



E-Governance: A Study of Issues & Challenges in Indian Context

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ABSTRACT

In this research paper, we have reviewed about the E-Governance in India. We have presented that how using ICT we can enable good governance. E-Governance is the effective use of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) to improve the system of governance that is in place, and thus provides better services to the Citizens. E-Governance is considered as a high priority agenda in India, as it is considered to be the only means of taking IT to the "Common Public".

Keywords-- E-Governance, Framework, ICT

I. INTRODUCTION

E-Governance is becoming a buzzword. Across the world, we have been hearing about E-Governance. As socio-economic issues' expanding day to day, every government has started to extend its administration from high level to low level for mitigating of the various kinds of problems of socio-economic, science and technology, etc. with immense use of electronic devices (ICT). In fact, mostly in the world, both developed and developing economies extensively using all types of electronic devices to make government administration faster, transparent and accountable.

In the context of India, being the one of the largest countries democratically, demographically and geographically; as stated, it still has gap of using govt. services to its large population. In addition to it, there are still problems related to socio-economic prevailing in the country like unemployment, poverty, education, health, banking and business, etc. As a result, govt. of India has been launching the various initiatives in order to overcome these problems with minimum govt. and maximum governance by enormous use of electronic devices. In support of it, every states, in the country, has

launched different initiatives (projects of E-Governance) in order to timely provide services to its huge population. In spite of this effective process, as said the issues above, retarding the success of E-Governance to some extent. The present paper is going to discuss about evolution, initiatives, issues- challenges, and future prospects of E-Governance in India.

II. ENABLING GOOD GOVERNANCE THROUGH USE OF ICT

The emergence of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has provided means for faster and better communication, efficient storage, retrieval and processing of data and exchange and utilization of information to its users, be they individuals, groups, businesses, organizations or governments. What had begun as a faster, more accurate and simpler means of word-processing quickly lent itself to being used as a tool for processing and tabulating data as an aid in decision making. With growing computerization and increasing internet connectivity, this process has presently reached a stage where more and more users are motivated to modifying their ways of doing things in order to leverage the advantages provided by ICT. In other words, this has led to 'business process re-engineering'. So far as governments are concerned, the coming together of computerization and internet connectivity/web-enablement in association with process re-engineering, promises faster and better processing of information leading to speedier and qualitatively better decision making, greater reach and accountability, better utilization of resources and overall good governance. In the case of citizens, it holds the promise of enhanced access to information and government agencies, efficient service delivery and transparency in dealings and interactions with government.

With the increasing awareness among citizens about their rights and the resultant increase in expectations from the government to perform and deliver, the whole paradigm of governance has changed. Government, today, is expected to be transparent in its dealings, accountable for its activities and faster in its responses. This has made the use of ICT imperative in any agenda drawn towards achieving good governance. It has also led to the realization that such technologies could be used to achieve a wide range of objectives and lead to faster and more equitable development with a wider reach. In its Fourth Report entitled 'Ethics in Governance', the Commission had clearly stated that the tools of modern technology such as Information and Communications Technology (ICT) should be used to transform the relationship of the government with its constituents, citizens and businesses, and also between its own agencies. While recognizing the potential of ICT in transforming and redefining processes and systems of governance, the Commission had suggested that E-Governance is the logical next step in the use of ICT in systems of governance in order to ensure wider participation and deeper involvement of citizens, institutions, civil society groups and the private sector in the decision making process of governance.

E-Governance or 'electronic governance' is basically the application of Information and Communications Technology to the processes of Government functioning in order to bring about 'Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent' (SMART) governance. This would generally involve the use of ICTs by government agencies for any or all of the following reasons: (a) Exchange of information with citizens, businesses or other government departments (b) Speedier and more efficient delivery of public services (c) Improving internal efficiency (d) Reducing costs / increasing revenue (e) Re-structuring of administrative processes and (f) Improving quality of services.

III. DEFINING THE E-GOVERNANCE IN INDIAN CONTEXT

Although the term 'E-Governance' has gained currency in recent years, there is no standard definition of this term. Different governments and organizations define this term to suit their own aims and objectives. Sometimes, the term 'e-government' is also used instead of 'E-Governance'. Some widely used definitions are listed below: i. According to the World Bank, "E-Government refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government. These technologies can serve a variety of different ends: better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, or

more efficient government management. The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth, and/ or cost reductions." Thus, the stress here is on use of information technologies in improving citizen- government interactions, cost-cutting and generation of revenue and transparency. ii. UNESCO defines E- Governance as: "Governance refers to the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs, including citizens'

Basically, E-Governance is generally understood as the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) at all levels of the Government in order to provide services to the citizens, interaction with business enterprises and communication and exchange of information between different agencies of the Government in a speedy, convenient efficient and transparent manner. Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, former President of India, has visualized E-Governance in the Indian context to mean: "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."

IV. THE VARIOUS STAGES OF E-GOVERNANCE

It is evident that E-Governance is intrinsically linked with the development of computer technology, networking of computers and communication systems. In developing countries, such technologies and systems became available with a perceptible time lag as compared to developed nations. However, in the case of India, with the liberalization of the economy from the early 1990s onwards, there has been a convergence in the availability of cutting edge technologies and opportunities in the field of E- Governance. Generally speaking, the Indian experience demonstrates that the onset of E- Governance proceeded through the following phases:

(a) Computerization: In the first phase, with the availability of personal computers, a large number of Government offices got equipped with computers. The use of computers began with word processing, quickly followed by data processing.

(b) Networking: In this phase, some units of a few government organizations got connected through a hub leading to sharing of information and flow of data between different government entities.

(c) On-line presence: With increasing internet connectivity, a need was felt for maintaining a presence on the web. This resulted in maintenance of websites by government departments and other entities. Generally, these web-pages and web-sites contained information about the organizational structure, contact details, reports and publications, objectives and vision statements of the respective government entities.

(d) On-line interactivity: A natural consequence of on-line presence was opening up of communication channels between government entities and the citizens, civil society organizations etc. The main aim at this stage was to minimize the scope of personal interface with government entities by providing downloadable Forms, Instructions, Acts, and Rules etc. In some cases, this has already led to on-line submission of Forms. Most citizen-government transactions have the potential of being put on E-Governance mode.

V. EIGHT ELEMENTS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

Good governance has 8 major characteristics. It is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive, and follows the rule of law. Good governance is responsive to the present and future needs of the organization, exercises prudence in policy-setting and decision-making, and that the best interests of all stakeholders are taken into account.

1. Rule of Law

Good governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced by an impartial regulatory body, for the full protection of stakeholders.

2. Transparency

Transparency means that information should be provided in easily understandable forms and media; that it should be freely available and directly accessible to those who will be affected by governance policies and practices, as well as the outcomes resulting there from; and that any decisions taken and their enforcement are in compliance with established rules and regulations.

3. Responsiveness

Good governance requires that organizations and their processes are designed to serve the best interests of stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe.

4. Consensus Oriented

Good governance requires consultation to understand the different interests of stakeholders in order to reach a broad consensus of what is in the best interest of the entire stakeholder group and how this can be achieved in a sustainable and prudent manner.

5. Equity and Inclusiveness

The organization that provides the opportunity for its stakeholders to maintain, enhance, or generally improve their well-being provides the most compelling message regarding its reason for existence and value to society.

6. Effectiveness and Efficiency

Good governance means that the processes implemented by the organization to produce favorable results meet the needs of its stakeholders, while making the best use of resources – human, technological, financial, natural and environmental – at its disposal.

7. Accountability

Accountability is a key tenet of good governance. Who is accountable for what should be documented in policy statements. In general, an organization is accountable to those who will be affected by its decisions or actions as well as the applicable rules of law.

8. Participation

Participation by both men and women, either directly or through legitimate representatives, is a key cornerstone of good governance. Participation needs to be informed and organized, including freedom of expression and assiduous concern for the best interests of the organization and society in general.

VI. TYPES OF INTERACTIONS IN E-GOVERNANCE

E-Governance facilitates interaction between different stake holders in governance. These interactions may be described as follows:

G2G (Government to Government) – In this case, Information and Communications Technology is used not only to restructure the governmental processes involved in the functioning of government entities but also to increase the flow of information and services within and between different entities. This kind of interaction is only within the sphere of government and can be both horizontal i.e. between different government agencies as well as between different functional areas within an organization, or vertical i.e. between national, provincial and local government agencies as well as between different levels within an organization. The primary objective is to increase efficiency, performance and output.

G2C (Government to Citizens) – In this case, an interface is created between the government and citizens which enables the citizens to benefit from efficient delivery of a large range of public services. This expands the availability and accessibility of public services on the one hand and improves the quality of services on the other. It gives citizens the choice of when to interact with the government (e.g. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week), from where to interact with the government (e.g. service centre, unattended kiosk or from one's home/workplace) and how to interact with the government (e.g. through internet, fax, telephone, email, face-to-face, etc). The primary purpose is to make government, citizen- friendly.

G2B (Government to Business) – Here, E-Governance tools are used to aid the business community – providers of goods and services – to seamlessly interact with the government. The objective is to cut red tape, save time, reduce operational costs and to create a more transparent business environment when dealing with the government. The G2B initiatives can be transactional, such as in licensing, permits, procurement and revenue collection. They can also be promotional and facilitative, such as in trade, tourism and investment. These measures help to provide a congenial environment to businesses to

enable them to perform more efficiently.

G2E (Government to Employees) – Government is by far the biggest employer and like any organization, it has to interact with its employees on a regular basis. This interaction is a two-way process between the organization and the employee. Use of ICT tools helps in making these interactions fast and efficient on the one hand and increase satisfaction levels of employees on the other.

VII. BENEFITS OF E-GOVERNANCE

In the end, E-Governance is about reform in governance, facilitated by the creative use of Information and Communications Technology. It is expected that this would lead to:

- i. Better access to information and quality services for citizens: ICT would make available timely and reliable information on various aspects of governance. In the initial phase, information would be made available with respect to simple aspects of governance such as forms, laws, rules, procedures etc later extending to detailed information including reports (including performance reports), public database, decision making processes etc. As regards services, there would be an immediate impact in terms of savings in time, effort and money, resulting from online and one-point accessibility of public services backed up by automation of back end processes. The ultimate objective of E-Governance is to reach out to citizens by adopting a life-cycle approach i.e. providing public services to citizens which would be required right from birth to death.
- ii. Simplicity, efficiency and accountability in the government: Application of ICT to governance combined with detailed business process reengineering would lead to simplification of complicated processes, weeding out of redundant processes, simplification in structures and changes in statutes and regulations. The end result would be simplification of the functioning of government, enhanced decision making abilities and increased efficiency across government – all contributing to an overall environment of a more accountable government machinery. This, in turn, would result in enhanced productivity and efficiency in all sectors.
- iii. Expanded reach of governance: Rapid growth of communications technology and its adoption in governance would help in bringing government machinery to the doorsteps of the citizens. Expansion of telephone network, rapid strides in mobile telephony, spread of internet and strengthening of other communications infrastructure would facilitate delivery of a large number of services provided by the government. This enhancement of the reach of government – both spatial and demographic – would also enable better participation of citizens in the process of governance.

VIII. CONCLUSION

After carrying out our study we have seen that government is trying to give its best services to the people, there are many problems like illiteracy, large population, poverty etc. E-Governance helps the government to avoid these problems and reach to the people. But it has also some issues and challenges. With the proper use of e - governance these problems can be solved and people can get better services from the government.

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