



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**PERCEPTIONS AND KNOWLEDGE ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A
LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN IRAN**

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FEM 2005 3



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By

HOSSEIN ALEKAJBAF

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

September 2005



DEDICATION

THIS WORK IS HUMBLLY DEDICATED TO MY WIFE, MY LOVELY SON ARASH (I HOPE THAT HE WILL BE A SUCCESSFUL PERSON IN THE FUTURE), MY PARENTS, AND ABOVE ALL TO ALLAH, WHO IS “THE MOST BENEFICIENT, AND MERCIFUL”.

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment
of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Chairman: Professor Jayum Anak Jawan, PhD

Faculty: Human Ecology

This study seeks to examine the perceptions and knowledge of local residents on the effectiveness of local government in Iran within the context of the process of decentralization.

The study was based on qualitative and quantitative approaches. On the first, the study relied on published materials, both scholarly works and government data. On the quantitative method, the study was based on a case study conducted in the Tehran City Council area.

Quantitative data were collected using a set of questionnaire that was established within the Tehran City Council area. A total of 462 responses were successfully collected from

the respondents. In addition, interviews were also conducted with selected informants who comprised officials of the local authority in Tehran city.

The main findings of the study can be summarized as follows. Firstly, the study had discussed the development of local government as well as the process of decentralization in Iran and in particular the evolution of local government in Tehran city. Secondly, the study also discussed the structure and function of Tehran City Council, including discussing selected weakness in their structure and functions in relations to the delivery of services to the residents. Thirdly, the study also showed the low/ or negative level of perceptions among the respondents on the effectiveness of the functions of local government. The study also showed the weak relationship between the respondents and the officials of local authority. Lastly, the study showed that there were several areas that can be enhanced in order to improve on the functions of local government in its effort to provide better services to its resident, namely the need to review rules and regulations regarding local government, training needs of personnel of local authority, and the need to provide more information for residents so that the latter are aware of the services that they can get from their local authority.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat, Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PERSEPSI DAN PENGETAHUAN TERHADAP KEBERKESANAN
KERAJAN TEMPATAN DI IRAN**

Oleh

HOSSEIN ALEKAJBAF

September 2005

Pengerusi : Profesor Jayum Anak Jawan, PhD
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Kajian ini bertujuan mengkaji persepsi dan pengetahuan penduduk tempatan terhadap keberkesanan kerajaan tempatan di Iran dalam konteks proses desentralisasi.

Kajian ini didasarkan kepada pendekatan kualitatif dan kuantitatif. Sehubungan kaedah pertama, kajian ini telah bergantung kepada bahan-bahan bercetak, bahan-bahan kesarjanaan dan data-data kerajaan. Berkaitan kaedah kuantitatif, kajian ini telah didasarkan kepada sebuah kajian kes yang dijalankan di kawasan Majlis Perbandaran Tehran.

Data kuantitatif telah dipungut menggunakan satu set soalselidik yang telah dijalankan di kawasan Majlis Perbandaran Tehran. Sejumlah 462 respons telah berjaya dipungut daripada respondent. Selain itu, temuduga juga telah dijalankan di kalangan beberapa

informan terpilih yang terdiri daripada pegawai-pegawai kerajaan tempatan di Bandar Tehran.

Dapatan utama kajian dapat disimpulkan seperti berikut. Pertama, kajian telah membincangkan pembengunan kerajaan tempatan serta juga proses desentralisasi di Iran dan khususnya proses evolusi kerajaan tempatan di Bandar Tehran. Kedua, kajian telah membincangkan struktur dan fungsi Majlis perbandaran Tehran, termasuk membincangkan beberapa kelemahan di dalam struktur dan fungsi berkaitan proses penyampaian perkhidmatan kepada para penduduk. Ketiga, kajian juga menunjukkan tahap persepi yang rendah/ atau negatif di kalangan penduduk mengenai keberkesanan fungsi kerajaan tempatan. Kajian juga menunjukkan hubungan yang renggang di antara responden dengan pegawai-pegawai kerajaan tempatan. Akhir sekali, kajian menunjukkan terdapat beberapa bidang/ tumpuan yang memerlukan perhatian/ tindakan demi mempertingkatkan perkhidmatan kepada pelanggan, seperti keperluan mengkaji semula peraturan/ perundangan mengenai kerajaan tempatan, keperluan latihan kepada pegawai-pegawai kerajaan tempatan, dan keperluan mendedahkan maklumat kepada penduduk supaya mereka tahu tentang pelbagai perkhidmatan yang ada di kawasan mereka.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|--|---------------|
| DEDICATION | ii |
| ABSTRACT | iii |
| ABSTRAK | viii |
| ACKNOWLEDEGMENTS | xiii |
| APPROVAL | xv |
| DECLARATION | xvii |
| LIST OF TABLES | xxiv |
| LIST OF FIGURES | xxviii |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATION | xxix |
| | |
| CHAPTER | |
| | |
| 1 INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.1 Background | 1 |
| 1.2 Problem Statement | 8 |
| 1.3 Objectives of the Study | 12 |
| 1.4 Scope and Limitation of the Study | 13 |
| 1.5 Significance of the Study | 14 |
| 1.6 Definition of Concepts | 15 |
| 1.7 Organization of the Study | 18 |
| 1.8 Conclusion | 20 |
| | |
| 2 LITERATURE REVIEW | 21 |
| 2.1 Introduction | 21 |
| 2.2 Review of Literature | 22 |
| 2.2.1 Centralization | 22 |
| 2.2.2 Decentralization | 25 |
| 2.2.2.1 Definitions and Types of Decentralization | 25 |
| 2.2.2.2 Assumption and Limitations Decentralization | 34 |
| 2.2.3 Local Government | 38 |
| 2.2.3.1 Definitions and Categories of Local Government | 38 |
| 2.2.3.2 Objectives and Structure of Local Government | 40 |
| 2.2.3.3 The Local Government Structure | 43 |
| 2.2.4 Leadership and Local Democracy | 45 |
| 2.2.5 The Central and Local States in Capitalist Countries | 48 |
| 2.2.6 Central and Local Government Relationship | 54 |
| 2.2.7 Other Approaches on Local Government | 57 |
| 2.3 Local government in Iran | 62 |
| 2.4 Conceptual Framework | 66 |
| 2.4.1 The Structural Functionalist Perspective | 66 |
| 2.4.2 The Legalistic Institutional Approach | 68 |
| 2.5 Conclusion | 74 |

| | | |
|----------|---|-----------|
| 3 | METHODOLOGY | 76 |
| 3.1 | Introduction | 76 |
| 3.2 | Location of the Study | 76 |
| 3.3 | Sample Size | 78 |
| 3.4 | Interaction among Variables | 79 |
| 3.5 | Types of Data Collected | 81 |
| 3.5.1 | Primary Data | 82 |
| 3.5.2 | Secondary Data | 82 |
| 3.6 | Research Instruments | 83 |
| 3.6.1 | Library Research | 83 |
| 3.6.2 | Field Research | 83 |
| 3.7 | The Quantitative Method | 84 |
| 3.7.1 | The Questionnaire | 84 |
| 3.8 | Procedures of preparing of the Questionnaire | 85 |
| 3.8.1 | Logical Validity | 86 |
| 3.8.2 | Sample of items clearance | 88 |
| 3.8.3 | Reliability Test | 89 |
| 3.9 | The Qualitative Method | 91 |
| 3.9.1 | Interview | 91 |
| 3.10 | Data Analysis | 92 |
| 3.10.1 | Qualitative Data Analysis | 93 |
| 3.10.2 | Quantitative Data Analysis | 93 |
| 3.10.2.1 | Descriptive Statistics | 94 |
| 3.10.2.2 | Analytical Statistics | 94 |
| 3.11 | Conclusion | 94 |
| | | |
| 4 | THE ORIGIN OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN IRAN | 97 |
| 4.1 | Introduction | 97 |
| 4.2 | General background | 97 |
| 4.2.1 | Geography | 97 |
| 4.2.2 | Population | 99 |
| 4.2.3 | Economy: An Overview | 99 |
| 4.2.4 | Politics | 100 |
| 4.2.4.1 | Political Conditions | 102 |
| 4.3 | Before the Coming of Islam/ Ancient Iran | 102 |
| 4.3.1 | The Medes | 102 |
| 4.3.2 | The Achaemenian | 103 |
| 4.3.3 | The Seleucids and Ashkanian or Parthians | 104 |
| 4.3.4 | The Sassanians | 105 |
| 4.4 | After Coming Islam | 106 |
| 4.4.1 | Islamic Conquest | 106 |
| 4.4.2 | Safavids Dynasty | 107 |
| 4.4.3 | The Qajar Dynasty | 108 |
| 4.4.4 | The Constitutional Era | 110 |
| 4.4.5 | The Reign of Pahlavies | 114 |
| 4.4.5.1 | The Era of Reza Shah | 114 |

| | | |
|-----------|---|------------|
| 4.4.5.2 | The Era of Mohammad Reza Shah | 117 |
| 4.3.5.2.1 | Local and Province Councils | 118 |
| 4.5 | Post Islamic Revolution | 121 |
| 4.6 | Conclusion | 124 |
| 5 | THE STRUCTURE OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN IRAN | 127 |
| 5.1 | Introduction | 127 |
| 5.2 | Organization of Government | 127 |
| 5.3 | Leadership | 128 |
| 5.3.1 | Qualifications of Leader | 129 |
| 5.3.2 | Duties and Power of Leader | 130 |
| 5.4 | President | 132 |
| 5.4.1 | Duties and Power of President | 134 |
| 5.4.2 | Executive Cabinet | 135 |
| 5.5 | The Legislative | 136 |
| 5.5.1 | Majlis (the Parliament) | 136 |
| 5.5.1.1 | Powers of Majlis | 138 |
| 5.5.1.2 | Legislation Procedure | 138 |
| 5.5.2 | The Guardian Council | 140 |
| 5.5.2.1 | Powers and Functions of Guardian Council | 141 |
| 5.6 | The Judiciary | 142 |
| 5.7 | Assembly of Experts | 143 |
| 5.7.1 | Membership and Term | 144 |
| 5.8 | The Supreme National Security Council | 144 |
| 5.9 | Expediency Discernment Council of the System | 146 |
| 5.9.1 | The Functions of the EDCS | 146 |
| 5.10 | Conclusion | 148 |
| 6 | STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN IRAN | 150 |
| 6.1 | Introduction | 150 |
| 6.2 | The City and Village Councils | 150 |
| 6.2.1 | The Positions of Councils in the Iran Constitution Law | 151 |
| 6.2.2 | The Council Status in other Laws | 154 |
| 6.2.2.1 | The Law of the Country's Administrative Division | 154 |
| 6.2.2.2 | The Law of Municipalities | 155 |
| 6.2.2.3 | The Law of City Councils' Organizations, Functions and Election Procedures and Mayors Elections | 156 |
| 6.3 | Functions of the Central Government | 156 |
| 6.3.1 | The Relationship between Central and Local Government | 156 |
| 6.3.2 | Ministry of Interior | 159 |
| 6.4 | Relationship between Municipalities and Ministry of Housing and Urban Development | 161 |
| 6.4.1 | Supervising and Monitoring Relationship | 161 |
| 6.4.2 | The Management and Planning Organization | 162 |
| 6.4.3 | The Organization for Municipalities | 162 |



| | | |
|----------|---|------------|
| 6.5 | The Structure of Local Government | 163 |
| 6.5.1 | The Village Councils | 164 |
| 6.5.2 | City Council | 164 |
| 6.6 | Terms of City and Village Councils | 165 |
| 6.7 | Council's Session | 166 |
| 6.8 | The City and village Council Violations Investigation | 166 |
| 6.9 | Cancellation of City and Village Council Ratification | 168 |
| 6.10 | Dissolution of City and Village Council | 168 |
| 6.11 | The Councilors (City Council Members) | 170 |
| 6.12 | Councils Substitute Members | 171 |
| 6.13 | Payment of Councilors | 172 |
| 6.14 | Resignation of City Council Members | 172 |
| 6.15 | Removal of city council members | 172 |
| 6.16 | Chairman of the Council | 174 |
| 6.16.1 | Duties of the Chairman | 174 |
| 6.17 | Acting (Vice) Chairman | 175 |
| 6.18 | Secretary of City Council | 175 |
| 6.19 | Treasurer of City Council | 176 |
| 6.20 | City Council Committees | 176 |
| 6.21 | Mayor | 177 |
| 6.21.1 | Impeachment and Dismissal of mayor | 177 |
| 6.22 | Elections Quality for local government in Iran | 179 |
| 6.22.1 | Nullification of votes | 179 |
| 6.22.2 | Voters and eligibility to vote | 180 |
| 6.22.3 | Eligibilities of the Candidates | 182 |
| 6.22.3.1 | Qualification of Candidates | 182 |
| 6.22.3.2 | Disqualification of the Candidates | 183 |
| 6.23 | Types of Function of Local Government | 184 |
| 6.24 | Functions of Village Councils | 187 |
| 6.25 | Functions of Municipality | 188 |
| 7 | RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT | 192 |
| 7.1 | Introduction | 192 |
| 7.2 | Background of the Respondents | 192 |
| 7.3 | The Effectiveness of Local Government | 194 |
| 7.3.1 | Respondents' Knowledge on Tehran City Council | 194 |
| 7.3.2 | Respondents' Perceptions of the Relationship between Tehran City Council and the Residents | 197 |
| 7.3.3 | Respondents' perceptions on the effectiveness of T.C.C | 198 |
| 7.3.4 | Respondents' Knowledge on Tehran City Hall | 199 |
| 7.3.5 | Respondents' Perceptions on the Effectiveness of T.C.H | 201 |
| 7.4 | Respondents perceptions based on demographic factor | 202 |
| 7.5 | Respondents perceptions on relationship between residents ant TCC | 210 |
| 7.6 | The Perceptions of People towards the Effectiveness of TCC | 217 |
| 7.7 | The level of knowledge of the respondents towards TCH | 223 |
| 7.8 | The Perceptions of the Respondents towards TCH | 228 |
| 7.9 | Conclusion | 233 |

| | | |
|----------|--|-----|
| 8 | PERCEPTIONS OF THE EXPERTS ON THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT | 236 |
| | 8.1 Introduction | 236 |
| | 8.2 Presentation and Discussion | 237 |
| | 8.3 Performance of the City and Village Councils | 238 |
| | 8.4 Effectiveness of the Tehran City Council | 246 |
| | 8.5 The Local Government Structure and the Councils | 248 |
| | 8.6 Some Problems of Local Governance | 253 |
| | 8.7 Conclusion | 257 |
| 9 | SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND SUGESTIONS | 259 |
| | 9.1 Introduction | 259 |
| | 9.2 Summary of the Study | 259 |
| | 9.3 Summary of Findings and Conclusion | 261 |
| | 9.4 Recommendations | 266 |
| | 9.4.1 Recommendations to the Government of Iran | 266 |
| | 9.4.2 Future Research | 267 |
| | REFERENCES | 268 |
| | APPENDICES | 277 |
| | BIODATA OF THE AUTHOR | 311 |

LIST OF TABLES

| Table | | Page |
|--------------|--|-------------|
| 3.1 | General Information on Tehran city | 78 |
| 3.2 | Opinions of arbiters towards Part A, Section 1 | 86 |
| 3.3 | Opinions of arbiters towards part A section 2 | 87 |
| 3.4 | Opinions of arbiters about part A section 3 | 87 |
| 3.5 | Opinions of arbiters part B section 1 | 87 |
| 3.6 | Opinions of arbiters towards the attitude of the respondents | 88 |
| 3.7 | Results of Reliability Test | 90 |
| 6.1 | The numbers of Councils Members | 171 |
| 7.1 | Background of the Respondents | 193 |
| 7.2 | Descriptive Statistics | 195 |
| 7.3 | Level of Knowledge of Respondents towards TCC | 196 |
| 7.4 | Levels of Perceptions of respondent towards TCC | 198 |
| 7.5 | Levels of Perceptions of People towards the Effectiveness of TCC | 199 |
| 7.6 | Levels of Knowledge of Respondents towards TCH | 200 |
| 7.7 | Levels of Perceptions of People towards the Effectiveness of TCH | 202 |
| 7.8 | Knowledge of people towards the TCC according to gender | 203 |
| 7.9 | One way ANOVA of knowledge of people towards the TCC by gender | 205 |
| 7.10 | Knowledge of TCC by Age | 206 |
| 7.11 | One way ANOVA on Knowledge of TCC by Age | 208 |
| 7.12 | Post Hoc Tests (LSD) of Knowledge towards the TCC by Age | 209 |
| 7.13 | Knowledge towards the TCC by Marital Status | 211 |



| | | |
|------|--|-----|
| 7.14 | One way ANOVA of knowledge of people towards the TCC by Marital Status | 213 |
| 7.15 | Knowledge towards the TCC by Educational Level | 214 |
| 7.16 | One way ANOVA of knowledge of people towards the TCC according to Educational Level | 215 |
| 7.17 | Post Hoc Tests (LSD) of knowledge of people towards the TCC according to Educational Level | 217 |
| 7.18 | Perceptions of the respondents towards TCC according to gender | 218 |
| 7.19 | One way ANOVA of perceptions of people towards the TCC according to gender | 219 |
| 7.20 | Perceptions of people's towards TCC by age | 221 |
| 7.21 | One way ANOVA of perceptions of people towards the TCC according to age | 222 |
| 7.22 | Perceptions of people towards TCC according to marital status | 223 |
| 7.23 | One way ANOVA of perceptions of people towards the TCC according to marital status | 224 |
| 7.24 | Perceptions of people towards TCC according to educational level | 225 |
| 7.25 | ANOVA test of the people perceptions towards the TCC | 226 |
| 7.26 | Post Hoc Tests (LSD) of perceptions of people towards the TCC according to educational level | 227 |
| 7.27 | Perceptions of people towards the effectiveness of TCC according to gender | 228 |
| 7.28 | One way ANOVA of perceptions of people towards the effectiveness TCC according to gender | 229 |
| 7.29 | Perceptions of people towards the effectiveness of TCC by age | 230 |
| 7.30 | One way ANOVA of perceptions of people towards the effectiveness TCC by age | 231 |



| | | |
|------|---|-----|
| 7.31 | Perceptions of people towards the effectiveness of TCC according to marital status | 232 |
| 7.32 | One way ANOVA of perceptions of people towards the effectiveness of TCC according to marital status | 233 |



LIST OF FIGURES

| Figure | | Page |
|--------|--|------|
| 2.1 | Conceptual Framework of the Study | 73 |
| 3.1 | Relationship between Variables | 80 |
| 3.2 | Relationship between dependent and independent Variables | 81 |
| 4.1 | Map of Iran | 98 |
| 5.1 | The Structure of Central Government of Iran | 128 |
| 6.1 | Relationship between Central Government and National Government | 158 |
| 6.2 | The organizational chart of City Council | 173 |
| 7.1 | Knowledge of Respondents towards T.C.C by gender | 203 |
| 7.2 | Knowledge of Respondents towards T.C.C by age | 204 |
| 7.3 | Knowledge of Respondents towards T.C.C by marital status | 207 |
| 7.4 | Knowledge of Respondents towards T.C.C by educational level | 208 |
| 7.5 | Perceptions of respondent on relationship between residents and TCC by gender | 210 |
| 7.6 | Perceptions of respondent on relationship between residents and TCC by age | 213 |
| 7.7 | Perceptions of respondent on relationship between residents and TCC by marital status | 214 |
| 7.8 | Perceptions of respondent on relationship between residents and TCC by educational level | 215 |
| 7.9 | Perceptions of the Respondents towards the Effectiveness of T.C.C by gender | 217 |
| 7.10 | Perceptions of the Respondents towards the Effectiveness of T.C.C by age | 219 |
| 7.11 | Perceptions of the Respondents towards the Effectiveness of T.C.C by marital status | 220 |

| | | |
|------|---|-----|
| 7.12 | Perceptions of the Respondents towards the Effectiveness of T.C.C by education | 221 |
| 7.13 | Knowledge of respondents towards T.C.H by gender | 223 |
| 7.13 | Perceptions of the Respondents towards the Effectiveness of T.C.C by age | 224 |
| 7.14 | Perceptions of the Respondents towards the Effectiveness of T.C.C by marital status | 225 |
| 7.15 | Perceptions of the Respondents towards the Effectiveness of T.C.C by education | 226 |
| 7.16 | Perceptions of the respondents towards the effectiveness of T.C.H by gender | 228 |
| 7.17 | Perceptions of the respondents towards the effectiveness of T.C.H by age | 229 |
| 7.18 | Perceptions of the respondents towards the effectiveness of T.C.H by marital status | 230 |
| 7.19 | Perceptions of the respondents towards the effectiveness of T.C.H by education | 231 |

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------------|--|
| ADP | Azerbaijan Democrat Party |
| EDCS | Expediency Discernment Council of the System |
| HCP | Higher Council Provinces |
| ICL | Iran Constitution Law |
| IRGC | Islamic Revolution's Guard Corps |
| IRI | Islamic Republic of Iran |
| LG | Local Government |
| MP | Members of Parliament |
| NGO's | Non Governmental Organizations |
| PBO | Plan and Budget Organization |
| SCCAF | Chief of the Supreme Command Council of the Armed Forces |
| SNSC | Supreme National Security Council |
| TCC | Tehran City Council |
| TCH | Tehran City Hall |
| KTCC | Knowledge on Tehran City Council |
| PTCC | Perceptions on Tehran City Council |
| KTCH | Knowledge on Tehran City Hall |
| PTCH | Perceptions on Tehran City Hall |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

A government is generally understood as “the political system by which a nation or community is administered and regulated” (Encyclopedia Britannica, CD Rom: 2004). Anderson (1991) primarily stressed the concepts of nation and community as “imagined” by citing the experiences of some Southeast Asian countries’ nationalist movements. He pointed out that since the Second World War, “successful revolution has defined itself in national terms” and in so doing, “has grounded itself firmly in a territorial and social space inherited from the pre-revolutionary past” (1991:2). Although Iran represents a distinct political system in the Islamic World especially after its 1979 Revolution, its government in recent years has undergone structural reforms as a response to internal power struggle, and most importantly, to the international clamor for people’s participation and human rights advocacy.

In the past, the basic duties of government were to establish and preserve public needs, order, and justice. With the growing population and development of societies, the people’s expectations of their government also grew. For this reason the government started to intervene into most economic, social, and cultural affairs of society. This was to meet the ever increasing demands placed upon them, to plan and regulate their activities in order to stimulate the national economy. This development continued to the point where, in many countries, a huge and complex governmental bureaucracy evolved.



Thus, as the world politics became homogenized and polarized, the emergence of highly centralized systems of government in the 1950s in most developing countries paved the way to accommodate the delivery of public services to the periphery of power. Thus, there was a shift in the political structures in the 1970s when leaders recognized the impetus to transfer “power from the central government to local authorities” (Rondinelli et.al., 1983:10-13). A study on centralized bureaucracies done by Dennis (1983) showed that even if the central government does deliver goods and services to the local levels, he observed that the management of local affairs is stereotyped. One of the reasons he cited was the tendency of the central planners to “to overlook variations in local conditions”. Although he noted that the bureaucracy in general encourages people’s participation in various ways, the issue on centralization of power continues to play a major role in the study of political structures and systems. Obviously, this desire to closely monitor how a system works is based on his idea that structures in all countries undergo changes which can be drastic, dramatic, rapid, or slow because within these structures are the social, administrative, and political forces, whose interactions result to reforms and reorganization. The results, according to him, are “administrative reforms and reorganization”.

In the last decade, attention was directed towards representation in local institutions through which public affairs of the localities can be administered through local efforts. Some of the reasons identified for this “shift” were the realization that the pressure of aggregate national and local responsibilities placed upon the central government makes inefficiency inescapable, and that the central authority has demonstrated inability to pay appropriate attention to specific local issues as they do

