

E-governance initiatives in India challenges and resilience strategies

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Abstract

E-government empowers citizens to interact and receive services from the central, state or local governments thought the day, whole week (Shailendra C. Jain and Sushil S. Sharma). According to Gartner, 'e-government involves the use of ICTs to support government operations and provide government services'. The establishment of National Informatics Center in the central government is a great leap in Indian e-governance sector. The early programs initiated in pilot bases in different parts of the country. The resilience to Indian context was the main challenge in the early years and the Indian bureaucratic institutional culture was not familiar to the sudden paradigm shift in the work culture. The implementation of the program was to strengthen the government service delivery. The rapidly transforming technologies have the capacity to create a changing wave across all the functioning areas of the government. The information communication technology creating a new opening in the government services delivery system for the well-being of the citizens. Digital technology is not just focused on any single arena it is the comprehensive approach to the inclusive development (UN E-Government Survey 2018). The study elucidating the early establishment of e-governance institutions of India in the first phase establishment and their transformation since then based on the districts of Tiruvalluvar in TamilNadu (first e-district), Ramchandrapuram in Andra Pradesh (first e-Mandal) and Aymanam panchayat 15 ward in Kerala (first e-ward).

Keywords: Information and communication technology, e-governance, sustainable development.

Introduction

The emergence information technology transformed the whole human life. The importance of transformation towards digitalizing the government gain more importance after the development in the technical world. Government service which indulged with modern electronic equipment can be consider as e-governance. Internet delivering to the citizen improved service, reliable and updated information and knowledge for an active participation in the citizen centric moves. The way citizen use the information and technology and delivering technology initiatives have the key role in the active participation¹ in the governance mechanism. The importance of e-governance increased in the administrative world, the important features of e-governance is the same as good governance and playing as a supporting variable in the good governance initiatives. The good governance elements can transform in e-governance sector like: improving the transparency, proper accountability monitoring mechanism, increased peoples participation in governance, intra and inter social integration, more transparent public financial management and reforms and the holistic development in the society². The e-governance service can reach to the people by full-fledged implementation of online and offline services. It is essential for a proper and full access to the people and alternative to the service delivery. The offline and online channel management is the essential for the full-fledged service delivery in the developing countries e-governance initiatives and lives³. Digitalization focused mainly in two focal ideas: information management and connectivity: information

management is to provide needy information to all without any biasness and connectivity is for developing infrastructure for the communities⁴.

National Informatics Centre: National Informatics Centre (NIC) is the nodal institute implementing the e-governances initiatives in India and also performing as a monitoring body in the state. In 1976 National Informatics Centre was established in New Delhi under the ministry of communication. During the period NIC was the establishing institution of e-government and e-governance in the root level. NIC's prime target was to create hard and soft infrastructure for the Indian digital revolution, which boosted the poverty eradication and inclusive development programs⁵. The central agencies and state agencies played key role in the application development and maintenance in the administrative level⁶, state level and district level and also providing technical assistance to semi-governmental bodies for converging to digitalization⁷.

Methodology

The primary data collection was based on the implementation of the E-governance programe in India. The data collection based on the observation method and interview in selected areas. The primary data collected from Tiruvalluvar district in Tamil Nadu state of India, first e-district in in India, Ramchandrapuram, mandal in Andra Pradesh state of India, first e-mandal in India and ward no15 Ayman, Kottayam in Kerala State of India, first e-ward in the Country. The first e-governance implemented as

piolet bases and later merged with the state government programmes. Data collected from the bureaucratic wing related the initiatives in the departments in the particular area. Digital India program is transferring the whole digitalization process in India very rapidly, new initiatives and adaptation of the technologies like artificial intelligence etc., are the transformation face of the state.

Government going online

Under the National Informatics Centre government moved towards digitalization mainly for two purpose: information management and connectivity. In the early years of the digital revolution governments moved to establish basic services through digital mode. In 2000 Tiruvalluvar district in Tamil Nadu become the first e-district in the country, with the help of NIC government implemented the project. Ramchandrapuram village close to Hyderabad, was the India’s first e-madal panchyath which provided e enabled services to the villagers to settle disputes through an express web-enabled system. The Andhra Pradesh state sub body of the NIC implemented the

pilot project labeled as, “The Electronic Knowledge-based Panchayat (EK Panch) project”⁸. Ward no 15 in Aymanam Panchyath in the state of Kerala is the first e-Ward in the country⁹, which is focused in the rural areas in the root level. Among the three services Ward No 15, Aymanam only functioning as the same condition, remaining services merged with another pan umbrella service¹⁰, or government withdrawn the services in the later years¹¹. The digital India initiative changes the pattern of service delivery and citizen’s participation in the administration. Now most of the Indian states are adopting different e-governance service which have met with varying degree of success¹².

According to Richard Heeks the gap model suggest hard and soft gap in the information technology and suggesting the gap between technology and social arena where it implementing. The public private gap elucidating the functioning of service, access to services and the updation of technology in both the sector¹³.

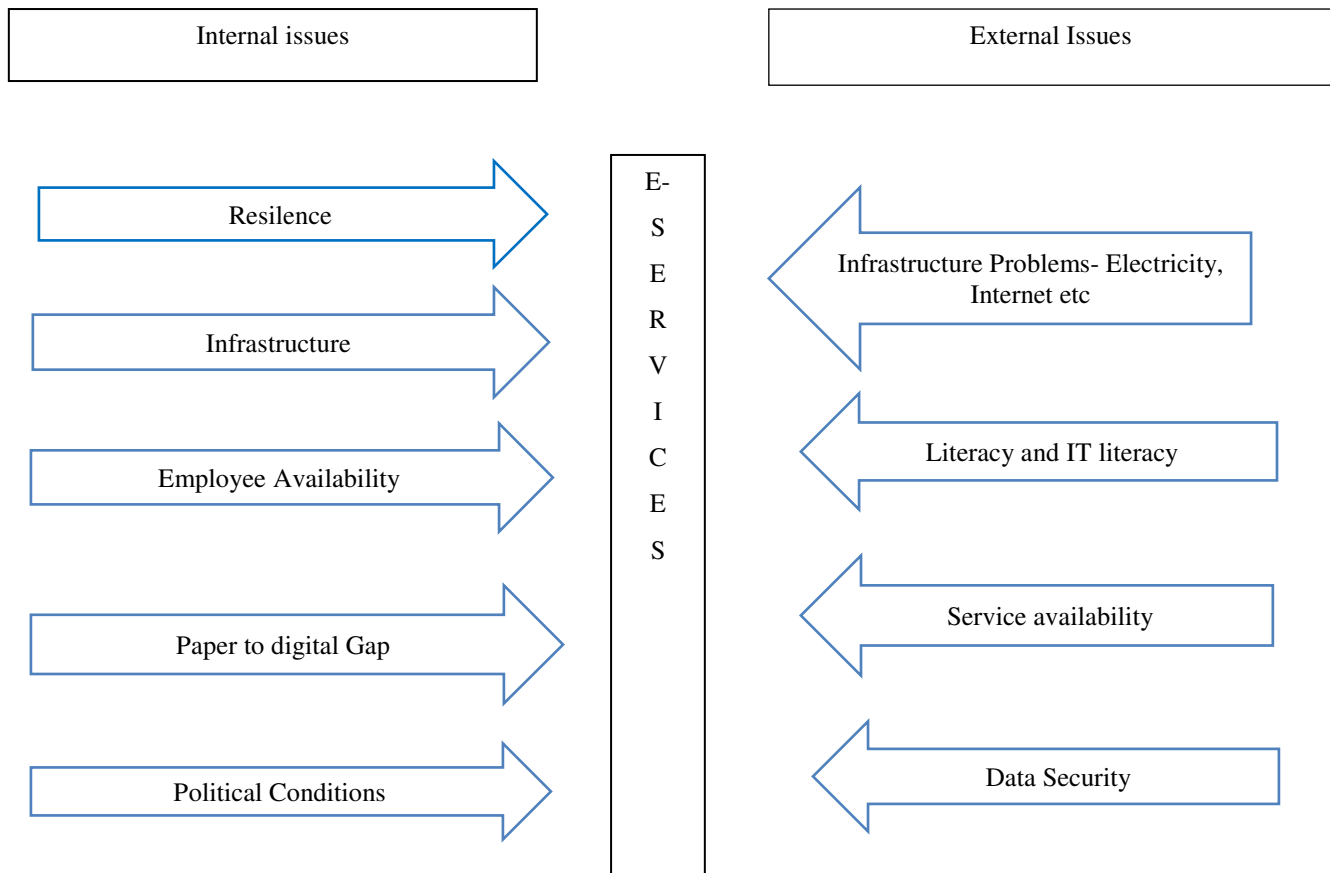


Figure-1: E- Service Failure Gap.

The main problem in the digitalization is resilience issues¹⁴ in all the stages. The term technology adoption is defined by Agarwal as 'the process of using or accepting innovative modernized approaches of new technologies used for government services in the delivery system'. Adoption in the bureaucratic arena is a main challenge factors like age, employee profile ego and the service opens to the people are the main difficulties. Infrastructure creation for a digital service¹⁴ is very important in the program implementation. Once the digitalization process is completed administration transformation takes time to adapt the changes and error in the early stages taking time to rectify and partially digitalized service making problems in service delivery¹⁵. The multi-party democratic system creating issues in the pre digital implementation stages. Ideological difference reflecting in the service preparation, in Aymanam panchyath programme implementation challenges are reflected in newspapers.

The external issues in the service acceptance are various challenges foremost and important in the external issue is infrastructure creation for the service like; access to the computer, internet facility, continues electricity availability etc. Literacy and computer literacy¹⁶ are very important for the service consumption. Aymanam panchyath e governance programs are successful and upgrading with modern services is because of the demand from the people where literacy rate is more than 94% and smartphone with internet usage is more than 71% are the influencing factors¹⁷. Tiruvalluvar district and Ramachandrapuram programs are failed in the due process but later merged with other new services. The success in the Aymanam was an inclusive success in the cultural, demographic and economic factors. Lack of skilled services provider played a key role in the early programs, where the need of the computer specialist in the rural area and skill of the employees created the service delay in the delivery process¹⁶. Information Technology Act 2000 and Net neutrality issues created a demand for the data security in the country. Strong legal protection and strong government involvement is the need of the people, because of this people are reluctant in use of this services¹⁸.

The service delivery mechanism and the delivery gap in the countries like India is analyzed in the e delivery gap analysis by Dada¹⁴. In the Indian context of the service delivery is different in the challenge perspective where people use English as an important language and political system is very diverse in the country. The amount of data is very huge in India, server for such a large data and protection is not a easy accommodative to the local self-government and other governing bodies. Under the NIC and Digital India program government implement server facility in each and every district and based on the demand that should enlarged to the needy areas.

Conclusion

Basically E-government facilitates, are for reducing the administrative burden the paper assessing the e-governance

issues in different context in the early phase. The problems in the digitalization in India is very common to the developing countries. Still some issues in the state are new to the programme implementation like high population and difficult geographical terrain of the state. Policy gap in the service preparation and behavioral change is a needy factor in the proper service implementation. There are many challenges in the implementation phase of e-governance programme like: resilience to the technology adaptation by the working and service receiving people, capacity building for the service delivery and service enjoyment. Weak legal frame work and Tran's boundary legal issues, common man awareness, specific standard for governance delivery and implementation. Weak law and law enforcement, service delivery updating and engineering problems, administrative reforms and change adaptation, common man service knowledge and coordination for the service enjoyment, intra government department coordination and execution. To meet all these challenges enlarge the resilience issues and meet the challenges. The people society and organization for a better enjoyment and delivery of the service should be coordinated work style. Capacity building in employees and wide spread awareness and availability of services can overcome the resilience in the e-governance challenges.

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