E-Governance – New age tool of Government

VIKAS KUMAR
M. Phil (scholar)
Dept. of public administration
Maharishi Dayanand University, Rohtak

Abstract

New avenues open up with unlimited prospects with the process of adapting to newer tools. Inventions can justify their utility for mankind by their adaptability into human lives to simplify lifestyles. With information & communication technology displaying a lot of opportunities, their integration in different aspects of governance can leads to unimaginable results.

The reach and efficiency of governance is a major determinant of quality of life enjoyed by the citizens. Over the years, the domain of governance has expanded manifold and governments globally- with different levels of embrace to the private sector participation have been striving to satisfy all needs of the citizens.

The need for evolving into a stratosphere of efficient, economic, and effective governance stems from an increasingly demanding and aware civil society globally. The information revolution made possible by the small tool of ICT has educated people of their rights and dues. The vociferous demands for good governance can no longer be muted. It broke out in form of Arab spring this year or closer home as various anti-graft agitations. It is the quality of services, along with their unmistakable delivery, which has grabbed the attention of the civil society.

The basic aim of governance is to provide opportunities to maximize the growth of human potential. The enabling spirit must inherently emanate from the core of any governance. It carries immense trust and expectations of the masses and must imbibe all 'goodness' for its' longevity. The path for the dawn of good governance has been simplified by tools presented by advancements in Information and Communication Technology. The adaptation of these tools in different domains of governance has the potential to unleash an era of e-governance. With varying degrees of progress, nations across the globe have progressed on absorbing the tools of ICT to make their governance economic, efficient, and effective.

Simplification of processes and ease of storage, transmission, and retrieval of information lie at the heart of the transformative process of governance using ICT. Communication facilities and increasing ease in handling large volumes of data have found a varying utility to bring smiles on millions of faces.

E-governance brings governance to the doorsteps of the individual. With an ingrained tenet of non-discrimination, it manages to drive systems to provide an equitable environment. The gulfs of class, color, language, region or religion fail to impede the service delivery. Every citizen who meets the defined norms and criterion stands eligible to receive benefits, escaping the judgmental prejudices linked with human involvement

Keywords: governance, information and communication technology, public service delivery, e-administration, e-services.

Introduction:

E-Governance can be defined as the application of **information and communication technology (ICT)** for providing government services, exchange of information, transactions, integration of previously existing services and information portals. The "e" in e-Governance stands for 'electronic'. Government Process Re-engineering using IT to simplify and make the government processes more efficient is critical for transformation to make the delivery of government services more effective across various government domains and therefore needs to be implemented by all Ministries/ Departments. It is the integration of various stand-alone systems between government to citizen (G2C), government-to-business (G2B), government-to-government (G2G), government-to-employees (G2E) as well as back-office processes and interactions within the entire government framework. The **Council of Europe** referred to e-Governance as the use of electronic technologies in three areas of public action:

o   relations between the public authorities and civil society

o   the functioning of the public authorities at all stages of the democratic process (electronic democracy)

o   the provision of public services (electronic public services)

Governance has become very complex. Citizens'' expectations from the government are increasingin modern era. **e-Governance is the** use of IT to improve the ability of the government to address the needs of society. It includes the publishing of policy and program-related information to transact with citizens. It extends beyond the provision of online services and covers the use of IT for strategic planning and reaching the development goals of the government. The use of IT to facilitate the ability of all sections of society to participate in the governance of the state. Emphasis is on bringing transparency, accountability, and participation of people. It includes online disclosures of policies, online grievance redressal, e-referendums etc. **e-Administration and e-Services are the two integral tenet of e-governance. E-Administration is t**he use of ICTs to modernize the state; the creation of data repositories for Management Information System (MIS) and computerization of records (land, health etc). **E-Services** emphasis on to bring the state closer to the citizens. For Examples: Provision of online services. E-administration and e-services together constitute what is largely termed as e-government.

Origin & Evolution:

E-Governance originated in India during the 1970s with a focus on in-house government applications in the areas of defence, economic monitoring, planning and deployment of ICT to manage data intensive functions related to elections, census, tax administration etc. The establishment of the **Department of Electronics in 1970** was the first major step towards e-governance in India as it brought 'information' and its communication to focus. **National Informatics Centre (NIC) established in 1977,** launched the **District Information System** program to computerize all district

offices in the country. The main thrust for e-governance was provided by the launching of **NICNET in 1987** – the national satellite-based computer network.

The National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) has been formulated by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DEITY) and Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) in 2006. The NeGP aims at improving delivery of Government services to citizens and businesses with the following vision: "Make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency & reliability of such services at affordable costs to realize the basic needs of the common man."

Digital India Initiatives

It is an umbrella program to prepare India for a knowledge-based transformation. It weaves together a large number of ideas and thoughts into a single comprehensive vision so that each of them is seen as part of a larger goal. It has been launched by the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (Meity)**. Vision of Digital India Initiatives is to provide Digital infrastructure as Utility to Every Citizen, governance and services on demand and Digital empowerment of citizens.

Various Initiatives Under Digital India Initiatives

- **MyGov:** It aims to establish a link between Government and Citizens towards meeting the goal of good governance. It encourages citizens as well as people abroad to participate in various activities i.e. 'Do', 'Discuss', 'Poll', 'Talk', 'Blog', etc.

- **DigiLocker:** It serves as a platform to enable citizens to securely store and share their documents with service providers who can directly access them electronically.

- **e-Hospital-Online Registration Framework (ORF):** It is an initiative to facilitate the patients to take online OPD appointments with government hospitals. This framework also covers patient care, laboratory services and medical record management.

- **National Scholarships Portal (NSP):** It provides a centralized platform for application and disbursement of scholarship to students under any scholarship scheme.

- **DARPAN:** It is an online tool that can be used to monitor and analyze the implementation of critical and high priority projects of the State. It facilitates presentation of real time data on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of selected schemes/projects to the senior functionaries of the State Government as well as district administration.

- **PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance And Timely Implementation):** It has been aimed at starting a culture of Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation. It is also a robust system for bringing e-transparency and e-accountability with real-time presence and exchange among the key stakeholders. It was launched in 2015.

- **Common Services Centres 2.0 (CSC 2.0):** It is being implemented to develop and provide support to the use of information technology in rural areas of the country. The

CSCs are Information and Communication Technology (ICT) enabled kiosks with broadband connectivity to provide various Governments, private and social services at the doorstep of the citizen.

- **Mobile Seva:** It provides government services to the people through mobile phones and tablets.

- **Jeevan Pramaan:** It is an Aadhaar based Biometric Authentication System for Pensioners. The system provides authenticity to Digital Life Certificate without the necessity of the pensioner being present in person before his/ her Pension Dispensing Authority (PDA).

E-Kranti: It is also seen as National e-Governance Plan 2.0. It is an essential pillar of the Digital India initiative. It was approved in 2015 with the vision of "Transforming e-Governance for Transforming Governance"**.** There are 44 Mission Mode Projects under e-Kranti, which are at various stages of implementation. Thrust Areas of e-Kranti:

- **e-Education:** All schools will be connected to broadband. Free WiFi will be provided in all secondary and higher secondary schools (coverage would be around 250,000 schools). **PMGDISHA (Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyaan)** aims to make six crore people in rural India digitally literate. **SWAYAM** includes Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) for leveraging e-Education. It provides for a platform that facilitates hosting of all the courses, taught in classrooms from Class 9 till post-graduation to be accessed by anyone, anywhere at any time.

- **e-Healthcare:** e-Healthcare would cover online medical consultation, online medical records, online medicine supply, pan-India exchange for patient information, etc.

- **Farmers:** This would facilitate farmers to get real-time price information, online ordering of inputs and online cash, loan, and relief payment with mobile banking.

- **Security:** Mobile-based emergency services and disaster-related services would be provided to citizens on a real-time basis so as to take precautionary measures well in time and minimize loss of lives and properties.

- **Financial Inclusion:** Financial inclusion shall be strengthened using mobile banking, Micro-ATM program, and CSCs/ Post Offices.

- **Justice:** Interoperable Criminal Justice System shall be strengthened by leveraging several related applications, i.e. e-Courts, e-Police, e-Jails, and e-Prosecution.

- **Planning:** National GIS Mission Mode Project would be implemented to facilitate GIS-based decision making for project planning, conceptualization, design, and development.

- **Cyber Security: National Cyber Security Co-ordination Centre** has been set up to ensure a safe and secure cyber-space within the country.

Advantages of e-governance

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

Use of ICT makes governing profess 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. 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.

E-Government brings public services to citizens on their schedule and their venue. It allows to redeploy resources from back-end processing to the front line of customer service. It 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

Disadvantages of e-governance

Electronic governments also consist on certain disadvantage. The main disadvantage of an electronic government is to move the government services into an electronic based system. This system loses the person to person interaction which is valued by a lot of people.

In addition, the implementation of an e-government service is that, with many technology based services, it is often easy to make the excuse (e.g. the server has gone down) that problems with the service provided are because of the technology.

The implementation of an e government does have certain constraints. Literacy of the users and the ability to use the computer, users who do not know how to read and write would need assistance. An example would be the senior citizens. In general, senior citizens do not have much computer education and they would have to approach a customer service officer for assistance. And also in case of rural people, it gives scope for middle man, who distort the information.

Even though the level of confidence in the security offered by government web sites are high, the public are still concerned over security, fear of spam from providing email addresses, and government retention of transaction or interaction history. There has been growing concern about the privacy of data being collected as part of UID project. The security of cyber space and misuse of data is still holding back the citizens to full adaptation of Aadhar card.

Challenges to E-Governance

Lack of basic infrastructural facilities like electricity, internet, etc. Initiatives like BharatNet and Saubhagya are steps taken to overcome this bottleneck. e-Governance measures are costly affairs and require huge public expenditure. In developing countries like India, the cost of projects is one of the major impediments in the implementation of e-Governance initiatives. PPP model is being used to leverage the private sector. Recent spark in data leak cases has threatened the peoples' faith in e-governance. There are growing concerns about the data collected by digital initiatives. Therefore, the implementation of e-governance projects must have security standards and protocols for safeguarding the interest of all classes of masses**.** Huge gap between users and non-users of e-govt. services. The digital divide takes form in rich-poor, male-female, urban-rural etc segments of the population. The gap needs to be narrowed down, then only the benefits of e-governance would be utilized equally.

Suggestions

A hybrid approach needs to be adopted for enhancing interoperability among e-governance applications which will encompass a centralized approach for document management, knowledge management, file management, grievance management etc. The e-governance initiatives in rural areas should be taken by **identifying and analyzing the grassroots realities.** The government should also focus on **devising appropriate, feasible, distinct and effective capacity building mechanisms** for various stakeholders viz bureaucrats, rural masses, urban masses, elected representatives, etc. Cloud computing is also becoming a big force to enhance the delivery of services related to e-governance. Cloud computing is not only a tool for cost reduction but also helps in enabling new services, improving the education system and creating new jobs/ opportunities. **Meghraj-GI Cloud is a step in the right direction.** The focus of this initiative is to accelerate the delivery of e-services in the country while optimizing ICT spending of the Government. e-Governance through regional languages is appreciable for the nations like India where people from several linguistic backgrounds are the participants.

Conclusion:

We have seen how the concept of e-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 tool 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. But at the same time, due to slow pace of project completion, red-tape and resistance from the side of government employees and citizens too has not given the desired result.

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