

E- governance: Issues and challenges in India

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Abstract: The traditional approaches dominated in the 20th century failed to respond to the changing environment in rendering the services to the public. E Government brought the revolution in India where government of India has taken steps to deliver the services to the citizens through the means of Information communications and technology (ICT). E government is the transformation of public sector internal and external relationship through internet enabled operations. The contribution and the role of Information communications and technology is very high. Through ICT knowledge has been created, information is shared, delivery of services, reduced cost, paperless office and many more.

The present study explores the theoretical assumptions about e governance by studying the some of the successful projects implemented by the various states in India. While studying we have identified some challenges at the time of implementation of the e governance projects. Experiences of the several successful projects reveal that though wider scope is there for implementation of projects nationwide unable to implement because lack of infrastructure facilities, technology feasibility, financial feasibility and huge investments

Keywords: E – Government, E – Governance, ICT, National E Governance Plan (NEGP).

Introduction

As India's economy is growing at a faster pace therefore faces a faster growing governance gap, causing our problems to scale faster than the attempted solutions. The exposure of series of high profile scandals in recent weeks is the clearest reminder yet that Indian governance has fallen so far behind the Indian economy and there is a serious risk that it will extinguish prospects of the nation's development. The National E-Governance plan is going to bridge the divide between the work of the public offices and the beneficiary – the citizens thanks to the Indian Government for taking the E-Governance initiatives. In this new plan the other forms of e-governance also cover like government to business (G2B), government to government (G2G), and government to employees (G2E) channels.

Governance refers to the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in management of the country's affairs. E- Governance may be understood as the performance of this governance via electronic media to facilitate speedy, efficient and transparent process of disseminating the information to the public and for performing the Government activities. In simple words Governance term can be understood as the complex mechanisms, relationships and institutions through which public exercise their rights and obligations.

E Governance which is a paradigm shift over the traditional approaches in public administration rendering the government services through electronic media. This brought a new revolution in delivering the quality services to the public.

E-Governance was started in India by AHSAYA in Kerala. This project involves setting up around 5000 multipurpose community technology centers called Akshaya e- Kendra's across Kerala. Run by private entrepreneurs, each e-Kendra set up within 2-3 kilometers of every household, will cater to the requirements of around 1000-3000 families to make available the power of networking and connectivity to common man. Akshaya is a social and economic catalyst focusing on the various facets of e-learning, e-transaction, e-governance, information and communication. Use of internet by the government to provide its services at the door step of customers, business and other stakeholder. In E-Governance, government makes best possible use of internet technology to communicate and provide information to common peoples and businessman. Today, electricity, water, phone and all kinds of bills

can be paid over the internet. All this is what government and citizens is using and doing. All are dependent on internet and when citizens depends on government internet services all that come is E-Governance.

Four pillars of E-Governance

- **Connectivity** : Connectivity is required to connect the people to the services of the government. There should be a strong connectivity for an effective e-governance.
- **Knowledge** : Knowledge here refers to IT knowledge. Government should employ skill full engineers who can handle the e-governance in an efficient way. These engineers also handle all kind of fault that may occur during the working of e-governance.
- **Data Content** : To share any kind of knowledge or information over the internet, there should be its database. This database should have the data content which is related to government services.
- **Capital** : Capital can be on public or private partnership. It refers to money used by government to provide their services or to that sector of the economy based on its operation

Why E – Governance?

The purpose of e governance implementation is for good governance. Good governance is characterized by participation, transparency and accountability. The advancement in ICT (Information Communications and Technology) and internet provides an opportunity to maintain the relationship between the government and public by providing the quality services.

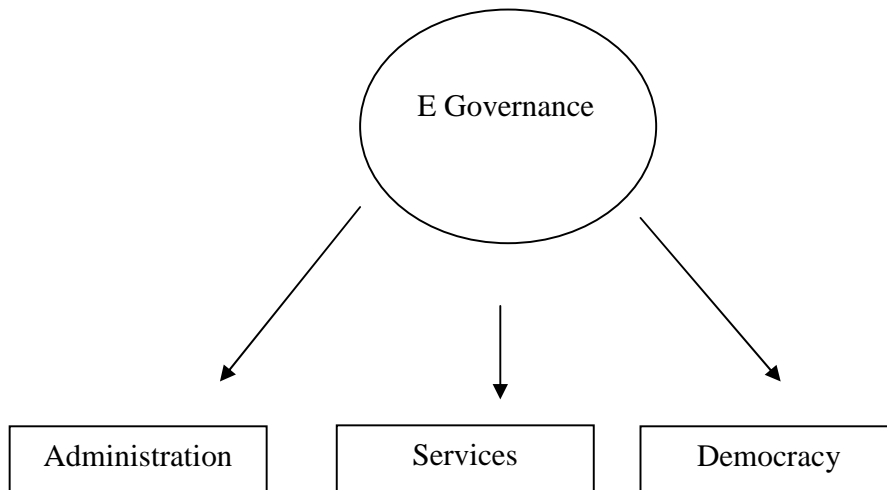


Figure 1: Showing the Implementation of E Governance in different fields

1. Administration refers to improving the government process.
2. Services refers to the improved delivery of services through electronic media
3. Democracy refers to the active participation and involvement of the public enabled by ICT in decision making process.

National E – Governance Plan

India's National E – Governance Plan (NEGP) is a major program of the tenth national plan and endorsed by the PMO (Prime Ministers office) since 2003. The objective of the plan is to bring a change in the services provided by the Government of India. It consists of central and stale level projects planned for the development of the E governance. Following are some of the services provided by the GOI through ICT (fig 2)

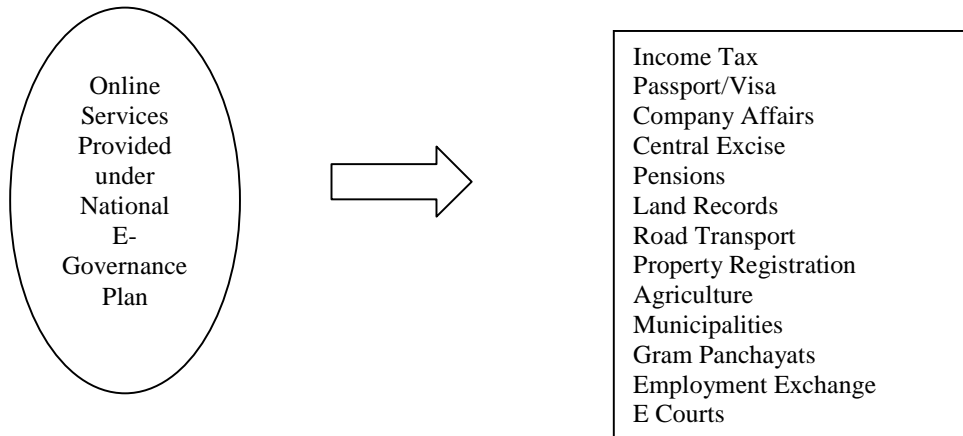


Figure 2: Showing the different online services provided under the National E Governance Plan

Conceptual View of E – Governance Model

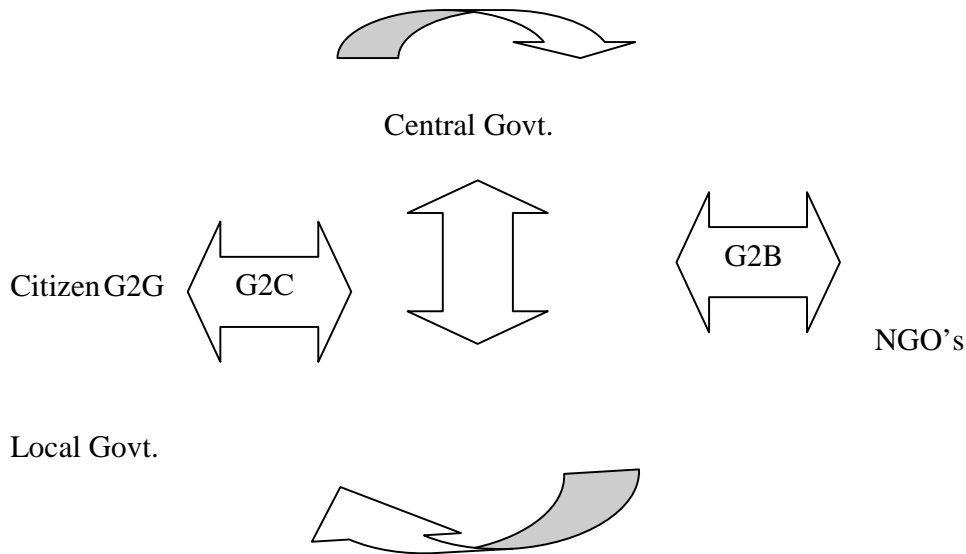


Figure 3: Showing the conceptual model of E - Governance

Fig 3 shows a conceptual model of E – Governance showing how the people and government are interconnected through the use of information technology for improved services. Interaction of the citizen is one of the key primary objectives of the governance followed by the business organizations. The information exchange is done by several interconnected networks, websites, software, databases and enterprise information.

Importance of E – Government

The three activities that are involved in the e government are government-to-government (G to G), government-to-citizens (G to C) and government-to-business (G to B). G to G represents as backbone of the e government. Governments at the union, state and local must update their internal systems and procedures for electronic

transactions with citizens and business are introduced. G to C it facilitates interaction between citizens and government which is the primary objective of e government. It facilitates services like payments, transactions, access of public information through websites and kiosks. G to B includes both the procurement of goods and services by the government as well as the sale of surplus government goods to the public on line.

ICT's contribution

- Increase the transparency and accountability of government action by offering new possibilities for monitoring of and recording government activities.
- Increase public trust in government and reduce the overall corruption and promote core democratic values through informed debate, public consultation and encouragement of the expression of views.
- Integrate citizens' feedback into the decision-making process, in order to respond better to citizens' expectations.
- Strengthen the institutions of representative government and civil society, including parliaments and political parties, by promoting transparency and accountability in the decision-making process and effective party competition.
- Facilitate the ability of citizens to gather information about campaign issues, follow the political process, mobilize and create diverse coalitions around policy problems and get engaged in policy formation.
- ICT would provide huge opportunities for streamlining supply chain processes in minimizing the mismanagement and corruption.

Successful E – Governance Projects In India

AADHAAR: The most prominent of NeGP (National e-governance Project) which was conceived by the planning commission of India whose aim is to provide a single unique identification to each resident of India. Aadhaar is one of the largest data base projects in the world with the budget of Rs.40 billion covers 1.26 billion population of India. Through this unique identification number residents can access up-to-date information about their entitlements, demand services and redress their grievances directly from their mobile phone, kiosks or other means.

PDS: (Public Distribution System): The core objective of this project is to enable the better services in the remote and rural areas of India with the use of ICT. Under the PDS which people below the poverty line will get food grains. The ministry of Food and Agriculture has now initiated computerization of the whole PDS network up to the Food Corporation of India (FCI). Technologies implemented like global positioning system for tracking movement of commodities, bar coded ration coupons, digitized ration card database and smart cards.

CARD: (digital registration of deeds) Project in Andhra Pradesh

In registration of deeds as manual systems are involved problems like valuation of property, assessment of duty, lack of transparency in valuation of projects, deterioration of quality in storage of paper based documents. The Project CARD helped to overcome all the problems that are there in the manual system. After Implementation of the CARD project 10 million citizens benefited with in 3 years. Few of the benefits like transparency in valuation of properties, speed, reliability, consistency and efficient document management system.

E SEVA Project in Andhra Pradesh:

E-Seva is the project launched by the AP Government to provide one stop shop solutions and services to citizens. This is the best model for G2C. The project is implemented with the help of Public Private Partnership (PPP). The services like payment of electricity, telephone bills, water bills, payment of taxes, ticket reservations, passport applications, registration of birth and death, payments by cash/card/cheque are some of the services provided to citizens.

BHOOMI Project in Karnataka:

Karnataka being an agriculture oriented state faced with the problem of maintaining immense land records and entire process is done by manually. This project facilitated to computerize entire 20 million records of land ownership of 6.7 million farmers in the state of Karnataka. At present land record kiosks called Bhoomi center is functional in all the 177 talukas in the state.

AKSHAYA Project in Kerala:

Kerala is renowned as one of the most literate states in the south India. But failed in catching up with the IT literacy owning government inability to promote and create an interest in the public. In 2002 Kerala government launched

Akshaya Project to promote IT literacy. With in no time attracted public became very successful. One of its most recent achievements was to become one of the finalists in the prestigious Stockholm Challenge award for 2004.

Some of the other initiatives are

- **FRIENDS:** - This project is started by Kerala Government for its citizens to make online payment of electricity and water bills, revenue taxes, license fees, motor vehicle taxes, university fees, etc.
- **E-SEVA:**-Electronic seva by Andhra Pradesh government to pay utility bills, avail of tradelicenses and transact on government matters at these facilities.
- **BWSSB ganakeekruthaGrahakaraSeve, water billing, and collection system:** - This e-governance project is started by the Bangalore government.
- **DOMESTIC:** - This project is started by Daman and Diu. It is an Electricity Billing System for domestic consumers.
- **E-Pourasabha Municipal Application:-E-Pourasabha** is an e-governance application for urban local bodies. It is implemented for Tax Collection system, Property Tax, Water Tax etc.
- **HEALING:**-it is a Health Information system for Kerala Government which is developed and implemented for Medical Health & Family Welfare department.
- **AGMARKNET:** - It is a project approved by Department of Marketing & Inspection (DMI), Ministry of Agriculture, and Government of India.
- **LokMitra:** - By the government of Himachal Pradesh. The services offered include information about vacancies, tenders, market rates, matrimonial services, village e-mail.
- **Chetana:** - It is a Disaster management system which has been started in the state of Bihar to deal with natural disasters such as flood and earthquake.

E-Governance projects in Indian states

- **Andhra Pradesh:**- e-Seva, CARD, VOICE, MPHS, FAST, e-Cops, AP online—One-stopshop on the Internet, Saukaryam, Online Transaction processing.
- **Bihar:** - Sales Tax Administration Management Information.
- **Chhattisgarh:** - Chhattisgarh Infotech Promotion Society, Treasury office, e-linking project.
- **Delhi:**- Automatic Vehicle Tracking System, Computerisation of website of RCS office, Electronic Clearance System, Management Information System for Education.
- **Goa:** - Dharani Project.
- **Gujarat:**- Mahiti Shakti, request for Government documents online, Form book online, G R book online, census online, tender notice.
- **Haryana:** - Nai Disha.
- **Himachal Pradesh:** - Lok Mitra.
- **Karnataka:** - Bhoomi, Khajane, Kaveri.
- **Kerala:**- e-Srinkhala, RDNNet, Fast, Reliable, Instant, Efficient Network for the Disbursement of Services (FRIENDS).
- **Madhya Pradesh:**- Gyandoot, Gram Sampark, Smart Card in Transport Department, Computerization MP State Agricultural Marketing Board (Mandi Board).
- **Maharashtra:** - SETU, Online Complaint Management System—Mumbai
- **Rajasthan:** - Jan Mitra, RajSWIFT, Lokmitra, RajNIDHI.
- **Tamil Nadu:**- Rasi Maiyams—Kanchipuram; Application forms related to public utility, tender notices and display.

E-Governance: Major Challenges in India

Poor people and poor infrastructure are major challenges in countries like India. It poses a major challenge in reaping the full benefits of service provision under e-governance. Certain challenges are as follows:

- **Poverty:** Accessing Internet is a costly affair for the poor who struggle for their livelihood in developing countries like India. Lack of required infrastructure is also a challenge.
- **Technical illiteracy:** There is general lack of technical literacy as well as literacy hence is a challenge.

- **Language Dominance:** The dominance of English on the internet constrains the access of non-English-speaking population. Due to overwhelming dominance of English, computers and the internet are quite useless in Indian villages.
- **Unawareness:** There is general lack of awareness regarding benefits of E-Governance as well as the process involved in implementing successful Government to Citizen, Government to Government, Government to Employees and Government to Business projects.
- **Inequality:** Inequality in gaining access to public sector services between various sections of citizens, especially between urban and rural communities, between the educated and illiterate, and between the rich and poor.
- **Infrastructure:** Lack of necessary infrastructure like electricity, internet, technology and ways of communications will affect the working of the e-governance projects.
- **Impediments for the Re-Engineering process:** Implementation of E-Governance projects requires lots of restructuring in administrative processes, redefining of administrative procedures and formats which attracts a lot of resistance in almost all the departments at all the levels.

Future Prospects of E-Governance in India

Vision and Objectives of the Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17)

- To deliver all Government services in electronic mode so as to make the Government process transparent, citizen centric, efficient and easily accessible.
- To break information silos and create shareable resources for all Government entities.
- To deliver both informational and transactional government services over mobiles and promote innovation in mobile governance.
- To build Shared Service Platforms to accelerate the adoption of E-Governance and reduce the —cycle time of E-Governance project implementation.
- To strengthen and improve sustainability of the existing projects through innovative business models and through continuous infusion of advanced technology.
- To promote ethical use of technology and data and to create a safe and secure E-Governance cyber world.
- To create an ecosystem that promotes innovation in ICT for Governance and for applications that can benefit the citizens.
- To better target the delivery of welfare schemes of the Central and State Governments.
- To reduce asymmetry in information availability, accessibility and ability to utilize the information.
- To increase the all round awareness and create mechanisms that promotes and encourages citizen engagement.
- To make available as much data as possible in the public domain for productive use by the citizens.

Conclusion

E government refers to the use of information and communications technologies to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of government. By studying some of the successful projects in India the current e government practice is project specific. The projects are not nation wide and differ from state to state. Lack of financial feasibility, infrastructure facilities and huge investments on the software and hardware making this initiative to less scope for the governance. Even though there are large and small e-governance projects being implemented but it hasn't been a smooth ride upwards for all of them like Right to Information Act and the electronic voting machine had faced a lot of negative feedback and shortcomings are exposed. The real challenge in front of the Government of India lies in the area of quality deliverance of services.

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