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Framing Sound Policy and Adequate Infrastructure to Overcomet e- Project Challenges In India

Kaur Ramnik

*Department of Public Administration, Sri Guru Gobind Singh College
Sector-26, Chandigarh*

ABSTRACT

The electronic mode motivating reforms are capable of engaging greater citizens' involvement in policy formulation and in introducing responsive governance and administration. While framing the policies to involve the citizen participation it is very important to look over the requirement of the beneficiaries and the demanding infrastructure for making it an effective formulation. Countries like India, often lack in framing sound policies and also lack in providing proper infrastructure to the officials in order to serve the basic purpose of the newly introduced policy. In order to match the digital divide gap in India there is a need to develop an environment to accept e-government and cope up with the challenges of sound policy and adequate infrastructure. This paper discusses the framing of sound policies and adequate infrastructure focusing e-governance.

KEYWORDS: E-Governance, sound policy, adequate infrastructure, etc.

***Corresponding Author**

Dr Ramnik Kaur

Assistant Professor

Department of Public Administration, Sri Guru Gobind Singh College

Sector-26, Chandigarh

E mail - ramnikkaur17@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

In India, challenges like weak governance, cost, time, quality, risk, procurement, capacity building, poverty, and bureaucratic corruption among others is very much engaged with the successful application of e-governance. The electronic modes are motivating reforms and are capable of engaging greater citizens' involvement in policy formulation, responsive governance and administration, beyond, ushering global best practices that cultural and contextual compatible. But e-readiness in India is still low because of various challenges which are faced during implementation of the e-government project in India. To overcome these challenges of implementation an adequate manner and a focused vision are required the Government of India. The cultural norms and patterns of individual behaviour affect the manner in which technology is used by citizens. There is a need to develop effective implementation of e-government projects in India in order to serve the citizens effectively. There is also a need to develop an environment to accept the e-government by overcoming the challenges faced by the government while delivering e-services. Implementation of e-government conceptual framework can be further validated in the real life situation which is meant for developing the effective implementation of e-government in India.

The developing economy of countries like India face many problems in implementing the e-governance projects successfully, the main reason being the improper planning and inadequate strategies. India requires capacity building strategy for proper implementation of such projects. A hybrid approach needs to be adopted for enhancing interoperability among e-governance applications which will encompass centralized approach for document management, knowledge management, file management, grievance management etc. and distributed approach for land registration, building plans, vehicle registration, criminal and crime information etcetera. The Cloud computing is also a big force to enhance delivery of services related to e-governance resulting not only as a tool for cost reduction but also it helps in; enabling new services, improving education system and creating new opportunities.

An approach should be made to focus on citizen centric services and should follow multiple channels of communication for dissemination of e-services. The government should also focus on devising appropriate, feasible, distinct and effective capacity building mechanisms for various stakeholders viz bureaucrats, rural masses, urban masses, elected representatives etc.

Adequate Infrastructure

Adequate infrastructure must be undertaken in a well-planned manner, wherein all stakeholders must be able to voice their inputs/concerns, due consideration to all must be given and a proper feedback mechanism must be put in place to inform all those participated about the decisions and the reasons thereof. To help department implement such an engagement, a Framework for Citizen centric e-Governance projects needs to undertake various steps dependent upon the identification of objective for which such a project is being proposed. Some of the objectives, based on project stage are as under:

- Conceptualization & DPR Preparation tends to ensure that the scheme is need-based and drawn up in consultation with community, serving especially the rural areas.
- Pilot & Roll Out ensures that envisaged services are being delivered, properly and to right people it has been created for.
- Post Implementation stage ensures the type & quality of work is in tune with initial identified requirement.

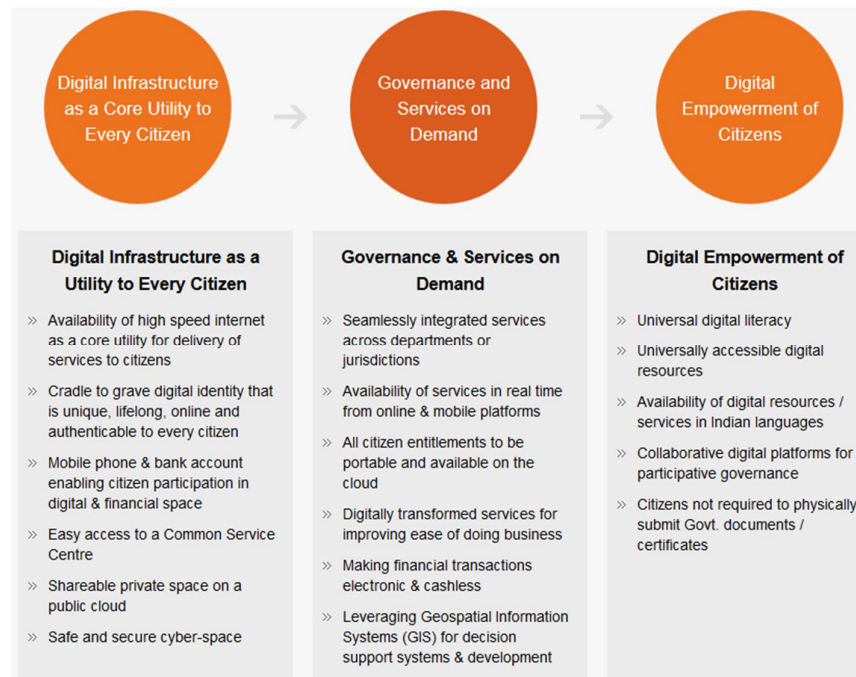
Table No.1.1 - Needs Analysis vis-a-vis Project Stage

S No	Project Stage	Needs Analysis
1	Conceptualization & DPR Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To define scope of project • To identify Services to be included • To identify existing & desired Service Levels • To identify access points and channels • To determine ability and willingness to pay for delivery of service through alternate channel/s • To identify current pain points & opportunities for process re-engineering • To identify synergies/dependencies with other departments/processes/institutions
2	Pilot & Roll Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To seek feedback new channels of service delivery • To measure adherence to service levels • To measure satisfaction of service delivery • To understand the challenges in service delivery • To identify areas of improvement in the re-engineered process
3	Post Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To undertake impact assessment of project • To determine quality of service rendered • To determine impact on overall governance parameters viz. Transparency, accountability, corruption etc.
4	Project Enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To seek inputs for Project Enhancement • Perspective of new services to be added • Adequacy of service levels • Adequacy of process re-engineering • Enhance quality of service

Source: Department of Electronics & Information Technology, Ministry of Communications & Information Technology, Government of India, April 2012

- Project Enhancement is to ensure continuous improvement in the project deliverables after the completion of work

It is easy to identify the need to introduce citizen participation in a new project but it is often difficult to determine such points of interventions for ongoing projects. However, opportunities to interact with citizens exist at all stages of the project. The above Framework represents a project life cycle which broadly is divided into 4 stages for e-infrastructure of Projects explaining the need for Citizen Participation in implementing e-Governance projects



Source: www.digitalindia.gov.in

Figure 1.1 - Digital Infrastructure of core utility

The figure 1.1 explains that the digital infrastructure is of core utility to the citizens which provides governance and services on demand and empowers the citizens digitally. Building adequate e-infrastructure brings awareness among many sections of the society. The service delivery through ICT has brought dependence as compare to other instruments. In order to promote the e-governance effectively it is important to build adequate e-infrastructure and to initiate rural-centric-e-governance projects focusing on the requirements of the larger sections of population.

Presently, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has designed a National Capability Building Framework (NCBF), to outline a comprehensive approach towards building the capabilities of Panchayats. NCBF was created inter alia for Improving the Gram Sabha

functioning, developing capacity of ‘lynchpin capacity providers’ and effective mechanisms to engage civil society and the private sector in the delivery of capacity development services; and creating conducive socio-political environment through political parties, representatives in the legislatures, civil society organizations and citizens in order to accept and promote local governments. Practiced in Bangalore Citizen Report Card is a simple but powerful tool in providing systematic feedback to public agencies from users of public services. Social media is the new channel of citizen’s participation.

Sound Policy and Legal Framework

E-governance enhances citizen participation in shaping the ICT policies and improving service delivery system. E-governance facilitates better participatory of citizens and government in the process of governance. The people can debate and discuss the enactment of Acts and rules of public policies before the enactment is made which results in actions and decisions with people’s participation bringing greater transparency. Citizens’ opinions, needs, and preferences about the services can be communicated to the concerned authorities in form of feedback which helps in making the service delivery process more qualitative and cost effective. E-governance projects like ‘Bhoomi’, Gyandoot, ‘FRIENDS’, e-seva etc. and most of the government websites, have a feedback section helping stakeholders to participate directly with the delivery system bypassing the intermediaries. The citizens are empowered to access the information related to government activities and programmers to monitor and judge government’s performance through ICT. Accessibility and availability of information of land records, land registration, government policies, schemes and procedures, business, politics etc. empowers the citizens to a great extent. E-governance enhances public participation by providing them with the opportunity to share information and to suggest betterment in the administration.

For the application of ICT new regulations and laws are essential in promoting governance to ensure accountability and maintain the service delivery system by private and public sectors without prejudicing the larger society. Removal of laws and discretionary powers obsolete in nature, simplification of procedures to avoid administrative barriers and constitution of single windows, ensure speedy disposal of cases. The successful application of electronic governance requires a range of legislative regulations covering the aspects of electronic signatures, electronic archiving, data matching, right of information, data protection, computer crime and intellectual property rights. The Government of India is

already practicing with the IT Act and Convergence Bill and citizen charter of many departments are now available on Internet. Hence, there is need of more policies and legal actions to be taken for strengthening e-governance in India such as:

- Accountability law for making public servants accountable and responsive for non-performance and malfunctioning of their departments,
- Cyber laws, ensuring that any information about the citizens is not misused
- A law in line with the US Government Paper Elimination Act (GPEA) to promote use of electronic media
- Amendments to Consumers Protection Law, Tariffs and Taxation Laws, Intellectual Property Regulations etc., are required
- Preparing guidelines for Content, technological standards, Electronic payments
- Setting standards for electronic publishing, archiving, e-mails etc.

The amendment of certain laws will result in better responsibility and accountability on both citizens and employees. The cyber law will allow the surfing of citizens more freely. Grievances of the customer would be dealt on fast tract online mode. The government will be more authoritative about the information provided by them.

CONCLUSION

Hence, making policy choice of electronic mode of transactions in order to urgency overcomes the need for suitable hardware and software at any cost. Serious efforts to mobilize resources for this onerous job must be introduced. There is a need to establish complete connectivity between various ministries and departments in order to transfer files and papers through Internet thereby choosing efficacious speed as an alternative to manual labor. Supplying information to the public in a language that they understand and are comfortable with, that is their local language. Changing the mindset of the government employees through workshops and counseling to overcome working in the manual mode. Making cyber laws available to the public as early as possible so that the IT systems and information documents stored in the systems has the same legal validity as the documents stored today on paper. Building a supportive infrastructure to power and provide the services in suitable and convenient travel system to bridge the digital divide between the rural and urban India.

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