E-Governance Implementation: Challenges of Effective Service Delivery in Civil Service of Nepal

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Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:

E-Governance Implementation: Challenges of Effective Service Delivery in Civil Service of Nepal

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I. Introduction

E-governance helps to restructuring the way the Governments work, share data and information, connect citizens and deliver services using technology to external and internal clients for the benefit of both government and the clients that they provide. The government should try to apply e-government practices in all government bodies and public sector by promoting them technically, financially and officially. But the need of hour for government is to focus not only on software and hardware, but also to implement this strategy with honesty by government side. It's clear that, it's better to first create strong administration, to bring all government employees under confidence, only then we can think to bring e-governance. Connecting each and every person to this e-governed world and to provide basic facilities timely to the citizens while sitting at home [17].

The proper use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has made human life and daily activities easy, fast and smart. The service delivery means of government, department and business organization has been economical, fast, efficient and reliable. The primary motive of government is to deliver public services transparently, accountably, effectively and efficiently. Civil service is one of the most important mechanisms for public service delivery by government side. The use of ICT for public service delivery can be more effective through integration, linkage and inter-operability system among government organizations, departments, business entities and other stake holders [12]. The perspective change is toward citizen oriented computerization rather than only back office computerization of existing system. Various modules were designed to help the citizens, like property taxation, water and electricity billing and accounting, various permits and smart licenses, death and birth registration, health scheme monitoring, municipal hospitals, e-bidding, budget, auditing, e-Sewa, online banking, e-ticketing, General administration & Establishment, legal matters, Citizen Help Desk, corporate websites etc [11].

E-governance has been essential to increase effectiveness, liability and to improve the service delivery and participation of the people in all aspect of government activities [18]. E-government is being deployed not only to make smooth civil services but also for public sector efficiency purposes. E-government has been a means of new governance with the use of ICTs to promote more efficient and cost effective government in present day world. It has facilitated towards more convenient government services, allowed greater public access to information, and made government more responsive to citizens through civil service [29]. E-government services aims to provide citizens with more accessible, accurate, real-time and high quality services and information [31]. It is a tool and techniques for the use of information and communication to improve and development of government activities and their social transformation [24] Implementation of E-Government could not imagine without the adoption of modern day technologies and applications [5]. It has been adopted as a new "paradigm shift" for better service delivery both by the developing countries and the developed countries [20].

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ICTs are changing the way of government doing business for the people and other stakeholders. In this context, e-government is seen to be a lever for the transformation of government in all sectors of its bodies [28]. E-government uses the application of ICT in public administration to streamline and integrate workflows. It helps for processes and manages data, information and human resource, financial resource, enhance public service delivery, as well as expand communication channels for engagement and empowerment of people [18].

According to Interim Constitution of Nepal [15], the civil service is an institutional mechanism to support the government in executing its tasks and realizing the goals of the nation state that have been defined under the Directive Principles and Policies of the State. Creation of a public welfare state is the main political objective, and a public service is to be set up and operated for fulfilling this objective. It specifies that the state shall be oriented towards promoting public welfare by maintaining peace and order in society, making arrangements for the just distribution of economic resources available in the country, and running the development activities for overall socio-economic development in collaboration with the governmental, cooperative and private sectors. The government's major role is to deliver the services to the people according to their demands and needs in a speedy, efficient and effective manner [27].

But the Present Constitution of Nepal [23] article 285 includes the provision of governance under three tired, that is federal civil service, provincial government service and the local government service. The civil service is divided into professional (gazetted), support (non-gazetted) and helper (classless) personnel [4]. Professional staffs are grouped into 10 broad services: economic planning and statistics, engineering, agriculture, judicial, foreign, administrative, audit, forests, education and "miscellaneous." The minimum academic qualification for professional positions is a bachelor's degree. In 2010, there were 11,461 professional staffers, 42,529 at the support level and 21,838 at the level where jobs are not classified into classes (the support services). Since 2007, the government began holding separate competitions among women (33%), indigenous nationalities (27%), Madhesis (22%), the downtrodden (9%), persons with disabilities (5%) and candidates from backward regions (4%) to fill vacancies in the civil service. The percentages refer to the positions reserved for these groups [27].

II. Objective

The main objective of this article is to explore the challenges of effective service delivery in civil service of Nepal while implementing e-governance.

III. Literature Review

The objectives of e-governance is to provide the services to citizens by implementing simple, secure and reliable registration process, by developing consistency in process, by implementing transparency in valuation of properties and automating all the back office functions. The major strengths of the e-government policies are to cover all administrative civic functions, to complete online functioning, providing anytime anywhere solution to citizens, to provide user, the internet technology with browser based interfaces, to provide an effective user technology for providing single window solution, to establish a proper workflow across departments, and computerization of municipal corporations [3]. Development of new technologies allows electronic services to be applied in e-government [25]. E-government is considered as implication of ICT in order to improve public services, strengthen and support for public policies and decision making in policy level.

E-Government has been no-doubt a mechanism for the management of civil service at the global level [5]. Government's role has been mostly the effective service delivery to the citizens in low cost [22] Civil service discipline and management practices needs to be objective, fair, honest and reasonable [14]. Performance may be taken into account in setting pay, or bonus levels, but must be based on actual performance, objectively assessed, and properly documented. In parliamentary democratic system state authority is exercised by the political leaders but for the operation of governance there is a civil service as a permanent government which plays the role of backbone[19]. He further claims, to make public administration people oriented, efficient, impartial and neutral political leaders should be conscious about the values, norms and ethics of civil service and there should not be any unnecessary political presser and hurdles.

For the developing countries in Asia and the Pacific, e-governance is increasingly being emphasized as a way for governments to strengthen good governance. If implemented strategically e-governance can not only improve efficiency of government processes, but it can also be a tool to empower citizens by enabling them to participate in the decision making processes at policy level of government's bodies [8]. In general, developing countries have been lagging behind in e-government use as compared to developed countries even though they have been facing various challenges [30].

The rapid advancement in ICT has undoubtedly influenced positive changes in carrying out administrative functions in government institutions and making work process cheap, easy and fast [8]. In order to meet the global challenges in administrative

management, the use of ICT for service delivery cannot be abandoned due to its reliability, accuracy and permanence [7]. Government shares IT like World Wide Web (WWW), Internet and mobile computing and software applications to reach out to citizens to improve effective service delivery to citizens [2]. New developments in ICT and software applications are fundamentally changing the way we live, work and interact with each other [1]. He further stated that improved ICT governance will ensure alignment, reduce risk and support unification. But new technology is making service delivery not easy due to its new innovation and lack of technical skill and knowledge to utilize it.

The civil organizations in Nepal, though they have a very short history of structured operation, are also practicing the use of ICT. The e-governance was coined from the very beginning by introducing main frame computer named IBM 1401 in 1971 from USA. The data processing of the country's data started with the establishment of the National Computer Center (NCC) in1974. The involvement of private sector in the area of software development started during 1980's. The concept of outsourcing has already been implemented during 1982 [31].

According to Damodar Regmi [9] civil service is the important mechanism of the implementation of the government policy and plan. So, capability of civil service should be developed through effective human resource management. He said that to make civil service capable to meet the challenge and opportunity of the changing context, making it productive, technically skilled, responsible and creative; having positive attitude, good manner, and contemporary adjustment. Digital divide is a challenge to the implementation of e-governance, which is caused by the disparity in access to electronic services, and this may outcome from factors inclusive of class, race, age culture and geographical location [21]. The digital divide generally occurs in developing countries where there is a lack of infrastructure, technology friendly human resource, trust in e-governance, financial resources and access to modern technology such as internet, computers, new software applications and new models of mobile phones [16]. Trade unions that cover all employees up to gazetted class three officers are seen as institutions for bargaining rather than as institutions to strengthen the civil service [27].

The government as a service provider and manager of e-Government system must be ensured trust so that service recipients will be motivated to use e-Government service confidently [10] He again said that public trust is foundation of relationship between service provider and service recipients. So, public trust is one of the critical factors of successes through the system adoption. Thus the need for building trust between the government and other stake-holders of e-government is considered a fundamental principle in designing and developing effective e-government system.

The government is always facing difficulty on to achieving its goal to make welfare of the citizen by ensuring effective service. In this context, the efficiency and effectiveness of the civil service need to significantly improved. Nepalese Civil Service (NCS) is often charged for its inefficiency, dishonesty and lack of professionalism. Various studies and discussion have shown that the first and foremost cause of de-motivation in NCS is inadequate salary to meet the minimum basic requirement and maintain standard of living. Due to lack of appropriate incentives, overspread impunities, lack of experience development environment, in appropriate and unjustifiable evaluation system, and lean provision of career development. This has seriously caused the delayed public service delivery for the general people [13] Administrative Restructuring Commission [6] spelled out the problems and challenges in civil service into six categories viz. policy related, structural, organizational, managerial, working procedure related and attitudinal. These problems basically capture the problems being faced by the Nepalese civil service adequately. The challenges of civil service management may be listed as:

The weak capacity in terms of resources processes and institutions (including institution building) are recognized as a big challenge because substantive reforms in the absence of capacity are clearly going to be an difficult task. The challenges and responsibilities are increasing but the size of the civil service is declining. Vacancies are lying unfulfilled, hindering the capacity of service delivery further exacerbating the lack of capacity. Weak coordination and other structural problems lead to lack of clarity and poor service delivery including institution building. The tenure of top leadership is highly volatile and uncertain. Trade unions that cover all employees up to non-gazetted class three officers are seen as institutions for bargaining rather than as institutions to strengthen the civil service. The multiplicity of trade unions in the same work place is a problem rather than strength.

There is a delay in service delivery particularly in offices with high levels of engagement with the public despite efforts to continually improve the situation and define completion time lines. The productivity of human and capital resources is poor, and is not helped by indifferent motivational measures and systems. The process of administrative reforms will take time as is experienced with the five reform commission reports and their implementation (Buch, 1952; Acharya, 1956; Jha, 2025 BS; Thapa, 2032BS; Koirala, 2048BS and ARC, 2008). The norms governing the civil service are process oriented and not results oriented, and this is reported as a cause for the poor attainment of planned

targets. In the absence of clarity of rules or transparency, transfers and placements and in some cases promotion have been reported to be contentious issues. Changing the bureaucratic culture may be a major challenge to transfer it from the status quo and from process orientation to result orientation, with a willingness to shoulder responsibilities and accountability [26].

IV. METHODOLOGY

To conduct this research, researcher has collected the primary data from civil servants of government organizations who are working at various parts of country whose primary role is to deliver service for citizens and adopted quantitative research technique. The researcher have developed questionnaire that consist of information about demographic, physical facilities, role of civil servants, service delivery, ICT training etc. from different groups namely non technical sector. The collected data have been entered into SPSS 22 and data analysis has been done. Books, academic journals government annual reports and websites were also used for literature review.

V. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The research survey was framed under the category of assessing infrastructure development, human resource development and management, trust on e-government system, digital divide and information security and data protection.

While assessing the issue of e-governance that enhances the level of good governance, the participants rated under the criteria of fully disagreed, disagreed, neutral, satisfied and fully satisfied. The table 1 represents the status of the civil servants in non technical sector.

Table 1: E-governance Vs good governance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Fully disagreed	2	1.4	1.6	1.6
	Disagreed	3	2.1	2.4	4.0
	Neutral	8	5.7	6.3	10.3
	Satisfied	40	28.6	31.7	42.1
	Fully satisfied	73	52.1	57.9	100.0
	Total	126	90.0	100.0	
Missing	System	14	10.0		
Total		140	100.0		

Table 1 illustrates that 57.9 percent with majority of the participants claimed that they were fully satisfied on the influence of e-governance system for good governance. In the same way, only 1.6 percent fully disagreed about positive effect of e-governance over good governance. The satisfied level of e-governance on good governance was rated by 31.7% participants. It can be concluded from the data that almost all the participants agreed positive impact of e-governance for enhancing good governance in the context of Nepalese civil service.

The sample taken from the population of civil servants of Nepal government was rated under the theme of ICT usage they use for effective service delivery. The rate was counted in the category of 'No' and 'Yes'. Table 2 describes the assessment level of the participants.

Table 2: Use of ICT in service delivery

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	35	25.0	26.7	26.7
	Yes	96	68.6	73.3	100.0
	Total	131	93.6	100.0	
Missing	System	9	6.4		
Total		140	100.0		

Table 2 has illustrated that out of 140 participants, nine did not respond and out of 131 respondents 73.3 % rated that they agree on the use of ICT while providing the service to the people and only 26.7% rejected the use. It can be concluded that the majority of the civil servant think that the use ICT in non technical sector is very fruitful but there is very rare use of the ICT in work performance in the field.

The survey data was taken from the population of civil servants of Nepal government who are working at the various part of the country. It was rated under the scenario of digital divide in Nepalese civil servant. The rate was counted in the category of 'No' and 'Yes'. Table 3 describes the assessment level of the participants.

Table 3: Scenario of Digital Divide

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	63	45.0	51.2	51.2
	Yes	60	42.9	48.8	100.0
	Total	123	87.9	100.0	
Missing	System	17	12.1		
Total		140	100.0		

The table 3 shows that out of 140 participants, 17 did not respond and out of 123 who responded were in level of 51.2 percent to rate 'No' and 48.8 percent rated in 'Yes' category. It reflected that majority of the civil servants are not in technology friendly and others in favor.

The participants are assessed for the rating of the use of ICT at workplace with the category of fully disagree, disagree, neutral, satisfied and fully satisfied. Table 4 shows the level of rating by them.

Table 4: Use of ICT at Workplace

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Fully disagreed	6	4.3	4.8	4.8
	Disagreed	30	21.4	24.2	29.0
	Neutral	35	25.0	28.2	57.3
	Satisfied	41	29.3	33.1	90.3
	Fully satisfied	12	8.6	9.7	100.0
	Total	124	88.6	100.0	
Missing	System	16	11.4		
Total		140	100.0		

Table 4 has reflected that out of 140 participants, 16 were missing to respond and out of 124, 33.1 % rated for satisfactory level and 9.7 % rated for fully satisfied level. On the other hand 28.2% rated neutral and 24.2 percent disagreed on the use of ICT in workplace. Only 4.8% rated for fully disagree. It can be concluded that a major volume of civil servants agree for the use of ICT in workplace that may enhance their performance.

The information security and data protection was felt a major challenge in Nepalese e-governance implementation and it was assessed in five point scale including fully disagreed, agreed, neutral, satisfied and fully satisfied level. The major categories rated have been presented on the table 5.

Table 5: Information security and data protection challenge in e-service

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Fully disagreed	6	4.3	4.7	4.7
	Disagreed	1	.7	.8	5.5
	Neutral	7	5.0	5.5	10.9
	Satisfied	45	32.1	35.2	46.1
	Fully satisfied	69	49.3	53.9	100.0
	Total	128	91.4	100.0	
Missing	System	12	8.6		
Total		140	100.0		

Table 5 has shown that out of 140 non technical civil servants, 12 did not respond, out of 128 participated on the survey and rated that 53.9% declared that they were fully satisfied and 35.2% satisfied that there is challenge in information security and data protection if e-governance is implemented at present. Only 4.7% fully disagreed and 0.8 % disagreed about the challenge of information security and data protection. 5.5% remained neutral in this case. The data has declared that majority of the people working in civil service realized that there is challenge in information security and data protection.

VI. Discussion

The data analysis of the survey declared that sufficient ICT equipments and software applications though available in work place has not been fully utilized. On the other hand they also demonstrated that digital divide has played vital role in accepting the e-governance as there is gap in user and non user of digital devices within civil servants. The sophisticated infrastructure of ICT based applications and accessories were insufficient in work place at all the government bodies particularly in remote area. The information security and data protection has been realized as a major challenge in the e-governance implementation. People have no trust in e-governance as they were not fully ready to adopt it. Despite of the challenges in new technology in hardware and software, another challenge of restructuring of the state has added value for getting more assessment towards feasibility study in future. The human resource development and management in ICT sector has also been felt needed.

VII. Conclusion

The study has concluded that infrastructure development, human resource development and management, digital divide and information security and data protection have been the major challenges of effective service delivery in civil service of Nepal. Unnecessary influence of middleman in the public

service delivery, lack of open competition in the public procurement has been influenced by syndicate of some hidden groups. Needless expansion of government agencies and its employees; too many layers in the decision-making process; service delivery is more process oriented rather than result oriented, failure to make individual officials responsible; and a lack of decentralization of necessary authority to the officials down to the field offices are also found as huddles. The challenge of state restructuration and reform has also added value of the implementation of e-governance in future. The challenges have been tried to address through the design of e-government master plan, restructuration of civil service and reform. The government has to bring regular capacity development programme for civil servant and service providers towards ICT innovations and its application.

VIII. Way Forward

The Public Service have been more agile and deliver more user centric and pioneering services for common people if we able to implement the following ICT strategy in Nepalese civil service.

- Innovative use of ICT in the Public Service may deliver better value for taxpayers by creating efficiencies through integration, consolidation and sharing of common infrastructure, systems and resources.
- Adoption and facilitation of digital technologies may increase productivity, improve the relationship between citizens, businesses and government and will deliver social and economic benefits for Ireland.
- Integrated services and increased data sharing may drive significant efficiencies; will facilitate insight driven decision making; will increase openness and transparency between Government and the public; and will provide a much higher user experience and quality of service for citizens, businesses and public servants.
- Improved ICT governance may ensure alignment, reduce risk and support unification as envisaged.

The future needs for ICT skills can be met through professionalization of ICT streams, targeted recruitment and improved mobility and succession planning across all Public Bodies.

Acknowledgment

Abbreviations

E – Government : Electronic Governemtn

E- Governance : Electronic Governance

e-Sewa : Electronic Sewa

IBM : International Business Machine

ICT : Information Communication Technology

IT : Information Technology

NCC : National Computer Center

NCS : Nepalese Civil Service

UK : United Kingdom

USA : United State of America

WWW : World Wide Web

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