ADMINISTRATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND E-GOVERNANCE

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Abstract

Information and communication technologies are playing an important role in the daily lives of people, revolutionizing work and changing the way of doing business. It has a valuable potential to help meet good governance goals in India. It is effective and to promote openness and to ensure efficacy, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, participation and inclusion in the delivery of public services. "ICTs (Information and Communication Technology) are effectively showing new dimensions to old institutional setups. It is generally believed that ICT has considerable potential to improve governance capabilities and transform relations with customers. The initiatives of government agencies and departments to use ICT tools and applications like internet and mobile devices to support good governance, strengthen existing relationships and build new partnerships within civil society, are known as e-governance initiatives (Valentina 2004) E-Government is the term for the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in public administration to change structures and processes of government organizations. It can be an engine of development for the people. It is the application of information & communication technologies to transform the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of informational & transactional exchanges with in government, between govt. & govt. agencies of National, State, Municipal & Local levels, citizen & businesses, and to empower citizens through access & use of information. In the fast moving world of automation and digitization India also has full flagged ICT framework for implementation of e-governance, and through this new technological innovations our work, lives and society have been changed. It is open and transparent: public administration capable of comprehending citizens' expectations and it is accountable and open towards democratic participation; by providing timely information and facilitating cooperation among regions, the e-governments are believed to help public managers solve long-lingering problems such as poverty, corruption, and diseases. E-governance, which is a paradigm shift over the traditional approaches in public administration, means rendering of government services and information to the public using electronic means. The interaction between citizens or businesses with government, which traditionally occurred in an office, has been facilitated by e-government through 'the use of ICT to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of government' (World Bank).

Keywords: ICT, E- Governance, Accountability, Transparency, reliability

Introduction

IT has been globally recognized as an important vehicle of accelerated economic growth, efficient governance and human resource development. Information and communication

technologies are playing an important role in the daily lives of people, revolutionizing work and changing the way of doing business. It has a valuable potential to help meet good governance goals in India. It is effective and to promote openness and to ensure efficacy, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, participation and inclusion in the delivery of public services. "ICTs (Information and Communication Technology) are effectively showing new dimensions to old institutional setups. It is generally believed that ICT has considerable potential to improve governance capabilities and transform relations with customers. The initiatives of government agencies and departments to use ICT tools and applications like internet and mobile devices to support good governance strengthen existing relationships and build new partnerships within civil society, are known as e-governance initiatives (Valentina 2004).

Today information plays a pivotal role in our lives and technology has become standard mode for storage, processing and sharing information and knowledge. The internet can be used by citizens to watch their governments, rather than by governments to watch their citizens. ICT can make governments more relevant to citizens by increasing participation and involvement in decision making. Developing country governments have been using IT for more than 40 years. E-governance is a step ahead in this direction. It has changed the ways of information and service delivery of government to various section of society. It is advocated as a tool to achieve the policy prescriptions of the good governance agenda. *E-governance is the application of information & communication technologies to transform the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of informational & transactional exchanges with in government, between govt. & govt. agencies of National, State, Municipal & Local levels, citizen & businesses, and to empower citizens through access & use of information.*

While ICTs have the potential to create a platform for greater community awareness and participation in civic processes, e-governance initiatives tend to emerge under a model of service delivery, mediated by the private sector. The Government of India views e-governance as a strategic tool for transforming Governance and improving the quality of services provided by the government to its people. It is a narrower discipline dealing with the development of online government services to the citizen and businesses such as e-tax, e-transportation, e-procurement, e-participation amongst other. It aims to "help strengthen government's drive toward effective governance and increase transparency to better manage social and economic resources for development. E-government is defined by the United

Nations as "A government that applies ICT to transform its internal and external relationships" (United Nations, 2003)

'E-Government' or electronic government refers to the use of ICTs by government agencies for any or all of the following reasons: (a) Exchange of information with citizens, businesses or other government departments (b) Speedier and more efficient delivery of public services (c) Improving internal efficiency (d) Reducing costs or increasing revenue (e) Re-structuring of administrative processes. E-governance is to enhance the use of the information technology and to help enhance lives of the citizens. "E-governance is accorded a prominent place in the development agenda of developing countries as a promising tool for achieving good governance, which is usually regarded as essential for economic and political development. It can improve the efficiency of government by streamlining administrative procedures (simplification and transparent) for effective communication within and outside government departments. Rationalization and simplification of the vast number of regulations and procedures through computerization, cut-short delays and enhance the quality of service-delivery. E-governance not only reduces paper work, but also facilitates speedy communication and effective coordination. This ultimately reduces red tape and corruption and helps in providing more and better service at lesser cost (NASSCOM 2003). India the World's largest democracy, is fast catching up with other countries to promote e-governance in a big way to improve the quality of governance and service delivery. Government of India has defined a vision for e-governance which states that "All Government services accessible to the common man in his locality through a One-stop-shop (integrated service delivery) ensuring convenience, efficiency, transparency & reliability. Maximum transparency in government has been ensured through citizen charters available over the internet, for every government department. The government has already passed the Information Act, 2005 within the scope of Article 19 - a fundamental right – in our constitution enabling the citizens to get the information from the government. A number of projects are in operation in different states for promoting electronic governance in India. The Government of India took the basis of SMART for its vision statement on e-governance. This relates to "application of IT to the process of government functioning to bring out *Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive* and *Transparent governance* (SMART)". This vision helped India outlining further objectives and strategic initiatives on e-governance. E-governance enables active citizen involvement by informing the citizens, representing the citizens, encouraging them to vote consulting them as required and encouraging their participation (Patel 2001). According

to A.P.J. Abdul Kalam (2003) e-governance is the transparent, smart, seamless access, secure and authentic flow of information crossing the inter-departmental barriers and providing a fair and unbiased service to the citizen.

E-government can improve the performance of the Government in the following areas. **Delivery of services to citizens:** E-government can benefit citizens by reducing delays, consolidating multiple services under one roof, eliminating the need for frequent visits to government offices, and containing corruption, publishing rules and procedures online can increase transparency.

Delivery of Services to Business and Industry: Business and industry are concerned with the cost of setting up a business. A significant component of this cost is the administrative permissions and license that must be obtained to establish and operate a business. Electronic delivery can lead to quick turnaround of license applications and lead to an overall reduction in costs. Businesses often face significant administrative roadblocks when interacting with government. Electronic delivery can shorten the turnaround on license applications from several weeks to a few days.

Increased Efficiency of Departments/ Government Enterprises: E-government may lead to lower cost of operations with the resulting higher productivity. Governments that do not feel responsible for providing large-scale employment and are willing to cut down the number of employees after the introduction of electronic delivery realize such a benefit. Data captured by an electronic system often enables more frequent and accurate data sharing across departments, closer monitoring of employee productivity, easier identification of pressure points for delay and corruption, and improved compilation of historical data that can be mined for policy analysis.

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 is invest significant part of its scare 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 Programme. 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, and essential backend for CSC etc.

• **Infrastructural and Technical**: This cell provides support to the Department of Information Technology in implementing projects and components of e-Government. Without proper ICT infrastructure it is not possible to implement the e-governance in a developing country.

• **Monitoring and Evaluation**: Monitoring and Evaluation Unit of the Programme Management Unit for National e-government programme develop a comprehensive MIS at programme level and track the physical and financial progress of various projects. Government should monitor and keep track on every transaction of the departments regularly and take feedback regularly

• **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.

During last 5 years, many initiatives have been taken by different state governments in India for using Information technology as a tool in the functioning of government so as to provide better services to citizens. The online facility of complaining and suggestions helps the citizens effectively participate in the delivery of services. E-governance projects like 'Bhoomi', Gyandoot, `FRIENDS', e-seva etc. and most of the government websites, have a feedback section helping stakeholders to participate directly with the delivery system by passing the intermediaries. The information and communication technologies (ICT) are being increasingly used by the governments to deliver its services at the locations convenient to the citizens. The ICT applications attempt to offer the services to the citizens at their village door steps. The applications utilize the ICT offering improved and affordable connectivity and processing solutions. Several 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. The government of Madhya Pradesh has defined the vision as 'Seamless Society with Global opportunities'. The statement implies that there should be no islands of elitism and conclaves of wisdom in the information society of the future- where access to information and knowledge would be symmetric among all seekers and users. Every citizen must feel comfortable in accessing information through the facility of Technology- whether

directly or where essential, through public or private intermediaries. It is to create a confident society of the future that human resources should be developed in the State.

The government of India has formulated the National e-governance Action Plan (NeGP) that aims to expedite deployment of information technology in governance with a view to improving delivery of government services to citizens, business and stakeholders. The e-government vision of Madhya Pradesh is inline with the NeGP vision as it stresses the importance of reaching all sections of society with utmost convenience – efficiently and reliably. The e-government vision statement for the State of Madhya Pradesh is, "All government services accessible to the common man in his locality, throughout his life through a one-stop-shop (integrated service delivery) ensuring efficiency, transparency and reliability at affordable costs to meet the basic needs of the common man."

Gyandoot:

Gyandoot was the first rural intranet network in India set up in a remote district of the state, Dhar, in 2001.Through a network of 35 information centers, it has benefited nearly a million people across 311 Gram Panchayats in over 600 villages. The villagers are able to access 15 types of services including information like Mandi(Agricultural Marketing committee), prices of crops, copies of land records, grievance redressal, sending in e-mails in their language, application for assistance under government schemes, help health records accessed through the main hospital at Indore city etc. It is managed by trained local people and is being replicated in all the districts of the state. This project has received wide recognition and has been awarded Stockholm Challenge IT award 2000. It has also received the Computer Society of India IT award in the category " Best IT usage in India".

E-krishi vipnan (EKVI)

EKVI project involves use of ICT for automation of Mandi Board Head office, 7 Regional offices, 231 Mandis and their associated Sub-market yards and Nakas (Inter-state barriers) across the State of Madhya Pradesh. Mandi Board has computerized its activities which includes Computerization of Mandi Activities and Integration of Mandi network through Internet/Virtual Private Network (VPN). Rates of various commodities all over the state are computerized and are made available on the TV screen at Mandi, which has become a great helping hand for the farmers. The project received the Golden Icon Award 2004-05 instituted by the Government of India at the Bhubaneswar e-governance conference.

Computerization in Treasury operations

District treasuries in Madhya Pradesh are computerized and are networked with the state headquarters and connected with the Banks. This has facilitated information access and data transmission on-line bringing greater transparency to treasury operation. At the initial state this system is being applied in the commercial tax and transport sectors. After establishment of cyber treasury entrepreneurs, traders as well as consumers and all other concerned would not have to make trips to offices and treasury.

Computerization in Commercial Taxes Department

All 52 offices of the Commercial tax department are networked across the state. A database of all tax payers and other business establishments is being created to facilitate on-line payment; check post activities are also networked and automated. The Madhya Pradesh commercial taxes (MPCT) department is among the largest in the country, with 96 offices in 60 locations and a team of 5,000 employees. It collects around Rs 35 billion annually and is one of the biggest single revenue sources for the state government.

Smart cards in Transport Department

The Department of Transport has initiated computerization of its activities (issue of Driving licenses, Vehicle Registration, permits etc) with Smart Card interface on a build own operate (BOO) basis; all the 39 office locations are being networked with the cenral office in Gwalior. All 45 Field offices are connected to Central database on an offline basis using DSL/ISDN and PSTN connectivity.

Computerization in Land Records department

Madhya Pradesh has completed data entry, of land records in almost all the villages of the State. Land records computerized in the State following which farmers are now being provided the computerized copies of the Government documents like Khasra. The computerization of land records has been completed after nine years of hard work. Of the 55,897 villages in the State, the data entry work of land records has already been completed in 55,677 villages. The pilot project for computerization of land maps has already been completed. The tables of agriculture computing, weather and crop reports, information of rainfall, cattle census, minor irrigation projects, statements of land settlement, tables of land inspection works of Patwaris for scientific scrutiny etc have also been computerized.

Suggestions:

- Training camp for citizens & users should be arranged in every village. Without having proper awareness among the users of the e-governance system it is not possible to set up

an effective e-governance system. Users should have enough knowledge about the e-governance system and its services. In that case government should takes necessary steps to increase the awareness among the users level like- arranging seminar-meeting, special training session, organizing workshops etc.

- E-Governance projects mostly developed in English language, majority of citizens do not understand English, so implementation of these projects in local languages is suggested. The software should prefer to use the local language for increasing the interest of user in new technology.

- For the implementation of the project, Government should provide adequate infrastructure & site for the services.

- The charges of internet usage are very high, start the kiosk in every village to provide internet facility as well as government related information.

- There should be up gradation of Government website once in a week.

Conclusion:

E-government is a function of citizen, government and technology. The purpose of implementing E-governance is to enhance good governance. Governments Worldwide have been making efforts for over 2 decades to use technology as an instrument to change to provide better services to citizens, facilitate business, and provide better governance and transparency. E-governance can very positively turn a paradigm shift as indicated above from traditional bureaucratic administration to a more responsive, open to democratic involvement and scrutiny, accountable and effective administration, have well designed procedures without bureaucratic red tape which many governments of the world are aspiring for a long time. People are now more aware about the political, social and economical issues that interests them and also about the implications of the actions made by their representatives. E-governance not merely provides information about various activities of a government but also involves citizens to participate in government's decision making process

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