

E-governance: Challenges, Major Issues & Future Prospects with special reference to India

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Abstract:

The present paper represents current challenges and future prospects of the E-governance in India. The e-governance is nothing but use of internet for the various purposes in the transactions and applied things. Governments and public sector organizations around the world are facing to reform their public administration organizations and deliver more efficient and cost effective services, as well as better information and knowledge to their stakeholders. E-governance is the effective use of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) to improve the system of governance that is in place, and thus provide better services to the Citizens. E-Governance is considered as a high priority agenda in India, as it is considered to be the only means of taking IT to the "Common Public". Developments in e-Governance provide opportunities to harness the power of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to make the business of governance inexpensive, qualitatively responsive, and truly encompassing. In this paper we discuss about the basic problems and acceptability of e-Governance in India.

Keywords: ICT, e-Governance, accountability, acceptability, Indian government.

Introduction:

ICT is "Information and Communication Technologies." ICT refers to technologies that make available right to use to information throughout telecommunications. It is parallel to Information Technology (IT), but focuses primarily on communication technologies. ICT having number of communication channels like wireless networks, cell phones, Internet and other. The rapid development and implementation of the Information and Communication Technology is transforming every aspect of human life.

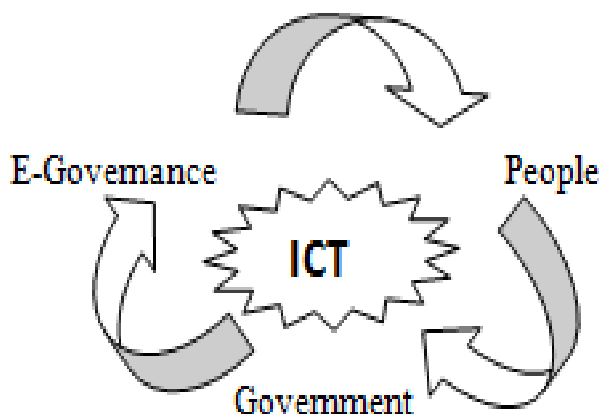


Figure: ICT

The term e-Government came into existence with the advent of government websites in late 1990s. E-Governance or "electronic Governance" refers to the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to provide citizens and organizations with more convenient access to the government's services and information. In other words, e-Governance involves ICTs, especially the internet, to improve the delivery of government services to citizens, businesses and government agencies. It is not limited to the public sector only but also includes the management and administration of policies and procedures in private sector as well. The use of internet not only delivers the services faster but also brings more transparency between the government and the citizens. But in developing countries like India, where literacy level is very low and most of the people are living below poverty line, it is very much difficult for the government to provide its services to such citizens via means of internet.

Even the e-Readiness Rank of India is very low. E-readiness is defined as the ability to use information and communication technologies to develop one's economy and welfare. According to the Global Information Technology Report 2012, the e-Readiness rank of India is 69 with the score of 3.89 out of 10 that means the use of ICTs in India is very low. Many other factors like privacy and security related to user's personal information, digital divide etc. are also huge challenges for the implementation of e-Governance in India.

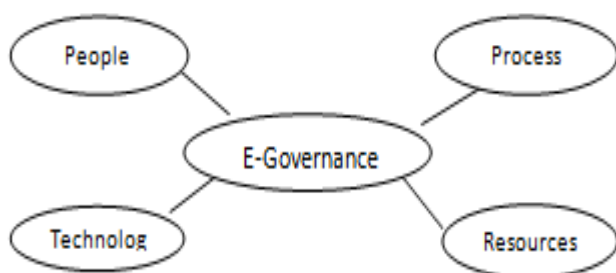


Figure: Elements of E-governance.

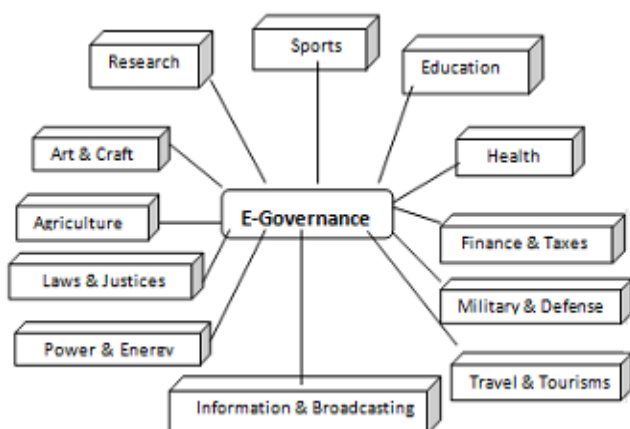


Figure: Elements of E-governance.

Objectives:

The objective of this paper is to explain the challenges and opportunities of E-governance in India. In addition to this, an attempt is made to understand the prospects in India. Again to study the Major issues of e-governance are also studied through this paper.

Research Methodology:

The present paper is descriptive of the nature and hence the data is taken from the secondary sources only. The secondary sources include various journals, websites and other relevant printed material.

Importance of the Study:

The study has the following importance with it:

- The present study will helpful in providing a detail of challenges towards E-governance sector.
- The present paper will impose a major light on opportunities of e-governance in India.
- The present study will be important from the point view of data collection and other research variability.

Limitations of the Study:

The present paper is having various limitations to be faced during the study which are given below:

- The paper is having human errors to be faced out.
- The paper is having other limits such as time limit, data collection limit and geographical are limit.

E-Governance: Major issues in India:

Countries like India people are poor and infrastructures are not up to the mark. Under such condition it becomes very difficult to provide government services to the people. There are number of reasons for that:

Poverty: Internet access is too expensive for the poor in developing countries like India. Installing the necessary telephone lines needed for internet or email access is equally unaffordable in most poor countries. In India, each telephone connection may cost as much as Rs. 30,000 in urban areas and Rs. 70,000–80,000 in villages, which is unaffordable by most low income families. It is also very expensive to gain internet access in India: it may cost about Rs. 25 per hour in cities and Rs. 150–1200 per hour in rural areas.

Technical illiteracy: There is general lack of technical literacy as well as literacy in countries like India, the correlation between education level and use of electronic means or Internet and other CT means are quite significant.

Language Dominance: The dominance of English on the internet constrains the access of on-English-speaking population. It is found that of all the web pages in the world, about

84percent are in English followed by 4.5 percent in German, 3.1 percent in Japanese, 1.8 percent in French, 1.2 percent in Spanish, 1.1 percent in Swedish, 1 percent in Italian and less than 1percent in all other languages. In the case of India, 95 percent of the population does not speak English. Due to such overwhelming dominance of English over these communication channels, computers and the internet are quite useless in Indian villages, and the use of local languages does little to alleviate the problem due to the poor literacy level mentioned earlier.

Unawareness: There is general lack of awareness regarding benefits of e-governance as well as the process involved in implementing successful G-C, G-G and G-B projects. The administrative structure is not geared for maintaining, storing and retrieving the governance information electronically.

Lack of Participations of Society, Public and Private Sectors: Designing of any application requires a very close interaction between the govt. department and the agency developing the solutions. At present the users in govt. departments do not contribute enough to design the solution architecture. Consequently the solution developed and implemented does not meet the requirements of an e-governance project and hence does not get implemented.

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 as in Table1 will affect the speed which delays the implementation.

Challenges:

Although the government has come up with several initiatives to facilitate the access to public services, the desired outcomes are yet to be fully realized. This can be largely attributed to various front-end and back-end challenges that the government continues to face. Front-end challenges relate to user-specific issues such as,

high illiteracy levels, non-availability of user-friendly interfaces, inadequate power supply in rural areas, low broadband penetration and most importantly, lack of awareness of e-Governance initiatives.

On the other hand, back-end challenges relate to technical, process or human resource issues within the government. These issues include lack of systems integration within a department, lack of integration across government departments, limited knowledge of using computers at various levels of bureaucracy and deployment of technology without proper process re-engineering.

Benefits of E-Governance:

Fast, Convenient and Cost Effective Service Delivery:

With the advent of e-Service delivery, the government can provide information and services at lesser costs, in reduced time and with greater convenience. For instance, after the computerization of land records in Karnataka, farmers can obtain a copy of their Records of Rights, Tenancy and Crops (RTC) within 30 minutes, as against 30days that it used to take earlier. Moreover, a printed copy of the RTC at kiosks costs 15 only, as against heavy bribes that one had to pay earlier

Transparency, Accountability and Reduced Corruption:

Dissemination of information through ICT increases transparency, ensures accountability and prevents corruption. An increased use of computers and web based services improves the awareness levels of citizens about their rights and powers. This helps to reduce the discretionary powers of government officials and curtail corruption. For instance, land registration requirements in Andhra Pradesh after computerization can now be completed within an hour without any official harassment or bribes.

Increased Participation by People:

With easy access to the government services, the faith of the citizens in the government increases and they come forward to share their views and feedback. Increased accessibility to information

has empowered the citizens and has enhanced their participation by giving them the opportunity to share information and contribution implementation of initiatives.

Current challenges for managing E-Government Projects in India:

- a. Lack of effective project management tools and methods.
- b. Absence of proper planning, various ad hoc tasks are taken up by the project team due to which the focus on critical activities is lost.
- c. The knowledge of project management concepts is very low in Government officials forming part of the e-Government Project team.
- d. E-Government projects do not follow any standardized project management implementation frameworks.
- e. Resources are over loaded with work due to inadequate staffing. Sometimes tasks not assigned to the team appropriately.
- f. No control of central IT agencies during project execution. The decision making process is generally left to individual line ministries and departments since funding comes from them.
- g. No provisioning of Project Management dashboard for collaborative project monitoring by all stakeholders in large e-Government projects.
- h. Inadequate tracking of how the project is being implemented, tasks causing delays.
- i. No monitoring of Cost and Schedule at project checkpoints.
- j. During the project initiation, the baseline data is not captured which is useful for benchmarking of activities.

Some Suggestion / Solutions to the above Challenges:

- a) Government needs to have their own project management tools.
- b) Project tracking tool should be integrated to the tasks/ activities of the project and these should be monitored instead of status reports with only long text paragraphs being generated for monitoring the project status.
- c) Complete transparency/ work break down/ what are the issues blocking the project progress should be provided in the PM tools. Projects

should be tracked through milestone based approach and evaluation done at various critical checkpoints.

d) Cost, schedule, quality milestones checkpoints should get included as part of the project deliverables.

Targets of the Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17) with respect to E-Governance:

- a) A National Institute for E-Governance (NIG) would be setup as an autonomous State of the Art National Institute. NIG will also train at least 50 employees from Central Government per year on Project Management Certification.
- b) An E-Governance Innovation and R&D Fund will be created to give adequate impetus to innovation in E-Governance and M-Governance
- c) Electronic Delivery of Services (EDS) Bill will be implemented. Assistance will be given to every Central Government Department in delivering at least one Service in electronic mode and every State Government in delivering at least three Services in electronic mode apart from the services which are already identified in the MMPs under NeGP.
- d) Shared Services Platforms for e-Payment, GIS, call centre, etc. will be created.
- e) An apps store will be created to promote development of large scale E-Governance and M-Governance applications
- f) M-Governance platforms and frameworks will be created to enable delivery of public services through mobile devices
- g) At least one person per family in 50% of the families will be targeted to provide basic IT training in the XII Plan period.
- h) Cyber Security will be a major focus area during the Twelfth Five Year Plan Period.
- i) Existing SWAN, SDC, NSDG/SSDG, India Portal, CSC Schemes will be rolled out and maintained in all States/UTs. These schemes would be further augmented and technologically upgraded.
- j) The e-District MMP will be implemented in all districts.
- k) Training on Basic IT Skills will be introduced systematically for the existing and all new entrants into Government service.

Conclusion:

The e-governance is playing a major part of activity in today's era, besides those challenges and issues in India it is slowly covering a major part of the country. Although people are unknown to it at the certain part or locality of India but they were too keen to get acquainted with it. E-Governance enhances the relationships between G2G, G2C, G2B, C2G and B2G using ICT. Thus, E-Governance not only provides information about various activities of a Government but also involves citizens to participate in government's decision making process. During the last few years, many initiatives have been taken by different state governments in India for using IT as a tool in the functioning of Government so as to provide better services to citizens. In this paper we have made an attempt to summarize key areas which should be focused upon when a country wishes to position itself to be seriously moving towards E-Governance in a comprehensive way. This is a change, a transition that cannot be stopped since

it is part of a global movement. Cooperation from government officials and staff will contribute to a smoother transition. Given the current high level of political commitment and largely adequate sources of funding, India is likely to soon emerge as a leader in E-Governance. In spite of poor infrastructure, poverty, illiteracy, language dominance and all the other reasons India has number of award winning e-governance projects. Effective promotion schemes by the Indian government will also be a boosting factor to provide quality services to their citizens which means there is huge potential for the development of e-governance in various sectors. According to Skoch consultancy New Delhi, 81% citizens report reduction in corruption, 95% find cost of e-governance affordable and 78% favors fast of delivery of services. Therefore we can say that e-Governance is the key to the Good Governance for the developing countries like India to minimize corruption, provides efficient and effective or quality services to their citizens.

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