

Role of Information Systems in Urban Local Self Government

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Abstract

Local Self Government is the people elected institution which is created for performing the basic functions of local area. Local self government generally provides basic services like roads, sanitation, streetlight, education, health etc. Therefore, a sound and systematic administrative structure has to be built up by the local self-governing institution. Now, the time has changed and the physical process of performing local government functions has been replaced by the information system. Local government uses information and communication technology for the smooth and efficient performance of its public functions in the fastest way. Information system directly links the public with the local government and helps the public to know the plan and policies of the local government and their methods of working, so information system plays an important role in this area. In this paper an attempt has been made to study role of information system in local self government.

Keywords : MCP , IT , E-Readiness

Introduction

According to Oxford Dictionary the government means the group of people who are responsible for controlling a country or state. Thus the form of government may be Central, State and Local government. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1974), “Local Government means authority to determine and execute measures within a restricted area inside and smaller than the whole state”. Lockard (1969) defines it “as a public organisation, authorised to decide and administer a limited range of public policies within relatively small territory which is a subdivision of a regional or government.

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Thus local government is the form of government which is at the bottom of pyramid of governmental institutes, with the national government at the top and intermediate government, i.e. state, regions and provinces. It manages own affairs by the people of locality.

Local Self Government

According to Gokhale (1972) Local Government is the government of a specified locality by the local; people through the representatives elected by them.

Thus local self government is the body of primary elected people through the local citizen and it possess a large amount of autonomy. It may raise its revenue through local taxation and spending it to provide basic services in its local jurisdiction.

Significance of Local Self Government

The local self government and its effective working is rooted in its proper planning and coordinate activities to execute those plans. Some of the activities of such plan may be followed to achieve significant results. These may be:

- Nursery of democracy
- Effective people participation
- Better planning and implementation
- Better mobilization of local resources
- Effective reporting system
- Enhance economy, efficiency and effectiveness in basic services

Thus, the significance of local self government hardly can be ignored for socio economic development of country. With the enactment of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, local bodies have become a crucial third tier of government, after the centre and the states.

The Twelfth Schedule of the Constitution:

The twelfth Schedule of the Constitution lists the functions that may be devolved to the Municipalities. A State Legislature would be free to select from this list or add to this list while stipulating the functions to be performed by municipalities. These functions are:

1. Urban planning, including town planning.
2. Regulation of land use and construction of buildings.
3. Roads and bridges.

4. Water supply for domestic, industrial and commercial purpose.
5. Public health, sanitation, conservancy and solid waste management.
6. Fire services.
7. Urban forestry; protection of the environment and promotion of ecological aspects.
8. Slum improvement and up-gradation.
9. Urban poverty alleviation.
10. Provision of urban amenities and facilities such as parks, gardens and play grounds.
11. Burials and burial grounds, cremations, cremation grounds and electric crematoriums.
12. Planning for economic and social development.
13. Safeguard the interests of weaker sections of society, including the handicapped and mentally retarded.
14. Promotion of culture, educational and aesthetic aspects.
15. Regulation of slaughter-houses and tanneries.
16. Public amenities, including street lighting, parking lots, bus stops and public conveniences.
17. Vital statistics including registration of birth and death.
18. Cattle ponds, prevention of cruelty to animals.

In the light of Government of India's 74th Amendment Act, 1993, Government of Haryana, amended its Haryana Municipal Act in the year 1994. Municipal bodies in Haryana are functioning from the about seventeen years after this Amendment no significant effort has been made to evaluate the performance of these bodies.

The present study aims to examine the performance of Municipal Cooperation Panchkula with reference to select Municipal Services.

Functional Devolution to Urban Local Bodies in Haryana

The following functions according to section 66A of the Haryana Municipal Act, 1973 were transferred to the Urban Local Bodies (Jain, 1983):

- a) The preparation of plans for economic development and social justice.
- b) The performances of functions and implementation of schemes in respect of the following matters, namely:

- i) Urban planning including town planning;
- ii) Regulation of land use and construction of buildings;
- iii) Planning for economic and social development;
- iv) Water supply for domestic, industrial and commercial purpose;
- v) Public health, sanitation, conservancy and solid waste management;
- vi) Fire services;
- vii) Urban forestry, protection of the environment and promotion of ecological aspects;
- viii) Safeguarding the interests of weaker sections of society including the handicapped and mentally retarded;
- ix) Slum improvement and up-gradation;
- x) Urban poverty alleviation;
- xi) Provision of urban amenities and facilities such as parks, gardens, playgrounds;
- xii) Promotion of cultural education and aesthetic aspects;
- xiii) Burial grounds, cremations, cremation grounds and electric crematoriums;
- xiv) Cattle ponds, prevention of cruelty to animals;
- xv) Vital statistics including registration of births and deaths and
- xvi) Public amenities including street lighting, parking lots, bus stops and public conveniences.

The Municipal Corporation Panchkula has been chosen considering the rapid urbanization taking place in Panchkula and growing number of developmental activities being undertaken by the administration.

About Municipal Corporation, Panchkula

Municipal Corporation (previously Council) Panchkula was established on 26th January, 2001 under the Haryana Municipal Act 1973. Panchkula Municipal Council was upgraded to a Corporation in March, 2010. The Corporation is divided into 31 Wards. The Wards include 28 Sectors and 13 Villages. Each Ward is represented by a Municipal Councilor. In addition there is 1 Member of Parliament (MP) and 1 Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) who are nominated to the Municipal Corporation. Panchkula has total population of 1,40,925 as per the

census 2001 (now estimated to be over 3,00,000). Important functions performed by the Municipal Corporation, Panchkula include:

1. Sanitation
2. Roads/Drain and Building Maintenance
3. Street Light
4. License (Grant of license, acceptance and acknowledgement of application and receipt of license fees).
5. No Objection Certificate (NOC for water supply/sewerage connection, NOC for electricity, NOC for registration of sale deeds).
6. Fire services
7. Municipal Taxes
8. Parks (Development of new parks, grass cutting, watering/ clearing)
9. Miscellaneous (Disposal of Complaints, Domicile, Resident, Caste Certificate Verification, Enquiries regarding supply of materials, Tender of Municipal works).

In order to identify the research problem and formulate objectives, literature relating to the subject matter has been reviewed.

What is Information Technology?

Information technology refers to all forms of technology applied to processing storing and transmitting information in electronic form (Koli, 2008). The physical equipment used for this purpose includes computers, communications equipment and networks, fax machines, and even electronic pocket organizers.

It includes a device or application, encompassing: radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network hardware and software satellite system and so on in communication process or service delivery.

In a simple term we can say that ICT refers to technologies that provide access to information through telecommunications. This includes the internet, wireless networks, cell phones, radio, TV and other communication mediums.

Significance of Information Technology

IT is an essential ingredient for effective working in any sector. Local self government is not an exception to it. Thus, for effective channelization some of the IT and its related activities may be incorporated as follows:-

- I. Quick decision making
- II. Simple procedure
- III. Free from red tapism
- IV. Reduced hierarchy
- V. Less time in completing transaction
- VI. Enhance accountability, responsiveness and transparency
- VII. Check corruption
- VIII. To enhance the quality of public services position to the poor, marginalized section of the society and also to the women and rural people.
- IX. Public grievances redressal system by the method of on line submission of application forms.
- X. To provide public information system to the citizen.
- XI. Management information system for district level officers for effective monitoring of information flow.
- XII. Improved quality of service
- XIII. Reliable and real time service
- XIV. For efficient and effective service
- XV. For improved co-operation and co-ordination between various departments, agencies, bodies working for the administrative machinery.

Priority Areas of Uses of IT in Local Government

‘Priority areas’ refers to certain activities which it undertakes on priority basis to streamline the functioning of the local self government. Some of these may as follows:-

- I. Issuing of tenders
- II. Publications of citizen charter

- III. RTI appeal
- IV. Tax deposits
- V. Tax assessment
- VI. Tax recovery
- VII. Budgeting
- VIII. Audit
- IX. Account
- X. Policy making
- XI. Policy implementation
- XII. Proper handling of grievances.
- XIII. Like issue of certificates, license.
- XIV. Payment of bill for telephone, electricity and water supply.
- XV. On line access to vacancies and employment opportunity.

Thus, local self government can use information technology in its financial, personnel and day to day administration for effective service delivery of its citizen.

Reason for failure of Information Technologies in local self government

Mere IT and infrastructure may not help grow an organization. It requires positive environment in the organization for the effective working IT related infrastructure. Some of the constraints as enlisted below accounts for the failure of IT and its related infrastructure in an organization.

- Lack of E-readiness.
- Problems in policy formulation and its implementation
- Unwillingness of people
- Not willingness of bureaurcrates and politicians
- Lack of funds
- Lack of trained personnel
- Limitation due to non acceptance of modernization in rural India
- Illiteracy
- Social-cultural problems in rural India.

Uses of Information Technology in Municipal Corporation, Panchkula

Methodology

The paper was development on the basis of both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected from citizens within the jurisdiction of MCP. The respondents were chosen from one colony i.e. Rajiv Colony out of Four colonies, two villages namely Bhaisa Tibba and Haripur out of 13 villages and three sectors namely sector 20, Sector 14 and Sector 6 out of 28 sectors in accordance with their prosperity. The Primary data was also collected from the officials of MCP. The data was collected through the decisions with citizens and officials and their views were analyzed and classified and written in an academic way.

The secondary data was collected from the Text Books, Articles, Websites and official documents of MCP. Observation method was also used in study.

Information Technology in MCP

MCP has failed to setup not only technological lab but also in creating its own website. However, in MCP the creation of its own website is in process. Technological service like computer is using as a typing purpose, there is no connectivity of LAN & WAN in MCP. In an area of tax administration MCP is carrying some functions with the method of contrasting out, it provides tender for this purpose; and selected agency is responsible for Bill distribution mainly for property tax, and they carry out their functions through appropriate software installed by themselves. After that, Citizen's receive print Bill for their property tax, and they used to deposit their balance amount at MCP. The amounts received by MCP by manual procedure leads to delay and inefficiency in its working of the institution. However, recently MCP has installed internet facility in its office. Now, some official works like receiving the order from DC office and sending reply to it is done through e-mail. In the year MCP, 2008 election, MCP had prepared voter list of citizen from other agency by providing tender. And it led to huge expenditure because of the MCP negligence in installing IT infrastructures MCP.

According to officials of MCP the following areas are identified where it can be used:

- Audit
- Tax Assessment

- Tax collection
- Passing a building map
- Recruitment of same parts of personnel, performance appraisal.
- Providing a all type of certificate
- Issuing a tender
- Information
- Handling the citizen grievances.
- Budgeting

Thus, IT may be used in MCP working in the area of finance and providing information to it citizens.

Problems Faced by Official while using IT in MCP

- I. Not regular staff
- II. Not trained staff

The discussion with officials about problem are being faced by them while they want to take initiative to installed IT in MCP working due to personal problems not due to financial crunch.

Reasons for not installing IT in MCP are as follows:-

- I. Not willingness of officials of MCP
- II. Government Delays
- III. E-readiness of MCP

The discussion with councilors, about why MCP has not able to install IT in MCP, revealed that the main reasons were unwillingness of officials and delay of government approval for IT project. This resulted in difficulty in e-readiness of MCP.

Problems faced by citizen due to not use of IT in MCP:-

According to citizen of MCP from the sectors, villages, colonies the followings problems are faced:

- I. Not proper handling of complain:- MCP is unable to maintain of telephone records call which is reflected by the citizen's and it leads to mismanagement while handling complain.

- II. Delay of harassment of people.
- III. Sometimes extra amount of property tax is received by MCP due to not proper use of IT in MCP.
- IV. Lack of information about MCP bye laws, rules and regulation due to improper use of it in MCP. An example -- MCP launched a scheme to leave a stray cattle at MCP office and get rupees one thousand as reward in 2008.

Suggestion:-

- A framework for strategic planning for communication.
- Support for using computer communication system to support the everyday work practices need proper planning in this regard.
- Physical Infrastructure of MCP must take initiative for creating physical infrastructure for installing IT in MCP.
- Personnel Development of MCP should take initiative for recruitment of IT professional in MCP and trained them as per requirement.
- Grievances of citizen's should be handled properly through the IT measures.

Conclusion

The significance of IT in Local Bodies are hardly ignored. The lack of Physical, procedural and personnel capacity to provide these services in the main reason among the various reasons for not using It in MCP. MCP has neither done much to develop its capacity to install it nor has much interest in this regard. And it is suggested that MCP must develop its capacity to make physical infrastructure & personnel as per as the requirements which fulfill the expectations & time efficient services of the citizen's when they avail services, which were provided by MCP.

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