

CHALLENGES FOR E-GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

Dr. Naresh verma

Associate Professor, Centre of Excellence Govt. Degree College Sanjauli Shimla-6

Abstract

E- Governance is a government initiative to provide platforms that help citizens connect directly with the government. It promotes government schemes, integrity, transparency, flexibility, security, good governance and empowerment. The boom in the IT sector led to the initiative with a user- friendly interface and better administration for the government. E-governance evolved in the 70s, now it is spreading throughout the country to help the population. However there are many challenges to E-governance

KEYWORDS:- Governance, Integrity, Transparency, Empowerment, Initiative

Introduction

The term e-Governance came into existence with the advent of government websites in late 1990s. 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 government's 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. Even the e-Readiness Rank of India is very low. e-readiness is defined as the ability to use information and communication technologies to develop one's economy and welfare. According to the Global Information Technology Report 2012, the e-Readiness rank of India is 69 with the score of 3.89 out of 10 that means the use of ICTs in India is very low. Many other factors like privacy and security related to user's personal information, digital divide etc. are also huge challenges for the implementation of e- Governance in India as well as in H.P.

Challenges for E-Governance in H.P.

There are a large number of obstacles in implementation of e-Governance in H.P. These can be categorized under the following titles: Environmental and Social Challenges, Economical Challenges and Technical Challenges. These challenges are explained below:

Environmental and Social Challenges

- i. **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. 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.
- ii. **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. IT literacy level of HP 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.
 - iii. **Low IT Literacy:** Much of the State are not literate and those who are literate, they do not have much knowledge about Information Technology (IT). Most of the people in our state 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 HP. So, first of all people must be made aware about the usage of Information Technology.
 - iv. **Recognition of applications:** Recognition of the e-Governance 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-Governance and have them to trust in it, so that citizens should be ready to accept these facilities.
 - v. **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 of 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.
 - vi. **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 state 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.
 - vii. **Confidence on technologies provided by government:** The implementation of public administration functions via e-Governance 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.
 - viii. **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 HP even some of the economically stable people do not know about the scope and services of e-Governance. State government has to take some actions to narrow this separation to effectively implement the e-Governance projects.

- ix. Struggle to Change:** The struggle to change phenomenon can explain much of the hesitation that occurs on the part of the constituents in moving from a paper-based to a web-based system to interact with government.
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.
- x. Population:** Population of State 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. Apart from this, measuring the population, keeping the database of all citizens, keeping this database updated and then providing the e-Governance services to the whole population are major challenges.
- xi. 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. Therefore, the information that resides within one department has no or very little meaning to some other department of the government.
- xii. Lack of awareness in people:** Most of the people are not aware of the benefits of e-Governance services. Even the government do 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.
- xiii. Cost:** in a poor state like HP cost is one of the most important obstacles in the path of implementation of e-Governance where major part of the population is living below poverty line. Even the politicians do not have interest in implementing e-Governance. 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.
- xiv. Applications must be transferrable from one platform to another:** e-Governance applications must be independent from hardware or software platforms. Therefore, these applications can be used at any platform irrespective of the hardware or software and from one platform to the other platform. These applications may also help on possible reuse by other administrators.
- xv. Maintenance of electronic devices:** As the Information Technology changes very fast and it is very difficult for us to update our existing systems very fast. Regulations of different devices and their different characteristics may vary and the system in use must be capable to handle all the emerging needs. Maintenance is a key factor for long living systems in a rapidly changing technical environment.
- xvi. Low per Capita income:** Per capita income means how much each individual receives, in the terms of money, of the yearly income generated in a country. This refers to what each individual receives if the yearly national income is divided equally among everyone Per capita income of HP is Low. Therefore, people cannot afford on-line services provided by the government which is a challenge for implementation of e-Governance.
- xvii. Limited financial resources:** The Gross Domestic, Product (GDP) is one of the measures of state income and economy of state. GDP is defined as the total market value of all final goods and services produced within the country in a given period of time. GDP of a country is the measure of its financial strength. Our State has limited financial resources so as to implement and maintain the e-Government projects properly.

Technical challenges:

- i. **Interoperability:** Interoperability is the ability of systems and organizations of different qualities to work together. The e-Governance applications must have this characteristic so that the newly developed and existing applications can be implemented together.
- ii. **Scale of applications:** e-Governance projects have to be designed to scale from the day one. E-Governance is supposed to affect every citizen of the state, so e-Governance applications must have the scale to interface with every citizen.
- iii. **Multimodal Interaction:** Multimodal interaction provides the user with multiple modes of interfacing with a system. An e-Governance application can be really effective if its users can access it using different devices.
- iv. **Privacy and Security:** A critical obstacle in implementing e-Governance is the privacy and security of an individual's personal data that he/she provides to obtain government services. With the implementation of e-Governance projects, some effective measures must be taken to protect the sensitive personal information of the people. Lack of security standards can limit the development of e-Governance projects that contain personal information such as income, medical history etc.
- v. **Scope of applications:** The very first step in creating a good application is to define its scope very well and everything else comes later. The applications which are provided by e-Governance, their scope must be known in advance for the accurate implementation of e-Governance projects.
- vi. **Tried and tested technology:** Technology tends to get out of date very fast. Our government may not be in position to buy new servers every year. So, it is better and safer to use technologies and products which are tried and tested for longer periods of times than using the latest ones.
- vii. **Geographical problems:** Corporate networks reside on reliable and controlled networks. Government networks have to go into all areas which are even unfriendly to live. It is, however, costly to wire up all the villages in the country. So, e-Governance systems must have to use the wireless networks like existing cellular networks to reach the applications into remote areas irrespective of the geographical issues.
- viii. **Local language:** The acceptance of English language in the state is very low. The e-governance applications are written in English. That is why e-Governance projects do not get success. Hence, the e-Governance applications must be written in local language of the people so that they may be able to use and take advantage of these applications.

Conclusions:

E- Governance is important initiative taken by governments worldwide, enabling them to handle and carry out their duties. E- Governance aims to provide services so that everyone can get benefit from it. The boom in the IT sector helped enhance the working of E-governance. While working towards citizen welfare, these platforms face various technical, social and economic challenges. The government must address these issues and provide a better service to its people. It will help the people of the country to take benefit from the various E-governance services.

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