

A study on E-Governance Initiatives in Panjab University

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Abstract

Changing with the time, the Panjab University, Chandigarh has conceptualized many e-governance small projects/ incentives. This study tries to examine the perception of the students, faculty and staff regarding E-governance effectiveness in the Panjab University. Data from total 200 respondents was collected and analyzed for this purpose. Faculty members identified 'Proper Training' as the most effective measure to improve the current state of e-governance of the university. The study also identifies that complete implementation of E-governance in University will include building technical Hardware and Software infrastructure. It will also include better and faster connectivity options.

Keywords: e-governance, students' attitudes, ICT

Introduction

E- Governance:

E-governance is the application of information & communication technologies to transform the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of informational & transactional exchanges with in government, between govt. & govt. agencies of National, State, Municipal & Local levels, citizen & businesses, and to empower citizens through access & use of information. It is the use of ICT by different actors of the society with the aim to improve their access to information and to build their capacities. E-governance is no more and no less than governance in an electronic environment. It is both governance of that environment and governance within that environment, using electronic tools (Zussman, 2002). Governance is a concept that involves the interactions among structures, processes and traditions that determine how power is exercised, how decisions are taken and how their say has been by citizens or other stakeholders.

E-governance started in India in the early '70s with a drive to improve work efficiency in the areas of economic monitoring, planning and the deployment of (ICT). Since then, it has been utilized in every aspect of the work environment, i.e., for reaching out to rural areas, for promoting transparency and accountability, to enable swift delivery of information and services and much more. E-governance is not about software and hardware, but about people and processes.

E-Governance model

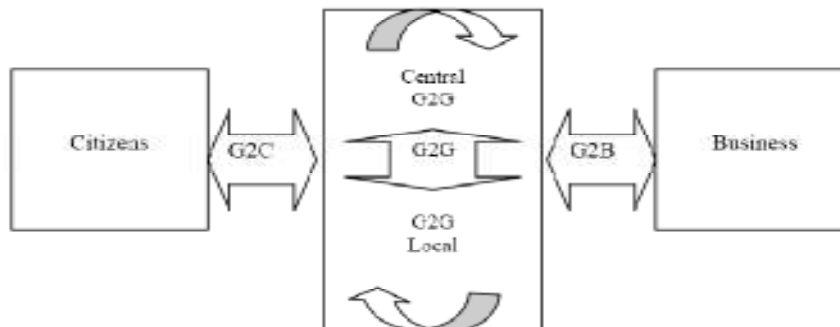
The three main target groups that can be distinguished in e-governance concepts are government, citizens and businesses. Abbreviations such as B2B (Business to Business) and B2C (Business to Consumer) are used, like in e-commerce concepts, to shortly describe which of the main groups

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are interacting. The most common interactions in e-governance, G2C, G2B and G2G, are presented schematically in Figure 1.

Figure 1: **Inter-relations in the field of e-Governance**



Source: Adapted from Backus (2001, p. 2)

Stages of E-Governance:

According to Gartner, e-governance will mature according to the following four phases:

Information → Presence

Interaction → Intake processes

Transaction → Complete transactions

Transformation → Integration & change

Phase – 1: Information

In the *first phase*, e-governance means being present on the web, providing the public (G2C & G2B) with relevant information. Internally (G2G) the government can also disseminate static information with electronic means, such as the Internet.

Phase – 2: Interaction

In the *second phase*, the interaction between government and the public (G2C & G2B) is stimulated with various applications. People can ask questions via e-mail, use search engines, and download forms and documents. Internally (G2G) government organizations use LANs, intranets and e-mail to communicate and exchange data.

Phase – 3: Transaction

With *phase three*, the complexity of the technology is increasing, but customer (G2C & G2B) value is also higher. Complete transactions can be done without going to an office.

Examples of online services are filing income tax, filing property tax, extending/renewal of licenses, visa and passports and online voting. In this phase, internal (G2G) processes have to be redesigned to provide good service. Government needs new laws and legislation to enable paperless transactions.

Phase – 4: Transformation

The *fourth phase* is the when all information systems are integrated and the public can get G2C & G2B services at one (virtual) counter. One single point of contact for all services is the

ultimate goal. In this phase, cost savings, efficiency and customer satisfaction reach highest possible levels.

E-Governance Trends:

Government's Performance:

Pressure is mounting on the government to reduce the operating cost. At the same time citizens expect an improved service from the government with more flexibility and efficiency, and without any premium rate for the additional services.

Growing number of digital citizens:

The common man's skill level in using the digital technology is increasing. Digital citizens are moving from passive consumers of government services to active consumers.

Reengineering the government structure:

The old industrial models should give way to new virtual communities to provide a more value-added service to the e-citizens in a networked environment. This calls for a fundamental change to the government business model.

Involving e-governance Communities:

Involving citizens and government lawmakers in the planning process of launching a government site will bring more transparency and access to data. Also, it will ensure the government services to evolve into a form which is more citizen driven.

Managing the change in responding to digital economy:

Successful management of changes in adapting to the digital economy not only gives a better and cheaper government but also a very different government

Hurdles in Implementing E-governance

The hurdles faced while implementing e-governance in India are as follows: Lack of Clarity of Objectives, Inadequacy of Funds, Dearth of talented workforce, Data Backlog, Change Management, Lack of Coordination among different departments, Lack of technically superior Internet, Rigid Legal Framework, Maintenance Challenge and Citizenry Readiness

E-Governance in relation to Universities:

The concept of governance applied to the University is related to the exercise of controlling the power of different centers and departments which are part of the University. This kind of exercise is based on the drawing of an adequate system which executes different levels of institutional and relational power. These are integrated in a model of electronic governance (e-governance), which is structured in different Internal Information Systems (IIS).

The full operation of these new digital e-governance platforms implies the transposition of e-business models into the institutional organizational and relational networks of the Universities.

Many Universities are now embracing the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in search for more efficient and competitive processes both in delivery of lectures as well as in administrative processes. The demand to automate university process is becoming important in line with university quality assurance.

Review of Literature

A brief resume of researches conducted and related to the present study has been presented under the following heads:

E-Governance of Universities: A Proposal of Benchmarking Methodology:

This paper aims to provide a benchmarking proposal related to the area of e-governance of universities. An e-governance tool is proposed in order to disseminate both the mission and the institutional culture of each University into a formal scheme of benchmarking tools. This paper aims to reveal the importance of benchmarking for universities through its contribution both to carry out more effective evaluations and to detect organizational problems that should be subsequently improved and surpassed. Through the analysis of the most relevant studies, a set of indicators was built in order to evaluate the benchmark related to e-governance.

An ideal model of e-governance can be executed by the implementation of four main dimensions (Leitner, 2003): (i) Adaptation and coordination of the public policies (ii) Participatory democracy (of the most representative players in what concerns to the services supply); (iii) Creation of cooperative networks (for the implementation of public policies for development); (iv) Access to clear and open informative systems of governance.

Importance of e-education and e-Governance,

In this study, two important issues –electronic governance (e-governance) and electronic education (e-education) – are discussed on the Scenario of Zonguldak Karaelmas University (ZKU), Bartın Faculty of Forestry, Department of Landscape Architecture. In this study, three international and one national case are examined, and they are compared with the ZKU. As a result of the study, the common problems of e - governance and e-education, their problems in Turkey and at the ZKU are determined, and the proposals for the solution of these problems are developed. As a final remark, the contributions of universities for the constitution of Knowledge Cities and the reflections of this study to the City of Bartın are emphasized.

The study introduces the *ZKU, Department of Landscape Architecture* as a special focus centre. Three international and one national cases are examined, and they are compared with the ZKU. As a result of the study, the common problems of e-governance and e-education, their problems in Turkey and at the ZKU are determined, and the proposals for the solution of these problems are developed.

It has been concluded that:

- E-government can only succeed in an environment where the appropriate framework supports the development of e-initiatives. Political stability, financial soundness, and government policies will affect competitiveness in the field of the network readiness of the countries (Saidi and Yared, 2001).
- ICT and e-Government can only thrive when the necessary technical infrastructure is available. Sufficient investments need to be made into setting up wide-reaching backbone networks, broadband access and the required systems and networks (UNDP 2003).

E-Governance in India: Dream or reality?

International Journal of Education and Development using Information and Communication Technology (IJEDICT), 2007, Vol. 3, Issue 2, pp. 125-137. This article discusses the position of India in e-governance environment and issues and challenges ahead. The objective of the paper

is to find at which state India lies in terms of e-governance growth model. The study will try to analyze the issues and challenges for the country. The article identifies 4 stages of E-Governance (Layne 2001) as cataloguing (information), transaction, vertical integration (interactive), and horizontal integration (strategic, interactive) or transformation

These four stages are arranged in terms of complexity and different levels of integration. According to the research, India is now on the verge of attaining the third stage for most of the departments like financial institutions, railways, income tax department etc. As a result, there are many challenging issues lying ahead. Security is the main concern for the citizen, and redefining rules and procedures, information transparency, legal issues, infrastructure, skill and awareness, access to right information, inter-departmental collaboration, tendency to resist the change in work culture, are the main concerns for the government to address. Other than all these factors, the government needs to make significant investments in areas such as government process re-engineering, capacity building, training, assessment and awareness.

Research Methodology

Research Objectives:

The research has been conducted keeping the following objectives in mind:

1. To find out existing systems of e-Governance in Panjab University
2. To identify the key issues in implementing e- Governance in Panjab University
3. To identify the gaps in the e-Governance systems of University.

Statement of the Research Problem

The problem can be defined as follows:

“To identify the various initiatives taken by Panjab University in the field of E- Governance and find out how it interacts with the society. Also, to find out how transparency is ensured in the various operations of Panjab University.”

Need for Study:

This study will help students (as citizens), as well as the staff to have a better understanding of e-governance system of Panjab University, and also, to bridge the gaps prevailing in the present system.

Limitations and Constraints:

- The findings are based on the subjective opinion of the respondents and the truth of the answers cannot be assessed.
- The descriptive quality of the study undertaken is dependent on the veracity of the responses, which is a constraint within which the researchers had to work.
- Sometimes due to lack of awareness, the faculty members were not able to answer.

Data Processing Procedures:

Data analysis was done using SPSS 11.5 software.

Findings and Analysis

State of University's E-Governance:

The following graph shows the average rating given to the University's E-Governance by the faculty members:

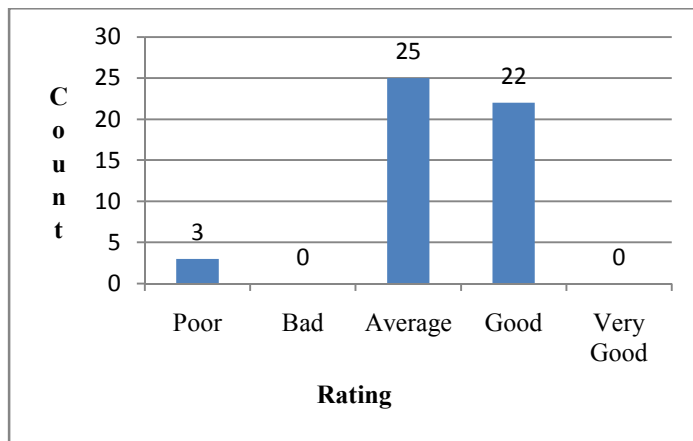


Fig 2: State of University's E - Governance

The results show that no member of the faculty is satisfied with the current state of E-Governance of the university. Not even a single person has given a rating of 5 (very good) to the university's E-Governance. But the average rating comes out to be 3. This means that current state of E-Governance of the University is not that good and needs to be improved a lot to bring it to the rating of 5.

Roadblock in implementing E-Governance

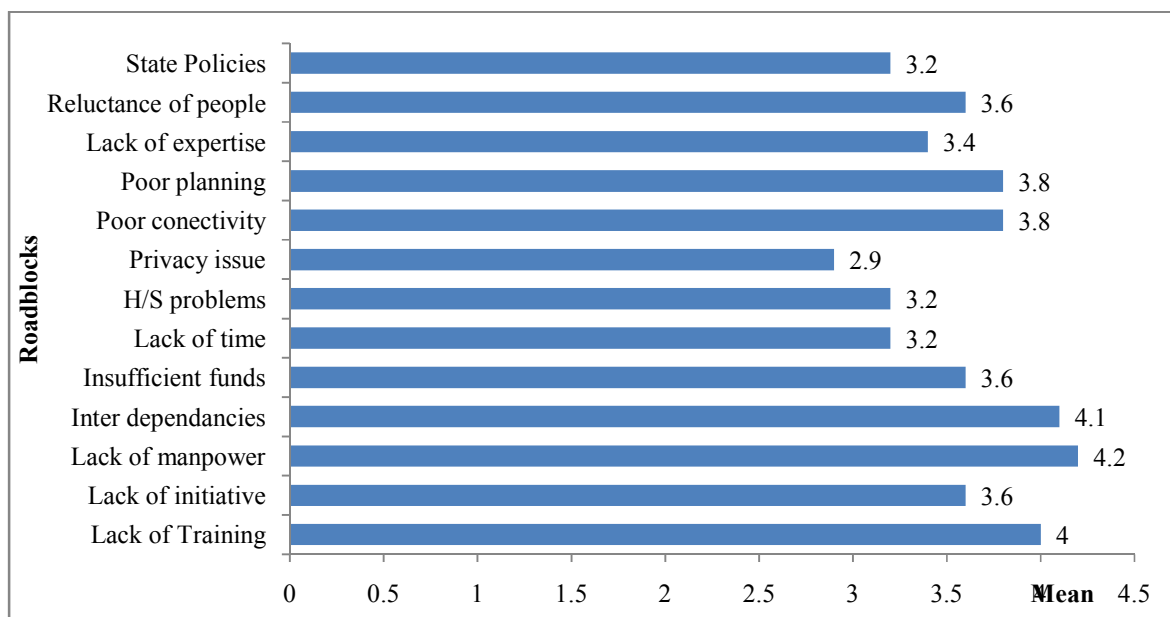


Fig 3: Roadblocks in implementing E - Governance

Out of all the problems, only one has rating below 3. This means all the other problems have an unavoidable presence in the University. The dominant one is the LACK OF MANPOWER. The second comes the INTERDEPARTMENTAL DEPENDANCIES due to which university is not able to implement E-Governance effectively. Similar rating is given to third problem, which is LACK OF TRAINING to faculty. This means people don't know how to implement E-Governance in the university. Unless and until they don't know how to implement E-Governance in university, there is no scope for progress in the system.

Measures to improve E-Governance of the University:

Following are few measures to improve E-Governance of the university and their corresponding ratings as suggested by faculty members:

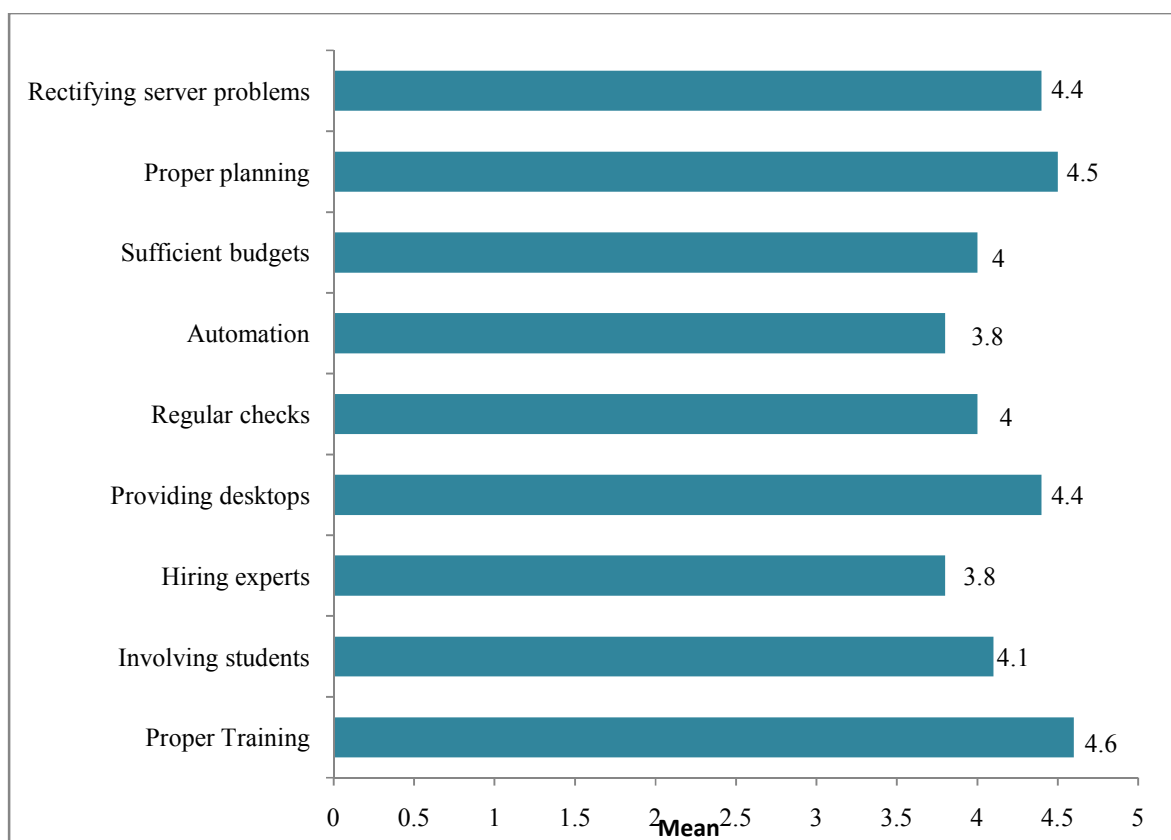


Fig 4: Measures to improve E - Governance

All the suggested variables have got rating above 3. This means all the measures need to be implemented according to the faculty members to improve the E-Governance system of university. The most important being PROPER TRAINING.

Rating of Panjab University's website:

The rating shows that neither the students, nor the faculty is satisfied with the current state of university's E-Governance and a lot of improvements need to be done.

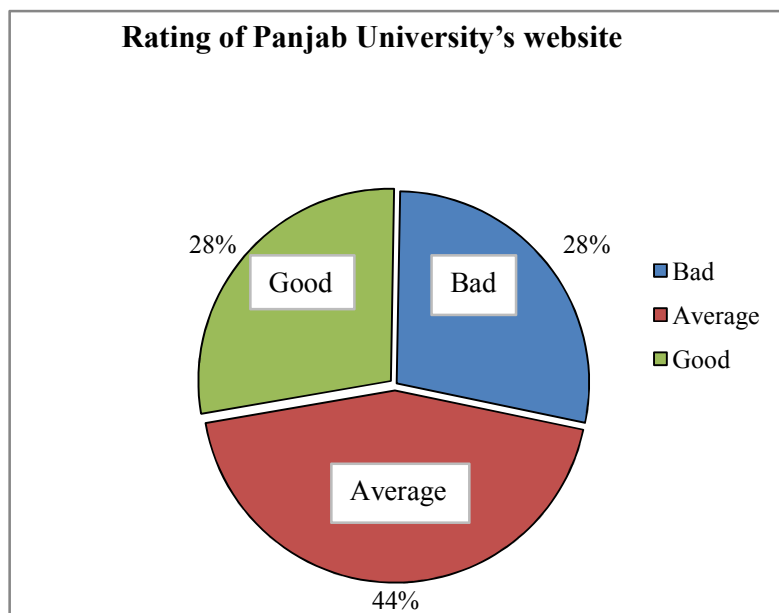


Fig 5: Rating of Panjab University's website

Problems with the website: Following are few of the problems which according to students are present in the website of PU:

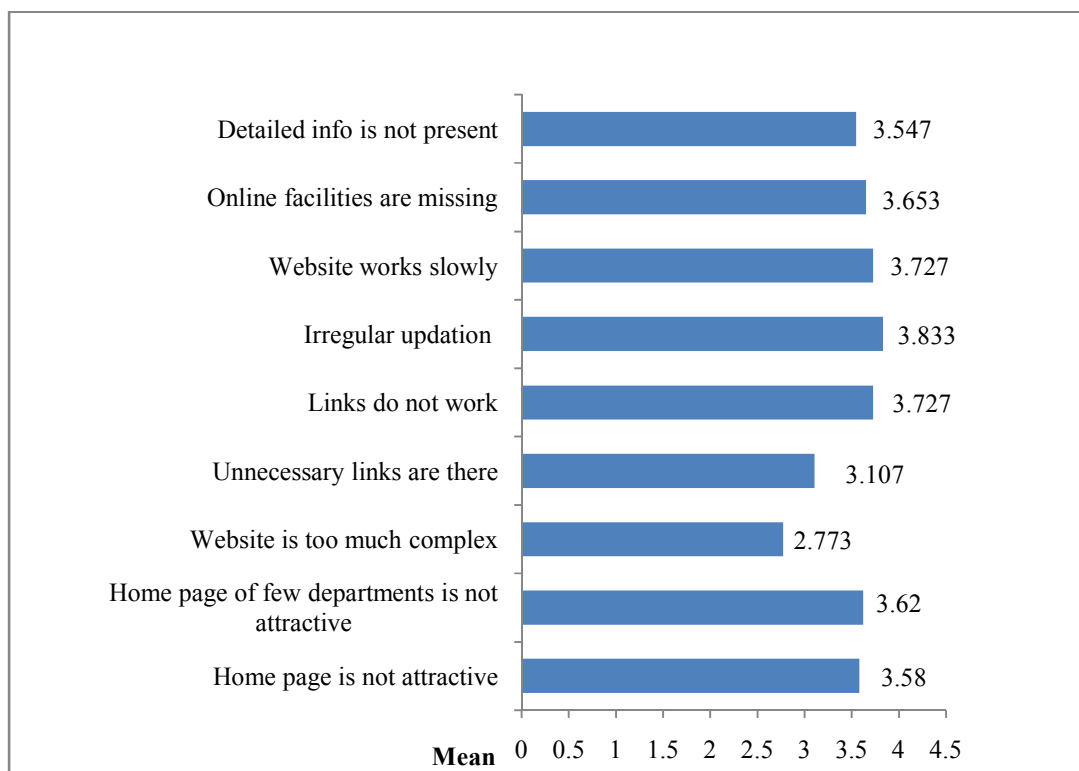


Fig 6: Problems in the Panjab University's website

Measures to improve the E-Governance:

Following are few of the measures which according to students must be implemented:

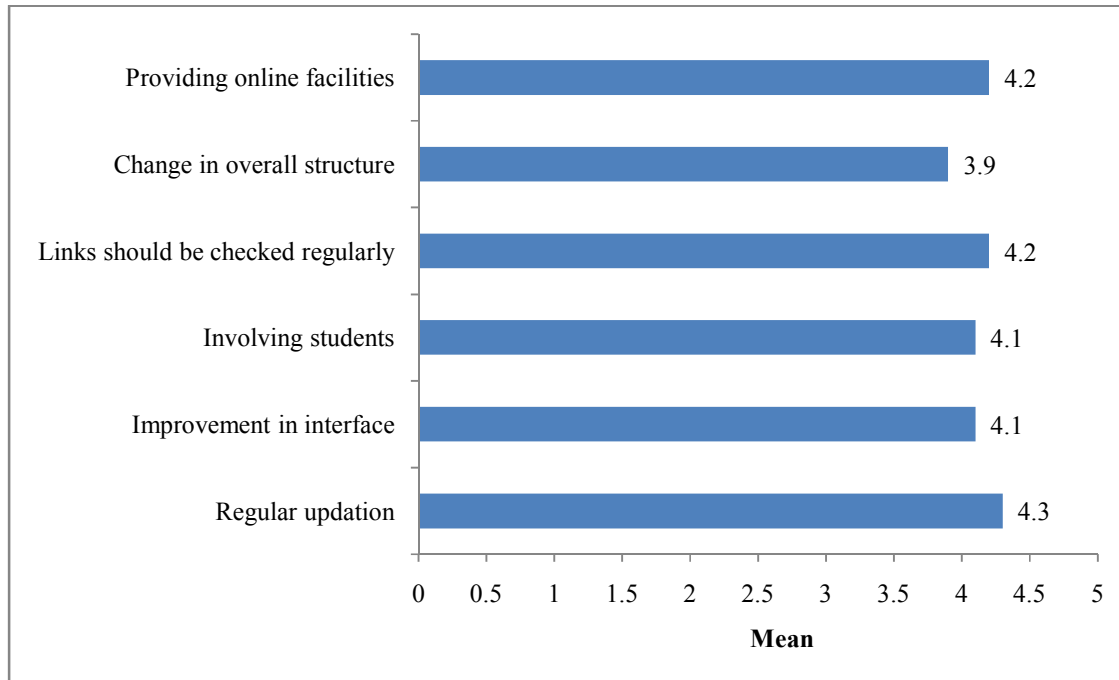


Fig 7: Measures to improve E- Governance

All the suggested measures have got rating above 3. This means all are quite important and need to be implemented to improve the state of University's E-Governance. The most important being TIMELY AND REGULAR UPDATION.

Conclusion

From the above findings, we can conclude that state of university's E-Governance is just average, as rated by most of the faculty members and students. Many problems exist in the website as well as E-Governance of the university like irregular updation, non working links, etc. Even many of the faculty members have no or very less information about their own department's site. Neither the students, nor the faculty is satisfied with the current state of university's E-Governance. Lack of initiative in the faculty members and irregular updation of the website are the most dominant problems existing in the university along with the other ones as shown above. Hence a lot of improvements need to be done by the faculty as well as the management to improve the current scene. .

Recommendations

A good and sound E-Governance system is very important for our university. The problems highlighted above need to be carefully looked upon and solved as soon as possible. Although the university provides many facilities on its website, but according to the results, many gaps have been identified.

Following measures can be implemented to improve the current state of E-governance of Panjab University: Providing proper training to faculty members, Regular updation of the website of PU as well as of each department, Providing online facilities like online registration, etc., Regular checks by computer department, Involving students in the process, Improving the interface, Changing overall structure of the website, Providing good computers to each faculty member, Rectifying server problems, Allocation of sufficient budgets, All faculty members should be on PUmial rather than on Gmail and Quick service in rectifying server problems.

Also, all the faculty members should access the webpage of their department regularly to keep themselves updated and well informed at least about their own department. A good amount of effort needs to be don't so that the rating of the university's E-Governance can be brought to 'Very Good' or at least 'Good'.

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