

ELECTRONIC MUNICIPALITY AS THE SELF-GOVERNMENT REFORMATION ELEMENT

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ABSTRACT

There still exist some problems regarding municipality transparency provision, public engagement in political communication and municipality service transparency in Georgia. Unfortunately, local government bodies lack special skills and techniques to build up transparent and effective relationship with citizens.

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Introduction. Our research clearly demonstrates that having efficient public administration is impossible without electronic governance and extreme attention is paid to its implementation in Georgia. Despite the fact that many things have progressed in the prism of electronic governance, implementing innovative e-governance solutions remains a challenge for Georgian public institutions, particularly for municipalities.

Research has been conducted based on systemic, structural-functional, institutional, sociological, interactive, comparative-analytical methods. Application of different types of methods enabled us to thoroughly study electronic communication practice of municipal establishments. For instance, through the help of comparative-analysis we managed to perceive the research object in total and point out its focal characteristics. So, we have studied Georgian e-governance on the level of central, regional and local government. Through the institutional analysis we have studied the local government as the political institute in line with other institutes. As for the functional analysis, it greatly contributed us to determine what is the function and purpose of local government bodies. Comparative method has been used in order to make the comparative analysis of local self-government electronic relation strategy and as a result, institutional unification tendency of communication with public of local government bodies' have been revealed.

Research results. Public engagement in local government service is one of the most discussed topics in Georgia. It takes significant place in self-government reformation process. Moreover, implementation of new systems, particularly e-governance is highly valued in our country. Nevertheless, many things have advanced in the prism of electronic governance, implementing innovative e-governance solutions remains a challenge for Georgian public institutions, especially for municipalities. Unfortunately, municipalities and public institutions have demonstrated significant gaps in regard with public engagement and using new tools of e-participation and electronic transparency [5].

In the period of local government reformation, it is heavily important to enhance the pace of informatization development on the local level. Significance of new informatization tools towards coping

with different challenges must not be neglected. For example, it is crucially important to implement information technologies not only in direction with information, accounting-statistical task solutions but with interactive task solutions as well. Municipal websites should not only provide with information but ensure public engagement in municipal activities too, which also implies more transparency of local government bodies and active involvement of citizens in decision making process [6].

On the modern stage, exactly electronic municipality represents the information and communication system of self-government bodies, providing all pertinent conditions for making efficient and result-oriented decisions. Undoubtedly, electronic municipality must be studied in line with municipal services, whether the business operations at work are effectively conducted or not and what is the relationship between the service personnel and outer agencies.

Implementing of electronic municipality and the utilization of modern technologies in municipal management facilitates to create the electronic service infrastructure, replace paper work with electronic service, improve the cooperation of local government with community and increase public awareness of e-services.

«Electronic municipality» deals with the municipal service provision for citizens and organizations through the internet. Nowadays, municipalities provide their services by applying information and telecommunication technologies, including e-governance portal, community centers and self-government agency websites [4].

The political and administrative system of local government is closely linked to public engagement. Specific characteristics which make municipalities special must be met by all municipalities in general, conditions include administrative borders, administrative centers, overall settlement, representative and executive bodies of elective self-government, property, budget-including incomes, all above mentioned things must be developed in legal-organizational form by public law legal entity [2]. Currently, the role of information communication technologies is extremely important, as it aims at strengthening the public services and their collaboration with citizens and various establishments [3]. From time to time, government approaches towards e-governance has changed- if its main function concerning government reformations in the past was solely to inform citizens, nowadays, its main challenge is to increase public participation in public policy.

In local government execution, Georgian local self-government legislation recognizes the following forms regarding public engagement:

- A) settlement general meeting;
 - B) Petition;
 - C) Civil Advisory Board
 - D) Participation in municipality council and municipality council committee meetings;
 - E) Report hearing concerning the conducted activities by the municipality mayor and municipal council member [1].
- After municipality portal examination, it has been revealed that from the angle of electronic communication in comparison with previous years portals have become complicated and communication with community has experienced regress.

After exploring some gaps and challenges we have developed electronic system concept by the name of “My municipality”, which is based on web-technologies and its working principle is demonstrated on figure#1.

Users can be connected with municipality web-portals through web-browser, it makes the identification/registration/authorization of the user according to his/her unique code and password. Users passing the registration automatically get connected with the server and with database respectively, enabling them to apply different modules or sub-modules pursuant to their privileges and what is more, information sensitivity and file system security will be totally preserved.

All type of information is included in database:

- * Making applications electronically;
- * Surveillance on application current status;
- * Notification-advice / consultation on the gaps, problems in the municipality etc;
- * Internal communication with municipal personnel;
- * Information exchange and dissemination among active users via E-mail or SMS;
- * Conducting surveys, referendum, informing citizens about social assistance etc;
- * Will of employment and creating CVs;

* Video monitoring, in case of additional registration, citizen has to be able to watch out sessions in live;

* E-engagement platform provision, discussion forum provision aiming at development of public-political culture between citizen and municipality;

Citizens and local government personnel who have been registered in the database represent the users of the program and have access to certain actions. For instance: To write applications electronically- citizen will be registered with his/her ID number and address, afterwards, he/she will be provided by different services by the local government body. These services include the following: citizen will be able to apply to municipal council electronically to recognize his/her property right, on the other side, municipal personnel/responsible person owns the right to confirm the application and prescribe it to specific service. What is more, citizen can stay at home and at the same time electronically watch out the stages and outcomes of application discussion.

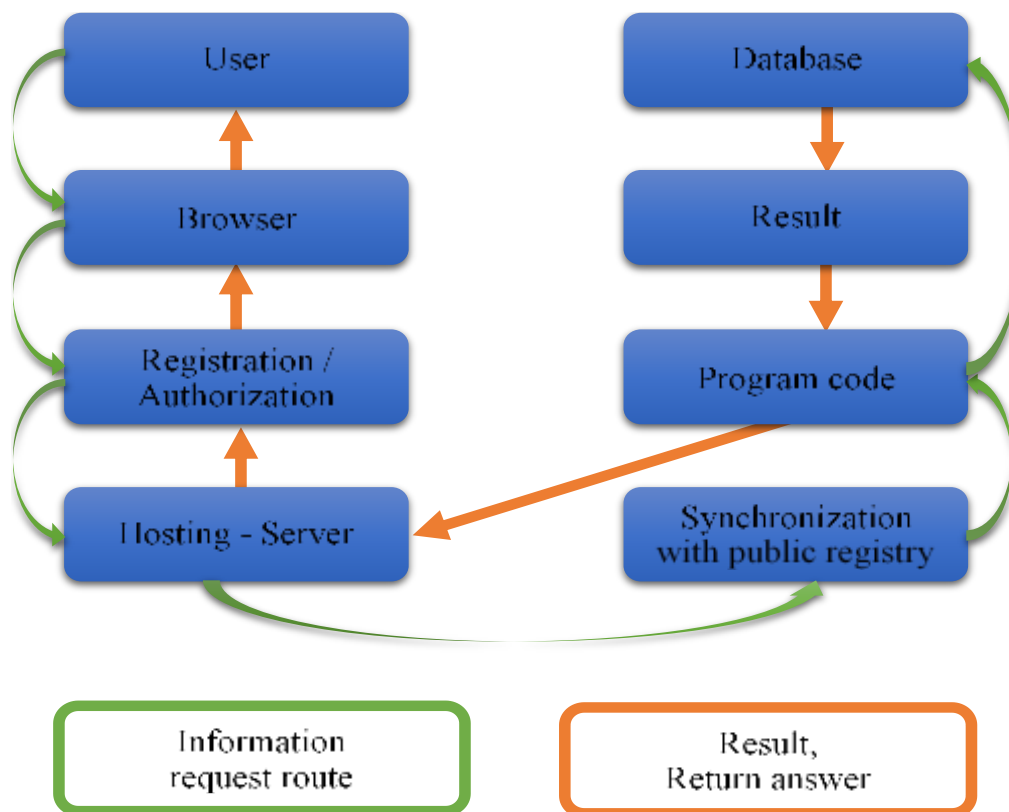


Fig. 1. «My municipality»

Conclusions. The concept of «Electronic municipality» will greatly contribute to the reduction of bureaucratic processes, save human resources and optimize management structures, strengthen personnel motivation, simplify communication, monitor information exchange, produce statistics in simple ways etc. Realization of e-governance on self-government level will be effective in case if its implementation deals with not only electronic transparency and e-service but e-administration, e-engagement, e-governance etc.

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