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Project Management Challenges in Implementation of e-Governance in India

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Abstract: *The article talks about e-Governance and implementation challenges. e-Governance is the use of Information and communication technology for enhancing relation between the Government and its citizens. India has witnessed a tremendous change in the way the citizen centric services have changed from paper based to completely online. With a lot of encouragement from the present Modi Government, a lot of human and financial capital has been invested in almost all the sectors to computerize various processes. In that race for making services online very less, thought has gone to analyse the hindrances which need to be overcome first before its implementation in the entire country. Our country still has villages which lack proper electrification. It is still having people which are illiterate for whom operating a computer is a distant dream. Also as per statistics of Ministry of Electronics, Govt. of India the failure rate of e-governance projects is pretty high. (85%). A developing country cannot afford to invest time and money in projects that fail and so call for a serious introspection. The article talks about the various implementation challenges under the heads of economic, technical & social issues.*

Keywords: *E-Governance, Economic, Technical & Social Issues, Project Management.*

I. INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

E-Governance is the usage of internet technology as a means for exchanging information, delivering services and transacting with citizens, business organisations, and other segments of government. E-Governance provides a full proof strategy to an effective overall governance. It definitely improves accountability, transparency, and efficiency of government processes, but in addition to it, it also facilitates sustainable and inclusive growth. E-Governance also provides a mechanism of direct delivery of citizen centric services to all segments of the society including those in the remotest corners, without having to deal with intermediaries.

a. Governance. The art of managing the functioning of an organisation by the people who are authorised to do so is called governance.

b. e-Government. It is the use of ICT by the government to offer its citizens and businesses organisations the opportunity to interact and conduct operations with government by making use of different communication media such as telephones, fax, smart cards, e-mail / Internet etc. It is also about how government administers, rules, regulates and frameworks to carry out service delivery and the coordination, communication, and integration of processes take place within itself. Another definition of E-government was presented by United Nation's website to be "e-government refers to the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) - such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing - by government agencies".

c. e-Governance e-Governance is a wider term than e-Government According to Thomos B. Riley. "Government and governance are both getting the consent and cooperation of the governed. But whereas government is the formal apparatus for this objective, the government is the outcome as experienced by those on the receiving end. E-Governance can be a more productive version of government in general if it is well implemented and managed.

II. REASONS FOR SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF E-GOVERNMENT PROJECTS IN INDIA

An estimated US\$3 trillion was spent during the first decade of the 21st century on government information systems. Yet recent studies suggest between 60 to 80% of e-government projects fail in some way leading to "a massive wastage of financial, human and political resources, and an inability to deliver the potential benefits of e-government to its beneficiaries". Systems failures are recognized as occurring from a complex interaction of technical and human factors set in a social situation rather than as the result of the failure of one particular component (human or technical). To understand failure, we need to examine the basis on which academic writers, who generally adopt an informative stance to evaluation, decide to provide descriptive and diagnostic information on the projects being considered. These diagnostic approaches fall into three main categories – factorial analyses, systems approaches and interpretive studies. Heeks (2002) applied a factor-based approach to an analysis of the significant number of failures in e-government projects. A survey of relevant case studies in the literature led him to the identification of seven dimensions necessary and sufficient to measure the gap that exists between 'current reality' and the 'design concept' of the intended application. He contends that the wider the gap that exists on each of these dimensions, the higher the risk of failure for the project. The seven dimensions of potential design-reality gaps to be explored on an e-government project are summarized by the ITPOSMO acronym and are outlined as:

- a. Information: the formal information held by the digital system and the informal information used by the people involved with the system.
- b. Technology: mainly focuses on the digital IT but can also cover other information-handling technologies such as paper or analogue telephones.
- c. Processes: the activities undertaken by the relevant stakeholders for whom the e-Government system operates both information related processes and broader business processes.
- d. Objectives and values: often the most important dimension since the objectives component covers issues of self-interest and organizational politics, and can even be seen to incorporate formal organizational strategies; the values component covers culture: what stakeholders feel are the right and wrong ways to do things.
- e. Staffing and skills: it comprises of the expertise level of the staff involved in the implementation of the project.
- f. Management systems and structures: the overall management systems required to organize operation and use of the e-government system, plus the way in which stakeholder agencies/groups are structured, both formally and informally.

E-Governance Project Failure - Facts and Reasons (Shown in Table 1)

35 % of e-Government projects are total Failures	- Initiatives not implemented - Initiatives abandoned immediately
50% of e-Government projects are partial Failures	- Main stated goals not achieved – Initial success but failure after a year - Success for one group but failure for others
15% of e-Government projects are successes	- All stakeholders benefited - No adverse results

Table1 (Source: www.nisg.org/docs/539_Report.pdf)

III. IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES IN INDIA

Several initiatives have been taken by the Indian government to facilitate the access to public services even then the desired outcomes are yet to be fully realised. This can be largely attributed to various front-end and back-end challenges that the government continues to face. High illiteracy levels, non-availability of user friendly interfaces, inadequate or no power supply in rural areas, low internet penetration and most importantly, lack of awareness of e-Governance processes are some of the main user specific issues which form the front end challenges. On the other hand, back-end challenges relate to technical, process or human resource issues within the government which mainly comprises of issues like lack of systems integration within a department, lack of integration across government departments, limited knowledge of using computers at various levels of bureaucracy and deployment of technology without proper process re-engineering. The obstacles in the implementation of e-Governance related to project management are explained in the following paragraphs:

IV. NON-TECHNICAL CHALLENGES

- a. Different Language. India is a country where people with different cultures and different religions live together. People belonging to different states speak different languages. The diversity of people in the context of language is a huge challenge for implementing e-Governance projects as e-Governance applications are written in the English language. And 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.
- b. 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. The biggest obstacle to the implementation of e-Governance projects is illiteracy. Illiterate people are not able to access the e-Governance applications; hence the projects do not get much success.
- c. Low IT Literacy. Much of the Indian people are not literate and those who are literate do not have much knowledge about Information Technology (IT). Most of the people in India do not know how to use the Internet. How can e-Governance projects be implemented successfully in such situation?
- d. Services are not accessible easily: The concept of e-Governance is claiming for increased efficiency and effectiveness of the government, but these goals can only be achieved if the services are available to all of its citizens. A major part of Indian population is not able to access e-Governance applications due to limited access to the Internet or lack of power supply.

V. ISSUES IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT IN INDIA

E-Government is a globally acclaimed fact that it is a force multiplier in achieving good governance, bringing down cost of operations, and increasing the ability of citizens and businesses to access services effectively and in cost efficient manner. It is a challenging task to successfully implement an e-Government project. Some current challenges for managing e-Government Projects in India are as follows:

- a. Lack of effective project management tools and methods.
- b. The absence of proper planning, various ad hoc tasks are taken up by the project team due to which the focus on critical activities is lost.
- c. The knowledge of project management concepts is very low in Government officials forming part of the e-Government Project team.
- d. E-Government projects do not follow any standardized project management implementation frameworks.
- e. Resources are over loaded with work due to inadequate staffing. Sometimes tasks not assigned to the team appropriately.
- f. No control of central IT agencies during project execution. The decision making process is generally left to individual line ministries and departments since funding comes from them.
- g. Non provisioning of Project Management dashboard for coordinated project monitoring by all the stakeholders in a large project.
- h. Inadequate tracking of how the project is being implemented, tasks causing delays.
- i. No monitoring of Cost and Schedule at project checkpoints.
- j. During the project initiation, the baseline data is not captured which is useful for bench marking of activities.

V. CONCLUSION

Computerisation is the key word of modern governance which the Indian government is doing to enhance its relationship with its citizens and other stake holders. In doing that the government is spending a huge amount of money on e-Governance projects. Unawareness in people, local language issues of the people of a particular area, privacy for the personal data of the people etc. are main bottlenecks for a complete success of e-Governance in India. The government must take actions to overcome the hindrances so that its citizens can take maximum advantage of the services offered and make e-Governance a complete success.

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