Conversion of Citizens into E-Citizens: An Approach to Make E-Governance more Effective

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Abstract: Though E-Government initiatives in India have gained momentum in the past decade, the citizen participation is missing. Geographical, social, & economical disparities among citizens are the biggest barriers for e-governance. Illiteracy, lack of infrastructure, security and privacy of personal and financial data are other constraints that hamper e-governance efforts. Citizens' participation should be increased against these constraints if we want good returns on investment from our e-governance efforts. The most benefits will be achieved if the e-governance is citizen-centric which itself will transform citizens to become active participators in establishing e-democracy.

Key words: Illiteracy, e-democracy, security, privacy.

1. INTRODUCTION

E-government success requires changing how government works, how it deals with information, how officials view their jobs and interacts with the public. Achieving e-government success also requires active partnerships between government, citizens and the private sector. The e-government process needs continuous input and feedback from the "customers"—the public, businesses and officials who use e-government services. Their voices and ideas are essential to making e-government work. E-government, when implemented well, is a participatory process Pacific Council on International Policy [1].

ICT's must be adopted to transform the age-old mechanisms of interaction between government and citizens as well as between two or more government. Government citizen interaction will not serve good results until citizen's participation in e-governance is improved. Keeping technology in hands and working with an old mindset is not going to work. Societal elements are clearly important to the prospects for Information Society strategies. One point seems clear however; unless the efforts of national and international governments to implement e-government and e-Commerce strategies fall within this wider societal context then they are unlikely to attain any great degree of success

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(Martin, B. and Byrne, [2, 3]). Establishing stronger connections with citizens requires a giant step beyond the technology itself and a focus on generating real, lasting public value (Parston G., [14]). James S L [4] Yong states that there has been a distinct shift from an "agency centric" model to a "citizen centric" model and beliefs that a citizen-centered approach to e-Government is the most effective and sustainable way forward [4]. In another research work Balnaves M. [5] suggests a public digital ecosystem infrastructure, enabling a build up of citizen profiles and transactions on issues, with transparent search engines to be made available. By extension, it would be possible to create a link between the aggregation in the ecosystem of concerns and issues raised by citizens and the actions and reactions of government public administration officials or elected representatives.

Alshawi et al [6] develop evaluation criteria for an effective, adaptable, and reflective assessment of e-government systems from the citizen's perspective. Developing countries suffer from poor citizen utilization of their e-government initiatives, and the adoption of such criteria would positively contribute in enhancing government understanding of the factors that influence citizen utilization of e-government systems.

2. CAPTURING THE GLOBAL EFFORTS

Citizens may be Unmotivated by nature. According to Norris, [2] having set up a web site or a 24-hour rolling news programmer, there is no guarantee that the citizens will come to it. Previous research has shown that during the 1997 UK general election those tuning into campaign news on the TV were those who were already the most attentive to politics, and those who were undecided about voting were the least likely to be heavy viewers of TV news or regular readers of the press (Oates B. J.,[7]).

3. ASSESSING THE NEEDS AND THE MOTIVATION LEVEL OF CITIZENS

Citizens may become Unmotivated by conditions such as:
1. Government's Apathy: no-serious attitude and lack of commitment of government. For example although ICT mechanisms for complaint handling exist they are largely skipped for action by the government employees. Concerns exist that citizens can have too much access and input into government (Von Hoffman, C., [8]).
2. Social and Educational dilemma: Insufficient education and awareness of citizens about

e-governance as well as security and privacy of personal and financial data are some other constraints. The question is e-government viable and beneficial in a country with a high rate of illiteracy (Kettani D., [9]) is debatable.

3. ICT Penetration Level: Due to lack of sufficient ICT penetration in the country. Most citizens are lacking access to technology and ICT capability.

4. Existing Gender Bias: In India women's ability to participate in the country's rapid progress towards e-governance is impeded by the low status ascribed to women and girls in Indian society. The issue of gender equity is not a supplement to development and e-governance but central to both. Despite the many e-governance initiatives and massive investments in information communication technologies (ICTs) in India, a gender gap might exclude or restrict women to be equal partners and beneficiaries of the e- governance initiatives (Subramanian M.[10]).

5. Privacy and Security Issues: Citizens feel that lack of privacy protection is the biggest deterrent to conducting transactions online (DeBenedictis, A. et al., [11]).

4. TRANSFORMING CITIZENS: FROM CITIZENS TO E-CITIZENS:

Citizens can be motivated to become active participators in e-governance by utilizing these motivation efforts strategies.

1. **Simplicity:** What political, social and economic strategies can give the greatest number of people access to e-government? By making simplified processes accessible through GSM phones (widely used in Morocco), Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) and personal computers, the project will reduce or eliminate bureaucratic delays, give all citizens equal access to services ensure all citizens can access the portal, the Fez Wilaya (local administration) will install free public digital kiosks.

2. **Multi-delivery channels:** If we want to control digital divide we will need a proper mix of delivery channels. We can then ensure that e-government is accessible and affordable for almost all users.

3. **Fostering Transparency:** Transparency measures the accountability, legitimacy, and trust of the Web site and characterizes a government's Web culture.

4. **Education:** It is important to educate young people for participation in an e-enabled political process. Government, Private sector business firms Educational institutions (both private and government) to actively engage and educate citizens, ultimately enlisting them as co-producers of public value. Academicians and researchers in e-learning should work to bring effective e-learning tool that will simplify complicated issues and make them more easily accessible to citizens.

5. **Maintaining privacy and security:** However, there are significant concerns to address about privacy and security before common man adopts e-governance.

6. **Doing away with Social dilemma:** Government to improve the social and economic conditions of citizens and create e-government awareness.

7. **Infrastructure development and Cheap Innovation:** Private business firms to provide cheap infrastructure and cheap

innovation. For example, Hossan et al. [12] define four major life saving uses of m-government applications in Bangladesh such as disseminating pre-disaster and post-disaster warning SMS, exchanging SMS with citizens to enable them request relief needs, and government citizens interaction to exchange information about health hazards.

CITIZENS-CENTRIC E-GOVERNANCE

E-Governance will become citizen centric if the following aspects as depicted in the figure below (Figure 1.1) are addressed adequately-
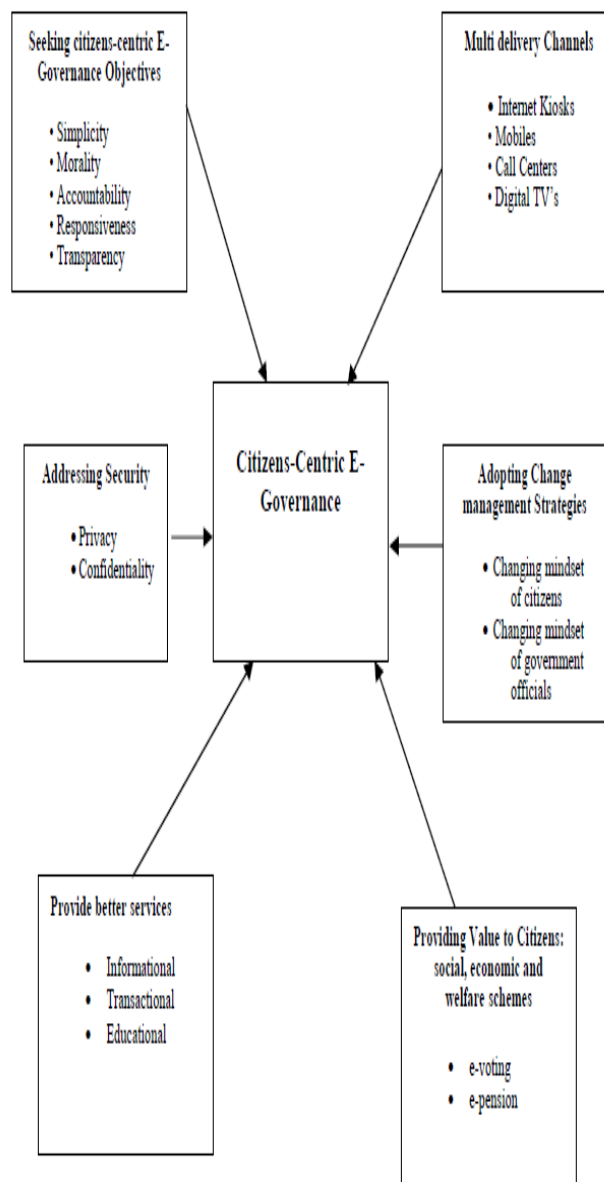

Figure 1.1 Citizens – Centric E- Governance Model

CONCLUSION

The human factor in the area

of e-government is a crucial one that appears in more than one dimension (Obeidat Rand A et al., [13]). It therefore becomes essential to assess the government's present footings towards e-governance in country from the perspectives of citizens' benefits. The future research must focus on the citizens' perspectives of e-governance and how citizens' interests, so far, have been accommodated in e-governance initiatives.

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