

Technology Readiness Assessment for M-Governance in Panchayat Raj



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E-Governance has become benchmarking system for effective and efficient Governance. India has its own well defined National e-Governance Plan. The growth of mobile phones in India has naturally turned the e-Governance policy makers to frame, develop and implement Mobile based Information Systems. Otherwise available services under e-Governance are now augmented by several Mobile applications for citizens. Panchayat Raj System is backbone of rural India. The readiness of the system for e-Governance and m-Governance in Panchayat Raj is vital for its success. The results of this assessment are presented for study conducted for Dhule District in Maharashtra.

Keywords: E-Governance, M-Governance, Readiness, Panchayat Raj

1. Introduction

Panchayat Raj System has its separate ministry and considerable ICT implementation is done by ministry for stakeholders of Panchayat Raj System. Panchayat have been the backbone of the Indian villages since the beginning of recorded history. Gandhiji, the father of the nation, in 1946 had aptly remarked that the Indian Independence must begin at the bottom and every village ought to be a Republic or Panchayat having powers. Gandhiji's dream has been translated into reality with the introduction of the three-tier Panchayati Raj system to ensure people's participation in rural reconstruction.

The 3 Tier Structure of Panchayat Raj is as follows

Zila Parishad

This is the **uppermost** body of the Panchayati Raj System. The members of Zila Parishad are elected directly by the people. However the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons are elected by the elected members indirectly. Elected members of Zila Parishad are determined by the State Government at the rate of one member for every 25000 populations or part thereof subject to a minimum of 10 members. The members of Lok-Sabha, Members of State Legislative Assembly representing a part or whole of the District and the members of council of States where they are registered as voters and chairpersons of Panchayat Samiti of the District will also be the members of Zila Parishad. Additional Deputy Commissioner has been designated as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), whereas District Panchayat Officer is the Secretary of Zila Parishad.

Panchayat Samiti

Intermediate body of the three-tier Panchayati Raj in the State is called Panchayat Samiti. This institution is co-terminus with the development blocks. Members of Panchayat Samitis are elected directly, whereas the Chair-Persons and Vice-Chairperson are elected indirectly by the elected members. The numbers of elected members of Panchayat Samiti are determined by the Govt. at the rate of one member for every 3500 population or part thereof subject to a minimum of 15 members. There is no separate office of Panchayat Samitis but office of the block development officer functions as the Samiti office. Block Development Officer (BDO) has been designated as Executive Officer-cum-Secretary of the Panchayat Samitis.

Gram Panchayat

Gram Panchayats is Bottom in this System, Generally Gram Panchayat are constituted for a village or group of villages having population ranging from 1000 to 5000. In Scheduled and other far flung areas Gram Panchayats are also constituted for the population of less than 1000. The numbers of members of Gram Panchayat are determined on the basis of population which ranges from 5 to 13 excluding Pradhan. Pradhan and members of Gram Panchayats are elected directly by the voters of the Panchayat area whereas Up-Pradhan is elected amongst the members of Gram Panchayats.

2. Review of Literature

Abdullah Dhannoon younus¹ in doctoral thesis, 'Investigation of a Mobile Government A Case Study in Iraq' concludes that, the use of technology in the delivery of public services by the government to the citizen is aspired to by most of the developed countries to earn that accuracy in work and reduce the time in addition to reliability in the delivery of information to the largest possible number of citizens, so Mobile Government became one of the most important projects that got the focus of most advanced countries of the world. The technology and techniques of mobile phone have significantly expanded, especially recently to assist the Government in its work and offer various kinds of services to various segments of society. Mobile Government affords a powerful and transformational capacity to both extending access to existing services, and expanding the delivery of new services – and to increase active citizen participation in government operations, moving beyond the initial concentration of E-government on commerce and e-taxation, and improving internal operations.

Hamed Ahmed Saud Al-Busaidi² in doctoral thesis, 'A Model of Intention to Use Mobile Government Services' states that, the aim of this research was to develop and validate a model which was designed to be useful for many countries considering delivery of mobile government (m-Government) services as the literature had not revealed any comprehensive model that is specifically used in the m-Government services context. The existence of this gap encouraged this research to empirically test and validate the combination of the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) model and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as well as external variables including Perceived Security, Perceived Trustworthiness, Perceived Enjoyment and Personal Innovativeness. Therefore, in order to fill the gap, this research developed a validated Model with relevant hypotheses which was tested for its predictive value.

R. K.Maiti³ in paper 'e-Governance with PPP mode - Common Services Centers', writes about National e-Governance plan in his presentation that, The Plan seeks to lay the foundation and provide the impetus for long-term growth of e-Governance within the country.

The plan seeks to create the right governance and institutional mechanisms, set up the core infrastructure and policies and implements a number of Mission Mode Projects at the center, state and integrated service levels to create a citizen-centric and business-centric environment for governance. E-Governance is a growing initiative leading the move towards electronic and on-line governance.

GeoSINC International⁴, in an e-Readiness Guide for Developing Countries have identified that, the basic e-Readiness framework can be divided into a number of focus areas: Access and Connectivity, Training, Education and Public Awareness, Public Administration and Government Leadership Business and Private Sector Initiatives, Society Development. The e-Readiness model is comprehensive, when apart from infrastructure and connectivity is used at the start of the e-Readiness process, it clearly gives an equal importance to other factors, not linked to technology.

3. Methodology

The Objectives of the Study are

To assess readiness of the system for e-Governance and m-Governance in Panchayat Raj system in Dhule District of Maharashtra.

Data Collection: Primary data is collected from key respondents of Panchayat Raj system namely – Officers and Staff of Panchayat Raj offices at district, taluka and village level and beneficiary citizens. Random sampling method is used. The data is collected with structured questionnaire method.

4. Results and Discussion

India's National e-Governance Plan is the master document for e-Governance implementation in the country and 68.6% officers of the Panchayat Raj System rated it as good including 28% impressions as very good while 14.3% found it average and 7.1% rated it very poor.

35.7% Officers of the Panchayat Raj System found Government of India's e-Governance initiatives for Panchayat Raj System very good while 57.1% rated it good and 14.3% rated it as average.

Government of Maharashtra's e-Governance initiatives for Panchayat Raj System was rated as good by 57.1% officers while 35.7% rated it good and 7.1% as average.

On key question of rating Government initiatives for Mobile Governance for Panchayat Raj System, 52% rated it as average or poor including 40% as average and 12% as poor.

69% officers stated that, District is benefited with ICT implementation in Panchayat Raj System.

74% officers stated that, their district does not offer some unique mobile based services to its officers and citizens apart from those made available as per Governments directive.

57.1% is the percentage of 50:50 proportion of using computer and mobile for accessing various ICT tools and applications related to Panchayat Raj System. This is the highest rated proportion. While 14.3% each for 25:75 and 75:25 proportion, while it is 7.1% each for 0:100 and 100:0% proportion.

71.4% officers agree that ICT based governance with special emphasis on mobile based information system is useful in Development Functions. While 28.6% strongly agree.

Rating of SW for cost efficiency: Functionality - Government Directory Software Application – Local Government Directory, 57.1% officers found it very useful. 50% officers rated SW for cost efficiency with Dynamic Website of Panchayats Software Application – National Panchayat Portal as Very useful.

42.9% officers rated the Ministry of Panchayat Raj promoted Software Applications for improving Time Efficiency of Panchayat Raj System and for Saving efforts of Officers of Panchayat Raj System.

Mobile Proficiency for becoming Comfortable user of mobile based information systems with respect to Panchayat Raj System -Using mobile for Social Networking – Whatsapp is good in 81% staff.

83% staff agree that their District is benefited with ICT implementation in Panchayat Raj System

38.7% specify percentage proportion of using computer and mobile for accessing various ICT tools and applications related to Panchayat Raj System as 50:50 while 32.1% as 25:75

Only 2.8% rate e-Governance in Panchayat Raj System in improving Citizen Satisfaction as poor. Problem while using ICT based systems for your Panchayat Raj System related work as Not Comfortable in e-Banking and not properly trained for using ICT as is most significant problem by 11.3% staff for each.

74.5% citizens say that they work with Computers 64.9% citizens say that there is someone in family who is Computer literate. 88.3% citizens said that they do have mobile. 90% citizens say that someone in your family is having mobile. 52.8% citizens say that, they or any of their family member uses computer and internet facility at Internet Café for Citizen e-Services.

5. Conclusion

The percentage of 50:50 proportion of using computer and mobile for accessing various ICT tools and applications related to Panchayat Raj System is the highest rated proportion. Quality of computers (processor, RAM etc.) in panchayat raj system needs improvement. Internet speed needs to be more efficient for staff users of Panchayat Raj System. Alternate Internet availability is rated as poor for staff of panchayat raj system. An alternate availability of electricity (Generator, Inverter etc.) is also poor. Staff members needs motivation by CEO, BDO for using ICT. Support by Vistar Adhikari for ICT is needs improvement. High efforts for Computer & Internet Training of staff members is required. CT Troubleshooting support from Zila Parishad for its offices needs improvement. The provisions for ICT in Zila Parishad annual budget need to be higher. The rate of Computer literacy of office staff is average Internet literacy of office staff is average. IT Act Awareness among staff is poor. Awareness of staff for e-Banking is needs to be increased. The awareness of staff for e-tendering is not satisfactory. Mobile Proficiency for becoming Comfortable user of mobile based information systems with respect to Panchayat Raj System -Using mobile for messaging is good. Mobile Proficiency for becoming Comfortable user of mobile based information systems with respect to Panchayat Raj System -Using mobile for Social Networking – Whatsapp is also good.

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