

E- Governance: An Overview

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Abstract

Backward governance has been undermining the service delivery and development initiatives undertaken by majority of the countries. Many of these governments have now started using e-governance as a mechanism to engender change in their governance systems for achieving developments to ensure better service delivery to citizens and other stakeholders. The governments of almost all the countries of the world have made huge investments in implementations of e-governance projects including India. Based on review of literature, this paper focuses on the conceptualization of e-governance, its goals and e-governance initiatives in India. The framework of this paper also identifies the challenges in implementation of e-governance. The main objective of this study proved very helpful developing theoretical base.

Keywords: Information and Communication Technology (ITC), e-governance, good governance, digital divide, service delivery

Introduction

A welfare state is a positive state which is committed to the welfare of the people. Modern democratic states are characterized by welfare orientation. The government plays an important role in socio-economic development of the nation. This means that every activity of individuals from womb to tomb is regulated and controlled by government. This resulted in the expansion of number of services. Hence, ministries, departments and agencies are established to provide large number of services to people. Welfare is a type of government to support the citizens of the society. Nowadays, all the sections in the society judge the government by their governance.

Good governance is about providing an efficient and effective administrative that is committed to providing the quality of services to the people. It is about what people expect from the administration and the willingness and capacity of the administration to fulfill their expectations. The concept of good governance and citizen centric administration are intimately connected. Citizen centricity with the aim of ensuring citizen's welfare and citizen's satisfaction is critical for any government at local, state or national level to execute and especially meet the expectations of the people.

The "e" in e-Governance stands for "electronic". Thus, e-Governance is basically associated with carrying out the functions and achieving the results of governance through the utilization of ICT (Information and Communication Technology).

So to achieve the goal of good governance e-governance is the means. In words of Dr.A.P.J.Abdul Kalam, the Ex-President of India, "Good governance is a transparent, smart e-governance with seamless access, secure and authentic flow of information crossing the interdepartmental barrier and providing a fair and unbiased service to the citizen"

According to World Bank, 'E-Governance' refers to the use of information technologies (such as wide area networks) by government agencies. Electronic governance or e-governance is defined as the delivery of services and information to the public gaining information through electronic means which is not exclusively dealing with the government sector. It is the application of ICT to the process of administration and does not mean computerization of the total administrative system. It is a fundamental change in the operation of the government. E-governance is beyond the scope of e-government. While e-government is the delivery of government e-services and dissemination of information to the public using ICT, e-governance is a way to achieve the good governance by using electronic devices from the government to provide services.

E-Governance is regarded as a powerful tool in the hands of government for reducing cost, increasing revenues, improving delivery of services. In reality union government, state government and local self-government (rural and urban) are under pressure to deliver services more efficiently at low cost. Thereby e-government is an alternative option both economically and politically.

e-Governance is not only about changing administrative processes, inter-departmental, inter-secretarial and inter-agency or inter-personal relationship and at the same time not limited to government offices. It is not just about able to type documents using computers and save them in soft copy model. It does not put government security and confidentiality at risk. Generally e-government is basically the use of information technology (ICT) and its application by relevant government body for the provision of information and public service to the people. e-Government is the use of technology to enhance the access to and delivery of the government services to benefit the citizens, business partners and employees. It is the use of information technology to support government offices, engage citizens and provide more simple, more efficient services in a transparent manner.

World Bank (2012) defined e-government as the use by the government agencies of information technologies (such as wide area network), VAN, the internet and mobile computing the ability transform relations with the citizens, business and other arms of the government. These technologies can serve a variety of different ends, better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interaction with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access of information which are the most efficient government managements. The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth and cost reduction.

Differences between e-government and e-governance

e-Government and e-governance can be defined as two very distinct terms. E-governance is a broader topic that deals with the whole spectrum of relationship and networks within government regarding the usage and application of ICT's. It is group of norms and processes and behaviors that has an influence on the exercise of power, especially from the point of view of openness, participation, responsibility, effectiveness and consistency. e-Government is actually a narrower discipline dealing with the development of online services to the citizen, more than on any particular government service such as e-tax, e-transportation etc. e-governance is a wider concept that defines and assess the impacts, technologies that are in practice. Deals with administration of government and the relationship between public servants and society, such as dealings with the elected bodies or outside groups or non-profit organization or private sector corporate entities. It encompasses a series of necessary steps for government agencies to develop and administer to ensure successful implementation of e-government services to the public at large.

e-Government is a form of e-business in governance and refers to the process and structures needed to deliver the electronic services to public, collaborate with business partners and to conduct electronic transactions within an organizational entity.

e-Governance initiatives in India

India is not the first country which has seen the importance of e-governance for the effective delivery of public services. The government of India had declared year 2001 as “Year of E-Governance” to increase the usage of information technology in government. In 2002 the Prime Minister on the eve of Independence unveiled an ambitious program on e-governance. This proposal involved multiple issues: massive networking, making available all the services such as land records, registration of vehicles, municipalities and civil supplies distribution, income tax, customs, issuance of passport, provident fund. Other proposal includes introduction of Police net, Edu net, e-employment, health net etc,. Further the proposal aimed at assisting different states “on the pattern of Development and Reform Facility (DRF), and insist upon backward states for the massive computerization in the area of man power information, taxation, land records, budgeting, commerce and agriculture and finally a database for government activities (Economic times, 2002). It was in 2003 that Indian government stressed on the need for comprehensive e-governance framework (Financial Express: 2003).

Indian government had approved a policy of earmarking two to three per cent of plan budget for the purpose of information technology, or the purpose of introducing e-governance at different levels. Nonetheless the Indian government also established Centre for E-Governance under Department of Information technology. The principal aim of this centre is to “showcase successful tools and applications in e-governance and also serve as a venue for government officials, legislatures, industry and various other key players, to come together, discuss, learn and explore issues of shared importance” (<http://egov.mit.gov.in/>) . Its other activities include to demonstrate the best practices available in e-governance, create spaces for the policy makers including the feasibility of introducing e-governance, helps different governments to make policy changes etc,.

e-GOVERNANCE PROJECTS IN DIFFERENT STATES

States	Projects
Assam	ASHA, SANWAD
Andhra Pradesh	E-Seva, CARD, VOICE
Bihar	Sales tax administration management information
Chattisgarh	Treasury office E-linking Project
Delhi	Automatic Vehicle tracking System, Electronic Clearance System, Management Information System for Education
Goa	Dharani project
Gujarat	MahitiShakthi, Form Book Online, Census Online
Haryana	NaiDisha, Janani, SavidhaYojana
Himachal Pradesh	LokMitra
Karnataka	Bhoomi, Khajane, Kaveri
Kerala	E-Shrinkhala, FRIENDS, PEARL, Asrya
Madhya Pradesh	Gyanadoot, Smart card in transport department, Gramasampark
Maharashtra	SETU, OnlneCompaint Management System

Rajasthan	Jan Mitra, Lokmitra, Rajnidhi, SARATHI
Tamil Nadu	Rasimaiyam, Application from related to Public utility, Universal Public Distribution System
Arunachal Pradesh	Community Information System
Manipur	Community Information System
Meghalaya	Community Information System
Mizoram	Community Information System
Nagaland	Community Information System
West Bengal	Gram Panchayat Accounts and Management, GIS based information system, citizen service, Center for Delivery of various services
Uttar Pradesh	Lokvani
Tripura	E-sevidhaKendras

e-Governance initiatives in Karnataka

Karnataka is the first state that announces IT policy in the year 1997. This policy has acted as an important catalyst for the growth of IT industry in the state. Karnataka is in the forefront of the information technology and is called the Silicon State of India. Bangalore is called as Silicon Valley of the country. In addition the state capital Bangalore has shown remarkable growth in IT sector.

There are many programme that Karnataka government has introduced as part of e-governance in various departments. They include,

- **Public utility services** in KSRTC for online reservation
- **Mukyavahini** established in Chief Minister’s Secretariat
- **Educational administration** computerised for payroll of teachers and CET for professional courses
- **Revenue administration** computerised land records
- **Water resource department**
- **Treasuries** computerised for financial management and monitoring of income and expenditure
- **Forest department** computerised for regular monitoring and development activities by remote sensing
- **Tourism department** computerised for providing information on tourist places
- **Judicial department** computerised to copies of judgements

Types of government interaction in e-Governance.

G2G: Government to Government:

it refers to the relationship among the government organizations or with other foreign government organizations. It will improve government process by cutting cost, reduction in paper work, time cut, managing performances and making strategic connections with the government.

- **Khajane Project in Karnataka:** It is a comprehensive online treasury computerization project of the Government of Karnataka. The project has resulted in the computerization of the entire treasury related activities of the State Government and the system has the ability to track every activity right from the approval of the State Budget to the point of rendering accounts to the government.

- Smart Gov (Andhra Pradesh): Smart Gov has been developed to streamline operations, enhance efficiency through workflow automation and knowledge management for implementation in the Andhra Pradesh Secretariat.

G2C: Government to Citizen:

it means the relationship between government and citizens. e-Governance consents to government agencies to talk, listen, relate and promote continuous communication with its citizens.

- Computerization of Land Records: In collaboration with NIC. Ensuring that landowners get computerized copies of ownership, crop and tenancy and updated copies of Records of Rights (RoRs) on demand.
- Bhoomi Project: Online delivery of Land Records. Self-sustainable e-Governance project for the computerized delivery of 20 million rural land records to 6.7 million farmers through 177 Government-owned kiosks in the State of Karnataka Admission to Professional Colleges – Common Entrance Test (CET): With the rapid growth in the demand as well as supply of professional education, the process of admission to these institutions became a major challenge in the early 1990s. Recourse was then taken to ICT to make the process of admission transparent and objective. One of the pioneering efforts was made by Karnataka. The State Government decided to conduct a common entrance test based on which admission to different colleges and disciplines was made.

G2B: Government to Business:

it consists of the electronic interaction between government agencies and private business companies everywhere which are conducting business to business, e-commerce in order to lower their cost and improve inventory control.

- e-Procurement Project in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat: To reduce the time and cost of doing business for both vendors and government.
- MCA 21: By the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. The project aims at providing easy and secure online access to all registry related services provided by the Union Ministry of Corporate Affairs to corporate and other stakeholders at any time and in a manner that best suits them.

G2E: Government to Employee:

it means the internal part of G2G sector. It is the relationship between employees, government, institutions and their management. This sector gives human resource training and development.

- Receiving salary by electronic clearance service (ECS)
- Maintenance of employee individual data in HRMS,
- Balance of earning leaves
- Yearly increment through the HRMS.

G2N: Government to NGO's:

it includes interaction between government and non-governmental agencies, interest groups and various associations of the society. The civil society organizations influence governmental policies. Government implements many developmental activities through NGO's by giving aids and grant.

- Various programmes including woman empowerment, rural development, environmental protection, old age homes via government aid to NGO's.

C2G: Consumer to Government:

it includes the areas where the citizen interacts with the government.

- Taxation to pay taxes to the government sooner, electricity bill and water bill in online payment mode.

Advantages of e-governance

Following are the advantages of E-Governance

Speed: Technology makes communication speedier. Internet, Phones, Cell Phones have reduced the time taken in normal communication.

Cost Reduction: Most of the Government expenditure is appropriated towards the cost of stationary. Paper-based communication needs lots of stationary, printers, computers, etc. which calls for continuous heavy expenditure. Internet and Phones makes communication cheaper saving valuable money for the Government.

Transparency: Use of ICT makes governing process transparent. All the information of the Government would be made available on the internet. The citizens can see the information whenever they want to see. But this is only possible when every piece of information of the Government is uploaded on the internet and is available for the public to peruse. Current governing process leaves many ways to conceal the information from all the people. ICT helps make the information available online eliminating all the possibilities of concealing of information. **Accountability:** Once the governing process is made transparent the Government is automatically made accountable.

Accountability is answerability of the Government to the people. It is the answerability for the deeds of the Government. An accountable Government is a responsible Government. **Convenience:** E-Government brings public services to citizens on their schedule and their venue.

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Improved Customer Service: E-Government allows to redeploy resources from back-end processing to the front line of customer service.

Increased access to information: E-Government improves the accessibility of government information to citizens allowing it become an important resource in the making the decisions that affect daily life and so it helps in empowerment of citizens.

According to World Bank e-governance has following benefits:

- It greatly simplifies process of information accumulation for citizens and business.
- It empowers people to greater information regarding any department of government and get involved in the process of decision making.
- e-Government strengthens the very fabric of democracy by ensuring greater citizen participation at all level of governance.
- E-governance leads to automation of services, ensuring that information regarding every work of public welfare is easily available to all citizens, eliminating corruption.
- This revolutionizes the way government's function, ensuring much more transparency in the functioning, thereby eliminating corruption.
- Since the information regarding every activity of the government is easily available, it would make every government department responsible as they now that every action of theirs is closely monitored.

- Proper implementation of e-governance practices make it possible for people to get their work done online thereby sparing themselves unnecessary hassles of travelling to the respective offices.
- Successful implementation of e-governance practices offer better delivery of services to citizens, improves interaction with business industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, better management, greater convenience, revenue growth, cost reductions etc.,
- Furthermore, introduction of e-governance brings government's closer to citizens. So much so that today it becomes extremely convenient to get in touch with a government agency. Indeed citizen services are located closer to the citizens now. Such centers may consist of an unattended kiosk in the government agency, a service kiosk located close to the client, or the use a personal computer in home or office.
- e-Governance practices help business accesses information that might be important for them at a click.

Challenges in e-governance

There are large numbers of potential barriers in the implementation of e-Governance. Some hindrances in the path of implementation, like security, unequal access to the computer technology by the citizen, high initial cost for setting up the e-government solutions and resistance to change. Challenges identified as trust, resistance to change, digital divide, cost and privacy and security concerns.

Challenges in e-governance:

- Language problem: most of the computer applications of e-governance are in English. The people of rural India do not understand tools and techniques of e-governance due to language of English language.
- Computer illiteracy: the major problem is computer illiteracy in proper implementation of e-governance. The users are technically illiterate. The government has introduced many e-governance programs like, Bhoomi, Agmark-net etc., but they cannot utilize those facilities due to computer illiteracy.
- Lack of awareness: most of the e-governance programmes will not reach to common people because of lack of awareness about the program.
- Lack of infrastructure: the rural people of India cannot access the internet facilities due to difficulty in laying wires in rural areas. Still many villages in India do not have access to electricity.
- Hesitations to change: people are hesitant to change. As e-governance means change of the system from the manual to computerization base the people generally dislike accepting the change.
- Cost: cost is one of the most important inducing factors that come in the e-governance implementation particularly in the developing countries like India where most of the people live under Below Poverty Line. They are unable to bear the cost.
- Digital divide: it refers to the separation that exist between individual and communities, and businesses that have access to information technology and those that do not have such access, social, economic infrastructural and ethno-linguistic indicators provide explanations for presence of digital divide. Economic poverty is closely related to limited information technology resources. An individual living below poverty line does not afford a computer for himself to harness the benefits of e-government and other online services. As the digital divide narrows, broader adoption of e-government in the public domain becomes possible. Economic poverty is not the only cause of digital divide. It can also be caused by the lack of awareness among the people. Even some of the

economic stable people don't know about the scope of e - governance.

- Trust: Trust can be defined along two dimensions: as an assessment of a current situation, or as an innate personality trait predisposition. The implementation of public administration functions via e-government requires the presence of two levels of trust. The first is that the user must be confident, comfortable and trusting of the tool or technology with which they will interact. The second dimension of trust pertains to trust of the government]. There has to be a balance between ensuring that a system prevents fraudulent transactions and the burden that extensive checks can take place on people who are honest.

Overcoming challenges for successful implementation of e-governance

- Training: the most essential requirement is training program for politicians and public servants who are in policy making level. The training should be e-governance training, document management, networking, people-friendly mannerism and good service mentality.
- Follow the best practices: the study of best practices of the national and international level will give a greater momentum for effective execution of e-governance in the local level. The governing bodies will not re-invent the wheel every time they can learn and follow the development already made.
- Data Bank on national resources: it would help create an archive of e-governance applications in the country. This would help in implementing newer projects rather than replicating the same project.
- Multi-language software application: most of the software applications are introduced in English. In the rural areas most of the people do not know the language and are facing the language problem while they are using the tools of e-governance. So software applications of e-governance should be made in all local languages for the convenience of the people.
- Regular update of websites: it helps people to access the information regarding the benefits of the existing and new schemes. So government agencies must ensure that the data on the site remains updated and relevant.
- Rewarding individuals and agencies: government should recognize the individual and agencies that make contribution in case of simplifying the users' in the application of the e-governance. It should enhance the people-friendly governance by introducing new techniques and tools of the e-governance.
- Tools of security and privacy must be identified: the users of e-governance are in the disbelief and being terrified about their individual data. Government should ensure the security and privacy of data of the individual through creating awareness and introducing efficient security tools in the e-governance system.
- Providing affordable services: while introducing e-governance project politicians' policy makers and civil servants should note the affordability of the services. As far as possible fees based services must be avoided by developing projects that are achievable with the resources provided.

Conclusion

Good governance concentrates on efficient delivery of public services to the expectation and satisfaction of the people. Nowadays citizen expectations from the government are very high. Thus e-governance is very important to achieve the aims of good governance, but e-governance is not an easy task in case of its proper implementation. In order to implement e-governance government should face many challenges but government need not worry about those challenges as those challenges are temporary and initial. Where there is a change there is a big challenge.

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