

Exigency to Undertake Revolutionary Change in Delhi Jal Board

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Abstract

There was a time when it was said that the commanding height of Indian economy will be with the public sector. But with gradual deterioration in the functioning of government owned public utilities, increasing public chaos and demand for better public utility services necessitated revolutionary change in state owned enterprises and boards. This paper throws light upon the exigency to undertake revolutionary change in DJB (Delhi Jal Board) to circumvent public misery and outcry. It expresses the need to commence a major change that encompasses altering internal policies, procedures, structure, mindset as well as the mission and vision of the organisation. Accordingly, this paper attempts to substantiate the obligatory high level change through research conducted on TPDDL (Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited) that was transformed on PPP (public-private-partnership) basis.

It also exhibits the various forces operating in the environment that incessantly drive towards a comprehensive change, through Kurt Lewin model of change. Consequently, it addresses the problems of water scarcity and mismanagement.

Besides, it also updates about the small projects or initiatives by DJB to deal with the growing needs of water in Delhi.

Keywords: DJB, TPDDL, Revolutionary change, Transformational change, Sustainability, Water crisis, Water mismanagement, Public outcry

Introduction

The very nature and existence of public utilities is based on the effective and efficient rendering of essential services to the masses. In order to provide smooth flow of services, public utilities have to

accept that they are an open system that continuously interacts with the outside environment and adapt itself to the growing needs of the consumers and society.

It makes no difference whether the organisation is a public utility or private it has to respond to the various forces outside the environment and build upon its strengths which are crucial for long-term survival and growth. Consequently, this paper symbolises the path of change as one of the keys to remain successful and abreast in this globalised market. Change is not an alternative to any problem or situation but the way of life. Change is the very essence of survival and growth for any organisation.

According to Burnes (2000) to match the needs of volatile environment and depending on its own strengths and weaknesses, an organisation experiment, undertake and adopt multi-level change to eliminate incompetency and disorganisation.

“Organizational change may result in altering the current realities by moving from present state to desired state due to internal and environmental pressure” (Singh, 2010)

Here efforts are made to acknowledge the fact that public utilities are no exception to change, no matter whether that change requires total restructuring of the organisation or involvement of private players. Water situation in Delhi has reached to a point where the present infrastructure, methods, technologies, administration are posing threat by pushing Delhi near to “Day Zero” which connotes dried river, water taps, water reservoirs. A complete turbulence and unrest, that is sure to come if we do not bring any radical change in this area.

The idea behind this paper is to take motivation from the revolutionary change that took place in the electricity distribution sector to transform the loss making, inefficient and unorganised board. The fundamental reason for such a major change were power distribution losses that has reached between 53 percent to 60 percent (“Sustainability Report 2021”, n.da) due to age-old network, lack of training and investment in modern technology, high accident ratio, power theft, red-tapism, manual error, corruption from lineman to top officials, unsound bill payment system, extended power cuts, unaddressed consumer complaints. Hence, a holistic approach was employed by TPDDL that calls for re-engineering the power distribution sector. TPDDL left no stone unturned and thereby excel in all fronts that encapsulate automation and digitisation, refurbished network, recognising consumer demands through satisfactions surveys, employee empowerment and training. All these efforts bring noticeable and appreciable results viz;

- Technical and commercial losses were abridged from 53.1 percent to just 7.26 percent.
- Consumer satisfaction has augmented from nil to 84 percent.
- Within 2 days the complaint against bill is solved instead of 45 days.
- Meters get replaced within 2.79 days as compared to 25 days earlier. (“Sustainability Report 2021”, n.db)
- Employee turnover and absenteeism of employees have been significantly reduced.

At present TPDDL is recognised as a precise example for implementing reactive change in well thought-out and non-violent manner.

Existing Water Situation in Delhi

One of the most critical and insufficient yet renewable resources is being the victim of mismanagement, redundant technology, feeble policies. Its management and sustainable development has become the challenge that is evident from its high water distribution losses which is 40 percent of the total water distributed. The specific and attributable cause behind this is water dripping due to rusting of pipes, which in fact allows water to get mixed with the drain water. The outcome is paucity of potable water and rise in the figure of water borne diseases.

The chief minister of Delhi, India Sh. Arvind Kejriwal also claimed

“water shortage to be a ‘management problem’, almost half of city’s water getting waste in distribution, groundwater depletion to contamination of water leading to serious health problems, the national capital of India seems to be getting entangled in a serious water cycle trap.(Kareila, 2018).

In addition to this, one of the vital areas that demands technologically sound plant, infrastructure, machines for filtration and removal of dirt, sludge and pollutants from waste water is sewerage treatment. Accordingly there is a broad gap between water produced and treated which is not able to serve the incessant increase in demand for water that surpasses its supply. This further leads to river pollution and harm the aquatic life and common man. Moreover, the existence of harmful pollutants not only causes river pollution but the treated water is so contaminated that it becomes harmful for even irrigation and washing purposes.

Hon’ble chief minister Shri Arvind Kejriwal has taken a bold yet risky step to allow sewage water to mix with Yamuna water after treatment which will enable to serve the present population with potable drinking water as well as maintain the minimum river flow. The chief minister has announced “that the city will start following the Singapore new water policy by using waste water to augment 15% to 20% of its water supply on a large scale” (Singh, July 11 2018).

On the other front, DJB has taken a requisite step to “bring clean water to the under-served communities by 2031”, In order to augment the quality of water in river Yamuna and upgradation of sanitation system, DJB has joined hands with AECOM for an integrated and sustainable master plan (Delhi Sewerage System, 2021)

AECOM is a U.S based service company that offers varied water management services apart from designing, engineering to construction and management in varied domains.

Both of these steps signify the seriousness of the problem that is going to multiply if no concrete and comprehensive action being taken.

The irony of Delhi is more perceptible when monsoon knocks at the door. At one side it gives relief by pouring dried Delhi with water and on the other side it puts a question mark on the drainage system of Delhi, which is also one of the important tasks assigned to DJB. It is evident that plenty of rains in Delhi cause water logging which not only affects the roads and infrastructure, but also leads to different types of water-borne and vector-borne diseases. Drainage facility is lacking in major portion of Delhi which again hints towards incapability and sheer ignorance on the part of DJB. It incurs heavy losses to the exchequer as the allocated funds are not been utilized to its best.



Figure 1. Showing water logging after rainfall in front of Khalsa College, Delhi. July 12, 2018

Another burning issue that entails immediate attention is harvesting of rain water and recharging the level of ground water. Present system and policies is not up to the standards and hence require a major change to administer a program that resolves the crying need for rain water harvesting in different spheres. But currently the situation is jumbled and hence craving for substantial step. According to a report in Times of India

“DJB has partnered with an NGO viz; FORCE to execute the desirable step of RWH system, It has opened three rain centers at R.K Puram, Lajpat Nagar, Dwarka. But all of them were lying non-operational; moreover the agreement between the NGO and DJB was never renewed once it lapsed after a year”. (Singh, May 10 2018)

It signifies the lack of interest and casual approach towards such a fundamental problem without which it is difficult to sustain.

Conclusively, it is crystal clear that nothing has been learned from the past mistakes and no fool proof plan has been developed yet to address the problem of water scarcity and mismanagement. DJB and the common man have not learnt to accumulate water and are not able to store Yamuna river water through dams and ponds or by building water reservoir.

NGT (National Green Tribunal) in its various order including its order dated September 10, 2014 has asked Delhi government and other appropriate authority to install RWH (Rain water harvesting system) in various educational institutions, hospitals (India Environment Portal, 2014). But in spite of NGT order the true concrete step of rain water harvesting is missing.

Implementing Kurt Lewin’s Force Field Analysis Model of Change

The present condition indisputably confirms the compelling and driving forces in the environment that signifies towards a revolutionary change to be adopted in case of DJB. At this juncture one of the popular models of change given by Kurt Lewin clearly portrays the condition of DJB. Accordingly there are two forces in the environment viz; pressing and restricting forces. Pressing

forces are those forces that drives towards a particular direction which calls for change and likely to keep it going (Rao, 2009). Restricting forces are those which stand to restrict or reduce the pressing forces. In context of DJB both these forces are depicted in the following Kurt Lewin model of change.

From the above aforesaid condition it is very well indicated that scarcity of water and its mismanagement will lead to public hostility and turmoil. Moreover the present policies, technology and infrastructure are not sufficient to prevent the Day Zero situation. In this scenario how can one talk of sustainable development when we are not able to meet the needs of present population. Any change initiative is likely to face some resistance from the employees' side which is natural.

But here we are not talking of any competitive or luxury product however a scarce resource which is renewable only if it is well managed otherwise it becomes non renewable and without which life does not exist.

Thus, it signifies the ascendancy of pressing forces as well as warns about the immediate riotous condition if concrete steps not taken in this direction. The above model undoubtedly points towards the ill-effects of water mismanagement and therefore indicating towards the major change initiative

We all are the eye—witnesses of the Latur crisis in 2016 which was hit by severe drought consecutively in the third year. The town's only source of water was water carrying train, private tankers as the dams, wells, borewells were almost dried. (Chitnis, 2016). Recently BJP minister Meenakshi Lekhi quote "The people of Delhi have been so stricken by water problem that they do not even care about social distancing when water tankers arrive and crowds gather to get water," ("Acute water shortage forcing", 2020). This substantiate that the present alarming situation of water is becoming uglier day-by-day that can even ignore the threat posed by the deadly corona virus.

This paper is undertaken with the clear intention to portray the criticality of efficient management of one of the limited resources water. This phenomenon is prevalent in almost any metropolitan cities of the world. The ground reality is more or less the same i.e.; population growth, scarcity of resources and inadequate plans to serve the needs of population. To meet the needs of masses public utilities constantly use natural resources, consequently exclude any prospect for evolving alternative sources.

But this practice is constantly pushing us towards day zero which entails no water and hints towards a hidden cry of sorrow and turmoil. Hence, water mismanagement may further affect our day-to-day life and is becoming a burden on the shoulder of the exchequer. So, this paper creates awareness and signals towards the needed change in DJB in all the areas i.e., water distribution, sewerage treatment, drainage system and rain water harvesting.

To conclude active interference of the government is the need of the hour to avoid a turmoil situation in the near future.

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