
Work Performance of the Philippine Senate and its Contribution to the National Development Plan

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This study sought to examine the work performance of the Philippine Senate during the administrations of Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III (2010–2016) and Rodrigo Roa Duterte (2016–2022), focusing on how the Senate contributed to achieving the National Development Plans (PDPs) under both administrations. Specifically, it aimed to (1) describe the profile of the Senate in terms of age, sex, partisan composition, and professional background during the 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th Congresses; (2) evaluate the legislative performance of the Senate based on resolutions passed, bills approved, laws enacted, and treaties concurred; (3) identify the salient features of the Philippine Development Plans during the Aquino and Duterte administrations; and (4) assess the Senate’s contribution in achieving the goals outlined in the PDPs from 2011–2016 and 2017–2022.

To achieve these objectives, the study employed a qualitative research design, particularly the document analysis method, which focuses on reviewing and interpreting textual and documentary data to extract meaning, patterns, and insights. This method allowed the researchers to systematically analyze documents such as Senate records, official legislative journals, the Philippine Development Plans, and other related government publications. According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is a valuable research method for qualitative studies because it provides stable and rich data that can be re-examined for verification and triangulation. In this study, the method was used to assess the priorities, values, and beliefs reflected in Senate activities and to understand the alignment between legislative outputs and national development objectives.

Additionally, a thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring themes and patterns in the Senate’s performance. This involved coding and categorizing information drawn from official records, legislative statistics, and policy documents. Through this approach, the researchers were able to capture the underlying narratives and relationships between the Senate’s legislative outputs and their corresponding relevance to the development agenda of both administrations.

The findings revealed several key characteristics regarding the profile of the Philippine Senate during the 15th to 18th Congresses. The majority of the senators were male, with only a small number of female legislators, showing that gender imbalance persisted in the upper chamber of Congress throughout both administrations. Most senators were within the working-age range and came predominantly from Luzon, particularly from Metro Manila and nearby provinces. In terms of partisan composition, the Liberal Party (LP) was dominant during the Aquino administration, while a more mixed political alignment characterized the Duterte administration, with the emergence of regional parties and alliances under PDP–Laban and its affiliated groups. Professionally, many senators had backgrounds in law, business, public service, and mass media, which significantly influenced their legislative priorities and styles of governance.

In terms of legislative performance, the Senate demonstrated consistent productivity in passing resolutions, bills, and treaties across the four Congresses. During the Aquino administration (15th and 16th Congresses), the Senate enacted several key laws that aligned with the Philippine Development Plan 2011–2016, which was grounded on the principles of inclusive growth, good governance, and anti-corruption. Laws focusing on transparency, social welfare, and education reform—such as the K-12 Education Act, Sin Tax Reform Law, and GOCC Governance Act—were notable outputs that supported the administration’s policy direction. The Senate also ratified important international treaties during this period, particularly those related to trade and maritime cooperation.

During the Duterte administration (17th and 18th Congresses), the Senate's legislative performance remained robust, though its focus shifted in accordance with the Philippine Development Plan 2017–2022, which emphasized infrastructure development, peace and order, and regional competitiveness. Landmark legislations such as the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, the Ease of Doing Business Act, the Bangsamoro Organic Law, and the Build, Build, Build infrastructure program-related laws reflected the government's priorities. The Senate also played a critical role in the review and concurrence of treaties related to defense, trade, and international cooperation.

Despite these accomplishments, the study found that only a portion of the enacted bills directly contributed to the implementation of the PDPs under both administrations. While many laws had developmental implications, few were explicitly designed as legislative mechanisms to achieve specific PDP goals. This suggests a gap between the Senate's legislative agenda and the comprehensive development strategies outlined in the national plans. The analysis also revealed that the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for tracking the impact of laws on national development were limited, resulting in insufficient integration between legislative output and development outcomes.

Regarding the Philippine Development Plan (2011–2016) under President Aquino, the study noted that it was anchored on the Social Contract with the Filipino People, which emphasized inclusive growth, poverty reduction, and good governance. The plan aimed to achieve "rapid, sustained, and inclusive growth" through improved transparency, economic reform, and investment in human capital. In contrast, the Philippine Development Plan (2017–2022) under President Duterte adopted the vision of "AmBisyon Natin 2040", a long-term goal of achieving a "matatag, maginhawa, at panatag na buhay para sa lahat." The Duterte PDP focused on infrastructure development, peace and security, rural and regional development, and economic resilience. The Senate's legislative agenda during this period was largely responsive to these priorities, especially through the enactment of economic liberalization laws and measures to improve government efficiency.

The study concluded that while both administrations had distinct priorities, the Senate's role in national development remained indispensable. The Senate acted as both a policy-making and oversight body, ensuring that national programs were supported by appropriate legislation. However, the researchers observed that greater alignment and coordination between the Senate and the executive branch are necessary to ensure that legislative measures are effectively translated into development outcomes.

From the findings, several recommendations were made. First, senators must closely monitor and evaluate the implementation of the laws and programs they pass to ensure alignment with the national development agenda. Legislative oversight should be strengthened, particularly in evaluating the impact of laws on economic growth, social welfare, and governance reforms. Second, there should be increased participation of women in legislative processes to ensure more inclusive decision-making. Promoting gender equality and representation in the Senate will contribute to more balanced and comprehensive policymaking. Third, the Senate could benefit from developing a performance measurement system not only for accountability but also as a management tool to improve institutional efficiency. Such a system would enable the Senate to assess the effectiveness of its outputs in contributing to national goals. Lastly, the study recommends that future researchers delve deeper into identifying the primary authors and proponents of significant laws and resolutions, as well as the challenges encountered in achieving the objectives of the National Development Plan.

In summary, this research underscores that the Philippine Senate plays a pivotal role in shaping the direction of the country's development through its legislative functions. The study highlights the importance of aligning legislative priorities with the national development agenda, ensuring gender inclusivity, and enhancing institutional accountability. By strengthening these areas, the Senate can further its mission of serving as a vital instrument in achieving the long-term vision of national progress and inclusive growth envisioned in the country's development plans.