

E-Governance and Its Impact on Common Populace

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<<< Abstract

All over the world, the spectacular growth and development of information and communication Technology (ICTs) has changed the total scenario of our daily life and their subsequent use on strengthening interaction among public entities, civil societies, communities and citizens has given rise to a new governance paradigm known as E-Governance. Electronic 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” Presently, E-Governance is more than a Government website on the internet. Political, social, economic and technological aspects determine the scope and success of existence of E-Governance. It may include a broad range of services for many segments of society. The most common areas of e-Governance application are electronic commerce and business regulations, taxation and revenue, law enforcement and courts, education, health and transport. E-Governance facilitates a competent, speedy and translucent procedure to disseminate information to the public and other agencies, and to execute Government administration activities. A lot of initiatives have already been taken in the area, but specialists clamour for things to be implemented. A lot of measures are still to be taken for authenticity and confidence in online transactions. This paper intended to focus on the objectives, scope, initiatives taken by E-Governance together with challenges faced during the implementation and Recommendations to overcome these challenges.

Keywords: *E-Governance, Government, ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies)*

1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF E-GOVERNANCE

Government is an institutional view. It focuses attention on political bodies such as cities, countries and States; the legislative, executive and judicial branches of Government; or on the various departments and agencies of public administration in the executive branch of Government.

E-Government is the use of IT & communication technologies, to deliver public services in a much more convenient, customer-oriented, cost-effective and altogether different and better way. However it has to be renowned that it is not all regarding technology, but to use it as a facilitator to modify, and to revolve our processes better.

E- Governance is the implementation and delivery of Government services through the information communication technology to provide Transparent, Effective, Efficient, Responsive and Accountable governance to the society. In simple terms Electronic Governance can be defined as giving citizens the choice of when and where

they access Government information and services. While e-Governance entails the processes used to provide services to the public, e-Government is the tool to accomplish e-Governance.

E-Governance is the function of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for delivering Government services, exchange of information, communication transactions, integration various stand-alone systems and services between Government and Citizens (G2C), Government and Business (G2B) as well as back office processes and interactions within the entire Government frame work.

According to Former Secretary General of the United Nations: Kofi A. Annan, “Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development.” Therefore, governance is an exercise of power for steering social systems, as well as a process by which organizations are directed, controlled, and held to account to their society. It is a set of the systems and processes concerned with ensuring the overall direction, effectiveness, supervision and accountability of an organization.

According to one school of thought, E-Governance is not just about Government web site and e-mail. It is not just about service delivery over the Internet. It is not just about digital access to Government information or electronic payments. It will change how citizens relate to governments as much as it changes how citizens relate to each other. It will bring forth, new concepts of citizenship, both in terms of needs and responsibilities.

The definitions of E-government by various sources may vary widely, there is a common theme. E-government involves using information technology, and especially the Internet, to improve the delivery of government services to citizens, businesses, and other government agencies. E-government enables citizens to interact and receive services from the federal, state or local governments twenty four hours a day, seven days a week.

There are three aspects to the E-Governance –

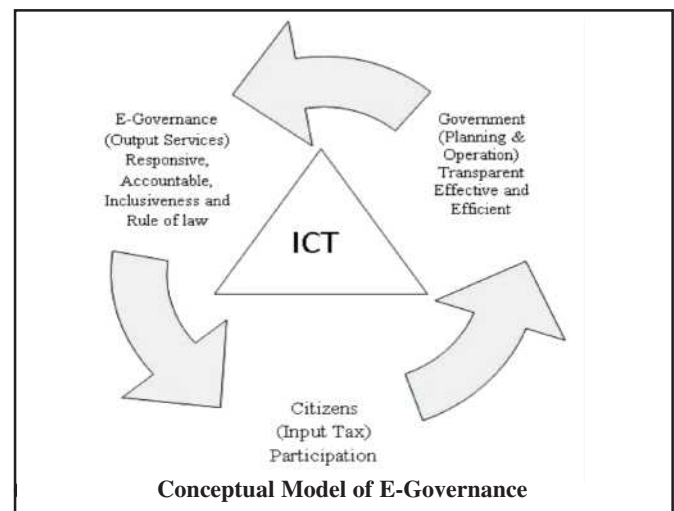
- a) IT enabling the Government functions - something similar to back-office automation,
- b) Web-enabling the Government functions so that the citizens will have a direct access, and

- c) Improving Government processes so that openness, accountability, accuracy, speed of operations, effectiveness and efficiency may be achieved.

Characteristically, this would mean web-enabled applications, but e-Governance would also cater to automated applications for the Government sector, which helps in achieving **SMART** governance which some define as:

- Speed
- Moral
- Accountable/Accurate
- Responsive and
- Transparent Governance

Thus e-governance is a broader concept that deals with the whole spectrum of the relationship and networks within Government regarding the usage and application of ICTs whereas e-government is limited to the development of online services E-Government Services



2. NEED AND SCOPE OF E-GOVERNANCE

E-Governance, also known as e-gov, digital government, online government to create transformed government, where interaction with government to citizens, business other governments departments in a comfortable, transparent and effective at interaction low cost. E-Governance is the use of information and communication technologies to support good governance. It has the following main dimensions:

a) Government to Citizen (G2C) : G2C are those activities in which the Government provides one-stop, on-line access to information and services to citizens. G2C applications enable citizens to inquire questions of Government agencies and receive answers; file income taxes (federal, state, and local); pay taxes (income, real estate); renew driver's licenses; pay traffic tickets; change their address; and make appointments for vehicle release inspections and driving tests. It further involves enhanced services to the citizens through single point delivery mechanism and involves areas like:

E-Citizen : In e-citizen incorporated service centres will be formed. The purpose of these centres is to take over the various customer services in due course. It offers services like issue of Certificates, Ration Cards, Passports, Payment of Bills and taxes etc. These centres will become one-stop Government Shops for delivery of all services.

E-Transport : The transport aspects that can be easily e-governed which includes: Registration of motor vehicles, Issue of driving licenses, Issue of plying permissions (Permits), Tax and fee collection through Cash and Bank Challans and Control of Pollution

E-Medicine : It involves connecting of various hospitals in different parts of the country and provides better medical services to the citizen.

E-Education : E-Education constitutes various initiatives of educating the citizen and the Government with the various Information technologies

E-Registration : E-Governing the registration and transfer of the properties and stamp duty to be paid thereon will bring substantial reduction of paper work and reduce the duplicating of entries. Further the transparency in work will increase and the overall time of process registration will reduce.

b) Consumer to Government (C2G) : C2G will mainly constitute the areas where the citizen interacts with the Government. It will include areas like election when citizens vote for the Government; Census where he provides information about himself to the Government; taxation where he is paying taxes to the Government.

E-Democracy : E-democracy refers to online activities of Governments, elected representatives, political parties and citizens for democratic processes. This includes

political or current affairs discussion and online consultation between representatives and their constituents. It is an effort to change the role of citizen from passive information giving to active citizen involvement. In an e-democracy the Government will be informing the citizen, representing the citizen, and encouraging the citizen to vote, consulting the citizen and engaging the citizen in the Governance. Taking the citizens input about the various Government policies by organizing an e-debate will further strengthen the e-democracy. The concept of e-debate is similar to chat over the Internet, wherein not only the citizens but also the political leaders contesting the elections participate. The citizens give their feedback about the various policies of the parties and particularly the manifesto of the party. The initiative will further strengthen the process by enhancing the representative role, improving accessibility of citizens to their elected members and developing the capacity of elected representatives to engage in e-government. Elected members will also be provided with access to the local authority's Internet and e-mail systems so that they become available online for decision making and people can easily access them.

c) Government to Government (G2G) : Government to Government **G2G** deals with those activities that take place between different Governments Organizations/agencies. Many of these activities are aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of overall Government operations. This can also be referred as e-Administration. It involves improving Government processes by cutting costs, by managing performance, by making strategic connections within government, and by creating empowerment. It will involve networking all Government offices so as to produce synergy among them. The major areas are:

E-Secretariat : Secretariat which is the seat of power has a lot of valuable information regarding the functioning of the State. The cross-linking of various departments and exchange of information amongst various components will simplify the process of Governance.

E-Police : E-Police will help to built citizen confidence. There will be two databases. One of police personnel and the other of criminals. The database of personnel will have the records of their current and previous

postings. This will help to track policemen specialized in certain geographical regions and skills. Take for example; we want to look for a forensic expert. The database within seconds gives the list of all forensic experts. The same database will give the track of their details like service record, family background etc which will also be helpful in intelligent posting and promotion of personnel.

The second database will be of criminals. This database has to be upgraded to national database for its total utility. By just typing the name of a criminal a police officer will be able to know the details of his past activities, including his modus operandi and the area of operation.

Further a database like this will help tap the criminals easily for all the police stations will have simultaneous access to their record.

The module will also include G2C activities like online filing of FIR's, finding the case status of an FIR. Creating a database of Lost and Found can assist further lost and found of valuables and individuals.

E-Court : The pending court cases in India have brought the legal system to a halt. Not only are the consumers asking for changes in the administration, but also the system will collapse if it continues in this manner. IT can transform the system and bring in the court cases to a level of zero dependency. Creating a database of cases can do the same. In fact such a system will help to avoid all the appeals to High Courts and Supreme Court, for the Judges can consider the appeals from an intranet wherein the case remains in the same district court but the Higher Court gives their decision online based on the recorded facts of the case. Such a step will not only help the citizens but will also reduce the backlog of cases. Further the use of IT in the areas like recording of court proceedings, high solution remote video to identify fraudulent documents, live fingerprints scanning and reification, remote probation monitoring, electronic entry of reports and paper work will further speed up the court proceedings.

State Wide Networks : This involves linking all the departments of the Government with various districts headquarters and the state capital, facilitating the flow of information between the various state departments and its constituents. Here various blocks will be linked to district Headquarters, district headquarters to State

Headquarters and State Headquarters to the National Capital.

d) Government to Business (G2B) : In G2B, the Government deals with businesses such as suppliers using the Internet and other ICTs. G2B includes two two-way interactions and transactions: Government-to business and business-to-Government (B2G). B2G refers to businesses selling products and services to Government. Two key G2B areas are e-procurement and auctioning of Government surpluses. Government buys large amounts of MROs (Maintenance, Repairs, and Operations) and other materials directly from suppliers. It further includes:

E-Taxation : This will constitute the various services a business house needs to get from the Government, which includes getting licenses etc. In a similar scenario, it can also flow from a business house to the Government as in the case of procurements, from such business houses by the Government. This will become a B2G service.

e) Government to NGO (G2N) : E-Society : Building interactions beyond the boundaries of Government by developing communities, by building Government partnerships, and by building civil society. It will involve building various associations or interest groups that will ensure the betterment of the society. Such initiatives deal particularly with the relationship between government and citizens: either as voters/stakeholders from whom the public sector derives its legitimacy, or as customers who consume public services.

3. INITIATIVES OF E-GOVERNANCE

India's practice in E-Governance / ICT initiatives has established significant success in improving accessibility, cutting down costs, reducing corruption, extending help and increased access to un-served groups. In this stage of experimentation, e-government initiatives have reached millions of people belonging to these sections of society. Improved access to information and services has provided economic and social development opportunities, facilitated participation and communication in policy and decision-making processes and empowerment of the weakest groups. This has led to fostering a sense of ownership and building of social capital, which in turn, constitute a basis for local revitalization.

E-Governance is the interaction between citizens and Government through electronic media. These are basically efforts made to modernize Government functioning. E-Governance makes use of technological tools like Internet, public kiosks etc. to complete many government activities. For example if a common man needs some financial loan or a retired person wants to apply for pension, he/she should be able to apply for the same through internet center without physically going to the required office. Going to a Government office for a small task and wait for a long time could be a tiresome job. The citizens should have a choice of going to the Internet centers or the Government offices to get their works done with the Government.

In a simple way 'e-governance' is viewed in the perspective of two major shifts in socio-economic arena – Governance and information revolution. It uses electronic means to support and stimulate good Governance. The emergence of ICTs along with a strong wave of globalization, and has a profound impact in the development of e-governance notion. E-governance is not only the usage of ICTs but is determined by political, social, economic and technological aspects. It is important to establish relationship between Government officials and citizens, providing greater access to Government information and services by making the Government accessible online; promoting citizen participation by enabling citizens to interact more conveniently with government officials, such as by requesting Government service and filing required documents through website; increasing government accountability by making its operations more transparent, thereby reducing the opportunities for corruption; and supporting development goals by providing business, rural and traditionally underserved communities with information, opportunities and communications capabilities (Baev, Vitality, 2003). Thus it increases the flow of information accelerating the process of decision making by optimizing resources, and making the mechanism for decision making self-regulating.

Services provided through the various e-Government initiatives assist Governments in reaching the yet 'unreached' and thereby contribute to poverty reduction in rural and far-flung areas by increasing access to critical information and opportunities. At the same time, this process also enables involvement and empowerment

of marginalized groups through their participation in the Government process.

The National e-Governance Plan was approved by the Cabinet in May 2006 with a vision to provide Public services to the common man in his locality at affordable costs. The NeGP is a multi-stakeholder programme which primarily focuses on making critical public services available and promoting rural entrepreneurship.

The Government has initiated the creation of National Population Register (NPR) by collecting specific information of all usual residents in the country during the House-listing and Housing Census phase of Census 2011, during April 2010 to September 2010. The NPR is an inclusive identity database to be formed and maintained by the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India (RG&CCI), Ministry of Home Affairs. It involves digitization of the demographic data thus collected and biometric enrolment of all usual residents for allotment of Unique Identification (UID) Numbers. RG&CCI has assigned Department of Information Technology (DIT), Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, with the responsibility of demographic data digitization and biometric data collection in 19 States and 2 Union Territories of India. The objective of NPR is to facilitate better targeting of the benefits and services under the Government schemes, improve planning and security, and prevent identity fraud.

The Department of Information Technology, has created the National e-Governance Division (NeGD) as an autonomous business division within Media Lab Asia (MLA), under the Ministry of IT, for undertaking the Programme Management of NeGP. The NeGD facilitates and supports DIT for tasks and responsibilities assigned to them such as facilitating implementation of NeGP by various Ministries and State Governments, providing technical assistance to Central Ministries/State Line Departments, serving as a Secretariat to the Apex Committee, undertaking technical appraisal of all NeGP projects to examine issues such as overall technological framework, standards, security policy, service delivery mechanism etc. NeGD supports DIT in human resource development, training and awareness building, framing core policies, R & D, assessment.

Present Scenario of e-Governance in India

State/Union Territory	Initiatives covering departmental automation, user charge collection, delivery of policy/programme information and delivery of entitlements
Andhra Pradesh	e-Seva, CARD, VOICE, MPHS, FAST, e-Cops, AP online—One-stop-shop on the Internet, Saukaryam, Online Transaction processing
Bihar	Sales Tax Administration Management Information
Chhattisgarh	Chhattisgarh InfoTech Promotion Society, Treasury office, e-linking project
Delhi	Automatic Vehicle Tracking System, Computerization of website of RCS office, Electronic Clearance System, Management Information System for Education etc
Goa	Dharani Project
Gujarat	Mahiti Shakti, request for Government documents online, Form book online, G R book online, census online, tender notice.
Haryana	Nai Disha
Himachal Pradesh	Lok Mitra
Karnataka	Bhoomi, Khajane, Kaveri
Kerala	e-Srinkhala, RDNet, Fast, Reliable, Instant, Efficient Network for the Disbursement of Services (FRIENDS)
Madhya Pradesh	Gyandoot, Gram Sampark, Smart Card in Transport Department, Computerization MP State Agricultural Marketing Board (Mandi Board) etc
Maharashtra	SETU, Online Complaint Management System—Mumbai
Rajasthan	Jan Mitra, RajSWIFT, Lokmitra, RajNIDHI
Tamil Nadu	Rasi Maiyams–Kanchipuram; Application forms related to public utility, tender notices and display North-Eastern States
Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya,	Community Information Center. Forms available on the Meghalaya website under schemes related to
Mizoram & Nagaland	social welfare, food civil supplies and consumer affairs, housing transport etc.

Source: PC Quest Article

4. SUCCESSFUL E-GOVERNANCE PROJECTS

Some of the successful e-governance projects have been e-Seva, Bhoomi, Gramdoot, Gyandoot etc among others. The e-governance projects generally cover all modes of service delivery from the Government to citizens. Some of the applications are listed below:

1. Transport-Registration of Motor Vehicles, issuing driving licenses etc.
2. Health Care- Linking various Hospitals Tele-Medicine etc.
3. Education-Linking various educational Institutions, distance learning etc.
4. Employment-Online Registration for unemployed, computerization of day to day activities of employment exchange etc.

5. Municipal- Bill deposition, Issue of Certificates - Birth / Death / Land records etc.
6. Food and Civil Supply- Issue and Renewal of Ration Cards
7. Revenue-Registration of Property, Land records computerization &
8. Transfer of Properties, Stamp Duty Payments.

The e-governance projects have been appreciated and awarded by different organizations and agencies

5. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING E-GOVERNANCE

India comprises of many states with population of over more than one billion. Out of this population, around 60 percent live in rural areas and rest in semi urban and urban areas. Literacy and language are immense challenges, in a multicultural and multilingual

country. Following are the major challenges in implementation of e-Governance, because of which the speed of implementation of e-Governance initiatives in India is very slow. This has unenthusiastically affected the use of e-Governance:

- Lack of sufficient and proper planning
- Leadership failures resulting in slow and patchy progress of e-Governance initiatives
- Technophobia, which primarily results from low levels of literacy and e-literacy.
- The project implementation is generally vendor driven.
- Financial inhibitors limiting the flow of investment to e-Governance projects
- Lack of standardization (For example, similar projects are carried out by different state agencies using incompatible file formats and application standards)
- Digital divides and choices, where socio-economic and physical inequalities lead to differences in motivations and competences that constrain and fragment e-Governance take-up and fail to address particular user needs.
- Reverse compatibility of application with legacy systems are missing in several projects.
- Deep rooted corruption, which has seeded to all levels of Governance, makes it difficult to implement changes
- Poor coordination across jurisdictional, administrative and geographic boundaries and lack of proper coordination of between government machineries and solutions developers that holds back e-Governance networking benefits.
- The IT Infrastructures are procured before building the application or digitizing the data.
- Need for Government Process Reengineering
- Lack of supporting infrastructures of power and all weather surface transport system to bridge the digital divide between the rural and urban India
- Workplace and organizational inflexibility impairing adaptability to new networked forms of information sharing and service provision.
- Physical security is emphasized, whereas the Logical and application security is left to vendors in many cases.

- Lack of trust heightening fears about inadequate security and privacy safeguards in electronic networks.
- Lack of financial resources, this however, has been relegated to a back burner with the role of International donor agencies.
- Poor technical design leading to incompatibilities between ICT systems or difficult-to-use e-Governance services
- Lack of IT literacy and awareness regarding benefits of e-Governance
- Underutilization of existing ICT infrastructure and lack of infrastructure for sustaining e-Governance projects on national level
- Lack of understanding by the departments, for the components of e-governance applications, which can be outsourced or can be carried out in-house.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Following are some of the recommendations for a successful implementation of an E-Governance system for people of India:

- Use public access kiosks and mobile center's if telecommunication density is low.
- Create literacy/awareness and commitment to e-Governance at high level
- Start with the implementation of pilot projects and replicate the successful ones
- Establishing complete connectivity between various ministries and departments so that transfer of files and papers could be done through Internet thereby choosing efficacious speed as an alternative to manual labor. Thus, interoperability of e-governance projects is of vital importance if the citizens are to feel the benefit of IT in day to day life
- Develop projects that are compatible with the nation's telecom infrastructure.
- Making a policy choice in favor of computerization to overcome radically even if it requires huge investments for the purchase of hardware and software
- Serious efforts would be required to mobilize resources for this job. One way to deal with the situation could be that governments enter into

arrangements for leasing of computers. This would reduce initial heavy capital investments. There are a large number of agencies which would like to fund the leasing to the departments. Ministry of Finance can be asked to provide concessions to these agencies

- Consider the Government's current use of technology and learn from past successes and failures.
- Consult with stakeholders to assess how existing laws may impede the desired results.
- Conduct usability surveys for assessment of existing e-Governance projects and act upon the results of such assessment, wherever required
- Supplying information to the public in a language that they understand and are comfortable with, and generally, it is the local language. As technology is available by which transliteration from English into other languages can be made. Therefore, the problem is manageable provided there is enough motivation to do this onerous task
- Making cyber laws available to the public as early as possible so that the IT systems and information documents stored in the systems has the same legal validity as the documents stored today on paper
- Reform processes by simplifying regulations and procedures
- Provide incentives to the private sector to donate equipment and training.
- Changing the mindset of the government employees who are used to working only in the manual mode. This is a big task and needs patience and careful planning. Workshops, seminars, and training programs are required to be organized to spread awareness among the employees at all levels
- Planning and strategy making should be a continuous process during the life cycle of e-Governance projects. Procedures to incorporate changes in an approved plan scheme, during the course of its implementation, should be simplified.
- Create programs that include traditional medias, like radio programs or newspaper columns, where citizens can learn about E-Government.
- Build supporting infrastructures of power and all weather surface transport system to bridge the digital

divide between the rural and urban India

- From the outset, design applications that accommodate the disabled, such as an audio option for the blind.
- Establish as a legal requirement that the Government must adopt technology to assist the disabled and
- Provide aids to access points who can train citizens in basic computer skills.

7. CONCLUSION

With the emergence of the Information technology and the social changes occurred by it, Government is being forced to enter the e-age. The explosion of e-government products and growing interest from the community and Government officials magnifies this pressure.

In spite of poor infrastructure, poverty, illiteracy, language dominance and all the other reasons India has number of award winning e-governance projects. Effective promotion schemes by the Indian Government will also be a boosting factor to provide quality services to their citizens which means there is huge potential for the development of e-governance in various sectors. Therefore we can say that e-Governance is the key to the "Good Governance" for the developing countries like India to minimize corruption, provides efficient and effective or quality services to their citizens.

The National E-governance Program (NeGP) in India has provided a big platform for scaling up these initiatives under e-governance across the country. It offers big opportunity for the Government to transform. Government does not have the option to ignore the e-government phenomenon and continue to do business as usual. Government has to adopt it fully and should start working for it at faster pace so that common people can see changes sooner. Though there have been a number of successful initiatives in e-governance in the country and we should feel proud being part of this concept but a complete roll out will require successful handling of complex issues like work culture management, official capabilities, citizen's perspective, external factors (social and political) and so on.

E-Governance needs to transform all levels of Government but the focus should be on local Governments since local Governments are the closest to

citizens, and constitute for many, the main interface with Government. The relationship of citizens and local authorities tends to be one based on proximity as the interests at stake for both parties are closely entwined concerning issues such as public services, local development, education etc. E-Governance based administrative reforms in local Governments can have maximum impact on citizens.

The benefits of information technology have not been evenly distributed. It has been noticed that most of

the time the benefits of e-Governance are also reaped by the affluent sections of society. Therefore a concerted effort has to be made to direct E-Governance reforms towards the common man. The goals of E-Governance are: Better service delivery to citizens, Ushering in transparency and accountability, Empowering people through information, improved efficiency within Governments, Improve interface with business and industry.

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