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Research Paper Computer Science

"E-Governance Initiatives in Gujarat- A Case Study"

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ABSTRACT

Gujarat is pioneer in E-governance implementation compare to other states in India. Gujarat has implemented wide range of E-governance projects. When it comes to e-governance, there is no doubt that Gujarat is one of the top states in the country in this regard. Not only is the basket of services offered to citizens huge, but the results have also been tangible and widespread. Be it citizen-centric services or services for businesses in the state, Gujarat is one of the few states that not only has a clear e-governance charter, but is also strong on its policy footing. The last decade has seen a gamut of e-governance activities across the state and while some of them are still undergoing the transition from implementation to utilization, others are full blown projects that are providing a variety of services to the citizens of Gujarat.

There are quite a few elements that Gujarat has got right in journey to a well e-governed state. While it has a lot to do with clear policies, it is also about having a well defined vision. Vision, for any e-governed state, necessarily has to percolate from the top. In that regard, Gujarat has been lucky as its leadership, with the CM at the forefront, has always believed in the potential of e-governance and how it can change the matrices of governing a state.

E-governance

"When ICT is used in governance, things move faster as idle levels are eliminated," said K.R. Gururaja Rao, Chairman and Managing Director, Gujarat Informatics Ltd.

The outcome of all these diverse factors has been singular and the end result is a better governed state. The difference lies in the fact that this result has been brought about in multiple and well-thought out ways. Gujarat as a state seems to have understood that e-governance cannot be brought about by applying one formula to everything and that a state data center or a SWAN network are not the answers to every e-governance need. E-governance requires more engineering in order to fit into a system. Above all, Gujarat has understood that e-governance is primarily about reach. All initiatives, at the end, need to penetrate to the furthest corners in order to make a difference.

The state began thinking about e-governance long before the Government of India woke up to the prowess of IT. Back in 1999, when governance using technology was still a concept either in minds of enthusiasts or on the planning pages of the government, Gujarat embarked on its IT journey.

The state's initial steps towards becoming IT governed commenced with the formation of an IT Cell under the General Administration Department in 1999. A significant move in the same year was the establishment of Gujarat Informatics Limited (GIL), the nodal agency for IT development in the state. GIL has played an instrumental role is advising the government both in terms of policies and the implementation of various projects.

Then came the establishment of the Department of Science and Technology in 2002. Since then, it has been a rapid journey. The State Wide Area Network (SWAN) was set up in 2001-2002 and it was soon followed by a server farm and the State Data Center.

With infrastructure projects well on their way, the IT Policy that was initially outlined in 1999 underwent a revamp in 2006 and it is all set to be revised again in 2011. Gujarat has managed to scale up fast.

Over the years, the state has struggled to make the e-governance transition from informative to interactive to transactional. The ultimate step, that of transformation, doesn't seem far off.

Another crucial thing that the Government of Gujarat (GoG) recognized was that initiating e-governance in the state necessarily involved a massive amount of change. Consequently, it brought into place a few enabling mechanisms to manage this change. Under this mechanism, all departments were required to prepare an IT action plan. Earlier 1% of state budget went towards IT-related activities. This rose to 3% of the state government's budget in 2005.

Another substantial step was the nomination of a Chief Information Officer (CIO) in every department. Various technical people were also deputed as systems managers to bridge the talent gap for the smooth implementation of technical projects.

Framework approach

"We are not following the project approach, we are following the framework approach." This statement by Dr. Neeta Shah, Director (e-governance), GIL, is actually the success mantra behind the state's e-governance policies.

What it basically implies is that projects are not taken up in silos, rather the entire framework is taken into account before implementing a project. Most e-governance initiatives in the past have had limited impact as the projects were implemented in isolation. One department was not aware of the steps or plans of other departments and there was little or no coordination and information was stagnant.

For any e-governance initiative to be completed, the projects need to talk to each other. It is crucial to avoid any duplication of work and simplify processes for citizens. For such an approach to be translated into implementation, you not only need a sophisticated IT infrastructure but you also need to reassemble the process through which the system operates. Apply that equation to any Indian state government and you have a mammoth task on hand.

Engineering change
For every project initiated in the state, Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) was undertaken by departments that were delivering a project. Sometimes, this BPR exercise would involve the complete strata of administration including the leadership.

This included conditioning and training departments to enable them to provide services sans glitches. More often than not, the whole set-up and earlier processes needed to be displaced but if careful assessment of the scenario required such a massive shift, then the shift did take place. The second part of this reengineering process was training and capacity building. The GoG, to this end, introduced a number of training and certificate courses to create an IT-enabled workforce. There is a College to Career program that is being run in partnership with Microsoft and TCS. There is also Project Invite (Initiative to Nurture a Vibrant Information Technology Ecosystem) being run collaboratively by GIL and IBM.

There are a few certification tests like the NAC Test which is NASSCOM's certifying program to identify a talent pool for the ITES/BPO industry in Gujarat.

The road ahead
Despite being among the best e-governed states in the country, Gujarat has ambitious plans on the anvil. If you peek at the pipeline you would see quite a few ambitious new projects lined up and almost all existing ones about to undergo substantial scaling up.

Be it the state data center or the SWAN network or the e-gram projects, they are already in the process of expanding both their scope and reach. Gujarat has also doled out some unique IT initiatives like e-voting and plans on taking these things to the next level together with some new projects that are being lined up. However, there are a few things that these projects have in common. They all are geared for one eventual result, which is the integration and seamless delivery of services to citizens through the use of technology.

Initiative Projects by Gujarat
GSWAN
- Connecting 7 Districts on 8 Mbps, 18 Districts on 4 Mbps and 1 District with 2 Mbps to State Center at Gandhinagar using leased circuits provided by BSNL, Reliance and Tata Tele Services.
- Connecting 225 Talukas to 26 District HQ on 2 Mbps leased circuits.
- Interconnecting more than 3600 District and Taluka level GoG offices.
- Average 70 departmental offices at District locations and 5 offices at Taluka Locations have been connected to GSWAN.
- Facilitates uninterrupted and easy IP based Video-conferencing between various GoG office.
- Over 20015 E-mail IDs created for Government officers all over the state.
- Over 255 Websites are hosted for various departments.
- 14 Mbps Internet Bandwidth terminated at GSWAN State Centre among 5000 Internet Users.
- Facilitates uninterrupted and easy IP based video-conferencing between various GoG offices.

SWAGAT Online
Swagat project is been hosted on every 4th Thursday of the month in the presence of Chief Minister Narendra Modi in the Jansampark Department of his Chief Minister Office. In his presence with all the department heads and the district representatives, the grievance of the common man are addressed through Video conferencing and solutions are provided online to the common man immediately. All the department heads try to find the solution to the common man's problem in the best possible way. Of the Applications received, justice to 92.45% is done by the mutual united initiative since the implementation.

E-Dhara
E-Dhara enchances complete Computerization of Land Records across the state. Elimination of Manual Records, computer controlled mutation process and self sustainability are the leading objectives of e-Dhara system.

Health Management Information System
HMIS is to build trust and confidence for the general hospitals in the hearts of the citizen of the state by providing efficient and quality health services through IT application. They streamline the Operations with improved Patient care and effective Administration and Control. HMIS project was conceptualized by the department of health & family welfare to ensure the quality health care by IT application to provide standard clinical & diagnostic tools, hospital management tools and integration of management information at the state level so as to ensure online review & monitoring. The Project is undertaken by Department of Health and Family welfare.

E-City
The Project undertaken by Revenue Department of GOG, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation is the first Municipal Corporation in India to facilitate better performance of the delivery of municipal services like birth and death registration, building plan, primary health and education, city cleanliness, water supply, sewage, road, street-lights, parks and garden through e-governance to citizens of the city. For this Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation has established six City Civic Centers located in five zones of Ahmedabad city and also created forty-three ward civic offices all these interconnected via intranet/ Internet connectivity. Citizens have the facility to pay through net/bank/ cyber café.

E Gram – Vishvagram
On the Birthday of Subhash Chandra Bose on 23rd January, CM Narendra Modi launched the e-Gram Vishwagram Project from Haripura, the place where Subhash Chandra Bose had given call for freedom. This Project Initiates e-Gram Project connecting 13716 Gram Panchayats and 6000 Citizen Common Service Centres as a part of the eGram connectivity Project. Some features of e-Gram Project are Video conferencing facilities at all villages, issuing the documents and certificates, application forms for various development and welfare schemes. Also 7/12 certificates to the farmers from panchayats. VSat communication technology based broadband connectivity, free of cost communication between panchayats, common service facilities, advantages of Internet and cyber connectivity and electricity-telephone bills, visa, E-postal services and many more facilities are provided through the online e-Gram project webs

Home Department
The portal of Home Department – www.home.gujarat.gov.in – covers total 70 individual websites, including that of the Home Department, all its HODs like Anti Corruption Bureau, Prohibition & Excise, IG Prisons etc. and Gujarat Police (DGP, Commissionerate, DSPs, Armed Unit, Training, Human Rights etc.), Port & Transport Department, Commissioner Transport and all RTOs & ARTOs. It is completely Dynamic (Unicode based) Web-Portal & Websites based on CMS (Content Management System) and having Online Updating Facility, User Interaction to the various Applications and Database, Search Engine enabled features, Online Complain and User Feedback facility.

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