



Quality service delivery and district administration

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Abstract

Quality has become a catchword of the new era, stakeholders become more and more conscious of the quality of service they received and the products that is made available to them. The wake of globalization opens more opportunity, expectation and needs of the customers has under gone change constantly and also opens competitive market in both government and private sectors. Customers are now aware of the quality of service, durability and reliability of products and the customer care that service provider has rendered. Under such pressure, quality service delivery given by traditional government institutions is being challenged. As district occupied the basic unit of administration, district governance needs to be closely looked into in terms of quality service delivery within the goal of good governance.

Keywords: service delivery; quality service delivery; district; district administration; governance; good governance

Introduction

Administration undergo a sea of change, traditional mode of delivering services is no longer enough to meet the need and fulfill the aspiration of the people. Expectation of the public in terms of good and services, quality of services provided by the government transmuted and even become very demanding. Advancement in education and technology, modernization of general public lifestyle and perception of quality, pressure the administration to switch its aged old system of governance. Today, governance becomes more responsible, transparent and accountable after the adoption of the principles of good governance.

Quality concept and governance

The present era is an Era of Quality, everyone wants good quality, and none wants to be a victim of inferior quality. Therefore the organization that understands the importance of Quality becomes successful. Oxford Dictionary defined "Quality as being the degree of excellence, relative nature or kind or character; class or grade of thing determined by this; general excellence". Quality can therefore be defined as the extent to which a product or service meets the requirements of the customers. It is now accepted that quality management is important in every services there is a greater awareness of and commitment to quality by designers, manufacturers and service industry managers than ever before. They realized that quality and reliability are not just desirable goals, but are essential for commercial success and survival.

Quality service delivery becomes the benchmark of good governance. Citizens are more and more conscious and have greater bargaining power when it comes to receiving services from both the private and public sectors. Advancement in technology enables the citizens to be more informed about quality of different products and services, choices and comparison of products available in the market has become more easy, besides, international trade and the existence of global economy has opened huge platform where buyers is given access to his needs. The nature of governance at the public sector needs to undergo changes to meet the new requirement and the pressure from the market has shaken the structure and functions of this sector. Today, public sectors are in constant competition with the private sector in terms of its accountability towards the people. Traditionally, citizens rarely questioned the services provided by the public sectors, but lately, the well-informed and educated citizens questioned the productivity and quality level of services received through the government sector. Governance cannot effort to continue to maintain the status quo but adapt itself to new demands and improve their performances to meet the requirement of the citizens. Governance and quality service delivery can go a long way effecting economic growth through their impact on human capital.

Quality service is a process of continuous improvement through which all stakeholders strives to create and support an environment in which people are committed to serving and meeting the needs of customers. It is complying with standard or even exceeds customer expectation, and is the highest level of care that is given to the customer within the objectives of the organization. Delivering quality service is a continuous process and involved long term commitment of management. It also requires hiring employees who are fully aware of the standards and dedicate themselves to delivering quality service. High quality performance comes from total submission to the standards and tireless practices.

District Administration

District is considered as the basic unit of administration in India. It has always play very important role in the history of Indian administration. Constitution od District was first initiated in the time of Maurya Empire where they have built an imperial system, and district occupies the central place of territorial unit, where all power were centralized and concentrated in a single officer called the Rajuka in the hierarchy structure. For the security and stability of the empire the Mughals make a close link between the Rajuka and the Home-Finance Minister. The district evolved as a sub-state in the time of the Mauryas, the Gupta and later during the time of the British. As the British began to have permanent settlement within the territory of India, they continue to strengthened and enlarge the district believing that the larger the district, there will be greater economy and higher the stature and prestige of the district officers, and ultimately, strengthened their position as well as their revenue administration within India. The nature of Maurya's and Gupta's rule throws highlights on the evolution of district as a territorial unit of administrative and political unit. When the East India Company maintained its settlement in India, they were keen to promptly and regularly collect revenue. For this purpose , during the time of Warren Hasting (1772-1785) on 14th May , 1772 they introduced the present system of Office of Collector, from this time till 1947, district continue to be a basic area of administration, and continue to be one of the most remarkable legacy of the British. Rule in India.

Within the federal polity, the independent India continued to retain district as the basic unit of administration. As of now, there are 741 districts (2021) in the whole of India. Among which the greatest district in terms of population is Thane, Maharastra, with a population of 11060,148 (2011 Census), and in terms of area Kutch, Gujarat has the largest area with 45,652km. the study area has 34 districts within the state with 31,2055,076 population.

District administration at the time of British India was considered as one of the most vital unit and the office of District Collector was made all powerful especially in matter of revenue collection and maintenance of law and order. A wide variety of function has been added to the district as time goes by, that result in the complexity of administrative system. The adoptions of welfare state as one of the guiding principle within the democratic framework of the Indian constitution continued to strengthened and increase the powers and function of the district level authorities. Agriculture, animal husbandry, social welfare, medical, public health, education, civil supplies, industries, irrigation, co-operation etc. collectively, with district collector's office, formed apart of District Administration. At present, all the state government departments have their field agency at the district level jointly looked after by the Office of District Collector. The District level officers also include, Superintendent of Police and Deputy Conservator of Forest. However, District Collector as the British named it, continue to be the kingpin of district administration and is variously described as 'eyes and ears of government', 'general administrator of all government activities', 'agent of government', 'captain of the team'. Recently, in a more benevolent terms the District collector is called as 'the friend, philosopher and guide', 'advisor, educator and helper', and 'the mainspring of development'.

The name given to the highest level functionary in the district differs such as Deputy Commissioner, District Superintendent, District Collector and District Magistrate. The adoption of Separation of Judiciary from the executive by the Constitution of India has diminished the power of the district collector. And the introduction Panchayati Raj System designate the district Collector as development agent, due to his assigned role within his district to look into all development programme and policies and all implementation of development schemes has to be undertaken under his supervision.

Ideological shift has taken place when the government of India focuses their attention on decentralization, to transfer more political and administrative powers to the lower levels such as Urban Local Bodies (UBL) and Rural Local Bodies (RLB). Prior to 1992, there is no proper provision incorporated in the Constitution of India in support for the institution of local governments. However, under Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP), among the Gandhian Principle, setting up of rural local government ws mentioned under Article 40 of the Constitution. Unfortunately, the provision under DPSP is not justiciable and most states within Independent India did not take steps to set up these local bodies. Even where it is implemented, local bodies were not equipped with enough power to handle functions that are assigned to them, and they are not given adequate financial resources to implement their development goals, in addition to that, there is lack of support from the state government in rendering expert guidance to have effective administration. When the Government of India introduced the 73rd and the 74th Constitution Amendment Act, 1992, only then actual support and commitment takes place for the setting up of local government bodies, in both rural and urban areas. The ideological shift to give more powers to the local bodies was given full attention to stand true to the existing Democratic Decentralization principle in the country.

Local units need to be considered as a self-governing institution and not as a delivery mechanism. Although national goals and aspirations are supportive of decentralization, there is a need to address concern for inclusiveness, accountability and effectiveness in time of implementation. There is a need to create institutions which response to local needs and preferences. And should be recognized as a vehicle for social reform apart from the political, administrative and financial responsibilities it shoulders.

Lately, political agenda among all leading national party make it a point to work for the implementation of decentralized administration and good governance, facilitating for the growth of decentralized administration, eventually, leading to greater role and importance of District Administration.

The wake of economic liberalization that has taken deep root in the early 1990's brings about greater attention to focus more and more on decentralization, not just in the political and administrative areas but also for the acceleration of economic growth and empowerment of every level from the central to the local bodies. This propaganda of economic liberalization introduced paradigm shift, and creates people-centric administration, where the implementation of development goals and policies focuses on people's participation, enabling involvement of people at all level, as they constitute the major stakeholder in economic development process.

The power to decide on the allocation and distribution of public resources constitutes political decentralization as decision making power is given to the local level elected bodies. Federal democracy come alive when actual power of decision making is transferred to these local units. However, one has to make sure that devolution of power improved the performance and accountability of the government. Secondly, power to implement development programme and policies ensured through decentralization constitutes administrative decentralization, which is vital to bring about effectiveness and endorsement of development. Thirdly, the power to raise and spend public revenue by the local unit enabled financial decentralization, which constitutes one of the most important forms of decentralization. Since finance is the backbone of every institutions, without the power to raise and spend public revenue the lower level institutions will be crippled.

The present system of governance, as incorporated in Article 243 of the Constitution adopted three-tier system of rural local government, namely, Zila Parishad at the district level, Panchayat Samiti at the block level and Village Panchayat at the village level, and the institution of Gram Sabha, where Direct Democracy is in practice. And in the urban areas institutions like Municipal Corporation for larger urban areas, Municipal Council for smaller urban areas and Nagar Panchayat for transitional areas or an area in transition from rural to an urban area are constituted. The goals of good governance are initiated from the grass-root level, to bring about political, administrative and financial decentralization.

As structural changes takes its shape and empowerment of people becomes the central focus of good governance, district administration change its direction from the traditional functions of maintaining law and order and collection of revenue to implementing welfare state principles and accelerate economic growth and development through proper plan projects with the help of institutions designed for the cause. Today, district administration establishes a strong foundation to meet the challenges as well as lead the nation towards its development goals with effective popular control, inclusiveness, co-operative federalism and decentralized governance.

The search for good governance is an endless process. For efficient and effective governance, be it the case of legislative, executive or judiciary, requires institution, the delivery mechanism and the framework of supportive rules, regulations and procedures to continually evolve in harmony with each other in their response to the changing context. It is important to have governance that is continuously adapting itself to reflect changes in the market and role of civil society, not neglecting the changing role and goals of the state. The state should realize its role as development catalyst for progressive performance.

Under democratic framework, Governance is associated with effective and efficient administration involving administrative, economic and political power along with formulation and implementation of policies. The basic aim of governance is to provide responsive and quality services and to maintain good relations between the government and the citizens. Good Governance has become the ultimate goal.

Good Governance aims a broad reform strategy to make the government more responsive, accountable, democratic and transparent as well as efficient management of economics and strengthened civil society and regulates private sectors, providing citizen-friendly and citizen-centric administration, also aims at utilization of information technology to improve service delivery and citizens participation. It tries to bring in all stakeholders in its reform, such as capacity of the government to formulate and implement policies effectively and, enhancing the quality of service for greater number of people. It also tries to enhance quality of governance through justice, equity, accountability and participation without which the objectives of good governance is futile.

Conclusion

Performance of government have paradigm shift from traditional mode to more technical and welfare orientated today, administration for that matter needs to be more responsive and more accountable. District administration has always been change agent within their respective area, despite the fact that they deliver the same services over the years. With decentralization of governance the nature of functions also took a new turn, old methods no longer suffices the demands of the people, customer oriented administration along-side participative management becomes the need of the time. It is where quality management system becomes important, government has to focus as it is in constant competition with the private sector, and survival in the competitive world is a challenging task. Service delivery is measured in terms of its quality, timeliness and reliability. Recently, many government organization and for that matter district administration opted for International Organization for Standardization's Certification to assured to all stakeholders its effort towards quality of services. The certification focuses on customer satisfaction, management involvement and continuous improvement in administration. Today, district administration is expected to render quality services that satisfy all stakeholder as such functional techniques modification and adoption of new method becomes imperative.

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