

Innovation in Public Sector: A Study of Land Record Modernization Programme in India

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ABSTRACT

The study represents a modest attempt to explore the issues and challenges facing successful implementation of National Land Records Modernisation Programme (NLRMP) in the state of Madhya Pradesh (MP).

On account of their appropriateness, both the exploratory and descriptive research designs were chosen for the present study. Further, the study made the use of qualitative approach of data collection through focus group and in-depth interviews.

The data analysis generated several pertinent issues which were perceived as affecting the implementation of NLRMP. The factors inter alia include: lack of technical competency in implementers; role ambiguity among the officials designated for implementation of NLRMP; lack of training and orientation to end beneficiaries (land owners/customers); lack of financial and material resources at record centers; lassitude of Government officials in motivating subordinates; resistance to change for technical adoption in government employees; and lack of support for solving contingency problems in digitalization process at record centers. Subsequently, the study proposed a few suggestions in this regard.

The knowledge, appreciation and management of these factors will expectedly enable the Government and other stakeholders to take the strategic decisions and foster the successful implantation of the programme. The study simultaneously makes a novel contribution to the literature as such a study has not been undertaken so far.

Keywords: digitalization, land records, innovation, public sector, national land records digitalization programme.

INTRODUCTION:

Public services in common parlance refer to the services rendered by the Government to the people living within its jurisdiction. Public services represent vital aspects of Government functioning and serve as crucial link between public and Government. Considering the fact that public services are entrusted with socially vital mandates that impact the well-being of myriad of people, the Governments continuously strive to bring more efficiency in its delivery of services. On account of the fact that organisational performance in both the private and public sector is an important determinant of overall organisational efficiency and success, the need for driving innovation can't be overlooked. The organizations which can consistently generate and execute ideas tend to be more effective at achieving their both short and long term goals.

To be competent in present scenario and prepare for the future, the recent time has witnessed an upsurge in the efforts to bring more innovation in public sector. The innovation in public sector organisations explicitly strives to enhance the value being delivered. For example; the governments of various developed countries have implemented e-governance mechanisms in order to address public needs with more coordinated approaches. With the changing public needs, and change in the way the public is being served coupled with persistent socio-

economic variations, the innovation in public sector is an ideal strategy to be sought after (Satar, 2016). Innovation can be mentioned as a concept, practice or process that systematically strives to germinate a desired organisational culture in order to pursue a sustained growth in the market. Specifically, innovation in public sector organisations would fetch well-organized mechanisms to address old and new public needs in terms of reducing costs and maximizing the effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of service outcome.

The recent development of information and communication technology (ICT) has enabled the transformation of many Government functions through the implementations of many innovative approaches like Electronic-governance (e-governance). E-governance primarily facilitates the greater interactions within the entire government framework through fast and efficient delivery of public services, information exchange, and integration of multiple stand-alone systems and services between government-to-government, government-to-business, and government-to-citizens.

In line with above, the government of India (GOI) has recently come up with an ambitious programme of 'Digital India' which aims at transforming India into a digitally empowered society. The programme has been implemented to bring explicit changes in many governance concerns which range from reduction in corruption to greater empowerment and promotion of economic growth and well-being. The major ICT initiatives inter alia, undertaken by GOI include projects like railway computerization and land records digitalization programme etc.

The digital land records modernization programme was launched by GOI in August 2008. The programme has the chief ambition of modernizing the management of land records in the country. The programme aims to minimize scope of land or property disputes, enhance transparency in the land records maintenance system and facilitate moving eventually towards guaranteed conclusive titles to immovable properties in the country. The programme comprises of approaches like computerization of all land records, digitalization of maps and integration of textual and spatial data, survey/re-survey and updating of all survey and settlement records including creation of original cadastral records wherever necessary, computerization of registration and its integration with the land records maintenance system, development of core Geospatial Information System and capacity building.

In its 9th Five Year Plan, the government of Madhya Pradesh (MP) has started with a similar programme on digitalization of land records. The programme has prepared a largest database of Land records in the country consisting of approximately 37 million Khasra (Plot/Survey) numbers & 12 million Landowners. Further, a number of initiatives like BHU-ABHILEKH (The Land Record Information System), BHU-NAKSHA (The Parcel Map Management) were successfully launched under the programme. The programme so far has achieved great milestones. Nevertheless, its implementation is not devoid problems and issues.

The present study was undertaken with the primary purpose to explore the factors affecting the successful implementation of the programme. The study is pioneer in this field. Consequently, the study outcome is prosperous of generating novel insights about the success or failure factors of land records digitalization programme in the state of MP. This will rightly enable the Government and other stakeholders to take the strategic decisions and foster the successful implantation of the programme. The study further makes a novel contribution to the literature as such a study has not been undertaken so far.

BRIEF REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

In the recent time, globalization coupled with advancement in IT has fuelled a bewildering change in innovation sector. There has been a considerable increase in the ease with which goods, people, information, and other resources flow within and outside nations. The consequent fierce competition as well as new forms of cooperation has presumably brought significant changes in the attitudes, values, aspirations and motivations of customers and employees everywhere. Thus, in order to sustain in the market and cherish their long term goals, the organizations in general have to manage diverse kinds of significant changes. Needless to say, the organizations in both the private and public sector cannot withstand indifference to the need to innovate. The innovation thus rightly enables an organisation to be more adept at identifying and exploiting the opportunities through the process of knowledge generation, idea selection, idea implementation and idea diffusion.

Despite acknowledging the need and importance of driving innovation, the public sector comparatively has witnessed incremental improvements only (Satar and John, 2016). Nevertheless, the importance of innovation in public sector can't be overlooked. A number of authors have attempted to investigate the modalities, explore role and emphasize the need of driving innovation in public sector. For example; while Kiel (1994), has identified the intrinsic complexity in bringing public reforms, Berry (1994), has emphasized the need for adopting strategic planning in public governance. In a similar vein, Frederickson (1996) has acknowledged the

fact of driving changes in bureaucracy system. Furthermore, many authors has emphasized for the role of infusing new values and approaches for improvements in public sector (Feller *et al.*, 2011; Kernaghan, 2000). Likewise, Hartley (2005) has proposed three prong approaches for policy makers, managers and citizens for driving innovation in public sector. Likewise Brown & Osborne (2012) have suggested a systematic pathway for bringing improvements in public services at large.

It is worthwhile to note that absence of an effective land records system has continued to remain a potential source of land ownership issues and a crucial challenge for Indian administrators. For the sake of curbing some recurrent problems in land record system, the central GOI had initially started with 'Computerization of Land Records' scheme way back in 1988. This was followed by, another ambitious attempt through launching of National Land Records Modernization Programme (NLRMP). However, the programme received number of setbacks and was not fully successful in achieving the target objectives. In the recent time (2016), a more robust and ambitious programme known as National Land Records Modernization Programme was re-launched. The programme is expectedly going to minimize the scope of land disputes, and improve the overall transparency in the land records management system. Apart from providing conclusive titles to land owners, ease the process of land acquisition, the programme is projected to improve the buildup of local revenue through better tax billing and collection.

However, its implementation is not devoid of challenges. The issues and challenges needs to be resolved in order to reap the full potentiality of 'Digital India' Programme.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To explore the factors affecting the successful implementation of Land Records Digitalization Programme in the state of Madhya Pradesh.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Considering the nature of study under consideration, both the exploratory and descriptive research designs were deemed appropriate for the present research work. The study employed qualitative approach of data collection, especially focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. The approach enabled the researchers to capture deep experiences, perception and understandings of the various challenges associated with the implementation of NLRMP in the state of MP. The suitability of the approach is justified on account of the fact that it allowed the researchers to discuss, clarify and compare the existing situation with regard to successful implementation of the NLRMP (2016). Further, the researchers analyzed suitable secondary sources of information by reviewing the relevant documents such as books, journals and internet. Thus, both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized for the present study.

Selection of target participants:

With the assistance of officials at collect-orate of Jabalpur and Tehsil offices, a total of 10 urban and rural land record offices (08 urban and 02 rural) of Jabalpur (M.P.) were selected. The centers were selected as they had functional level support system for implementation of NLRMP. We believed that the selected participants (both urban and rural) would be able to fetch rich perspectives based on their active functional role in the implementation of project. Further, in the process of seeking the consent of the officials, we further held discussions with them about theme of the study. The sessions were conducted in February 2015. Focus groups 1 and 2 comprised of seven officials from each rural center and focus group 3 consisted of six officials from two rural centers. An approximate of 30 min focus group discussions were held in each earmarked focus group followed by 10 minutes of feedback sessions.

The guiding questions for all the focus groups were actually taken from the excerpts of the literature survey. The questions gave the participants the opportunity to engage in discussions about the topics of commonality and concerns raised by them. The focus group interviews were actually designed around the following main questions:

- Describe some particular strategies or modifications that will assist you in successful implementation of the project?
- How do you look at/think of how the beneficiaries are empowered to adopt the change of digital delivery of their services?
- If you talk of support for officials in your centers, what do you mean?

Data Collection:

Data was collected by means of an in-depth interview guide between the periods from February 2015- April 2015. A focus group discussion (FGD) guide was compiled based on the study objectives and was used to navigate discussions with the participant members. Some key informant interviews and FGD guides were constructed in English and local language to reduce the language barriers during data collection. Further, the pertinent documents and reports were reviewed to acquire vital information for the study.

For the sake of ensuring completeness and accuracy of the data collected, a review of the generated data was undertaken on a daily basis. Moreover, the notes and observations were verified against audio-recorded information. The generated information was transcribed verbatim using electronic medium. At the ultimate compilation stage, any missing information was sought from the participants.

Data Analysis:

For accurate interpretation of study data, thematic analysis was deemed as appropriate data analytical tool. Through an inductive approach, themes were identified. Therefore, the themes so identified were essentially linked to the data, rather than imposed by the researchers themselves. The data was analyzed manually by the researchers through reading and re-reading the transcripts. So, the researchers coded the data by writing down key phrases/words that matched the emerging concepts. Furthermore, the coded concepts were reviewed to discover their similarities and differences which aided the researchers in earmarking main emerging themes linked to the research objectives.

Results:

The framework of results presented is exclusively based on the thematic areas on the issues and challenges faced by the participants in successful implementation of NLRMP. So the findings are actually centered on the experiences and responses of the participants towards the implementation of NLRMP (2016). The identified themes include: lack of technical competency in implementers; role ambiguity among the officials designated for implementation of NLRMP, lack of training and orientation to end beneficiaries (land owners/customers); lack of financial and material resources at record centers; lassitude of Government officials in motivating subordinates; resistance to change for technical adoption in government employees; lack of support for solving contingency problems in digitalization process at record centers.

SUGGESTIONS:

The themes so identified in the form of issues and challenges enabled us to propose a few suggestions for smooth functioning and implementation of NLRMP in the state of MP. For example;

- There must be a pool of highly competent officers entrusted with the overall supervision of performance at record centers. Moreover, these officials must be made to undergo frequent training and updating courses arranged by the government at various levels.
- For officials and employees engaged at various levels of digitalization programme, there must be the issuance of clear guidelines from the government in order to enable them to discharge their role and responsibility effectively.
- There must be facilities for training for functional level employees and incentives for officers to motivate and encourage subordinates to adopt the digital change.
- Frequent orientation sessions must be conducted for end beneficiaries at various local and regional record centers.
- A mechanism for reporting and troubleshooting of contingency issues must be put in place at all functional units of the programme.

CONCLUSION:

The study represents a modest attempt to explore the challenges facing the successful implementation of NLRMP in the state of MP. Study findings have revealed that like any typical government programme, there are several issues which hamper the implementation of the NLRMP. The issues include: lack of technical competency in implementers; role ambiguity among the officials designated for implementation of NLRMP, lack of training and orientation to end beneficiaries (land owners/customers); lack of financial and material resources at record centers; lassitude of Government officials in motivating subordinates; resistance to change for technical adoption in government employees; lack of support for solving contingency problems in digitalization process at record centers. Consequently, it is being argued that for the sake of enabling the policy makers to achieve the desired goals (output of the programme), they must ensure that the aforementioned

glitches are taken care of. This indicates that all inputs required (human resource, technology competence, finance and infrastructure etc.) are comprehensively assured and the process involved in the implementation of NLRMP must be well organized.

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