E-Governance – "A Tool For Citizen Centric Governance" : Impediments in Implementation in India

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Abstract

Governance is meant for the common good of the citizens. Good governance must ensure free and fair interaction between the administration and the public. In essence, people centric systems shall be put in place instead of citizens adjusting to the bureaucratic institutions and practices.

Electronic Governance (E-Governance) is a way forward in this direction. The advances in Internet and digital technologies are used for developing `Citizen Centric' systems. E-governance encompasses each and every gamut of Government. E-Governance has two major components i.e. technical infrastructure and the willingness to change. It is both digital and mental service. The basic objective of E-Governance is to providemaximum comfort to the citizens at low Cost, Efficient, in Transparent manner with Less effort.Payment of Electricity & water bills, property taxes through internet and E-Service Centers is one of the key feature of the E-service. This has resulted in not only saving lot of time for the people but also reduction in Corruption levels. E-Governance also resulted in enhancement of transparency across various departments. However, E-Governance in India is yet to come of age. The associated problems like illiteracy, lack of knowledge of English language, Lack of E-Security, poor internet access in rural and remote areas, high cost for initial set up etc.are coming in the way of implementation of e-Governance.This literature review focuses on various forms of E-Governance in India and impediments in implementations and strategies to overcome them.

Key Words:- E-Governance, Citizen centric , ICT , Transparency.

Introduction :

Role of Government is not just providing infrastructure facilities, civic amenities, maintaining law and order, and welfare activities etc.. It shall also ensure that governance is just and equitable, transparent, swift and accountable. Whatever may be the form of Government, good governance is an expectation of citizens of every nation. With the advances in technology the world has become a global village. Technology is making continuous strides especially in the field of Information Technology. Research is not for the sake of research. The ultimate purpose of research is to enable the citizens to improve their quality of life. Applications of Information Technology have entered every walk of human life. India is no exception to it. Making use of technology for running government is a tool for brining effectiveness and transparency in administration. Any progressive government can not ignore the applications of information technology for improvingthe working of its administration.

The Electronic Governance (E-Governance) carryout the functions through utilization of

Information and Communications Technology (ICT).The basic objective of E-Governance is to improve the delivery of public services at multiple levels and simplify the process of accessing them. Indian democracy is based on bureaucratic system of Governance consisting various layers of hierarchy beginning from village level to the national level. The goal of e-Governance is transformation from institution-centric civil service to a citizen centric-system. Citizens no longer need to adjust to the requirements of bureaucracy and government. Through E-Governance, bureaucracy and government are accountable to the citizens who elect the government. All the three organs of government i.e. Legislature, Executive and Judiciary are leveraging the advances of Information and Communications technology for E-Governance.

The E-Governance services can broadly be categorized as below.

a) Government to citizens (G2C) – Ex-Online payments by citizens

b) Government to government (G2G) – Ex-sharing of information across government departments

c) Government to businessman (G2B) – Ex-according approvals for business

d) Government to employees (G2E) – Ex – between government and its employees

However, E-Governance in India is still at a nascent stage compared to other advanced nations.

Definition of Governance

The word "governance" came from the Latin verb "gubernare" or more originally from the Greek word "kubernaein" which means "to steer." Hence, governance refers to the manner of steering or governing, or of directing and controlling, a group of people or a state.Governance means different things to different people based on the time, context and place of governance. Some definitions are given below.

World Bank defines governance as ``the manner in which power is exercised in the management of country's economic and social resources for development".

British Council definition

"Governance involves interaction between the formal institutions and those in civil society. Governance refers to a process whereby elements in society wield power, authority and influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life and social upliftment

Features of Good Governance

Good governance should ideally have following features:

1) Government should be participative,transparent, democratic and legitimate and accountable
2) Political executives should be accountable for their actions
3) Bureaucracy should be efficient and citizen centric rather than citizens adjusting to government requirements
4) Policy making should be open and transparent
5) Rule of law should be maintained
6) Protection of basic rights and property rights should be upheld
7) The governance shall be welfare oriented and there should be special protection for women, minorities and deprived sections of society, etc.

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8) Should be able to respond to the needs of people in the best possible time

Definition of E-Governance

Some definitions of E-Governance are given below.

Muir and Oppenheim (2007) Defined E-government as the delivery of government information and services online through the internet.

Otubu (2009) Defines E-Government as the process whereby the use of information and communication technology and services is deployed and employed government

Abramson (2010) Defined as the transaction and information exchange between the government, the public and employee

Benefits of E-Governance :

Following are the benefits of e-Governance

Speed:

The service delivery systems have undergone tremendous changes. The public sector is competing with the private sector for its very existence. Citizens are expecting fast and quality services from all the service providers especially in the telecom, banking and insurance sectors. Failing to meet the set targets by their employees is viewed seriously by the concerned departments. Thus introduction of ICT (Information and Communications Technology) hastened the process of service delivery.

Transparency :

The earlier governance was based on opaque system. Citizens were not aware of the rules and regulations, processes, and functioning of various departments. Now, the situation has changed for better. The procedures, rules, regulations are put in public domain which can be accessed by any citizen.

Removes Corruption :

Transparency in working and transactions is a sine-qua-non for removal of corruption. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are in place, flow charts are available online, thus making people aware of the systems and their rights. Discretionary powers of the government officials are reduced to a great extent. All these added together resulted in reduction of corruption at various levels.

Saves time :

Citizens used to standup in queues for payment of their utility bills, filing complaints and applications for availing any service from the government. They used to sweat, ran pillar to post, humiliated at the hands of bureaucracy even for petty jobs. Now, those tough days are gone. People pay taxes online, submit complaints & applications online, know the status of their applications online.

Data Storage :

In the earlier system of governance emphasis was laid on generation of reports manually. Records are maintained on paper which have got some life period. Retrieval of data was also very time consuming. However, in E-Data, information is stored in digital form which is permanently stored. Data or information can be retrieved instantly by clique of a mouse. Manual data may be lost but not

the electronically stored data.

Customer Delight :

The ultimate objective of any government is to ensure that the citizens are happy and delightful. The e-services are available 24/7 allowing citizens to use them as per their convenience. Many welfare schemes are available under one umbrella. Every information is available at the backhand to enable citizens take decisions. In a way it is a tool of empowerment of citizens.

Business Acceleration & Growth of Economy :

E-Governance creates very conducive atmosphere for business acceleration due to transparency in administration, elimination of corruption, time bound grant of approvals. Many entrepreneurs have been establishing start-up companies. This will result in flow of money into market and further add up to growth of the economy as a whole.

E-Governance in the State of Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh state pioneered in the use of digital technologies and internet services in the late nineties. Contrary to the conventional method of land administration, all the transactions were made online. All the land documents were made digitalized. Certified copies of documents can be obtained within hours unlike in the pre-e-Governance era. When the transactions are made online in a transparent manner it has reduced the corruption level in the administration and making people feel comfortable.

E-Seva (E-Service)

These services are provided on the pattern of Public Private Partnership (PPP). Citizens can pay water taxes, electricity bills, property taxes etc..by using the internet or the service centres provided by the private partners at various places in the state. E-Sevas are offering a host of other services like filing IT returns, obtaining driving licenses, registration and issue of birth and death certificates, payment of exams fees so on so forth.

CARD :

The government has introduced the CARD (Computerized Administration in Registration Department) project in 1998 for property sale registration as a part of computerized registration. CARD provides a transparent method of valuation of properties and the calculation of stamp duties. It simplifies registration procedures and enhanced the speed, reliability and consistency of the system. Scanning of documents has replaced copying. The manual systems of copying, indexing and accounting have given way to the state-of-the-art document management system.

SMART Governance of Andhra Pradesh

The government of Andhra Pradesh, in collaboration with the International Development Institute of the UK, has set up an independent watchdog called the Centre For Good Governance (CGG). The CGG publishes independent periodic reports on the functioning of citizen centric initiatives of the government of Andhra Pradesh. The ultimate aim of e-Governance in Andhra Pradesh state is SMART (Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive, Transparent) Governance.

The Government of Andhra Pradesh is the first state in the country to conduct E-Cabinet meetings. Agenda of the cabinet is displayed on laptops and I-Pads of the cabinet members which are password protected and ensures full confidentiality.

E-Governance of Tiruamala Tirupati Devastanams (TTD) is worth mentioning in this context. Darshan date and time and accommodation can be booked online as per the convenience of pilgrims. The pilgrims need not wait in the queues for long hours to have glimpse of the presiding deity. They need not go to middlemen for any kind of favours. Thus corruption levels are reduced. Pilgrims can save lot of time and energy.

Following are the names of some of the e-Governance projects being implemented by various states in the country.

Table-I

Name of the State	Name of the e-Governance projects
Andhra Pradesh	e-Seva, CARD, VOICE, MPHS, FAST, e- Cops, Saukaryam, Online transaction processing, e-immunization Rural Health Call Center and Site Suitability for Water Harvesting, Professional e-Pension
Arunachal Pradesh	Community Information Center
Bihar	E- Sale Tax, Chhattisgarh Info-Tech Promotion Society, Treasury Office, E- Linking Project
Chattisgarh	Chhattisgarh Info-Tech Promotion Society, Treasury Office, E- Linking Project
Delhi	Automatic Vehicle Tracking System, Computerisation Of Website Of RCS Office, Electronic Clearance System, Management Information System.
Goa	Dharani Project
Gujarat	Mahiti Shakti, Request For Government Documents Online, Form Book Online, G R Book Online, Census Online, Tender Notice.
Haryana	NaiDisha
Himachal Pradesh	LokMitra
Karnataka	Bhoomi, Khajane, Kaveri
Kerala	E-Srinkhala, Rdnet, Fast, Reliable, Instant, Friends
Madhya Pradesh	Gyandoot, Gram Sampark, Smart Card In Transport , department,Computerization MP State Agricultural Marketing Board (Mandi Board), E-ChoupalEtc
Maharastra	Setu, Online Complaint Management System—Mumbai
Punjab	Suwidha, Tisp, Eems, Pawan
Rajasthan	Jan Mitra, Rajswift, Lokmitra, Rajnidhi
Tamilnadu	Sari
Uttar Pradesh	Lokvani , E-suvidha , E-Seva , Koshvani , Jan Suvidha Kendra, Srishti, Bhulekh,

E-Governance programmes of Indian Government

The origins of E-Government in India dates back to establishment of National Informatics Centre (NIC) in the year 1976. It emerged as ``Prime Builder" of E-governance applications in the country. NICNET was launched by the central government in 1987 which was followed by establishing District Information Centres (DICs) and State Information Centres (SICs) and connectivity across various centres in the 1990s. Computerization of Railways, digitalization of land records gave further boost to other sectors to follow suit.

National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) :- Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology has been co-ordinating implementation of e-Governance. The Central Government approved the national e-Governance plan (NeGP) on May, 18,2006. The NeGP was launched for providing government services to common man in his locality, through common service outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency and reliability. The initial plan comprised of four projects and the list was increased later to include 31 Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) covering a wide range of domains, viz. agriculture, land records, health, education, passports, police, courts, municipalities, commercial taxes etc.. However, the issues like lack of integration amongst government applications and databases, low degree of government process reengineering, scope for leveraging emerging technologies like mobile, cloud etc.. The portfolio of Mission Mode Projects has increased from 31 to 44 by inclusion of many new social sector projects.

Digital India Campaign

The overall scope of this programme is a) to prepare India for a knowledge future; b) on being transformative that is to realize IT (Indian talent) + IT (Information Technology) = IT (India Tomorrow) ; c) making technology central to enabling change; and d) on being an umbrella programme covering many departments.

The programme is co-ordinated by the ministry of Electronics and Information Technology along with the ministries and departments in the central and state governments partnering in their respective domain areas. The vision is single and comprehensive in which every individual element stands on its own, but is a part of larger whole. Each and every department / local government works separately as well as integratedly making it a team work in totality.

Government of India approved the E-Kranthi programme with the vision of ``Transforming e-Governance for Transforming Governance" in which the key principle is ``Transformation and not translation".E-Kranthi aims to transform the quality of services and also providing integrated services. This initiatives aims to utilize emerging technologies such as cloud and mobile platform and to focus on integration of services.

Digital India aims to provide much needed thrust to the nine pillars of growth areas namely 1) Broadband Highways 2) Universal access to mobile connectivity 3) Public Internet Access programme 4) e-Governance : Reforming government through technology 5) e-Kranthi-Electronic delivery of services 6) Information for all 7) Electronics manufacturing 8) IT for jobs 9) Early harvest programme

Diagram –I

Nine Pillars of Growth – Digital India
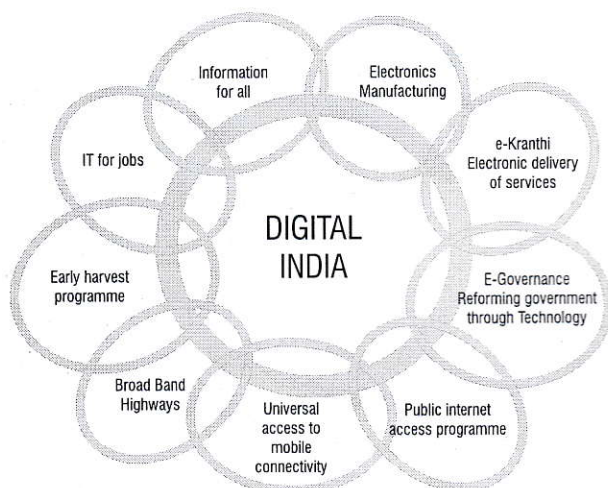
MCA 21 e-Governance Project

The project was implemented in 2006 in registry related services on the model of build, own, operate and transfer (BOOT) in the public private partnership (PPP). The project was undertaken to bring about a service centric approach in the delivery of public services and administration of Companies Act, 2013 specifically focusing on 1) starting a business 2) doing business. All functions are provided online with out physical presence either at Registrar of Companies or at Head Quarters.

UIDAI :- Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) was established in 2009 with a vision to empower residents of India with a unique identity and a digital platform to authenticate anywhere, anytime. It allots a 12 digit unique number, one time, to each citizen of the country on providing minimal demographic and biometric details. There is a provision for making changes in the address and contact details as and when the details of citizens are changed. The `Aadhar Act'2016 provides for efficient, transparent and targeted delivery of subsidies, benefits and services to individuals residing in India through assigning of a Unique Identification Number to such individuals. Over 102.60 crore individuals have enrolled under the aadhar programme.

Some of the E-initiatives of of the Indian Government

E-Courts

The basic objective of E-Courts is universal computerization of district and subordinate courts in the country with the use of ICT and provide services to Lawyers, litigants and lawyers. The E-Courts project was implemented in High Courts of various states and the Supreme Court also.

E-Office – All the state and central government offices are computerized. All the business houses have developed their own software systems for providing better quality services. Another indirect advantage of E-Office is that with the minimum use of paper, there will be more number of trees on the planet which will help reduction of air pollution.

E-Hospital

Under the OPD Registration Framework (ORF) patients can book online Out Patient Appointments with government hospitals. The initiative also covers other facilities like patient care, laboratory services and medical record management.

E-Panchayats

E-Panchayat is one of the Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) to realize the dream of Gram Swaraj. The project tries to transform completely the functioning of panchayatraj institutions for making them more transparent, accountable and de-centralized. It is being implemented under the

'Digital India'programme of the Central Government. Grants to the tune of Rs 02 lakh crores will be allocated during the period 2015-2020 for making democracy work effectively at grassroots level.

Figure-I – Enthuastic learners in a Villagers

E-District:

This is one of the 44 Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) under NeGP envisages leveraging and utilizing the four pillars of e-Infrastructure namely, State Data Centers (SDC) , Sate Wide Area networks (SWANs), State Service Delivery Gateways (SSDGs) and Common Service Centers (CSSs) optimally to deliver public services electronically to citizens at their doorsteps. It has been launched in 553 districts and about 890 e-services have also been launched.

E-Banking:

The discussion would be incomplete without mentioning the E-Banking. It is the best example of citizen-centric services of E-Governance. Online banking is the most commonly used transaction by any common person. The purpose may be for transfer of money, payment of school/college fees, examination fees, payment of utility bills, drawl of money from ATMs anywhere across various banks. Millions of transactions are made online everyday.

MyGov.in

This initiative is an innovative platform which gives opportunity to anybody across the world to share their views on key issues with the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India. This is an interactive citizen centric tool of engagement of citizens in the decision making process.

Organizing National Conferences, Grant of Awards on e-Governance

National conference on E-governances are organized every year along with association of a state in which senior officers of the government, IT secretaries of the state governments, experts, intellectuals from industry and academic institutions take part for exchange of ideas and initiatives. To encourage e-Governance initiatives national awards are presented in various categories. Research and evaluation studies on Good Governance are also conducted to understand the replicability, sustainability, and improvements of the initiatives. One such study was conducted in the year 2013-14 by M/s KPMG Advisory Services Pvt Ltd on ten E-Governance initiatives.

Indian Government is extending financial help for E-documentation and short documentary films made by the state governments and union territories for dissemination of information on various E-Governance initiatives.E-Governance is a giant step in realizing the dream of `Minimum Government and Maximum Governance'.

Impediments in implementation:

1) **Illiteracy**:-As per the census of Government of India, 2011, illiterates formed 27% of the population. Even among the literates, many people are not familiar with the operation of computers

and internet services. Rural population which accounts for 68.85% of total population of India are not familiar with English language as most of the services are available in English language making them difficult to be part of e-Governance.

2) Connectivity issues :- Though Central and State governments are making all out efforts to reach out their citizens through e-Governance, still many people in remote and tribal Areas in the country are untouched by the waves of ICT. Due to poor infrastructure facilities internet connection is not good enough to reach out the hilly regions and forest terrains. Even in the urban areas the speed of the internet access is either very slow or most of the time not available. Thus, becoming an impediment in implementation of e-Governance. These people are financially weak to buy a computer and use internet.

3) Cost of initial set up& Maintenance:-There is a requirement for investment of huge amount of money for setting up of necessary infrastructure throughout the country. India, being a developing country, finds it difficult to allocate huge budget for development of necessary infrastructure. Implementation, maintenance and updation of technology.

4) Lack of Co-ordination:- It is noticed that various departments of central and state governments and departments within the same government are working in isolation. Lack of Integration and co-ordination amongst various departments is a matter of concern due to which many initiatives which are otherwise common to them are not brought under one umbrella. If these services are integrated the services under e-Governance can be made much faster and effective.

5) Resistance to change:- It is a natural tendency in human being to be skeptical about any change. People feel uncomfortable to switch over to new things when their mind set is tuned to a particular way of doing things. Any innovation is opposed by the implementing agencies as well as the beneficiaries due to the fear of unknown. In few cases, persons sitting at high positions show little or no interest to switch over to e-Governance due to which people at the ground level are not implementing.

6) Trust &Confidence: - Many people feel insecure while operating the Information and communication Technology. This is because the data which is personal and confidential may be accessed by fraudulent people.

7) Lack of Skilled technical Manpower :- Unfortunately, the technical personnel engaged in implementation of various projects lack the project management skills due to which there are delays in completion of targets as per the planned schedules. The personnel deputed for the work are also scanty to take up such massive work.

Some suggestions for the success of e-Governance

1) More research needs to be done to develop low cost, efficient, simple and user friendly technologies for a country like India where sizable population can't afford to buy expensive goods / gadgets.

2) Smart phone has emerged as a powerful tool in the hands of common man. Many facilities are made available on phone. Mobile and Wireless communication are to be improvedfor governance services and communication especially in rural areas. Mobile sevas and mobile app stores need be strengthened further. M-Governance is not a

replacement to e-governance rather it is complimentary. As the expenditure for installation of networks for ICT is high, the government can depend upon wireless technologies. According to the statistics of government, Wireless customers in India are 101.10 crores constituting about 97.54% of total communications in India. Development of new apps and innovations can add to success of the e-Governance.

3) India is known for its multiplicity of languages. There is need for developing softwares for each and every regional language in addition to English / Hindi languages to ensure e-Governance reach every nook and corner of the country. The acceptability of e-Governance is more when people understand the meaning of any programme.

4) Periodical research and reviews need to be carried out to understand the practical usefulness of different softwares and their applications. If required, mid course corrective actions need to be taken. The Andhra Pradesh model of Centre for Good Governance can be emulated by other states to know the feedback about e-Governance.

5) Training and Sensitization Programmes shall be conducted to create awareness about the benefits of e-Governance and the processes involved in it. Here comes the role of non-governmental organizations and responsible citizens.

6) Cyber security needs to be strengthened further. Many citizens are still apprehensive about the safety of the personal data stored in digital form in the public domain. Robust technologies needs to be put in place to protect the personal data as well as classified information from hackers.

7) Video conferences need to be encouraged. It will result in real-time governance. Unwanted travel of officials can be avoided which in turn will save lot of money and time.

8) Fund allocation shall be made for introduction and implementation of e-Governance projects. The e-Governance projects will give rich dividends in future.

9) Proper study needs to be conducted before implementation of any e-Governance project. Factors like social context, technology available etc..shall be taken into consideration for ensuring success of e-Governance.

10) Moral & financial integrity is also a crucial factor for success of e-Governance. Students should be taught not only the technical aspects but also character building, morals, ethics and good behavior pattern.

Summary :

The Indian government and various state governments have introduced good initiatives of e-governance which have a long way to go. The business sector has added value to their services through e-governance practices. Though there are many impediments like illiteracy, poverty, language, insufficient infrastructure etc..coming in the way of implementation , progress made on e-governance is also noteworthy. Still, there are many avenues for growth of e-governance in India. Education has a pivotal role to play in this regard. Character building also plays a vital role as hardware technology is controlled by software of humans. There is need for development of robust technologies which are user friendly and simultaneously ensure Cyber security. The future of E-governance is very bright and that day is not too far where India would be a force to reckon with in the E-governance map of the world.

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