

EVOLUTION OF THE RESPONSIVENESS IN ADMINISTRATION: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

In a democratic set up the person engaged in administration are expected to be responsible to two major sets - one, the political executives and legislators and the other, the general public. In other words they have to respond to the demands of democratic institutions and the needs of public. They are often obliged to reconcile responsiveness with other administrative values such as accountability and efficiency. It means that the administration should be for the people and not people for administration. Responsible behaviour of the administrative officials, working at different levels, is another most important aspect of responsive administration. Accountability and responsibility are often used interchangeably. But the two can be distinguished. Unfortunately the bureaucracy is today in bad odour. It stands associated with routine, red-tape and is even beginning to be regarded in some circles, as redundant. The administrative system is heavily rule oriented. The rules may, does not matter, be outdated or not assisting the real purpose of objectives¹. Accordingly, remedial efforts which may prove really effective and meaningful in the given circumstances should be made. In this paper evolution of the responsiveness in administration is discussed.

Keywords: Responsiveness, Political Executives, Legislators, Democratic Institutions, Accountability.

Introduction

Steps to Enhances Institution's Responsiveness

- **Time Management**

For a timely disposal, the officers should have proper time-management, otherwise things will spill-over, which ultimately will damage the public interest and spoil the image of whole administrative system. Infact, they themselves are the best judge of their time schedules as each individual has different capability, capacity and working style. The plan for day or week should be worked out on the basis of urgency and seriousness of the matters competing the attention of the concerned officer (s). Some cushion period may be left to adjust the expected assignments or to meet emergencies.

- **One Window Service System**

To introduce 'One window service', counters suggested for different sections need to be consolidated into one central counter. The applications would be entered in one or more registers, as per requirement. After registration the applications would be sent to the concerned sections or departments for disposal. There too registration is desirable from the view point of monitoring. The concept of 'one window service' originally belongs to Japan where it was evolved to facilitate the industrial entrepreneurs. This system requires every intensive monitoring.

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- **Identification of Matters of Public Concern for Special Attention**

The positive way to create such an atmosphere is to concentrate on the matters relating to large number of people. In each department the matters which are important in terms of public contact, can be identified and strategy be planned out for their prompt disposal. Specific duration can be fixed for each type of job this can be made publicly known also.

- **Minimization of Delays**

Delay in disposal is the most serious, widely spread and in the opinion of some 'an incurable disease of our administrative system. Combinedly, all these evils encourage corruption, cause harassment to the public and lower down the image of the organisation, system and the whole government. Delays in the administrative organizations, it seems, have creped in proportion to the size, status and importance of the organisation; greater and higher the organisation, more the delays.

- **Demystification of Office-Procedures**

Infact, this is the need of time; circumstances require such a precautionary step. The administrative system as it exists today is procedurally very complicated. Although, all the procedures are listed in the manuals which are public documents, yet the common citizen does not know or understand them always⁴. The manual is a complete document and has legal language.

- **Accountability**

The word 'accountable' seems to have come into usage in the English language for the first time in the year 1583, and the context was financial. Even today, financial accountability is an important part of it so much so that many public servants show their concern only for it and in the process either forget or conveniently ignore other equally vital components of accountability. The concept is a comprehensive one and covers all the activities undertaken by the government. Shorter oxford English Dictionary defines 'accountable' as 'Liable to be called to account, responsible (to, far)'.

- **Simplification of Procedures**

There is no readymade formula or norms. What is needed is the firm determination and a planned effort. Keeping all factors, that affect the work, in view a systematic analysis may be done. It would be application of common sense in the search for better and easier ways of doing work and for ways of eliminating waste of time, energy, materials, space and equipment. Work simplification can be applied to almost any work situation if there is a desire to save time, effort or money. It is more than a study of methods; it is a study of mind or attitude philosophy of progress and an approach for improvement. Duration may be fixed for each stage/step. Many information's, relating to the case(s) are already available in the upper level office. However, instead of searching their own almirahs the dealing assistants prefer to refer the file back to the lower office. Standard formats-cum-checklists may be used for each type of application.

- **Camp Approach**

Extension-cum-implementation camps may prove very effective for a quick disposal. Administrative officers have also been entrusted with the new and the most challenging role of development in their areas. These roles can be better performed in the officer is prepared to free himself from the file work, VIP visits and meetings held at headquarters, and tour the interior parts of the district. Thus, the village-camp is a very forceful manifestation of responsiveness of the administration. For identification purpose such an approach is the best. Time framing is one of the pre-requisites for monitoring and important technique of modern management aiming at minimizing delays in disposal.

- **Work Chart for Each Section**

Every office is organized into various sections as per requirement i.e. the volume of work and variety of subjects or heads. Further, the whole work of section is distributed among various dealing assistants. To ensure earliest possible disposal and enforce accountability it is desirable to have separate work - chart for each section.

- **Decentralization and Delegation of Powers**

Delegation of powers is an important concept of administration and an effective technique to multiply the output. It is granting of authority by one executive to another, usually from higher level to lower level. By means of delegation of authority, an executive spread his area of managerial influence and makes an organisational structure more meaningful and the executive (to whom authority has been delegated) more effective. With this, even the officers working at lower level, develop a sense of responsibility

E-Governance is Good Governance

E-governance and e-government initiatives now enable citizens to access government documents, order publications, file taxes, order vital records, and renew licenses and permits from any location with an Internet connection. In addition, there are already signs that e-government is transforming organizations by breaking down organizational boundaries and providing greater access to information, enhancing communication and facilitating democratic processes.

Responsive and Administration through E-Governance

The need for good governance for a country's development cannot be overemphasised. The challenge before the administration, at this juncture is greater than ever before. There is an urgent need for the administration to get closer to its citizens. There is a need to select good technology solutions and administrative process to give efficient, responsive or sensitive administration or good governance. E-governance will offer a new vision to governance and would help to reform administrative programmes which would primarily focus on the following:

- Increasing transparency and efficiency in administration and reducing corruption.
- Establishing synergy between the public and private sectors.
- Improvement in service delivery to people.
- Empowerment of people through dissemination of information.

E-governance is of recent origin in Information Technology. It attempts to take public services and the government, literally to the doorstep of the citizens through IT. E-governance facilitates the delivery of government services to the masses through procedural simplicity, speed and convenience¹⁰.

General Information Dissemination Model (GIDM)

General Information Dissemination Model is based on the assumption that informing people about the functioning of the government helps in establishing a better relation rapport between the people and the government. Informing people also empowers them to exercise their rights and responsibilities and make informed decisions. This model also remedies a situation of information failure. It is an essential prerequisite for creating an environment for enhanced participation of people and their organizations in government business and transactions. The following are some examples of GIDM :

- Publishing information related to various welfare and development schemes and activities on the internet along with the details of procedures for availing benefits of these schemes and activities.
- Publishing information about the performance of the government on the Internet.
- Publishing government laws, regulations and legislations on the internet so that they are available at any place and at any time to people.
- Making available names, addresses and contact details of government officials on the Internet.

Interactive Service Model (ISM)

Interactive Service Model is a consolidation of the three models of e-governance described earlier. It opens up possibilities for participation of people in governmental business and transactions. Unlike the first three models of e-governance, which are basically one-way information flow models, this is a two-way information flow model, in which the potential of IT is fully utilized. Because of its interactive nature of operation, this model leads to greater participation, efficiency and transparency. It also results in substantial savings of time and cost in the decision-making process within the government. This access and control, in turn, makes the public and development administration system more responsible and accountable to people's needs and expectations. The following are the areas of application of the ISM:

- Online government operations.
- Interactive channel of communication between key policy makers and members of the Planning Commission.
- Election of government officials and representatives.
- Grievance redressal, feedback and reporting system.
- Sharing of concerns and common interests by people and the government.
- Organization of opinion polls on government policies and other government decisions.
- Decentralized forms of governance

Advocacy Model (AD)

Advocacy Model can be viewed as an aid to civil society to influence the government decision making process by forming virtual communities or specific groups within, as well as outside the government. It enables public debate on issues related to public welfare. The model can help the government by directing strategic flow of information to groups of communities who can become strong virtual allies to complement government action. It mobilises the potential of human resources and information, overcoming geographical, institutional and bureaucratic barriers and targets them for concerted action on pertinent issues facing the community.

Information System

Availability of information is the first and most crucial requirement for the implementation of the model. A well-defined and well-organized system of information collection, storage and retrieval and a well - established system of updating available information at regular intervals is critical to the success of the e-governance model. It is also important that the system of collection of information is such that the whole process is transparent and the information collected is of a high quality, so that people can have faith in the available information.

Technology

Two points are of relevance here. First is the cost consideration. The cost of hardware, software and net-working required for universalizing the use of information Technology in government may be a deterring factor in pursuing e-governance in a poor country like India, where electronic technology is viewed more as a luxury than a necessity for administration. The second issue is that of the digital divide across which one group of population reaps the benefits of Information Technology while another group cannot. Computer literacy or elemental familiarity with IT is essential. Not everyone has these skills and so they remain cut off from computers and the Internet.

Elements of E-Governance

E-governance cannot operate in an institutional vacuum. It can succeed only in an enabling institutional environment and a set of influencing factors that may be political, legal, economic and even social and cultural. We will first deal with the information system and then with the environment.

Application Areas of E-Governance

- **Law and Order**

A common citizen feels harassed if required to visit a police station to lodge a complaint or a (First Information Report) FIR against any violation of law. Things would be different if such complaints can be filed online through e-policing. The acknowledgement and action taken can also be communicated online. Tamper proof electronic fare meters installed on taxis and autos, would save the citizens from harassment at the hands of the unscrupulous operators of these services.

- **Passport Services**

In spite of the fact that the Regional Passport Office in Delhi and its branches have their own websites that give the status of an application for issue of a passport, it takes about three months to issue a passport. However, if one has the right connection or contact with an agent, he may get it faster. The governmental process is linear in nature. The application must go from one stage to another to reach its final destination for a final decision.

- **Revenue Collection**

Online submission of forms has started in the excise department. Online connectivity enables simplified procedures for levying of commercial taxes, thus, eliminating delays and bottlenecks in the taxation procedures. A database of registered dealers is being maintained. Steps are on for computerising the issuance of licenses and automatic updating of STV registers.

The Lokpal and Lokayukta Bill, 1968

The Bill of 1968 referred only to the Central Administration. It provided for the appointment of one Lokpal and one or more Lokayuktas. The Lokpal was to be appointed by the President after consultation with the chief justice of India and the Leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha. If there was no such leader, a person elected by the Members of the opposition in the Lok Sabha for this purpose was to be consulted. The Bill provided that the appointment of Lokayuktas would be made by the President after consultation with Lokpal.

He was given a security of tenure like a judge of Supreme Court. He could be removed before the expiry of his term only on the ground of misbehaviour or incapacity and on no other ground. An inquiry was to be held by a sitting or retired Supreme Court Judge. The inquiry report was to be placed before both Houses of Parliament and each House was to pass an address for his removal by a majority of its total membership and a majority not less than two-third of its members present and voting. The Lokpal was empowered to investigate certain types of actions taken by or on behalf of the Government or certain public authorities.

Lokpal Bill, 1985

A fresh Bill to provide for the appointment of a Lokpal to inquire into allegations of corruption against Union Ministers was introduced in the Lok Sabha by the then Union Law Minister Mr. A.K. Sen on August 26, 1985. Like previous Bills, this fresh Bill is also aimed to enable the citizen to have recourse to a convenient and effective forum for the determination of his complaints and save him seeking remedy through the process of courts which may prove expensive or dilatory and may not facilitate speedy determination of his complaints. The Bill has been the subject matter of a controversy ever since the government circulated a draft among leaders of opposition parties. Owing to the sharp disagreement between the government and the opposition on major provisions of the Bill, the Lok Sabha Speaker Mr. Balram Jakhar who announced the decision to refer the Bill to a Joint Select Committee of the two Houses said that he had come to the conclusion that a more exhaustive study of the bill was needed. This is the fourth time that parliament has attempted a Lokpal legislation and ended up referring the Bill to a Joint Select Committee. The work of the earlier committees had been rendered infructuous because of the dissolution of Lok Sabha. After many attempt the Lokpal Bill could not pass in Parliament because of many reason new recently Civil Society organized and starts movement against corruption under leadership of Anna Hazare.

About the Anna Hazare

Kisan Bapat Baburao Hazare or Anna Hazare, is a social activist and a social worker. He used to work as a driver in the Indian Army and has been greatly influenced by Swami Vivekanand, Ghandiji and Acharya Vinobha Bhave. He is especially recognized for this contribution to the development of Ralegan Sidhi, a village in Ahmednagar district, Maharashtra.

Jan Lokpal Bill

Lokpal will have powers to initiate sue-motto action or receive complaints of corruption from the general public. Lokpal will be much more than an Advisory Body. It should be granted powers to initiate Prosecution against anyone found guilty. Lokpal will have police powers. To say that it will be able to register FIRs. Lokpal and anti corruption wing of CBI will be one independent body. The punishment should be minimum 5 years and maximum up-to life imprisonment. Lokpal will not be a monopoly for particular area.

Law Provision in Public Service Guarantee

The Rajasthan government implemented the Public Service Guarantee Act in the state on 14 November 2011. It came into force with an aim to provide public services in a time-bound manner. Rajasthan became the only state in India where the state government made a provision of the penalty imposed for failing to provide a service or for a delay. The penalty would be recovered from the salary of the concerned designated officer. The Act covered 108 services of 15 major government departments, envisages a time-bound performance of duties by government officials and it possessed a provision of cash penalty for the offenders. The Public Service Guarantee Act included services pertaining to departments of Police, Finance, Energy, Medical, Traffic, Public Health Engineering, Food, Housing, Water Resources and Social Justice among others.

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