

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER IN BANGLADESH: A FOCUS ON THE TRADITIONAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND ITS TRANSFORMATION.

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ABSTRACT

In Bangladesh, Office of the Deputy Commissioner is the key role player in the district with a big number of traditional functions right from the time of East India Company. Although the original pattern of district administration remains more or less unchanged but there appears to be gradual transformation of the conventional character of district administration. The purpose of the research is to overview the evolution of the Office of the Deputy Commissioner, explore the extent of transformation of the traditional functions and identify factors. This study is based on historical (qualitative) method of research where data have been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The study found that although several traditional functions of Deputy Commissioner have been transformed but some features still resemble the features of Traditional Public Administration. The research has identified various factors that induced and or influenced the transformation process.

Keywords: Deputy Commissioner, Traditional Public Administration, Evolution, Transformation, Factors.

1. Introduction

The objective of the study is to overview of the evolution of the role and function of the Office of the Deputy Commissioner, explore the extent of transformation of the traditional functions and to identify the factors of transformation of the role from traditional public administration. The Office of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) in Bangladesh is said to be the eye, ear and hand of the Government in the district. According to the “Ma-Bap”ⁱ concept of Government as put forward by Hans Anderson, the concentration of powers in the hands of the Deputy Commissioner was so great and his sharing of these powers so rare and minimal that he would have been called the ‘Ma-Bap’ (mother and father) of his area (Abedin, 1973). Starting its journey in 1772 with the Hastings Plan, the pattern of Office of DC has gone through many ups and downs (Ali et. al. 1983). It was originated as Collectorⁱⁱ in British India in order to gear towards collection of revenue. Then he was empowered as District Magistrate for ensuring security and criminal justice. O’Malley (1931) focused on the functions of Collector during Indian Civil Service particularly land revenue collection during East India Company and the evolution of collector and district administration. He mentioned that the role and functions of the Collector and District Magistrate (DM) had been changed over time and with the change of Governor. In course of time, Collector got more and more involved in local developmental and managerial activities (Ali, 1982). At present, judicial separation and government principal agenda “Digital Bangladesh Vision 2021” have pushed the role of Deputy Commissioner from traditional towards a new reality. Although, collectors are now more and more engaged in public management, development and innovative activities, but still they are maintaining a classic bureaucratic approach of public administration.

2. District Administration in Bangladesh

District is the focal point in the administrative system of Bangladesh. It has a long historical background. The Mughal emperor Akbar (1542-1605) divided the vast Mughal empireⁱⁱⁱ into ‘Subas’ (provinces) each of which was in turn split up into ‘Sarkars’(districts) (Abedin, 1973). Today in Bangladesh, the whole country is divided in eight divisions, sixty four districts which are consisted of 490 upazilas^{iv}. Below the upazila level, there are unions which are grass root level local government institutions. Office of the Deputy Commissioner is regarded as the ‘pivot’ of the field bureaucracy. Beginning with the position of Supervisor in 1769 during East India Company, the position has evolved through Collector of Revenue, District Magistrate and finally the Deputy Commissioner. In the passage of time, the Office of the Deputy Commissioner is not only a functional office; rather it has evolved as an institution by itself. However, district administration^v is not only the administration run by the Deputy Commissioner, there are a number of other offices which are linked with their respective bigger echelon. Although by the term ‘district administration’ in a wider sense, it is meant the field administration of all functional departments at the district level, in narrower sense, it means the functions performed by the Office of the Deputy Commissioner (Ali et. al. 1983).

Historically Office of the Deputy Commissioner is the key role player in the district. In 1786, the Board of Directors of East India Company decided that Collector should be retained as a permanent feature of local administration. Accordingly, Governor General Macpherson divided the province of Bengal into 36 districts and appointed a Collector in each district. He was empowered with Revenue, Administrative and Magisterial power. But in 1793, Governor General Lord Cornwallis separated the judiciary from the executive and placed under a separate Judge. In 1861, British Crown also curtailed the executive and discretionary power of the collector. In 1869, the magisterial power of collector was regained. Thus for decades, he continued to be the District Magistrate and Collector combining in him the magisterial, administrative and revenue functions.

Even during Pakistan period in the Constitution of 1956, separation of judiciary from the executive was enunciated which could not be materialized. The Administrative Reforms Commission 1959 recommended that the designation of the District Magistrate should be changed to Deputy Commissioner to strengthen his power and position to make him more effective. In Bangladesh, the power and position of Deputy Commissioner remained almost unchanged. In 2007, although judiciary was separated from the executive due to some constitutional obligation, but still DC is continuing his role as District Magistrate with executive magistrates in function. At present, DC is becoming more and more engaged in various types of developmental and innovative activities, more and more service providing approach. The role of district coordination function is becoming more important day by day. Still DC is the chief communicating person who can directly communicate with the Prime Minister's Office, Cabinet Division and any other strategic ministries of the government. Due to the changing reality everywhere, there appears to be some kind of transformation or diffusion in the role and function of the Deputy Commissioner, but the original bureaucratic model (field bureaucracy) more or less remained unchanged.

3. Historical Evolution of District Administration

The foundation of modern district administration in Bangladesh was laid during the first hundred years of British administration in South Asia (Abedin, 1973). The East India Company adopted the Mughal system of field administration and further developed it. Since mid 1760s towards the close of the 18th century, principles for the pattern of district administration were formulated. District administration was developed from the revenue administration. In 1765 the 'Diwani' of Bengal was assumed by the East India Company. In 1769 Supervisors of revenue collections were appointed, but they could not bring fruitful result in revenue collection.

In 1772, Governor General Warren Hastings created the post of Collector and empowered him with magisterial power. But in 1773, the post of Collector was abolished and responsibility was given to local officials under a Board of Revenue. Governor General Macpherson revived the post of Collector in 1786. He empowered Collector by Civil & Criminal Courts & police power. Thus, Collector became the most powerful officer in the district. In 1793, Governor General Lord Cornwallis started land reform activities (Zamindari System) by introducing "Permanent Settlement". The Offices of the Collector and Judge were separated. In 1831, Governor General Lord Bentinck held that the offices of Collector and District Magistrate should be united in the person of the Collector. Thus the Collector was given authority to try criminal cases and to control the police force in his district. He was also given summary jurisdiction to try revenue cases. The police, revenue and magisterial functions of the Collector led to the emergence of different administrative units in Bengal (Ali, 1982).

During British rule in between 1858 and 1947, district administration was regulated by the Indian Civil Service (ICS) which was popularly known as "Imperial Service" of the British Raj. In 1858, Land Revenue and Tenancy Laws, Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code were passed by the British Government which curtailed the executive and discretionary power of the Collector. But, in 1869, the Collector was made responsible for disposal of criminal cases as District Magistrate. The Governor of Bengal Sir George Campbell in 1872 strengthened the authority of District Magistrate to make him more effective. The Magistrate-Collector was made the general controlling authority over all other departments in the district and thus became the Chief Executive and Administrator of the district.

After independence and partition of India in 1947, the objectives of government and administration radically changed. During Pakistan period, many divisional, district, subdivision and thana level officials were appointed in different stages of economic development programs and project implementation. So, the functions of district administration in East Pakistan were also changed after the posting of local officers as District Magistrates. District Magistrate was found to be the most suitable officer to carry the job of coordination at district level. The traditional office, status and image of DM found to be useful for the purpose. In 1959, Akhtar Hussain Commission recommended to change the designation of District Magistrate (DM) to Deputy Commissioner (DC). To strengthen the position of DC, the commission recommended the delegation of new powers in order to make him more effective for the implementation of development programs. He was made the coordinator for development work in the district who would preside over the coordination meetings of all district level officials to expedite the implementation of projects. In order to assist the Deputy Commissioner, three Additional Deputy Commissioners (ADCs) were appointed in every district in 1961. They are ADC (General), ADC (Development) and ADC (Revenue).

After liberation war in December 1971, the district administration performed satisfactorily under the 1972 democratic system of government. They adjusted in changed circumstances following the introduction of one-party system of government after the amendment of the Constitution in 1975. Even peace was maintained among civilian population by district administration during martial law. The district administration not only shared powers with military but also worked directly under the district martial law administrator. No other country in the subcontinent has seen so many radical changes in the district administration system as Bangladesh within such a short period.

The journey of district administration started during British period and its shape was given borne during British rule. The name and the functions have been changed many times but the structure remained almost unchanged. Though the functions of Deputy Commissioner have evolved from that of the Collector of a district from about mid 18th century, the DC soon came to be entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining law and order in the district. Such functions and responsibilities have diversified and undergone modifications at various stages in the administrative history of Bangladesh. The DC continues to act as the representative of the central government in matters of collecting revenue, maintaining law and order and coordinating welfare and development activities (Abedin, 1973).

4. Methodological Overview

This study is based on the qualitative method of research. The process of historical method has been followed here. The researcher has gone for content analysis and archive documents. Data has also been collected from secondary sources like books, texts, articles, internet sources, DC's conference meeting resolution from Cabinet Division, and official documents of DC Office etc. There have been two case studies conducted here in this research. Two districts (Office of the Deputy Commissioner) are selected for the purpose. One is Jessore and another is Gazipur. A total 35 number of respondents have been interviewed in this research. Among them former Advisers of Caretaker Government (former civil servants) 2, former Chief Election Commissioner (former civil servants) 1, Historian 1, Academic 1, former Civil Servants (Secretary) 1, incumbent Secretaries/Additional Secretaries of different ministries/divisions 4, incumbent Deputy Commissioners/former Deputy Commissioners 8, incumbent Additional Deputy Commissioners 8, media personalities 2, civil society members 3, citizens 3 and former staff of DC office 1. This study has not used any data scaling method or any other particular test like SPSS as is used in traditional quantitative or mixed method. This is totally exploratory study. The researcher has gone to thoroughly present the collected data from content/archive documents, case studies and empirical observations. However, the researcher has used textual presentation (narratives text) with coding, charts, figures and tables for easily understanding his arguments.

5. Concept and Features of Traditional Public Administration (TPA)

The traditional model of public administration (TPA) remains the longest standing and most discussed and even debated theory of management in the public sector which pre-dominated for most of the 20th century. Its theoretical foundations were mainly derived from Max Weber, Woodrow Wilson, Frederick Taylor and the Northcote–Trevelyan Report (1854) in the United Kingdom.

The beginning of the traditional model is best seen in the mid-nineteenth century in Britain. In 1854, Northcote–Trevelyan Report recommended the abolition of patronage and the substitution of recruitment by open competitive examination under the supervision of a central examination board, particularly for the Indian Civil Service (ICS). On the contrary, emphasis was given by Max Weber (1846-1920) on the control from top to bottom in the form of monocratic hierarchy. It is a system of control in which policy is set at the top and carried out through a series of offices, with each manager and worker reporting to one superior and held to account by that person. The system in bureaucracy is based on a set of rules and regulations which flows from public law; the system of control is rational and legal. The role of the bureaucrat is strictly subordinate to the political superior (Pffifner, 2004).

Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924) contributed to the traditional model of public administration by arguing for the separation of administration from political policy making. He was one of the main proponents of the politics-administration dichotomy which allowed public administration to emerge as a self conscious field of study, intellectually and institutionally differentiated from the politics. Frederick Winslow Taylor (1856-1915) made a contribution to the classical model with his time and motion studies and careful analysis of the role of managers and workers. Taylor's Principles of Scientific Management emphasized tight control of work processes and careful planning by managers. He pointed out that management was a true science resting upon clearly fixed laws, rules and principles as foundation.

Salient Features of Traditional Public Administration (TPA):

- Formal control of political leadership: Public administration is an activity serving the public, and public servants carry out policies derived from politicians (Hughes, 2003:6). Elected officials (politicians) control the decisions and actions of the appointed officials (civil servants) (Frederickson & Smith, 2003).
- Rigid and rule bound: The bureaucratic system is based on a set of rules and regulations flowing from public law; the system of control is rational and legal (Lutzker, 1982).
- A formal hierarchical structure: In TPA, each level controls the level below and is controlled by the level above. A formal hierarchy is the basis of central planning and centralized decision making. (Chakrabarty & Chand, 2012).
- Emphasis on rationality in decision making: Traditional model goes for rationalization of collective action in decision making in order to achieve the highest degree of efficiency (Kernaghan & Siegel, 1999).
- Authoritative approach: General trend of traditional administration is the dominant approach and authoritarian ruling (Lutzker, 1982).
- Process oriented inward accountability: The traditional model tilts toward accountability. Public administration focuses on processes and procedures subject to a unified control and disciplinary system (Pffifner, 2004).

- Secrecy and citizen avoiding in government business: Traditional model is regulated by some particular norms and rules. Bureaucracy is not open to all; secrecy is maintained strictly in government activities. (Chakrabarty & Chand, 2012).
- Adoption of centralized strategy: Power and authority is centralized on the top level or head of the institution. The organizational structures rely on one individual to make decisions and provide directions (Lutzker, 1982; Pfiffner, 2004).
- Resistance to change: In TPA, authority is a vital and any change is like a challenge to the status quo of the authority; because change goes against the order and system of authority. That is why resistance is so high in TPA (Lutzker, 1982; Pfiffner, 2004).
- Public-Private Distinction: There is a traditional distinction between public and private sphere in the society. This dividing line between private and public had been a painful dilemma in TPA (Lutzker, 1982; Henry, 2009).
- Politics –administration dichotomy: Public administration lies in a self conscious separate field and it cannot lie in the same sphere of politics (Pfiffner, 2004). Bureaucracy will maintain only hierarchical loyalty and will be free from any political biasness (Lutzker, 1982; Haque, 2004).
- Risk avoidance: Administrators always try to eliminate hazards, activities or exposures that can negatively affect the institution or organization or administration (Haque, 2004).

6. Functional Shift of Traditional District Administration

The present district administration is a continuation of the former Civil Service of Pakistan which was inherited from the Indian Civil Service in the British Raj (1858-1947). Before that it was run by the East India Company during Company rule (1765-1858). The pattern of district administration that was originated in the Company rule in British India during the period of Governor General Warren Hastings (1772) has gone through a series of changes during this long period of time and still is the core extension body of the National Government in the field administration. Office of the Deputy Commissioner started its journey when the administration would run totally with traditional approach. In course of time, some of those traditional features have become part of the district administration whether others indicate the features of different paradigms.

Firstly, bureaucrats work according to the decision of the political leadership maintaining political neutrality. Deputy Commissioner also has to follow the instructions and guidance of the central government, more clearly, party in power. An eminent former Adviser of Caretaker Government and former Cabinet Secretary mentioned,

“Political government always provides necessary instructions and guidelines to DC. He cannot work independently.”

Another former Adviser of Caretaker Government and former Secretary said,

“All DCs are more or less politically biased. They cannot go beyond the intention of political government.”

A former Secretary who worked as Deputy Commissioner in the past, mentioned,

“At present, DC is doing everything by following the order of higher level political leaders.”

According to the observations of these scholars, DCs are posted on political choice; they work in close

connection with the political leaders. Like all other bureaucrats, DC is regulated by the formal control of the political leadership.

Secondly, DC office is fairly guided and motivated by the upper level bureaucracy. In DC office, ADC and other junior officers also maintain a fairly hierarchic relationship with the Deputy Commissioner. An eminent former Chief Election Commissioner and former Secretary mentioned,

“The official hierarchic structure of DC office will remain unchanged, no doubt, but the role and function will change over time.”

Another former Secretary mentioned that the official hierarchic structure of DC Office more or less remained unchanged. Example: official organogram of DC Office prepared by Ministry of Public Administration (MOPA).

Thirdly, for any decision making, Deputy Commissioner considers the rationality regarding citizen or the situation. Recently, all DCs take decision according to the circumstances in his jurisdiction. One of the Joint Secretaries, Cabinet Division, mentioned that DCs are bound to follow the rules and regulations of the government, but during decision making, they have the discretion to take final decision. In many cases, they become ‘tactful’ for decision making, even in emergency. In the same way, they decide about the citizen service giving emphasis on rationality. One example is the approval or sanction of relief to the people of different upazilas in the district during flood.

Fourthly, like central bureaucracy, officers in DC office are accountable to their senior and all are accountable to the Deputy Commissioner for every official process, procedure and other activities. Deputy Commissioner Jessore mentioned that, there exists very friendly relationship among the officers in the office. Junior officers obey their ADCs and ADCs are very process oriented and loyal to DC. One of the Joint Secretaries of Cabinet Division said that there is no scope for the DC and other officers to go beyond the official process and decorum for any activity. Example: Annual Confidential Report (ACR).

Fifthly, the pattern of the power practice of DC office is still centralized. For every decision, junior officers or ADCs have to depend on or wait for the decision of DC. Power is not yet decentralized. The researcher found that every file of the section goes up to the Deputy Commissioner. All other cases are disposed in the same way. The strategy is still highly centralized.

Sixthly, it is a general task of field administration as well bureaucracy is risk management. It may be natural hazard or any other type of hazard such as, political clash. One of the eminent historians mentioned that political leaders are very dominant now and DC has to maintain a check and balance relationship with them in order to avoid risk. In the same way, district administration plans and takes action for disaster management and other issue to avoid risk. One example is issuing order of 144 Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) of 1898 for preventing the hazard of political clash or public clash in the jurisdiction.

Finally, it can be said that the above discussed features are the part of present district administration as well as the features of TPA. There are other features like citizen avoiding, rigid and rule bound attitude, public-private distinction, authoritative approach, resistance to change which are not found to be existed in DC office at present. Current Deputy Commissioners are becoming more and more citizen centric; they are hearing from the people every day. DC office is, no doubt, government rule bound, but the rigidity in applying those rules is reducing day by day. Present Deputy Commissioners are not as harsh and authoritative as they were in British period. But, the features that are discussed above indicate that present district administration holds the tradition of classical administration although some features have already been transformed to other paradigms.

(See Table 1 for more clarification).

7. Key Factors Affecting the Transformation of the Role and Function of Deputy Commissioner

From the content analysis, secondary data, media sources, interviews and case studies, it is evident that there has been a gradual transformation in the role and function of the Deputy Commissioner. There are several factors that are contributing to this transformation of the conventional character of district administration. This study facilitates the scope of identifying those factors that are responsible for the transformation.

Election Manifesto:

It has been found that the role and function of the Deputy Commissioner has been changed according to the instructions and guidance of the government in power. Government is guided by the election manifesto that they set for the people and country during election. In fact, government in power reflects the majority of the citizens who are promising to them for the implementation of election manifesto. For example, in the Parliament Election 2008, one of the main issues of the election manifesto of Bangladesh Awami League was “Vision 2021” – a charter for change. When they came in power in 2009, formally they declared “Digital Bangladesh and Vision 2021” in order to bring desired changes as mentioned in their election manifesto and issued necessary rules & regulations with proper guidance. In order to proper implementation in the field administration, Deputy Commissioner has to come out of the traditional mentality and go through many new and changing environments for implementing “Digital Bangladesh” in district level.

Various Administrative Reforms:

In Bangladesh, the idea of administrative reforms is not new. In fact, a number of Committees and Commissions in the past right from the British Rule through Pakistan period devoted some of their attention to the administrative reform process although the process of actual implementation of reform program continued to be slow and obscure. A number of Commission and Committees report like Report of the Public Service Commission, 1886-87, Montagu-Chelmsford Reform 1912, Royal Commission on the Superior Civil Services in India, 1924, and Rowland Committee 1944-45 focused some attention on administrative reform. But a major milestone in this context was Montagu-Chelmsford Report 1912 and Bengal District Administrative Committee Report 1913-14 and Rowland Committee 1944-45 (Ali et. al. 1983). During Pakistan period, the designation of District Magistrate (DM) was changed to Deputy Commissioner (DC) according to recommendation of Provincial Administration Commission (Akhtar Hossain Commission) 1959 to strengthen his position by giving him new powers in order to make him more effective for the implementation of development programmes. In Bangladesh, on the basis of the recommendations of the Administrative Reform Committee (M. A. Khan Committee) 1982, 42 subdivisions were upgraded into new districts which were inaugurated in 1984 (Ali, 1995). So, the district administration was expanded in new districts that indicated a huge transformation of the role of Deputy Commissioner.

Decentralization:

Administrative and Local Government decentralization started from the British period and it continued in Pakistan period up to Bangladesh. Governor General Lord Ripon in 1882, decided to introduce a democratic local government system in Bengal (Ali, 1995). It was implemented by the historic Local Self Government Act, 1885 which provided for the creation of a district board for each district. Initially the District Magistrate became the ex-officio chairman of the board. The government of Pakistan also retained the system of district board with all acts, rules and regulations. After independence in Bangladesh, the system was also running in the same way. But a present, in the Zila Parishad (District Council), there are elected chairman and members working. In the same way, municipalities and other local government bodies were separated from the central administration replaced by elected representatives.

Separation of Judiciary:

Judicial function was a part and parcel of Collector from the beginning in British India. Afterwards, several times this function had been separated from the executive and collector regained it again. For example, Governor General Warren Hastings empowered collector with judicial and police power in 1772, but Governor General Lord Cornwallis separated the judiciary from Collector in 1793. Collector became more powerful by gaining judicial power and less powerful by losing it. In fact, this power is essential in order to solve some land related problems and better maintenance of law and order. Recently, in 2007 during Caretaker Government in Bangladesh, judiciary has been separated from the executive due to some constitutional obligation. This study found that the role and function of the Deputy Commissioner has been greatly influenced due to this separation. Although, Deputy Commissioner still is the District Magistrate and head of the District Law and Order Committee, but the loss of power due to judicial separation has lead him losing some sorts of control over police. An eminent former Adviser of the Caretaker Government and former Cabinet Secretary said,

“Separation of judiciary has influenced the power of DC adversely. DC has become meaningless now without judicial power. As a result, they have lost their control over police.”

Socio-economic Change:

The literacy rate and awareness of the citizens have increased a lot with the passage of time. Particularly, in the age of digitalization, people come to know everything with the help of technology. They know about citizen charter, Right to Information (RTI) Act, web portal etc. that helped them to raise their voice about their demands. The government as well as administration have also been aware of the citizens and showed a very positive approach to this change of citizen's awareness. So, one kind of social movement has taken place in the society. The Human Development Index (HDI) in recent times in Bangladesh is high. Women empowerment is also increasing day by day. Due to the development of technology and globalization, rapid changes among the people in the society have been taken place. At the same time, the economic condition of the people is also improving day by day. Administration is also influenced by these socio-economic changes of the people. The study found that district administration has prepared itself in order to mitigate this change of the society. Deputy Commissioners are pro people and citizen centric. They are committed to provide their services to the door steps of the citizens.

Citizen Charter (CC) and Right to Information (RTI):

According to the direction of both Cabinet Division and Ministry of Establishment all DC offices and its subordinate offices implemented Citizen Charter on February' 2008 (Nayem, 2010). Later on, this initiative was more strengthened by the district administration in Bangladesh. Field administration expert, an eminent Professor of Department of Public Administration, Dhaka University mentioned,

“In every DC office, there is a ‘Citizen Charter’ by which they are trying to provide services to the citizen or inform them about their services. It was imaginary in the past. Citizen Charter itself is a big development to the paradigm shift”.

Similarly, The Right to Information (RTI) Act was introduced in Bangladesh in 2009. The Act made provisions for ensuring free flow of information and people's right to information. President of Jessore Press Club said,

“Nothing can be hidden in the office of the Deputy Commissioner now, because citizens have the right to every information. Right to Information Act 2009 has empowered the citizens and helped to change the scenario of DC office.”

So, CC and RTI helped to bring about remarkable changes in DC Office from traditional approach to innovative approach. The accountability, transparency and service delivery system improved a lot and citizen began to get their proper rights from the government offices.

Five Year Plan:

The government of Bangladesh has made a mega plan to boost up its economy such that it can achieve the target of vision 2021 and become a middle income country within that time frame. Government is trying its best to strengthen finance for 7th five year plan (2016-2020) and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Bangladesh. In the recent past, government successfully achieved Millennium Development Goal (MDG) with the implementation of 6th five year plan (2011-2015). In the field administration, DC Office has to play a leading role in order to achieving these goals including many other developmental as well strategic action plans as directed in the five year plan. Particularly, for the implementation of “Vision 2021 Digital Bangladesh” as directed in the 6th five year plan, Office of the Deputy Commissioner had to go for many innovative internal reforms within the office which result in one kind shift in the role and function of the Deputy Commissioner. The key argument is that the role of the DC Office institutionally has been influenced by the five year plan as set by the government. In the past, five year plan also influenced collector to be more and more development oriented in addition to its regulatory function. So, five year plan is a vital factor that does matter in the transformation process.

Innovation & Technology:

In the field administration, office of the Deputy Commissioner is leading the district innovation team and innovative activities. The purpose is to provide in time services to the door steps of the citizens. Government Innovation Unit (GIU) of the Prime Minister's Office is providing proper guidelines and support for the purpose. Cabinet Division, MOPA and other strategic ministries are also providing necessary support for the innovation. DC Office is coming out of the traditional approach by applying the innovative technique in different service clusters, such as land record management, improving office environment for the citizens, use of face book etc. As a result, easy communication has been established between DC Office and citizens. Innovation has helped DC Office to turn into a transforming rule driven institution. Innovation is leading Office of the Deputy Commissioner each and every day for finding new plans and ideas for developing services to the citizens. DC Office considers Citizens now as their customers whom they will provide services for the maximization of their good will and developing better image.

On the other hand, in the age of globalization; technology is playing a major role for easy communication among the people and bringing desired changes/outcomes. Government has provided huge supports of technology to the DC office through a2i project and ICT ministries. Laptop, computer, printers, broad band and wifi connection, video conferencing equipments, supporting infra structures etc. have changed the office environment into a new and digital one. Here technology is facilitating e-functioning support in DC Office. Use of technology has helped a lot both officers and staff of the office to get rid of traditional mentality and be prepared for handling citizen in a digital environment. Web portal, face book, e-service centre, front desk, computer lab, digital conference room everything are the outcomes of technology. The only purpose is to satisfy the client (citizen) of DC Office. It has made the office management simple, speedy and visible. One of the Joint Secretaries, Ministry of Public Administration and former DC, Jessore said,

“The use of ICT and globalization has made more and more transformation in the role and function of DC. In fact, it is one of the basic reasons for the transformation. People have become more and more conscious due to the use of technology and effect of globalization. The entire citizens now know the information of DC Office that was not possible in the traditional period.”

Education and Training:

Ministry of Public Administration (MOPA), Cabinet Division and Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) have designed and organized different types of training and higher education programs for the field level officers both within the country and in foreign country. For example, MOPA has designed a special project for the government officials for Masters, Post Graduate Diploma, and PhD in the foreign countries in order to strengthen their skill and ability. Many officers have achieved the degree from foreign country and they are coming out of traditional mentality and becoming more and more innovative and service oriented. In the same way, many domestic and foreign training have been designed for the Deputy Commissioner. For example, mid career training in India for DC. PMO also organized some special training on innovation, ICT, development and other issues. These training have helped the officers for setting their mind in a different way such that they can really help the people as a service provider, not as a ruler. DC Office also arranged this type of training in the district level both for the officers and the staff. So, all these training and education programs have helped the officers and staff to properly work in a changing reality.

Annual Performance Agreement:

The new dimension that has been added in the field administration is the Annual Performance Agreement (APA) signing between DC Office and different ministries or divisions. The purpose of agreement signing is to be result or output oriented. It is one kind of obligation, accountability or visibility of the annual work of district administration that will be evaluated by the central government. On the basis of evaluation of annual performance or result, DC office will be rewarded. An eminent Senior Secretary to the Government of Bangladesh and first woman Deputy Commissioner (former) said,

“It was imaginary in the past that DC Office is signing agreement (Annual Performance Agreement) with the government for their annual performance evaluation. The agreement will make DC Office more innovative, citizen centric, result or output oriented, accountable and transparent, effective and efficient.”

So, output or result at the end of the year is a big factor for the performance evaluation of Deputy Commissioner.

Media & Social Media:

Media is the mirror of the society. At present electronic and print media is so strong. In addition, social media has added a new dimension in the cyber world. Face book, twitter, web sites, video conferencing, email etc. are actively working at every moment all over the world. Any incident at any corner of the world is publicized within a few seconds through social media. Everybody can express his personal opinion in live through social media. District administration is also using the opportunity of media and social media in order to extend their publicity to all. All DCs have face book account and web portal now. Through it, they can display their developmental and other activities of the district administration and also express the announcement and other relevant information publicly through social media. People can also put their comments on DC's activities through social media. Moreover, media is very strong now. DC has to face them regularly. So, nothing can be hidden at present. Every information, news and other activities are published in the media within few moments. Deputy Commissioner, Faridpur said,

“People are very conscious and educated now. They are getting all the information from internet, face book and other social media. Electronic and print media is also very strong. So, district administration is also open to all. DC is getting mixed with the people without any hesitation. We are empowering people by ensuring their rights.”

So, the media and social media have brought DC Office in a new reality which was imaginary in the past.

Recognition or Reward System:

Government has introduced reward system in the field administration particularly in the district administration for their contribution in innovative and other significant role or service oriented activities. For example, Prime Minister Medal and MOPA Medal for the best Deputy Commissioner in National level. Deputy Commissioner Gazipur said,

“Government is formulating new rules and regulations to run the administration, at the same time government is encouraging DC to be innovative and citizen centric, declaring reward for significant innovation and citizen service from Prime Minister's Office, providing budgets, encouraging to be digitized and go for more citizen centric services.”

This type of recognition by the Prime Minister is inspiring the Deputy Commissioner for contributing more and more in the district. Recognition is also helping all the DCs to create a friendly competition among them. In previous time, this type of provision was not incorporated in the system by the government. It might not have that much financial value, but it has a big impact on creating moral value and it counts much more than anything. At the same time, it is creating a citizen friendly working environment in the district.

(See Table 2 for more clarification)

8. Conclusion

District Administration is both politically and administratively important and significant. It is seen as the core extension body of the National Government. The study found that the importance of this office is increasing day by day particularly in development oriented activities. People still feel that there is only one office in the district that will stand beside them in their well and woe, that is, the Office of the Deputy Commissioner. But the demand and expectation of the people have increased high. People look for more easy, quick and transparent services now. Keeping an eye to the demand of the people, office of the Deputy Commissioner is gradually bringing changes in its strategy. The political government is also directing district administration keeping an eye to the popular demand of the citizen as well as fulfilling their election commitment to the people. In this study, it seems that transformation or shifting from traditional approach is necessary for the better existence and creating more good will or image among the people, particularly, in the changing reality.

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Table 1: Summary of the Features of Traditional Public Administration (Existing/Transformed) at Present Office of the Deputy Commissioner.

No.	Salient Features of TPA	TPA Features at Present DC Office	Example
1	Formal control of political leadership	exist	Guidance of political government.
2	Secrecy and Citizen avoiding in government business	-	-
3	Rigid and rule bound	-	-
4	A formal hierarchical structure	exist	Official organogram (by MOPA).
5	Public private distinction	-	-
6	Emphasis on rationality in decision making	exist	Approval of relief during flood.
7	Authoritative approach	-	-
8	Process oriented inward accountability	exist	Annual Confidential Report (ACR).
9	Adoption of centralized strategy	exist	DC is the decision maker by law.
10	Resistance to change	-	-
11	Politics-administration dichotomy	-	-
12	Risk avoidance	exist	Issuing order of 144 CrPC 1898.

Table 2: Summary of the Factors Affecting the Transformation of Traditional Functions of Deputy Commissioner

No.	Factors	Interpretive Summary	Example
1	Election Manifesto	Political commitment of government to the people	Digital Bangladesh
2	Administrative Reforms	Administrative reforms by different Reform Commission/ Committees.	Administrative Reform Committee 1982 (M. A. Khan Committee)
3	Separation of Judiciary	Constitutional commitment	In 2007, DC lost magisterial power.
4	Socio-economic change	Increase in citizen awareness and demand due to change of literacy & economy over time	Demand for online service
5	Decentralization	Loss of authority over some institution.	District Council
6	Five Year Plan	Government expenditure and action plan	7 th five year plan
7	Innovation & Technology	Small reform within office for better service delivery. Technology helps visible and in time easy service delivery.	District e-Service Centre, Front Desk, Reception. Laptop, Computer, Scanner
8	Education & Training	Higher education and foreign/domestic training for the officers and staff.	a2i Training, Strengthening Officials Program, Mid career training program in India.
9	Citizen Charter (CC) & Right to Information (RTI)	Openness of official service delivery and access to information.	DC Office Citizen Charter. Focal Point Officer for information providing.
10	Annual Performance Agreement (APA)	Annual Performance Agreement between DC (ADC) and different ministries	Agreement between ADC (Rev.) and Land Reform Board.
11	Media/Social Media	Increases accountability, visibility and publicity of DC Office.	Electronic & print media, face book.
12	Recognition/Reward System	Increases inspiration and efficiency for service delivery	Prime Minister Medal, MOPA Medal for best DC

Endnotes

ⁱ “Ma-Bap” is a Bengali word consists of two words ‘Ma’ and ‘Bap’. ‘Ma’ means mother and ‘Bap’ means Father. In Bangladesh, ‘Ma-Bap’ indicates a person who can exercise enormous power in the society.

ⁱⁱ Collector, Deputy Commissioner and District Magistrate indicate the same official person in Bangladesh. He is the “District Officer” with three types of functions in him as mentioned.

ⁱⁱⁱ An empire in the Indian Subcontinent founded in 1526; it was established and ruled by a Muslim dynasty.

^{iv} “Upazila” is a Bengali word which means sub-district.

^v District Administration and Office of the Deputy Commissioner are used for indicating same meaning in Bangladesh.