

Adaptive Learning in Deploying National E-District Plan of India

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on developing a practical model based on adaptive governance literature for the context of the national e-district plan of the Government of India, which was launched in 2011. The plan has a three-tier implementation structure, a periodic review at a national level, monitoring, and facilitation at the state level and operation at the district level. Different states have implemented the plan in a local context. This article uses the data and minutes of the proceedings that took place over five years of time among the implementation agencies. The findings compile how the plan has contributed to diffusing accountability and bringing efficiency in governance in the context of e-governance in India.

KEYWORDS

Adaptive Learning, Common Service Centre, E-District, E-Governance Services, India, Value Added Services

1. INTRODUCTION

E-governance projects as the part of digital era public management paradigm aims for shifting the accountability burden from the executive of the Government In India, E-district project under the national e governance plan was conceptualized in the year 2011 as a state level Mission Mode Project (MMP). The purpose was to provide various governmental services to the citizens at district and sub-district level. The strategic planning parameters included the success parameters of the projects. Success parameter included the number of transactions took place in the month and the coverage of the services offered. As per the national rollout guidelines issued in June 2011, every state in India has to start at least 10 service categories. The first strategic plan was to identify the service, which are high volume in nature so that it can lead to the maximum impact on the citizens. The purpose was to ensure 'reach' of the services. The planning aim was to select the service, which consists maximum hardships or cost to the citizens. That covered the 'richness' dimension. The state IT department typically played the role of nodal agency for the project. The agency had to take concurrence from different line departments. The plan has to take final approval from the state/apex level committee (SAC). Traditionally, these services were available only at the respective government office that had to bear high load. This resulted the time consumption of citizens and the excessive load on the staff regarding the routine matters. After the e-district implementation, the services became decentralized and became available openly. Service guarantee part was also conceived. The integrated framework

DOI: 10.4018/IJEGR.2018040101

of the services categorized the services into three parts; Type-1 services which could be provided to citizens within the confine of his home, Type-2 services, which may require the citizen to have at least two visits to the office but have potential to be converted in to type-1 due to process changes. Type-3 is the category of the services, which is not possible to be provided without visit to the government office.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation for Development) (2003) while defining the essential characteristics of e-governance mentioned that e governance is about providing internet-based services by the Government. Grönlund and Horan (2009) further concluded that at transaction level e-governance projects, administrative system and the civil society interact, while transformational level e-governance system, administrative system, political system and the civil society all interface. Recently Tassbehji et al. (2016) synthesized the public management paradigm contrasting the New Public Management era (NPM) and Post NPM (Digital governance era). Accordingly, in NPM, politicians set goal and hold managers to account for the delivery, whereas in digital era governance being the citizen-oriented governance, the need to making officials accountable is strived to minimized. Governance essentially being performed by the citizens who in turn would be responsible for the consequence. Digital governance era emphasizes the neutrality of the 'government as instrument' and active role and accountability of the citizens. Digital era governance instead of checking performance of its executives makes the citizens capable to perform their task their own. Tang (2008) in his book review of 'Digital era Governance' by Dunleavy et al. (2006) mentions that Inter-agency lack of coordination is the main reason of the 'bureaucratic failure', whereas technology forces the agencies to cooperate amidst the inter-organizational complexity, and hence resulting the lessening bureaucratic hassle. Janowski (2015) studies the evolution of the Digital Government and emphasize the need to study the contextualization process happened over the period. This could facilitate the research to perform evaluation of decisions. Linders et al. (2015) studied the e-governance model of the Taiwan and found that the conventional governance model aims to bring efficiency, whereas the new model of e-governance is transiting from 'pull' to 'push'. Push model requires to accustom the system to address the individual concerns around needs, preference, circumstances, and the location. The researchers call it 'proactive governance model' which characterize citizen centricity, data driven personalization and the empowerment of the front line civil servants. Recently Jassen and Voort (2016) mentions that the 'adaptive governance' should increase the capacity of the internal system to withstand the outside changes, it should further decentralize the decision-making power to the bottom level. At the same time, it should challenge the accountability systems. In this way, the adaptive governance relies on the ambidextrous capabilities. Duffield and Witty (2015) concludes that there are limited practical models in the literature about how organization learning takes place and how to enable it. The presently study focuses on this literature gap. It could be an interesting research question that in a federated democratic setting, where individual concerns are addressed for better or for comparative worse w.r.t. other sub-system. As the different state govt's implements, the e-governance projects and they are expected to localize the system, after the strategic learning is attained from another system. To what extent, the states or local governments are able to reinforce the local needs and situations and how it is embedded in the centralized planning and by the fund allocation agency.

2.1. Research Question

Based upon the above discussion, the following research questions would be undertaken in the present study:

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