E-Governance: Redefining Citizenship

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ABSTRACT

Introduction of E-Governance is the key to making information technology (IT) relevant to ordinary citizens. E-Governance is a culture, which changes how citizens relate to governments as much as it changes how citizens relate to each other. It brings forth re-definition of needs and responsibilities. Though computerization introduced successfully by NIC in different sectors in the districts has yielded fruitful results, the concept of introducing E-Governance to implement citizen-IT based applications in the district is the next logical step.

I. E-GOVERNANCE

Representative democracy relies on supposition that best way to make a decision is wider participation for all its citizens having access to relevant information. Government is by nature an information intensive organization. E-governments’ policy-making and citizens to communicate each other. The e-governance will truly allow citizens to participate in the government decision-making process, reflect their true needs and welfare by utilizing e-government as a tool.

Introduction of e-governance is a key to make information technology (IT) relevant to ordinary citizens in Latin America and Caribbean countries where a large numbers of population are poor and a digital divide is a significant problem. E-governance will allow ordinary people to constantly interface with the government in both local and central level on various matters.

The Bank’s involvement in modernization of the government thus is not limited to provide the most advanced governance is beyond the scope of e-government. While e-government is defined as a mere delivery of government services and information to the public using electronic means, e-governance allows direct participation of constituents in government activities. Blake Harris summarizes the e-governance as the following; 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. E-governance will allow citizens to communicate with government, participate in the Information Communication and Technology to the government so that government can provide its information and service more effectively and efficiently to the citizens. The Bank makes sure that the government will allow all the citizens to access to information or services (any citizens should not be excluded), to articulate their needs and to participate in formulating policy and regulation that will improve their social welfare and well being. The ability of Central government to understand all needs from ordinary local citizens is limited. Therefore, the participation of citizens in local level is extremely important (link with creative community initiative). The true e-governance should be attained by interface of citizens both with central and local government.
II. MISSION AND OBJECTIVE

With the sole mission of bringing district administration closer to the common people thus offering efficient and effective services, with the following objectives.
A. To provide a friendly, affordable, speedier and efficient interface between the government and the public.
B. To ensure greater transparency, efficiency, objectivity, accountability and speed that can help tackle most of the maladies of the government by providing efficient services to the public.
C. To provide responsive and transparent services to the citizens of the state.
D. To provide cost effective service and at the same time improving the quality of service.
E. To provide a single window for govt services at district level.
F. Complete understanding of working of the prevailing system for introduction of E-Governance, identification of user requirements for creating Citizen-IT interface at DC office, Identification of required infrastructure details such as site preparation, telephone lines etc to be provided by district administration, providing training to the users, for examples as architecture given below.

III. E-GOVERNANCE ARCHITECTURE

A. Workflow like systems instead of input/output to facilitate tracking of progress
B. Elimination of verification & on the spot issue of certificates
C. Use of Citizen ID to provide unique identification
D. Linkages with Land Records, Census, BPL, Licenses, Ration Cards, Death and Birth database
E. Making information on Schemes, Forms, Procedures available from remote locations and on Internet

IV. SALIENT FEATURES

A. Single window system
B. On Line verification
C. On the spot delivery, wherever possible
D. Information/Status on Intranet/ Web
E. Generation of internal notes & verification forms to minimize delay
F. Based on Highly specific parameters to facilitate future changes
G. Business rules in database rather than hard-coded
H. Provision for entry of old records
I. Local Language (Gurumukhi)
J. Computerized acceptance-cum-fees receipt for Applications
K. Generation of Identity Card/ Passes/ Permissions/ Licenses /Certificates
L. User administration for each module
M. Audit of critical activities
N. MIS Reports

V. EMERGENCE OF E-GOVERNMENT

Similar to the dramatic changes in e-commerce, countries in the Regions have begun to recognize the emergence of e-government - "the ability to obtain government services through nontraditional electronic means, enabling access to government information and to completion of government transaction on an anywhere, any time basis and in conformance with equal access requirement." offers potential to reshape the public sector and build relationships between citizens and the government.

At the same time, concerns have already been expressed about the gap between the technology haves and have-nots, and more popularly known as "the digital divide." In order to ensure that countries avoid creating a digital divide and create conditions to ensure that growth of the knowledge economy contributes to carrying out a democratic process of efficient, equitable and sustainable development, expanded dialogue and new patterns of cooperation among public, private ad civil society organizations are needed.

The multiple roles of government, at all levels, must be recognized and understood by all if it is to play an effective role in this partnership involving access to information and the role of information and communication technology.
VI. ROLES OF GOVERNMENT

A. Uses information and information/communication technology provided by the private sector for public administration,
B. Produces public information to which citizens must have access,
C. Has the authority to establish marketplace rules and establish regulatory structures that ensure that everyone participates and benefits form growth of the knowledge economy.

There is an inextricable relationship between government's role as a user of information and communication technology and its capacity to formulated public policy for the knowledge economy. Governments that learn how to use these technologies to operate more efficiently and improve public services are more likely to effectively stimulate and contribute to the knowledge economy public policy debate.

Online delivery of services benefits both government and its constituents, as it lowers costs and make services more accessible.

VII. BASIC FEATURES OF PRESENT MODEL OF E-GOVERNANCE

A. Government is simple; moral; transparent; efficient.
B. Commodity to deliver is service but delivering agency is Government
C. Legacy problems of existing Government is assumed to be resolved over Technology Backbone
D. Basic orientation of this model is not to reduce the role of Government in citizen’s life but to serve it more efficiently.
E. Citizen is demanded to orient himself to fit with the way government works.

 VIII. GOVERNANCE: IN IT FRAMEWORK

A. Expansion of internet and electronic commerce, is redefining relationships among various stake holders in the process of governance.
B. A new model of governance would be based upon the transactions in virtual space, digital economy and dealing with knowledge oriented societies.
C. Electronic governance is an emerging trend to re-invent the way the government works.

IX. PRIORITIES FOR GOVERNANCE BASED ON TECHNOLOGY

A. Ensuring well being/safety of communities
B. Creating economic vitality
C. Preparing a productive workforce
D. Building a education and health care for public specially for children and adults
E. Creation and maintenance of transport & communication Infrastructure
F. Protection and promotion of natural resources

FOCUS:
A. Greater attention to improve service delivery mechanism.
B. Enhancing the efficiency of production

Inherently Government Functions (IGF) in EGOV Framework

IGF are driven from the fact that they are some Functions which will mean so much for public Interest and need to be performed by Government employee:
A. Strategic Planning, visions, goals, initiatives
B. Fixing goals; targets; schedules; collection and reporting
C. Budgeting & allocation of resources for strategic initiatives
D. Policy framework; guidelines
E. Evaluating vendors; Benchmarks
F. Security and data access policy
G. Conflict resolution
H. Defining common operating environment for Interoperability
X. PROMOTING BEST PRACTICES IN AND E-GOVERNMENT

Latin American and Caribbean countries have already begun to improve public administration through the implementation of e-government capabilities, processes and techniques. The Inter-American Development Bank has been expanding its institutional capacity and knowledge by working with an increasing number of these countries to understand how e-government can be deployed in a manner that is responsive to the special conditions of each country. The Information Technology for Development Division - through our "Digital Democracy" program is facilitating appropriate marches in e-government between the increasing and changing needs of each country and the resources of the Bank.

- Creating alliances with other institutions and governments
- Promoting regional dialogue among institutions including different aspects of e-government.
- Promoting interamerican cooperation to strengthen democracy through

XI. POTENTIAL CLIENTS IN AN E-GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

In an e-government system we should consider four different possible clients: the government itself (G2G), the employees (G2E), the private sector (G2B), and the citizenship (G2C).

One of the most promising aspects of e-government is its ability to bring citizens closer to their governments. While the technology to facilitate this connection is widely available, many government sites have not taken full advantage of its benefits in Latin American and Caribbean Countries.

Enabling conversation between citizens and government is not the only way to bring citizens and government closer together. Making government more easily accessible is another component of this endeavor. There are few features that make this possible. One of them is the ability to search a particular web site. Another is to offer life broadcast of important speeches through the web. Another way is by enabling citizens to cater available information to their particular interest.

XII. BENEFITS OF E-GOVERNMENT INTEGRATION

A. Lower costs as well as improved efficiency and quality of service.
B. More effective linkages between citizens and government.
C. Improve efficiency of government workers.
D. Facilitate transparency and accountability

XIII. RE-ORIENTING G TO G : AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL OF E-GOVERNANCE

A. Emphasis is accorded for self-service. Citizen is more self reliant. He may access “On_line” government as per the need. But he is in charge of the affairs.
B. Role of governance is limited as facilitator. The internal fabrics of G to G system is having higher intelligence. The regulatory interface with business and revenue activities are more market and community driven
C. It is the government which tries to fit with the life of Citizen, particularly those who are under privileged, whereas In previous model it was other way round

XIV. REORIENTING THE APPROPRIATE GOVERNANCE

A. Our current system generally functions with three tier of Governance designated as appropriate Government.
B. In e-government era, same government will be working in a SMART way
C. In true e-governance framework, concept of appropriate government will be replaced by appropriate governance with a particular focus on reaching the rural masses
XV. WHAT IS A WAY OUT?

A. Technology should be used to enable the delivery of result not merely as a substitute to reduce inertial processes.
B. Set priority/vision and make investment
C. Technological innovations for public services
D. Technology should not be used to mummify (preserve) legacy systems
E. G2G may create channel partners for service-delivery Interfaces
F. Focus on results not on process
G. Governance should be a collaborative approach
H. Create leadership in Technology; Security & Privacy

XVI. E-GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

The key challenges with electronic governance are not technology or internet issues but organizational issues like
A. Redefining rules and procedures
B. Information transparency
C. Legal issues
D. Infrastructure; Skill and awareness
E. Access to right information
F. Interdepartmental collaboration
G. Tendency to resist the change in work culture

XVII. E-GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES FOR RURAL AREAS

The other set of challenges lie in extending the reach of electronic Governance services to 70% of Indian population that lives in villages. These include:
A. Assessment of local needs and customizing e-Governance solutions to meet those needs
B. Connectivity
C. Content (local content based on local language)
D. Building Human Capacities
E. E-Commerce, E-Governance & Opportunities at Grass root level
F. Introduction of indigenous & cost-effective technologies more suitable for rural areas
G. Localization of content in terms of language and context
H. Introduction of Community Software Solutions such as ENRICH, developed by NIC
I. Implementing e-Commerce solutions for marketing rural products, e.g. RuralBazar, developed by NIC
J. Exploring partnerships for effectively delivering e-Governance services at grass root level

XVIII. E-GOVERNANCE AREAS OF OPPORTUNITIES

- Creation of IT Infrastructure
- Standards for e-Governance procedures
- Reengineering the existing system
- Regional Languages, culture and IT
- Managing the shifts in social paradigms by long term approaches and strategies at National level

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XIX. CONCLUSION

E-government rests on elusive relationships. Information technology provides the infrastructure on which imaginative redesign of government services and operations depends. However, the search for effective management of information technology systems with cross-organisational and cross-jurisdictional capability demands staying power. Early visions of transformation burnt off like the mist.

Weill and Vitale stress that e-business initiatives and initiatives to provide appropriate information technology infrastructure need to go hand in hand. Fountain, in analysis of practice as well as theory, identifies the costly ease with which organisational and information technology capabilities can be mismatched.

The large information technology projects on which e-government depends strain to the limit the public sector’s ability to conceptualise the necessary organisational and information technology requirements. Implementation arrangements are required, including criteria of effectiveness and project management, which continue to have bite as both policy and technological directions change. The cases of Michigan and Victoria illustrate how central direction or setting aims for citizen-centred government are not enough. The OECD’s cautious advocacy of central leadership and Canada’s and Victoria’s use of Chief Information Officers provide useful contemporary guidance. But more will be needed.

In the public and related sectors, the politics and management of information and communications technology are becoming mainstream. Citizens want to transcend customer relationships. Convenient and integrated transactions are not enough. Integrating services has turned out to be harder than it looked. Transcending the emphasis on transactions is likely to be even harder.

In the literature reviewed in this paper, governments have come by circuitous routes to the tensions between information technology governance and what communities increasingly expect of government initiatives, e-enabled or not. Tight governance of information and communications technology infrastructure will not mesh easily with demands for increased public participation. It is argued here that forward looking practitioners will see this as one of the most significant current agendas for leadership and management in government.

REFERENCES


