E-Governance Initiatives In Maharashtra (India): Importance And Problems

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Abstract:

Governments and public sector organizations around the world are facing to reform their public administration organizations and deliver more efficient and cost effective services, as well as better information and knowledge to their stakeholders. *E-governance*, expands to **electronic governance**, is the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in all the processes, with the aim of enhancing government ability to address the needs of the general public. E-governance is a style of governance in which the use of paper is eliminated or greatly reduced and work of government is done in digital mode rather than through paper and files. It has ushered in transparency in the governing process, saving of time due to provision of services through single windows, simplification of procedures, better office and record management, improved attitude and reduction in corruption. The delivering of e-services to the citizens at their door is the primary function of government. In this research paper we present an overview of general introduction of e-governance with its importance and problems.

Introduction

Recognizing the increasing importance of electronics, the Government of India established the Department of Electronics in 1970. The subsequent establishment of the National Informatics Centre (NIC) in 1977 was the first major step towards e-Governance in India as it brought 'information' and its communication in focus. In the early 1980s, use of computers was confined to very few organizations. The advent of personal computers brought the storage, retrieval and processing capacities of computers to Government offices. By the late 1980s, a large number of government officers had computers but they were mostly used for 'word processing'. Gradually, with the introduction of better software's, computers were put to other uses like managing databases and processing information. Advances in communications technology further improved the versatility and reach of computers, and many Government departments started using ICT for a number of applications like tracking movement of papers and files, monitoring of development programmers, processing of employees' pay rolls, generation of reports etc.

E-governance is a way for governments to leverage the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to provide people with convenient access and better quality of government information and services and to provide greater opportunities to participate in democratic institutions and processes. Governments around the world are using ICT to reach to the citizens and businesses and provide them services through various channels at the time and place of their convenience.

Government of Maharashtra is one of the pioneers in promotion of ICT and e-Governance in India. It has been at forefront in implementing e-governance initiatives that focus on citizens' needs and ensure superior service delivery. Greater transparency and access to information on public administration processes has been the thrust area of e-governance in the State. The Government Setup an e-Governance Policy in the state as a further step towards promoting e-Governance in the State.

Maharashtra is the first state to release a dedicated e-Governance policy. The e-Governance Policy was drafted by a 10 member e-Governance Committee under the chairmanship of Padmashri Dr. Vijay. P. Bhatkar and approved by the Cabinet. The objective of the e-Governance Policy is to ensure standardized and seamless implementation of e-governance projects across Maharashtra, thereby encouraging interoperability, data collaboration, sharing and linkage with UID. The policy lays the groundwork for development of an integrated environment for delivering various

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Government to Citizen (G2C), Government to Business (G2B), Government to Government (G2G) and Government to Employees (G2E) Services in a seamless and cost effective manner. The policy is in an advanced stage of implementation currently.

One such step taken by the state Government is to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with YASHADA (Yashwantrao Chavan Academy of Development Administration). Through this MoU, Yashada shall provide necessary infrastructure to provide training and capacity building for various e-Governance projects being executed by DIT and other departments of Government of Maharashtra. Yashada shall also conduct regular audits of various e-Governance projects across all departments to verify the compliance of the department with respect to the state e-governance policy.

The IT and e-Governance Training room at Mantralaya was inaugurated on November 1st, 2012. This is the first dedicated IT and e-Governance Training facility in Mantralaya, Mumbai. This facility shall be used for imparting IT and e-Governance training on a continuous basis. The training calendar for the next 12 months has been finalized and training is held every day. Many of these trainings are walk-in trainings where the interested candidates can join anytime.

Vision of Maharashtra government about e-Governance:

The vision for e-governance in Maharashtra, serves to provide both direction and purpose to improve systemic efficiencies. The IT vision aims to spread awareness about the numerous opportunities and possibilities that technology offers in the current scenario, as well as in the times to come. The information revolution has created tremendous opportunities for government, businesses and citizens. It enables the government to provide better services to citizens and businesses, meeting the ever-increasing demand for greater efficiency, effectiveness and accountability while reducing costs and risks. Government of Maharashtra strongly believes that Information Technology has the potential to lead the positive transformation of its strong industrial base, service sector and vibrant agriculture towards better economy as well as service delivery.

Translation of Vision:

In order to attain the goals outlined above, Government of Maharashtra has identified six priority pillars which will facilitate state departments to use e-governance as a tool to become more proactive and responsive to its citizens' needs. The key pillars are:

Pillar 1: Establishment of Policy/Legal Frameworks

Pillar 2: Develop Strong Capacity Building Framework

Pillar 3: Facilitate Abundant Funding

Pillar 4: Institutional Framework

Pillar 5: Build Common Core e-Governance

Pillar 6: Develop Common State Wide Projects

Advantages of E-Governance E

- **Speed:** Technology makes communication speedier. Internet, Phones, Cell Phones have reduced the time taken in normal communication. The work becomes easy, smooth, fast and accountable.

- **Cost Reduction:** Most of the Government expenditure is appropriated towards the cost of stationary. Paper-based communication needs lots of stationary, printers, computers, etc. which calls for continuous heavy expenditure. Internet and Phones makes communication cheaper saving valuable money for the Government. Lesser the paper is used, lesser the harm for the environment. It will also generate much lesser junk.

- **Transparency:** Use of ICT makes governing profess transparent. All the information of the Government would be made available on the internet. The citizens can see the information whenever they want to see. But this is only possible when every piece of information of the Government is uploaded on the internet and is available for the public to peruse. Current governing process leaves many ways to conceal the information from all the people. ICT helps make the information available online eliminating all the possibilities of concealing of information.

- **Accountability:** Once the governing process is made transparent the Government is

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automatically made accountable. Accountability is answerability of the Government to the people. It is the answerability for the deeds of the Government. An accountable Government is a responsible Government.

- *Convenience: E-Government brings public services to citizens on their schedule and their venue.* Like Digital locker, e-challan, e-wallet, e-Passport application ,e-tickets in railway and e-tender system etc.

- *Improved Customer Service: E-Government allows to redeploy resources from back-end processing to the front line of customer service.* Digitising social security schemes like PDS, LPG subsidy, scholarship scheme,old age pension etc. To promote ease of doing business: e-filing of returns, e-biz portal and digitising various business application for seeking various permits.

- *Increased access to information: E-Government improves the accessibility of government information to citizens allowing it become an important resource in the making the decisions that affect daily life and so it helps in empowerment of citizens.* The saved documents can be easily kept for ages without taking any physical space. It will be easier to search them as well.

Challenges Ine-Governance

There are large numbers of potential barriers in the implementation of e-Governance. Some hindrance in the path of implementation, like security, unequal access to the computer technology by the citizen, high initial cost for setting up the e government solutions and resistance to change. Challenges identified as trust, resistance to change, digital divide, cost and privacy and security concerns.

Trust

Trust can be defined along two dimensions: as an assessment of a current situation, or as an innate personality traitor predisposition. The implementation of public administration functions via e-government requires the presence of two levels of trust. The first is that the user must be confident, comfortable and trusting of the tool or technology with which they will interact. The

second dimension of trust pertains to trust of the government.

There has to be a balance between ensuring that a system prevents fraudulent transactions and the burden that extensive checks can take place on people who are honest.

Recently, confidential information on military veterans was compromised when a computer containing their personal information was lost. This type of incident can erode trust and user confidence in government systems. Trust, along with financial security, are two critical factors limiting the adoption of e-government services.

Resistance to change

The innovation diffusion theory states that over time an innovation will diffuse through a population, and the rate of adoption will vary between those who adopt early, referred to as early adopters and to those who adopt the innovation much later, referred to as ―laggards.

The resistant to change phenomenon can explain much of the hesitation that occurs on the part of constituents in moving from a paper based to a Web-based system for interacting with government.

Citizens, employees and businesses can all have their biases with respect to how transactions should be processed. However, government entities and public policy administrators cannot ignore the changes that occur as a result of the implementation of information and communication technology (ICT) Education about the value of the new systems is one step toward reducing some of the existing resistance. It can also be particularly useful for a leader or manager, to buy into the new system at an early stage in the adoption process

Digital Divide

The digital divide refers to the separation that exists between individuals, communities, and businesses that have access to information technology and those that do not have such access.

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Social, economic, infrastructural and ethno-linguistic indicators provide explanations for the presence of the digital divide.

Economic poverty is closely related to limited information technology resources An individual living below poverty line does not afford a computer for himself to harness the benefits of e-government and other online services. As the digital divide narrows, broader adoption of e-government in the public domain becomes possible. Economic poverty is not the only cause of digital divide. It can also be caused by the lack of awareness among the people. Even some of the economic stable people don't know about the scope of e -governance.

Awareness can only help to bring users to that service delivery channel once. It cannot guarantee sustained use of the system unless the system is also designed in such a way as to deliver satisfactory outcome. Procedures need to be simplified to deliver concrete benefits and clear guidelines provided to encourage their use by the actual end users and reduce user's dependence on middlemen/intermediaries

Cost

One of the difficult tasks of the govt. is to spend on implementation of e-governance initiatives to which govt. has to bear huge cost. Cost is one of the most important prohibiting factor that comes in the path of e-governance implementation particularly in the developing countries like India where most of the people living below the poverty line. Elected officers and politician don't seem to be interested in implementing e-governance

Privacy and Security

There will be three basic levels of access exists for e-government stakeholders: no access to a Web service; limited access to a Web-service or full-access to a Web service, however when personal sensitive data exists the formation of the security access policy is a much more complex process with legal consideration. With the implementation of e-government projects, effective measures must be taken to protect sensitive personal information. A lack of clear security standards and protocols can limit the development of projects that contain sensitive information such as income, medical history.

Conclusion

We have seen how the concept of e-governance has evolved in Indian scenario and how much it is required for transparency and accountability on the part of government and at the same time it is also a toll to increase the participation of people in policy making by empowering them with the right information at right time. National portal of India has interactive user interface and has all the information about its states, departments and ministries and is also well connected to them. It has covered connectivity to the nationalized and private sector banks. The penetration of internet, telecommunication services in India has increased in the last decade and this gives a ray of hope to the citizens of India to fight with the long persisting problems of poverty, corruption, regional disparity and unemployment. But at the same time, due to slow pace of project completion, red-tape and resistance from the side of government employees and citizens too has not given the desired result.

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