

Challenges of Implementation of E-Governance

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ABSTRACT

Today, citizens are becoming more and more conscious about their rights to get the required services at their doorstep and both the state and central governments recognize the need to deliver faster and efficient services to ordinary citizens through e-governance which is an effective instrument of administration. India's experience in e-governance and ICT initiatives has demonstrated significant success in improving accessibility, cutting down costs, reducing corruption and extending help and increased access to un-served groups. e-governance initiatives have reached millions of people belonging to these sections of society.

1. Introduction

The concept of good governance has also emerged from the felt need called New Public Management which began in the early 1980s, to improve public service efficiency. The core values around which new public management works are economy, efficiency and effectiveness. e-governance making use of ICT for better government functioning, is a tool for achieving good governance. Good governance requires a long-term, strategic approach evolved through a consensus process. It also requires a long-term perspective on what is needed for sustainable human development. This can only result from an understanding of the social context of a given society or community. e-governance connects the citizen and government with ease and speed and hence has a pivotal role in the governance agenda. Good governance has 8 major characteristics.

2. Objectives

1. to understand the significance of e governance
2. to know the challenges of implementation of e governance

3. Method

Analytical method has been employed

4. Scope

Problem area of the e-governance has been taken into account in the present study

5. Development of thought

E governance involves participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive services and follows the rule of law. It ensures that corruption is minimized and transparency is maximized, that views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decisionmaking. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society. Good governance is considered the single-most important factor for national development and poverty alleviation. It is based on certain key characteristics which are

presented below. Participation: Participation by both men and women is the key cornerstone of good governance and it could be either direct or through legitimate intermediate institutions or representatives. Participation needs to be informed and organized. This means freedom of association and expression on the one hand and an organized civil society on the other.

Rule of law: Good governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced impartially. It also requires full protection of human rights, particularly those of minorities. Impartial enforcement of laws requires an independent judiciary and an impartial and incorruptible police force.

6. Transparency:

Transparency means that when decisions are taken their enforcement is done in a manner that follows rules and regulations. It also means that information is freely available and directly accessible to those who will be affected by such decisions and their enforcement. It also means that enough information is provided and that it is provided in easily understandable forms and media. Responsiveness: Good governance requires that institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe.

7. Consensus oriented:

There are several actors and as many view points in a given society. Good governance requires mediation of the different interests in society to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interests of the whole community and how this can be achieved. It also requires a broad and long term perspective on what is needed for sustainable human development and how to achieve the goals of such development. This can only result from an understanding of the historical, cultural and social contexts of a given society or community.

8. Equity and inclusiveness:

A society's well being depends on ensuring that all its members feel that they have a stake in it and do not feel excluded from the mainstream of society. This requires all groups, but particularly the most vulnerable, to have opportunities to improve or maintain their well being.

Effectiveness and efficiency: Good governance means that processes and institutions produce results that meet the needs of society while making the best use of resources at their disposal. The concept of efficiency in the context of good governance also covers the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the environment.

9. Accountability:

Accountability is a key requirement of good governance. Not only must governmental institutions be accountable to the public but also private sector and civil society organizations must be accountable to their institutional stakeholders. Who is accountable to whom varies on whether decisions or actions taken are internal or external to an organization or institution. In general an organization or an institution is accountable to those who will be affected by its decisions or actions. Accountability cannot be enforced without transparency and the rule of law.

10. Maturity Model

E-government applications and projects generally pass through various stages such as publishing of information on the web to carrying out transactions and even complete process re-engineering so as to bring in the true value and benefits of the efforts to the citizens. Gartner, an international e-business research consultancy firm, has formulated a four-phase e-governance model which can serve as a reference for governments to position where a project would fit in the overall evolution of an e-government strategy. In each of the four phases, the delivery of online services and use of ICTs in government operations serve one or more of the aspects of e-government: democracy, government, business. In most cases, governments start with the delivery of online information, but soon public demand and internal efficiency ask for more complex services. Of course this change will take effect gradually; some services will be online earlier than other services. In some cases the public demand is the driving force; in other cases cost saving aspects for the government lead the change.

11. Challenges of Implementation

Implementation of e-governance has changed the way of living of the people in many countries. The Gol has embraced e-governance as a trigger and means to redefine and streamline outdated, inefficient processes and procedures while simultaneously exploiting the full power of modern ICT. The aim is to provide citizens with easier and faster access to government services. India has recognized the benefits of e-governance and through it, ushered in a paradigm of citizen-centric service delivery. e-governance is reforming the way government manages and shares information with external and internal clients. Specifically, it harnesses ICT to transform relations with citizens, businesses and the various arms of government. There are however, numerous challenges. Some of the key areas needing attention are as follows:-

12. Clarity in objective setting:

Project approval and funding of projects through multiple departmental budgets lead to wide variations in the approach to project objective setting, without a clear focus on outcomes or on building sustainable services. The service needs of

citizens/ businesses and those of other departments are often either overlooked or accorded lower priority in relation to internal needs. Very often, objective setting is purely in ICT terms such as computers, networks and so on which are specified in great detail, while government business process outcomes are either not defined or are defined in vague terms that do not lend themselves to measurement post implementation. Ensuring service delivery: e-governance projects have primarily focused on internal process automation and generally are hardware and infrastructure driven with little focus on citizen service delivery or outcomes.

13. Awareness:

There is a general lack of awareness regarding benefits of e-governance as well as the process involved in implementing successful G2C, G2B and G2G projects. The administrative structure is not geared for maintaining, storing and retrieving governance information electronically. The general tendency is to obtain the data from the files as and when required rather than using document management and workflow technologies. Awareness of government officials about ICT: More than anything else, it is the mindset of government officials that poses the biggest bottleneck to e-government. There are a number of reasons why they resist the use of computers beyond the usual typing of letters and documents. The primary reasons are that they are resistant to any kind of change in their familiar working environment; they fear that computerization of different government activities may make some people redundant and think that computers are meant for low-level typist kind of work.

14. Public Awareness about ICTs:

Although there is much hype about IT among the younger generation, there is not a high level of awareness among the general public about how ICTs may be useful to their lives. Also, there is a cultural inhibition about the use of PCs in this country. From a cultural context, people are generally not familiar with the concept of using computers. ICTs are still generally perceived as catering to the rich and the elite. As a result, there is no demand or pressure from the public for service delivery through the use of ICTs. Non-acceptability of IT systems: It is often seen that even after an IT system is implemented in a government office, it becomes hard for government officials to convince themselves to use it. Besides the general lack of awareness about ICTs and the fears discussed earlier, some other factors also play a part in the non-acceptability of IT systems. They fear that important data may get lost or they are doubtful about the security features of computers. Leveraging Private Capital: The experience of successful e-governance initiatives indicates that well structured service-oriented projects can attract private capital linked to explicit service-linked revenues from users or from government. The current system of project formulation i.e. based on budgetary allocation / grants places little or no pressure on departments to develop project structures that can attract private capital, a goal that necessitates additional rigor and complexity at the project formulation and development stage. Resistance to re-engineering of departmental processes: Successful implementation of e-governance projects requires a lot of restructuring in the administrative processes and redefining of administrative procedures and

formats. This meets with resistance in almost all departments at all levels. Additionally there is a lack of expertise among departmental MIS executives in exploiting data mining techniques, updating of and collection of real time content in the website etc. Therefore the content collected or maintained by various e-governance portals is unreliable or full of gaps. In such a scenario, it is difficult for any e-governance solution to achieve its intended results. Hence, it is essential to undertake process re-engineering as an integral part of e-governance project implementation in order to ensure increased efficiency and reduced costs. Standardization: A departmental approach and the absence of a national framework for common standards has resulted in the adoption of different technical standards and varied architectures. This has significant implications for designing effective integrated applications and also entails long-term costs and sub-optimal results.

15. Independent Impact Assessment:

In the current system, there is no requirement or institutional mechanism for an independent assessment of projects post-implementation to determine whether they have achieved the set objectives, except in purely financial terms. Further, very few projects have formal performance metrics defined at the start of the project to measure outcomes. Localization/Multi-language support: e-governance has an impact only when the services to citizens are made available in their respective language. However, this is a challenge that needs to be addressed by formulating clear standards and guidelines with respect to the fonts, storage, input etc. ICT solutions were mostly developed with an English language interface. However, in India vast majorities (95 percent) of the citizens do not know English and use the local language. The fact is that India has 22 official languages; for the success of e-governance, this reality needs to be reflected in the implementation strategy. Internal Capacity/Project Management Expertise: Departments/ states have limited access to any institutional mechanisms for building capacities in the areas of e-governance project development and design, bid process management, professional project management, development of contractual frameworks and service level agreements.

16. Underutilization of existing ICT infrastructure:

To a larger extent, the computers in the department are used for the purpose of word processing only, resulting in the under-utilization of the computers in terms of their use in data mining for supporting management decisions. The time gap between the procurement of the hardware and development of the custom applications is so large that by the time the application is ready for use, the hardware becomes obsolete.

Lack of coordination between the government department and solution developers: Designing of any application requires a very close interaction between the government department and the agency developing the solutions. At present the users in the government departments do not contribute enough to design the solution architecture. Consequently the solutions developed and implemented do not address the requirements of an e-governance project and hence do not get implemented.

Lack of infrastructure for sustaining e-governance projects on a national level: Infrastructure to support e-governance initiatives does not exist within government departments. The

agony is that government departments are not equipped to be in a position to project clear requirements nor are there any guidelines for involving the private sector. Whatever efforts have been made by various government organizations may be defined as islands of computerization. The infrastructure creation is not guided by a uniform national policy, but is dependent on the needs of individual officers championing a few projects. Therefore, the required networking and communication equipment is either nonexistent in government departments, or if it exists at all, it does not serve any tangible purpose as far as the requirement of a e-governance project is concerned. The use of connectivity options provided by government agencies like NICNET etc. are used in a very limited manner for the purpose of data transmission between various locations viz. district, state, center etc. and are mainly utilized for e-mail and internet purposes only. Sharing of data across various e-governance implementations: One of the key benefits that a citizen is looking at from e-governance initiatives is a single window access to various government services no matter which department is responsible for giving the service. To achieve this, there is a need to be able to seamlessly share data across the applications.

17. Security Issues:

While there are clear standards like ISO 27001 and ISO 20000 for IT securities and IT service management which are presently being used by various e-governance applications, it has been seen however, that the 136 concerns of the respective departments with regard to data and application security and control are still not adequately addressed. The reasons include the lack of adequate knowledge and understanding of the various management controls on these standards by the departments. Policies like access control and security are not made very comprehensive, and the controls in international standards need to be made more prescriptive for our requirements. The RFP should also highlight the concerns of the government department with respect to the requisite strategic controls clearly.

18. Lack of adequate training programs:

Many e-government or computerization projects suffer gravely from a lack of adequate training programs. Training is of vital necessity in familiarizing users with computers and overcoming their fears. Some officials go through unplanned 'IT Training', often in another country, and then come back not getting any scope for utilizing their newly gathered knowledge of IT and forgetting it all in due time. The training programs are mostly not need-based. They are arranged at arbitrary periods, and not during the implementation phase of an e-government project.

19. Lack of reliable maintenance:

Another significant problem is that generally there is no in-house maintenance personnel. It is of vital necessity that computers get fixed as soon as they malfunction or users very easily lose confidence in the IT systems. Most offices have contracts with local hardware companies for maintenance, but their services are often not immediate.

20. Conclusion

The advent of IT as a highly leveraged enabling tool for delivery of products and services has now redefined the fundamentals and changed the institutions and their mechanisms of delivery forever. Technology has proliferated in all spheres of life. Accompanied by the rapid growth of the internet there has been a concomitant rise in online transactions. This information age paradigm shift is characterized by citizen and business integration driven as it were by the choice of service providers and means of access.

In this context the concept of public governance has not gone unaffected. It too has seen a fundamental shift in the concept both in the manner and method by which the e-governance initiatives are being implemented at the central, state and local government levels through various prospects. This new practice of public administration has developed into the concept of EG. It helps simplify processes and makes access to government information more easy for public sector agencies and citizens.

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