Efficient personnel administration is just one of the important inputs which helps in producing effective municipal administration. Its usefulness in municipal management cannot be gainsaid. The standard of municipal services rendered is largely contingent upon the nature and quality of personnel administration. In brief, to tackle complex problems of urban living the need for sound personnel system seems ineluctable. By greater mobilisation of financial resources municipal services may not improve if the personnel system is not properly planned and managed. "The mode of recruitment, scales of salaries, wages, and other allowances, leave conditions, policies of postings and transfer, rules and disciplinary control, promotion system, welfare benefits and retirement benefits, training facilities, management of conflicts within the system (both inter-personnel and inter-agency/departmental) all these constitute the crux of personnel administration."

1). Municipal Personnel System:

Any attempt to study municipal personnel administration in India should precede a brief reference to the personnel systems. Basically, municipal personnel system is of three types "Separate", "Unified" and "Integrated". A "separate personnel"
system refers to a system in which each municipal body has power to appoint and dismiss its own personnel, and the personnel are not transferable to any other jurisdiction by a central body. Under "Unified" system all or certain categories of personnel of municipal bodies form a single career service for the entire state. Under this system, appointment, promotion, transfers and dismissal of personnel are administered by an agency at the state level. This municipal service is distinct from the state civil service. The third type is an integrated system, in which the personnel of the national or state government and those of municipal bodies form parts of the same service, transfers being possible not only between municipalities but also between municipal government and national or state government.

These personnel systems have their respective advantages and disadvantages. To state the arguments for and against these three types of personnel system is necessary for setting the theoretical backdrop to evaluate particular municipal personnel system. The basic advantage of separate system is that it contributes to the idea of local autonomy especially in the field of recruitment and management of its own manpower resources. Under the separate system municipal bodies have the power needed to ensure the loyalty and effective performance of their employees. Employees, when locally recruited, are likely to know the local conditions better and the opportunities for continuous
employment in their own communities may induce some of the talented young persons to seek a career in the service of the local Municipal Government. The separate system has certain disadvantages too. Under this system, promotion to the higher category of Service is very much restricted and thus it can not attract competent people. In so far as the small municipality is concerned it suffers from a number of difficulties. It is financially incapable of attracting the best talents. Above all, if locally recruited personnel are to spend their whole career in a locality, some kind of local vested interests are likely to emerge.

The unified personnel system may enable municipalities especially the smaller ones, to obtain the services of more qualified persons and can prevent nepotism and favouritism in appointments and other personnel matters. It involves a certain degree of central control over municipal personnel matters and also provides for delegation of personnel functions to municipal authorities to the maximum extent practicable and may facilitate the devolution of development functions to local authorities. As against these advantages, there are certain formidable disadvantages of Unified system. These are: (1) where Unified Service covers only part of the staff, new problems arise in relationship between employees who are in the unified service and those who do...
not. (2) Under this system, there are possibilities of conflict between the Municipal Council and the personnel which in the long run would affect adversely the municipal services. (3) The problem of designing training programmes and their financing in the system cannot be ruled out. (4) Top calibre personnel are ever so to the municipal service because of its lack of dynamism and glamour.

The integrated personnel system designates an integrated service covering both national/state and municipal governments is based on merit principles. Its distinctive advantages may be summed up as follows: (a) since it is an integrated service system, even a small municipality can get talented and skilled personnel. (b) It permits the most extensive area basis for recruitment. (c) It facilitates the estimation of national manpower needs and the organisation of educational and training programmes to meet them. (d) It gives the central/state government a greater stake in the improvement of living conditions in small towns in order to make live more attractive. In spite of these advantages, the integrated personnel system suffers from certain serious shortcomings. These are: (a) since, on staff management the local council has less authority, the staff may not be responsive; (b) since the environment of a municipal government and that of central/state is altogether different the personnel will have their problems in discharging their duties; (c) The
danger of excessive centralisation of authority with its resultant delays and lack of adaptation to local needs would be ever present.

ii) Municipal Personal Administration in India : An overview.

Municipal government in India suffers from, inter alia, the absence of a well-organised and effective system of personnel administration. This explains, to a large extent growing gap between the civic needs of citizens and the actual performance of municipal administration. Unless there has been an effective and efficient personnel system the challenges of managing urban development cannot be properly met. Since Independence, Commissions and Committees laid stress on this point. Nevertheless, barring in a few states (i.e. Gujarat and Maharashtra) no perceptible changes have taken place in this sphere. There is no uniformity in municipal personnel system throughout the country.

Against this, three distinct models named after Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Maharashtra have evolved following the practice in respect of municipal personnel. Acceptance of a model in a given state is largely contingent upon the unique conditions in which the model is supposed to operate. This offers us an opportunity for evaluating the relative importance of various models of the municipal personnel system.
Under Tamil Nadu Model, the officers serving municipal government are transferable both horizontally and vertically, i.e., between municipalities and also between national state and municipal government. This model has been prevalent in all southern states, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. In operational terms, model brings an integration between the state and municipal service up to the level of departmental heads; however, in the event of lower grade, separate system remains. In Rajasthan model, municipal services are unified up to the supervisory and clerical levels; but the lowest level employees continue to be separately recruited and controlled at the municipal level. In pursuance of this model, Uttar pradesh, Punjab, Haryana have constituted state cadres of municipal services controlled by the respective state governments. The Maharashtra Model has been practiced by the states of West Bengal (with a minor deviation) and Gujarat. In these states municipal authorities have been given exclusive competence to recruit and manage their own personnel. In these states, although rules are framed to control certain aspects of personnel administration of the municipalities, however, in matter of recruitment and other management issues, the municipalities have been exclusive freedom. Towards the evolution of the above models the contribution of various commissions and committees must be taken into consideration. A brief note of these committees may be attempted to trace its development. This would enable us to understand the
system that exists in West Bengal.

The Royal Commission on Administrative Decentralisation (1907-08) made some pioneering recommendations in municipal personnel system. It observed "the appointment of municipal secretaries and other chief executive officers, engineers and health officers of municipalities should require the sanction of provincial government in case of cities and of Divisional Commissioner in case of other small municipalities."

Immediately after Independence, the municipal personnel system received an energizing attention. The First Conference of the State Ministers in charge of local self government (1948) adopted the following resolution. "In view of the fact that provincial cadre will facilitate recruitment of suitable personnel from a wide field and provide a more efficient and contended service, this conference is of opinion that there should be provincial cadres for the higher executive and technical staff employed by local bodies." (6)

The second conference of the Ministers of Local Self Government in 1964 resolved in favour of previous resolution. The Central Council of Local Self Government along with the Fourth Conference of Ministers of Town and country planning (1963), emphasised on the improvement of efficiency and standard of muni-
cipal services and recommended in favour of provincialisation of administrative, health, engineering and town planning services of the municipalities.

The Rural-Urban Relationship Committee had made certain notable recommendations on municipal personnel administration. The Committee observed that "the limited practice of having common cadres for the state and local authorities for the superior executive and technical services has, on the whole worked well. The committee favoured an integrated municipal personnel system for the executive and technical posts in municipalities, because the state wide unified cadre for municipal administration would not be able to attract properly qualified persons.

The Committee on the Service Conditions of municipal employees in its report (1968) felt that the need for strengthening municipal personnel system to gear up the municipal bodies. Like the Rural Urban Relationship Committee, the committee favoured an integrated personnel system for serving both State Government and municipal bodies.

The Task Force on Planning and Development of Small and Medium Towns and Cities, appointed in 1975 by the Union Ministry of Works and Housing in its report (1977) opined that "Unified municipal cadre is definitely helpful to place the services of qualified technical and administrative personnel within the reach of local
bodies." The Study Group on Constitution, Powers and Laws of the Urban Local Bodies and Municipal Corporation was the first of the four study groups which were appointed by Union Ministry of Works and Housing in 1981 in pursuance of a resolution of the Eighteenth meeting of the Central Council of Local Government and Urban Development. The Study Group gave an emphasis on municipal personnel system. It suggested that "while creation of posts should be done by municipal authorities, appointment should be done through a variety of means: class I posts should follow the rules of relevant state cadre, class II posts are to be filled on the basis of selection by the state public service commission, while municipal authorities are to appoint persons in the remaining Class III and Class IV posts. That is to say, the class I posts would be mostly reserved for state employees belonging to an integrated cadre the class II posts would be reserved for state appointees to a unified cadre, while the remaining employees belonging to class III and class IV cadres belong to separate cadres controlled by municipal bodies."

The Task Force on Management of Urban Development was one of the four Task Forces appointed by the Planning Commission of India (1983). Its report highlighted that "personnel development has been the weakest aspect of urban management in India". The Task Force pleaded for the formation of state cadres for key positives in municipal management like chief-officer, engineer,
accounts officer, revenue officer and health officer.

Thus, it is evident that a happy blending of integrated, unified and separated cadres seems necessary in the formation of municipal personnel system.


In West Bengal, the municipalities are regulated by B. M. Act 1932 as amended. The Personnel System is embodied in the Act itself. To say the least, the changing needs of municipal management cannot be adequately met by the existing personnel system. Hence, the government amended the Act suitably in 1980. Certain major changes have taken place under the Amending Act 1980: First, the erstwhile provisions of the Bengal Municipal Act enabled the State Government to appoint an Executive Officer for a particular municipality if the affairs of the municipality were found not properly managed. Such Executive officers were different from Executive Officers required to be appointed by the Commissioners in public interest. The Amending Act had done away with duality of the position of the Executive Officer. Presently under the section 66 there is only one category of Executive Officer to be appointed by the State Government for a municipality or a group of municipalities. Likewise, the State Government may appoint an Engineer, Finance Officer, Health Officer at the expenses of the State Government for a municipality or a group of municipalities.
By virtue of the provisions of sub-section (1) of section 68, these officers are subordinate to the Executive Officer who is designated to be the Principal Executive Officer. The purpose of these provisions is to streamline line and buttress the administration of the municipality without resorting to direct interference by the State Government. Second, it has been provided that the municipal board can augment the staff strength of a municipality only to the extent of one percent of the total number of posts of officers and employees as existed in the year immediately preceding. Any appointment contemplated beyond this proportion will require the prior sanction of the State Government. Third, within the limit of one percent the municipal board is not competent to create posts of all categories freely. A distinction has been made between the power to create a post and the power to make appointment thereto. While the power to determine the staff strength as well as the power to create posts of officers and employees and fix the salaries and allowances for them rests with the commissioners at a meeting, creation of a post carrying a monthly salary of more than one thousand rupees or salary raising by periodical increments to more than one thousand rupees will require the sanction of the State Government. Fourth, the appointing authority for the posts carrying the monthly salary upto Rs. 250 lies with the Chairman. The Commissioners at a meeting may appoint to the posts carrying salary upto Rs. 750. But in respect of appointment to the posts carrying salary above
N. 760 would require prior approval of the State Government.

Guided by previous experiences, the government wanted to curtail the freedom of the municipal bodies in respect of appointment of the staff. Salary and emoluments of the municipal employees were so unattractive that the government felt the need for raising them suitably. Under section 66A the State Government may if it considers necessary for the purpose of rationalising the pay scale and other terms and conditions of the service, appoint a Pay Review Committee and the decision of the State Government upon the recommendations or such committee shall be binding on the commissioners of all municipalities. In fact, the Government of West Bengal appointed a Pay Review Committee under the Chairmanship of Shri Sambhunath Bose in 1978. The Committee, broadly classified the employees totalling 30,000 (Approximately) into three categories: lower subordinates (Helpers) around 19,000, subordinates 10,000 and supervisory around 1,000. The Committee was authorised to renew the recommendations of the two Pay Committees headed by Late M. K. Raichoudhury I.C.S. (Rtd.). The Government accepted the recommendations with some modifications. The main feature of the Roy Choudhury Committee recommendations was "for the first time, the municipal employees were considered to be of comparable status with the state government employees and entitled to comparable
pay, allowances, similar service conditions and retiring benefits." But in its detailed report the Roy Choudhury Committee proceeded to draw up pay scales on the basis of paying capacity of the individual municipality. In reality, the recommendations failed to satisfy the municipal employees. "Though a small percentage of municipalities accepted the recommendations, for the majority of them Roy Choudhury Committee's recommendations remained a dead letter." The Pay Review Committee (1979) suggested an uniform pay scale throughout the state for a class of employees doing the same or comparable nature of work. Such uniformity of pay scales was in conformity with principle adopted for state government employees.

"...and idea has also gained ground that the activities of the urban local bodies are, in fact, an extension of the activities of the State Government, and the employees are entitled to be considered at par with State Government employees in pay and service conditions". To motivate the municipal employees the committee suggested a promotion policy by removing the stagnation in service, inter-grade promotion and long pay scales.

Having recommending pay structure and promotion policy the Pay Review Committee examined the policy of recruitment for municipal bodies. The Committee suggested that necessary provision in Bengal Municipal (B.M. Act) Act 1932 should be inserted so that Municipal Service Commission could be established...
constituted for the recruitment of the municipal employees excepting the helper class (Class IV staff). The authority of the Municipal Service Commission should be unrestricted in the matter of selection of municipal staff of all classes for appointment. It may hold annual examination for all categories of municipal staff and prepare panels for each category. Panels drawn up thus will be valid for one year only. The Committee is competent to prepare recruitment rules and set forth the yardsticks to base the size of municipal administration.

Thus, attempt has been made to bring about uniformity in respect of the appointment of municipal employees, the establishment size etc. As yet the Municipal Service Commission has not come to function. But recruitment rules have been framed. If the evils of spoil system are any guide the above recommendations may be taken as a significant improvement. To do away with the patronage and political interference in the recruitment of municipal personnel, the need for uniform rules can hardly be ignored.

From the above, it is clear that a suitable mix of integrated, unified and separate systems has been favoured for the municipal employees in West Bengal. Reform of municipal personnel administration rests on as to how to build administrative capability for the purpose of implementing urban development programmes, particularly under IDSMT. The IDSMT programme, in
fact, earmarked 3 p.c. of project cost for administrative purpose. Most of the municipalities found however, this sum of money highly inadequate for the purpose. Guideline of IDSMT provide "it is necessary to equip the staff employed in the implementing agencies and the municipalities with adequate training and expertise". It has further been stated "the state government should undertake to get the concerned planning and executing staff of the local bodies trained in the regional centre of training in municipal administration under this Ministry or in any other suitable training organisation before the project is sanctioned by the Government of India."

In this context, it is relevant to mention the role played by the Institute of local government and urban studies set up by the government of West Bengal. The Institute offers training facilities to different categories of municipal employees. Training becomes meaningful only in the context of a philosophy of organisational progress. Unfortunately most of the municipal bodies do not have definite strategies of training. As a result, there is a general drift in training activities which do not lead to the fulfilment of the core objectives of training programmes. To make training courses a success several important factors must be taken into account, such as, specific training need of a member of organisation, designing of the programme, duration of training courses, learning atmosphere, suitable visual aids and good trainer.
Thus the State Government has been making serious attempts in building up capability of the municipal administration. Although, the scenario has not significantly changed as yet, signs of improvement are clearly manifest. By and large, fair implementation of IDSMT projects in different towns indicates that the municipal administration has been gaining strength.

REFERENCES:

2. Ibid., p. 10.
4. Ibid., p. 17.
5. Ibid., p. 19.
6. Ibid., p. 21.
8. Report of the Committee on the service conditions of Municipal Employees (Govt. of India, Ministry of Health and Family Planning and Urban Development, 1968).


16. West Bengal (W.B.), Government Resolutions No. 3029/MIM-21/73 dated 17.8.73 and No. 3126/MIM-21/73 dated 21.8.73.

17. West Bengal (W.B.), Government Resolution No. 759/LSG-4H-10/76 dt. 19.3.1976.

18. Report of the Pay Review Committee for the Urban Local Bodies 1979, Govt. of West Bengal, p. 3

19. Ibid., p. 3.

20. Ibid., p. 11.

21. Ibid.,

22. Workshop on management of IDSMT Programme, 1983, Siliguri. It was felt that 25 percent of the project cost was highly inadequate for meeting the administrative expenses for a period of five years.