Concepts and Challenges of Digital India

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Abstract – The Information age has brought about a revolution in technological advancement. The industrial revolution propelled the world into a new era of greater mechanical advantage and shaped our current world. India was suffering with division and lack of political stability at that time and was not able to capitalize on its resources, then. So, when the world ushered into a new era of digitization, Digital India was launched to digitize the entire ecosystem and to make full use of our natural and human resources. Digital India aimed to capitalize on this opportunity by positioning ourselves in the best way possible. Although these programs have come a long way forward, they have faced major challenges. The successful launch and growth of E-governance platforms and other technological advancements are leaving many Indians behind and this divide is to be checked by increasing the digital literacy of the average Indian. Are the various programmes under this digital India scheme dealing with most of these problems and are they setting the stage for a bright and technically advanced future is to be seen.

Keywords – Digitization, E- Governance, E-Kranti, Digital India, Meity.

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INTRODUCTION

The Digital India campaign was launched on 1st July, 2015 by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the Finance Ministry to connect rural India with high speed internet networks and to improve digital literacy after building digital infrastructure across India. The main programs under Digital India focus on e-governance, e-kranti, IT for jobs, early harvest programs and universal access to mobile connectivity among others. First and foremost, this campaign aims to spread the reach of high speed internet connectivity to far flung areas of the nation. This will help people in the remotest part of the country to lead better connected lives. The three broadband highways namely- rural, urban and a national information infrastructure (NII) are the key pillars for this aim to be fulfilled. Some early harvest programs intended for an immediate effect were online attendance in government offices, wifi services in all institutions of higher education, mass messaging platforms, etc.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

1. To identify the aims of the Digital India campaign.

2. To understand the various schemes launched to fulfill these objectives and the concepts behind them.

3. To focus on the challenges faced so far in the campaign.

4. To come up with efficient solutions for various challenges.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF DIGITAL INDIA

1. High Speed Connectivity

Digital India's first aim was to successfully spread internet access throughout India. Three components of Broadway highways focused on penetrating into the broadband gaps of the country. The early harvest programs also aimed to setup Wi-Fi in all universities and government offices.

2. Building Digital Infrastructure

Subsequently, the Digital India scheme aimed to build a massive digital infrastructure of public internet access programmes. These programmes were mainly rolled out through common service centers and post offices as Multi service centres. These efforts combined with using IT to simplify government processes through re-engineering simpler and efficient solutions will render effective government services to all parts of the country. The E-kranti of delivering government services electronically aims to radically modify the government.

3. Digital Literacy

A much needed boost to the country's digital IQ rests on schemes under the Digital India scheme where it aims to increase employment opportunities in the IT/ITES sectors and are providing training to the

youth to make full use of such opportunities. The CSCs objectives are to increase awareness and provide multimedia content related to e-governance, education, entertainment, etc.

CONCEPTS OF DIGITAL INDIA

1. Broadband Highways

They are covered by three main components.

a. Broadband for all- Rural

Under the nodal Department for this project, Department of Telecommunications, 250000 village panchayats were aimed to be connected by the National Optical Fibre Network(NOFN) by December 2016.

b. Broadband for all- Urban

Buildings will be pushed towards mandatory connectivity requirements and virtual operator networks would be leveraged to deliver communication infrastructure and services to remote areas of the cities.

c. National Information Infrastructure(NII)

State Wide Area Network (SWAN), National Knowledge Network(NKN), National Optical Fiber Network(NOFN), Government User Gun(GUN) and the Meghraj cloud will all be integrated under the national information infrastructure with provisions for horizontal connectivity as well under the Meity.

2. Universal Access to mobile connectivity

A programme to extend mobile connectivity to more than 50000 villages was aimed to connect the North East by providing mobile coverage to uncovered villages has been initiated with a project cost of 16000 Cr rupees during 2014-18.

3. E-kranti

44 Mission Mode Projects (MMP) under e-kranti are underway. They are grouped under central, state and integrated projects. The key principles of this concept are as follows-

a. The transformation to the digital ecosystem should be innovative and not a translation of the old practices with a new face.

b. Efforts on integrated services should be maximized to reduce user input and create integrated back end processes to smoothen service delivery.

c. Government Process Reengineering(GPR) is to be mandatory in every MMP as the first step to digitization and that it should be assessed and compared.

d. Government offices should be provided with connectivity, cloud and mobile platforms on demand to improve ICT infrastructure.

e. Government's flexibility, agility and cost effectiveness should be increased while designing cloud technologies for government departments.

f. Mobile first. All services should be available through mobile.

g. The MMPs should be approved fast and through competent authorities to take subsequent decisions.

h. A certain standardization in all government processes and protocols should be mandated.

i. Regional languages should be included everywhere in the infrastructure.

j. National Geo Spatial Information Sysytems(NGIS) should be promoted in e-governance projects.

k. The National Cyber Security Policy 2013 notified by the DeitY must be adhered to.

4. E-governance

All government databases and information must be electronically available. All government processes by various departments and agencies should have automated workflow for efficient work and transparency in processes. IT can be used to forecast problems by analyzing data and hence improve processes better. Use of online repositories should be mandated as well as integration of government services and platform for interoperable service delivery to citizens and businesses.

5. IT for jobs

The IT/ITES sectors have a lot of employment opportunities. IT trainings to people in smaller towns and villages is a target of Meity over five years. It aims to train one crore students for building a good base for companies to switch to tier 2 and 3 cities. The North East BPO Promotion Scheme (NEBPS) aims to decentralize the BPO industry from tier 1 cities to all across the country.

6. Public Internet Access Programme

a. Common Service Centres(CSCs) are to be placed in every gram panchayat for end to end delivery of business and government services under the Meity. A total of 2.5 Lakhs CSCs are to be opened.

b. Multi Service Centres as Post Offices. Under the department of Posts, 150000 Post

offices are to be converted to Multi service centres.

7. Early Harvest Programmes

- Biometric attendance in government offices

- Wi-fi in universities and public hotspots

- School books to be e-books

- National Portal for Lost and Found children

- SMS based info on weather and disaster alerts

- Mass messaging IT Platform

CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL INDIA

Even after careful planning and execution of ambitious programs under this scheme, there are places that we have failed in. Some of the challenges faced by the Digital India Campaign are as follows-

1. The internet speed as compared to other developed nations is slow.

2. The MSME scale industries find it increasingly hard to walk shoulder to shoulder with the developments in the digital field.

3. Inexpensive smart phones do not have smooth internet access.

4. With the growth of the digital sector, a force of skilled manpower is missing to handle the downpour of digital technology.

5. A shortage of around a million cyber security experts can undermine and sabotage the whole scheme through the growing menace of digital crime.

6. Lack of user awareness.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

With the increase in the digital infrastructure of the country, we have already seen the power that digitization yields in changing the face of a company, industry or country. Some of the solutions for better Digital growth are -

1. Spreading Digital awareness

2. Empower people with knowledge rather than digitizing everything and hoping people will adapt.

3. Relentless marketing of government schemes in rural and urban areas alike will help the scheme gain momentum, market share and users.

4. Last but not the least, the internet speeds need to be checked and actions must be taken for violating trust and connection speeds.

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