

E-Governance in India: Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract

e-Governance or electronic Governance refers to the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to provide citizens and organizations with more convenient access to the governments services and information. In other words, e-Governance involves ICTs, especially the internet, to improve the delivery of government services to citizens, businesses and government agencies. It is not limited to the public sector only but also includes the management and administration of policies and procedures in private sector as well. The use of internet not only delivers the services faster but also brings more transparency between the government and the citizens. But in developing countries like India, where literacy level is very low and most of the people are living below poverty line, it is very much difficult for the government to provide its services to such citizens via means of internet.

The technology and the methods used in E-Governance project provide a roadmap for efficient delivery of services at the door step. In today's time the development of any country depends on the uses of e-Governance and also their penetration. Development of any country can be judge by the scope of e-Governance in that country.

Key Words: Citizens, E-governance, information and communication Technology, private sector.

1. Introduction

The “e” in e-Governance stands for ‘electronic’. Thus, e-Governance is basically associated with carrying out the functions and achieving the results of governance through the utilization of ICT (Information and Communications Technology). An equally important aspect is concerned with ensuring equitable access to public services and the benefits of economic growth to all. It also ensures government to be transparent in its dealings, accountable for its activities and faster in its responses as part of good governance.

However, this would require the government to change itself – its processes, its outlook, laws, rules and regulations and also its way of interacting with the citizens. It would also require capacity building within the government and creation of general awareness about e-Governance among the citizens.

2. Role of Information Communication Technology

The term e-governance focuses on the use of new ICTs by governments as applied to the full range of government functions. Thus e-governance is the application of information and communication technology for delivering government services, exchange of information, communication, transactions, integration, various stand-alone systems, and services between government and citizens, government and business as well as back office processes and interactions within the entire government frame work. The government being the service provider it is important to motivate the employees for delivering the services through ICT. E-governance seek to achieve Efficiency, Transparency, and Citizen’s Participation. Enabling E-governance through ICT contributes to Good Governance, Trust and Accountability, Citizen’s Awareness, and empowerment, Citizen’s Welfare, Democracy, Nation’s Economic growth. ICT is the biggest enabler of change and process reforms fade in face of what ICT has achieved in few years.

It provides efficient storing and retrieval of data, instantaneous transmission of information, processing information and data faster than the earlier manual systems, speeding up governmental processes, taking decisions expeditiously and judiciously, increasing transparency and enforcing accountability. It also helps in increasing the reach of government – both geographically and demographically.

3. Opportunities for e-governance in India

NISG services include providing consultations to both Central and State Government in India regarding the development and implementation of various e-Gov-related projects. NISG provides consulting experience for both technical and non-technical issues related to e-Gov and also is involved in capacity-

building and change management through partnerships with both government and private institutions. They also advertise a number of vacancies for different management positions and ongoing government.

ABM Knowledge ware Ltd. (ABM) is an IT company listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange. ABM has developed a thorough insight into the development, implementation and institutionalization of e-Governance in the Indian context. This is evident from various e-Gov projects (such as the Kalyan Dombivli Municipal Corporation (KDMC) project, the Property Tax project for the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM), an ERP-based integrated and holistic e-Governance solution for MCGM, and the AQUA project for water billing and accounting for MCGM, the e-Municipality covering 231 municipal bodies across the Government of Maharashtra, to name a few) that have been successfully undertaken by this organization. Job seekers with relevant experience and capabilities in the area of management, software development, and functional consultancy can look for appropriate jobs in this company.

Research opportunities: A number of universities and academic institutions have well-established research groups focusing on e-Gov-related issues. Researchers and potential doctoral candidates may like to explore the following research groups and centers for research-related opportunities. This group provides an opportunity for eligible candidates to undertake doctoral research or collaborative research leading to paper publications. Within India, The Department of Management Studies, IIT Delhi and The School of Management, MNNIT, hosts worlds-leading academics under-taking research, consultancy and PhD supervision related to the e-Government area and has already produced a number of PhD scholars specializing in e-Gov-related issues.

India today has perhaps the most ambitious e-Governance plan. At the highest level in the Government, there is a separate Secretary-level official, there is an approved budget of more than billion dollars at the Central Government; there are Secretary-level officials in every State Government with additional (though small compared to Central budget) budget. There are annual e-Governance conferences at the Regional, National and even International levels. Major Indian IT service majors (TCS and Wipro, for example) and MNC firms (IBM and Sun, for example) have dedicated teams to address the growing e-Governance market in India. Thanks to some early success – e-Seva, CARDS, Bhoomi, Bangalore-One and Passport office computerization, for example – there is enough media coverage – both print and electronic media – with at least two magazines devoted exclusively to e-Governance. There is an Institute NISG (National Institute of Smart Governance) set up in public-private-partnership model with Government of Andhra Pradesh and NASSCOM. Online payment of bills and taxes: Services provided by e-governance in this area's:- Online Transaction, Payment of Bill, Payment of taxes, Payment of house EMIs.

4. Various Projects

FRIENDS: - This project is started by Kerala Government for its citizens to make online payment of electricity and water bills, revenue taxes, license fees, motor vehicle taxes, university fees, etc.

E-SEVA:-Electronic seva by Andhra Pradesh government to pay utility bills, avail of trade licenses and transact on government matters at these facilities.

BWSSB Ganakeekrutha Grahakara Seve, water billing, and collection system:-

This e-governance project is started by the Bangalore government. In this every month bills houses are generated through BGS software.

Municipal services: - Services provided are as:- House Tax Assessment, Billing and Collection, Maintain records of Land & property, Issue of Death Certificates, Registration & Attorneys of properties, Review and approval authority for site plans

Various Projects

E-Panjeeyan:-It is started by Assam government to deals with the computerization of the Document registration work at Sub Registrar Office.

SDO Suite:-By Assam government. This system helps in issuing various certificates like Land sale Permission, Legal heir certificate, Issue of Passport Verification Certificate, Birth and Death Report,

5. Challenges for e-Governance in India

There are a large number of obstacles in implementation of e-Governance in India.

Different Language: India is a country where people with different cultures and different religions live. People belonging to different states speak different languages. The diversity of people in context of language is a huge challenge for implementing e-Governance projects as e-Governance applications are written in English language. And also, English may not be understandable by most of the people. Therefore, it becomes a challenge for the government to write e-Governance applications which are to be implemented for the whole nation in more than one language so that these may be acceptable to the users of a particular language.

Low Literacy: Literacy can be defined as the ability to read and write with understanding in any language. A person who can merely read but cannot write cannot be considered as literate. Any formal education or minimum educational standard is not necessary to be considered literate. Literacy level of India is very low 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.

Low IT Literacy: Much of the Indian people are not literate and those who are literate, they do not have much knowledge about Information Technology (IT). Most of the people in India are not aware about the usage of Information Technology. So, in India, having such low level of IT literacy, how can e-Governance projects be implemented successfully?.

We can say that IT illiteracy is a major obstacle in implementation of e-Governance in India. So, first of all Indian people must be made aware about the usage of Information Technology.

Recognition of applications: Recognition of the eGovernance facilities by the citizens is another huge challenge. It is a challenge to have all the citizens well aware of the facilities offered by the e-government and have them to trust in it, so that citizens should be ready to accept these facilities.

User friendliness of Government websites: Users of e-Governance applications are often non-expert users who may not be able to use the applications in a right manner. Such users need guidance to find the right way to perform their transactions. Therefore, government websites must be user friendly so that more and more people can use them easily. Hence, these websites can be more effective. If government websites will be designed in an easier format only then these will be more usable for the users who are not expert users of IT.

Services are not accessible easily: The concept of e-Governance is claiming for increased efficiency and effectiveness of the government, but these goals will be achieved only if the service will be available to the 100% of the citizens. So, every service should be accessible by anybody from anywhere and anytime. Even if the users of Internet are growing but still there is a major part of Indian population which is not able to access e-Governance activities for variety of reasons, e.g. some people may have limited access to Information and Communication Technologies and devices. Therefore, government has to provide internet access through public terminals as a part of their universal access efforts.

Confidence on technologies provided by government: The implementation of public administration functions via e-Government requires that the user must be confident and comfortable while using the technology. He must also trust that technology that he/she is interacting with. Even the government should provide the measures so that the users can trust the technology provided to them. The government has to make a balance between ensuring that a system prevents fraudulent transactions and the burden that extensive checks can take place on people who are honest.

Separation: The separation that exists between the individuals, communities and

businesses that have access to Information Technology and those that do not have such access. Economic poverty is closely related to the limited information technology resources. People who are living below poverty line cannot afford a computer and internet connection for themselves to take the benefits of the e-Government and other on-line services. Economic poverty is not the only cause of this separation; it may also be caused by the lack of awareness among the people. In India even some of the economically stable people do not know about the scope and services of e-Governance. Indian government has to take some actions to narrow this separation to effectively implement the e-Governance projects.

Citizens, employees and businesses can all have their biases with respect to how transactions should be processed. Government entities and public policy administrators cannot ignore the changes that occur as a result of the implementation of the ICT. Education about the value of new system is one step towards reducing some of this struggle.

Population: Population of India is probably the biggest challenge in implementing e-Governance projects. As population is considered to be an asset to the country but it also offers some other challenges e.g. establishing person identities. There is no unique identity of individuals in India although Indian government is making efforts for providing unique identity to its citizens. Apart from this, measuring the population, keeping the database of all Indian nationals and keeping this database updated and then providing the e governance services to the whole population are major challenges.

Lack of integrated services: Most of the e-governance services which are offered by the state or central government are not integrated. Lack of communication between different departments of government may be its major cause.

Lack of awareness in people: Most of the Indian people are not aware of the benefits of e-Governance services. Even the government does not pay much attention to make the people aware about e-Governance activities. Unawareness is a major challenge in the implementation of e-Governance projects.

6. Conclusion

As the usage of Information Technology is growing very fast, Indian government is making many efforts to provide services to its citizens through e-Governance. Although Indian government is spending a lot of money on e-Governance projects but still these projects are not successful in all parts of India. Unawareness in people, local language of the people of a particular area, privacy for the personal data of the people etc. are main challenges which are responsible for the unsuccessful implementation of e-Governance in India. Government must take some actions to make the people aware about the e-Governance activities so that people may take full advantage of these activities

and e-Governance projects can be implemented successfully.

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