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E-GOVERNANCE AS A CONTRIBUTION TO CITIZENS' IDENTITY - A DISTRICT LEVEL STUDY OF PUNE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

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ABSTRACT

Citizens are the epic center of government. Citizens as consumers of public goods and services see efficient system in business world, tending them to expect the same from the government departments too. With the newfound ability to do business online, the public has come to expect a much greater level of convenience, availability and reliability of government products and services. E-governance through the concept of Citizen Relationship Management forwards a solution to meet this end. The bottleneck appears, in implementing this IT-enabled concept, in the form of multiplicity in citizens' identity system as this paper points out based on a study of Pune district in the State of Maharashtra. This paper suggests that an understanding of e-Governance in city such as Pune where e-governance application in information and communication technologies to transform the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of informational & transactional exchanges within government, between govt. & govt. agencies of National, State, Municipal & Local levels, citizen & businesses, and to empower citizens through access and use of information. E-Governance is a wider concept that defines and assesses the impact technologies are having on the practice and administration of governments and the relationships between public servants and the wider society. E-Government lets citizen's access government information and services and gives them the opportunity to participate in democratic institutions and processes. E-Government provides higher quality, cost-effective, government services and a better relationship between people and their government.

KEYWORDS

E-governance, Citizen Relationship Management, ICT (Information, Communication, Technology), Citizen Empowerment.

E-GOVERNMENT IN MAHARASHTRA

The Government of Maharashtra (GOM) is keen to accelerate the process of computerization and the pace and process of e-Governance. The mission statement of our Information Technology policy is 'Empowerment through Connectivity'. The objective of the state policy is to give to the citizens 'anywhere, anytime, anyhow services.

The state is determined to harness information technology to create a knowledge-based society that empowers citizens to participate in the development of the state and provides efficient and speedy services to its citizens and businesses.

The Government of Maharashtra is in process of computerizing the working of all its departments and administrative units and provide universal access to information, while keeping administrative costs low.

Their aim is to make the State a 'Maha-IT-rashtra' by using state-of-the-art information technology-such as wireless technology and handheld portable devices-to reach the remotest areas and poorest people and improve the standard of living statewide.

E-GOVERNMENT: SCOPE

E-Government is about a process of reform in the way Government works, shares information and delivers services clients so as to benefit both government and the citizens and businesses that they serve.

E-Government harnesses information technologies which include Wide Area Networks (WAN), Internet, World Wide Web, and mobile computing by government agencies to reach out to citizens, business, and other arms of the government to:

Improve service delivery to citizens;

Improve interface within business and industry;

Empower citizens giving access to knowledge and information; and

Make the working of the government more efficient and effective

The resulting benefits could be higher degree of transparency, greater convenience to citizens, growth in state revenues, cost reduction and less corruption for better environment.

Different Models of Delivery

- Departments going on-line
- Greater departmental ownership: possibility of significant re-engineering
- Citizen visit many departments, each one may be more efficient
- Could be a step ahead in the absence of high band width network
- Convenient location of Service Centers
- Counters by public/private agencies
- Multiple services at each location: payment, licenses, certificates
- Can quickly move traffic from departments to service centers

- Requires coordination
- Self Service through a Portal one stop shop
- Back end computerization and integration for data sharing
- High internet penetration, willingness and ability of citizen to use
- Security and mutual trust.
- Requires strong centralized leadership for extensive co-ordination

GOVERNANCE FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY IN PUNE

The city of Pune is located in the Indian state of Maharashtra, approximately 200 kilometres east and 400 kilometres southeast of Mumbai, respectively. Pune is a major city and industrial centre with a population of 3,516,304. Pune is India's seventh largest city and benefits economically from its location close to Mumbai. Pune city suffer from adequate infrastructure, which has not kept up with the rapid pace of urban growth. The provision of basic infrastructure across the city of Pune, infrastructure is often old and poorly maintained. 1991 was a key turning point, as a result of the liberalization of the Indian economy. This situation had a direct impact on urban management, especially in regard to the demand for large-scale infrastructure development and promotion of a corporate-led economy. A significant development here was the coming up of large financing institutions to support this that drew on national funds and funds from international bilateral and multilateral agencies. Financing institutions moved from their traditional role of funding projects to funding large scale infrastructure programmes as financial intermediaries.

Access to relatively cheap and state government-secured funds has in turn generated new demand. The concept of the information technology sector for modernization has captured the imagination of Pune's political and bureaucratic elite. The main justification is to make Pune "globally competitive". Corporate information technology groups were quick to point out the deficiencies in infrastructure in Pune and to demand ever more dedicated investment by the state to promote growth.

e-GOVERNANCE AT PUNE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

PMC believes that e-Governance is an opportunity to transform the corporation's commitment to be citizen centric, provide cost-effective service and enhance governance through improved access to accurate information. Thus e-Governance is a permanent part of the governing process. For both government organizations and citizens, its advantages are far reaching in comparison to investment in establishing e-governance.

Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) is one of the largest and leading Urban Local Governance Body in Maharashtra. It is committed to provide transparent, accountable and efficient local governance through the use of modern technology especially in management and administration fields. It has decided to embrace Information Technology in the form of e-Governance tool to achieve the goals.

PMC covers an area of over about 237 Square Kilometres, catering to the civic needs of over 25 lakh citizens. Most of the functions carried Pune Municipal Corporation are service oriented, and have been already computerized to larger extent. There are 144 wards and 42 Citizen Facilitation Centres (CFC's) in Pune through which various services are rendered to the citizens. Better IT systems are required to integrate the workflow for a faster and efficient service to the citizens, employees, administrators.

Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) has always been on the forefront of ICT enablement of services and departments to render faster and efficient services to the citizens. PMC is truly on its way to become complete e-Governed Urban Local Body in the country. Some of the unique initiatives taken by PMC are -

- **Registration of Births and Deaths:** Birth and Death registration is already computerized. Online registration facility is available and computerized certificates are being issued to citizens.
- **Public Grievance Redressal:** As part of interactive web portal of PMC grievance redressal system already in place.
- **Property Tax Management:** Property tax database is computerized and demand notes are issued by this database. Property tax dues are updated regularly online. Property tax payments and collection is also facilitated by ICICI Infinity Internet gateway.
- **Municipal Accounting System:** The present Cash based Double Entry accounting system is already computerized. That system is proposed to be converted to computerized Double Entry Accrual System on an ERP platform and the process for the same is already initiated.
- **E-Procurement:** Interactive website for information on tenders of departments is in place.
- **Personal Management:** Payroll and Pension System is already commissioned this includes Biometric Time & Attendance System. The system is currently being integrated with the payroll system. Payment of Property Tax, Utility Bills and Management of Utilities that come under the ULBs Online windows for payment of Property Tax and Water Bills have been initiated from the Head Qtrs., zonal offices and Citizen Facilitation Centers of the PMC.
- **Building Plan Approval:** Building plan permission process is automated and made available online on the interactive website of PMC.
- **Unwire Pune:** PMC is one of the first governance bodies in the country to launch a project for providing Wi-Fi connectivity across the city. Through this initiative "Unwire Pune", Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) propose to deliver a solution to the citizens, businesses and academic institutions to connect to the internet in a relatively easy manner. As much as providing basic facilities such as drinking water supply, sewerage, power, roads etc, PMC would like to provide basic Information Technology infrastructure such as stable internet connectivity to its citizens and also offer compelling business and cost models to attract and sustain major ISP businesses in Pune.

Looking at the challenges faced due to rapid growth of Pune district, there is increasing need to have a comprehensive, integrated, ERP based e-Governance model. Such a system will help administration to adhere to the reform agenda set by PMC. The reform agenda are given below:

1. **Promote citizen centric administration:** Common citizens should get the benefits of the system of accurate billing. Corruption should be avoided.
2. **Move from process accountability to productivity accountability and from transactional to transformative governance:** The process is computerized to increase productivity. Every department of the corporation has reports giving exact statistics of how accountability is achieved through the system.
3. **Reduce delays and ensure promptness in service delivery:** Computerization would ensure timely delivery of accurate services.

E-ADMINISTRATION

Improve administrative processes by cost cutting, managing performance, making strategic linkages with the local bodies and creating empowerment E-Citizen and E-Services: Connect citizens to the local government by talking to citizens and supporting accountability, by listening to citizens and supporting democracy by improving public services.

The e-administration of government is to restore trust in government by providing strong social services:

1. To increase collaboration among government organizations.
2. To strengthen the relationship between people and state through greater opportunities for participation.
3. To provide the state with an opportunity to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public services while reducing their cost.

The e-Government administration is about inclusion-helping people take part in economic growth. It fits well with similar development in business and commerce. Together, e-Government, e-business and e-commerce will play an important role in the development of an economy that mobilizes the knowledge and skills of all citizens.

E-GOVERNANCE - EMPOWERING PEOPLE THROUGH SERVICE DELIVERY

E-Government will be an example of an innovative use of developing technologies and help citizens to understand and use the tools of the information economy; this is a matter of vital importance to the economic and social prosperity of individuals and country. It is recognized that both the e-government and

e-governance need enablers for success. Broadly they are, Educational levels, Cultural readiness, Income levels, Confidence and trust in Government, Customer readiness, Privacy and data protection, Use of Customer Data by Government, Freedom of Information, Electronic commerce, Copyright regulations, Telecommunications and Cross agency operations. Government is an institutional superstructure that society uses to translate politics into policies and legislation. Governance is the outcome of interaction of government, the public service, and citizens throughout the political process, policy development, program design, and delivery of service. The institution of government involves a narrower range of considerations than the wider functions of governance. Governments are specialized institutions that contribute to governance.

Governments are bureaucratically organized and constitutionally legitimated. Governments serve as both the highest forum for policy making within their jurisdictions, and as the final court of appeal within their jurisdictions for dissenters to those policies. Mostly work of government consists of actually implementing policies through service delivering programs. Governments often face the need to rationalize discrepancies among the people desires to achieve their own ends. Governance is distinct from government as it concerns longer-term processes rather than immediate decisions. Governance is a set of continuous processes that usually evolve slowly with use unlike government. The governance focuses on processes rather than decisions. Governance takes the view of social objectives; it involves the coordination of efforts rather than the implementation of specific programs. This is the systemic perspective as opposed to a focus on the individual practice, or player, or process. The "bottom line" for governance is outcomes rather than the outputs of government.

There are a multitude of situations that require government decisions, and a variety of types of decisions that governments render. Decisions that are confined to a particular policy, program, department, region, or group, are usually easier to frame, negotiate, and finalise. Unfortunately the unexpected can occur, when a previously insignificant occurrence suddenly acquires disproportionate importance "out of the blue", often because of a change in its political salience. Even for these situations there are now coping skills. Joint decisions that need to be agreed between various levels of jurisdiction can also be particularly tricky to arrive at. Governments may lack the money, personnel, or expertise to implement decision they desire, or they may face constitutional limits regarding what they can impose without the consent of the governed. These kinds of government decisions are becoming the fastest-growing type in today's policy environment. Some experts contend that many knowledge workers within governments are resistant to assignments to manage processes rather than to deal with "substantive issues". But since government is not a single-issue or a single-instance exercise, on-going processes are what governance is all about. If governing processes were directed by flexible guidelines and if those on the front line were permitted to respond to unforeseeable particulars in a creative way, the larger aim of policy and program improvement may be favorably achieved. The Engagement Process consists of citizens and interest groups interacting with government representatives. The Consultation Process involves direct contact between the public service, citizens and interest groups. In the case of interest groups, they have sought and gained access to bureaucrats for decades. What is changing is that individual citizens and community groups are now beginning to obtain similar access even if in limited numbers at this point in time. This process empowers citizens to actually shape regulations.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) has always been on the forefront of ICT enablement of services and departments to render faster and efficient services to empower the citizens. PMC is truly on its way to become complete e-Governed Urban Local Body in the country. Issues of accountability, transparency and responsiveness depend on the character and nature of prevailing institutions. The standardization, is one of the major issues that is evolving and needs to be addressed urgently. There is need for an in-depth discussion so as to evolve the next generation government.

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