grassroots level rather than those in the central government alone (Addink, 2019). In this case, this research argues that voices from a multicultural region should be heard.

Purposefully, 03 case models of federalism (American, German, and Nigerian) were chosen based on merits as shown in Table 1. First, Federalism has distinct characteristics. Therefore, the distinct characteristics such as Cooperative, Administrative, and Balanced Federalism should be equally represented. Cooperative and Administrative federalism are two federal governance models that explain the relationship and power allocation between the central government and its constituent units such as states or provinces. They differ in their decision-making approach, subnational autonomy, and authority orientation. Cooperative federalism stresses collaboration and shared decision-making, boosting subnational entities' autonomy and creating a two-way flow of authority, emphasizing joint efforts and shared duties between the central government and states or provinces. Administrative federalism, on the other hand, is characterized by a centralized decision-making paradigm, which may limit state autonomy and features a one-way flow of authority from the central government. Meanwhile, the goal of balanced federalism is to combine the best aspects of cooperative and administrative models, promoting efficient teamwork while maintaining a suitable degree of central authority. It aims to establish a collaborative decision-making structure that acknowledges the distinct roles and competencies of both the federal government and its constituent states or provinces. By combining centralized efficiency with decentralized responsiveness, balanced federalism aims to maximize administration and ensure a dynamic and productive interaction between the many tiers of government. Second, there are two bases of Federal division. These could be territorial or cultural. States are divided geographically into territories, primarily based on borders. A cultural model, on the other hand, takes into account the distinctive identities of various ethnic or cultural groups. These two divisions are represented by the 03 chosen case models. Third, Federalism has forms of governance. The form could either be parliamentary or presidential. In parliamentary systems such as the German model, the head of government is a member of the majority party in the legislature. In presidential systems like American and Nigerian models, the head of state is elected independently. Federalism can exist in both systems, dividing power between central and regional governments (Dosenrode, 2007; Simon, Steel, & Lovrich, 2018; The U.S. Territories, 2017).

Table 1

Characteristics of the 03 federal case countries as bases in choosing the models

Type	Area	Characteristics
American Model	North America	Cooperative Federalism, Territorial, Presidential
German Model	Central Europe	Administrative Federalism, Territorial, Parliamentary
Nigerian Model	West Africa	Balanced Federalism, Cultural, Presidential

Source: This is an original table by the author

2. Concepts and literatures

Cooperative Federalism (American). Federalism in the United States is characterized by a cooperative structure based on territorial jurisdiction. The concept of cooperative federalism calls for cooperation across all governmental levels in the pursuit of shared goals and the solving of problems that affect the entire country. This method emphasizes the need for collaborative efforts while acknowledging the state and federal separation of powers. Under this system, states oversee matters that fall under their particular jurisdiction, like education and public health, while the federal government is in charge of foreign and defense policy. The two-party system

dominates election procedures, and the President, in his or her capacity as head of state and head of government, may not necessarily belong to the political party that holds the majority of seats. Crucially, the appointment of the president takes place without the involvement of the legislative body. Furthermore, members of the President's cabinet are legally prohibited from serving concurrently in both chambers of Congress. The legislative branch, which is represented by Congress, passes laws, and federal agencies create programs, which are mostly run and carried out by state and local governments. The Supreme Court takes on a crucial function in the American federal structure at the same time. With the power to declare legislation unlawful, the Court is the final arbiter when it comes to deciding how much governmental control over citizens' lives is acceptable (Bautista, 2016; Doonan, 2013; Gerston, 2015; Goelzhauser & Konisky, 2020). The study of Gardner (2023), however, showed that state judiciaries are becoming more politicized accordingly because they are frequently the focus of national partisan organizations and are impacted by significant out-of-state investment in judicial elections. The ability to preserve fully independent state constitutional decision-making is called into question by these difficulties, which may have an impact on alignment with the political agenda of the country. This is also revealed by the study of Yilmaz and Venugopal (2013) that a culture of power accumulation makes it possible for powerful politicians to exert influence locally, impeding local governments' ability to answer to the people.

Administrative Federalism (German). Blankart and Kotter (2017), Benz and Broschek (2017), Zimmermann and Huber (2017), Blankart (2015), Schuppert (2002), Elazar (1994), Schneider (2003) explored the operational, structural, and legal facets of German federalism through their investigations, illuminating its intricacies and offering insightful perspectives on the processes of governance at work. Based on territorial delineations, administrative federalism forms the foundation of the German federalist paradigm. One of the main characteristics of German federalism is the complex connection that exists between the *Länder*, or states, and the *Bund*, or federal government. Ensuring universal, direct, equal, free, and secret ballot elections is how the federal government and the *Länder* work together to uphold the people's right to autonomous representation. Through its legislative framework, German federalism allows communes, or communities, the right to self-determination. People can now make their own decisions about a range of local issues thanks to this. It's interesting to note that this right also encompasses financial governance, granting communes access to legally recognized tax revenue streams and upholding fiscal responsibility. This situation is congruent with studies by Ardanaz Leiras, and Tommasi (2014), who contend that the tale of self-serving politicians competing for political advantages reflects cooperative federalism. The cooperative federalism concept, which emphasizes group decision-making, is reflected in the intricate rivalry for advantages. In addressing political incentives and power dynamics within the federal government, this highlights the significance of considering cooperative federalism. Essential legal instruments and constitutions define and delineate the powers and domains of the national and local governments. Germany's federal system assigns simultaneous responsibilities to the legislative, executive, and governing parts of the state. The federal government is in charge of some different things, including border enforcement, customs, armed forces, federal highways and rivers, and diplomatic activities. Distinct accountability domains are created from these categories. While supreme courts are run by the federal government, state governments oversee all other courts. Conversely, state governments oversee all other courts, while the federal government alone has power over supreme courts. This constitutional split places a strong emphasis on the proper distribution of authority, which ensures that each level of government has jurisdiction over particular areas and so promotes the growth of a rational and effective political structure.

Balanced Federalism (Nigerian). The Nigerian federal concept is made easier to understand by the scholarly works of Nwabueze (2014), Akinola (2010), Agbu (2009), Olaniyan (2007), Elaigwu and Suberu (2005), Mustapha and Adejumobi (2002), and others. When taken as a whole, these academic publications clarify several points and help readers better comprehend the intricate idea of Nigerian federalism. The notion is that rather than competing with one another, state and federal governments will work together to carry out their varied obligations since they share a common set of authorities. Part of the institutional framework of Nigeria's federal system is the National Assembly, which is composed of the Senate and the House of Representatives under the direction of the President. The judiciary, which is led by the Supreme Court, is added to this. The Nigerian Constitution, which creates a system of checks and balances to prevent any one body from exercising undue influence, plainly intends to maintain the division of powers. The design of this constitution aims to maintain a balance between the various branches and levels of government. Ukachukwu (2020) examines the local government's operation inside Nigeria's federal system of government and evaluates its effectiveness as a federal body the study revealed that Nigeria's federalism has established a consistent local government structure that falls short of meeting local demands since it has not taken into account the country's diverse population. Hence, the paper emphasized that a more customized and responsive local government structure is required. When comparing the federal system of Nigeria with the contemporary unitary system of the Philippines, an intriguing analogy emerges. The three branches of government in both countries are the president, the legislature, and the judiciary, which include the Supreme Court. But it's their respective constitutional architectures that make all the difference. The central government in the Philippines is the source of authority, with a tendency toward centralization. Nigeria, on the other hand, emphasizes a clear separation of authorities and a strong focus on federalism.

Figure 1 presents the paradigm of the study. The study utilized the Input-Process-Output to present the design of the research. Three different models of Federalism were included as model cases in this study, thereby the input. The theories of good governance and collaborative governance also form part of the input as it laid the conceptual grounding of the research whereby, any attempt to change a long been existing laws of the land should be based on good governance and collaborative governance. The process on the other hand involves crafting a survey questionnaire which was constructed to describe the agreements of 400 indigenous people on each of the features of the different models through computation of weighted mean, and mode. Meanwhile, the output is a compilation of the benchmark features from the 03 case models that the multicultural region wants to include in the proposed Philippine Federalism model.

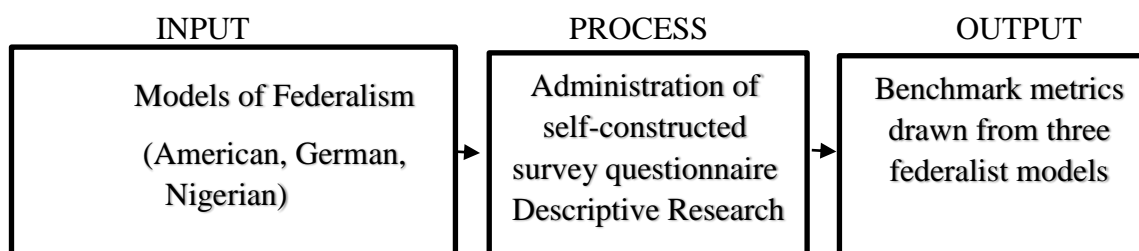


Figure 1. Paradigm of the study

3. Theoretical bases

This research is anchored on two theories-good governance theory and collaborative governance theory. The goal of good governance theory is to clarify the fundamentals and traits of a morally and effectively run government. It is motivated by the desire to advance participation in governance processes, responsiveness, equity, accountability, transparency, and

the rule of law. By offering a standard structure, it directs decision-makers and leaders to guarantee accountable and efficient governance. Good Governance Theory encompasses the concept of participative governance, which is a way of developing policies and making decisions that involve the general public. The fundamental principle of participatory governance is its dedication to guaranteeing that the diverse viewpoints and voices of the populace either from minority or majority are included in the decision-making process. This fosters inclusivity, openness, and responsibility. This study claims that for governance to be effective, the populace must be actively involved. It advocates for a system that is grounded in the collective input of the people it seeks to serve while maintaining theoretical rigor (Cornwall, 2008; Fung & Wright, 2003; Gaventa, 2002). Meanwhile, the core of collaborative governance theory is how different stakeholders work together to solve problems and make decisions. The idea addresses how groups might cooperate to accomplish shared objectives and places an emphasis on concepts that promote effective cooperation, such as shared decision-making, inclusion, and cooperative problem-solving. Considering the collective voices of a multicultural region on their preferences among the 03 models of federalism is a way of consulting and involving them in the decision-making process thereby adhering to the theory of good governance.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research design

A quantitative methodology with a descriptive design was used in this study. The goal of descriptive research design is to characterize the features and trends of a certain phenomenon without modifying factors or proving causality. To provide an accurate picture of the current status of the topic under inquiry, data collection is required. The descriptive study design is frequently employed when the investigator aims to offer an all-encompassing summary of a group or circumstance.

4.2. Population and locale

This research involved a randomly selected 400 indigenous people in a multicultural region from its total population of 1,797,660 in 2020. The sample size was computed using Slovin's formula at a .05 margin of error to guarantee a valid representation of the total population. Table 2 presents the summary of the profile of the respondents. It can be seen that in terms of sex, females outnumbered the males. The bulk of the respondents are from the age bracket 31 to 65, and the least from 66 and above. As to the line of work, most of the respondents belong to the agriculture, business, and government sectors. In terms of their ethnic affiliations, most are Kankanaey and Kalanguya, however, data also shows that all the dominant ethnic affiliations in the region are represented. It is also good to note that the 07 provinces of the multicultural region are represented.

Table 2

Profile of the respondents

Sex	Age	Line of work	Ethnic affiliation	Geographic domicile
Female - 222	18 to 20 = 52	Agriculture = 80	Kalanguya = 58	Abra = 53
Male - 178	21 to 30 = 77	Appointed Officials = 3	Kankanaey = 98	Apayao = 50
	31 to 65 = 236	Business Men/Women = 56	Ibontoc = 42	Benguet = 67
	66 above = 32	Financial Institution = 19	Ifugao = 48	Baguio = 67
	Not identified = 3	Fishery = 7	Ilocano = 56	Ifugao = 50
		Government employee = 49	Isnag = 52	Kalinga = 53

Sex	Age	Line of work	Ethnic affiliation	Geographic domicile
		Tourism = 13 NGO = 24	Kiangan = 17 Tingguians = 23	Mountain Province = 60
		Media = 14 Elected Official = 12 Education = 20 Student = 20 Lawyer = 16 Private = 38 Military/Police = 15 Others: 14	Not identified: 6	N = 400

Source: This is an original table by the author

4.3. Data collection instrument

The researcher utilized a self-constructed questionnaire. The questionnaire was crafted based on the review of literature and concepts identified in this study. The questionnaire was piloted in Baguio City with 20 respondents. It was then subjected to validity and reliability and found to have been reliable and valid.

4.4. Treatment of data

The 5-point Likert scale shown in Table 3 was used to measure the acceptability of the indicators from the 03 models. The data were treated using the weighted mean and mode. The weighted mean was used to assess the agreement of the respondents. Further, the model was employed to determine the response that appears most in the data. Furthermore, skewness was used to measure the asymmetry of the responses on the indicators.

Table 3

Statistical limit and its equivalent

Rating	Statistical Limit	Interpretation	Descriptive Equivalent
5	4.21 - 5.00	Highly Accept	Accept the indicator at 100%
4	3.41 - 4.20	Accept	Accept the indicator at 80%
3	2.61 - 3.40	Moderately Accept	Accept the indicator at 60%
2	1.81 - 2.60	Slightly Accept	Accept the indicator at 40%
1	1.00 - 1.80	Least Accept	Accept the indicator at 20%

Source: This is an original table by the author at .79 intervals

5. Results and discussion

Table 4 shows the general result of the study. Out of the three models, the Nigerian model had the lowest rating, while the American model received a rating that was .15 higher than the German model. Essentially, the indicators of each of the models were also examined to identify the most desirable characteristics against which the Philippines can be measured.

Table 4

Acceptance of the three federalism models in the multicultural region

Model	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
American (Cooperative)	3.57	Accept
German (Administrative)	3.42	Accept
Nigerian (Balanced)	3.31	Moderately Accept

5.1. Acceptance level of the American model

Table 5 shows that respondents support indicators of the American model, with an overall numerical acceptability of 3.57; with a particular focus on accountability. This finds support in the broader conversation on federalism, such that of Kelly and Witko (2012), Burgess (2006), Mayeux and Tani (2016), Friedrich (1968), who says federalism is designed to foster accountability, effective government, and human rights protection. This is consistent with constituents' emphasis on the fiduciary principles, legal obligations, and responsibility to the people, as indicated in the highest-rated indicator, which received a mean score of 3.84. The moderate acceptance of the bilateral system or two-party system (mean of 3.39) implies that the multicultural people in the CAR want electoral equity and equal opportunities for independent candidates and other political parties in support of the democratic ideals of equality, justice and self-determination. Furthermore, the theoretical foundation of the study in the concept of participative governance corresponds with scholarly discourse highlighting federalism as a system that supports representation through the electoral process and tackles political and economic inequities. The study's examination of the acceptability of various opinions and voices reflects the consideration of varied viewpoints and voices promoted in participative government. The mode, on the other hand, shows that the most common mode is 4, suggesting a high level of acceptance of each of the indicators.

Table 5

Acceptance level of the American model

Indicators	Mode	Weighted Mean	Desc. Inter.	Rank
1. The President heads both government and state	4	3.65	A	3.5
2. The legislature and the president are chosen separately	4	3.51	A	6
3. Members of the Cabinet are people who are not concurrently members of Congress	3	3.42	A	8
4. The election is a two-party System	4	3.39	MA	9
5. The president is accountable to the people and has constitutional duties	4	3.84	A	1
6. States only take part in the administration and execution of federally established programs, which are established by legislation passed by Congress	4	3.56	A	5
7. The programs are established by the federal government, while state and local governments simply take part in their administration	4	3.65	A	3.5
8. States and the federal government collaborate to form the federal government	3	3.43	A	7
9. Congress has the authority to enact laws on nearly any topic it deems to be in the best interests of the nation	3	3.69	A	2
GENERAL WEIGHTED MEAN		3.57	ACCEPT	
Standard Deviation		1.10		

5.2. Acceptance level of the German model

The German model is acceptable in the CAR, according to Table 6, with an overall numerical acceptability rating of 3.42. Parallels with discourses on federalism and the unitary system in the Philippines, the difficulties lie in which the central government wields the majority of authority. Federalism is viewed as a viable answer to concerns such as civil freedoms, majority control, and peace (Burgess, 2006; Mayeux & Tani, 2016). Hence, this lays the groundwork for understanding why CAR members can find interest in alternative governing structures such as German federalism. The idea of structured ties is congruent with the administrative federalism based on territorial divisions used in Germany. The German system places a strong emphasis on the precise separation of powers, giving the federal and state governments distinct functions.

The results of the survey demonstrate that everyone is in favor of decentralized state operations and the active involvement of regional governments in federal legislation (indicators with means of 3.56). This is consistent with the benefits of federalism, such as correcting political and economic imbalances and encouraging cooperation across different levels of government (Kelly & Witko, 2012). Findings indicate a low level of support for the federal exclusive authority over the Supreme Court (indicator with the lowest mean score of 3.22). This reflects a varied view among constituents, with some understanding the necessity for decentralization while others see the importance of centralized authority. This corroborates the study of Gardner (2023) which argues that state judiciaries are becoming more politicized because they are frequently the focus of national partisan organizations and are impacted by significant out-of-state investment in judicial affairs.

In conclusion, the findings support the broader debate about the possible benefits of federalism, such as accountability, good governance, and resolving inequities. The German model, with its administrative federalism, appears to correspond well with CAR constituents' views, highlighting a need for decentralized responsibilities and changes to better serve local and national interests.

Table 6

Acceptance level of the German model

No.	Indicators	Mode	Weighted Mean	Desc. Inter.	Rank
1.	The federal legislative process involves direct participation from the regional governments	4	3.56	A	1.5
2.	States and the federal government are separate entities	4	3.43	A	3
3.	The federal and the states share all state responsibilities, including legislation, executive branch, and judicial branch	4	3.56	A	1.5
4.	States carry out all other policies, with the federal government handling a few areas such as armed forces, national roads and rivers, foreign service, border police, and customs	4	3.33	MA	4
5.	Supreme courts are the sole courts under federal control; state governments are in charge of all other courts	3	3.22	MA	5
GENERAL WEIGHTED MEAN			3.42	ACCEPT	
Standard Deviation			1.14		

5.3. Acceptance level of the Nigerian model

Table 7 summarizes CAR's endorsement of the Nigerian federalism concept. While respondents are less enthusiastic about the Nigerian model as compared to the two other models, a standard deviation of 1.20 indicates that there is significant variability in opinions in the study. The left-skewed distribution shows that greater replies are more common, with few instances of lower responses. With a Mean of 3.51 and a Mode of 4, the most widely accepted indication is that governmental powers are shared between the national and unit of government. This indicates widespread approval of devolving powers between federal and states.

This corroborates Lagdameo's (2009) contention that federalism permits local states to exercise autonomous governance. The least acceptable indications, both with Means of 3.22, entail a reluctance to support complete independence among government branches and sole presidential responsibility. This implies a propensity for devolving responsibilities to local governments without giving government branches unlimited autonomy and without placing sole responsibility for governance outcomes on the President.

In essence, the study reveals nuanced preferences among CAR constituents, indicating a moderate acceptance of the Nigerian model, characterized by a willingness to share governmental powers but a reluctance to endorse full independence among government branches and sole responsibility for governance outcomes on the President. The study by Gardner (2023) supports the conclusions drawn from Nigerian federalism, especially about the difficulties state judiciaries confront which indicates that significant out-of-state investment in judicial elections and the impact of national partisan organizations are making state judiciaries more politicized. This is consistent with the findings, which show that respondents favor alternative kinds of federalism more than the idea of Nigerian federalism. A more tailored and responsive local government structure that takes into account Nigeria's diverse population is necessary, as highlighted by Ukachukwu's (2020) study on the operational features of local government under the country's federal system.

Table 7

Acceptance level of the Nigerian model

Indicators	Mode	Skewness Value	L/R	Weighted Mean	Desc. Inter.	Rank
1. The national and states share governmental powers inside the country	4	-0.5098	L	3.51	A	1
2. States are autonomous from one another, and this applies to people and property within their authority	4	-0.3519	L	3.30	MA	2.5
3. Three groups of people will administer 03 different branches but they will not have any direct influence on the others	3	-0.2618		3.22	MA	4.5
4. The President is ultimately in charge of overseeing the government and is ultimately accountable for any mistakes or shortfalls that may arise	3	-0.2738	L	3.22	MA	4.5
5. A national legislature made up of the Senate and a lower house is in charge of enacting laws through bills that are passed and delivered to the President, who will either grant or deny their approval	4	-0.3201	L	3.30	MA	2.5
OVERALL MEAN				3.31	MODERATELY	
Standard deviation				1.20	ACCEPT	

6. Conclusions and recommendations

The respondents display varied levels of acceptance for the American, German, and Nigerian federalism models, with the American and German models having more significant approval than the Nigerian counterparts. The study's insights, detailed in Table 8, provide data for shaping the design of a proposed Federal Philippines.

Table 8

Matrix: Considerations in designing the Philippine federalism model

Model	Favored indicators (Agree)	Moderately favored indicators
American	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The President acts as head of both state and federal • The legislature does not influence the election of the president • Cabinet members do not hold concurrent membership in Congress • The President is responsible to the people and has constitutional duties • The federal government established the programs, states and local governments administer them, and Congress enacts laws • Congress can enact laws that are seen to be in the best interests of the country • States and federal collaborate on federal matters (Shared partnership) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are two parties in the election
German	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The federal government and the states share all state responsibilities, such as legislation, administration, and the courts • Regional administrations actively engage in the legislative process • States and the nation are separate entities and are independent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State governments control all courts except the Supreme Court which are federal The federal government manages few domains while states handle all other policies
Nigerian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The national and local governments of the nation share the same governing authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The President is ultimately in charge of the government and is obligated to take ultimate responsibility for any mistakes or shortfalls that may arise • A group of people will oversee the administration of the three branches of the government, but none of them will have ultimate authority over the others • Every tier of government functions independently of one another, with individuals and assets falling under its purview • A national parliament consisting of the Senate and a lower house is tasked with enacting laws by passing bills that are then given to the President, who • will either grant or deny their approval.

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