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| Unit overview | |
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| Unit plan title | Decentralization |
| Curriculum framing questions | |
| Essential questions | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain the various bodies of Panchayati Raj. 2. Explain democratic decentralization in detail. |
| Unit questions | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain Panchayati Raj. 2. Explain the various functions of Panchayati Raj. |

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| Content questions | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you mean by decentralization? 2. Give any two functions of Gram Panchayat. |
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| <p><u>Unit Summary</u></p> <p>The unit comprises of the following topics:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Concept of Democratic Decentralisation 2. Significance of Democratic Decentralisation 3. Advantages of Decentralization 4. Democratic Decentralisation in India 5. Decentralization in Kerala <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept of Democratic Decentralisation <p>Democracy is considered as one of the best forms of government because it ensures liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, equality of status and opportunity, fraternity as well as the right to participate in political decision-making. Participation and control of governance by the people of the country is the essence of democracy. Such participation is possible only when the powers of the state are decentralized to the district, block and village levels where all the sections of the people can sit together, discuss their problems and suggest solutions and plan, execute as well as monitor the implementation of the programmes. It is called the crux of</p> |
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democratic decentralization.

Decentralization means transfer of planning, decision-making or administrative authority from the central government to its field organizations, local administrative units, semi-autonomous organizations, local governments or non-governmental organizations. Different forms of decentralization can be distinguished primarily by the extent to which the authority to plan, decide and manage is transferred and autonomy is achieved in their tasks. In simple under decentralization authority is not concentrated at the centre, it is distributed to smaller administrative units.

Democratic decentralization is a plea to further democratize local self government to enable it to enjoy more authority, shoulder greater responsibility, take more initiative and experience greater autonomy in the management of the affairs of the local area. Decentralization is regarded as a necessary condition of social, economic and political development. It establishes social harmony, community spirit and political stability. Decentralization is not an end in itself, but it depends on the circumstances under which decentralization occurs. Democracy provides the best environment for nurturing its growth and realization.

- **Significance of Democratic Decentralisation**

Today democratic decentralization is a global phenomenon. Decentralization should be seen as a theory of development, which requires a variety of institutions for empowering and uplifting the marginalized and the poor. It is expected to work for the building up of an administrative space at the cutting edge level where the felt needs of the poor could be ventilated. Decentralization is a prime mechanism through which democracy becomes truly representative and responsive.

- **Advantages of decentralization:**

- 1) Closer contact between government officials and local population is possible.
- 2) It can allow better penetration of national policies to areas remote from the national capital.
- 3) It will ensure greater representation of political, religious, ethnic and tribal groups in development decision-making that could lead to greater equity in allocation of resources.
- 4) Capacity of local institutions and their managerial and technical skills will develop.
- 5) Top management would be relieved of routine jobs and devote time to more important jobs.
- 6) It will ensure better coordination.
- 7) It will institutionalize the participation of the citizens and exchange of information.
- 8) It will offset the influence of the elite people.
- 9) It will lead to a more flexible, innovative and creative administration.

- **Democratic decentralisation in India**

Gross roots governance has been a major concern of the planning process in India ever since the introduction of Panchayati raj in 1959. The spirit of democratic decentralization that evolved over the years is being practiced only in a limited way. It is realized that development efforts in India did not address the issues of equity and to the development of the poor. Therefore, there is a need to redirect development efforts towards the poor and those at the gross roots. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts have been major steps in the direction of decentralized governance in India. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act relates to introduce reforms in rural local bodies whereas the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act relates to bring reform in urban local bodies. These amendments have accorded constitutional recognition to rural and urban local bodies. The Acts aims at integrating the concept of people's participation in a formal way with the planning process on the one hand and the devolution of responsibility to the people themselves on the other. These acts have addressed the persistent problems of irregular elections, suppression, inadequate representation, insufficient devolution of powers, lack of administrative and financial autonomy, and inadequate resources.

- **Structure and Functions of Panchayati Raj Institutions:**

The structure of Panchayati Raj (PR) varies from state to state. Some states have three-tier structure (Gram Panchayat at the village level, Panchayat Samiti at block level and Zilla Parishad at district level), whereas some have two-tier structure (Gram Panchayat at village level and Panchayat Samiti at block level). A few states have only single-tier structure at the village level.

In Rajasthan, the Panchayati Raj model is of three levels, viz., Gram Panchayats (village level), Panchayat Samitis (block level) and Zilla Parishads (district level). The chairperson of Gram Panchayat is known as Sarpanch, of Panchayat Samiti, Pradhan and of Zilla Parishad, Zilla Pramukh. Their nomenclature, composition and tenure vary from state to state. The structure and functions of the PRIs in terms of Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad are spelt out as under:

- **Gram Panchayat:**

Gram Panchayat is the base or bottom tier of the PR system. It is the first executive tier having jurisdiction over a village or group of villages. The members of the Gram Panchayat—the Panchas and Sarpanch (chairman)—are directly elected.

Their number in each panchayat varies from 5 to 31 according to population of the concerned village (s). In addition to the elected Panchas and Sarpanch, there is a provision for co-option of two ladies, and one SC and ST member each, if they have not been elected as Panchas.

The main functions of the Gram Panchayat are:

1. Law and order:

Maintenance of peace and harmony in the panchayat circle.

2. Civic:

Construction of wells, ponds, water reservoirs and distribution tanks; construction of public streets, public latrines and maintenance of roads, etc.

3. Welfare:

Famine and flood relief work, welfare programmes for women, children, handicapped and weaker sections.

4. Administrative:

Collection of funds, maintenance of records, budget and accounts, registration of births and deaths, etc.;

5. Commercial:

Supervision of community orchards, grazing ground, etc.

6. Developmental:

Preparation and execution of plans for the promotion of agriculture, irrigation, co-operatives, cottage and small-scale industries. The main sources of income of panchayats are the grants from government, taxes on buildings, vehicles, etc., octroi on goods and animals, pilgrim tax, etc.

- **Panchayat Samiti:**

It is the middle tier of the PR system—between Gram Panchayat and Zilla Parishad. This tier was coterminous with the tehsil or taluka. This is composed of Sarpanchas (ex-officio members) of all the Gram Panchayats within a block along with MLA of the area (without right of vote). In addition to these ex-officio members, there are some co-opted members—two women, one SC and ST representatives each, if they have not already been elected as primary members.

The chairperson of the Panchayat Samiti is called Pradhan. He is elected by the members of the Panchayat Samiti amongst themselves. At certain places, such as in Rajasthan, Panchas of Gram Panchayat also take part in the election of Pradhans.

The main functions of the Panchayat Samiti are:

- (i) Agriculture—formulation of plans of development of agriculture, tree plantation and soil conservation;
- (ii) Animal husbandry;
- (iii) Health and sanitation;
- (iv) education—running primary schools;
- (v) communication—construction and maintenance of inter-panchayat roads, etc.;
- (vi), co-operation—promotion of co-operative societies;
- (vii) development of cottage and small-scale industries; and
- (viii) miscellaneous work.

The main sources of income of Panchayat Samiti are annual grants by state government, share from land revenue, proceeds from taxes, fees and loans, contributions, etc.

Zilla Parishad:

It is the apex body of the PR system located at the district level. It is also known as District Development Council in some states (such as Tamil Nadu).

It is composed of:

- (i) Chairpersons/Presidents of Panchayat Samitis within its jurisdiction;
- (ii) MPs, MLAs, and MLCs of the area;
- (iii) members representing women, SCs and STs are co-opted if they are not otherwise members;
- (iv) representatives of co-operative societies, municipalities of the area; and
- (v) some persons having experience in the field of administration, public life or rural development are also co-opted.

The membership of the Zilla Parishad remains in the range of 40 to 60 persons. The elected head of Zilla Parishad is known as Zilla Pramukh (President). He is elected either directly or indirectly from amongst the members of the Zilla Parishad. Zilla Pramukh works through committees which look after specific works like education, planning and finance. The main sources of income of the Zilla Parishads are grants-in-aid from the state government, share in the land revenue and other taxes like the cess.

• **Democratic Decentralisation in Rural Areas**

After independence, rural development forms the crux of India's development strategy. Rural development programmes aim at the improvement of the living standards of the rural poor by providing them opportunities for the optimum utilization of their potential through active participation in the development process. Development programmes have a better chance of success when the target group and the general public participate in the various stages of the developmental decision-making process. In order to improve the participation of rural people in the process of development and involvement in decision-making and decentralized planning, the government of India has made 73rd Constitutional Amendment in 1992 to provide constitutional recognition to Panchayati Raj Institutions.

The constitution through 73rd amendment, visualizes panchayats as institutions of local self governments, it is subjected to the extent of devolution of powers and functions to the will of the state legislature. For the first time, self-government is located at the Panchayat level. Locality has become the basis of planning. The gram panchayat is entrusted with the responsibility for planning that is done by the people through gram sabha. The amendment provides for decentralized governance at the district and even lower levels. It has created people-centred institutions at the district, block and village level. The amendment devolved a package of powers and functions, to Panchayati Raj institutions. The eleventh schedule lists out 29 subjects to be transferred to panchayat raj bodies. The Panchayat Raj institutions are responsible for the planning and implementation of programmes related to social justice and economic development.

• **Decentralization in Kerala:**

The 73rd and 74th amendment of the Constitution of India did alter dramatically the scope of political participation of women in the country through an exercise of democratic decentralization. In Kerala, decentralization created the opportunities for women to cross the thresholds of their homes and participate in potentially democratic processes not available earlier.

The State has 999 Grama Panchayats, 152 Block Panchayats, 14 District Panchayats, 52 Municipalities and 5 Corporations. Consequent to the 74th Amendment to the Constitution of India, the Local self-government Institutions (LSGIs) were designed to function as the third tier of Government. In Kerala, LSGIs were meaningfully empowered through massive transfer of resources as well as administrative powers. On the basis of 73rd and 74th amendments acts of the Constitution, The Panchayat Raj and the Municipality Act came into effect on the 23rd of April and 30th of May 1994 respectively. This led to the decentralization of powers, responsibilities and projects of the Government as they were transferred to the local self-

government on 2nd October, 1995.

Scope and Importance of Decentralization:

Decentralization is a very relevant topic. The teacher aims at orienting the students to know about the democratic rule in India. She aims to clarify about the concept of democracy and decentralization to the students. She focuses on the significance and advantages of decentralization and gives a brief account about decentralization in India and Kerala. The students would be able to get an idea about the various bodies under decentralization.

Subject areas:

Concept of Democratic Decentralisation
Significance of Democratic Decentralisation
Advantages of Decentralization
Democratic Decentralisation in India
Decentralization in Kerala

Class Level: D.El.Ed.

Student Objectives/ Learning outcomes

1. To understand the concept of decentralization .
2. To understand the different bodies under decentralization.

Procedures

Teacher refreshes the class through ask some questions related to decentralization and provide orientation to the students. She makes the students understand about the concept of democratic decentralization and makes them discuss their examples. She teaches the significance and advantages of Decentralization

She also teaches about functions of Panchayati Raj institutions and gives a brief account on the decentralization in Kerala and India. Later the teacher assign group activities and conclude the meaning and scope of decentralization.

Approximate time needed

1 Hour

Prerequisite skills: To understand the basic knowledge about democracy and decentralization

Printed Materials
Text book, Resource books, Charts

Supplies
Black board, Chalk, Reading materials

Other resources

Accommodations to Support different levels of learners in your classroom
Resource student:
Group discussion, extended work time, detailed description, clarification of doubt.
Gifted student:
Assignment for detailed study

Student assessment

Report

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| Key word search: Decentralization, democracy, panchayat, |
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