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Is there a Marinduque Public Administration? A Study Across Localized Key Governance Sectors

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Abstract

Whether a distinct Philippine public administration exists has long been debated at the national level; this study poses the question to an island province by examining administrative practice in the education, health, and tourism sectors of Marinduque. Using a qualitative descriptive design, key informants from the provincial government, the Municipality of Boac, the Schools Division, the Department of the Interior and Local Government, a civic club, and the chamber of commerce were purposively sampled, interviewed with a semi-structured guide, and their accounts thematically analyzed. Human resource management followed civil service rules and merit-based procedures, yet municipal tourism was run by an officer in a concurrent capacity without staff. Financial management combined prior-year planning with strict liquidation rules, while a reported municipal health allocation of 1.3% against an expected 4.5%, high sea-travel costs, and slow disbursement constrained operations. Policy implementation was hybrid: national directives were amended through field feedback, sectoral meetings, legislative oversight, and digital signatures. Records were digitalized but not paperless. Practices aligned with institutional plans and were tracked through scorecards and satisfaction surveys, although responsiveness was limited by executive priorities and long outcome horizons. Recurrent issues included resource deficits met through officials' personal spending, policy announcements ahead of local readiness, leadership turnover, paper-based legal requirements, and insularity. Informants proposed risk-based planning, digital authorization, partnerships, dedicated offices, and preserved institutional memory. The study concludes that Marinduque public administration, prescribed from the center and improvised locally, constitutes an adaptive bureaucracy explained jointly by Weberian, managerial, and contingency perspectives.

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1. Introduction

Is there a Philippine public administration? De Guzman (1986) posed this question and opened a prolonged discussion of whether the discipline in the country bears a native character or imitates foreign models. Extending the question, Brillantes and Fernandez (2008) asked for whom such an administration exists, and Ricote (2005) proposed indigenization as a way of refounding the field. While this debate has taken place mostly at the national level, whether distinct administrative identities also emerge at the sub-national level remains unexamined. This study brings the question to an island province: Is there a Marinduque public administration?

Public administration is concerned with the organization of structures, resources, and people so that public policy is carried out and services reach the communities for which they are intended (Shafritz et al., 2017). National policy provides the broad map; the quality of services and programs provided to residents, however, is determined by the capacity and operational systems of local institutions. Variations in leadership, staff, techniques, and organizational make-up produce variations in the quality of services. The problem this study addresses is that while the *de jure* practice of public administration has been the subject of considerable interpretation, understanding of its *de facto* practice in the Province of Marinduque is limited, which hampers capacity building, policy change, and institutional development in the province.

To address this problem, the study examines whether human resource management, financial management, policy analysis and implementation, and knowledge management, as practiced in the province's key governance sectors of education, health, and tourism, show a recognizable local character or merely follow national templates. The province is thus approached as a possible source of administrative theory in its own right. Five research questions guided the inquiry: (RQ1) What is the nature of public administration in selected government offices of Marinduque with respect to human resource management, financial management, policy analysis and implementation, and knowledge management? (RQ2) How does this practice relate to institutional vision and development goals? (RQ3) What are the common capacity, policy, and institutional issues? (RQ4) How can these issues be addressed? and (RQ5) What are the implications for the theory and practice of public administration?

The article makes three contributions. First, it provides original field data on sub-national public administration in a small island province, a context often neglected in the literature on Philippine and Southeast Asian decentralization. Second, it extends the national discussion on what constitutes Philippine public administration to the provincial level and tests bureaucratic, managerial, contingency, and collaborative governance theories against the accounts of working administrators. Third, it examines four administrative functions across three sectors in one jurisdiction, giving particular attention to knowledge management, the least studied of the four in local government.

2. Literature review and conceptual framework

2.1 The identity of Philippine public administration

In 1986, the *Philippine Journal of Public Administration* asked whether there is a Philippine public administration at all. De Guzman (1986) and Corpuz (1986) offered affirmative answers, emphasizing the need to understand the question within an institutional and cultural context, while Brillantes and Fernandez (2008) reopened the issue by asking for whom Philippine public administration exists. Ricote (2005) framed indigenization as a refounding of the discipline in response to its difficulty in explaining local conditions. The exchange concerned the national bureaucracy and the discipline as taught in universities. It revealed a long-standing tension between models of administration based on Western experience and Filipino social and political conditions, a tension that Riggs (1964) had earlier described as formalism, the gap between prescribed forms and actual behavior in developing administrations. Since the debate has been theorized at the level of national institutions and academics, little has been empirically examined about whether administrative action displays a discernible native character at the provincial level.

2.2 Devolution and local administrative capacity

With the passage of the Local Government Code of 1991, responsibility for much of the work of public administration was brought closer to communities in the Philippines. The Code devolved primary health care, basic education support, tourism development, and other frontline functions to provinces, cities, municipalities, and barangays, and set up local health boards, local school boards, and local development councils as sites for planning and participation (Republic

Act No. 7160, 1991). Two later measures enlarged this mandate: the Supreme Court ruling in *Mandanas v. Ochoa* (2018) widened the base from which the local share of national taxes is computed, and Executive Order No. 138 (2021) directed the full devolution of functions from the executive branch to local government units (LGUs).

Decades of evidence show wide variation and general underperformance of devolution. Local health expenditures have not translated into effective service delivery because devolved functions were not accompanied by local revenue capacity (Cuenca, 2020). The health system was fragmented after 1991 (Grundy et al., 2003), local health boards have achieved varying levels of community participation (Ramiro et al., 2001), and adversarial local politics has been found to disrupt programs and the careers of health workers (Yu et al., 2023). In basic education, LGU support financed through the Special Education Fund depends on the local real property tax base (Manasan et al., 2011). In tourism, the Tourism Act of 2009 gives planning and regulatory oversight to LGUs (Republic Act No. 9593, 2009), but coordinating tourism planning across an archipelago presents its own challenges (Maguigad, 2013). Evaluations of the post-*Mandanas* transition show wide variation in LGU priorities and capacity, with planned capacity strengthening focused mainly on staffing and training needs (Juco et al., 2024), and have raised related issues concerning devolution transition plans and local health systems (Lubos et al., 2023; Nisperos et al., 2024).

2.3 Island provinces and the Marinduque setting

Studies of decentralization in the Philippines tend to rely on national data, fiscal indicators, and case studies of large or highly urbanized LGUs (Cuenca, 2020; Juco et al., 2024). Small, single-island provinces, where every regional transaction involves a sea crossing and one officer may serve in several roles, have been neglected. Most existing studies also focus on a single sector, most often health, and a single function, most often finance. Few examine human resource management, financial management, policy implementation, and knowledge management together and across sectors, and knowledge management in LGUs receives the least coverage of the four.

Marinduque offers a suitable setting in which to carry the identity question below the national level. It is an island province in the MIMAROPA Region composed of six municipalities (Boac, Mogpog, Gasan, Santa Cruz, Torrijos, and Buenavista) and 218 barangays.

Its economy is largely agricultural; it is known nationally for the Moriones Festival, and it is reached only by sea or air. The province shares the constraints of geographically isolated areas: limited infrastructure, limited funds, and a shortage of qualified personnel. Yet it also displays community governance systems that have received little academic attention. Published work on Marinduque has focused on tourism resources and the environmental impacts of mining, and how its administrators hire staff, draw up budgets, implement programs, translate national agendas into local action, and retain knowledge have yet to be systematically documented.

2.4 Conceptual framework

Figure 1 presents the research paradigm of the study in the input-process-output (IPO) format. The model derives from the open-systems view of organizations, in which an organization draws inputs from its environment, transforms them through a throughput, and returns outputs to that environment (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Applied to research, the IPO model describes the inquiry itself as a system: the research questions and the constructs they contain define what enters the study, the methodological procedures define how that material is transformed into evidence, and the implications for the theory and practice of public administration define what the study returns to the discipline and to the institutions examined. The large arrow that runs behind the three boxes signifies that the stages are sequential and cumulative. Each stage depends on the one before it, and the output cannot be reached without passing through the procedures of the process stage. The paradigm is anchored on the central question of the study, namely whether there is a Marinduque public administration. The question extends to the provincial level the long-standing debate on whether there is a Philippine public administration (Brillantes & Fernandez, 2008; De Guzman, 1986). The paradigm operationalizes that debate by specifying which administrative practices are to be observed, against what institutional standards they are to be judged, which constraints are expected to bear on them, and how their solutions are to be identified.

The Input

The input box contains the first four research questions. These questions serve as the conceptual inputs of the study because they determine the constructs on which data are gathered. They proceed from description (how public administration is practiced), to evaluation (how

responsive the practices are), to diagnosis (what issues are encountered), and finally to prescription (how the issues can be addressed). This sequence moves the analysis from what is observed to what should be done.

Research Question 1: Public Administration Practice

The first question asks how public administration is practiced in selected government sectors of Marinduque, specifically education, health, and tourism. The three sectors were chosen because they represent functions devolved or shared under the Local Government Code of 1991 (Republic Act No. 7160, 1991) and are central to the province's development. Education and health carry national mandates and are delivered partly through field offices of national agencies. Tourism is largely locally funded and is the principal economic sector linked to the Moriones Lenten Rites. Observing all three permits comparison between nationally anchored and locally dependent functions. Practice is examined through four functional domains that together span the core of administrative work.

Human resource management (1.1) refers to how personnel are recruited, deployed, and evaluated. It tests the Weberian expectation that public offices are filled through merit and governed by written rules (Weber, 1922/1978), as well as the results orientation of new public management expressed through performance instruments (Hood, 1991). Financial management (1.2) covers the planning, allocation, control, and disbursement of funds. It reflects the strategic management view that budgets should be tied to medium-term plans (Poister & Streib, 1999) and the accountability concerns of results-based management (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). Policy analysis and implementation (1.3) concerns how national directives are interpreted and carried into local action. It draws on implementation theory, which treats every decision point between intent and execution as an occasion for delay or alteration (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973), and on the synthesis of top-down and bottom-up perspectives (Sabatier, 1986). Knowledge management (1.4) refers to how information and know-how are recorded, shared, and retained. It is examined through the conversion of tacit into explicit knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) and through the digitization of administrative records (Dunleavy et al., 2006). Taken together, the four domains cover the people, money, rules, and information through which any public organization operates.

Research Question 2: Responsiveness to Institutional Vision and Goals

The second question asks how responsive these practices are to the vision and development goals of the institutions. It shifts the analysis from what administrators do to whether their actions serve the purposes for which the institutions exist. Responsiveness is examined through three indicators: the alignment of activities with development plans, the presence of monitoring and feedback mechanisms, and the participation of clients and stakeholders in planning. The indicators correspond to the strategic management cycle of planning, implementation, assessment, and adjustment (Poister & Streib, 1999). They also reflect participatory and collaborative models of governance, in which public agencies engage non-state actors in decision-making (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Fung, 2006). The question is directly related to Sustainable Development Goal 16, which calls for effective, accountable, and responsive institutions (United Nations, 2015).

Research Question 3: Common Issues Encountered

The third question identifies the common issues encountered in public administration practice. It groups them into three categories that were defined in advance. Capacity (3.1) refers to the adequacy of financial, human, and material resources relative to administrative demands. It is interpreted through resource dependence theory, which holds that organizations are constrained by the external parties that control the resources they need (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Policy (3.2) refers to problems arising from the design, timing, clarity, and procedures of policies. It draws on the observation that frontline implementers must reconcile policy as declared with resources as given (Lipsky, 1980). Institutional factors (3.3) refer to the political, legal, and environmental conditions within which offices operate, including leadership priorities, documentation requirements, and geography. These are examined through institutional theory, which explains the persistence of formal requirements by the legitimacy they confer (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), and through contingency theory, which holds that organizations adapt their arrangements to their environment (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). The three-category scheme ensures that each obstacle is classified according to whether it originates within the organization, in the policy itself, or in the wider institutional and physical setting.

Research Question 4: Addressing the Issues

The fourth question asks how the challenges and issues can be addressed. It completes the input by turning the diagnosis into prescription. The question seeks measures already in use as well as those proposed by informants, so that the recommendations rest on the experience of practitioners rather than on external prescriptions alone. Placing this question within the input is consistent with the bottom-up perspective on implementation, which regards local adaptation as a source of policy improvement (Sabatier, 1986).

The Process

The process box specifies the procedures by which the inputs are transformed into findings. It has two components, which correspond to the data-gathering and data-analysis phases of the study.

The first component is the distribution and retrieval of research instruments. The main instrument is a semi-structured interview guide constructed in line with the four input questions. Each item corresponds to a domain or category in the input box, so the instrument is a direct translation of the paradigm. Letters requesting permission were sent to the participating offices. Informants were selected through purposive sampling of persons directly involved in administrative decision-making, policy implementation, or program delivery (Etikan et al., 2016). Interviews were conducted face-to-face where feasible. Informants who could not be interviewed completed the same open-ended items in print or electronic form, which were then retrieved for analysis. Informed consent was obtained before each interview, and recordings were made only with permission.

The second component is the tabulation, interpretation, analysis, and presentation of data. Recordings and written responses were transcribed and analyzed thematically, following the phases described by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarization, coding, grouping of codes into categories, development and review of themes, and interpretation. In this qualitative study, tabulation refers to organizing codes, themes, and participant sources into summary matrices rather than to statistical treatment. Interpretation reads the resulting themes against the theories identified for each input domain. This makes it possible to determine where local practice agrees with established accounts and where it departs from them. Presentation reports each theme with verbatim excerpts tied to participant codes, so that every analytic claim can be traced to its source. Because informants were drawn from government, civic, and business organizations

across three sectors, comparison across institutional positions provides a form of data-source triangulation.

The Output

The output of the study is a statement of the implications of the results for the theory and practice of public administration. The output is the answer to the study's fifth research question. For this reason, it appears in the output box rather than among the inputs: it cannot be posed as a separate line of data gathering because it depends on the synthesis of the first four questions.

The theoretical implications concern whether, and to what extent, local practice confirms or qualifies the theories invoked at the input stage. These include bureaucratic theory, new public management, strategic management, contingency theory, resource dependence, digital-era governance, and network and collaborative governance (Rhodes, 1996). The output thereby returns to the question that frames the study. De Guzman (1986) held that a Philippine public administration exists in the sense that Philippine institutions display recognizable patterns of behavior. If administration in Marinduque shows recognizable local patterns in how national rules are applied under island conditions, the same reasoning supports the claim that a Marinduque public administration exists. The practical implications are directed to provincial and municipal officials, sectoral managers, national and regional policy makers, and researchers. They take the form of recommendations on records and digital governance, the institutionalization of devolved functions, feedback from implementers into policy, the use of partnerships to mobilize resources, and the preservation of institutional knowledge.

Coherence of the Framework

The framework is coherent in three respects. First, it is aligned vertically: each input question has a corresponding section of the instrument, a set of codes in the analysis, and a part of the output. As a result, no construct is introduced without being measured, and no finding is reported without a question that produced it. Second, it is sequential: the input questions build from description to prescription, and the output is reached only through the procedures of the process stage. Third, it is theoretically grounded: each domain and category in the input is linked to an established body of public administration theory, which provides the standard against which local practice is interpreted at the output stage.

The paradigm should be read with two qualifications. Because the study is qualitative, the arrow in Figure 1 denotes the logical order of the inquiry rather than a causal relationship to be

tested statistically. In addition, the paradigm is represented as a linear sequence, whereas the measures identified under the fourth question are expected to feed back into practice. This feedback is examined in the analysis and returned to in the discussion of implications. Within these qualifications, the paradigm provides a clear map of what the study examines, how it examines it, and what it contributes to the understanding of public administration in an island province.

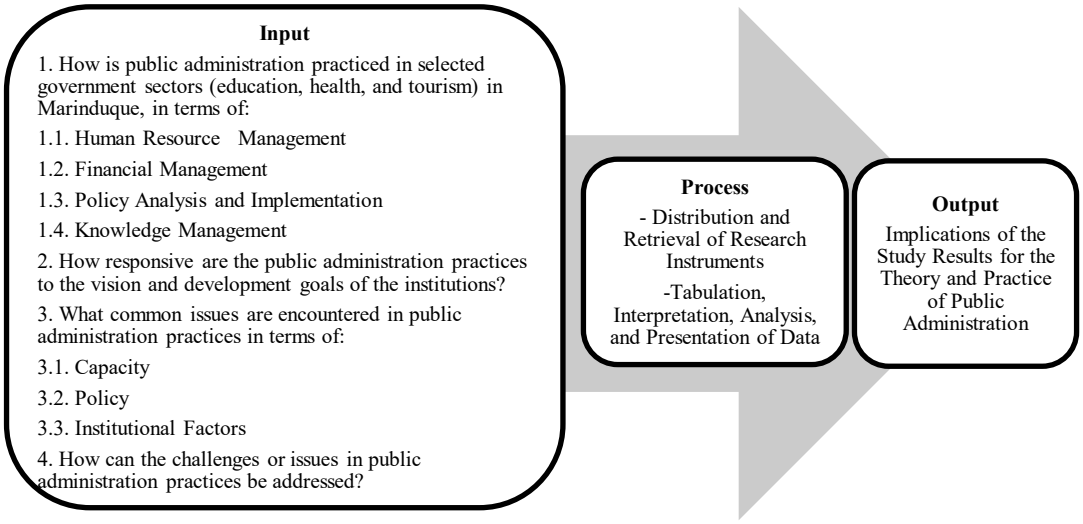


Figure 1. *Conceptual framework of the study*

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

The study used a qualitative descriptive design. The concern was the way local administrators carry out their work and the interpretations they make of it, and there was no intent to generalize administrative traits to a population; a qualitative design was therefore suitable (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The design enabled data on program implementation and administrative decision-making to be obtained directly from local administrators and allowed practices to be connected to institutional goals and to the capacity, policy, and institutional factors that influence them.

The analytic structure had deductive and inductive components. The four functional domains (human resource management, financial management, policy analysis and implementation, and knowledge management) and the three issue categories (capacity, policy,

and institutional factors) were predetermined according to the research questions. Within each domain, codes and themes were derived from participants' statements. Interpretation was guided by policy implementation theory and governance theory, together with the other theoretical bodies that the data brought into play during analysis.

3.2 Research locale, participants, and sampling

The research was carried out in the Province of Marinduque, Philippines, with the provincial capital, Boac, as the principal study area. Marinduque lies between Tayabas Bay to the north and the Sibuyan Sea to the south, northeast of Mindoro and north of Romblon. Its main industry is agriculture, and the Moriones Lenten Rites are its principal tourist attraction and a cultural resource with significant economic benefits for the community. Three conditions informed the choice of locale. As a single-island province, Marinduque allows the effects of isolation on administration to be observed without the complicating effects of land links to neighboring provinces. With its small population and bureaucracy, officials and communities know one another and the effects of decisions are visible. Provincial and municipal offices, field offices of national government agencies, and civic and business organizations are concentrated in Boac, which enabled accounts to be obtained from several institutional perspectives in one location.

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling, a technique used in qualitative research to identify interviewees with knowledge of and direct involvement in the issue studied (Etikan et al., 2016). The sample was stratified by sector so that education, health, and tourism were each represented, and by institutional type so that provincial and municipal government, national agencies with field offices in the province, civil society, and the private sector were included. Inclusion criteria were incumbency in the designated position and direct involvement in administrative decision-making, policy implementation, or program delivery. Eight key-informant positions met these criteria (Table 1).

Table 1

Key-Informant Positions and Basis for Inclusion

Office	Position	Basis for inclusion	Participant code
Department of Education, Schools Division of Marinduque	Schools Division Superintendent	Oversees basic education schools in the division; implements DepEd policies and reforms; manages division budgets, hiring, and school operations	DepEd-Admin, DepEd-HR, DepEd-Budget
Provincial Government of Marinduque	Secretary to the Sangguniang Panlalawigan	Directly involved in provincial legislative and administrative processes	SP-Sec
Provincial Government of Marinduque	Provincial Tourism Officer	Oversees and promotes provincial tourism programs; coordinates with LGUs and stakeholders; monitors tourism projects	Tourism-Prov
Municipality of Boac	Municipal Health Officer	Plans, coordinates, monitors, and evaluates municipal public health programs and services	RHU-Boac
Municipality of Boac	Municipal Tourism Officer	Plans, promotes, implements, and monitors local tourism programs	Tourism-Boac
Department of the Interior and Local Government	Provincial Director	Oversees local governance standards, compliance, and capacity building in the province	DILG-PD
Rotary Club of Marinduque North	President	Leads civic and community service initiatives; represents civil society	Rotary-Pres
Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Provincial President	Represents the private sector in governance and development matters	PCCI-Pres

Note. Responses from the Schools Division are reported under three functional codes covering administration (DepEd-Admin), human resources (DepEd-HR), and budget (DepEd-Budget). DepEd = Department of Education; LGU = local government unit; SP = Sangguniang Panlalawigan; RHU = Rural Health Unit; DILG = Department of the Interior and Local Government; PCCI = Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The sample is small and weighted toward Boac and toward senior office holders. It was designed to yield depth of account from persons who control or closely observe the four administrative functions, and its findings are transferable to similar settings by analytic reasoning only.

3.3 Data generation

Written letters requesting permission were sent to the Provincial Government, the Municipality of Boac, the DILG Provincial Office, the Schools Division Office, the Rotary Club of Marinduque North, and the PCCI. After permission was secured, interviews with each office head or focal person were scheduled at times that would not interfere with normal office activity.

The main instrument was a semi-structured interview guide constructed in line with the research questions. It contained general, open-ended questions on human resource management, financial management, policy implementation, and knowledge management; on the fit between practice and institutional aims; on problems experienced; and on suggested solutions. The guide was tested and refined before fieldwork, and its semi-structured form allowed the interviewers to follow up on responses and ask for specific instances.

Each interview took approximately 30 minutes and was conducted face to face whenever feasible, or by electronic communication when the informant could not be interviewed in person or preferred it. Informants who could not be interviewed completed the same open-ended items in print or electronic form within a mutually agreed period. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent, and recordings and written responses were transcribed and compiled for analysis. Participants spoke in English, Filipino, or a combination of the two. Quotations are presented in the language participants used, with English glosses in square brackets.

3.4 Data analysis

The data were analyzed thematically following the six-phase approach of Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarization through repeated reading of transcripts and written responses; coding of salient and recurring statements; grouping of related codes into categories; development of themes capturing practices and difficulties common across sectors; review of those themes; and interpretation against the research questions and guiding frameworks. Each code was tied to a participant code and at least one verbatim excerpt, so that every analytic claim can be traced to its source. The inclusion of informants from three sectors and from government, civic, and business organizations permitted comparison across institutional positions and provided data-source triangulation. Themes were then read against bureaucratic theory, new public management, strategic management, contingency theory, street-level bureaucracy, digital-era governance, and collaborative governance to identify where local practice converged with these accounts and where it diverged. Quantitative statements made by participants, including budget shares, are reported as given and were not verified against financial records.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Prior approval was obtained from each of the concerned university offices and participating office before data collection began. This includes the acquisition of ethical clearance from the University Research Ethics Committee. Likewise, coordination with various agencies facilitated participation of key employees in the interviews. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study, advised that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time, and gave informed consent before the interview or questionnaire. Audio recording was used only with the participant's consent.

Names are not given. Participants are referred to by codes denoting office and function, for example DILG-PD or RHU-Boac. Because several of these offices have a single incumbent, the codes restrict identifiability without fully anonymizing participants; this is an unavoidable constraint when interviewing officials in a small province and is acknowledged here. Transcripts and written responses were stored securely and used only for academic purposes.

4. Findings

Table 2 summarizes the themes derived from the analysis, organized by research question. The sections that follow present the evidence for each theme.

Table 2

Summary of Themes by Research Question

Research question and domain	Themes	Participant sources
RQ1. Practice: human resource management	Regionally centralized recruitment; compliance with departmental and civil service rules; scorecard and IPCR evaluation; role overload through concurrent capacity	DILG-PD, DepEd-HR, SP-Sec, Tourism-Boac
RQ1. Practice: financial management	Prior-year strategic budgeting; travel-weighted allocation; 30-day liquidation rule; low health allocation; disbursement delay	Tourism-Prov, DILG-PD, DepEd-Budget, RHU-Boac
RQ1. Practice: policy analysis and implementation	Digital authorization; integration of field feedback; correction through meetings; legislative oversight	DILG-PD, DepEd-Admin, RHU-Boac, SP-Sec
RQ1. Practice: knowledge management	Video-based training; regional and national data systems; centralized and restricted records; digitalized but not paperless	DILG-PD, Tourism-Boac, RHU-Boac, DepEd-Admin, SP-Sec
RQ2. Responsiveness	Alignment with plans; quarterly monitoring and satisfaction surveys; participatory planning and public-private collaboration; long outcome horizons; dependence on executive priority	DepEd-Admin, Tourism-Prov, DILG-PD, PCCI-Pres, RHU-Boac
RQ3. Issues: capacity	Resource constraints; out-of-pocket governance; role overload without staff; inactive organizational membership	DepEd-Admin, DILG-PD, Tourism-Boac, Rotary-Pres
RQ3. Issues: policy	Announcement ahead of local readiness; variation in interpretation; procedural delay in payment	RHU-Boac, DepEd-Admin, Tourism-Prov
RQ3. Issues: institutional factors	Executive priorities; leadership-driven program change; paper documentation requirements; geographic accessibility	Tourism-Prov, DepEd-Admin, SP-Sec, DILG-PD
RQ4. Measures	Risk-based planning and field monitoring; digital signatures and streamlining; partnerships and stakeholder relations; merit recruitment, dedicated offices, institutional memory	DepEd-Admin, Tourism-Prov, DILG-PD, RHU-Boac, Tourism-Boac, SP-Sec

Note. RQ = research question; IPCR = Individual Performance Commitment and Review. Participant codes are defined in Table 1.

4.1 How public administration is practiced (RQ1)

4.1.1 Human resource management

Human resource management in the offices studied is governed by civil service regulation and by agency-specific rules that leave little to local discretion. Recruitment in the DILG begins in the province and ends in the region:

> *"The process is more on centralized regional office… the province provincial office will conduct the initial interview… then later on ipapasa siya doon sa regional office for the final assessment pagkatapos ay hiring"* [it is then

forwarded to the regional office for the final assessment, after which hiring follows]. (DILG-PD)

The provincial office screens, but authority to appoint rests at the regional level. In the Schools Division, the sequence is fixed by a departmental issuance: "In recruitment, we use [DepEd] Order number 7, series of 2023. It indicates our process from publication up to the fill-up of appointment" (DepEd-HR; see Department of Education, 2023). At the provincial legislature, the Secretary placed civil service rules ahead of everything else: *"Unang-una kailangan natin ng CSC rules and regulation"* [First of all, we need the Civil Service rules and regulations] (SP-Sec).

Performance management is equally formal. The DILG uses a scorecard for its field officers that records, among other items, *"kung naka-comply ka ba sa mga admin requirements"* [whether you have complied with the administrative requirements] (DILG-PD). The provincial legislature applies the Individual Performance Commitment and Review (IPCR), the standard instrument of the Civil Service Commission: *"Ang evaluation namin ang tawag ay IPCR"* [Our evaluation is called the IPCR] (SP-Sec). In both offices, performance is assessed against written targets and compliance items and is documented.

The offices studied stand in two different relations to the national government, and this affects where personnel authority lies. The DILG Provincial Office and the Schools Division are field units of national departments whose functions are deconcentrated, so that screening is local while appointment is decided at the regional level under departmental rules. The provincial and municipal offices are devolved units in which the local chief executive is the appointing authority, subject to civil service standards on qualification. In both arrangements, the criteria for entry and evaluation are set nationally; the difference lies in who applies them. This explains why informants from national agencies spoke of regional offices while those from local governments spoke of the absence of positions.

These practices correspond closely to the Weberian model of bureaucracy, in which authority is legal-rational, offices are filled based on qualification, and conduct is governed by written rules (Weber, 1922/1978). They are consistent with De Guzman's (1986) observation that the Philippine bureaucracy displays the structural features of the model. The use of scorecards and the IPCR adds a results-oriented layer associated with new public management

(Hood, 1991). Recruitment in these offices is not discretionary, and informants presented this as a source of transparency and uniformity.

The same accounts reveal a point at which the formal system does not hold. In Boac, tourism is administered by an officer whose plantilla position lies elsewhere:

> *"Ang position ko talagang is information officer… tapos concurrent capacity kasi walang malagay sa tourism… Mahirap yung kailangan… sa tourism"* [My actual position is information officer… and then a concurrent capacity, because there is no one to assign to tourism… What tourism requires is difficult]. (Tourism-Boac)

The officer performs the duties of two posts and, as reported in Section 4.3.1, does so without staff. The arrangement is referred to here by the participant's own term, "concurrent capacity." It is the local form of role overload: the volume and range of work attached to a function exceed what the assigned person can carry because no position has been created or filled for it. Overlapping functions and the use of temporary personnel were most evident in tourism-related posts, and offices adjusted by redistributing responsibilities among available staff. Concurrent designation departs from the bureaucratic principle of a fixed division of labor among specialized offices, and it illustrates the tension between reform requirements and inherited structures that Zolak Poljašević et al. (2025) identify in public sector human resource management. Human resource practice in Marinduque is therefore meritocratic and rule-bound in procedure but stretched in deployment.

4.1.2 Financial management

Financial management is planned well in advance and tightly regulated at the point of spending. The Provincial Tourism Officer described a budget cycle that begins a year before funds are used:

> *"Mahabang proseso ang budget… nagsisimula in prior year. So itong gastusin namin for 2026 was derived and planned way back 2025 pa"* [The budget is a long process… it begins in the prior year. Our expenditures for 2026 were derived and planned as far back as 2025]. (Tourism-Prov)

Budgeting is tied to medium-term plans rather than short-term appropriation, which accords with the forward-looking orientation that Poister and Streib (1999) treat as the core of strategic management in the public sector. Allocation is also adjusted to geography. The DILG Provincial Director explained that "in MIMAROPA, a larger budget goes to travelling… because

you cross the sea… we consider that" (DILG-PD). Because regional meetings, trainings, and submissions require travel by boat or aircraft, transport is a structural cost of administration in the province. Contingency theory holds that organizations adapt their internal arrangements to the demands of their environment (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967); the weighting of the travel budget is a direct instance.

Controls on the use of funds are strict and time-bound. Schools must account for one cash advance before the next is released: *"kailangan nilang ma-liquidate yun within 30 days para ma-release yung succeeding cash advance nila"* [they need to liquidate it within 30 days so that their succeeding cash advance can be released] (DepEd-Budget). The rule enforces fiscal discipline and accountability at the school level in the manner promoted by new public management (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992).

Planning and control do not resolve the shortage of funds. The Municipal Health Officer of Boac compared the local health allocation with the national expectation:

> *"Gusto ng taas national is mag-alot ng 4.5% sa health pero ang meron lamang kami is 1.3%. So sobrang baba"* [The national level wants 4.5% allotted to health, but what we have is only 1.3%. That is extremely low]. (RHU-Boac)

The figure is the participant's own and was not checked against budget documents. It indicates that the health office works with less than a third of the share it understands to be expected. The account agrees with Cuenca's (2020) finding that devolved health functions exceed the fiscal capacity of many LGUs and with the observation of Nisperos et al. (2024) that a larger national tax allotment does not by itself secure a larger commitment to health.

Procedure also slows payment. The Provincial Tourism Officer was candid:

> *"Masyadong bureaucratic ang gobyerno… disbursement delays, yes. So, yan ang issue din ng mga supplier, tagal nilang bayaran"* [Government is too bureaucratic… disbursement delays, yes.] That is also the suppliers' complaint: it takes a long time for them to be paid]. (Tourism-Prov)

Delay in paying suppliers weakens the standing of government as a client and may raise costs or narrow the pool of providers willing to serve a small island market. Bozeman (1993) describes as red tape those rules that impose a compliance burden without advancing the purpose they were written to serve; the informant's complaint is that disbursement procedure has reached that point.

The financial accounts differ by sector in a way that mirrors the structure of funding. The Schools Division and the DILG administer national appropriations released through regional offices, and their concerns centered on liquidation, timing, and travel. The rural health unit and the tourism offices depend on local budgets, and their concerns centered on the size of the allocation and the pace of disbursement. Compliance is the dominant issue where funds are national, and adequacy where they are local. Financial management in Marinduque is thus systematic in design and constrained in operation: strategic plans and established procedures guide it, while budget ceilings, regulatory requirements, and the high cost of transport in an island province limit what those plans can sustain.

4.1.3 Policy analysis and implementation

National policies and directives provide the primary framework for local action in all three sectors. Within that framework, informants described a process in which policy is adjusted through technology, field feedback, deliberation, and oversight.

Technology has been used to remove a physical obstacle to implementation. The DILG Provincial Director recalled the effect of authorizing digital signatures under the Philippine National Public Key Infrastructure (PNPKI): *"Nung inallow na yung digital signature (PNPKI)… kahit wala ka physically pwede mong permahan ang dokumento"* [once the digital signature was allowed… you can sign the document even if you are not physically present] (DILG-PD). In a province where a signatory may be held on another island by weather, the measure allows documents to move when people cannot. Informants also referred to the e-LGU system and connectivity initiatives as supports for service delivery.

Policy content is revised in response to those who implement it. In the Schools Division, *"Some amendments, some inclusion… because of the feedback coming from the field, coming from the grassroots, lalo na sa mga allowances"* [especially on allowances] (DepEd-Admin). Teachers and school heads, who experience the practical effects of a rule, transmit their observations upward, and the rule is amended. This is the influence that Lipsky (1980) attributes to street-level bureaucrats, whose handling of policy at the point of delivery shapes what the policy becomes.

In health, correction takes place through meetings: *"Pag may nakikita kang mga mistakes so ico-correct mo siya. So ang mga policies um dumadaan yan sa mga meetings"* [When you see

mistakes, you correct them.] Policies go through meetings] (RHU-Boac). Policy is treated as provisional, and its adjustment is a collective matter for the health team. Oversight completes the arrangement. The Secretary to the provincial legislature described the authority of that body over implementing offices: *"Inherent sa sanggunian… implied na meron siyang oversight functions… pwede nila akong ipatawag at tanungin every now and then"* [It is inherent in the Sanggunian… it is implied that it has oversight functions… they can summon me and question me every now and then] (SP-Sec). Legislative scrutiny holds administrators answerable for adherence to mandate.

Taken together, these accounts describe a hybrid mode of implementation. Direction is set centrally, in keeping with the top-down perspective, while content and method are modified from below through participation, innovation, and feedback, in keeping with the bottom-up perspective (Sabatier, 1986). Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) showed that policy passes through many decision points between intent and execution, each an occasion for delay or alteration. In Marinduque, several of these points have been turned into occasions for local adaptation, and partnerships with government institutions and private organizations supply further means of carrying policy into effect.

4.1.4 Knowledge management

Knowledge management is the least settled of the four functions. Offices are moving from paper records toward digital systems, and the movement is incomplete. The Secretary to the provincial legislature stated the position precisely:

> *"We are digitalized but not paperless… hindi soft copy kinikilala ng batas kaya may mga libro kami"* [the law does not recognize the soft copy, which is why we keep books]. (SP-Sec)

Records are encoded and retrievable electronically, yet the legally operative record of legislative proceedings is the bound volume; the office therefore maintains two systems. Digital tools are nonetheless used with some ingenuity to transfer knowledge. The DILG records short instructional videos: *"We recorded short videos regarding certain topics because it's easier to share… mas madali siyang matutunan"* [it is easier to learn] (DILG-PD). Know-how that would otherwise reside with an experienced officer is captured in a form that can be passed to successors and field staff. In the terms of Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), tacit knowledge is externalized and becomes explicit, which is the step on which organizational memory depends.

Sectoral information systems supplied by national agencies provide the main infrastructure for data. In tourism, *"Meron kami yung system na ginagamit provided ng DOT Mimaropa… Best practice yan ang Mimaropa, yung tour lista"* [We have a system that we use, provided by DOT MIMAROPA… That is a MIMAROPA best practice, the "tour lista"] (Tourism-Boac). The platform standardizes the recording of tourism data across the region. In health, electronic clinic records feed the Field Health Services Information System (FHSIS): *"Dahil sa pagpasok nung e-clinic… meron kaming FHSIS… tatapon ngayon yun doon sa national"* [With the introduction of the e-clinic… we have the FHSIS… that is then transmitted to the national level] (RHU-Boac). In education, general records are centralized while sensitive data are restricted: "The regular data, it is centralized in our record section… but as to learner's information… handled by the focal person" (DepEd-Admin). The separation serves both access and data privacy.

The pattern fits the account of digital-era governance proposed by Dunleavy et al. (2006), in which information technology reintegrates government functions and digitizes administrative processes, with one qualification. Digitization in Marinduque has reached storage, reporting, and training, and it stops where legal validity is at issue. Formal requirements for original documents and handwritten signatures sustain a hybrid paper-digital system. The Electronic Commerce Act of 2000 gives legal recognition to electronic documents in general terms (Republic Act No. 8792, 2000); the informant's account suggests that this recognition has not been carried into the specific rules and audit practices that govern legislative and administrative records at the local level. The practical result is duplication of effort, and knowledge management in the province remains a developing practice in which digital tools extend reach while compliance requirements keep paper in place.

4.2 Responsiveness to institutional vision and development goals (RQ2)

The practices described are responsive to institutional visions and development goals, subject to two conditions: the time needed for outcomes to appear and the priorities of elected executives. Alignment with plans was reported in every sector. In education, activities are derived from the division's development plan: "Everything that we do is contributory to the success of our programs… as stated in our division educational development plan" (DepEd-Admin). In tourism, annual work is drawn from a multi-year master plan:

> *"May master plan kami from 2023 down up to 2030… at kada year, compendium na siya bubulutin sa year na ito itong gagawin ko"* [We have a master plan from 2023 up to 2030… and each year it serves as a compendium from which I draw what I will do for that year]. (Tourism-Prov)

In health, planning follows the direction set by the national government and by local leadership through the local investment plan for health. Programs in the three sectors can therefore be traced to education development plans, health investment plans, and the provincial tourism master plan, as strategic management prescribes (Poister & Streib, 1999).

Monitoring gives the plans operational force. The Schools Division reviews targets quarterly: "We have this monitoring and evaluation mechanism… for example, [were] the target set for the quarter achieved or attained? If not, what interventions are we going to implement?" (DepEd-Admin). The DILG gathers client feedback on every service: *"For every service that we have, we have a CSS customer satisfaction survey… and yun naman ang ginagamit how to improve our services"* [and that is what is used to improve our services] (DILG-PD). Performance tracking, feedback mechanisms, and satisfaction surveys are instruments of results-based management (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). Legislative oversight, noted in Section 4.1.3, adds an external check on whether programs remain consistent with institutional objectives.

Participation broadens the planning base. The Schools Division involves other sectors in its planning: "We invite people… All sectors are actually represented in the strategic planning. So we have the LGU… the municipalities, the finance sector, the agriculture" (DepEd-Admin). Business takes the collaborative project route:

> *"We have a membership fee… So magpoproyekto kami ang ginagawa ko ngayon ay puro collaboration with different national government offices"* [We have a membership fee… So when we undertake projects, what I do now is all collaboration with different national government offices]. (PCCI-Pres)

At the community level, need is verified before a project is taken up. As one informant explained, *"Bago namin doon gawin yung project nag-a-assessment muna kami. Meron kaming benchmarking kung ito pang barangay na ito is meron talagang pangangailangan"* [Before we carry out a project there, we first conduct an assessment. We benchmark whether this barangay really has the need]. Community health outreach and private sector representation in local councils were further examples. These arrangements correspond to the participatory designs

discussed by Fung (2006) and to the collaborative governance model of Ansell and Gash (2008), in which public agencies engage non-state stakeholders in collective decision-making.

Responsiveness is constrained in two ways. First, certain performance measures are not visible within one planning cycle. The Municipal Health Officer gave the example of non-communicable disease:

> *"Mahirap din kasi when it comes to… hypertension hindi mo agad mababago ang lifestyle… Ang measure niya mga makikita mo mga after 10 years"* [It is also difficult because, with hypertension, you cannot change lifestyle right away… its measure is something you see after about 10 years]. (RHU-Boac)

Annual indicators record activities and outputs; whether a program has altered health status is known only much later. The second limit is political. The Provincial Tourism Officer summed it up in a question: *"You may have the best plan in the world. Ang tanong* [The question is]*, is that plan the priority of your LCE?"* (Tourism-Prov). A master plan that runs to 2030 spans more than one electoral term, and its execution depends on the continued support of whoever holds executive office.

The sectors vary in how responsiveness occurs. Education has the most developed machinery, with quarterly targets, field supervision, and multi-sector planning meetings. Tourism has the longest planning horizon and the greatest exposure to executive preference, because its programs are locally funded and lack the protection of a national mandate of the kind that governs schooling and primary health care. Health is bound most closely to national direction and faces the greatest difficulty in demonstrating results within its reporting period. Systems for responsiveness are therefore in place and functioning, but their effect is conditioned by time horizons, political priorities, and limited resources. This finding qualifies the common assumption that weak local responsiveness results from an absence of plans. In Marinduque, the plans exist and are monitored; what is uncertain is their continuity across administrations and the resources committed to them, a concern that also motivates the ground-level measurement of transparency and accountability practices in Philippine LGUs by Gabriel and Castillo (2020).

4.3 Common issues encountered in public administration practice (RQ3)

Informants were asked what stands in the way of the practices they had described. Their answers are grouped under the three categories set by the research question. The categories overlap in experience, and several statements could be assigned to more than one.

4.3.1 Capacity

Capacity issues arise from an imbalance between administrative demands and the financial and human resources available to meet them. In education, shortage alters the scale of what is implemented: "Whenever we would be implementing programs… the problem is always resources… a project would be compressed… because of financial constraints" (DepEd-Admin). Programs proceed, but in reduced form. Where funds are absent altogether, officials sometimes supply them personally. The DILG Provincial Director reported:

> "Sometimes you will shell out… Our MLGOs [municipal local government operations officers] shell out sometimes just to deliver what is demanded from them." (DILG-PD)

The study terms this practice *out-of-pocket governance*: the completion of mandated public tasks with the private money of public servants. It keeps services running and conceals the true cost of delivery from the budget. Personnel shortage compounds the financial one. The limited number of technical and permanent employees results in overlapping responsibilities and heavier workloads, and reliance on temporary or contractual workers with limited training and job security affects the consistency of service. The Boac tourism officer added that the concurrent post comes without support: *"Mahirap yung kailangan… sa tourism… at wala ka rin staff"* [What tourism requires is difficult… and you have no staff either] (Tourism-Boac).

The same imbalance appears in civil society. The Rotary Club President described the effect of inactive members:

> *"Ang ano mga members na inactive… affected yung iyong ah project kasi kaunti… is-sholder ko yun"* [The members who are inactive… your project is affected because we are few… I shoulder that payment myself]. (Rotary-Pres)

The burden of collective projects falls on the few who remain active, as the logic of collective action predicts for voluntary groups that cannot compel contribution (Olson, 1965). Resource dependence theory holds that organizations are constrained by the external parties that control the resources they need (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Local offices in Marinduque depend on national transfers and regional allocations that do not cover their mandates, and they compensate through compression of programs, concurrent designation, and personal subsidy. The pattern accords with national assessments that find devolved responsibilities running ahead of local means (Cuenca, 2020; Juco et al., 2024).

4.3.2 Policy

Policy issues take three forms: announcement ahead of readiness, variation in interpretation, and procedural delay. The first concerns timing. National agencies announce programs before local offices have the means to deliver them, and frontline staff absorb the consequences:

> *"Ang nangyari sa national, magsasabi agad sila hindi pa nagagawa sa ground… kami yong nag-aano ng burden"* [What happens at the national level is that they announce things right away when these have not yet been done on the ground… we are the ones who carry the burden]. (RHU-Boac)

Public expectations are raised centrally and must be managed locally by personnel who lack the funds, staff, or guidelines that the announcement presupposes. Some programs continue to be implemented despite these limitations. This is the situation of the street-level bureaucrat described by Lipsky (1980), who must reconcile policy as declared with resources as given.

The second concerns meaning. A directive may be understood differently by those who receive it: "It depends on the taker of the information… because different persons have different perspectives, so they have different interpretations" (DepEd-Admin). Where a policy leaves room for interpretation, implementation becomes uneven across schools and offices, and results differ accordingly. The third concerns procedure. The disbursement delays reported in Section 4.1.2 were attributed by the Provincial Tourism Officer to the bureaucratic character of government processes and associated with extensive documentation. Rules intended to safeguard public funds lengthen transactions to the point at which suppliers are discouraged, which meets Bozeman's (1993) definition of red tape. The three forms share an origin in the distance between the level at which policy is made and the level at which it is carried out: top-down design without prior consultation of implementers produces mandates that are premature, ambiguous, or procedurally heavy in local conditions (Sabatier, 1986).

4.3.3 Institutional factors

Four institutional factors condition administrative performance: the priorities of local chief executives, changes in leadership, legal documentation requirements, and geography. The dependence of plans on executive priority has been noted; the tourism officer's question, whether a plan is "the priority of your LCE," identifies political will as the decisive condition for implementation at the local level.

Changes in leadership at higher levels have a similar effect on national agencies: "*Siyempre* [Of course] we are always affected by the change of administration in the higher-ups… there will be a change in all the programs" (DepEd-Admin). Programs that require long-term implementation are the most exposed. Nalbandian et al. (2013) describe the gap between what is politically acceptable and what is administratively sustainable as a central problem of contemporary local government, and Yu et al. (2023) document its costs in Philippine health services. The Marinduque accounts add that the problem operates at two levels at once, through local electoral turnover and through changes of national administration.

Legal formalism is the third factor. The requirement that official records be kept on paper, already discussed, was restated in institutional terms: *"Digitalized but not paperless… hindi soft copy kinikilala ng batas kaya may mga libro kami… nakapapel"* [the law does not recognize the soft copy, which is why we keep books… on paper] (SP-Sec). Institutional theory explains the persistence of such forms by the legitimacy they confer: organizations adopt and retain structures because these are required or expected, whether or not they are efficient (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Geography is the fourth:

> *"One of the challenges ay yung ano yung geog situation… Maropa is an island… plane or boat. Mag malakas ang alon… tengga ka"* [One of the challenges is the geographic situation… MIMAROPA is made up of islands… plane or boat. When the waves are strong… you are stranded]. (DILG-PD)

Insularity affects the movement of personnel, documents, and supplies, raises costs, and introduces uncertainty into every schedule that depends on a crossing. It is the environmental contingency to which the travel budget and the digital signature respond (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). Governance outcomes in the province are thus shaped by the interaction of political leadership, legal and institutional requirements, and physical setting, as much as by the administrative system itself. The issues are interconnected: limited funds and staff magnify the effect of premature mandates, leadership turnover interrupts the plans meant to manage scarcity, and insularity adds cost and delay to each.

4.4 How the issues can be addressed (RQ4)

Informants described four groups of measures, some already in use and others proposed: strategic planning and monitoring, digital systems, collaborative governance, and institutional and human resource reform. Table 3 relates each group to the issues it addresses.

Table 3

Measures Reported or Proposed and the Issues They Address

Measure	Practices reported or proposed	Issues addressed
Strategic planning and monitoring	Risk identification in plans; annual review of the previous year; field supervision and evaluation	Resource constraints; shifting priorities; implementation gaps
Digital systems	PNPKI electronic signature; recorded instructional videos; streamlining of paperwork	Geographic inaccessibility; procedural delay; loss of knowledge on turnover
Collaborative governance	Private partners for schools; inter-agency collaboration in health; client voice in planning; stakeholder allies in development councils	Budget shortfall; limited staff; weak support for sectoral proposals
Institutional and human resource reform	Competency-based recruitment; dedicated departments and personnel; institutional memory; combination of established and new practices	Role overload; concurrent capacity; discontinuity across administrations

Note. PNPKI = Philippine National Public Key Infrastructure.

Strategic planning and monitoring. Administrators treat planning as a means of anticipating difficulty. A sound plan, in the words of the Schools Division informant, includes risk management: "A good plan… included yung risk management, you should be able to identify or predict the possible risk, the possible bottlenecks" (DepEd-Admin). The tourism office reviews each year's experience before planning the next: "There is always a review, an assessment of what happened the year before… making sure that the same shouldn't happen the following year" (Tourism-Prov). Implementation is supervised in the field: "Our strategy is to constantly monitor as to the implementation… they have field supervision; they have field evaluation" (DepEd-Admin). Planning, implementation, assessment, and adjustment form a cycle, which is the strategic management process in operation (Poister & Streib, 1999).

Digital systems. Existing technologies were identified as the most direct response to insularity and procedural delay. The PNPKI electronic signature is now promoted among local officials: *"Pinapagamit na rin namin yung PNPKI electronic signature… kahit wala ka physically pwede mong permahan ang dokumento"* [we are now also having them use the PNPKI electronic signature… you can sign the document even if you are not physically present] (DILG-PD). Recorded instruction supports the transfer of knowledge when personnel change: *"Ire-record siya… short video regarding a topic… mas madali siyang ma-share at madali siyang matutunan"* [it is recorded… a short video on a topic… it is easier to share and easy to learn] (DILG-PD). The tourism informant looked beyond the tools to the procedures themselves:

"If we can only streamline the paperwork, *malaking tulong yan*" [that would be a big help] (Tourism-Prov). Digital authorization shortens the route a document must travel; it does not reduce the number of documents required. Digital-era governance, as Dunleavy et al. (2006) describe it, involves the redesign of processes around digital means; the informants' accounts indicate that Marinduque has adopted the tools and awaits the redesign.

Collaborative governance. Partnership is the principal means by which offices compensate for limited budgets. The Schools Division draws on private partners through arrangements such as the Adopt-a-School Program: "We do not depend on the government alone. We have these private partners who are very happy… to share their blessings" (DepEd-Admin). The rural health unit relies on other agencies:

> *"Kung meron kaming palaging collaboration mas napapadali namin yung mga services at program na nadadala sa mga pasyente"* [When we collaborate regularly, we are able to bring services and programs to patients more easily]. (RHU-Boac)

Community voice is built into planning: "To give the best services… we have to listen to the voice of our clients, the voice of the customers, and that is included in the planning stage" (DepEd-Admin). In tourism, relationships with stakeholders have a budgetary purpose:

> *"Pag maganda yung relasyon mo sa stakeholder mo, sila yung magiging kakampi mo sa Municipal Development Council, sa pagpalagay ng mga pondos"* [When your relationship with your stakeholders is good, they become your allies in the Municipal Development Council, in the allocation of funds]. (Tourism-Boac)

Stakeholders seated in the local development council can support an office's proposals when resources are divided. Informants also pointed to coordination with the Department of Science and Technology and the Department of Trade and Industry for training and for livelihood and small-business support. These practices match the conditions that Ansell and Gash (2008) associate with effective collaboration, namely repeated interaction, mutual dependence, and shared gains. They also show collaboration serving as a resource strategy in the sense of Pfeffer and Salancik (1978): offices manage dependence on insufficient public funds by cultivating alternative sources.

Institutional and human resource reform. The remaining proposals concern structure and personnel. Recruitment should rest on competence: *"Ano dapat ang tingnan is, yung qualification, nung nag-a-apply, and experience, o competency talaga"* [What should be looked

at is the applicant's qualification and experience, or really competency] (Tourism-Boac). Functions now held in a concurrent capacity should be given offices of their own: "You have to create another department for that, *para maging mas effective siya… para maging mas sustainable*" [so that it becomes more effective… so that it becomes more sustainable] (Tourism-Boac). Assigning dedicated personnel to specific divisions would reduce overlapping duties and excessive workloads. Institutional memory was valued as a resource for decision-making. The Secretary to the provincial legislature explained its use in advising officials:

> *"Dapat meron kang institutional memory kasi pwede mong sabihin sa kanya… nangyari na yan po dati… so maniniwala sa'yo"* [You should have institutional memory, because you can tell the official… "that has happened before"… and so you will be believed]. (SP-Sec)

Knowledge of precedent gives career staff standing with elected officials and allows earlier errors to be avoided. The health informant recommended that reform combine established and new practices: *"Kumuha ka pa rin nung culture from old culture at yung new culture tapos pagsamahin"* [you still take from the old culture and from the new culture and then combine them] (RHU-Boac).

The four groups of measures are mutually supporting. Risk-based planning identifies where scarcity and turnover will bite; digital systems reduce the cost of distance; partnerships supply resources that budgets do not; and dedicated offices and retained memory give the other three an institutional base. The measures also have limits that informants did not always state. Partnership depends on the goodwill and solvency of partners, and it tends to favor offices and schools whose heads are skilled at cultivating them, which may widen differences within the province. Digital authorization depends on connectivity and on the willingness of oversight bodies to honor electronic records. Proposals for new departments and permanent positions require local legislation and recurring funds, which returns the matter to the executive priorities and budget ceilings that created the problem. The measures already in use are those an office can adopt on its own authority; those still at the stage of proposal require decisions by others. None requires a departure from national rules. Each is an adaptation made within them, consistent with the hybrid mode of implementation described in Section 4.1.3.

5. Discussion

This section addresses RQ5 by reading the findings against the theories that framed the study and returning to the question posed in the title.

5.1 Implications for theory

The legitimacy of the province's administration still rests on bureaucratic theory. Regulated documentation, recruitment under DepEd Order No. 007, s. 2023 and civil service rules, and formal performance evaluation indicate that legal-rational authority structures everyday practice (Weber, 1922/1978). The theory nonetheless requires qualification: the concurrent capacity of an officer who holds the posts of both information officer and tourism officer breaches the requirement of a clear division of labor.

The IPCR, the field officers' scorecard, client satisfaction surveys, and liquidation timeframes are results-based instruments introduced through new public management. They show a shift of focus from process to measurable results, such as literacy in education and tourist arrivals in tourism. The health informant's comment on ten-year outcome horizons shows the limit of this shift: there are annual measures of output, but not of the outcomes that matter most.

Contingency theory receives strong support. Administrators have adjusted budgeting, scheduling, and authorization to the sea, the weather, and the distance to regional centers. An archipelagic environment produces administrative arrangements, such as travel-weighted budgets and remote signing, that have no close counterpart in land-based jurisdictions.

The most distinctive theoretical implication lies in the association between public service motivation and resource dependence. Perry and Wise (1990) define public service motivation as a predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations. The personal financing of official tasks by field officers suggests that such motivation operates as a substitute for resources that the formal system fails to supply. Out-of-pocket governance indicates that in resource-deficient environments the public sector is sustained at least partly by the commitment of individual officials. This closes the resource gap in the short term but, because the subsidy is unrecorded, weakens the case for adequate allocation in the long term.

Governance theory is confirmed in its network form: government agencies, private organizations, and civic groups contribute jointly to institutional objectives (Rhodes, 1996).

Public administration in Marinduque combines formal bureaucratic mechanisms with collaborative arrangements, and neither element alone describes it. Policy implementation theory is likewise supported. It predicts that intent is altered as it passes through administrative structures and successive decision points (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973). The Marinduque accounts locate the main points of alteration: the regional office, where appointments and releases are decided; the local chief executive, whose priorities determine which plans are funded; the audit and records rules, which fix the form transactions must take; and the sea crossing, which governs when people and papers arrive. The accounts add that alteration is often corrective. Field staff amend, compress, and supplement policy so that it can be delivered at all, which supports the bottom-up view that local adaptation is a condition of implementation and should be planned for.

These implications return the discussion to the question in the title. De Guzman (1986) held that there is a Philippine public administration in the sense that there are Philippine institutions with recognizable patterns of behavior. By the same reasoning, there is a Marinduque public administration. Its formal apparatus is national and uniform. Its working character is local: it is defined by concurrent designation, sea-dependent logistics, records that are digitalized but not paperless, reliance on partners, and personal subsidy by officials. It is best described as an *adaptive bureaucracy*. Brillantes and Fernandez (2008) asked for whom public administration exists; the Marinduque evidence indicates that local administrators orient their adaptations toward clients and communities, often at personal cost, while the rules they work under are oriented toward compliance.

5.2 Implications for practice and policy

Five implications follow for practice. First, offices should move from digitalized to digital governance. A digitalized office still carries the legal burden of physical records and ink signatures. Riggs (1964) used the term formalism for the gap between prescribed forms and actual practice; here the forms themselves hold practice back. Rules on records and audit need revision so that digital files are accepted as official documentation. Second, institutions require formalization. Sectors such as tourism suffer from being assigned as designations rather than established as funded offices; a regular office with dedicated technical staff would provide a

continuous, predictable conduit for program delivery that does not rely on an overburdened workforce.

Third, feedback from the field should be strengthened. Policies are designed at the national level, and implementation is impeded when they are not translated to conditions on the ground. Formal processes through which teachers, health workers, and other implementers can propose changes before policies are finalized would improve feasibility. Fourth, collaborative governance should be used deliberately to acquire resources. Given the reported health allocation of 1.3% against an expected 4.5%, administrators benefit from pooling resources and expertise with private partners and other agencies to meet needs that government budgets cannot. Fifth, knowledge should be preserved. With staff turnover every year, knowledge management tools become more essential; short videos, learning libraries, and online information sharing, such as those already used by the DILG, the tourism offices, and the Rotary Club, help ensure that expertise is not lost when experienced personnel leave.

The findings also bear on the Sustainable Development Goals. They relate most directly to SDG 16, particularly Target 16.6 on effective, accountable, and transparent institutions and Target 16.7 on responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making (United Nations, 2015). Findings on the funding, staffing, and reporting of rural health units relate to SDG 3, specifically Targets 3.8 and 3.c; findings on division-level planning, school-based financial management, and school partnerships relate to SDG 4; and findings on tourism planning, data systems, and institutional capacity relate to SDG 8, specifically Target 8.9 on sustainable tourism. The dependence of local offices on private partners, civil society, and inter-agency collaboration connects to SDG 17, particularly Target 17.17, and the focus on insularity and unequal local fiscal capacity connects to SDG 10. As Meuleman (2021) argues, SDG achievement hinges on the quality of public administration at the level of implementation.

5.3 Limitations

The study drew on a small purposive sample of senior informants concentrated in Boac, which limits the range of perspectives represented, particularly those of frontline staff and of the other five municipalities. The data are self-reports by office holders, who may present their institutions favorably; triangulation across sectors and institutional types reduces but does not remove this risk. Quantitative statements, including budget shares, were reported as given and

were not verified against financial records. Because several offices have a single incumbent, participant codes limit rather than eliminate identifiability. The findings therefore describe patterns of practice and should not be read as measures of performance.

5.4 Directions for future research

Future research should extend the inquiry to additional sectors and to the other municipalities of Marinduque and to other island provinces in order to test and broaden these findings. Comparative studies across regions and methods, including documentary verification of budget shares, would strengthen the evidence base. The phenomenon of out-of-pocket governance warrants dedicated measurement of personal spending by public officials and of its implications for budgeting and for public service motivation.

6. Conclusion

The study examined how public administration is practiced in the education, health, and tourism sectors of Marinduque and reached four conclusions. First, public administration in the province functions as an adaptive bureaucratic organization: it has a formal, merit-based structure governed by national rules, and it shows resilience through a deconcentrated network of operations that compensates for scarce resources and for the slowness of its own procedures. Second, strategic planning is robust and responsive, yet a significant implementation gap separates plans from results; the gap is produced externally by geography and internally by institutional factors, chief among them political turnover and shifting executive priorities. Third, administrative systems are modernizing but remain tied to paper-based documentation and audit, producing a double system of records and substantial administrative redundancy. Fourth, the capacity of local institutions to deliver services rests on a multi-sectoral mode of operation and on the personal and organizational values of administrators, including high ethical standards and mutual cooperation; practices are consistent with organizational objectives and are sustained under persistent constraints of capacity, policy, and institutional design.

In answer to the question posed in the title, a Marinduque public administration does exist. It consists of the national system as reshaped by the conditions of a small island province and by the people who operate it. The following recommendations are offered:

1. *For citizens and communities:* strengthen multi-sector partnerships among government, the private sector, and civil society so that resources and knowledge are combined in long-lasting, community-centered programs.
2. *For local government units and sectoral organizations:* adopt competency-based recruitment together with training and mentoring, build the capacity needed for an adequately skilled and motivated workforce, and use digital governance and knowledge management systems to improve coordination, transparency, institutional memory, and service delivery.
3. *For local government units and implementing agencies:* increase transport and financial support for inter-island operations, improve communication systems, and accelerate payments and cash releases, so that administrative and geographic constraints are addressed together.
4. *For policymakers and local leaders:* institute a bottom-up process of regular policy review so that policymaking is participatory, responsive to local needs, and consistent with the broader goals of institutions.
5. *For future researchers:* extend the inquiry to additional sectors, municipalities, and provinces, and undertake comparisons across regions and methods, including documentary verification of budget shares and measurement of out-of-pocket spending by public officials.

By locating a recognizable administrative identity in one island province, the study suggests that the question first asked of the nation in 1986 can be productively asked of each locality, and that the answers are likely to be found in how officials adapt national forms to local conditions.

Declarations

Author contributions (CRediT). Kurt Russel B. Regalado: Conceptualization, Investigation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing - original draft. Raoul J. Magcamit: Methodology, Supervision, Validation, Writing - review and editing.

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Conflict of interest. The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethics approval. Written permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Provincial Government of Marinduque, the Municipality of Boac, the DILG Provincial Office, the Schools Division Office of Marinduque, the Rotary Club of Marinduque North, and the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Clearance from the Marinduque State University - Research Ethics Committee (REC) was secured for the paper per REC Code: 1225-24 dated February 06, 2026.

Informed consent. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study, advised that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time, and gave informed consent before the interview or questionnaire. Audio recordings were made only with consent. Participants were likewise informed of their anonymity and that data gathered shall be treated with utmost confidentiality in compliance with the provisions of the Data Privacy Act.

Data availability. The interview data are not publicly available because several informants hold single-incumbent positions and could be identified. De-identified excerpts are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Use of generative AI. AI was responsibly used in improving the grammar construction of sentences and paragraphs. Authors take full responsibility for the results of such use.

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