

ROLE OF E- GOVERNANCE IN SOCIO -ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

E-governance or “electronic governance” is defined as the delivery of government services and information to the public, using the electronic means including the dissemination of information to the people and the agencies. In India, the concept of ‘e-governance’ began with the efforts of National Informatics Center (NIC) to connect all district headquarters through computers in 1980s. Recently, it further proposed the setting up of an Indian portal for public access to information on various aspects of government functioning. e-governance promotes the efficiency, enforces accountability, brings transparency in the working of the government system and reduces time delays. Through e-governance people of the nation become aware about all important government policies which are useful and beneficial to the citizens. It involves technology, policies and infrastructure. This paper reveals the performance of e-governance in India in the context of its role in Socio – Economic Development.

Keywords: e-governance, National Informatics Center [NIC], Government Services, Technology, Policies, Infrastructure.

1. INTRODUCTION

E-Governance or Electronic Governance simply means providing government products and rendering services to the citizens of India by the government electronically. It is an application of ICT (**Information Communication and Technology**) for rendering government services between G2C, G2G, G2B and G2E as well as interaction within the government framework. Through e-government models one can easily avail government services conveniently. E-Governance is a wonderful tool to bring transparency, accountability and efficiency in the working conditions of the government system.

The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) are being increasingly used by the governments to deliver its services at the locations convenient to the citizens. The rural ICT applications attempt to offer these services of central agencies like district administration, cooperative union, and state and central government departments to the citizens at their village door steps. These applications utilize the ICT in offering improved and affordable connectivity and processing solutions. Several Government-Citizen (G2C) e-Government pilot projects have attempted to adopt these technologies to improve the reach, enhance the base, minimize the processing costs, increase transparency, and reduce the cycle times.

2. ABOUT E-GOVERNANCE

E-governance is the application of information & communication technologies to transform the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of informational & transactional exchanges within government, between govt. & govt. agencies of National, State, Municipal & Local levels, citizen & businesses, and to empower citizens through access & use of information. The Governance of India kick started the use of IT in the government in the right earnest by launching number of initiatives. First the Government approved the National E-Governance Action plan for implementation during the year 2003-2007. The plan is an attempt to lay the foundation and provide impetus for long-term growth of e-governance within the country. It proposed to create the right governance and institutional mechanisms at the center, state and local levels to provide a citizen centric and business centric environment for governance.

Dr. A.P.J. Kalam, the former President of India in his inaugural address at the 'International Conference on E-governance' at Indian Institute of Technology in the year 2003 had aptly summarized the basic e-governance challenge lying before the country as: "E-governance has to be citizen-friendly. Delivery of services to citizens is considered a primary function of the government. In a democratic nation of over one billion people like India, E-governance should enable seamless access to information and seamless flow of information across the state and central government in the federal set up. No country has so far implemented an E-governance system for one billion people. It is a big challenge before us". India, being the largest democracy in the world has much to gain from E-Governance, especially when citizen participation in governance is one of the features of the fully evolved phase of E-Governance.

Finally, E-governance is defined as the application of electronic means in the interaction between government and citizens (G2C) and government and businesses (G2B), as well as in internal government operations to simplify and improve democratic, government and business aspects.

3. OBJECTIVES:

- To know the e-governance policies in India.
- To study the role of e-governance in the agriculture sector.
- To identify the performance of e-governance in the rural development.
- To reveal the impact of e-governance on the social welfare aspect.

4. METHODOLOGY:

The study is based on secondary data collected from various sources such as books, journals, annual reports, government bulletins, gazettes etc. This paper reviews e-governance policies and role of e-governance in agriculture, rural development and social welfare.

5. MODELS OF E-GOVERNANCE

There are 4 main model of e-government:-

I. G2C

II. G2E

III. G2G

IV. G2B

I. G2C Model: G2C is known as “Government - to - Citizen” model of e-government. In this model, government and private individuals or residents are involved in buying and selling of goods and services through Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), but can also include direct mail and media campaign. There is a direct interaction between government and private individuals in G2C model of e-government and no intermediaries are involved in this model.

II. G2E Model: G2E is known as “Government - to - Employees” model of e-government. This model involves online interaction between Government and Employees. Through this model government provide services to their employees through instantaneous communication tools. It also gives employees the possibility of accessing information in regard to compensation and benefit policies, training and learning opportunities and civil rights laws. G2E services also includes software for maintaining personnel information and records of employees

III. G2G Model: G2G is known as “Government – to – Government” in which there is no intervention of citizen or employees. It is sharing of data electronically between government agencies or organizations which improves communication, data access and data sharing.

IV. G2B Model: G2B is known as “Government – to – Business” in which there is interaction between local and central and business sector with the objective to provide easy access of information to commercial business sector. It reduces cost, allow all companies to interact with the electronically instead of physical interaction which saves time.

6. APPLICATION OF E-GOVERNANCE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS

E-Governance initiatives embracing new ICTs as tools for public service delivery and citizen participation have become a key component of public sector reforms across the world. Followings are the sectors in which e-governance takes active participation towards socio economic development of India.

I. E-GOVERNANCE IN AGRICULTURE SECTOR

E-governance in agricultural sector means rendering goods and services to farmers or those who works in agrarian sector which includes livestock, agricultural traders, milk diary workers etc. Government provides a wide variety of goods and services for agrarian sector to fulfill their common needs which includes varieties of seeds, pesticides, fertilizers and prediction related to rainfall. Govt. provides great assistance to farmers and agrarian community. In a country like India where agriculture forms a major part of the national income e- governance plays an important role. The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation is implementing a central state scheme, “Strengthening/Promoting

Agriculture Information Systems” during the Tenth Plan with a budgetary provisions of INR 100 crore.

II. E-GOVERNANCE IN SOCIAL WELFARE

Social welfare aspect is one in which e-governance plays a key role in social protection and promotion of economic and social well-being of its citizens. Governance tools can be an effective application to help women acquire literacy skills that will help them in their education, employment to start their own business and earn their livelihood and become independent. Panchayatshave been a major part of rural life in India , and the constitution 73rd Amendment Act, 1992 has institutionalized the panchayati Raj at the Village, Intermediate and District levels, as the third tier e- governance.

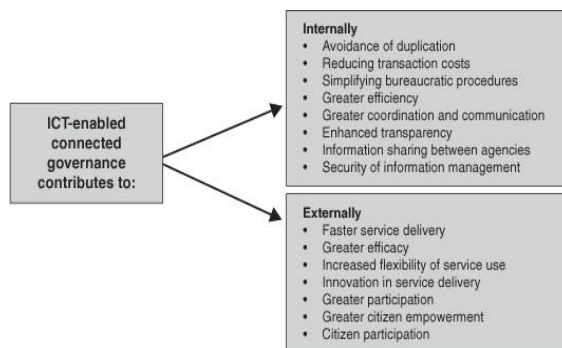
III. E- GOVERNANCE IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

India is a country which is mainly dominated by rural population. The main agenda of e-governance is to bring the people in the rural region in recognition of the government and help them to adopt modern techniques. Rural development implies both socio and economic development of the people and helps them in their transformation using e-governance.

The rural ICT solutions are normally offered through internet portals hosted on a delivery webserver to provide access to the citizen through inexpensive internet medium. The information flow between the delivery server and the other departments is accomplished through Intranet / LAN connectivity with servers of those departments. Often, due to non-computerization of back-end systems, the transactions are manually exchanged and response data is keyed in manually through the nodes on the delivery server.

7. E-GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

India has obtained a remarkable start in terms of using ICT for improving government business. Several states in India – Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka being the pioneers – have been attempting e-governance solutions to improve information management and governance. States have set up Information Technology and Communication (IT&C) Departments to guide and coordinate the implementation of e-governance programmes and projects.



ITC Departments have made commendable progress in the development of e-governance applications (e.g. Bhoomi in Karnataka and e-Seva in Andhra Pradesh). The IT&C Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh has taken up exemplary e-governance initiatives like e-Seva, e-Procurement, CARD (Computer-aided Administration of Registration Department), and Fully Automated Services of Transport Department (FAST). The Government of Andhra Pradesh has also recognized the need for e-governance standards to ensure interoperability among e-governance applications. Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Chandigarh, Maharashtra, Kerala, Gujarat, Goa, Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, are leaders of E-governance. Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh West Bengal, Rajasthan are average achievers of e-governance. Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Assam, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura, Nagaland are below average or least achievers.

In spite of good progress, the power of e-Governance for good governance is yet to be assured in India to a significant degree. States differ substantially in terms of their e-readiness and approach to e-Governance due to several factors. A study of the experiences with e-Governance projects and other e-initiatives undertaken by States provides the following lessons:

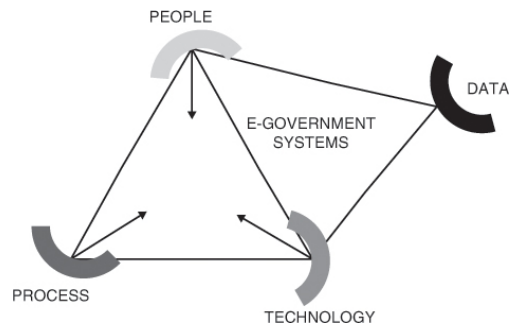
- Strong domain knowledge is critical for the success and sustainability of applications; 80 per cent of projects fail due to poor knowledge content and design in e-applications following from lack of adequate domain support from government departments ;
- Lack of ownership and coordination in the government lead to many well-crafted e-solutions to languish into disuse, it should be robust well-defined;
- Partial approaches have been adopted to both development and implementation of e-solutions; the enormous power of the excellent computerization of voter identity particulars by the Election Commission of India spanning the whole of India has not been tapped excepting in a few places like Hyderabad;
- Back-end is more important than the front-end; the front-end dealing with business and citizens in e-governance applications need much larger efforts to design;
- Support infrastructure is critical for e-governance implementation; the reliability and reach of electric power, telecommunication links and broad band connectivity are critically important;
- It is very difficult on part of governments to recruit and retain quality professionals with ICT expertise in view of much better prospects in the private sector; thus public-private partnership models need to be explored in addition to providing pay and allowance to ICT professionals in government on par with the private sector;
- General ICT literacy with local language content and application are essential elements of the climate for effective e-governance and its acceptance;

- Training, awareness building, and social mobilization to create constituencies of ICT-propelled transformation in government and to facilitate the acceptance of new tools and methods by various sections are very important.

8. COMPONENTS OF E-GOVERNMENT PROGRAM IN INDIA

Over the past decade there has been e-government initiative in the country at national state and district level. Some of them are highly successful and are implemented across the country and some of them are not successful. Hence there is a need of taking a holistic view towards the entire e-government initiative across the country. The national e-government programme is conducted to effectively implement the e-government in India. The component of this programme is as follows:

- **Awareness and communication:** The success of e-government plan highly depends on the awareness about the programme. Therefore the Government of India disseminates the information about the e-government plans.
- **Assessment:** The Government of India invest significant part of its scarce resource in e-government projects. Therefore it is necessary that a robust assessment strategy is devised for the existing e-government projects.
- **Common Services Centre:** Common Services Centre (CSC) scheme is the most prominent face of National e-Government Programmes. Specific support is being provided for this scheme. The scope of support includes Identification of core components of CSC Scheme; Frame problem agendas related with application software, legal instruments, essential backend for CSC etc.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The Program Management, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit of the Programmes Management Unit for National e-government programmes develop a comprehensive MIS at program level and track the physical and financial progress of various projects.
- **Project and Financial Appraisal:** The cell identify resources to provide assistance in project conceptualization, development and implementation to various implementing agencies.
- **Research and Development:** The e-Governance R&D team provides consultancy and research inputs in the areas of e-Governance, technical Standards including interoperability standards e-Government Enterprise architecture frameworks, Information Security etc.



9. ICT FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

I. The advances in information and communication technologies and the internet provide opportunities to transform the relationship between governments and citizens and business in new ways that contribute to the attainment of good governance. They provide opportunities for people and business to involve in the process of governance at all levels. They facilitate better service delivery to clients, in terms of timelines and quality, thus making governance more efficient and effective. In addition, the use of ICT may lower transaction costs both for citizens and government operations and public services can be made more affordable to the people at large.

II. ICT presents many avenues for improving governance. It has opened up new opportunities for governments to manage things differently and in a more efficient manner by utilizing information effectively and re-engineering processes. ICT tools are emerging as important instruments towards the goal of “good governance”. Many countries have launched specific initiatives for open government. Freedom of information is being redefined and supported by statutes. India’s Right to Information Act 2005 is a prime example in this regard. ICT has facilitated a conscious attempt to place the citizen at the centre of a governance network. Citizens are being perceived as customers and clients rather than beneficiaries. The Internet revolution has proved to be a powerful tool for citizen-centric governance. An important dimension of the Internet potential is the possibility of providing public services anytime, anywhere.

III. A defining characteristic of traditional public sectors has been the existence of a large physical infrastructure. This was to deliver programmes through a network of service delivery points and offices. Physical infrastructure was the most effective way to deliver public services directly to citizens. ICT now allows governments to experiment successfully with new ways of organizing themselves; cost-effective delivery of services is now possible without the service providers and clients being physically close to each other.

IV. Large scale implementation of e-governance initiatives can lead to demystification of complicated government processes and empowerment of citizens. It can lead to enhanced government performance and generate a multiplier effect on economic progress. ICT has enabled citizens to demand information and better services from governments. With increased citizen awareness, governments today are under increasing pressure to deliver a range of services – from ration cards, motor driving licenses and land records to health, education and civic services – in a manner that is timely, efficient, economical, equitable and transparent.

V. The application of ICT to government processes - e-Governance - can have a profound impact on the efficiency, responsiveness and accountability of the government, thereby, on the quality of life and productivity of citizens, especially the poor; and ultimately, on the economic output and growth of the country as a whole. Electronic governance goes far beyond mere computerization of standalone back office operations. It is a means to fundamentally change how the government operates and this implies a new set of responsibilities for the machinery of the government.

10. CHALLENGES FOR IMPLIMENTION OF E-GOVERNMENT

Implementation of e- government has changed the way of living of the people in many countries. However, in India the implementation of e-government is little difficult because of its developing status. The government agencies find lot of difficulties in the smooth implementation of e- government in India because of low literacy, low per capita income, insufficient infrastructure and limited financial resource.

- Low literacy
- Low per capita income
- Limited financial resources
- Unsatisfactory technological advancement
- Lack of communication etc

11. REFORMS FOR E-GOVERNANCE

I. Using e-governance tools for good governance requires certain fundamental reforms. We need a new institutional framework – a framework of “networked” or “joined-up” government based on the foundation of simplified, reformed and connected horizontal processes and appropriate regulations. The institutional structure of government, which has so long been based on a hierarchical model, needs a thorough overhaul. Good governance requires a systems approach wherein various facets of government are linked to each other in an organic way.

II. e-Governance requires a range of new rules, policies, laws and legislative changes to address e-activities including electronic signatures, electronic archiving, freedom of information, data protection, computer crime, intellectual property rights and copyright issues. Dealing with e-governance means signing a contract or a digital agreement, which has to be protected and recognized by formalized laws. Digital laws are yet to be fully developed. Establishing protection and legal reforms will be needed to ensure, among other things, the privacy, security and legal recognition of electronic interactions and electronic signatures. Hence, the government needs to tackle the design and development of key public infrastructure – physical, administrative, legal etc. - which will guarantee secure transactions between organizations and individuals.

IV. A major challenge of any e-governance initiative is the lack of required ICT skills in government. This is a particular problem where the chronic lack of qualified staff, frequent turnover of contract IT personnel, and inadequate human resources training are endemic. The availability of appropriate skills is essential for successful e-governance implementations. e-Governance requires hybrid human capacities: technological, commercial and management which can be procured at market cost. Technical skills for installation, maintenance, designing and implementation of ICT infrastructure, as well as skills for using and managing online processes, functions and citizens, are necessary. The new experiment of Andhra Pradesh through Jawahar Knowledge Centers in reputed engineering colleges is a worthwhile initiative.

V. Change in management issues must be addressed as new work practices, new ways of processing and performing tasks are introduced through ICT. Correctly designed e-government projects, supported by change management, not only save costs and improve service quality, they also revolutionize and reinvent government processes and functions. Employee resistance to change is still the biggest barrier to successful change. Employees fear changes in general and ICT applications, in particular as they believe that ICT would replace them and contribute to loss of jobs. Moreover, it is very difficult in a short time to turn off traditional methods of working and learn new one.

12. CONCLUSION

E-Government is to be able to offer an increased portfolio of public services to citizens in an efficient and cost effective manner. E-government allows for government transparency. Government transparency is important because it allows the public to be informed about what the government is working on as well as the policies they are trying to implement. Simple tasks may be easier to perform through electronic government access. Many changes, such as marital status or address changes can be a long process and take a lot of paper work for citizens. E- Government allows these tasks to be performed efficiently with more convenience to individuals. E-government is an easy way for the public to be more involved in political campaigns. It could increase voter awareness, which could lead to an increase in citizen participation in elections. It is convenient and cost-effective for businesses, and the public benefits by getting easy access to the most current information available without having to spend time, energy and money to get it.

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