

# Political decentralization and the local government system assignment



The final tier of elected government is the district (Gila) council. The district council consisted of all the (directly elected) union council Nazims in the district. The head of district council, the district Nazim and district Naib-Nazim are indirectly elected. Another aspect of representation in Devolution Plan is the creation of Citizen Community Boards (CCBs) in both rural and urban areas. The CCBs were expected to initiate and manage their own development projects, with 25 percent of the district development funds set aside for their use.

They are Voluntary organizations' formed by citizens themselves. Source: (Schema, Jais, & Qureshi, 2005) 3. 3 Characteristics of Current Local Government System . Restructuring of Government Pakistan. " (Abaft & Hussain, 2010). Schema, 2005 discussed that the elected government and provincial administration have been integrated at the district and Thesic levels, the division abolished altogether and the local level provincial administration has been made accountable to elected officials at the local level.

Moreover, majority of public services that were previously under the provincial government have been transferred to local government increasing their scope and responsibilities. B. Provincial to Local Decentralization with No Federal Decentralization The other side of the picture is, all the authority and power which have been distributed in local governments came from provincial government, no power transferred from federal government to either provincial or local governments. C.

Integration of Rural and Urban In pre-devolution period, there was a sharp distinction between rural and urban governments. But in post-devolution, it is no longer there as the administrative unit is union council which includes several towns and villages. D. Electoral Process Prior to devolution, members of urban local councils and district councils were directly elected and then they elected their heads of respective councils. Under the devolution, both the members and heads of the lowest level of government, the union council, are elected through public vote as before.

But the new legislation has created inter-governmental linkages by ensuring that the majority (two-thirds) of the members of the Thesis and district councils are these elected heads. However, within the devolved departments, “ not all functions were devolved and certain activities remain within the provincial purvey. ” (Schema, Jaws, & Qatar, 2005). A closer look at these changes and differences has been provided below. 3. 4 Changes under Political Decentralization Schema (2005) discussed in detail the changes brought in by devolution of power plan.

These are the changes in level of decision making, administration, accountability and fiscal resources available. While this paper only covers changes in level of decision making and accountability of representative governments as focusing on political decentralization. A. Change in Decision Making Level Before devolution, provincial government was more powerful and took all the decisions. But devolution plan distributed this power of decision making among local elected governments. For example, a service may have been under purvey of rabbinical elected government but after devolution it is transferred to local elected government.

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One thing to be noted is that this involves change in level of decision level of decision making power can be different depending upon the scale of service. Schema (2005) described the level changes in many different categories as under: a. Province to province b. Province to district c. Province to Thesis/Town d. Urban/ Rural Local Council to Thesis e. Urban/ Rural Local Council to District b. Change in Accountability Devolution also changed the decision maker's accountability keeping the decision making power on the same level.

These are the changes where decision of a particular service is now made by the agent who differs in his accountability to public. Prior to devolution, provincial bureaucracy was accountable to their non- elected provincial secretariat, while under the new system they are accountable to the elected heads of district and Thesis governments. For example, decision of some service might be taken at district level by bureaucrats before devolution, while decision are still made on the district level but by the elected district representative. So accountability of that service is now closer to the voters who elected their preventatives.

The most significant accountability change is that the De facto head of district administration under the previous system, the deputy commissioner (DC), used to report to the non-elected provincial bureaucracy, whereas in the present system the head of the district administration, the District Coordination Officer (DOC) reports to the elected district Nazism. Schema 2005 summarized the discussion stating " the ultimate decision maker changed from a provincial government district officer who reported to the provincial bureaucracy, to an elected Nazism who ultimately is answerable to <https://assignbuster.com/political-decentralization-and-the-local-government-system-assignment/>

his district's constituents. 3. 5 Analysis Critics on Current Local Government System and POLO 2001 Devolution plan is a revolutionary step in the history of decentralization in Pakistan but the structure of system of representation created a number of problems also (Abaft & Hussy, 2010). Direct election in a particular constituency limited the attention of union Nazism to union specific development schemes and they did not pay attention to their role as Thesis and District council members.

This resulted in holistic and fragmented union council level projects rather than district or Thesis bevel. The structure of the electoral system also caused reverse campaigning; instead of directly elected union councilors campaigning for elections, there are cases of union Nazism campaigning for their respective union councilors. This secures the future re-election of union Nazism if the union councilor of his choice gets elected as Nazism are to be selected later indirectly (Hessian, 2008).

Since political parties had been bypassed and caste-based candidates were now pitted against each other, the elections reinforced traditional hostilities at the local level. To a large extent, "such a yester of patronage and hostility defeated the opportunities for rural areas to participate in decision making and to demand better services from the state" (Abaft & Hussy, 2010). Another major problem with the system of representation that was promulgated through the Devolution plan was the lack of checks and balances between and across elected bodies.

The accountability of district Nazism is almost council headed by naif-Nazism rarely goes counter to Nazism. The most important issue facing elected

bodies was the clash of interests with representative provincial governments. The Devolution plan of 2000 had been prepared without consultation with stakeholders particularly provinces, at the time national and provincial assemblies had been dissolved. When these assemblies were revived, local tier had been added according to devolution plan.

On that time there was no political ownership of newly created local governments which led provincial governments to interfere in both policy making and implementation at the district level (Abaft & Hussy, 2010).

Citizen Community Boards (CBS) were a great way for the representation in local government, but they became functional to a certain degree, to quite in the way envisioned in the Devolution plan. Usually “ CBS have become splinter groups lobbying for small investment projects and often captured by local elites or contractors looking for project funding” (Abaft & Hussy, 2010)

4.

To characterize decentralization in the country “ all these components (political, fiscal and administrative) must complement each other to produce more responsive local governments that will deliver effective, efficient and sustainable services and maintain fiscal discipline” (Never, 2001). Never provided a set of questions for each component of decentralization in order to assess the level of decentralization. Considering the scope to this paper only political decentralization is being assessed in context of Pakistan using the indicators given by Never.

With the descriptive answers, every situation has been given marks out of 10 ('10' is best/strong yes while ' 0' is worst/strong No) in relevance to the

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description. 1 . Are governments elected? Yes generally governments are elected as long as military take over and dissolved in the ill situation of law and order and bad governance. (10) 2. Are there multi-party elections? Yes elections are multi-party; there are a number of small medium and large, old and new political parties which participate in general elections. (10) 3. Are ballots cast secretly in government elections?

According to constitution, ballots are and should be cast secretly in all the areas. Exception prevails at some electoral stations which are under a high influence of some political parties but such areas are very few in number. (08) 4. Are elections held at regular intervals? 2008-13 is the first time in history of Pakistan when elected National government employed its 5-years tenure and elections were held after exact five years that is in May 2013. Before this, military has been taking over in the situation of bad governance and ill law and order. (03) 5.

Are elections free and fair? There has been a big question mark on the fairness of elections as there are a few old political parties which have been controlling the country politics for a long time. Moreover, every party has its area of influence in which it can use its power and influence people and sometimes elections also. (05) 6. Is the head of local government elected directly, indirectly or appointed? According to electoral process defined by the Devolution plan which has been discussed earlier, head of local at keeping a check on local corruption?

In real practice, civil society has no power to keep check and balance on local elected representatives. They are just elected locally but they are not in

control of or accountable to the general public as envisioned in the Devolution Plan. (00) 5. The Devolution of Power Plan which has been promulgated through Local Government Ordinance 2001 is a revolutionary step in the history of decentralization in Pakistan. Mustard introduced a number of reforms which helped in reducing the AP between state and civil society.

All the powers distributed to the newly created lower tiers came through provincial government without distributing the powers of federal government. Provincial governments which used to be very powerful tier become less authoritative as local tiers were directly connected with the center. Initially local governments were given constitutional protection of six years against any kind of amendments but later some political powers, which got affected by the direct linkage of local government with center, made amendments to recover some of the lost powers.

The reverse campaigning because of structure of government affects fairness of electoral process as Nazism campaigns for their own union councilors to secure their future elections rather than union councilors campaigning for the elections. This promotes sense of self benefits among the union councilors and the interests of community are ignored. Though the Devolution plan transferred powers to local tiers and empowered local communities at very bottom level but still there are some issues which hinder the efficiency of plan and limited the benefits to the citizens of Pakistan.



The assessment of political decentralization in Pakistan on the basis of Never indicators shows that political system is well decentralized at least on the policy documents but in real practice issues of transparency and accountability exist. There are still some gaps in the real practice as civil society is still lacking the actual power to keep checks and balances on the representatives. 6. RECOMMENDATIONS All the powers and authority distributed at local level has been taken from province while center keeps all the authority and decision making power as it is including sisal authorities.

There should be distribution of powers of center as well in order to develop a balance between center-province and province-district relation. In real practice, plan has not work up to the mark because of absence of transparency in the system particularly in financial matters. There should be complete transparent system which allows common public to look into the country's on-going matters. Voters should have power to keep check and balance on the decisions made by their representatives as they are the one who elected them through electoral process.