

E-Governance Trends and Best Practices in India: Some Case Studies

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Abstract: E-Governance has become an essential part of any firm in globalisation process. Increasing demands of clearness in administration, rapid information transfer, more competent performance and improved public service has pushed organizations to choose electronic means for success in business. E-governance has become the key to good-governance in a developing country like India. To be at par with developed countries, the Government of India had made out a plan to use Information and Communication Technology extensively in its operation to make more efficient and effective and also to bring transparency and accountability. E-Governance refers to the process of automation for providing efficient and effective delivery of government services to the citizens. E Governance programmes are initiated after 1990 in India and these have great impact on Indian society. The present Article deals with the E Governance initiatives in India and recent trends and also best practices from deferent states.

Keywords: E Governance, Globalization, Good governance, Information and communication technology, Transparency

1. Introduction

E-Governance has become an essential part of any firm in globalisation process. Increasing demands of clearness in administration, rapid information transfer, more competent performance and improved public service has pushed organizations to choose electronic means for success in business. Organizations can give better performance through innovative use of information technology and e-governance. There are many advantages of e-governance and impact public management through, for example, improved access to services, decreased operational costs, enhanced knowledge management, and strengthened coordination of government agencies. E-government has been major developments of the web. It is well established that Internet supported digital communities, they present the national governments with a number of challenges and opportunities. The application of ICT and e-governance has huge potential for intermediate organizations in developing countries. The main goal of e-governance is to support and simplify governance for all parties' government, citizens and businesses. E-governance uses electronic medium to support and motivate good governance. Therefore the purpose of e-

governance are analogous to the objectives of good governance. Good governance can be seen as an application of economic, political, and administrative authority to smoothly manage business activities of a country at, national and local level. It is the application of ICT to the processes of government functioning for good governance. In other words, e-governance is use of ICT with the aim to empower information and service delivery, encourage citizen participation in decision making and make Government more accountable, transparent and responsive. It is a move towards SMART governance.

E-governance on the other hand goes beyond the service delivery aspects and is seen as a decisional process. It is about the use of ICTs in the system of governance i.e. using ICT to involve multi-stockholders in decision making and in making governments more open & accountable. Reinventing Government has been a dominant theme since 1990, wherein governments World over are attempting to improve the system of public service delivery. Rapid strides made in the field of ICT have facilitated the reinvention of governments and prepared them to serve the needs of a diverse society. It is with this concern that the concept of e-governance became prominent. Democracies in the world share a vision of the day when e-governance becomes a way of life.

E-Governance/ICT initiatives has immense role in the enhancement of improving accessibility, cutting down costs, lessening corruption, extending help and increased access to un-served groups in India. In the age of technical advancement, e-government initiatives have reached most of the people belonging to these sections of society. Improved access to information and services has offered economic and social development opportunities, enabled participation and communication in policy and decision-making processes and empowerment of the feeblest groups of society. This has promoted ownership and building of social capital, which in turn, constitute a basis for local revival.

2. Concept of E-Governance

E-governance is the good usage of information and communication technologies to transform and enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of informational and transactional exchanges with in government, between government agencies at National, State, Municipal & Local levels, citizen & businesses, and to authorise citizens through access and use of information. Fundamentally, E-governance, entails electronic governance

which uses information and communication technologies at various levels of the government and the public sector to improve governance (Bedi, Singh and Srivastava, 2001). Theoretical studies demonstrated that E-Governance is the process of change of the relationship of government with its constituents the citizens, the businesses and between its own organs, through the use of tools of information and communication technology. Keohane and Nye (2000) asserted that "Governance implies the processes and institutions, both formal and informal that guide and restrain the collective activities of a group. Government is the subset that acts with authority and creates formal obligations. Governance need not necessarily be conducted exclusively by governments. Private firms, associations of firms, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and associations of NGOs all engage in it, often in association with governmental bodies, to create governance and sometimes without governmental authority." The objective of e governance is to embrace information and communication technologies and offer an opportunity to citizens, so they can get involve in decision making process. According to The UNESCO, E-governance is the public sector's use of information and communication technologies in order to enhance information and service delivery, motivating inhabitant involvement in the decision-making process and making government more accountable, transparent and effective. E-governance involves new styles of management, novel ways to decide policy and investment, new ways of accessing education, and listening to citizens and new ways of organizing and delivering information and services. The purpose is to give better access, accountability and efficiency in the delivery of government information and services. E-Governance has capability to provide all government information and services on internet to the public and private sector. An e-governance initiatives and innovations will ensure a more democratic, transparent and accountable framework for the public and private apparatus to operate in. The governments of developing countries must establish a suitable environment for e-governance. E-governance is the method of service delivery and information dissemination to citizens using electronic means providing many benefits over the conventional system (Jayaradha and Shanthakumar, 2003). These include increased efficiency in various Governmental processes, transparency and anticorruption in all transactions, empowerment of citizens and encouragement of their participation in governance. Ray and Dash (2015) considered that e-governance should also include the aspects of internal working which cover use of information technology to increase competence and effectiveness of internal functions and internal communications and

internetworking. Internal aspects cover the overall change of government hierarchy to adjust to the new requirements and expectations of efficient and improved services, simplification and rationalization in the business process to better serve the stake-holders in a transparent and cost-effective manner.

3. National E Governance Plan

Taking note of the potential of e-governance to improve the quality of life of the vast population of the country, the Government of India has formulated a national program the National e-governance Plan (NeGP). This plan attempts to cover all the important areas relating to e-Governance Policy, Infrastructure, Finances, Project Management, Government Process Reengineering, Capacity Building, Training, Assessment and Awareness etc. across the Central and State Governments. The vision of NeGP is to make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality through common service delivery outlets. The implementation strategy envisages clear definition of service goals and metrics for each project and structured stakeholder consultations with all stakeholders including citizens and civil society organizations before the service goals of each project are firmed up. Even at the stage of formulation of the NeGP, its vision and proposed strategy, consultations were held with various stakeholders including state governments, ministries/departments, IT industry representatives and civil society organizations.

Several State Governments have taken various innovative steps to promote e-Governance and have drawn up a roadmap for IT implementation and delivery of services to the citizens online. The applications that have been implemented are targeted towards providing Government to Citizen (G2C), Government to Business (G2B) and Government to Government (G2G) services with emphasis on use of local language. Every State has the flexibility of identifying up to five additional State-specific Mission Mode Projects (relevant for economic development within the State). In cases where Central Assistance is required, such inclusions are considered on the advice of the concerned Line Ministries/ Departments. States have MMPs on Agriculture, Commercial Taxes, e District, Employment Exchange, Land Records, Municipalities, Gram Panchayats, Police, Road Transport, Treasuries, etc. Apart from MMPs, the States have other e-Governance initiatives also.

4. E- Governance Best Practices

- **E-Seva in Telangana** : This project is designed to provide ‘Government to Citizen’ and ‘e-Business to Citizen’ services. The highlight of the e *Seva* project is that all the services are delivered online to consumers /citizens by connecting them to the respective government departments and providing online information at the point of service delivery. E seva the name has been changed to Mee seva and It is an Integrated Citizen Services Portal providing citizen centric services such as: Birth/Death Certificates, Property Registration, Driver’s License, Govt. Applications & Forms, Payment of taxes / utility bills etc.
- **Bhoomi**: *Automation of Land Records (State Government of Karnataka)* It provides computerized Record of Rights Tenancy & Crops (RTC) - needed by farmer to obtain bank loans, settle land disputes etc. It has also ensured increased transparency and reliability, significant reduction in corruption, exploitation and oppression of farmers. This project has benefited 20 million rural land records covering 6.7 million farmers.
- **Akshaya**: *E Literacy programme in Kerala* The Akshaya project was initiated by Government of Kerala to bridge the digital gap between the ‘information haves’ and ‘information have-nots’. The Akshaya project is conceived as a two-phase e-literacy programme that can change the culture and way of life of Keralites. As a part of Akshaya, at least one person in each of the 65 lakh families in the State will be made IT-literate. This project, piloted in Malappuram district has evolved into one of the most dynamic interventions in public-private-partnerships in the State. Akshaya is acting as an instrument in rural empowerment and economic development. Quality ICT dissemination and service delivery facilities (Akshaya Centres) has been set up within a maximum of 2 kilometers for any household and networked leveraging entrepreneurship.
- **CARD**: Registration Project in State Government of Andhra Pradesh. Computerization Administration of Registration Department (CARD) impacting 10 million citizens over a period of 3 years. It has completed registration of 2.8 million titles with title searches made in 1.4 million cases. The system ensures transparency in valuation of property and efficient document management system. The estimated saving of 70 million man-hours of citizen time valued at US\$ 35 mil (investment in CARD - US\$ 6million). Similar initiatives in other states like SARITA (State Government of Maharashtra) STAR (State Government of Tamil Nadu), etc. have further built upon this initiative. In India, most citizen services are

provided by state i.e. provincial governments and very few by the central i.e. federal government. However, both central and state governments provide different services to business and industry

- **Gyandoot:** Intranet in Tribal District of Dhar (State Government of Madhya Pradesh). This project offers e-governance services including online registration of applications, rural e-mail facility, village auction site etc. It also provides services such as Information on Mandi (farm products market) rates, On-line public grievance redressal, caste and income certificates and Rural Market (Gaon ka Bazaar).

The above cases of e-Governance initiatives are only illustrative. Many of the State Governments have successfully implemented several such initiatives. This has positively impacted the quality of life of citizens. Hence e-Governance affords an excellent opportunity for India to radically improve the quality of governance and thereby:

- Allow for two-way communication between government and citizens not only for service delivery but also to receive opinions of citizens on policies and government performance
- Provide greater access to excluded groups, who have few opportunities to interact with government and benefit from its services and schemes
- Include all sections of the society in the mainstream of development
- Enabling rural and traditionally marginalized segments of the population to gain fast and convenient access to services in their own neighborhoods.

5. Recent Trends in E Governance practices

- **Direct Cash transfer:** To facilitate disbursements of Government entitlements like NREGA, Social Security pension, Handicapped Old Age Pension etc. of any Central or State Government bodies, using Aadhaar and authentication thereof as supported by UIDAI.
- **Aadhar Enabled Payment system (AEPS):** AEPS is a bank led model which allows online interoperable financial inclusion transaction through the Business correspondent of any bank using the Aadhaar authentication. This has helped in financial inclusion. The four Aadhaar enabled basic types of banking transactions are as follows:-

- Balance Enquiry

- Cash Withdrawal
- Cash Deposit
- Aadhaar to Aadhaar Funds Transfer
- Digital India program

This programme has been envisaged by Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY). The vision of Digital India aims to transform the country into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. The Digital India is transformational in nature and would ensure that Government services are available to citizens electronically. It would also bring in public accountability through mandated delivery of government's services electronically, a Unique ID and e-Pramaan based on authentic and standard based interoperable and integrated government applications and data basis. The program aims at providing digital infrastructure as a utility to every citizen as well as high-speed internet as a core utility in all gram panchayats. The overall scope of this program is "to prepare India for a knowledge future", "to make technology central to enabling change" and "to become an umbrella program covering many departments"

My Gov citizen portal: Prime Minister launched an online platform mygov.nic.in to engage citizens in the task of "good governance" (*surajya*) as he completed 60 days in office on Saturday. MyGov is a technology-driven platform that would provide people with the opportunity to contribute towards good governance.

E-Kranti scheme: This is project for linking the internet with remote villages in the country. This scheme will broaden the reach of internet services to the rural areas in the country. The fundamental features of this scheme will be making the records handy to the government with ease. It also includes Expansion of internet and commencement of IT-based jobs in rural areas. It will also boost the use of mobile phones and computers in rural areas. It will also expand the use of IT in agriculture and retail trade too.

Digital Cloud for every Indian: Certificates issued by the government education, residential, medical records, birth certificates, etc. are to be stored in individual 'digital lockers' and a communication protocol established for government departments to access them without physically having to see the hard copy. The purpose of government is that copies of certificates issued by the government itself not to be carried around by people to government offices for various services.

6. M-governance

M-Governance is not a replacement for e-Governance, rather it complements e-Governance. M-Governance, is the use of mobile or wireless to improve Governance service and information “anytime, anywhere”. Mobile applications also rely on good back office ICT infrastructure and work processes. It has potential of using mobile phones as input devices in certain areas where last mile connectivity becomes issues for simple data inputs of critical importance for decision making in government departments. M-Governance is not a new concept. The private sector has been greatly leveraging these of mobile phones for delivery of value added services for the following which however are mostly SMS based: Banking, Media, Airlines, Telecom, Entertainment, News, Sports, Astrology, and Movie Tickets Etc.

M-governance has increased the productivity of public service personnel, improving the delivery of government information and services, increasing channels for public interactions and Lower costs leading to higher participation of people. Recent thrust to m-governance is being provided through USSD Services Unstructured Supplementary Services Data (USSD) is a session based service unlike sms which is store and forward service. It can be used by the user to send command to an application in text format. USSD acts as a trigger for the application.

6.1 Government initiatives for M-governance

- **Mobile Seva:** It aims to provide government services to the people through mobile phones and tablets. It has been developed as the core infrastructure for enabling the availability of public services through mobile devices. Mobile Seva enables the integration of the mobile platform with the common e-Governance infrastructure consisting of State Data Centers (SDCs), State Wide Area Networks (SWANs), State and National Service Delivery Gateways (SSDGs/NSDG). It enables a government department to integrate both web and mobile based services seamlessly and enhances the access to electronic services tremendously leveraging the very high penetration of mobile phones, especially in rural areas.

A Mobile Applications Store (m-App Store) has also been developed by DeitY as part of Mobile Seva. The Mobile Governance Portal and the m-App Store can be accessed at <http://mgov.gov.in/>. The m-Appstore currently hosts over 240 live mobile applications. The live applications can be downloaded and installed free of cost on a mobile phone by any person.

The project, “mobile seva” has won the second prize at the prestigious United Nations’ Public Services Awards in the category “Promoting Whole of Government Approaches in the Information Age” for Asia Pacific.

- A few years ago, Kerala launched ‘Dr. SMS,’ an m-health information system, for providing information on medical facilities available in the locality of the resident.
- Goa followed, with a mobile governance initiative for issuing alerts for receipt of government applications and complaints and status tracking.
- Next came Maharashtra. It adopted a similar traffic management system through mobile alerts.
- A laudable initiative launched by the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation in September tries to use technology in a mobile phone-based Intelligent Garbage Monitoring System enables sanitary supervisors to report the status of cleaning of garbage bins through their GPS-enabled mobile phones. Centralised reports as well as those of individual bins can be generated with the system.

7. Impact of E-Governance On Administration:

- i. E-governance programme calls for basic restructuring of age-old, archaic & colonial procedure – it indeed involves almost elimination of existing dysfunctional system of governance. It straight away offers a package of efficiency, time boundedness & cost efficiency, in fact much more, transparency, demolition of discretion & arbitrariness & above all clientele orientation and redressal of citizen grievances. It will down size, cut numbers, unite knots and do away with regulation & procedural bottlenecks, reduce time & increase customer satisfaction.
- ii. It has led to flattening & down-sizing of today’s organizations, eliminating the need for levels of bureaucracy & a long chain of command. People are replaced by technology & organization is able to down size or right size. The impact of IT is mainly felt at the middle level management. Downsizing of Government departments & directorates would create a new administrative culture by doing away with middle management.

- iii. IT brings in a rapid change in management pattern, such as breakdown of hierarchy in administration & increase in coordination activity. Computers make coordination better & cheaper. It will facilitate Decentralized administration i.e. delegation of authority.
- iv. IT helps in fast & better disposal of grievance of citizen & comments.
- v. IT will lead to administration & management revolution. The file pushing processes will be done away with, & data processing and decision making will be done quickly and cheaply. Ex.: If an information system would be built up for gathering databases regarding crimes and criminals, these data would enormously help police officer to track down criminals and prevent crimes.
- vi. Wide use of IT is likely to offer people friendly administrative culture by making people's easy access to data and information about public administration, bringing the functioning of bureaucrats and other public servants under the gaze of effective public scrutiny, by helping the people to assess the moral and attitude of public servants towards the people. Appreciation of needs of people will be greatly facilitated. E-governance or IT would be the instrument for transforming the nature & style of India's Public Administration into a Participative Culture, taking the people as partners in development administration.

8. Conclusion

E-governance practices have great impact on Indian society, It require basic change in work culture and goal orientation, and simultaneous change in the existing processes. Foremost of them is to create a culture of maintaining, processing and retrieving the information through an electronic system and use that information technology for decision making. We have seen how the concept of e-governance and m-governance has evolved in Indian scenario and how much it is required for transparency and accountability on the part of government and at the same time it is also a toll to increase the participation of people in policy making by empowering them with the right information at right time. The penetration of internet, telecommunication services in India has increased in the last decade and this gives a ray of hope to the citizens of India to fight with the long persisting problems of poverty, corruption, regional disparity and unemployment.

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