ICT and Administrative Efficiency - A Study of E-Panchayatra in Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract: *e-Panchayat' with the active involvement of the stake holders at lowest administrative level was successfully designed developed and being implemented successfully in Andhra Pradesh. As the project involves e-Governance right at the grass root level i.e., village level and offers a very cost effective solution. The methodology adopted for implementing the system is novel, cost-effective and self-sustaining. To achieve high efficiency the system harnesses the state-of-the-art Information and Communication Technologies which are highly efficient. The purpose of this paper is to examine the challenges encountered in e-Panchayat as well as the potential opportunities available in the context of A.P state. The study reveals Andhra Pradesh is still lagging behind in utilizing information and communication Technologies for delivering government services online.*

Keywords: e-Panchayat, services-online, Andhra Pradesh

1. Introduction

E-Panchayat is a software product conceptualized, designed and developed by National Informatics Centre, Hyderabad, Telangana, as a part of its e-governance initiatives. E-Panchayat has been designed taking into consideration all the information and knowledge management requirements in a Gram Panchayat. Thus e-Panchayat fits well into the information systems at gram Panchayat Level. The software is web enabled, and citizen-centric. Therefore, even with less overhead the village level functionaries and the citizens are envisaged to benefit by e-Panchayat.

There are various models and solutions of e-Governance in the World. However a cost effective solution is always preferable. An electronic knowledge based system titled 'e-Panchayat' with the active involvement of the stake holders at lowest administrative level was successfully designed developed and being implemented successfully in Andhra Pradesh. As the project involves e-Governance right at the grass root level i.e., village level and offers a very cost effective solution. The methodology adopted for implementing the system is novel, cost-effective and self-sustaining. To achieve high efficiency the system harnesses the state-of-the-art Information and Communication Technologies which are highly efficient.

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The **E-Panchayat initiative** in phase wise
- How to streamline the administrative processes and avoid delays and conserve resources in the country? Is there a feasible solution for this problem? How to implement the solution in a cost effective manner?

- Answer to several such questions was e-Panchayat. The main idea is if the administrative processes are streamlined and resources are conserved and citizens are empowered with efficient and responsive local administration at every village, then it results in development of districts, states and subsequently the entire nation. So grass root level problems were taken up for ICT application under the e-Panchayat Project

Table 1

Indicator	Unit	State statistics
Area	Sq.km.	1,62,970
Mandal/ Tehsil	Number	660
Villages	Number	17,366
Total population (Census 2011)	Crore	4.96
Rural population	Crore	3.50
Rural sex ratio	Females per 1000 Males	994
Density	Persons per Sq. Km	220
Rural literacy rate	Percentage	62.37
Male literacy rate	Percentage	70.48
Female literacy rate	Percentage	54.25
Scheduled Caste population	Percentage	17.08
Scheduled Tribe population	Percentage	5.53
Zilla Praja Parishads	Number	13
Mandal Praja Parishads	Number	660
Gram Panchayats	Number	12,920

Source: Information furnished (August 2017) by Commissioner, Panchayat Raj and Rural Development (CPR&RD) and Andhra Pradesh at a Glance published (2016-17) by Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Andhra Pradesh

Objective
Main purpose of the study is how e-Panchayat is administered in state and how it is benefiting the citizen through various development programmes. I identified the challenges and made recommendations through this paper.

E-Governance Projects under taken by government of Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh is the state that harnessing the power of project management in e-governance and stands front line in India to use the information technology in government functionaries for providing better services to citizens with less expenditure.

Mee-seva

It is a good governance initiative that corporate the vision of National Plan "Public Services-Closer to Home" and facilitates single entry portal for entire range of G2C& G2B services. The objective of Mee-Seva is to provide smart, citizen centric, ethical, efficient and effective governance facilitated by technology. The initiative involves universal and non-discriminatory delivery government services to citizens *&* Businessmen of all strata and improved efficiency, transparency and accountability for the government. The initiative features transformed government-citizen interface levels of administration along with a shared governance model.

Mee- bhoomi

The Government of Andhra Pradesh has come up with a public portal which can help the farmers/ general public and revenue officials to check the land records very conveniently. The portal meebhoomi.ap.gov.in can be used to check village map for personal and official purposes. The state government has introduced an online program 'Mee Bhoomi' for checking the land records quickly and easily. The computerized technique is really helpful for the residents, officials and also the farmers as they can effortlessly check the land records, village maps, land status details. AP Mee Bhoomi is available on http://meebhoomi.ap.gov.in and for more convenience of the state citizens.

Mee- Kosam

Mee-kosam a portal for people to report grievances, problems and give Suggestions, was launched *by Andhra Pradesh Chief* Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu. The portal www.meekosam.ap.gov. in will record grievance based on Aadhar number. The person who posted grievance or suggestion could also track the progress of his/her application. An acknowledgement will be received via SMS/ e-mail once a grievance is registered. Meekosam also provides an option to classify complaints.

E-Pragati

E-Pragati is a new paradigm in governance based on a Whole-of-Government framework, transcending the departmental boundaries. It adopts a Mission-centric approach in its design and implementation and seeks to realize the Vision of Sunrise AP 2022, by delivering citizen-centric services in a coordinated, integrated efficient and equitable manner."

E-POS

E-Pos in the public distribution system white ration cards are stream lined, the quantity of supply is making transparent and also increased the accountability of the dealer in the distribution. APTS on behalf of Civil Supplies Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh invites bids from eligible Service Providers for "Implementing Aadhar Enabled Public Distribution System (AePDS)" for Consumer affairs.

E- Office

E-Office will be introduced on a pilot basis in all 13 districts in June followed by a full-scale launch in July. The project aims to improve productivity, quality, resource management, turnaround time and increase transparency by replacing the old manual process with an electronic file system. The new e-office system is an integrated file and records management system that allows employees to manage content, search for data internally and collaborate. The file

system also enables the electronic movement and the tracking of files, and the archival and retrieval of data. The system is planned to be secure and confidential, automating routine tasks, capable on handling the required workload, with the facility of monitoring work and auto- escalation when there are delays

Online Sand Booking

Consumers in Andhra Pradesh can get sand at their doorsteps using the state government's online booking system. As per the system, consumers could either go to the nearest 'Mee-seva' citizen services centre or order sand online through www.sandbyshg.ap.gov.in website. An SMS would be sent to the consumers about delivery of sand and a receipt would also be issued to them. Consumers would be able to find out the status of sand delivery online by using a transaction ID. Consumers could register complaints if any

Online MPHS (multipurpose house hold survey)

Citizens in Andhra Pradesh can get Birth certificate, Caste Certificates, Nativity Certificates from online IPHS services

Online Citizen Friendly Services of Transport department

The online service provide to citizens Issue of learner licenses, Issue of driving licenses, Renewal of driving licenses, Issue of duplicate driving licenses, International Driving Permit, Registration of vehicles, Issue of Duplicate Registration Certificate, Effecting Transfer of ownership, Endorsement of Hire, purchase agreement / termination, Effecting Change of residence / place of business, Issue of tax tokens, Issue of Fitness Certificates.

Online compliant registration

Available services in the online services are complaint/issue are send through online to district official and Track status for complaint/issue to the government of Andhra Pradesh provide a link http://www.aponline.gov.in/apportal/ for more information about online complaint registration.

Statement of problems

1) **Lack of co-ordination between governments and citizens.**
2) **Lack of e-readiness to an extent of connectivity**
3) **Internet access is not that readily available in villages and small towns.**
4) **Lack of information access and communication infrastructure and Speed:** The speed of Government websites and its user is unfriendly which do not open up fast enough. Infrastructure & Running Cost - It is difficult to connect all rural areas through internet and at times it is difficult to lay wires at these places. In remote areas generally till now there is no basic infrastructure available like connectivity and electricity.
5) **Security and technical change.** Technology is changing at such a fast pace while the government speed is rather slow. Both don't work well. Within a matter of months these days, the entire technologies change – old ones become obsolete and new ones become standards.

2. Research Findings

- E-Panchayat Project Andhra Pradesh
- Salient Features of E-Panchayat project – Andhra Pradesh and its Highlights:
- Financial Services from banks, including payments of pension, NGRES national rural employment guarantee scheme wages and DBT direct benefit transfers.
- Mee Seva Citizen Services
- E-Panchayat Services.
- Access to other government services, including grievances redressal mechanism.

3. Recommendation

1) **The Council of Europe** has taken e-Governance to mean the use of electronic technologies in three areas of public action,
   - Relations between the public authorities and civil society
   - Functioning of the public authorities at all stages of the democratic process (electronic democracy)
   - The provision of public services (electronic public services)
   - In this light, the focus is on making use of electronic technologies with a view to encouraging better interaction between government and citizens, promoting democracy and providing public services.
2) **Cloud Computing** Today, cloud computing plays an important role in IT field. Cloud computing is beneficial for all those areas where technological infrastructure is not proper. Cloud computing can also help in internet proliferation. Cloud computing can contribute in a variety of ways to deliver citizen services efficiently and enable IT resources to be provided on demand, at scale in a multi-tenant, yet secured environment.
3) **The political motivation to spend time and resources** on something that will provide benefits to the people of the state is sometimes absent. It takes a back seat. This is accentuated by the lack of education and awareness of the politicians themselves.
4) **Governments have to take immediate steps for top class security**. With so many hackers out there with newer and newer ways to get in, it is important that the government takes full care of the latest advances. There have been many instances of hackers defacing the government websites time and again. This makes using internet and e-governance a big challenge
5) **A parallel movement called Digital Panchayat programme to build the website** of each panchayat with the involvement of panchayat members and local NGOs and show the ministry that only through civil society's involvement can content be generated.
6) **Extent of success of e-Panchayat in a village panchayat depends on the E-needs** of the potential partners as well as their e-readiness to an extent of connectivity available to them, penetration of digital culture as well access to the internet by village level members of these organizations. The Government has to act as a catalyst for creating a cooperative and friendly e-climate for achieving and sustaining the success, rather than a purchaser of hardware outsourcing agency.

7) **For good e-governance reengineering is essential**. The processes, procedures need to be restructured so that there is a great leap in the performance of the e-governance. For this Strategy, Processes, Technology, Organization and Culture the five components of the business need to be changed.

8) **Process and administrative inertia**: At the core of it, e-Governance is not a technical initiative. It hinges on the re-engineering of process and administrative methods. If one has to enable technology to do things better and faster, then people and processes need to change the ways. That is most often not possible in a government set up. The personnel in government have little or no motivation to change the way they have been doing things. That can fail any well laid out processes and technologies.

9) **Digital India – the new Umbrella initiative**: In a bid to quicken the pace of technical integration and boost the e-Governance implementation and acceptance in the country, the new Modi Government has put its weight behind the Digital India initiative. Digital India is an initiative of Government of India to integrate the government departments and the people of India. It aims at ensuring the government services are made available to citizens electronically by reducing paperwork. The initiative also includes plan to Connect rural areas with internet networks. Digital India has three core components. These include creation of digital infrastructure, delivering services digitally and digital literacy.

4. Conclusion

E-panchayat is a key to success for good governance. It gives the facility to the citizens to benefit from the services provided by the Government. There has been a considerable increase in the percentage of individuals using the Internet in rural and urban areas. The Internet usage has increased from 0.53% in 2000 to 15.10% in 2013. Although the Government faced a lot of challenges but still the move towards e-governance in Andhra Pradesh has been successful. In this paper I emphasized the challenges faced by the Government in implementing e-governance in rural India. Also a description of some of the projects has been given which has been introduced by the Government for the benefit of citizens. Further, the paper lists down the solutions for a more effective and efficient e-governance program.

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