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Abstract: Administrative Decentralization seeks to redistribute authority, responsibility and financial resources for providing public services among different levels of government. It is the transfer of responsibility for the planning, financing and management of certain public functions from the central government and its agencies to field units of government agencies, subordinate units or levels of government semi-autonomous public authorities or corporations or area wide regional or functional authorities. This paper divided into two parts. Part-I of this paper, a modest attempt has been made for searching a common theoretical framework of decentralization. And Part-II, try to analyze and asses the initiatives for decentralization of administration are so far made after the emergence of Bangladesh, and also try to find out why the initiatives usually get scrapped with changes of the government.

Key Word: Administrative Decentralization, Deconcentration, Delegation, Devolution, Division, Zila Parishad, Upazila Parishad, Union Parishad, Gram Sarkar.

Introduction: Bangladesh emerged as an Independent country on December 16, 1971 with an area of 147570 square K.M. Its lies in the northeastern part of south Asia. The country is bound by India on the west and the north, by India and Burma on the east, and by the Bay of Bengal on the south. The country is now governed by the parliamentary form of government. the prime minister is now the chief executive of the country. He/she has a council of ministers who assist him/her in the duties. For the convenience of administration, the country is divided into six administrative divisions each placed under a divisional commissioner. Each division is further sub divided into Zilas (Districts). There are 64 districts in Bangladesh. The administration of each district is headed by a deputy commissioner assisted by other officials. Each district consists of several thanas (Upazila). There are 499 thanas. Below thanas are unions, which consists of several villages. There are about 4403 unions in the country (Siddiqui, 1994)

Two types of local government institutions exist in Bangladesh—rural and urban. The rural local government bodies until recently have been

i) Gram Sarkar (Village government) at the Village level.
ii) Union Parishads at the Union level.
iii) Upazila Parishads at the Upazila/Thana level.
iv) Zila Parishads at District level.

The urban local governments are a) Pourashavas (Municipalities) and b) City corporations (Municipal Corporation). As the developmental functions and welfare activities of the central
government is increasing day by day our local government also is undergoing great changes to facilitate national development this paper takes into account the rural local government bodies.

**Data Sources:** This paper is analytical in nature. It is basically based on the review of primary and secondary literature, which include recent publications, journals, books, research reports, and news papers. Relevant literature has also been collected through Internet browsing.

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**Part-I: Conceptual Framework**

**Decentralization: Meaning and Concepts**

Decentralization and the development of democratic local governance continue quietly to sweep the world from Bolivia to Bulgaria, and from West Africa to south Asia a wide variety of countries are increasing the authority of local governments and working to make them more responsive and effective.

The word decentralization means transfer of power and authority from the central government to local or sub national units of the government for the meeting of grass root peoples demand. Decentralization has been defined by various scholars of public administration as transference of authority from a higher level of government to a lower, delegation of decision making, placement of authority with responsibility, allowing greatest number of actions to be taken where most of the people reside, removal of functions from the center to the periphery, a mode of operations involving wider participation of people in the whole range of decision making beginning from plan formulation to implementation (White, 1959; Rahman,1996).

In another definition of decentralization is as “ the transfer of responsibility for planning, management, raising and allocation of resources from central government to semi autonomous public authorities or corporations area wide regional or functional authorities or non government private or voluntary organizations (Rondinelli and Nellis, 1986; Islam, 1997). Whatever we understand by decentralization the essential characteristics of decentralization are three fold as stated by lilenthat (Rahman, 1996).

1) The greatest number of decisions should be made in the field, officers must be selected and trained as to develop the capacity to decide the question on the spot.
2) A decentralized administration must develop as far as possible the active participation of the people themselves. Their cooperation and not the compliance are essential. The services of the state and the local agencies supplementing and stimulating but not duplicating their staff or equipment should be utilized.
3) Coordination of the work of the various agencies in the field should be made in the field itself because; central coordination means delays, jealousies and jurisdictional disputes.

Close to their characteristics we find that the degree of decentralization become greater if the following conditions are observed (Rahman, 1996).

i.Greater number of decisions is made at lower levels of management,
ii.Decisions made at lower levels are important,
iii.Various organizational functions are more influenced by decisions made at lower levels, and
iv.There is less monitoring on decisions made by managerial personnel.
In the third world countries decentralization is identified as transfer of authority is from center to agencies, institutions or person working at the periphery for planning, decision making and performing other administrative works (Rahman; 1996).

The Dimensions and Forms of Decentralization
This paper identifies four major types of decentralization according to classifications made in UNDP and World Bank Articles. These are political, administrative, fiscal and market decentralization. Drawing distinctions between these various concepts is useful for highlighting the many dimensions to successful decentralization and the need for coordination among them. Nevertheless, there is clearly overlap in defining any of these terms and the precise definitions are not as important as the need for a comprehensive approach. Political, administrative, fiscal and market decentralization can also appear in different forms and combinations across countries, within countries and even with in sectors.

Political Decentralization: Political decentralization is the transfer of authority to a sub national body. Political decentralization aims to give citizens or their elected representatives more power in public decision making. It is often associated with pluralistic and representative government, but it can also support democratization by giving citizens, or their representatives, more influence in the formulation and implementation of policies (World Bank Thematic Team). The team also thinks that political decentralization assume that decisions made with greater participation will be better informed and more relevant to diverse interest in society than those made only by national political authorities. The concept implies that the selection of representations from local electoral jurisdictions allows entireness to know better their political representatives and allows elected officials to know better the needs and desires of their constituents.

Political decentralization often requires constitutional or statutory reforms, the development of pluralistic political parties, the strengthening of legislatures, creations of local political units, and the encouragement of effective public interest groups.

Political decentralization is manifested through devolution. The World Bank defines devolution as the transfer of authority for decision-making, finance and management to quasi-autonomous units of local government with corporate status”. Tubunda and Galang explain that the nature of power transfer is political and the approach is territorial or areal. In a devolved system, the World bank says, local government have clear and legally recognized geographical boundaries over which they exercise authority and within which they perform public functions.

Administrative Decentralization: Administrative decentralization refers to redistribute authority, responsibility and financial resources for providing public services among different levels of government (World Bank Decentralization Thematic Team). On the other hand according to center for Democracy and Governance’s Decentralization and Democratic local Governance programming handbook “administrative decentralization involves the full or partial transfer of an array of functional responsibilities to the local level such as health care service, the operation of schools, the management service personnel, the building and maintenance of roads and garbage collection. There are three major forms of administrative decentralization-deconcentration, delegation and devolution-each have different characteristics.
Deconcentration is often considered to be the weakest form of decentralization and is used most frequently in unitary states—redistributes decision making authority and financial and management responsibilities among different levels of the central government (WBTT). This may mean shifting of workload from one ministry to the other or from ministry to its field or local administration (Ali, 1995; Islam, 1997). In other words, it can merely shift responsibilities from central government officials in the capital city to those working in regions, provinces or districts, under this setup, local or field administration is done only under the supervision of central government ministries (Sourcebook on Decentralization in Asia). This form of decentralization is used by many African and Asian countries like Kenya, Tunisia, Tanzania, Morocco, Algeria, Pakistan, Philippine, Indonesia and Thailand in past decades (Hyden, 1983; Rondinelli and Nellis, 1986; Islam 1997).

Delegation is a more extensive form of decentralization. It involves the transfer of responsibility for decision making and administration of public functions from the central govt. to semi autonomous organizations that are not wholly controlled by the central government, but are ultimately accountable to it. These organizations usually have a great deal of discretion in decision making (Sourcebook on Decentralization is Asia.) for example many developing countries utilizes this practice in the creation of boards, authorities, corporations or any other separate agencies for carrying out specific functions (Islam, 1997).

Devolution is the third form of administrative decentralization. Devolution is the transfer of significant power, including law making and revenue raising, by law to the locally elected bodies (Conyers, 1986). There is a set of five fundamental characteristics in explaining the purest form of devolution identified by Cheema and Rondinelli (1983).

i) power are transferred to autonomous units governed independently and separately without the direct control of central government;

ii) the units enjoy corporate status and powers to secure its own resources to perform its function;

iii) the units maintain control over a recognized geographical area;

iv) devolution implies the need to develop local government institutions;

v) it is an arrangement of reciprocal, mutually beneficial and coordinate relationship between central and local government.

Fiscal Decentralization: Financial responsibility is core component of decentralization. Fiscal Decentralization transfers two things to local governments and private organizations: funds to deliver decentralized function; and revenue-generating power and authority, to decide on expenditures.

According to the World Bank decentralization thematic lists five forms of fiscal decentralization:

i) Self-financing or cost recovery through user charger;

ii) Co-financing or co-production arrangements through which the users participate in providing services and infrastructure through monetary or labor contributions;

iii) Expansion of local revenues through property or sales taxes or indirect charges;

iv) Authorization of municipal borrowing and the mobilization of either national or local government resources through loan guarantees; and

v) Inter governmental transfers that shift general revenues from taxes collected by the government to local governments for general or specific uses.
In many developing countries local governments or administrative units possess the legal authority to impose taxes, but the tax base is so weak and the dependence on central government subsidies so ingrained that no attempt is made to exercise that authority.

**Economic / Market Decentralization**: Economic or market decentralization is the passing over the private sector of the functions exclusively performed by government. It is manifested through privatization and deregulation. This type of decentralization promotes the engagement of businesses, community groups, cooperatives, private voluntary associations, and other non-government organizations.

**Privatization**—the term ‘Privatization’ means transfer of function from public to non-government institutions. In many countries the transfer of some of the planning and administrative responsibilities of public function from government to private or voluntary agencies facilitated the processes of decentralization (Ahmed, 1990).

According to World Bank Thematic Team privatization can include:

i) Allowing private enterprise to perform functions that had previously been monopolized by government;

ii) Contracting out the provision or management of public services or facilities to commercial enterprise indeed there is a wide range of possible ways in which function can be organized and many examples of within public sector and public private institutional forms particularly in infrastructure.

iii) Financing public sector programs through the capital market (with adequate regulation or measures to prevent situations where the central government bear the risk for this browning) and allowing private organizations to participate; and

iv) Transferring responsibility for providing services from the public to the private sector through the divestiture of state owned enterprise.

**Deregulation** reduces the legal constraints on private participation is service provision or allows competitor among private suppliers for survives that in the past had been provided by government or by regulated monopolize. In recent years privatization and deregulation have become more attractive alternatives to governments in developing countries. Local governments are also privatizing by contracting out service provision or administration.

From the above discussion it is clear that each of the different forms of decentralization has a different implication for different organizational purposes in the degree of power and authority to be transferred, but the form are not mutually exclusive. In reality, most governments are a combination of the four forms in their policy (Cheema & Rondinelli, 1983). Diana Conyers stated that degree and types of decentralization required will depend on the area of the country size and distribution of its population, the location of resource, and the guilty of communications, the existing political and economic structure and the nature of the country’s goals (Conyers, 1988; Islam, 1997). The figure 1 summarizes the forms of decentralization.
**Figure 01: Dimensions and forms of Decentralization**

![Diagram showing dimensions and forms of Decentralization](image-url)

**Source:** Sourcebook on Decentralization in Asia “Decentralization: An Overview” (http://www.decentralization.ws/srebook/overview/pdf)

**Nature of Decentralization**

After discussing the various forms of decentralization a question arises to the author’s mind that what would be the nature of decentralization? And seeking the answers of this question another two questions arises:

What decentralization is………………..? and

What decentralization is not………………?

Now the author tries to answer the above two questions for answering the first question in the flowing way:

**What Decentralization is .......?**

i) **A counter points to globalization:** Decentralization is a counter point to globalization. Globalization often removes from the local an national stages to the global sphere of multination or non-national interest. Decentralization on the other hand brings decision-making back to the sub national and local levels.

ii) **An integral part of democratization:** Decentralization is an integral part of the logic of democratization. The power of people to determine their own government, representation, polices and services.

iii) **A phenomenon involving multiple dimensions actors and sectors:** Decentralization is a complex phenomenon involving many geographic entities, societal actors and social sectors. The geographic entities include the international, national, sub-national and local. The social actors include government, the private sector, and civil society. The social sector include development themes political, legal, social, cultural and environmental.

iv) **A logical application of core characteristics of good governance:** Decentralization is the logical application of the core characteristics of good governance at the sub-national and local levels. These characteristics include accountability, transparency, rule of law and responsiveness.

v) **A mix types of functions and relationships:** Decentralization is a mixture of administrative, fiscal and political functions and relationship.

vi) **A mix of four dimensions:** Decentralization involves four dimensions-the collective/exterior, the collective/Interior, the individual/exterior, and the individual/interior. The collective/exterior has to do with the institutional and legal forms and procedures. The collective/interior deals with the social culture-the set of values and assumptions which are often unspoken or unacknowledged but never the less play a powerful role in human relationships. Whether government, private sector or civil
society. The dimension of the individual/interior deals with mindset, worldview, mental models, emotions and intuitions of individuals within institutions.

vii) **A new form of communication:** Decentralization involves new communication and information flows between each geographic area, societal actor and social sector. Another two important features are common to all decentralization.

viii) **Central control over decentralized procedures:** One remarkable feature of administrative reorganization in these countries is that decentralization policies have usually emanated from the center. The central government chose to transfer some of its own authority and power at other levels of government and decentralization was seen primarily as a mechanism to increase the central government’s effectiveness (Mathur, 1983). Consequently, the process was accompanied by elaborate supervision and control. Thus, while recognizing the need for decentralization, the central government also emphasizes that local agencies need guidance and a well-defined scope of activity to function well (Islam, 1997). Detailed criteria were established for the allocation of funds and functions by the central government. If the decentralized institutions demanded coordination among themselves, it was the central government institutions that provided it, thus sometimes in the name of financial priority and at other times in the name of supervision, guidance, and coordination, the central government weakened the very process they initiated. It has been widely observed that in most of the developing countries there is a gap in decentralization policies between what was proposed and what was implemented. (Mathur, 1983; Islam, 1997).

ix) **Limited popular participation:** Another characteristic of decentralization in much of Asia is that the need for popular participation in development planning has not been widely recognized. Dispersal of power, essentially, has taken place within administrative institutions that are constrained by centrally imposed rules, regulations and civil service procedures.

Thus, in most Asian countries decentralization has taken two major reforms: one has been the deconcentration of responsibility development functions to field agencies without giving them discretion or autonomy the other has been delegation of functions to agencies that are outside the regular administrative system. Little sympathy exists for devolution of authority to local government.

**What Decentralizations is not……….. ?**

i) **An alternative to centralization:** Decentralization is not an alternative to centralization. Both are needed. The complementary roles of national and sub national actors should be determined by analyzing the most effective ways and means of achieving a desire objectives. For example, a national road system should be designed with both local input and national coordination foreign policy should be a national function based on the view of the citizenry solid waste management should be dealt with through local mechanisms (Sourcebook on Decentralization in Asia).

ii) **Exclusive public sector reform:** Decentralization is much more than public sector, civil service and administrative reform. It involves the roles and relationships of all societal actors, whether governmental, private sector or civil society.
**Objectives of Decentralization**

Every step of our life is full of objectives, decentralization is not out of them. Decentralization may be seen as a means of achieving a variety of different objectives. This helps to explain the widespread interest in decentralization in recent years (Conyers, 1983), and more important, it also adds to the complexity and confusion associated with the analysis of decentralization (Islam, 1997). It is not simply the number of different objectives which causes problems more significant is the fact that firstly their objectives, have different, and sometimes conflicting implications, in terms of the type of decentralization required to achieve them and secondly, that a particular decentralization program is often advocated by several different interest groups each with its own objectives and therefore expectations in terms of the form of decentralization and its anticipated impact (Conyers, 1985; Islam, 1997).

To demonstrate the differences between the various objects, and the potential conflicts (Conyers, 1985; Islam, 1997) grouped the objectives in three dichotomous pairs managerial verses political, top-down verses bottom up, and explicit verses implicit objectives.

**a) Managerial verses Political:** Managerial objectives refer to the objective, related to the organization and management of development programs. Decentralization is frequently seen as a way of improving the planning and implementation of development programs and projects by taking account of local needs and conditions, decentralization is inevitably a political issue because it is about the distribution of power between different levels in the political and administrative hierarchy and also the distribution between different interest groups at each level.

**b) Top-down versus bottom-up objectives:** The distinction between ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ are made in order to emphasize that likely to be significantly different from and some times in conflict with these at regional, or local level. This is particularly obvious on the case of political objectives where some conflict is almost inevitable because decentralization concerns the distribution of power between the different levels however it also applying to managerial objectives, in some cases it is only a matter of differences in priorities but in other cases national and regional objective, are actually in conflict with each other.

**c) Explicit versus implicit objectives:** explicit objectives are those which are explicitly stated in public documents or declarations associated with decentralization, these may be managerial or political, top-down or bottom-up but inevitably they are always ‘positive objectives, the most obvious examples are objectives related to participation which are frequently expressed in terms of phrases such as power to the people’ etc. Implicit objectives are those which underline the views expressed by particular individuals or interest groups but are usually political objectives and both their existence and their importance in determining the actual form and impact of decentralization.

According to the World Bank decentralization Thematic Team target of decentralization is “to achieve the goals of sustainable and people-centered development. They think that decentralization is a form and process of governance. Just as there can be good governance at the national level and there can be good decentralized governance. Good governance include the mechanisms and processes that enable a society to achieve more sustainable and people – centered development. Good decentralized governance includes the forms and procedures that allow a society to achieve at the sub-national and local level the goals of poverty reduction sustainable livelihoods, environmental regeneration and gender equity.
What ever we understand by above-mentioned different dimensions of the objective of decentralization it has created great deal of enthusiasm more or less in almost all the countries. However, decentralized administration strives to achieve the following objectives (Rahman, 1996):

1. Administration is to be brought to the people to accelerating economic development.
2. Encourage people’s participation in governance and policy implementation.
3. Develop dynamic leadership in local areas.
4. Make the administration field oriented for upliftment of masses and create and expand socio-economic infrastructure.
5. To remove the distance between the people and bureaucracy and create a climate of trust and close cooperation between them.

Considerations of Designing the Decentralization Plan

When a country takes plan for decentralization it must have some considerations. Like as follows:

i. **Consider the existing cultural elements:** Decentralization is affected by the cultural elements of a society- the images, assumptions and internal psychic of the population regarding the issues of authority, role of the government, role of the citizen, conflict, consensus, power, role of elites, role of the poor, the role of women, and a host of other issues.

ii. **Consider changing relationship:** Decentralization always involves changes of relationship between and among different social actors, social sectors and geographic areas. These changes can be threatening or can be seen as enabling for all parties a win win situation.

iii. **Consider timing and sequence:** Decentralization is long-term effort in which, timing and phasing are crucial. So before taking the plan of decentralization WE should consider time sequences.

iv. **Consider enhancing mechanisms of participation and partnership:** Decentralization is increased in effectiveness through mechanisms of full participation and partnership. Participation must involve all the societal actors playing their optimal and legitimate roles in policy formulation, resource management and service provision. Popular participation is crucial in each phase of decentralization, from situational analysis, design implementation, monitoring, evaluation and feedback. Partnership must be based on mutual trust and understanding of the various actors, acknowledging that each has both strengths and weaknesses. Each actor must both enable the other actors in their legitimate roles and hold them accountable if they step outside their legitimate mandates.

v. **Consider the mental model that is being used:** Decentralization as a term comes from a mental model containing a center and a periphery. This is only a model just as a pyramidal social structure is only a mental model. When we view a society as a whole system, we see not vertical layers (as in a pyramid) or concentric layers (as in the centric model), but rather a horizontal-environment with autonomous yet interrelated actors, sectors, and geographic areas. In designing decentralization policies and programs it is necessary to be cognizant of the mental model one is using and if necessary to adapt or completely change the model to better fit reality.
To illustrate how far decentralization has come, such contrasts the models of governance in the 20th and 21st centuries (Table 02). The emergence of transition countries in the eastern and central Europe and former Soviet Union, as well as the of political reforms in Latin American, African and Asian countries attend to the change in the character of governance from being highly centralized to being localized yet globalized.

### Table-02. Governance structure: 20th and 21st century

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>20th Century</th>
<th>21st Century</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unitary</td>
<td>Federal / Confederal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centralized</td>
<td>Globalized and localized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center Manages</td>
<td>Center leads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucratic</td>
<td>Participatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Command and control</td>
<td>Responsiveness and accountable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internally dependent</td>
<td>Competitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed and slow</td>
<td>Open and quick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intolerance of risk</td>
<td>Freedom To fail / Successes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Shah (1997)

**Major Issues in Decentralization**

In analyzing the concept of decentralization and local governance several major issues continuously appear. These issues often form the bedrock of comprehensive and systematic strategies to promote and facilitate decentralization practices. The following of the most prevalent issues emerging from the analysis of the concept and its various dimensions (Sourcebook on Decentralization in Asia Undated).

**Issue-1:** Decentralization is a political issue that often arises from political commitment and pressure outside When decentralization is initiated first in a specific sector (e.g., education), it often meets resistance by who do not want to transfer their power.

**Issue-2:** Often guiding principles are the missing components of decentralization. Decentralization principles should include the purpose of decentralization, rationale, objectives, and implementation design, and include a clear definition of roles for the various management levels and the linkages between them.

**Issue-3:** Not all government functions should be decentralized. A function should not be transferred to a lower level if it is critical, the achievement of central-level goals and its sustainability at the local level cannot be guaranteed, the capacity to perform the function does not exist at the lower level or undertaking this function at the peripheral level is not cost-effective.

**Issue-4:** National leaders and donor organizations should fully appreciate the complexity of decentralization. The complexity of decentralization often is reflected in three key areas: transfer of finances, procurement systems, and management of human resources. For the decentralization process to be effective, details of these priority areas should be identified and crystallized well in advance of the implementation of the decentralization process.

**Issue-5:** Decentralization requires improved legal, regulatory and financial framework to ensure clear division of responsibilities, accountability and transparency.

**Issue-6:** Regional and local capacities for Decentralization should be full assessed prior to implementation of a countrywide decentralization process.
**Issue-7:** Creating coordinating and assistance linkages is essential for effective implementation of decentralization. If decentralization is to be effective, means must be found for reorienting the central administrators’ perception of their roles from control and direction to support and facilitation. This requires strengthening capacity at the central level to perform their new effectively.

**Issue-8:** Standard and norms are essential for equal and quality. The transfer of extensive power to more peripheral management levels should be based on a system that balances central and local priorities, which there would be negative impact on national equity. Clear national standards and service norm and ongoing system of monitoring are essential for safeguarding equity and quality.

**Issues-9:** Support for decentralization policies must be deliberately and carefully mobilized among all critical players. This includes: leaders in central ministries and departments, state, provincial, municipalities, district and local units of administration autonomous and regional agencies, political parties, and interest groups that will be affected by the decentralization process. The mass media training and public information programs, and political bargaining must be used to forge a base of support for decentralization policies if they are to be implemented successfully. In most countries, changes must be made in the civil service system to provide incentives and rewards for those officials who promote development at the local level.

**Issue-10:** Stages and procedures of the implementation of decentralization should be identified. Experiences indicate that decentralization can be implemented most successfully if the process is incremental and iterative. Those aspects or programs that are least likely to be opposed and for which there is adequate administrative capacity should be expanded as political support and administration competence increase. Greater attention should be given to building administrative capacity from the up" as well as from the "top - clown" and to finding ways of using and strengthening existing organizations and traditional decision making procedures in the rural areas policy and demonstration. Projects may be needed to gauge the ability of the local government to assume greater responsibility.

**Issue-11:** Financial and human resources should be proportionate with decentralization responsibilities. For effective implementation of decentralization policy, the central level government must be prepared to allocate appropriate resources in terms of financial and human capital, and technical to the localities. In most cases, the localities can not undertake decentralization responsibilities unless supported by the central administration.

**Issue-12:** The private sector can be critical partner in the design and implementation of decentralization. The public/private partnership in the design and implementation of decentralization is essential for mobilization of resources and delivery of services at the local level.

**Issue-13:** Broad participation is needed for successful decentralization process. For decentralization to be effective, it should be built on the needs, priorities and views of the people who are most affected by it. Appropriate, mechanisms-should be develop to promote and encourage popular participation and involvement in the identification of local needs to finding the most suitable approaches and strategies to respond to such needs.

**Issue-14:** Decentralization can facilitate empowerment. Local participation in identifying community strengths and weaknesses, and their involvement in mobilizing resources needed to enhance development at the local level facilitates and promotes empowerment.

**Issue-15:** Creative local solutions should the encouraged and disseminated. Decentralization is expected to enhance creative problem solving at the local level.
Issue-16: Monitoring and evaluation procedures for decentralization should be specified. To assess the impact of decentralization policies on improving the quality of life at the localities the concept of decentralization should be further narrowed to specific and tangible measures that can be used as reliable indicators to monitor and evaluate the progress of Decentralization policies and programs. To plan adjust and adapt Decentralization policies to meet local priorities and realities requires comprehensive monitoring and evaluation tools capable of detecting its effects on improving the quality of live for the population.

Advantages and disadvantages of Decentralization

In its 1997 World Development Report, the World Bank referred to the increasing demand for decentralization as "par. of the broader process of liberalization privatization aid other market reforms in many countries." It pointed out three major developments, which triggered decentralization. First the minimum size of self-sufficient government has declined. With the advent of technology and new demands from citizens producers and consumers, some of "the advantages that kept countries regions and provinces working together under a central government have become less important. Second, political changes have given voice to local demands. The collapse of centralized authorities and changes in political regimes has benefited regions and sub-national governments lastly countries often turn to local and regional governments when the central government has persistently failed to provide essential services (Sourcebook on Decentralization in Asia, Undated).

Advantages

The World Bank Decentralization Thematic Team cites the following advantages of decentralization:

i) It helps alleviate bottlenecks in decision-making that are often caused by central government planning and control of important economic and social activities.

ii) It can help cut complex bureaucratic procedures and it can increase government officials sensitivity to local conditions and needs.

iii) It can help national government ministries reach larger numbers of local areas with services.

iv) It allows greater political representation for diverse political, ethnic, religious, and cultural groups in decision-making.

v) It can relieve top managers in central ministries of “routine” tasks to concentrate on policy.

vi) In some countries, it may create a geographical focus at the local level for coordinating national, state, provincial, district, and local programs more effectively and can provide better opportunities for participation by local residents in decision making.

vii) It may lead to more creative, innovative, and responsive programs by allowing local “experimentation.”

viii) It can increase political stability and national unity by allowing citizens to better control public programs at the local level.

On the economic front, the World Bank Decentralization Thematic Team says decentralization makes way: for more efficient allocations, They explained that a level of government that is closer and, thus, more responsive to its constituency, allocations will correspond to local demand. In addition, they mentioned that there is greater willingness on the part of the people to
pay for services tailored according to their priorities, especially if they have been involved in the decision-making process with regard to delivering the services. Decentralization likewise improves the “competitiveness” of governments and enhance innovation, hence “the likelihood that they will act to satisfy the wishes of citizens.”

Basta in 1998 listed several arguments for decentralization:
   i) Enhancement of democracy, particularly the participation of grass-root groups
   ii) Protection of freedom and human rights (vertical check-and-balance)
   iii) Increase in efficiency through delegation and responsibility
   iv) Higher quality of services and
   v) Enhancement of social and economic development.

Osborne and Gaebler for their part, cites decentralization institutions as:
   i) Far more flexible and thus can respond quickly to changing circumstances and customers' needs;
   ii) More effective and more innovative in that frontline workers know more of what is actually happening in local situations and thus could provide the best solutions; and
   iii) Able to generate higher morale, more commitment, and greater productivity

Disadvantages
The World Bank Decentralization Thematic Team acknowledges that "decentralization may not always be efficient, especially for standardized, routine, network-based services.' It may, according to them, lead to:
   i) Loss of central governments control over scarce financial resources;
   ii) Less efficient and less effective delivery of services because of weak administrative or technical capacity at local levels;
   iii) Transfer of administrative responsibilities to local levels without adequate financial resources, making equitable distribution, or provision of services more difficult;
   iv) More complex system of coordinating national policies, where functions will most likely be captured by the local elite; and
   v) Distrust between public and private sectors that may undermine cooperation at the local level.

The world bank has decentralization will fail when it is not the result of any carefully designed sequence of reforms but has “occurred in a politically volatile environment in which the level of trust is low and policymakers respond unsystematically to emerging demands from below.” Among its potential detrimental effects are the loss of macroeconomic control, regional disparities in service provision, and misallocation of resource.

Part-II: Decentralization Practice in Bangladesh: An Overview

After the second world war the newly born independent countries of the third world stressed on “centralized administration” and “development planning” which emerged from the consciousness and thinking from “trickle down: and supervision theories” but these theory could not give in the expected results (Saleem, 1988; Rahman, 1996). The development trend in the
developing countries was unbalanced and urban and elitist oriented. As a result we observe the following appalling situation in the rural areas.

I. There has not been any improvement of the lot of the rural people and their conditions have deteriorated further.

II. They have no participation indecision making.

III. The planning process was urban and elitist based at the cost of the rural people.

In the light of the consciousness-developed countries belong to Asia; Africa and Latin America have gone for decentralization in late 70s and 80s. Bangladesh is no exception of it, though it has a long historical background of decentralization.

**Constitutional Framework of Decentralization**

The constitution of Bangladesh provides that the local government in a very administrative unit of the republic shall be entrusted to bodies composed of persons elected in accordance with laws (Article 59, COB). Article II of the constitution provided or a fundamental principle of state policy that “The republic shall be a democracy in which... effective participation by the people through their elected representation in administration at all levels shall be ensured”. More specifically two article 59 and 60 of the constitution of Bangladesh laid the framework of decentralized system of governance. Article 59(1) provided that local Government in every administrative unit of the republic with broad functional responsibilities to carryout:

1. administration and the work of public officers,
2. the maintenance of public order, and
3. the preparation and implementation of plans relating to police services and economic development (Aminuzzaman, 2004).

But unfortunately, the integrated scheme of the constitution concerning local government (Articles II, 59 and 60) was abolished by the constitution act (fourth Amendment) 1975. However with the proclamation (Amendment) order, 1977 (Order No. 1 of 1977) the provision of local govt. institution was incorporated in to the constitution by the substituted for the provisions of original Article. The revised Article noted, “The state shall encourage local government institutions composed of representatives of the areas concerned and in such institutions special representation shall be given as far as possible to peasants, workers, and women. Subsequently, the constitution (twelfth amendment) act, 1991, restored article 59-60 and the sentence of article II to the effect that “and in which effective participation by the people through their elected representatives in administration at all levels shall be ensured” Referring to the frequent changes and even abolition of local government units, the then chief justice of Bangladesh, justice Shahabuddin Ahmed (in 1992) in one of his historical judgments observed that: .......since independence from the British rule, these institutions fell victim to party politics or evil designs of autocratic regimes, passed through the order of suppression, dissolution or management their affairs by official bureaucrats or henchmen government of the day (Aminuzzaman, 2004).

**Recent Policy Options:** the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) which is considered to be the outline of the proposed sixth five year plan has assumed that the “decentralization and devolution of power is a technical necessity for good governance rather then a matter of political choice. The policy there fore stressed the need for creating a multiter ensemble of effective local government bodies at union, upazilla and district level (Aminuzzaman, 2004).
According to the Integrated Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (IPRSP) broad areas where local government can play an important role:

i. management and coordination of many nation-wide programs such as targeted food or cash assisted programs designed for the poor.

ii. management of school, community, clinics, union-level family planning and health centers and upazilla health complexes

iii. Coordinating various government and non-government programs in an area thereby reducing wastage and duplication, and facilitating greater synergies.

iv. development of local-level democracy through the promotion of grassroots organizations as well as fostering community activities.

**Forms of Decentralization in Bangladesh**

Decentralization practice in Bangladesh involves four dimensions: Political (devolution) Administrative (Deconcentration and delegation), Fiscal (Self-finance) and Economic or Market (privatization and deregulation) Decentralization. In other words Decentralization in Bangladesh is a mixture of administrative, fiscal, economic and political functions and relationships. Now the administrative structure in Bangladesh is as follows to the Table-3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrative Structure</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Division</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thana / Upazilla</td>
<td>489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>4460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gram / Village</td>
<td>83000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Decentralization practice in Bangladesh is **political or devolution** in that sense that devolution refers to the transfer of authority for decision making, finance, and management to a quasi autonomous units of local government with corporate status. According to Conyer (1986) devolution as the transfer of significant power, including law making and revenue raising, by law to the locally elected bodies, like union parishad system in Bangladesh union parishad is composed of locally elected bodies with necessary officials. It has also the power and authority for decision making financing and management of public affairs with the participation of local people. It also like to the town or urban area like Pourashava (municipal council) Municipal corporation (City corporation)

Decentralization in Bangladesh is **Administrative** (Deconcentration and delegation) in that sense that political Decentralization implemented by Decentralization and delegation form. Decentralization involves spreading the decision-making authority and financial and management responsibilities among across different levels of the central government, like as various divisions and districts of Bangladesh for the convenience of administration the country is divided into six administrative divisions each placed under a divisional commissioner (Executive chief) Each division is further sub-divided in to Zila (District). There are Sixty four (64) district in Bangladesh is headed by a deputy commissioner (DC) assisted by other officials.

On the other hand delegation refers to the transfer a responsibility for decision-making and administration of public functions from the central government to semi-autonomous organizations that are not wholly controlled by the central government but are ultimately
accountable to it. Like as City Corporation, City Development Authority Education Board, University, and Sericulture Board etc. in Bangladesh. These organizations usually have a great deal of discretion in decision making.

The other two dimensions are **Fiscal and Market Decentralization** these two types of Decentralization is the passing over the private sector of the functions exclusively performed by government. Actually fiscal Decentralization transfer of two things to local governments and private organizations funds to deliver Decentralization functions and revenue generating power and authority to decide on expenditure like as union parishad and upazilla parishad in Bangladesh. On the other hand economic dimension is manifested through privatization and deregulation. This type of Decentralization promotes the engagement of business community groups, cooperatives, private voluntary associations, and other non-governmental organizations for example trade associations (Chambers of commerce and industry), Parties, Garments Industries, Grameen Bank, BRAC, ASA, (NGOs) etc. in Bangladesh context to be considered. The Decentralized governance program of UNDP has come up with a matrix identifying the form of Decentralization that is manifested when political, economic or administrative responsibilities area transferred according to any of the four (4) sub units (autonomous) lower-level units, semi autonomous lower-level units, subordinate lower level units and external units) Table-4 shows that is the form of Decentralization that is manifested when political economic or administrative functions are transferred to autonomous sub-units, while delegation is implemented when the power and functions are transferred to semi autonomous sub units.

When the aspect of governance transferred to subordinate sub-units is political, it is directing, the arrangement is allocating when it is economic and tasking when it is administrative. Similarly when the aspect of governance transferred to external units, such as NGOs of business groups, is political it is deregulation, privatization when it is economic and contracting when it is administrative.

### Table-04: Different Arrangements of Decentralization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of unit to which authority is transferred</th>
<th>Aspects of Governance transferred or shared</th>
<th>Generic Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image_url" alt="Image of table content" /></td>
<td><img src="image_url" alt="Image of table content" /></td>
<td><img src="image_url" alt="Image of table content" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evolution of Administrative Decentralization in Bangladesh

Numerous efforts have been made in the Indian subcontinent especially in Bengal from the days of Mughal rulers to delegate power and responsibility from the centered to local level. But most of the efforts can only be termed as piecemeal narrow and restrictive (Khan, 1985; Islam, 1997)

**British Period (1870-1947)**

As a member state of the Indian subcontinent Bangladesh was a colony of the British for about two hundred years. Therefore local government has been a colonial legacy in Bangladesh (Jahan, 1997). The introduction of local government in British Bengal goes back to the passing of the Bengal Village Chawkidari act of 1870. Subsequently the local self government act 1885 the village self-government act 1919 and the Bengal municipal act 1932 during the British period are the principal instruments that lead to the development of the present local government in Bangladesh (Noor, 1986; Jahan, 1997). The local self government act 1985 provided for a three-tier system of local government for rural areas, shows by the table – 05.

**Table – 05: Structure of Local Government**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bodies</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Chairman</th>
<th>Member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. District Board</td>
<td>District level</td>
<td>District magistrate</td>
<td>not less than 09 (Half elected and half salaried govt. officials)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Local Board</td>
<td>Subdivision (Present Upazila level)</td>
<td>Local board could either elect their chairman from among their members or request the lieutenant governor to appoint them</td>
<td>Less than six members (two thirds were to be elected one third were to be nominated by govt.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Union Committee</td>
<td>For group of village (Union level)</td>
<td>Chairman would be elected by union committee from among the members by amended act extended to E.B.1914.</td>
<td>not less than 05 or more than 09 were to be elected by residents of the union</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Siddiqui. P. 39 (Local govt. in Bangladesh)

But the act of 1919 replaced existing Chowkidari Panchayets and Union Committees by a new body called the union board. The union board was composed of not less than six but not more than nine members of whom two-third were elected and one third was nominated nominated members were chosen by the district magistrate. The members of the board elected a president and a vice president from among themselves. The president was the chief executive of the board. After the whole period discussing, Tinker puts it aptly Indian local self government was still in many ways a democratic facade and autocratic structure. The British rule ended on 14-August, 1947. The British left the sub continent creating two independent states Pakistan and India then Bangladesh was fall in to the Pakistan named East Pakistan.

**Pakistan Period (1947-1971)**

From 1947 to 1958 the administrative pattern of local government in Pakistan remained more or less similar as was during the later part of the British rule except a few changes in their composition (Ahmed, 1979; Jahan, 1997). In 1958, Martial law was clamped over the country by General Ayub Khan, and all local bodies were suspended. In 1959, Ayub Khan introduced a four
tier hierarchical system of local government in East Pakistan (Now Bangladesh), called the Basic Democracy System (Table –06).

Table-06, Structure of Basic Democracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bodies</th>
<th>Chairman</th>
<th>Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Divisional Council</td>
<td>Commissioner</td>
<td>Half elected, Half Official</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Governmental Official)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Council</td>
<td>Deputy Commissioner</td>
<td>Half elected, Half Official</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Governmental Official)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thana councilor</td>
<td>Sub divisional Officer</td>
<td>Half Union Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Municipal committee)</td>
<td>(Governmental Official)</td>
<td>Chairmen, Half Official</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thana Council or Union</td>
<td>Elected by Members</td>
<td>Elected by Universal Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee</td>
<td></td>
<td>franchise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Jahan (1972: 115)

Local government institution under the basic democracy system became highly unpopular in the then East Pakistan, and tumbled down in the face of bitter criticism. In 1969 Ayub Khan was removed from power and the new government of General Yahia Khan dissolved all the local bodies introduced under basic democracy system (Jahan, 1997).

**Bangladesh Period: Mujib Regime (1971-1975)**

Bangladesh emerged as an independent sovereign country on 16-December, 1971 following a bloody war of liberation. Coming into being, the government directed its attention to the local government situation and found the local bodies in a moribund stage under official control that was instituted in 1969 (Faizullah, 1987; Jahan, 1997).

The new government of Sheikh Mujib abolished the old system, and declared the introduction of the Union Panchayet system throughout the country by an executive order (IGO, 1972). According to this order, all the local bodies from the union to the district level were formally dissolved, and administrators were appointed to each one of them. This order also changes the name of local bodies like the following structure of Table – 07.

Table –07: Changed structure of local government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the bodies before 1972</th>
<th>Changed name of the Bodies (1973-1997)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Union Council</td>
<td>Union Panchayet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thana Council</td>
<td>Thana Development Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Council</td>
<td>District Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Was later abolished)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The union panchayet was placed under the control of the circle officer (Development) while the thana development committee and the zila board were placed under the control of the sub-divisional officer (SDO) and the deputy commissioner (DC) respectively. This arrangement continued up to 1973 (Siddiqui, 1994).

In 1973 president’s order No, 22 was promulgated by this order, the name of union panchayet was changed to union parishad. But the functions and sources of income remained almost the
same as in the basic democracies order of 1959 under the changed arrangement a union was divided into three words. Each union parishad was to consist of a chairman and a vice chairman (elected by all voters of the union) and 9 members-three elected from each word. The Thana Parishad and Zila Parishad continued to function as under the BDO. 1959 with the SDO and the DC respectively as ex-officio chairman.

From the above discussion it clear that the government did nothing to establish elected local government bodies at all levels other than the union level, though the article 59 of Bangladesh constitution provided for elected local government institutions at all levels (Ali, 1986).

In 1975 in the face of serious crisis, the constitution was amended providing for presidential form of government and the Mujib government opted for one party rule. The government by presidential order of June 21, 1975 (Maniruzzaman, 1988). According to this order, all sub-divisions were to be upgraded into districts, and districts were to be governed by the district governors who were to be appointed by the government. But the august coup of 1975 prevented the implementation of the system.

**Zia Regime (1976-1981)**

After the changes of government in 1975, Ziaur Rahman, a military officer took over the state power. The district Governorship system was totally disbanded by general zia, a new local government ordinance was promulgated. The local government ordinance of 1976 provided for a three tier system of local government

- i) Union Parishad for a Union
- ii) Thana parishad for a Thana, and
- iii) Zila parishad for a District.

The ordinance provided for elected local councils at all levels except thana. But except for elections of the union Parishads, no attempt was made to install an elected local government at the district level. The deputy commissioner remained the administrator or zila parishad and the sub-divisional officer as chairman of thana parishad as under the previous regime. The changes in the composition to the union parishad from the earlier union parishad were distinct but little. The provision for nominating two women members to the union parishad from the earlier union parishad were distinct but little. The provision for nominating two women members to the union parishad was a new feature. The provision for the post of vice-chairman was dropped. After the presidential election in June, 1978 and the formation of Bangladesh nationalist party, sincere efforts were made to extend its organization to the village level to counteract its arch rival Awami league at rural areas (Obidullah, 1993; Jahan, 1997) to make the Bangladesh Nationalist Party’s (BNP) position more consolidated in the rural areas, a new body was created at the village level called the **Gram Sarkar** (Village government). It was decided that every village in the country would have a gram sarkar. The term swanivar (Self reliant) was added to the existing name i.e., the government termed it as the swanirvar Gram Sarker and formulated rules for the constitution and administration of the swanirvar Gram Sarkat (Hossain and Sarker, 1994). The Swanirvar Gram Sarkar was headed by the Gram Pradhan (Village chief) and consisted of two members from different functional/interest groups to ensure their representation. They were chosen through consensus of the villagers present in a meeting. The Swanirvar Gram Sarkar was assigned the responsibility of increasing food production, eradicating illiteracy, reducing population growth, and maintaining law and order in the village (Siddiqui, 1994).
The Swanirvar Gram Sarkar movement received wholehearted support from national government. But it lost its momentum with the assassination of President Zia in May, 1981 (Jahan, 1997). The program was totally abandoned by the successor military government headed by the then lieutenant general Hussain Mohammad Ershad.

**Ershad Regime (1982-1990)**

In the march of 1982, General Ershad captured state power through a bloodless coup and Martial law was clamped upon the country soon after coming to power a massive program of devolution of power and decentralization of administration was initiated in the country by the military government. The government appointed the Committee for Administrative reform / Reorganization CARR in the April of 1982 which suggested a three tier representative local government system and elimination of sub-division (GOB, 1982; Jahan, 1997). Proposed three tier local government were:

i) Union Parishad for Union Level  
ii) Upazila Parishad for Thana Level  
iii) Zila Parishad for District Level

Shortly after the submission of the CARR report the government constituted the national implementation committee for administrative reform/reorganization (NICARR), on the lines suggested by CARR. Among other things, the NICARR suggested more thanas for upgrading into upazilas and subdivision into districts.

As a result 460 thanas of the country were upgraded and renamed as upazila (Sub-district) in 1983 by an ordinance. By converting sub-division into districts, 64 new district were also created, the thana parishad and thana development committee were abolished.

Upazila as an upgraded form of thana was made the focal point of local development administration. Upazila administration was run by the upazila parishad which was a representative body headed by an elected chairman directly elected by the people of the upazila. Upazila Parishad consisted of representative members called chairman of the union parishads and pourashavas within Upazila.

Three women members (Nominated by the government), the chairman of the upazila central cooperative association and official members (Government officials serving in the upazila and deputed to upazila Parishad). The number of official members was determined by the government.

The task and responsibilities given to the upazila parishad were massive as well as very important. All the responsibilities of development activities at the local level were transferred to the upazila Parishad (Table-08).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table-08 : Functions of Upazila Parishad Retained Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retained functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Civil and criminal judiciary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Central revenue like income tax, customs and excise, land revenue, land tax etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Law and order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. Registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. Distribution of power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
vi. Large irrigation schemes  
vii. Education above primary  
viii. District hospitals and medical college  
i. Research organizations  
x. Large scale seed multiplication and dairy farms  
xi. Large scale industries  
xii. Essential supply including food  
xiii. Inter district and inter thana means of communication.  
xiv. Flood control  
xv. Marine fishing  
xvi. Mining and mineral  
xvii. Compilation of national statistics.  


The Upazila Parishad was given power to raise revenue. Previously, Planning was done through a well defined administrative hierarchy. The upazila parishad, dominated by elected officials did not require the approval of any government authority in the formulation of development plan. Moreover the upazila parishad would assist, supervise and guide union parishads, in their activities of identifying projects and implementing plans. Upazila development administration included five essential stages (a) Plan preparation; (b) process of financing; (c) implementation; (d) co ordination; (e) evaluation and monitoring. The planning process at upazila involve, four main steps and two additional steps which are shown in figure-09.

**Figure-09: Suggested process at plan preparation of Upazila**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sectoral Allocation</th>
<th>Technical Advice and Examination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identification of projects</td>
<td>Project formulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project formulation</td>
<td>Project Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Evaluation</td>
<td>Project Approval</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Obaidullah, 1999; P-114

Nothing was done to provide for an elected Zila parishad although the CARR recommenced for that. According to the Zila Parishad law enacted in 1988 a member of parliament was to be appointed by the government as the chairman of the Zila Parishads. In 1990, the government of general ershed was overthrown by a country wide mass upsurge. An interim caretaker government was formed under the leadership of the then chief justice shahbuddin ahmed the caretaker of the zila parishad and removed the incumbent chairman. The Upazila parishad and union parishad continued to function as usual (Hossain and Sarker, 1994; jahan, 1997). The interim government conducted a free and fair parliamentary election in early 1991 through which Bangladesh nationalist party ascended to state authority under the leadership of Begum Khaleda Zia.
So, we can see that the period of Ershad government is the administrative decentralization program of Bangladesh fulfilled all theoretical criteria in connection with territorial and functional dimensions as characterized by the proponents of the theory including some important weakness in practices enjoyed more power and authority in making decisions and implementing then increased financial allocations followed devolution and de-concentration of power to the local bodies and nation building departments at sub-national level.


The new government after assuming power abolished the upazila parishad by an executive order. A high powered local government structure review committee was constituted in the November of 1991 which recommended a two tier local government structure

i) Union parishad at the Union level, and

ii) Zila parishad at the district level

Among other major recommendations were the formations of

iii) Gram Shava at village level and

iv) Thana Development and Coordination Committee at Thana Level.

Regarding the union parishad, the suggestion was create I wards within each union, I member being elected from each ward through adult franchise and the union parishad chairman and 3 female members be elected through adult franchise throughout the Union.

The local government structure review committee suggested to constitute the gram shava with 10 members elected from each village within the union and to let it review the annual union parishad budget and development projects. At the village level, there was a suggestion to have a gram unnyan committee (Village development committee) constituted by the gram shava members of the village and chaired by the ward member (Jahan, 1997).

The committee stressed in its report that the thana development and coordination committee should mainly be a coordinated unit and not a layer of local government. The Thana Development and Coordination Committee would have an elected chairman. All union parishad chairmen within the thana would be members of the Thana Development and Co ordination Committee, and they would elect 3 female members. Members of parliament within the thana would be members of the thana development and coordination committee. The Thana Nirbahi Officer would act as secretary to the Thana Development and Coordination Committee.

The elections to the Zila parishad would through indirect voting, the electorate for the Zila Parishad chairman would be all members of the Gram Sahva as well as the chairman and members of all the union parishads within the district. From each thana there would be two representative in the Zila Parishad. They would be elected by all union parishad. Chairman and members who will also elect 3 female members.

The recommendation of the committee was establish a statutory body at the national level which would be called the local government commission. It would have power to formulate and implement local government related laws and regulations (Alam, Haque and Westrgaard, 1994).

The government finally accepted the recommendations regarding local government structure and thana development and coordination committee (Hossain and Sarker, 1994; Jahan, 1997).

Nothing was done to provide for an elected Zila Parishad. Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) was defeated in the general election of June 12, 1996 and the Awami League held the state authority under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina.
If we evaluated this period it would be clear that the recommendation of the commission couldn’t create any interest, enthusiasm in any quarter of the people because these were not any things new. And the most important point is that government was interested to maintain the recommend action of the commission.

**Sheikh Hasina Regime (1996-2001)**

In 1996, Awami League had formed government by winning the general election of 1996. One of the important commitment in the election manifesto of this government was to develop a strong, decentralization, effective local government system (Islam, 1997). On September 1996, government formed a high-powered local government commission (The Financial Express, 1997), which submitted its report on May 26, 1997. The commission stressed on total democratization and in light of this view commission recommended a four-tier local government structure (Table –10).

**Table –10: Proposed Four-Tier local Government Structure.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Name of the body</th>
<th>Formation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Gram Parishad / Palli Parishad</td>
<td># 9 elected member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># 3 women member (Directly elected by voters)-elected word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>member will be the chairman of the parishad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># All village level government and NGO workers will be the non</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>voting member of the parishad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>Union parishad</td>
<td># 9 members from 9 words to be elected directly by the voter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># 3 Women members from 9 word (1 member for 3 Word) by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>direct election.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># 1 Chairman by direct election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thana</td>
<td>Thana Parishad / Upazila Parishad</td>
<td># 1 member from each union by direct election.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># 1/3 members will be women by direct election.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># 1 Chairman by direct election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># All government, officials, except court and judges including</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>police will be representative member with no voting power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># Thana Nirbahi officer will act as the executive officer of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>parishad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zila</td>
<td>Zila Parishad</td>
<td># A Chairman: to be elected directly by the people of Zila.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(District)</td>
<td></td>
<td># Elected member: 2 members from each thana to be elected directly by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># Women member: 1/3 of total member will be elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>directly by the people of the Zila.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># Representive member: All thana parishad chairman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># Pourashava chairman will be members by rank.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># Official member: All district level government officials except court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and judges will be members of the parishad having no voting power.</td>
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<td># NGO Representive</td>
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<td># MPs will be the advisors of the Parishad.</td>
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<td># Deputy commissioner of district will act as the</td>
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<td>executive of the parishad.</td>
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*Source: Islam, 1997; 160*
The commission recommended for Decentralization of power at each level and at the same time it emphasized on peoples participation specially women participation is highly considered. The commission recommended for necessary allocation of power and resources. Some of the important features of this proposed report are as follows:-

I. At all levels of local government women participation through direct election by adult civilizes of the area is ensured, this is a good opportunity for establishing gender equality and empowerment of women.

II. At all levels of local government people representatives could play the controlling role over the civil servants.

III. Elected bodies by the people are responsible for preparation of development plan, budget and to implement by themselves.

IV. In this proposed reports there is a good system of coordination between peoples representatives and civil servants, elected chairman and MPs etc.

Though that report was accepted then by the Primem inister but the implementation status was as same like as before. Nothing was done to provide for elected Thana/Upazila, Gram and Zila Parishad. After the fulfillment of Awami (Sheikh Hasina) League period the government was defeated in the general Election of 2001 and the Bangladesh nationalist part held the state authority under the leadership of Khaleda Zia.

Khaleda Zia Regime (2001-Onward)

From the very beginning the BNP government of Khaleda Zia was in favour of introducing the LSG (Local Self Government) unit at the village level. The Eighth Parliamentary election took place on October 1, 2001 under the caretaker government of Justice Latifur Rahman. Prior to the election the BNP in its election manifesto (No. 3-6) incorporated that after going to the state power, to fulfill the dream of late president Ziaur Rahman, the VG (Village Government) would be introduced (The Daily Star and The Sangbad 2001). As the figurehead of the BNP government, in his inaugural speech before the 8th parliament on October 28, 2001, the President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed said that the VG should be introduced in the country (The Daily Star. 2001).

The present government proposed four tier of local government system in Bangladesh like before except village level. Instead of VP (Village Parishad) they proposed Gram Sarker (Village Government) at village level.

i) Gram sarker at the village level

ii) Union parishad at the union level

iii) Upazilla parishad at the Upazila level

iv) Zila parishad at the District level.

Present Structure of Decentralized Government In Bangladesh is as like as Figure 11.

Now we sketch the present scenario of the above four tiers of local government situation in Bangladesh.

Zila Parishad (ZP): At the district (Zila) level there is a zila parishad, which at this moment consist of an executive secretariat with no elected members, though the fourth tier recommended by the local government commission was a locally elected zila parishad. In fact, despite a series of legislation, no election has so far been held. The latest law on the subject is the zila parishad act. 2000. Under this law the tenure of zila parishad is five years. The law does not contemplate a
public servant taken over the functions until a succeeding ZP is in place. The provision in this regard is similar to the law applicable to a UP (Section 5). An elected ZP can continue to function until the succeeding ZP holds its first meeting (Ali-2004.)

Figure 11: Present Structure of Decentralized Government In Bangladesh

![Diagram of Decentralized Government Structure]

Figure 11: Structure Of Decentralized Government
Upazilla Parishad: Though the present government is committed to reintroduce the Upazila System in the country but is still undecided on the face of the stiff resistance especially from the members of parliament (MP). It has also been reported that the cabinet is also divided on the question of reintroducing Upazila Parishad System in the country.

Union parishad: Present government proposed union parishad system is like same the former Awami (Sheik Hasina) League government. Recently the 7th union parishad election was held in this country. People and voters were enthusiastic at that the fate of people could not change. The Condition of UP’s like administration, management, official and service delivery system are so poor even the people don’t have any connection with local representatives, which will facilitate people to obtain better services. That’s why union parishad is not able to play very effective role in the country (Sohel, 2003).

Gram Sarkar (Village Government): The Gram Sarkar Act. 2003 has been passed for the creation of Gram Sarkars instead of previous Gram parishad. These bodies will be created at the ward levels. Each Gram Sarker will represent 1-2 village comprising of about 3,000 people on an average. The UP member elected from the ward will be the chairman of the GS which will have other members, both males and females, elected in a general meeting of the voters of the ward under the supervision of a ‘prescribed/directing authority’. There are defined functions of the GS and other functions may be assigned to it as may be specified by the government from time to time. GSs will have the right to constitute issue-based standing committees as and when required and to determine the membership of such committees (CPD Task Force).

The formation of Gram Sarkar Process has been going on for a period of 45 days from August-September, 2004 Though several attract has been occurred against Gram Sarkar’s validity and rationality at very early in the process, on 25 August, 3263 Gram Sarkars were formed. The Gram Sarkar Act, 2003 provides for a local government body in each of the 40,392 wards in 4,488 union parishad. “Formation of the Gram Sarkars will be completed before the timeframe ends, Ziaul Haque Zia, the state minister for the ministry of LGRD told new age on Monday. Officials at the ministry of LGRD, however, declined to comment to allegations of keeping the voters uninformed, titular presence of the voters at the meetings, making up the list of the Gram Sarkars in advance, inclusion of persons in unsuitable categories, influence of local BNP leaders and manipulation of results after the formal selection (Chowdhury; 2004).

As the formation process of Gram Sarkar is going on so this is too early to make any comment objectively on the new model of local government.

General Observations on Decentralization Efforts in Bangladesh

Beginning from the Pakistan period, an unhealthy trend of using local bodies for the narrow political ends of those in power at the national level has been noticed (Siddiqui 1994: 228). The circumstances under which the local government institutions were introduced will reveal the intent behind their introduction (Jahan, 1997).

A basic objective behind the introduction of the Basic Democracy System was to legitimize Ayub's military rule and to create a new pattern of local leadership, which would provide mass support for the regime. Besides the primary tier, half of the members of the other tiers were government nominated officials, and except the Union Council chairmen all the chairmen of the other tiers were non-elected persons (Jahan, 1997).
This system of nomination has served the interest of the rulers. The most corruptive effect was the use of the Basic Democrats (members of the Union Council) as the members of the electoral college for electing the President of the country (Hoque, 1986: 33). Political role of Basic Democrats assumed greater importance than their administrative and local government function (Jahan 1972: 130). By monopolizing electoral rights the Basic Democracy System became the most visible target for the discontents of all alienated groups who looked upon it as the mechanism by which the regime perpetuated itself. Ultimately, therefore, the Basic Democracy System not only failed to legitimize the regime but, in fact, lost its own legitimacy (Faizullah 1987: 15).

Contrary to all expectations, no major changes were initiated during the first parliamentary government of Bangladesh led by the Awami League. The reason was that, the existing rural power structure was considered adequate as the party enjoyed unrivaled popularity because of leading the war of liberation (Huque 1988: 172). As a result, little attention was paid to local government reforms. But when the regime of Mujib became unpopular, a new form of local government system known as the District Governor system was introduced at the district level. However, it could not be materialized as the government was removed from power. It is argued that the local government bodies at the lowest level were used for the perpetuation of the rule of the government by tying this entity with the one party rule of BAKSAL Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (Siddiqui,1994:229;Jahan, 1997).

Changes in local government system during 1975-1983 were made to establish a rural power base and provide legitimacy to the military rulers. Zia relied heavily on the local government system to obtain legitimacy as a political leader. He needed a power base outside the armed forces to secure legitimacy, and continue his rule. A strong mass support was essential for Bangladesh Nationalist Party to compete with other political parties, especially the Awami League, its arch rival. As a result, Swanirvar Gram Sarkar came into being and was used for extending the influence of the ruling party. (Jahan, 1997)

The case of the military government of Ershad was no exception to this. As a military ruler, he felt the need to establish a new power base for his subsequent stay in power. So he canceled the Swanirvar Gram Sarkar and introduced a new local government institution - Upazila. So the upazila system may also be viewed as a political tool for its exploitation in the ruling party's interest. He used this institution to legitimize the movement of transforming his military regime into a civilian one. At the localities, the leaders were ready to take advantage of the opportunities opened up by the new system of local government and had declared themselves members of Janadal, a political party launched by Ershad to contest the election (Huque, 1988: 179).

The Ershad government was eager to establish a support base in the country before the election. Popular support was considered essential to validate the government's claim to legitimacy and for its continuation in power (Huque, 1988: 186). There are evidence which tend to support the view that the elected Upazila chairmen have been politically pampered to provide the government of Ershad with the needed political support at the initial stage (All, 1986: 175). The sudden abolition of upazila without alternate arrangement was a retrogressive step. Questions were raised about Khaleda Zia's motive behind scrapping rather than reforming the upazila system (Siddiqui, 1994:229). It is believed that the reason was more political than any better socioeconomic consideration. The reorganized local government system as envisaged in the Huda Commission Report was not put into practice (Jahan, 1997).

Military regimes found it politically expedient to fall back on local government system to muster support for staying into power (Ali, 1986: 174). It has been evident during Zia and Ershad regime. The ruling elite without a sound political base have tried to create a support base in the
rural areas where the vast majority of people live. When new political parties tried to establish a power base they attempted to introduce a new local government institution and rewarded the recruits with places in local government bodies. In other words, the ruling group appealed directly to the local influential persons and groups for support in return for a place in local government institutions (Huque, 1988: 12-13). Although election to these local government institutions were never contested on the basis of party tickets, all or most of the elected members and chairmen of these institutions belonged to some parties (Ali, 1986: 179). Leaders of local councils often tended to associate themselves with the party in power, and many changed party affiliation with successive changes of government (Alam, Huque and Westergaard, 1994: 91-92). The government did not care much about the past political activities of local leaders as long as they were willing to support the government and help it to continue in power (Huque, 1988: 67). There is a clear patron-client relationship between the national government and local government (Siddiqui, 1994: 212). The government on ground of political expediency wished not to disturb the power base in the local areas (Ali, 1986: 9). It is through this power base that Ayub, Zia and Ershad sought to legitimize their rule. They all depended heavily on the Basic Democrats, Union Parishad Chairmen, Upazila Chairmen respectively for political support and subsequent stay in power. As a result, they had no option but to patronize this group (Ali, 1986: 9). Not only the military regime but also the civilian regimes of Mujib and Khaleda Zia have tried to bring about changes in local government structure. Sheikh Hasina and later Khaleda Zia are also following the same practice.

The process of local institution building in Bangladesh has proved counter productive, because it was not based on any accepted doctrine 'but was used to satiate individual political ambition or that of the party in power' (Obaidullah, 1988: 66). It is the reason for why the elected Zila Parishad has not yet been established in spite of its existence for about 3 decades and the function assigned to the local bodies do not signify any qualitative change.

**Major Issue and Problems in Implement Decentralization Policies**

The foregoing review of the Decentralization practice in reveals that although there is an elaborate system of local government in Bangladesh, It’s functioning suffer from some inherent in consistency and the changing periodically for political expediency. Identifying the issues and problems involved in the practice pattern of Decentralization in Bangladesh will be the focus of this part of the paper. The major issues and problem are the following:

1) **Colonial administrative pattern:** Administrative system that Bangladesh inherited are commonly described as colonial, because it is rooted in the colonial heritage. Bangladesh were a colony of British about two hundred years and near about 30 years under Pakistan. The colonial pattern of administration, characterized by elitists and alienated nature, is prevalent till today. Administrative officials working at different level are mainly bureaucratic in orientation and alienated from the people. The British rulers provided nomination system in the constitution of local government. The Pakistani rulers followed the same practice. Their purposes were to extend control over the local bodies by the nominated members together with the officials. With the same objective, the nomination system in the constitution of local government has been following in Bangladesh. Nomination system, as practiced in Bangladesh, is a direct breach of the principles of democracy and decentralized local government.
2) Undefined Constitutional Base: Viewed in the historical context the legacy of local government in Bangladesh flourished within federal structure of government during the British and the Pakistan periods. It was then a provincial subject. Independent Bangladesh being a unitary country, there occurred a structural transformation in the centre-local relationship. This found reflection in the constitution under chapter III (Articles 59 & 60), the salient points of which were:

i) There would be local government in every administrative unit;
ii) Such local government would be entrusted to bodies composed by elected persons;
iii) The foundations of local government units will be prescribed by Act of Parliament relating to administration and the work of public officers, administration of public order and preparation and implementation of plan;
iv) The Parliament would confer powers on the local government bodies to impose taxes for local purposes etc.

The above provisions of the Constitution gave a framework for transforming the age-old local government structure suitably. But nothing to this effect was done. By the Presidential Order I of 1972 Union Parishad was abolished but was soon restored under the traditional framework in exactly the same pattern as it was under the Basic Democracy system introduced by General Ayub. The Thana Council, which was nominally a local government, was also retained. The district council/zila Parishad was allowed to count in moribund status. Neither its representative character nor the council was restored. Thus, in spite of constitutional provisions and the new requirements of unitary governmental structure, no steps were taken to transform the local government structure to suit the changed requirements of the new nation. However, by the proclamation order No. 1 of 1977 the above constitutional provisions were omitted. Instead, provisions were created under the general principles of state policy of the constitution in the following words:

“The State shall encourage local government institutions composed of representatives of the areas concerned and in such institutions special representation shall be given, as far as possible, to peasants, workers and women”(Article-9). Obviously, the above provision is nothing but mere statement of state policy and does not indicate anything specifically about the structure of local government as original provisions of the constitution did. As a result, the pattern and structure of local government in the country is no longer a constitutional obligation (Faizullah, 1985).

3) Unbalanced Central Patronage: While Gram Sarker was a nebulous attempt and was used as a mere political frontage of the regime, the Upazila Parishad, as has been explained earlier, is a more serious exercise in as much as it is not only different from the existing local government units but it is receiving unprecedented patronage and weighted treatment from the central government in all matters as well.

The Upazila Parishad being founded on the concept of division of governmental functions between the center and the local government (Upazila Parished), introduces a kind of "sharing" of functions between the Center and one unit of local government only, to the exclusion of the others. Questions are, therefore, being raised as to the place of other local bodies who do not enjoy any -sharing" of functions with the center. On the other hand, if the principle of 'sharing' or 'transfer' of functions is extended to other local government units, both urban and rural, there is possibility that the center would have to divest itself of many more of its functions. This is not possible in the case of union parishad, because, all local functions have since been transferred to the Upazila Parishad. In the case of Zila Parishad any significant transfer of functions worth the name may lead to weakening the center and hence may be inconsistent in a unitary framework of
government. On the other hand, with its present structure and functioning Zila Parishad looks clearly redundant and, but for the nostalgia, there is no reason to retain it any longer. Therefore, question may be raised about rationale of retaining the Union Parishad and Zila Parishad as tiers of rural local government. This particular issue is relevant to the question on what number of local government tiers there should be in the country. Of the existing three tiers of rural local government, Zila Parishad looks clearly redundant.

4. **Dependency on Central government:** Historically, Bangladesh local government has always been dependent on the desire of the chief executive of the country. He has been the sole authority to decide whether local government will exist or not. If it should exist, at what level(s) of the country? How will the institution(s) of local government be composed of? Should to be composed of the elected representatives or the appointed officials or nominated persons or an administer of any two or all the four? How much power and functions will be transferred from the center to the local government? In Bangladesh these questions have always been decided by the ordinances or orders of the chief executive of the country.

On the other hand local government is always dependent on central government for finance. In spite of giving them the power to levy and raise local taxes, they have never been able to raise sufficient funds. Thus they are always in financial crisis in meeting their recurring expenditure. Even the government allocations also are irregular which causes anxiety and irritation and damages thereby the local initiatives, in respect of their functions too. While the urban bodies have some, what remained unaffected in this respect the rural bodies are in a state of confusion and disarray. The relevant laws of Union Parishad and Zila Parishad prescribe a long list of functions, which they do not also cannot perform in the first instance, because of fund constraint, lack of adequate and competent manpower, but more significantly, since 1950s the government in the name of development, assumed responsibility of a number of essential civic functions like road communication, education, health, water supply etc which now form key central functions. In fact, being denuded of these functions, the relevant local bodies do not really have any functional identity left. While this position still continues in respect of Union Parishad and Zila Parishad, introduction of the concept of sharing of functions with Upazila Parishad on an exclusive basis has introduced a new dimension in respect of functions of local bodies. For, this particular local body has now been declared to be the sole arbiter of its functions and the transfer of functions by the center has been said to be complete with necessary manpower, logistic and fund. Contrary to Union Parishad and Zila Parishad, the Upazila Parishad has been loaded with numerous and important functions. It looks like that whatever government took over from the local bodies like Union Parishad and Zila Parishad since the 50s it has now chosen to return them, but to a new body. To what extent such swing would be assimilated in the overall body politic of the local government and the central government is yet to be seen.

5. **Inefficient in Management:** Connected with the functions is the issue of efficient management of local bodies. One of the basic considerations for setting up local bodies in a country is the question of efficient rendering of services locally. While functions of local bodies reflect services required to be rendered locally, in real terms it is dependent upon a sound and efficient management. Our earlier discussion on this subject revealed the existing state of art in the country. While good management is a function of various factors like finance, adequacy of able manpower etc. It is also necessary that there exist a proper framework for fostering good management. Foremost in this respect is the factor of job and career opportunities of the
incumbents. For this respect, the Local Government Service Rules, 1968 provides the condition of service of local government officials. But the Prerequisites of the growth of local government service cadre do not exist. The proposal for having a Local Government Service has not seen the light of the day. As a result, the conditions and prospects of service of local government officials particularly, career prospects of senior local government servants like Engineers, Chief Officers etc. remain to a large extent undefined. As a result, local government service as a whole is an unattractive, venture. On the other hand, consistency in the staffing pattern of one body to another is also quite glaring. The Union Parishad with only one junior staff called Secretary is understaffed whereas the newly created Upazila Parishad with 252 staff is obviously well staffed, if not overstaffed. Again, in the absence of adequate training opportunities, the scope of qualitative improvement of the officials has become problematic. The abolition of the Basic Democracy Training Institutes and virtual de-linking of Comilla Academy from the area of local government activity has crated a great vacuum in this respect. In the 60s there were institutions which organized regular training programmers for the local government functionaries of all levels and types. Similarly, the training aspect of Upazilla Training and Development Center is no longer emphasized upon. The Local Government Institute which was conceived to develop as the central training agency in the field is yet to be equipped with adequate facilities and programmers for undertaking the responsibility (Faizullah, 1985).

6. Rigid and controlled oriented central local relationship: Rigid and control oriented central-local relations is one of the most critical and striking that halted the pace and process of decentralization in Bangladesh is rigid central control. The means of control exercised by the central government cover three areas-institutional, financial and administrative. The institutional control is exercised through powers to set territorial jurisdictions, composition of local bodies election procedures, staffing patterns functional jurisdiction and through adjudication and settlement of inter institutional disputes. In the case of finance, the central government supervision and control remain stringent and comprehensive. The central government regulates the income of the local bodies through prescribing the sources of income, particularly in respect to grant-in-aid. Although the central government is under statutory obligation to provide these grants, it can exercise a considerable degree of control over the local level institutions by varying the amount or by making their release subject to fulfillment of conditionality. With a high dependence of the local bodies on central government grants such measures often emerge as effective weapons of central government control of local institutions.

Through legislation and circulars, the government determines the structure, composition, functions, etc. of the local bodies. In addition, the government formulates detailed rules relating to, the powers of the elected members, assessment of taxes and many other important matters. Regulations made, by the local bodies are subject to central government approval. Financially the government prescribes in detail the sources of income, the powers of taxation, maintenance of accounts, the rules to be followed, etc. Administratively the local bodies do not appoint their own staff administrative control is also carried out through review resolutions! (the local bodies have to submit a copy of the proceedings of their meetings and the resolutions passed) and periodic inspections.

Adequate resources are one of the crucial prerequisites for a successful decentralized system. The amounts received by the local government (Union Parishad) through the Block Grant am small and their allocation among the unions is, subject to much competition. Not all the revenues
raised remains with the UP. It gets only one percent of the tax on the transfer of immovable property.

7. **Lack of administrative and political support:** political will is the level of commitment a country demonstrates particularly, but not exclusively its national government leaders to Decentralization and the development of local government. But in the implementation process of decentralization political will of our country seems to be very narrow. Decentralization is a top political priority but we can see here the executive branch, legislative and local officials are its primary advocates or opponents. There is no widespread understanding of the political and socio economic implications of decentralization on the other hand there is no established sub national political environment that can have a impact on the debate. Even there are no powerful constituencies who will be adversely affected and will they accept or attempt to neutralize the decentralization reform.

Sensitive and important policy like administrative decentralization needs support of tile larger part of administrative-political system. In Our country, the previous attempts for decentralization could not achieve sustainability mainly for empower of administrative and political Support, none of tile previous attempts was with consensus among political parties and larger part of the bureaucracy.

8. **Shortage of Skilled Personnel at the local level:** All the units of local government lack trained, technically expert personnel. Even the training facilities for them also are not adequate. The NILG lacks adequate financial support, specialized trainers and physical facilities. Besides, the representatives in local government councils do not mind it necessary to be trained.

Decentralization program in Bangladesh is facing the problem of serious shortage of skilled, trained manpower to perform local functions in implementing administrative decentralization program. A Word Bank evaluation of the Use program of Tanjania noted that decentralization has dispersed skilled personnel to regions and districts (Rondinelli, 1983). In early eighty, Bangladesh also faced the similar problem that exists till today.

9. **Ambiguous pattern of leadership:** Connected with proper management of the local bodies is the question of local government leadership. There are a number of issues in this respect. As we have noticed earlier, there exists a varying situation in this respect from one local body to another. While some local bodies have elected council others do not. While some have elected chairman, others have appointed or official as- chairman. This mixed situation has led to serious controversies, as to the functioning and object of the local-bodies. The most prominent and pertinent is the case of Upazila Parishad where in the absence of an elected chairman, the Upazila Nirbahi Officer a government official on deputation to the local body, has been allowed to act as the chairman. This has given rise to consider able controversy. Again, the municipalities have elected chairman but the municipal corporations have appointed ones. Although there exists varying patterns in various countries as to the head of a local body, some countries have government officials to act as chief of a local body, yet the fact remains that the overwhelm majority of the countries have elected chiefs to lead the local bodies. Bangladesh have not opted clearly in favor of either and its divergent politics and practices in this respect have rather increased the vulnerability of local government as public institution. Such divergence is also noticed in respect of composition of the council. While Zila Parishad is without a council, the councils of other bodies have varying and mixed patterns in their composition. The Union Parishad and the Pourashava have numerical preponderance of elected representatives. In the Upazila Parishad the nominated and official members stand predominant in most cases. In the municipal corporations the council consists entirely of nominated members (Faizullah, 1985).
10. Inadequate physical infrastructure transport and communications linkages: The ability of localities in most of the developing countries to carry out development responsibilities was limited by adverse physical conditions and responsible physical infrastructure, transportation facilities communication networks and roads because poor physical conditions in tile Countryside limited the interaction among local and central government and at the same time it become very difficult for local official to resource mobilize, supervise field personnel, distribute services and disseminate information (Islam, 1997).

11. Poor administrative capacity: Like other Asian Countries, in Bangladesh, the staff, needed to Support decentralized agencies, is usually inadequate. The challenge is to generate increased managerial capability for project planning and implementation at the local level (Mathur 1983). Usually central government attracted talented, and trained, capable persons away from the local. Those who are at the center are not inclined to return to the field after having completed the necessary stint for advancement. File result is that at the local level one finds either unwilling workers who are seeking opportunities to leave or those who have tried unsuccessfully to leave. To make a decentralized system of administration work effectively capability at the local level is a necessity and indeed, at least in the initial stages, high level staff Must be placed in field and given greater responsibility (Chambers, 1978)

12. Politico-administrative contradictions: The contradictions between the political wing and administrative wing of the local government unit often disrupt their very functioning. The officials argue that as the political leaders lack technical expertise required for developmental works, they should work under the supervision and control of bureaucratic official. On the other hand local leaders claim that they are in a better position to understand local problems and find out solutions. Neither officials nor local leaders mind cooperation with each other.

Beginning from Pakistan period, an unhealthy trend of using local bodies for the narrow political ends has been noticed. All the successive governments were to reshape and reorganize the local self-government in order to get back from these bodies and perpetuate their power.

13. Ambiguity in the design of decentralization policies: Decentralization policy Could not achieve its, goal due to ambiguous decentralization policy design. For sound implementation policy should be balanced in all respect. If file extent and purpose of the reforms, the procedures for participation and the roles of the officials at various levels of administration is not very clear ambiguous many problems can be created (Islam,1997)

14. Weaknesses in local organizational Instructional: Implementation of decentralization policy may be obstructed by the absence of or weaknesses in supporting institutions. From Our experiences with decentralization program in 80s we have found that strong local organizations have a great role, in fastening the development process.

From the above discussion the main problems of local government in Bangladesh may be identified as follows which are obstacles to implement the Decentralized effort.

i. Frequent changes in the local government structure with the change of political power at the national level,

ii. Complete dependence of local government on national government officials;

iii. Predominance of government officials;

iv. Inadequate mobilization of local resources;

v. Misuse and misappropriation of development fund; and

vi. Absence of rural people’s participation in development projects undertaken by the local government bodies.
The above problems are not only for Bangladesh. These, more or less, prevail in most of the developing countries. The problems, however, may be minimized if a stable and sound local government system is established.

**Suggested Measures**

In view of above observation we recommend the following policy measures

1. **Maintenance of Democratic Political Process**: Local government, organized on the spirit of devolution, is subsystem of greater political system of a country. It has roots democracy. Without democratic setup at the national level, the government institutions cannot grow and develop in the real. Fortunately, democratic government has been established at national level of Bangladesh recently. Now political leaders, both the ruling party and the opposition, should remain united on one i that democratic political process in the country must be maintained any cost so that authoritarian rule as in 1975 or the military intervention in politics may not take place. Unfortunately, in the past political leaders of the country never agreed on this issue; and in one way or other, some of them cooperated the military whenever they took over the reins of the government (Wahab, 1996).

2. **Constitutional Guarantee**: In a democratic country local government is generally a legal entity formed either from the constitution or an Act of Parliament. The constitutional guarantee is not a substitute for public esteem for local government. "Nevertheless constitutional recognition can be helpful and is an indicator of the position enjoyed by local government in the body politic of the country" (Siddiqui ed., 1992). In many countries including India and Pakistan, local government bodies have constitutional recognition. In the original constitution of Bangladesh (1972) local government was accorded a high status and dealt with elaborately. The provisions relating to local government were abolished in 1975, when one party authoritarian rule was promulgated under the Fourth Amendment of the constitution. The abolished provisions under the Fourth Amendment were revived word for word with effect from September 18, 1991, on which the Twelfth Amendment of the constitution was made. Now as per the provisions of the constitution there are two requirements for local government. First, local government is to body of elected persons, and second, it is entrusted to a body composed although special representation may be given to the peasants, workers and women (Article 9; Wahab, 1996).

3. **National Consensus**: It should be mentioned here that a mere constitutional cover for local government is not enough in a country like Bangladesh where constitution is frequently amended and suspended. There must be a national consensus among the different power holders and their contenders about the central political setup as well as the local political setup. Fortunately, a national consensus on the central political setup was made in 1991. Like the central political setup, national consensus is also essential on the local government institutions. It is unfortunate that as yet no national consensus has emerged on this issue. Furthermore, there is a sharp difference among the national leaders both from the party in power and the opposition as to the tiers of local government, and the levels at which the local government bodies should be instituted.

   It is, therefore, necessary to have a national consensus whether union and thana/upazila are administrative units, and this has to be incorporated in the constitution. In short the local government bodies in Bangladesh, based on national consensus, should be organized with the
laws of the constitution and/or legislature, not by the ordinance as it was done in the past (Wahab, 1996).

4. **Building local government capacity**: Activities focused primarily at the local level. The objective is to improve local government performance as measured through, primarily, a stronger financial position and increasingly effective public service delivery financial administrative and managerial capacity are all include in this area of programming. Local (or at least sub-national) capacity is one of the most important factors creating a well-functioning decentralized civil service. In countries where local institutions already exist the challenge will be to reinforce them institutionally and legally as, well as to strengthen their personnel management capacities. In places where local government are embryonic or exist only at an informal level, the institutional and legal framework will have to be created before any type of reform of the administration is undertaken.

Increased local government capacity we can take the following steps:

i. Availability of local government budgets and financial reports to councilors, the public, and the media;

ii. Existence of internal and external auditing in accordance with required schedules;

iii. Number or percentage of post-audit actions taken;

iv. Proportion of local government executive posts for which recruitment is based on clear job descriptions, professional merit;

v. Existence of citizen complaint mechanism and use of that input to affect policy or service delivery;

vi. Response time to citizen complaints;

vii. Existence of transparent financial systems and full reporting to citizens;

viii. Percentage of local revenue generated by local government;

ix. Percentage of local operating costs covered by local revenue;

x. Percentage of population satisfied with particular services (disaggregated to ensure equity of access);

xi. Documented performances standards and system of measurement;

xii. Actual performance (results) reported to public;

xiii. Percentage of local staff completing relevant skills training, and evidence of use of that training;


5. **Information and Monitoring**: Accountability is a prerequisite for improved public sector performance, and information is the key to accountability. The systematic collection, analysis, and reporting of information are critical elements of decentralization programs because that information can be used to verify compliance with policy goals, to analyze alternative outcomes, and to guide future decisions. Information on financial flows (i.e., budgeting and expenditure reporting) as well as on other inputs, outputs and, where possible, outcomes. Such information is essential both at the local level to inform local constituents and to encourage public participation in the political process -- and at the central level -- to monitor and supervise local activities funded (at least partially) by central sources.

Unless, the local public is aware of what public goods and services are provided, *how well* they are provided, who the beneficiaries are, how much the goods and services cost, and who paid, for
them, local constituencies will not encourage effective government. Central monitoring evaluation of local performance has much the same effect, except that national interests replace particular local interests. Without some central monitoring, there can be no assurance that functions of national importance are adequately performed once they have been decentralized, that the macroeconomic implications of decentralization are understood, or that the of proposed changes in intergovernmental fiscal or administrative relations are adequately analyzed.

6. Local Technical and Managerial Capacity: The recent International trend toward decentralization has provoked a lively debate about the capacity of local governments and communities to plan finance and manage their new responsibilities. Assessing, improving, and accommodating varying degrees of local capacity has become more and more important as decentralization policies transfer larger responsibilities as well as budgets from national governments to local governments and communities. Measuring local capacity can be difficult and the debate over qualifying it has often been motivated by political concerns as well as technical considerations about the local government’s ability to provide services. (J. Widner, 1994). Central governments have used “lack of capacity” excuse for refusing to transfer their authority, financial resources, and the accompanying privileges to local units. For this reason, it is useful to set out some of the relevant issues in objectively measuring local capacity. The fact that a community and its government exist indicates the presence of some skills. The challenge for development agencies and their partners is to identify the current capacity in the local government, civil society, and private sector, and bring it into the development programs. The first task is to identify the specific tasks that that local governments and citizens will need to carry out. The following are just a few of the components of planning, implementing and sustaining basic services.

i. analyzing and solving local problems;
ii. determining community needs;
iii. organizing local and national political support for programs;
iv. mobilizing national resources for program;
v. raising-tax revenues collecting user fees;
vi. writing specifications for the technical elements of programs;
vii. maintaining and sustaining the service;
viii. evaluating the impact of the program on the local environment;
ix. providing for those affected adversely by the program;
x. contracting for services and buying equipment.

7. Civil Service Reform and Decentralization: Civil service reform is usually a supporting strategy for more general decentralization in government operations or service delivery. One does not decentralize the civil service as an end in itself -- one does so in order to provide services better, manage resources more efficiently, or support other general outcome goals, The civil service as, a whole can be seen as one of the main instruments with which the government fulfills its obligations. In the context of decentralization, this tool must often be reshaped in order to perform a new set of duties efficiently, equitably, and effectively, Reform of the civil service therefore, is the process of modifying rules, and incentives obtain a more efficient, dedicated and performing government labor-force in newly decentralized environment.
8. Role of Civil Society: NGOs can often be a source of trained, experienced personnel and local construction, accounting etc. firms can provide services on a case-by-case basis. The local government's relationship with the private sector and demonstrated ability to contract out is an important, often overlooked part of "capacity." In assessing the community's longer-term capacity. One would want to look at the depth and history of civil society organizations (is there one skillful community leader of a network?) as well as the number of private contractors and concentration of skills (i.e.. Is there only one contractor who could move at any time or are there several firms that could provide technical help) in this area.

9. Local participation can be a strong motivator for change: Recent evidence from Colombia and Bolivia shows that citizen/constituent -oversight can be an important impetus for local governments to actively improve their capacity. Regular, fair, elections and citizen councils can increase the pressure on local leaders to turn popular demands into outputs; Clarify in responsibility assignment is essential. India's technically and managerially ambitious Small Farmers' Development Agency and Sri Lanka's lack of guidance for the appropriate uses of district budgets, for example, led to low levels of success. The more successful decentralization efforts in Indonesia and Thailand however, had clear procedures for local budget allocation and responsibilities. So we can follow their strategies. In the area of development planning and recourse mobilization where a mechanism for citizen participation, an organized system of interaction between the local authorities and the people in the community should be institutionalized (Guzman and Padilla, 1985) participation, Should be institutionalized through a village committee. This committee may be created in each village consisting of all categories of people such as farmers-rich, medium, poor, landless, teachers, youths, women, traders, fishermen etc.

10. Accountability & Transparency: In the democratic political aspects decentralization as currently conceived and increasingly practiced in the international development community has two principle components: participation and accountability. Participation is - chiefly concerned with increasing the role of citizens in choosing their local leaders and in telling those leaders what to do-in other words, providing inputs MW local governance. Accountability constitutes the other side of the process, it is the degree to Much local governments have to explain or justify what they have done, or fail to do. Improved information about local needs and preferences is one of the theoretical advantages of decentralization, but there is no guarantee that leaders will actually act on these preferences unless they feel some sort of accountability to citizens. Local elections are the most common and powerful form of accountability, but other mechanisms such as citizen council, can have limited influence. Accountability can be seen as the validation of participation, in that the test of whether attempt to increase participation prove successful is the extent to which people can use participation to hold a local government responsible for its action.

11. Government workers to local officials: It is scarcely surprising that decentralization initiatives so often run into heavy bureaucratic resistance, and designers find themselves pressured to keep significant linkage between the central ministries, especially concerning such issues as postings, promotions, and salaries. Needless to say, such ties tend to undercut the capacity of elected officials to supervise government servants supposedly working for them. Some decentralized governance systems appear to have worked through these problems to establish popular control over the bureaucracy, but it has taken many years to do so.
12. Elected officials to the citizenry: Elections (provided they are free and fair) provide the most obvious accountability, but this is a rather blunt tool exercised only at widespread intervals and offering only the broadest citizen control over government. Voters can retain or reject their governors, a decision that can certainly have salutary effects on governance, but these acts are summary judgments, generally not reactions to particular acts or omissions. And when local elections do revolve around a given issue, such as schools, they necessarily leave everything else out of the picture. Citizens need more discriminating instrument to enforce accountability. Fortunately, a number of these are available. Political party can be a powerful tool for accountability when they are established and vigorous at the local level, as in many Latin American countries. They have a built-in incentive to uncovered publicize wrongdoing by the party in power and to present continuously an alternative set of public policies to the voters.

13. Developing democratic local governance: For establishing decentralization policy it is very necessary to create a favorable enabling environment and developed democratic local governance. For these respect activities focused primarily at the local level. The objectives is assist local government and community efforts to create local government that operates in a most responsive, participatory, accountable and increasingly effective or more democratic fashion.

Specific Recommendation

1) Decentralization policy: Decentralization policy have to be Carefully planned, closely Supervised and strongly supported by tile administrative and political System of the Country, Before undertaking any program government should collect data through opinion pool, open debate, parliament debate etc. and then a orientation program could be taken for the bureaucrats. Crucial political, economic and social controversy, issues regarding decentralization policy must be resolved before implementing decentralization program on large scale.

2) Coordination: The coordination system at the local level needs to be very strengthened. Committee of Various, development projects taken by the local institution, Should consist of all concern departments and at the same time Peoples representation in Such committee have to be ensured.

3) Building Administrative capacity: For Successful implementation of decentralization policy we have to build the administrative capacity. Enough numbers of skilled, trained manpower is needed at local level, specially for project planning evaluation, resource mobilization, performance budgeting, so the obvious recommendation I is to raise the administrative capacity of the technical offices of the local governments by improving their organization and the quality of their technical manpower.

4) Planning: To institutionalize the concept of local level planning and development, the preparation of five year development plan for local governments should be firmly re-established. The development plans should be based on an inventory of resources in each level of local government, (Task Force Report 1991. 243)

5) Regular and fair election: The effectiveness and functionality of local government units require elected, committed and action oriented popular representatives. For this, government must ensure the holding of regular and fair election of local govt. bodies. Because, without proper popular representation, popular interests would not be protected.

6) Authority commensurate with responsibility: As a matter of fact, the authority and responsibility of local self-government bodies should go hand in hand. Control of local bodies by central government
functionaries should be limited, their day to day working must be free from official direction and they must have the power to initiate any development project without any complexity of central recommendation.

7) **Peoples participation:** The local people should be involved in the decision making process and share responsibilities. They should not be viewed as being the beneficiary merely for the program of building rural infrastructure but as the change agent. The villagers should be called upon to utilize the opportunities available and responsible for building their future.

8) **Establishment of statutory board:** A statutory board may be established as specific control mechanism for local government. This commission may be consist of MPs, the Judges, Local government experts, retired civil servants, lawyers etc. The board would employ a number of officers to inspect, monitor and evaluate local government bodies and give their recommendation to the board. However, the board alone would be empowered to take the final decision.

9) **Proper decentralization:** Decentralization of powers and functions to local government bodies should not be in paper rather specific policies and directions should be triggered for actual decentralization/devolution. For this, the functions, powers, allocations and responsibilities of local government bodies should be spelt out one.

10) **Training:** Training program for local govt. functionaries should be strengthened. The training should include both the officials and political representatives in the same batch. BARD Comilla and RDA Bogra should be involved in training up local government functionaries on a regional basis.

11) **Formation of Grameen Court:** For speedy, easy, inexpensive, substantial and effective justice to the common people, Grameen Court may be established. Judges should be recruited for speedy judgment and ensuring peace and harmony in rural areas.

**Concluding Remarks**

There is much debate about how far decentralization has been achieved in development activities in the Third World Countries. The concept and practice of decentralization and its different forms do not truly reflect the underlying objectives of decentralization that a given country adopts. There can be one or a combination of objectives and forms of decentralization. Ultimately decentralization is a political decision “and its implementation is a reflection of a country’s political process.” Every government has tried to build up a newer structure of local government in Bangladesh. Successive regimes added on further cosmetic change to the inherited model in order to consolidate their narrow power base for perpetuating their regime and in response to the prevailing political compulsion (Siddiqui, 1994: 94). It is not, however, argued that changes in the local bodies should not be sought. Reorientation of local administration is essential for every country to suit the purpose of developmental function in socio-economic field, which is constantly changing. The disturbing element is that the sole purpose of the experiments with the local government bodies in Bangladesh since the Pakistan period is political, and that is the reason why the experiment is usually reversed with a change of government. The experiments never serve the purpose of the ruling elites on a long-term basis. Since independence, the successive government in Bangladesh have simply twisted the inherited local bodies to suit their political needs (Noor, 1986: 88). The net result is that local bodies become unstable, and this in turn, shakes people's confidence in those bodies (Siddiqui, 1994: 229).
Without a long term vision and a consistent government policy the attempts to restructure and strengthen the local government system is bound to end in failure. The Decentralization in Bangladesh has shown that the rise and fall of the local government has totally been dependent on political perceptions and attitudes of successive regimes. All attempts to change local government aimed at serving the interest of the rulers rather than the ruled (Jahan, 1997). There are empirical evidences which show that changes in the local government in Bangladesh have not necessarily resulted in improvement of the socio-economic situation, and wider participation of the local people in the development process although those were the stated objectives of the governments. The historical account of local government of the country shows that the successive governments felt obliged to established some kind of local government structure in order to mobilize support of the rural providing a little bit of welfare insures. None of these attempts have succeeded in creating a viable rural local government institution.

Lastly, we may conclude by saying that at present no absolute democratic decentralization is found in Bangladesh; rather there is administrative decentralization instead. It is desirable that if the government or concerned authority follow the above suggested measures for implementation of the decentralization policy in the near future this should be transformed into democratic decentralization on the US model, so that local government can operate without interference from the central government.

References


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