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City Government in Bangladesh: An Alternative Approach to Bring Efficiency & Effectiveness in Urban Governance

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Abstract: Democracy and development are interrelated. Bangladesh is facing a number of difficulties to ensure development through democracy in every aspect of its life. City government is an approach to improve and accelerate the process of democracy through governance, where development is major concern, in urban areas of Bangladesh. The conflict between mayors and local MPs (Member of Parliament) is a common phenomenon that is account for failure the development programs in city corporations. The present study aims to clarify the present condition of urban local government and possibility of City Government in Bangladesh. The study found ruling party interfere in local election, which must be avoid, financial independence is crucial issue for city government which will be managed locally if city government established. Awareness of the people, literacy and motivation can increase people's participation for effective governance in cities. Public Accountability and maintaining hierarchy was also marked as an important for effective city government. Delegation of authority and autonomy of city (local) government were found the precondition to establish of city government in Bangladesh where party politics must be keeping away from.

Keywords: City Government, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Urban Governance.

Introduction

Bangladesh is a young developing country in the adventure of democracy where development is the main concern. Developing economy from stagnant to dynamic, cities are playing pivotal role in every country. City Government is a form of urban governance which was common in the developed countries. City government, as a group, is responsible for taxation, appropriations, ordinances, and other general functions. Individual commissioners are assigned responsibility for a specific aspect of municipal affairs. One commissioner is designated to function as mayor, but this largely is a procedural, honorific, or ceremonial designation and typically, does not involve additional powers beyond that exercised by the other commissioners but without any direct election by the voters, and this role as chair often is passed as a designation among the entire commission members annually, from one to another by nominations from the commission alone (Raphael, 2006).

The council-manager (another) form of government developed, at least in part, as a response to some perceived limitations of the commission form. In the council-manager form, the elected council exercises the legislative power of the city and appoints a manager, who possesses the executive power. Thus the executive powers, divided among the commissioners in a commission form, are instead concentrated in the manager, who then delegates responsibility to department heads and other staff members (Beard, 1970). The council-manager form became the preferred alternative for progressive reform, and after first major war very few cities adopted the commission form and many cities using the commission plan switched to the council-manager form. The form City Government originated mainly for the reason that extra support was needed in certain areas. After its constitutionality was tested and confirmed, this form of government quickly became popular across the world (Beard, 1970).

The City Government concept is comparatively new in Bangladesh. Although the former mayor of Chittagong City Corporation A.B.M Mohiuddin had proposed to the government elevate the City Government. After that the ex mayor of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) Sadek Hosen Khoka also support it. But lack of noble intention of government it has not possible to establish. But not only Chittagong City Corporation (CCC), all of City Corporation is possible elevate to City Government. As a result, the local government (urban) will be strong.

Statement of the Research Problem

Bangladesh is a densely populated and resource-poor country in the world. We need good governance for sustainable development. City government is an approach to speed up the mechanism of urban governance. There are eleven cities in Bangladesh. These are called City Corporation. The head of City Corporation called mayor and some member are elected by the local voters those are called councilor. Those City Corporations are controlled by the central government. City Corporation could not able to announce their budget independently. But for the infrastructural and other development; the budget is essential. If the City Government established they have three sectors: law, administration and judiciary. Then they will be able to financial support by itself. There is another problem in City Corporation; this is the conflict between mayor and MPs (Member of Parliament). If any mayor takes policy and if he is the different political parties' member then MPs never support this (Kolimullah, 2010). As a result development policies are not implementing properly. This study was conducted to encounter all these aspect to assess the scope to establish city government in Bangladesh to increase efficiency and effectiveness of urban local government.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to clarify the present condition of urban local government and possibility of City Government in Bangladesh.

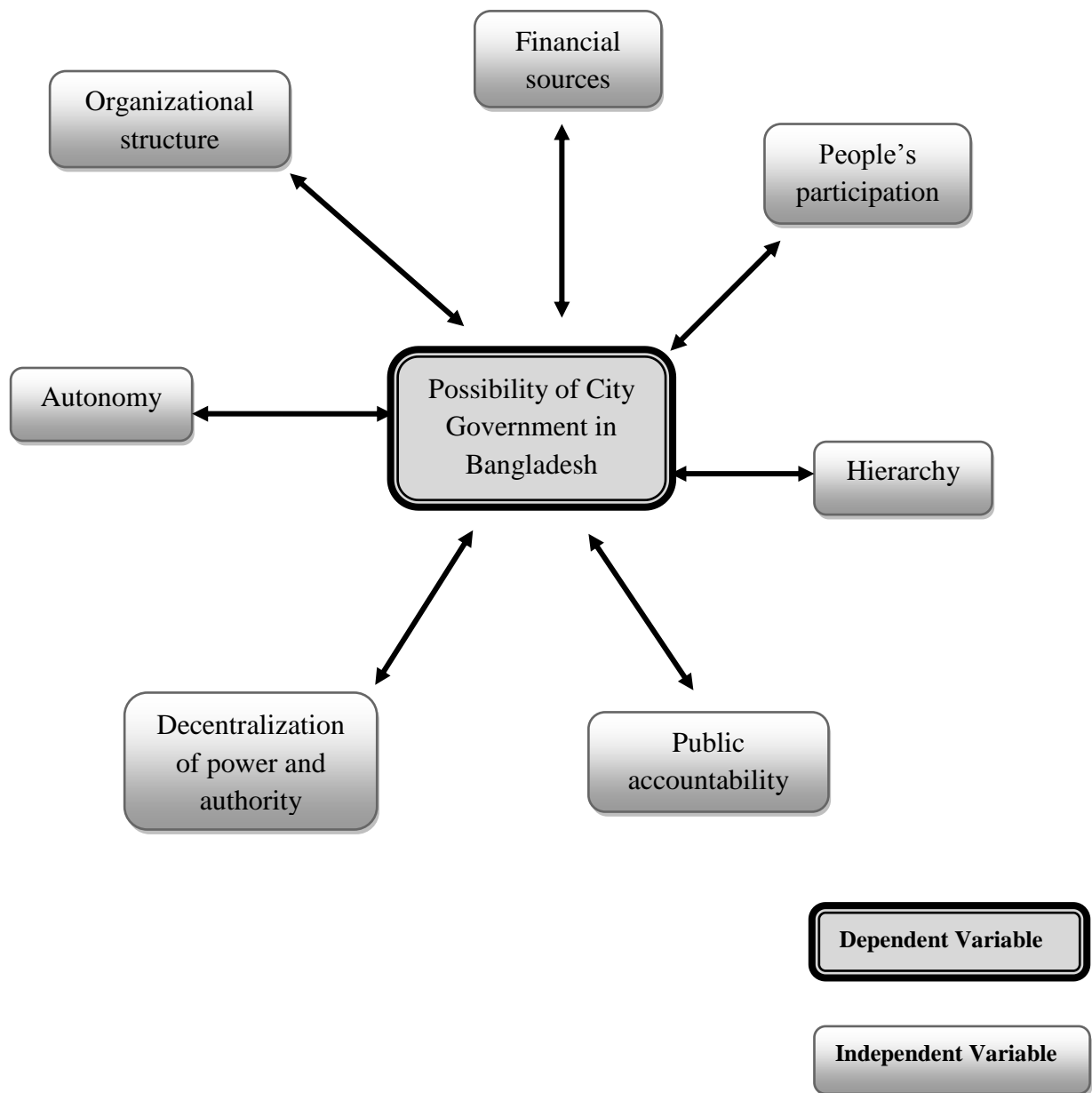
Specific Objectives are:

Various and multilateral objectives are accomplished from this research. But the main objectives are given bellow:

- To know the effectiveness of City Government by the compare of City Government and City Corporation especially urban governance.
- To know the City Corporation role in respect of development programmers in the urban area.
- To know the contributions of local people for making policies and strategies in the development programs.

Conceptual Framework

In conceptual framework independent and dependent variables have selected (Islam, 2009). The study topic is 'The possibility of City Government in Bangladesh'. In this Topic City government is a dependent variable and independent variables are organizational structure, financial resource, people's participation, hierarchy, responsibility to the people, decentralization of power and authority, autonomy etc. These are shown in a table;



Possibility of city government is mostly dependent on its organizational structure. In this structure a mayor is the highest title held in a city government. He will be elected by the people. The Mayor serves as Chairman of the City Council. The City Council proposes bills, holds votes, and passes municipal ordinances in the city. In many cases, the Mayor himself/herself has the authority to veto a decision made by the city council.

The City Council usually appoints a Municipal Court Judge and City Manager, making the Judge and City Manager under the City Council. It all varies city by city, but this is how it normally works. Financial sources are also important for city government. A city government is responsible for collecting citywide taxes and using them for services. There are some kinds of taxes could be follow like property taxes, sales taxes, excise taxes, income taxes, wheel taxes etc. It also needs to distribute grants and funding from the state and federal governments to programs and city development. A city government system can not possible to run without given full autonomy. For this autonomy central government never interfere on city government task and policy. City government plays three crucial roles that: values maximize; an institution that potentially allows citizens to reveal their preferences for public expenditures; and, as a competitor with other jurisdictions so that efficiency conditions are satisfied. In the city government form power will be decentralized. As a result every sector performs their task independently. And finally everything will be possible by ensure peoples participation.

Research Methodology

Research Design

In this research paper exploratory design has followed. The study has used the survey method to achieve calculative findings. This part of the research paper consists two distinct but interrelated sections.

Research Methodology

The study has conducted through methodological triangulation such as qualitative.

Methods of Data Collection

There are many different methods of data collecting, depending on the nature and objectives of the study as well as availability of resources (Young, 1984). In this study, the data has collected by using face to face interview method.

Sources of Data

In this study information has collected from primary source and secondary sources information also used for data composition and data analysis. In this circumstances various books, journals, papers, newspapers information also used.

Selection of the Study Area and Population

Selection of study area is very important for social research because the ideal research setting helps the study to find out specific criteria, which is required by the research objectives. For the fulfillment of the research objectivities, the study has selected Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) as its study area. Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) consists of 27 wards and 210 mahallas, and has a total area of 26.50 km². Half million peoples live in Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) area. 1, 80,875 voters elected their 36 commissioner and one mayor. The literacy rate of Sylhet City is 73%.¹

Sampling and Sample Size

Sampling and Sample size is very important for social research (Aminuzzaman, 1991). In this study purposive sampling method has followed and 40 samples have selected. All of them commissioners of wards, mayor of City Corporation and other were university teachers and graduate students.

¹ <http://www.sylhetcitycorporation.org>

Data Processing & Analysis

After collection of data from the field level, those have edited and coded for proper computer uses. Then those data have tabulated and presented by table and those data also analysis with, Microsoft Word.

Qualitative Approach of the Study

Qualitative methods produce information only on the particular cases studied, and any more general conclusions are only propositions (informed assertions) where Quantitative methods can be used to seek empirical support for such research hypotheses (Gupta, 1989).

As the qualitative research is interpretive the study has interpreted the field data on the basis of the objectives of the study, research question and variables of the study (Cresswell, 1994).

Result Analysis & Discussion

Organizational structure is very important for any kinds of institution. Success or failure of any institution depends on organizational structure. In Bangladesh maximum number of people thinks the head of the City Government (now City Corporation) would be elected by the local voters. Most of the respondents (37.5 percent) support central government will never interfere in this election. Not only mayor, but also city councilors, city attorney, controllers would also be elected by the local voters. Besides other officials member would be nominated by the mayor and city councilors.

Existing urban government is two tiers i.e. Municipality and City Corporation. This form of urban government cannot able to provide proper service for lack of financial independence. So, financial system is very important for the local government. In our country central government always provide money to fulfill the financial demand of local government. But when City Government will be established then financial

independence is more necessary. Local government must be earned money from the different sources. The major number of respondents (60 percent) thinks that this money will be arranged locally. The income sources of this institution should be taxes on local income, taxes on real estate, user fees, block grants from the central government, revenue sharing from the central government. A major numbers of respondents (77.5 percent) support these sources as income sources of City Government. As a result, interfere of central government will be reduced in urban government and City Government would not be totally depend on central government budget.

People's participation is one of the most important indicators of City Government. People's participation means communications with people's representative, importance of local election to the people, peoples will be part on decision making. About fifty (47.50) percent respondents think people's participation means to take part in decision making. Present condition of people's participation in urban local government is moderately good. To improve the peoples participation some procedure need to maintain. In this survey most of the respondent (77.5 percent) think without create people's awareness; increase the rate of literacy and motivation people's participation is not possible to increase. Moreover 90 percent respondent thinks that without people's participation effective City Government will not be established.

Hierarchy is a form of an organizational structure where every entity, except one, is subordinates to a single other entity. In an organization, the hierarchy usually consists of a singular/group of power at the top with subsequent levels of power beneath them. This is the dominant mode of organization among large organizations; governments, most corporations and organized religions are hierarchical organizations with different levels. In the City Government organization bottom to up hierarchical system will be followed. In this survey most of the respondents (80 percent) support this system. In this system all decision should take in democratic way and every member of City Government in administration giving their opinion freely. Maximum number

respondents (52.5 percent) think that the City Government would be non political institution. There are some changes needed to this pattern. This change should be ensure cordial working environment, avoid master servant relation, avoid excessive formalism as a result members of this organization communicate with their immediate superior and with their immediate subordinates easily.

Public accountability refers to institutionalized practice of account giving by elected governments, civil servants and public sector institutions to horizontal or higher levels of public servants and public sector institutions. Public accountability as a supply-side approach is critical in establishing controls and efficiency in local government operations. These mechanisms include ombudsman, anticorruption agencies and legislative monitoring bodies. Maximum number of respondents thinks without ensure public accountability this form of urban government could not provide proper service to the people.

Decentralization is a systematic delegation of authority and in all of the organization. In a decentralization concern, authority is retained by the top management for taking major decisions and framing policies concerning the whole concern. Rest of the authority may be delegated to the middle level and lower level of management. Decentralization is not the same as delegation. In fact, decentralization is all extension of delegation. Decentralization pattern is wider in scope and the authorities are diffused to the lowest most level of management. Delegation of authority is a complete process and takes place from one person to another. While decentralization is complete only when fullest possible delegation has taken place. By ensuring decentralization of power and authority all functions of this institution (City Government) will be finished smoothly. Party politics is one of the main barriers to ensure decentralization of power and authority in urban government. A large number of respondents (42.5 percent) agree with the statement that party politics is the main barrier to decentralize of power and

authority in urban local government. To ensure the decentralization of power and authority it should be must be avoid party politics in this form of local government.

Autonomy is one of the crucial indicators of City Government. It is the pre condition to establish City Government. Local government autonomy can be defined as “the freedom of the local government to recruit and manage its own staff, raise and manage its own finances, make by-laws and policies, and discharge its functions as provided by law without interference from the higher governments” (Ogunna, 1996). Without autonomy City Government is not possible to establish. A large number of respondents (67.5 percent) agree with this statement. Moreover present autonomy power of urban government is not satisfactory. Autonomy should be political, financial and administrative autonomy. Political autonomy means no interfere in local election, no interfere in decision making from the central government. Financial autonomy of local government is the “freedom to impose local taxation, generate revenue within its assigned sources, allocate its financial and material resources, determine and authorize its annual budget without external interference. It must be noted that local government autonomy is not absolute; the third tier of government retains functional and fiscal relations with the higher tiers of government, however, the relationship must function within the relevant law. The lion’s portion of respondents (85 percent) supports that political and financial autonomy should needed for this form of urban government in Bangladesh.

Concluding Remarks & Proposed Strategies

Bangladesh is a developing country. Its population is increasing day by day. It is very difficult to provide best service for existing urban local government like City Corporation. After the discuss the City Government’s structure, function, its budgeting process, income source and source of expenditure and existing City Government system in different cities of different countries; it should be possible to establish City

Government in Bangladesh. By established City Government the contributions of local people for making policies and strategies in the development program will be increased. With establish City Government; the conflict of authority between Member of Parliament (MP's) and Mayor because in this System City Mayor will be legal guardian of city.

Considering the above discussions it can be said that the existing urban local government cannot provide service properly. According this problem some strategy should be followed, which are short term (0-6 month), midterm (06 month-2 years) and Long term (more than two years).

Short-term (Within six months)

Follow the bottom to top hierarchy system in decision making.

Ensure cordial working environment.

Avoid master servant relationship.

Avoid excessive formalism.

Mayor, Councilors, Controller and City Attorney are elected by the electors.

Midterm (Six month to two years)

Annual Report of Urban Local Government

Annual report of activities and performance will have to be disseminated so that one City Corporation, municipal can know what other City Corporation and municipal.

Need for Infrastructure Survey

Therefore immediately an infrastructure survey in all City Corporation should be made so that this can be used as benchmark for future plan for additional infrastructure and estimation of their maintenance cost every year. In the absence of such information

corrupt practice persists. In the absence of estimate of description in budget, the budget proposal turns out to be meaningless.

Standardized and Consistent Data

The urban local government statistical year book seems to have compiled the budget proposal of different City Corporation and municipal but the data in the proposal are to what extent dependable has been explained earlier. The statistics provided in the book required to be consistent on year basis so that derivation is possible with data set.

National Urban Policy

A national urban policy must be formulated taking in to consideration the context, problems and prospects of urbanization in the country. This policy should contain clear guidelines of the planning process to include provision for extension of cities/towns, their structural development and ensuring services to the clientele and overall coordination of activities.

Long term (More than two years)

Decentralization of Power

Urban local governments in Bangladesh do not enjoy real autonomy to solve local problem. For financing development activities and resource mobilization, the local governments remain dependent on the central government. Similarly, for employing manpower or transfer of their employees, they are dependent on the central government. All the key personnel associated with development work in urban areas tend to employees of central government. However for effective urban governance, decision making opportunities have to be developed to the City Corporation, Paurashava and also to be ward level. At the same time, central government employees

assigned to the local bodies have to be placed under the administrative discipline of the bodies.

Democratic Participation

Democratic participation of the stake holders in decision making and urban development activities is one of the crucial components of good urban governance. In more concrete terms, each city corporation should be governed through the active participation of the elected representatives. These elected members of the City Corporation should sit more frequently and their participation needs to be made more effective. The elected body, apart from their council meetings, should take part in the various subject committees.

Transparency and Accountability

Transparency and accountability are almost synonyms. Transparency assumes that the government's decision, whether routine or policy, and activities affecting citizens, must be transparent to them. There is effectively no devolution of decision making to the people. Accountability means that public officials, elected or appointed, are held accountable to the citizens. At present in Bangladesh there is hardly any transparency and accountability in the system of urban local governance. In the local government, follow a bureaucratic system of decision-making. The local bodies should more actively seek to involve people in the decision-making process. Similarly, the local governments should be transparent to the people in all their development activities finances, income and expenditure.

Coordination

The most critical problem in urban governance is the weak or even non-existent coordination amongst development partners. It is generally believed that the lack of

coordination is a serious problem in urban governance. This problem of coordination arises because the responsibility for providing civic service in towns and cities are split among several authorities. At present not only the local urban governance but many other agencies are involved in providing civic service to the community proliferation of different agencies. Overlapping and duplication of functions with regard to civic services create problems of coordination. So we should be must ensure coordination to the different agencies of urban governance.

Efficiency and Manpower

Efficient urban governance is not possible without much more efficient and better trained manpower. The urban governance in Bangladesh lack organizational capabilities to undertake and successfully complete the massive task of urban development. One of the reasons for such a deficiency is lack of trained manpower resources available to the local authorities. So much greater investment should be made for building a cadre of trained professionals within the system of urban governance and management who are specially equipped to manage these local entities and responds to its development challenges.

Legislative Support

While the City Government is the major issue of urban governance, it needs legislative support and it's expedient to regulate in the interest of public to provide for the planned development of urban areas in Bangladesh.

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