

Hurdles in Implementation of E-Governance in India: A Report

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Abstract

E-governance, means rendering of government services and information to the public using electronic means. E Governance, especially in developing countries, is looked upon as a means to change the very concept of governance resulting in empowerment of the citizens and increased transparency in public dealings by the governments; increased efficiencies in delivery of public goods is an inherent underlying assumption. This paper shares some hurdles regarding the successful implementation of E-Governance in developing countries.

Keywords: E-governance, classification of failure, digital divides.

Definition of e-Governance

E-governance is the application of information & communication technologies to transform the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of informational & transactional exchanges with in government, between govt. & govt. agencies of National, State, Municipal & Local levels, citizen & businesses, and to empower citizens through access & use of information.

E-governance: Success or Failure

Central to E-governance success and failure is the vast gap between 'Current working scenario' and 'where the E-governance project wants to get us'. 'Current working scenario' means the current realities of the situation, i.e. E-governance success and failure therefore depends on the size of gap that exists between 'current realities' and 'design of the E-governance project'. Analysis of E-governance projects indicates that seven dimensions, Information, Technology, Processes, Objectives and values, Staffing and skills,

Management systems and structures, other resources: time and money, are necessary and sufficient to provide an understanding of gap stand between reality and design⁶. According to an oft quoted survey, done in 2006, on e-government initiatives in developing/transitional countries only 15 percent of e government projects can be termed as successful with 35 percent as total failures and

55 percent as partial failures where the outcome is classified as follows:

- Total failure: the initiative was never implemented or was implemented but immediately abandoned.
- Partial failure: major goals for the initiative were not attained and/or there were significant undesirable outcomes.
- Success: most stakeholder groups attained their major goals and did not experience significant undesirable outcomes.

Though this survey was on e government and not e governance but a very large number of e governance projects have, over the years, belied the promise that they once showed.e-Governance evolution : History and Present Status The concept of e-governance has its origins in India during the seventies with a focus on development of in- house government applications in the areas of defense, economic monitoring, planning and the deployment of IT to manage data intensive functions related to elections, census, tax administration etc. The efforts of the National Informatics Center (NIC) to connect all the district headquarters during the eighties was a very significant development. From the early nineties, IT technologies were supplemented by ICT technologies to extend its use for wider sectoral applications with policy emphasis on reaching out to rural areas and taking in greater inputs from NGOs and private sector as well. There has been an increasing involvement of international donor agencies under the framework of e-governance for development to catalyze the development of e-governance laws and technologies in developing countries.[1]

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For governments, the more overt motivation to shift from manual processes to IT-enabled processes may be increased efficiency in administration and service delivery, but this shift can be conceived as a worthwhile investment with potential for returns. Following are some of the recent e-governance projects implemented by various state govts.

Andhra Pradesh

e-Seva, CARD, VOICE, MPHS, FAST, e-Cops, AP online—One-stop-shop on the Internet, Saukaryam, Online Transaction processing

Bihar

Sales Tax Administration Management Information

Chhattisgarh

Chhattisgarh Infotech Promotion Society, Treasury office, e-linking project

Delhi

Automatic Vehicle Tracking System, Computerisation of website of RCS office, Electronic Clearance System, Management Information System for Education etc

Goa

Dharani Project

Gujarat

Mahiti Shakti, request for Government documents online, Form book online, G R book online, census online, tender notice.

Haryana

Nai Disha, e-disha, e-nakal as copy of land record etc.

Himachal Pradesh

Lok Mitra

Karnataka

Bhoomi, Khajane, Kaveri

Kerala

e-Srinkhala, RDNet, Fast, Reliable, Instant, Efficient Network for the Disbursement of Services (FRIENDS)

Madhya Pradesh

Gyandoot, Gram Sampark, Smart Card in Transport Department, Computerization MP State Agricultural Marketing Board (Mandi Board) etc

Maharashtra

SETU, Online Complaint Management System—Mumbai

Rajasthan

Jan Mitra, RajSWIFT, Lokmitra, RajNIDHI

Tamil Nadu

Rasi Maiyams—Kanchipuram; Application forms related to public utility, tender notices and display.

E-Governance evolution in India – Challenges before Stakeholders

This may primarily be attributed to the following reasons:

- Lack of IT awareness and literacy

There is general lack of awareness regarding benefits of e-governance as well as the process involved in

implementing successful G-C, G-G and G-B projects. The administrative structure is not geared for maintaining, storing and retrieving the governance information electronically.[5] The general tendency is to obtain the data from the files (print) as and when required rather than using Document Management and workflow technologies. Lately the use of DMS and workflow technologies has been able to find its use only in those departments where there is perceptible lightening of workload of the subordinate staff.

- existing ICT infrastructure

To a larger extent, the computers in the department are used for the purpose of word processing only, resulting in the underutilization 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 application is Ready for use, the hardware becomes obsolete.

- Attitude and psychology of Government Departments for e-governance

The psychology of government servants is quite different from that of private sectors. Traditionally the government servants have derived their sustenance from the fact that they are important repositories of govt. data. Thus any effort to implement DMS and workflow technologies or bringing out the change in the system is met with resistance from the govt. servants.

- Individual led initiatives:

In many projects at the system development stages, especially when the user requirements were being made, there was no effective communication between the users to share the domain knowledge with the system developer(s). This was particularly true of projects which were being implemented as a result of individual initiatives emanating from the top of the management hierarchy

- Lack of Infrastructure for sustaining e-governance projects on national level

Infrastructure to support e-governance initiatives does not exist within government departments. The agony is that the government departments are not equipped to be in a position to project the clear requirements nor are there any guidelines for involving private sector. Whatever efforts have been made by various govt. 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 non-existent in govt. departments, or if it exists at all, it does not serve any tangible purpose as far as the requirement of e-governance project is concerned. The use of connectivity options provided by govt. agencies like NICNET etc. are used in a very limited manner for data transmission purpose between various locations viz. Distt., State, Center etc. and is mainly utilized for e-mail and Internet purpose only.

•Confidentiality issues:

A major concern is the lack of attention to issues relating to the Confidentiality of the data such as in e-tendering systems or regarding personal details of citizens etc. The drawback is that these IT policy documents are not made based upon the requirements and inherent capabilities of the state but are based on the surveys and strategies used by other nations or other states. Though it's very wise to take examples from the successful e-governance strategies of other states and countries, it's equally essential that we customize our state policies after a careful study of the parameters applicable to the particular state in question. A tentative action plan is presented to help implement the e-governance initiatives as below:

E-Govt. Action Plan – Strategies for today; Vision for Future

Successful implementation of e-governance projects requires lots of restructuring in administrative processes, redefining of administrative procedures and formats which finds the resistance in almost all the departments at all the levels. Additionally there is lack of expertise of departmental MIS executives in exploiting data mining techniques, updation and collection of real time content onto website etc. Therefore the content as is collected or maintained by various e-governance portals is unreliable or full of gaps. In such a scenario, it's difficult for any e-governance solution to achieve its intended results.[2]

In this era of accountability and performance measurement, govts. will face increasing pressure to make the services more accessible to their citizens. With this rise in demand for e-services, it is a mandatory requirement for government budget writers that the efficiency enhancement and cost saving potential of providing online services and information be mastered.

E-governance is about more than streamlining processes and improving services. It's about transforming Governments and renovating the way citizens participate in democracy. So how does a government agency cut through the clutter and build a strategy to facilitate the transition to successful online or "e" service delivery.

The real challenges are how to develop and sustain successful e-governance projects and deliver state of the art e-services to citizens. Particularly for the democratic nation of the billion people like India, e-Governance should enable seamless access to information and seamless flow of information across the state and central government in the federal setup. Some of the requirements for implementing successful e-governance across the nation are :

•Required enough bandwidth: e-Governance framework across the nation with enough bandwidth to service a population of one billion.

•Connectivity framework for making the services reaches rural areas of the country or development of alternative means of services such as e-governance kiosks in regional languages.

• National Citizen Database which is the primary unit of data for all governance vertical and horizontal applications across the state and central governments.

•E-governance and interoperability standards for the exchange of secure information with non-repudiation, across the state and central government departments seamlessly[3].

•A secure delivery framework by means of virtual private network connecting across the state and central government departments.

•Workflow automation, collaboration Datacenters in centre and states to handle the departmental workflow automation, collaboration, interaction, exchange of information with authentication.

•The digital divide: There is always the risk of the implementation of e-governance projects being so prioritized as to benefit only a certain section(s) of the society. Additionally e-governance delivery mechanism may not account for the existing digital divide. This would cause even the most well intentioned initiatives not achieving the objectives. Though innovative methods were seen, especially such as e-governance kiosks manned by paid non government facilitators to help citizens, the fact remains that without bridging the digital divide e-governance projects may not be effective.

•Create Literacy and commitment to e-governance at high level

The most important requirement is a training program for policy makers in E-Governance (Senior Public Servants), politicians and IT task force members. The training program needs to be focused according to the requirements of the policy makers at the top. Such programs can be need based and outsourced when required. In addition it should be made mandatory for all the stake holders in implementation and maintenance of e-governance services to have the general IT skills. There

may be specific requirements for training in certain specific projects. Such programs can be need based and outsourced when required. A few suggestive programs include e-governance training, Building web interfaces for citizen interaction, Document management and workflow applications, security and PKI solutions, Office Automation, networking etc.

b) Conduct Usability Surveys for assessment of existing e-governance projects

There is a varying degree of development of e-governance among the different states. A few States have leapfrogged into a digital era whereas a few are yet to start with any initiative. There is a tremendous divergence in the extent of implementation of the concept of e-Governance. It is, therefore, not possible to come up with a framework for implementation of e-Governance which is straightaway applicable to all states and the Central Government. Therefore an e-readiness exercise should be carried out in all states, government departments to understand their level of acceptability of the e-governance. [4].

c) Starting with implementation of pilot projects and replicating the successful ones

The pilot projects taken in various states should be assessed for their achievement levels. They should be classified as success or failure according to the desired output written down before implementation of the projects. The study should be carried out by an independent agency for the implementation agency The study should be carried out at each stage of implementation. Bottlenecks and causes of delays should be documented, even though they are removed later. The successful projects should be replicated over the nation with members drawn from the implementing team. The projects, which could not achieve the desired outcome, should be documented for possible causes of failure. Various bottlenecks and causes of delay should be identified.

d) Follow the Best Practices in e-governance

The study of Best Practices will bring forward the best practices being followed nationally and internationally. The national and international Best Practices study will give a great momentum to the process of E-Governance. The State Governments will not have to re-invent wheel every time and they can learn from the developments already made.

Conclusion

It is evident from above discussion that objectives of achieving e-governance and transforming India goes far beyond mere computerization of stand alone back office operations. It means , to fundamentally change as to how the government operates, and this implies a new set of responsibilities for the executive and politicians. It will require basic change in work culture and goal orientation, and simultaneous change in the existing processes. Foremost of them is to create a culture of maintaining, processing and retrieving the information through an electronic system and use that information for decision making. It will require skilled navigation to ensure a smooth transition from old processes and manual operations to new automated services without hampering the existing services.

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