Punjab IT Policy

2016

Executive Summary

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The number of IT companies in Pakistan has grown steadily during the last decade at a healthy rate of 7.4% and has culminated into $519 million IT and IT-based exports during the fiscal year 2014-15. Although significant gains have been achieved, yet according to the Global Competitiveness Index 2015, Pakistan falls behind most of the countries in terms of absorption of IT and IT enabled services.

Since the introduction of National IT Policy of 2000, a number of domains such as legislation on education, health, environment, taxation, rural development and etc. have devolved to become provincial subjects. Moreover, during these 16 years, there has been a paradigm shift in the IT industry and new ideas such as Big Data, IoT and etc. have taken a lead. There is, therefore, a need to revisit the IT Policy introduced in year 2000 and enable the provinces to take lead in the matter.

Furthermore, Punjab has invested heavily in ICTs during the last decade to promote accessibility, entrepreneurship and innovation and encourage ICT adoption in businesses and governance. Punjab was the first province to take back the Broadband Tax, set up technology and business incubator and accelerator, create e-service and facilitation centers. The government has also worked diligently to automate government systems and processes through the involvement of leading IT companies of Pakistan. However, in order to ensure sustainability and demonstrate a long-term commitment to the cause, presence of a policy framework was deemed necessary.

With this backdrop in mind, Punjab Government is introducing the Punjab IT Policy 2016, which envisions Punjab as one of top e-Governed, IT-enabled, e-Literate provinces in the region, a preferred destination for global IT businesses and a major supplier of skilled IT human resource.

During the policy formulation stage of Punjab IT Policy 2016 it was ensured that the process was inclusive, outward looking, joined-up and evidence based so that a well-rounded effective policy document can be produced. In order to maintain highest standards of input a number of focus group Discussions and individual consultation sessions were conducted along with

rigorous in-house research. More than 150 individuals from across all key sectors have provided input in this draft.
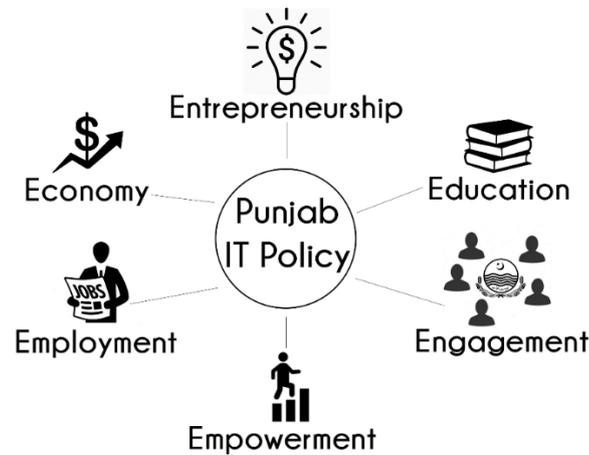

Fig 1. 6 E's of the Punjab IT Policy

Punjab IT Policy 2016 should be viewed as a set of policies focusing on 6 key areas: Industry, Education, Health, Governance, Citizens and Start-ups and MSMEs. Within these broad focus areas 30 key sub-sectors have been identified, and the policy aims to provide a comprehensive set of policies and incentives to boost growth and development in these areas. On the basis on this analysis and inspection the document also presents 6Es of the IT Policy which are deemed as key principles for Punjab to become a leading IT hub of the world: Education, Engagement, Empowerment, Economy, Entrepreneurship and Employment.

The policy posits 10 key goals, which cover the aforementioned sectors. These are:

1. Bridge the digital divide across gender, region and economic classes and achieve accessible and affordable access for all.
2. Position Punjab as the IT R&D and innovation hub of Pakistan.
3. Establish Punjab as the preferred destination for local and international investment in the IT/ITES/EHM industries.
4. Enable the entrepreneurial ecosystem to flourish in the field of IT/ITES/EHM.
5. Increase financial inclusion and incentivise investment in innovative ICT technologies to promote e-commerce in the province.
6. Create an enabling environment for IT Technologies and their safe usage through policy reform and improvements in legal framework.

7. Use ICTs for enhancing the capabilities of citizens and setting forward a more inclusive and broader human development agenda.

8. To endeavour for rapid expansion and growth of the knowledge based economy in the province.

9. Strengthen and build human resource and increase employment opportunities through the use of ICTs.

10. To utilize ICT for a more efficient transparent and green governance model in Punjab.

Each of these goals is accompanied by a set of relevant objectives and policy commitments that the government shall take up in pursuit of these goals. These include declaration of broadband as a public utility, establishment of common resource and service centers and public-wifi hotspots to ensure accessibility of internet for everyone, setting up special economic zones for IT, financial incentives for start-ups, promotion of innovation in schools and universities, public procurements from MSMEs and introduction of a Digital First policy at the government level, etc. Emerging disciplines such as IOT, Big Data and Cloud Computing have been given special considerations in the document, with the aim of creating relevant and skilled human resource as well as local demand.

The Punjab IT Policy also identifies the need for introduction of policies that would complement the IT sector. The government shall, in the days to come, work diligently to introduce these policies as well. These include:

- Information & Data Security Policy
- Electronic Hardware Manufacturing Policy
- Right of Way Policy

The complete first draft of the IT Policy has been made available for public consultation and can be accessed at www.policy.pitb.gov.pk Based on the feedback received through this consultation process, the policy draft shall be revised and submitted for final approval and a comprehensive Action Plan shall be prepared accordingly.