

Chapter 63

Applying Gap Model for Bringing Effectiveness to e-Government Services: A Case of NeGP Deployment in India

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ABSTRACT

Taking the means-ends approach to e-governance service quality the authors adopt the Parasuraman's 'Gap Model' to evaluate the antecedents of service performance in an Indian context of government-to-citizen (G2C) service deployment under the national e-governance plan (NeGP) of India. This e-governance initiative in India has been implemented at multiple tiers of the government that integrates administration and service processes at different levels that includes center, state, district, block, and further to the lowest level of governance unit (Panchayat). The authors acknowledge five levels of potential service discrepancies across the service delivery chain, from designing the service policy to achieving citizen satisfaction. These are service conceptualization, service design, service capacity, service offering, and service consumption. Corresponding to these discrepancies, the authors explain six types of potential gaps in e-governance G2C service context: Assessment Gap, Design Gap, Capacity Gap, External Communication Gap, Delivery Gap, and Service Gap. Preliminary strategies to close these gaps are also proposed.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-8358-7.ch063

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Usages of information and communication technology (ICT) to support online interactions and electronic transactions in the governance processes are increasingly adopted by the governments across the globe. The transformation towards e-government practices paving the way for efficient and effective delivery of services in the public spaces. Electronic interaction and transactions are critical activities that can support the government operations at various ends by facilitating citizen participation, and through an inclusive approach. Through application of information technology in government not new but brought through new perspectives such as online government, digital government, one stop government etc., which are collectively understood in the face of e-government (Andersen & Henriksen, 2006). McClure (2000) defines e-government as: *electronic government refers to government's use of technology, particularly web based internet applications to enhance the access to delivery of government information and services to citizens, business partners, employees, other agencies and entities*. According to Backus (2001), e-government works primarily at three interaction interfaces: government to government (G2G) for managing internal operations, government to business (G2B), and government to citizens (G2C). In addition to these, Carter & Belanger (2005) also acknowledged about government to employee (G2E) interface because employees can also be one of the service recipients. A large community of researchers have widely advocated that implementation of e-government systems has the potential to create a better service environment in turn improves the quality and effectiveness of electronic public services for the citizens. At the same time, early failure of a large share of e-government projects (Heeks, 2003), and accessibility barriers imposed by digital divide are

few of the key critical concerns noted by some of the researchers and international agencies (Bertot, 2003; Belanger & Carter, 2009; UN, 2004). Even if the project is successfully implemented in the government organizations, concerns of ensuring better electronic service quality and its continuous improvement always remains a challenging problem for the government.

It is observed that the terms e-government and e-governance are used interchangeably in extant literature (Patel & Jacobson, 2008). The authors refer to Sheridan & Riley (2006) who attempted to distinguish the two concepts. The notion of e-governance primarily denotes the processes of governance such as electronic consultation, electronic controllership, electronic engagement, and networked societal guidance while the notion of e-government is characterized by structure and institutional arrangement required to perform those processes for example, electronic service delivery, electronic workflow, electronic interaction etc. This distinction is coherent with the view proposed by Saxena (2005) who says government is a kind of institution while governance is a wider concept that can be exercised not only by the government authorities but also by non-government organizations and private firms. Both institutional structure and processes are essential as well as integrated components for effective service delivery, and hence in this paper we are using the term e-governance as electronic processes performed by the governance structure and technological resources to make it capable for the desired requirements for electronic service delivery. In this paper, our emphasis is directed towards exploring strategic aspects of service quality for the services delivered by e-governance systems that revisits the broader aspects of institutional and technological capabilities designed for delivering quality services.

Many researchers have addressed the problem of service quality for e-government systems, and

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