Governance In Local Governments: A Comparative Analysis Over the Web-Sites Of Metropolitan Municipalities Of Marmara Region

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ABSTRACT   *Municipalities, these days, spend the most effort in serving the community in the fields of transportation, education, culture and arts, nutrition, health-care, social services, environmental services while putting the major focus of interest in the emerging field of utilizing all media tools in regards to taking advantage of web portals and smart phone applications. In this globe, effective management and governance take transparency/participation/ accountability into account while communicating with the voters, thereby interrelating interactively with the citizens while getting feedback from them within the regions being served. In the era of knowledge and technology, municipalities aim to make use of face to face communication while keeping in mind that most recent communication technologies should be utilized.*

Key Words: Local Governments, Governance, Transparency, Social Media

Yerel Yönetimlerde Yönetişim: Marmara Bölgesi Büyükşehir Belediyelerinin Web Sayfaları Üzerine Karşılaştırmalı Bir Analiz

ÖZ   *Belediyeler, günümüzde ulaşım, eğitim, kültür sanat, gıda, sağlık, sosyal hizmetler, çevre ile ilgili her türlü hizmetlerin yanı sıra başarılarını arttırmak için her türlü medya aracının yanı sıra web ortamının ve akıllı telefon aplikasyonlarının tüm mecralarından yararlanma yolunda gayret göstermektedirler. Etkili yönetim ve yönetişimin 'Şeffaflık/Katılımcılık/Hesap Verebilirlik' kriterlerini de göz önünde bulundurarak seçmenle, hizmet bölgesindeki vatandaşla interaktif biçimde iletişime geçme ve feedback alabilme politikalarını hayata geçirmektedirler. Bilgi ve teknoloji çağında belediyeler yüzyüze iletişimin yanı sıra iletişim teknolojilerinin tüm olanaklarından faydalanmak zorundadırlar.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yerel Yönetimler, Yönetişim, Şeffaflık, Sosyal Medya

INTRODUCTION

Due to the election, audit,and responsibility aspects of democracy, local governments are shaped with effective functional political participation process. The society, arising from lack of social and geographical distance aspects, is able to represent itself directly within the local decision authorities while taking part in the decision making thereby having the opportunity to integrate itself to the system. (Çitçi, 1996:5-6; Çukurçayır, 2008: 26. Narrated by Damlapınar ve Balcı:91).

In order to especially enhance democracy culture in societies, municipality activities have to be developed. In this sense, local democracy is an arena where real and solid problems, which take an important part in the daily routine life of the society, are being revaled and discussed. In order for democracy to function properly, citizens should well be conscious of the democratic mechanisms, institutions, and organizations while perceiving the system as a means of trust and pride (Yıldırım, 2013:35).

As Ottoman Empire has not been able to improve itself simulateneously with the Western World in terms of social and economic initiatives, the roots of local governments were based upon the manifest and adjutacy tradition which was associated with the representation and cooperation between the society and the governor. This tradition was also popular not only in the Ottoman Empire but also within the Middle- Eastern societies. For example, Akkoyunlus, Karakoyunlus, and Safavids had this tradition as well (Ortaylı, 1978, 3-7. Narrated by: Turan, 2008:2)

As the Republic was established right after the Ottoman Empire was dispersed, municipalities have been widened and reorganized. Following the II. World War, Turkey transformed itself to multi-party system which increased the importance of local governments and its position in democracy since 1970. (Turan, 2008:4).

In this globe, looking back to the municipality activities and the evolvement of municipalities, urban change since 1960 diversified the social groups in cities, changed the nature of demand which in return caused an increase in societies who are interested in local politics. New legal and institutional arrangements regarding the city have been structured and implemented since 1980's somewhat a little later than expected right after urban transformation despite the opposition by the staff in the center. (Erder&İncioğlu, 2008:5).

In addition, changes since 1980 empowered the local governments, made the local politics very active as never had been before and diversified the people who cared for the local politics. These changes have been caused by several indicators. For example, military coup in 1980 and military coup management, in those periods, have brought political ban to current political parties in existance and newly formed parties felt that there is a high need to focus on local politics in order to attract new groups and staff (Erder&İncioğlu, 2008:6-7). 1984-1989 years of İstanbul which was also called the " Bedrettin Dalan" period was the starting period of " Municipality with Projects". Since then, "Project" focus had been a major point of saying for those who had been a candidate for municipality management staff (Erder&İncioğlu, 2008:6).

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As unexpected surprise, in 1989 local elections, Bedrettin Dalan period ended. The candidate of Social Democrat Populist Party, Prof. Dr. Nurettin Sözen, unexpectedly became the mayor by getting most of the votes from the suburbs. This ended up in Social Democrat Populist Party's being successful in local elections within İstanbul and many regions of Turkey. Along with that, within the period of 1989-1994, there had been a common perception in public that Social Democrat Populist Party had not been successful in local municipality. In 1994 local elections, there had been a historical transformation in Turkey. The candidate of Welfare Party, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan won the elections and the understanding of local municipality has totally been changed. The new staff communicated more closely with the society and in a short period of time, a new process had been introduced by this staff which directed the central politics (Karlı, 2014:259-260).

As new communication channels evolved, the ways of promoting the municipality activities/services and communicating with the voters have changed in terms of formats and methods. In this globe, the research conducted analyzes the web-sites of metropolitan municipalities of Marmara region and researches whether they make use of smart phone applications (such as Apple Store, Google Play Store) and social media (Facebook, Twitter etc) as new communication technologies emerge. Besides, on the perspective of governance principle in the context of the process of local government's informing the public, the transparency/participation/accountability aspects of the governance through the corporate websites of municipalities have been attempted to be analyzed.

New Communication Network and Governance in Local Governments

Developments on basic fields such as investments done by municipalities, environmental cleaning, social and cultural services transportation and education, directly effects the success of local governments. Local government's communication with the voter is a determining factor in this activity's being perceived as a success by the voters. It means that local government's success is equally related with its explaining the project to the public in a right and effective way as well as generating new services and projects. Nowadays, a successful management is highly associated with effective communication system. In this sense, establishing and operating a good communication network helps managerial outputs to be noticed. Insufficient communication, on the other hand, weakens the coordination and cooperation between public institutions and society. This is why managers have to implement and develop effective communication strategies in order to execute public services actively and enhance the corporate image. (Kalkan& Erdoğan, 2011: 221). Most importantly, this notion can only be realized through the understanding of effective governance. Today, all institution and organizations, including public and private sector, are trying to find solid communication ways using effective governance principles and methods with its citizens, partners or customers. In this regard, transparency /participation /accountability principles have to be mentioned as the major essential criterion of governance.

Concept of transparency in management science is defined as "openness in management", "transparency in management", "daylight management", "managerial democracy". These terms reveal an alternative management idea and model against secret

and self-enclosed practices which are dominant in management. Transparency is used for raising the curtain and seeing what is behind, publicity and knowing what's being hidden. At the same time, transparency expresses an environment where light is being transformed and products that are behind are clearly seen. The opposite is an environment that is light proof, expressed as dark and vague things, dull, confined, etc. (Eken, 2005: 22-23). In the 21st century knowledge and communication era, transparency is an inevitable outcome of managers and public authorities in explaining their practices and policies to the voters in the best appropriate/clear way.

Using transparency, participation and accountability principles correctly and effectively in democratic countries increase the reliability of the politicians and managers on behalf of the voter.

Providing effective, transparent and qualified service in public administration necessitates many change in the traditional public administration approach. The most important tool of achieving this goal is redefining work processes and public institutions by utilizing information and communication technologies at utmost level, providing B2B cooperation and knowledge sharing and providing public services in an electronic way. Considering this on behalf of municipal services, to reach every information through internet, that are defined under the jurisdiction of a municipality, brings transparency, as an important principle of governance. The prerequisite of being a transparent, honorable and trustworthy municipality is to share experiences and regulations with the public. Hence, transparency decreases confidentiality in regards to obligations and services being conducted while easing the access to get the right and freedom to obtain information. In short, municipal transparency means that decisions and decision making process of a municipality is open to the other parts of municipality, to civil society and to outside institutions and organizations. (Yılmaz, 2009:88)

Internet, as a means of transparency, accountability and participation, is both recognized as a communication and distribution channel by executing corporate web-site management. In fact municipalities, that are mostly related with public, started to use information technologies extensively in order to increase service quality, productivity and speed as realized in commercial sectors. A system that depends upon citizens who participate by mutual understanding and knowledge affects the local government's image positively while increasing the political vote capacity. Central authority and local government institutions in certain times face democracy demands that arise exempt from elections provided in the internet network (Yayınoğlu vd., 2007: 137).

Citizens, through the corporation's web-sites, news-sites, blogs, youtube, and similar platforms, as well as social media tools (especially Facebook, Twitter, Vine, Instagram etc), are able to interactively convey their public requests, ideas and criticisms to the managers. Today, with the aid of smart phones, individuals are able to record or take photographs of an event witnessed by them and then expose them to social media platforms (Karlı, 2014:263).

Method of the Study

Regarding the method of the study, findings gathered from internet sites that belong to municipalities are evaluated by content analysis and obtained data is attempted to be

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interpreted under different headings. Content analysis requires quantitative method for getting possible implications on extent of social reality from the content of texts. Besides, audit opportunity above concrete analysis can be done (Gökçe,1995:26). In line with revealing obtained data with tables, metropolitan municipality's web sites are attempted to be interpreted comparatively

Obtained Findings

Table 1: Communication Technologies and Social Media Utilization Level of Marmara Region Metropolitan Municipalities

Name of Municipality	Does it have a web site?	Does it have a Google play application?	Does it have an Apple Store application?	Does it have an official Facebook page?	Does it have an official Twitter page?
İstanbul	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kocaeli	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sakarya	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bursa	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tekirdağ	Yes	-	-	Yes	Yes
Balıkesir	Yes	-	-	Yes	Yes

In the study, it is observed that all Marmara Region- İstanbul, Kocaeli, Sakarya, Bursa, Tekirdağ and Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipalities have an official web site and official facebook and twitter pages. In addition to this, all İstanbul, Kocaeli, Sakarya, Bursa, Metropolitan Municipalities have smart phone applications, however Tekirdağ and Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipalities do not have smart phone applications.

Table 2: Research of Marmara Region Metropolitan Municipality's Web Sites In terms Of Transparency

Name of Municipality	Application to get information	Assembly Agenda/ Outcomes	Tender Notices / Tender Results	Financial Status Report
İstanbul	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kocaeli	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sakarya	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bursa	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tekirdağ	Yes	Yes	Yes	-
Balıkesir	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

In the study, it is observed that all Marmara Region- İstanbul, Kocaeli, Sakarya, Bursa, Tekirdağ and Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipalities have application to get information, assembly agenda/outcomes, and tender notices/tender results. Moreover, all municipality's Financial Status Report can be found at their web sites except for Tekirdağ Metropolitan Municipality.

Table 3: Presence of Participation Principle in Marmara Region Metropolitan Municipalities

Name of Municipality	Citizen- Local Government Interaction	Projects Involving Citizens to Local Government	NGO- Local Government Common Study
İstanbul	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kocaeli	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sakarya	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bursa	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tekirdağ	Yes	Yes	Yes
Balıkesir	Yes	Yes	Yes

In terms of governance approach participation principle, according to the data revealed from web sites of all Marmara Region- İstanbul, Kocaeli, Sakarya, Bursa, Tekirdağ and Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipalities, it is observed that participation principle is operated by all municipalities.

Table 4: Presence of Accountability Principle in Marmara Region Metropolitan Municipalities

Name of Municipality	Petition	Suggestion	Visitor	Complaint
İstanbul	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kocaeli	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sakarya	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bursa	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tekirdağ	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Balıkesir	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

While evaluating on behalf of accountability principle that is based on transmitting idea, suggestion, complaint and petition of citizens in every sphere to the government, it is observed that accountability principle is taken into consideration by all Marmara Region- İstanbul, Kocaeli, Sakarya, Bursa, Tekirdağ and Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipalities.

Conclusion

As information is spread unlimitedly, local governments have been forced to establish their own communication strategies. It is seen that Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (established in January 1994), Bursa Metropolitan Municipality (established in 1986- 1988 period), Kocaeli and Sakarya Metropolitan Municipalities (established in 1993), and Balıkesir and Tekirdağ Municipalities who have been agreed to become Metropolitan Municipalities under the Law numbered 6360 in November 12, 2012 by the Turkish Grand National Assembly, make use of new communication networks extensively. Considering website usage and transparency in management criterion, all the metropolitan municipalities that are covered in the research have been concluded to have corporate websites which are working actively. On the other side, except few municipalities, it is seen that many municipalities make use of smart phone google play and apple store application services in the context of new communication technologies.

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In addition, it is also observed that exempt from traditional media, "Facebook", "Twitter", "Instagram" and other social media tools which are widely used by millions of people in the whole World, are also used by local governments. In this perspective, it is detected that within the Metropolitan Municipalities of Marmara region, primarily Facebook and Twitter are extensively used while utilizing social media accounts, smart phone google play and apple store application services.

Besides, the extensive use of new communication technologies and social media tools by great mass caused the share of information being spread unlimitedly. Except for information that needs to be kept confidential for the benefit of public and national interest, public institutions and especially local governments have to be careful in terms of transparency. As democracy/individual rights and freedom evolved and media has transformed itself as media tools in the internet environment evolved simultaneously, people are seeking transparency in terms of the process of service purchases and revealing information to public.

In the research side of this study, between the dates of January 01- January 15, 2016 for a period of 15 days, web-sites of metropolitan municipalities of Marmara region have been researched under the transparency/participation/ accountability principles of governance. Under the transparency criteria of governance, application to get information, assembly agenda/outcomes, tender notices/tender results/financial status report have been concluded to clearly match with the standart transparency norms in order to inform the public in a transparent way of conduct

Researching the web-sites in the context of participation on behalf of governance, citizen-local government interaction, projects involving citizens to local government, NGO-Local government common study items have been analyzed. As a result, it has been depicted that six metropolitan municipalities of Marmara region gives a special importance to participation principle.

Within the scope of accountability principle of governance, it is found out that all local governments of Marmara region metropolitan municipalities pay the most attention to this concern. In this sense, petition, suggestion, visitor, and complaint titles are paid special attention to by the local government's web-sites and it is seen that web-sites provides effective services to public in these titles.

Through the data received, it can be said that local municipality managers have to transform their decisions taken on public services, investments, implications, and other related decisions transparently to public.

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