E –GOVERNANCE SCENARIO IN INDIA

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Abstract

Research for E-Governance is currently at the stage of new orientation. Smaller steps of government regarding e-governance have partially been implemented; larger part still lies. A roadmap for e-governance is being defined. Therefore, scenario building about the future is being used to grasp pictures of the future. The present research papers introduces of e- governance viz., government to citizens (G2C), government to business(G2B), government to government , that is , inter-agency relationships(G2G), and government to employees (G2E) along with benefits of e-governance. Various e-governance projects have also been discussed like project e-Seva, Project- CARD, Project- FRIENDS etc. It has been observed that objectives of achieving e-governance and transforming India go far beyond mere computerization of standalone back office operations. It has been suggested to create a culture of maintaining, processing and retrieving the information through an electronic system and use that information for decision making.

Keywords: E-Governance, Electronic System, Information and Communication Technologies

1.0 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).

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.

The Economist Intelligence Unit's annual e-readiness ranks India at 54 out of the world's 69 largest economies along with the Philippines. India has moved down by one rank since 2006.The NASSCOM report on Information Technology on the Economy of India highlights that , despite India's global IT dominance , internally , the country has a low level of IT investment only 3.5% of total capital- and minimal dispersal of IT capital of 30 countries evaluated.

2.0 The Global Scenario

The World Economic Forum's league table measuring the impact of technology on the development of nations, places Denmark at the top of the list for technological advancement, with other Nordic countries Sweden, Finland

and Norway claiming Second, fourth and 10th place respectively. The same report notes that: So, far a country to be considered to be technologically advanced, e-Governance is a key requirement and measurement.

e-Governance is defined for the purposes as the application of electronic means in the interaction between government and citizens and government and businesses ,as well as in internal government operations to simplify and improve democratic, government and business aspects of governance. "Denmark, in particular, has benefited from the very effective government e-leadership, reflected in early liberalisation of the telecommunications sector, a first-rate regulatory environment and large availability of e- government services."

e-governance is basically a move towards SMART governance implying : simple, moral, accountable, responsive and transparent governance.

1) Simple- Meaning simplification of rules, regulations and processes of government through the use of ICTs and thereby providing for a user-friendly government.
2) Moral- connoting emergence of an entirely new system of ethical values in the political and administrative machinery; technology interventions improve the efficiency of anti-corruption agencies, police , judiciary, etc.
3) Accountable- facilitating design, development and implementation of effective Management Information system and performance measurement mechanisms and thereby ensuring accountability of public service functionaries.
4) Responsive- streamlining the processes to speed up service delivery and make system more responsive.
5) Transparent – bringing information hitherto confined in the government documents to the public domain and making processes and functions transparent , which in turn would bring equity and rule of law in responses of the administrative agencies.

3.0 Interactions in e-Governance

There are four types of interactions in e- governance viz., government to citizens (G2C), government to business(G2B), government to government , that is , inter-agency relationships(G2G), and government to employees (G2E).

The Second Administrative Reforms Commission has explained the above four types of interactions in e-Governance in its report entitled "Promoting e-Governance: The SMART Way Forward" (2008) in the following manner :

1) G2C (Government to Citizens)- In this case , an interface is created between the Government and citizens which enables citizens to benefit from efficient delivery of a large range of public services. This expands the availability and accessibility of public services on the one hand and improves the quality of services on the other. It gives citizens the choice of when to interact with the government (being available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week), from where to interact with the government (e.g., service centre ,unattended kiosk or from one's home/workplace) and how to interact with the government(e.g., through internet , fax , telephone, e –mail, face-to-face etc). The primary purpose is to make government, citizen-friendly. Therefore E-Governance in G2C relationship will involve facilitation of the services flowing from Government towards Citizens with the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT).
a) E-Citizenship - E-Citizenship will include the implementation of ICT for facilitation of Government Services relating to citizenship of an individual. It may involve online transactions relating to issue and renewal of documents like Ration Cards, Passports, Election Cards, Identity Cards, etc. It will require the Government to create a virtual identity of every citizen so as to enable them to access the Government services online. For the same, Government would need to create a Citizen Database which is a huge task.

b)   E-Registration -. E-registration will help to reduce a significant amount of paperwork. E-Registration will cover the online registration of various contracts. Many of these contracts and transactions require registration for giving it legality and enforceability. Such registration may also be made ICT enabled.

c)   E-Transportation - E-Transportation services would include ICT enablement of services of Government relating to Transport by Road, Rail, Water or Air. This may involve online –

1. booking and cancellation of tickets,
2. status of vehicles, railways, boats and flights,
3. issue and renewal of Driving Licences,
4. registration and renewal of vehicles,
5. transfer of vehicles,
6. payment of the fees of licences,
7. payment of fees and taxes for vehicle registration,

d) E-Health - E-Health services would be ICT enablement of the health services of the Government. Under this interconnection of all hospitals may take place. A patient database may be created.

e) E-Education - E-Education would cover the implementation of ICT in imparting of education and conducting of Courses. Distant as well as classroom education will be facilitated with the use of ICT. Use of internet can reduce the communication time required in Distance education.

f) E-Taxation - E-Taxation will facilitate the taxing process by implementing ICT in the taxing process. Online tax due alerts and online payment of taxes would help transact faster.

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

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

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

3.1 Benefits of e-Goverance

1) More efficient government management.
2) Cost reductions and revenue growth.
3) Restructuring of administrative processes.
4) Improved interactions with business and industries.
5) Better delivery of government services to citizens.
6) Citizens empowerment through access to information .
7) Less corruption in administration.
8) Flattens organisational structures
9) Increased transparency in administration.
10) Increased legitimacy of Government.
11) Greater convenience to citizens and businesses.
12) Better planning and coordination between different levels of governance.
13) Improved relations between the public authorities and civil society.

4.0 Towards an ideal e-Governance scenario in India

But e-Governance is not just about improving delivery of services to citizens , businesses and government employees .It is also about blending Information and Communications Technology (ICT) with administrative reforms to make government more efficient, drive down costs and increase transparency in how government departments work. If implemented properly, it can be an asset for the un-served and under-served areas in India and help drive new levels of efficiency to governments services in India.

4.1 e-Governance Initiatives

The first e-Governance initiative in India was the computerization of government departments. Present e-Governance initiatives will be encapsulating the finer points of Governance such as Citizen Centricity, Service Orientation and Transparency.

Government of India approved the National e- Governance Plan (NeGP) on 18th May 2006 comprising of the following:

a. Vision
b. Approach
c. Strategy
d. Key components
e. Implementation methodology &
f. Management Structure
   Different accessible or continuing projects in the Mission Mode Projects category under the Central Ministries, States and State Departments would be properly improved and enhanced to align with the objectives of NeGP.

4.1.1 The following are the various MMP under the NeGP :

1) Central MMPs
   i)   Banking
   ii)   Central Excise and Customs
   iii)   Income Tax (IT)
   iv)   Insurance
   v)   MCA21
   vi)   National Citizen Database

       vii)   Passport

       viii)   Immigration, Visa and Foreigners Registration & Tracking

       ix)   Pension

       x)   e-office

2) State MMPs

       i)   Agriculture

       ii)   Commercial Taxes

       iii)   e district

       iv)   Employment exchange

       v)   Land records

       vi)   Municipalities

       vii)   Gram Panchayats

       viii)   Police

       ix)   Road transport

       x)   Treasuries

3) Integrated

       i)   CSC

       ii)   e-Biz

       iii)   e-courts

       iv)   e-procurement

       v)   EDI For e-Trade

       vi)   National e-governance Service Delivery Gateway

       vii)   India Portal

4.2 Project e-Seva (electronic Seva):

Description: Launched on the 25th of August 2001, electronic seva(e-seva) is the improved version of the TWINS projec launched in 1991 in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secundrabad in Andhra Pradesh. e-Seva centres offer 118 different services like payment of utility bills /taxes, registration of births /deaths, registration of applications for passport ,issue of births/deaths certificates , filling of Sales Tax returns ,Trade licenses of MCH, B2C services like payment of Tata Teleservices, Reliance, sale of Airtel Magic cards .

4.3 Project: CARD

Description: The Computer-aided Administration of Registration Department-CARD in Andhra Pradesh is designed to eliminate the maladies affecting the conventional registeration system by introducing electronic delivery of all registration services .CARD was initiated to meet objectives to demystify the registration process , bring speed ,efficiency, consistency and reliability, substantially improve the citizen interface etc. Six months following the launch of the CARD project , about 80%of all land registrations tranactions in AP were carried out electronically. Since 60% of the documents Encumbrance Certificates (Ecs) and certified copies relate to agriculture properties, the success of the CARD project has great benefit for the rural farming community.

4.4 Project: FRIENDS

Description: Fast, Reliable, Instant, Efficient Network for the Disbursement of Services is part of the Kerala State IT Mission. FRIENDS counters handle 1000 types of payment bills originating out of various PSUs .The payments that citizens can make include utility payments for electricity and water, revenue taxes, license fees, motor vehicle taxes, university fees, etc. Firewalls safeguard data from manipulation. The application has provision for adding more

modules and for rolling back incorrect entries without affecting the database even at the user level. One important feature of FRIENDS is a provision for adding more modules and a queue management system.

4.5 Project: GYANDOOT

Description: The Gyandoot project was initiated initiated in January 2000 by a committed group of civil servants in consultation with various gram panchayats in the Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh. Gyandoot is a low cost,self-sustainable and community-owned rural intranet system (Soochnalya) that caters to the specific needs of village communities in the District. They run the Soochnalyas (organised as Kiosks) as entrepreneurs (Soochaks); user charges are levied for a wide range of services that include agricultural information, market information, health, education, women's issues , and application for services delivered by the district administration related to land ownership, affirmative action and poverty alleviation.

4.6 Project: LOK MITRA (Integrated Citizen Service Centre/e-Kiosks ICSC)

Description: Lok Mitra is the first of its own kind of Electronic service in the state of Rajasthan. It aims to deploy Information Technology for the benefit of the masses. This has provided relief to a common man as he gets efficient services through IT driven interfaces at a single window.

4.7 Project: JAN MITRA

Description: Jan Mitra is an integrated e-platform through which rural population of Rajasthan can get desired information and avail services related to various government departments at kiosks near their doorsteps. Various services are Public Information Services, Public Awareness Services, E-Governance Services Public Greivance Redressal System , Online submission of Application Forms and Land and Revenue Records.

4.8 Project: DRISHTEE

Description : Drishtee's software platform enables e-governance and provides information about and access to education and health services, market –related information, and private information exchanges and transactions. Drishtee kiosks provide viable employment opportunities for unemployed rural youths and help stem rural-urban migration.

4.9 Project: WebCITI (Web based Citizen-IT Interface)

Description: An e-Governance project for building citizen IT interface for services offered by District Administration at Fatehgarh Sahib in Punjab and also provides complete workflow automation in District Commissioner's office. WebCITI provides web based interface to citizens seeking services from district administration. These include issuance of certificates such as death/ birth, caste, rural area etc; licenses such as arms license , permission for conferences /rallies etc. and benefits from socio-economic schemes.

4.10 Project: AARAKSHI

It is an Intranet based system that has been developed and implemented for Jaipur city Police. This innovative system enables the city police officers to carry out on-line sharing of crime and criminal data bases, carry out communication and perform monitoring activities.

5.0 Conclusion:

The objectives of achieving e-governance and transforming India goes far beyond mere computerization of standalone back office operations .It means to fundamentally change as to how the government operates , and this implies a new set of responsibilities for the executive and politicians. It will 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 for decision making. Every small step thus taken should be used to learn about hurdles and improve upon the next steps, both in term of the direction and magnitude.

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