

Implementing e-Governance in India – Challenges, Opportunities and Prospects



Vineet Nagpal

Research Scholar, Singhania University, Jhunjunu, Rajasthan
Email: vineet.nagpal@yahoo.com
(M) +91 9873 410 841

Dr. Anup Sharma

Department of CS & IT, Singhania University, Rajasthan

Prof. Ravinder Nath Rajotiya

Department of ECE, JEMTEC, Greater Noida

Abstract

e-Governance, paradigm shift over the traditional governance, refers to facilitating government policies, schemes, services and other people centric initiatives to the people using electronic means and measures. This paradigm shift has brought a new age digital ICT revolution in the efficiency and quality of service delivered to the citizens. The present study substantiates these assumptions about e-governance by analyzing challenges and opportunities in the implementation of e-Governance for the foundation of digital society and to increase the participation of people along in e-Governance projects so that these projects can be implemented successfully.

Keywords: e-Governance, ICT, Digital Society

Introduction

In the traditional governance the communication was rigid, slow and discriminatory and there was ample scope of miscommunication or no communication. It is because these reasons that in spite of government's will and resource sufficiency, the benefits and share in the national output could not percolate to the bottom and people at the bottom of the pyramid were deprived of the gains from democracy because people of the country were deprived of their dues and rights and the vision of inclusive and happy society has been lost in oblivion.

The concept of e-Governance is an important constituent of the digital society. Digital society is one where all activities are done in such a way that there is an efficient and effective optimum utilization of resources and the systems are reliable and eco-friendly. That can be made possible by installing tailor made IT solutions for major activities in the city. Digital society requires an efficient utilities distribution (Electricity, water and gas supply), an efficient transport system, eco-friendly waste disposable

system, fast service providers ranging from food and necessities deliveries, health services, job work, house –keeping, green energy production and consumption and so on. All these can be effectively managed and beneficial to the masses only when ICT is used in the processes and that it brings forth the role of E-Governance.

Aspects of e-Governance

Economics around the globe is becoming knowledge oriented that is enhanced by exhaustive use of innovation and technology. India is one of the largest country on the planet in terms of population, geographical conditions, as well as diversified nature with different types of cultures, languages and belief systems, any initiative which is person to person based has to be very elaborative thus exhausting the resources in basic functioning of the system. This makes almost no scope for improvements in the existing system. e-Governance may be good answer to this issue.

The implementation of e-Governance systems has many aspects. Generally, e-Governance services capital intensive, are non-profit high

payback period. Further approachability and connectivity is another issue to make the service accessible to masses.

Structure of e-Governance

Based on specialized, hierarchical and administrative probabilities, the following four phases are structure of e-Governance:

- Classification
- Operation
- Vertical integration
- Horizontal integration

These four phases are organized at various levels of coordination and complication. The first stage classification focuses on classifying government information and presenting it on the web. This stage is concentrated on establishing an on-line presence for the government. In this stage operation e-Governance initiatives are focused on connecting the internal government system to on-line interfaces and allow citizens to transact with government systems to on-line interfaces and electronically, are referred as transaction-based e-governance. This stage acts as association between the online database and transactions. Though, the significant advantages of employing e-Governance are in fact derived from the integration of underlying processes across various stages of the government. People can communicate with only single point of interaction with government to initiate and transact with any level of governmental operation. This may occur in vertical and horizontal means. Vertical combination indicates to local and central level of government associated for any purpose, functioning or services of the government, while horizontal integration allude incorporation across different purpose, functioning or services.

Vertical or intra-departmental integration is mandatory before implementing the horizontal or inter-departmental integration due to different levels of complications and complexities associated. Vertical integration at different levels of government should take place before the horizontal integration, because the gap between the levels of government is small than the difference between different functions. Administrators prefer to interact with their local

or central counterparts than with other departments in the same level of government. The vertically and horizontally integrated e-governance signifies model situation, in which people have online access to government services available everywhere with a transparent mechanism.

Challenges, Opportunities and Prospects

Language: There are 22 different languages and this diversified nature of India is a huge challenge for implementing e-governance projects as e-Governance applications are written in English language. India is a very diversified country, here more than 22 different languages and a large number of local *bolis* this expanded nature of India is really difficult for executing e-administration projects as e-Governance applications are written in English language.

Low Literacy: Literacy level of India is low when compared other countries which is a huge obstacle in implementation of e-governance projects. Illiterate people are not able to access the e-governance applications; hence the projects do not get much success.

Lack of Digital Literacy: Most of the people in India are not aware about the usage of Information Technology and digital literacy is almost no-existent among more than 90% of India's population. This should be given importance for the successful penetration of e-Governance services.

Lack of Integrated Services: Most of the e-governance services which are offered by the state or central government are not integrated. There is a lack of communication between different departments of government. Hence, the information that resides within one department has no or very little meaning to some other department of the government.

Awareness of e-Governance Services: Citizens are not aware of the governance facilities. There is need for generating widespread awareness among the public at large

Services are not accessible easily: More than half of India's population live in rural areas which are remote and too isolated to benefit from the country's impressive economic progress. Therefore, government has to provide

internet access through public terminals as a part of their universal access efforts.

Geography: Communication networks must be established in all areas, as the villages and remote areas are not connected by communication networks.

Cost: A huge amount of money is involved in implementation, operational and evolutionary maintenance tasks. These costs must be low enough so that to guarantee a good cost/benefit ratio.

Low per Capita income: Per capita income of India is low as compared to the other countries. Therefore, people cannot afford online services provided by the government which is a challenge for implementation of e-governance.

Privacy and Security: A lack of clear security measures and regulations can hamper the development of projects that contain sensitive information such as personal information, financial records, health records etc.

Focus on Government Process Re-engineering and Change Management: Need for business/administrative process re-engineering and change management in service delivery departments like utilities, urban development, revenue, transport, social justice and empowerment, health, public health, commercial taxes, Haryana Urban Development Authority and Police department. The aim is to eliminate unnecessary steps and bring objectivity in decision-making process. There is a need for re-writing of procedures in various areas of governmental activity and re-looking at the activities per se. The involvement of users during entire phases of project life cycle, addressing issues faced by them and motivations of employees at all levels is a critical success factor.

Capacity Building in Departments: Capacity Building at state level and project level is absolutely necessary. There is a need to set up state e-Governance mission team, project level e-Governance mission teams) by finalizing regular manpower policy on priority. Better training of government **Institutionalization** officials is required to appreciate the importance of IT projects in present day scenario is must.

The human element is crucial to the success of automation projects. Once a key champion of the project leaves, the administration becomes less responsive and the centre's key value proposition to the communities disappears, as also the change of key individuals' results in loss of all efforts and initiatives earlier taken. Behind every successful e-Government project is an individual champion. Project management processes need to be institutionalized.

Project Ownership and Management: There is a need for better ownership of IT projects by the departments. The department ownership of e-Government is vital, because no external agency can drive the kind of change that is needed in implementing e-Government. However, a department may not have the capacity to use the correct method and latest design techniques in developing the application, e-Government efforts should therefore be supported by a central agency, which can provide the necessary guidance in the use of correct methodology and act as a facilitator in identifying services to be delivered and in preparation and implementation of ICT detailed project reports.

Synthesize e-Governance Initiatives: There is also a need for developing policies/frameworks for bringing in comprehensiveness/standardization to the approach. A focus is required on having a common core infrastructure for all departments and common standards and frameworks for interoperability/scalability of applications.

Financial Sustainability of e-Governance Projects: Working out a self-sustainable revenue model. Build-in the concept of user-charge into e-Governance projects at the initiation stage.

Applications Roll-out Strategy: In e-Government initiatives, not all steps need to be, or should be, automated. However, such projects need clearly identified goals and measurable benefits to citizens and business in terms of delivery times, reduced corruption and lower costs. Focus on applications, which have a potential in improving the quality of citizen interface.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that our country is ideally stepping into building information society and going for e-Governance. Government is gaining some unsatisfactory progress by initiating some programs and new online e-services. In order to exploiting the benefits of ICTs, we need to develop sufficient and efficient infrastructure, capital and investment, enable easy and wider accessibility and generate skilled human resources. However, India as a most developing countries is facing vast challenges while implementing e-Governance successfully. Political, social, economic, technological aspects are the sectors where government is facing more troubles. However, the major concerns are the lack of IT infrastructure and services, multiple identifications used to access the e-Governance portal, low speed Internet, etc. are major e-Governance strategies and to get rigorous knowledge of implementing e-governance successfully in India.

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