E-GOVERNANCE: THE ROADMAP TO GOOD GOVERNANCE

CA Pradeep Ramchandra Thite

Abstract: As a form of public administration, E-Governance makes the use of communication and information technologies for enabling enhanced access and delivery of government services to benefit citizens, employees and management of urban local bodies, with the aim of strengthening the government's drive toward effective governance with increased transparency for efficient management of socio-economic resources for sustainable development of the nation. E-governance being the paradigm shift over the traditional public administration has a valuable potential of meeting good governance in our nation.

This paper is an attempt to understand the concept of e-governance, benefits of e-governance. It also attempts to unearth the issues and challenges of e-governance in Indian context.

Key words: e-governance, public administration, effective governance, information technology

INTRODUCTION

Good governance is a part of a development process which is participatory, transparent and accountable in characteristic where processes and structures guide political and socio-economic relationships, and the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable are heard in the decision-making processes regarding the allocation of resources. The emergence of the new information and communication technologies has all the attributes of enabling this process. **A** large number of initiatives have been undertaken by various State Governments and Central Ministries to lead in an era of e-Governance. Sustained efforts are being been made at multiple levels for improving the delivery of public services and for simplification of the process of accessing them. The e-governance aims at making Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets. It affirms efficiency, transparency, and reliability of such services at affordable costs to address the basic needs of the common man. To achieve this we require utilisation of the latest means of technology, communication and follow up to the rapid global developments and analyse the reasons for the failure and the success of E-governance programs and for encouraging the use of technology and increasing the number of users of computers and Internet tools effectively.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of the study is to understand the concept of e-governance, various components of e-governance and the benefits of e-governance. It also aims at throwing light on challenges in successful implementation of e-governance in Indian context.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The research study focuses on need for e-governance sustainable development of the nation and its benefit to various stakeholders. This paper helps to understand the challenges in success of e-governance. The paper also suggests the strategy for implementing the e-governance in Indian context.

Research methodology

The study is based on secondary data collected from books, journals and websites.

What is e- governance?

According to the World Bank, E-Government refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government. These technologies can serve a variety of different ends: better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, or more efficient government management. The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth, and/or cost reductions. E-Governance involves the use of ICT i.e. Information and Communication Technology for enhanced access to information and delivery of government services. E-Governance is a tool for good governance. The e-governance regime is a political decision. The switch over to e-governance requires change in attitude change in government officers and employees and a massive Government Process Reengineering. For productive exploitation of information technology the existing administrative processes are required to be studied

microscopically and after considering the loopholes they should be reengineered to ensure good governance. Adding computers to the system without adequate business processes reengineering will not result into efficient processes.

Four citizen centred groups, each providing opportunities to transform delivery of services, with their requisite infrastructure, that are targeted under e-governance are

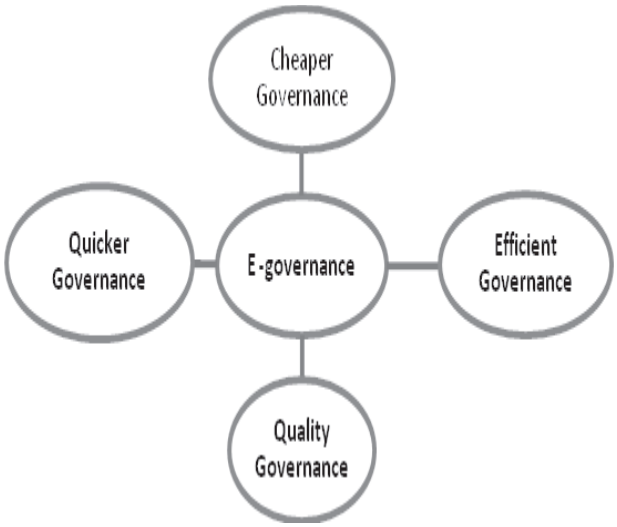
a) Individuals/ citizens: Government-to-citizens (G2C): an infrastructure which is easy to find, easy to use, one-stop point-of service making it easy for citizens to access high quality government services.

b) Businesses: government-to-business (G2B): an infrastructure aiming reduction in the burden of government on businesses by elimination of redundant collection of data and better leveraging e-business technologies for communication.

c) Intergovernmental: government-to-government (G2G): an infrastructure aiming at making it easier for states and localities, to meet reporting requirements and participate as full partners with the government in citizen services, with increased data availability and accuracy coupled with significant administrative savings.

d) Intra-governmental: internal efficiency and effectiveness (IEE): an infrastructure to make better use of modern technology for cost reduction and quality improvement in government administration, by using industry best practices in areas like supply chain management, financial management.

Why E-governance?: E-Governance improves government processes, connect citizens, and build interactions with and within a civil society. E governance involves replacement of current human-executed processes, which involve accepting, storing, processing, outputting or transmitting information, support to the current human-executed information processes and support to the new human-executed information processes.



These changes can bring benefits for good governance in the form of cheaper governance producing the same outputs at lower total cost, efficient Governance producing more outputs at the same total cost, quicker Governance producing the same outputs at the same total cost in less time, quality Governance producing the same outputs at the same total cost in the same time, but to a higher quality standard.

Components of E-governance

Strategy: A comprehensible strategy and implementation plan leading to the creation of an integrated system with avoidance of wastage of efforts and minimised chances of mistakes
Infrastructure: The Connectivity Infrastructure definition specifying the way of interconnection between various government offices and with external

entities. The technologies should be chosen after considering technical feasibility, economic considerations and criticality of requirements.
Hardware: Depending upon the specifications for end-user terminals and servers at various levels of administration.
Database Management: Beginning with the migration from paper based administration to paperless administration
Enabling Technologies: Technologies such as those for pervasive/mobile access, speech interface, security technologies and solutions, electronic transactions etc.
Applications: Carefully designed software used by the end users for their activities which may be standard applications with or without customization.
Middleware & Workflow tools: The integration tools required for defining complex applications that span across multiple simple applications or multiple levels of users/departments
Implementation Services: Required for development of applications, their integration and deployment. supported by ongoing maintenance and timely upgrading of hardware /software
Training: Employee Training to enable them to use the applications.
Maintenance and upgrading: Continuous process in development of e-governance solutions.

E–governance in India – the roadmap ahead: E-Governance in India has steadily evolved from computerization of Government Departments to initiatives that sum up the finer points of Governance, such as citizen centricity, service orientation and transparency. Lessons from previous e-Governance initiatives have played an important role in shaping the progressive e-Governance strategy of the country. Due cognizance has been taken of the notion that to speed up e-Governance implementation across the various arms of Government at National, State, and Local levels, a programme approach needs to be adopted, guided by common vision and strategy. This approach has the potential of enabling huge savings in costs through sharing of core and support infrastructure, enabling interoperability through standards, and of presenting a seamless view of Government to citizens. The Government of India has approved the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), comprising of 27 Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) and 8 components, on May 18, 2006. The Government has accorded approval to the vision, approach, strategy, key components, implementation methodology, and management structure for NeGP. However, the approval of NeGP does not constitute financial approval(s) for all the Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) and components under it. The existing or ongoing projects in the MMP category, being implemented by various Central Ministries, States, and State Departments would be suitably augmented and enhanced to align with the objectives of NeGP. The National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), takes a holistic view of e-Governance initiatives across the country, integrating them into a collective vision, a shared cause. Around this idea, a massive countrywide infrastructure reaching down to the remotest of villages is evolving, and large-scale digitization of records is taking place to enable easy, reliable access over the internet. The ultimate objective is to bring public services closer home to citizens, as articulated in the Vision Statement of NeGP.

E-governance infrastructure – Indian context

1) State Wide Area Network (SWAN): It is an advanced telecommunication infrastructure used for exchange of information and data between two or more geographically distant locations with the use of copper, optical fiber cable or wireless medium creating a highway for electronic transfer of information in the form of voice, video and data. Department of IT in Government of India is implementing an approved Scheme known as State Wide Area Network (SWAN) Scheme, envisaged to create such a connectivity in each State / UT, to bring speed, efficiency, reliability and accountability in overall system of Government-to-Government (G2G) functioning. When fully implemented, SWAN would work as a converged backbone network for voice, video and data communications across each State / Union Territory. SWAN is designed to cater to the governance information and communication requirements of all the State / Union

Territory Departments. When fully implemented, SWANs across the country are expected to cover at least 50000 departmental offices through 1 million (10 lacs) route kilometers of communication links.

2) Data Centre under NeGP: It is proposed to create State Data Centres for the States to consolidate services, applications and infrastructure to provide efficient electronic delivery of G2G, G2C and G2B services. These services can be rendered by the States through common delivery platform seamlessly supported by core Connectivity Infrastructure such as State Wide Area Network (SWAN) and Common Service Centre (CSC) connectivity extended up to village level. State Data Centre would provide many functionalities and some of the key functionalities are Central Repository of the State, Secure Data Storage, Online Delivery of Services, Citizen Information/Services Portal, State Intranet Portal, Disaster Recovery, Remote Management and Service Integration etc. SDCs would also provide better operation & management control and minimize overall cost of Data Management, IT Resource Management, Deployment and other costs.

3) National e-Governance Service Delivery Gateway (NSDG): It would act as a standards-based messaging switch and provide seamless interoperability and exchange of data across the government departments. NSDG will act as the nerve centre by handling large number of transactions helping in tracking and time stamping all transactions of the Government.

4) Common Services Centers (CSCs): They would provide high quality and cost-effective video, voice and data content and services, in the areas of e-governance, education, health, telemedicine, entertainment as well as other private services, offering web-enabled e-governance services in rural areas, including application forms, certificates, and utility payments such as electricity, telephone and water bills, creating a conducive environment for the private sector and NGOs to play an active role in implementation of the CSC Scheme, thereby becoming a partner of the government in the development of rural India. The PPP model of the CSC scheme envisages a 3-tier structure consisting of the CSC operator (called Village Level Entrepreneur or VLE) the Service Centre Agency (SCA), that will be responsible for a division of 500-1000 CSCs and a State Designated Agency (SDA) identified by the State Government responsible for managing the implementation over the entire State.

Number of Common Service Centres at Panchayat Level as on 31.3.2009	2009-2010		2010-2011		2011-12	
	Target	Achievement	Target	Achievement	Target	Achievement
36485	38000	39615	25000	17063	18000	3000

(Source:http://deity.gov.in/hindi/sites/upload_files/dithindi/files/DMU_Report_July_292011_pdf)

Issues of E-governance in India

CHALLENGES FOR E-GOVERNMENT IN INDIA

The customs of governance in India has been categorized by confidentiality, supremacy and corruption which need to be addressed with retribution if the majestic vision of e-Governance across India has to become a reality. Indian citizens are forced to move from one department to another, from one table to another for getting their work done. While initiatives for e-Governance have been originating from various directions, they are often at cross-purposes, recurring and uneconomical. Preparedness for E-Governance requires challenges like readiness of data systems infrastructure, existence of the legal infrastructure, institutional infrastructure, human infrastructure, technological infrastructure and most importantly the leadership and strategic thinking required for the implementation of the same.

The human challenge involves issue as to the acceptance of the change in processes which should be properly understood, accepted, internalized, adopted and improved to enable full advantages of the technology being adopted in the e-governance supported by training of the personnel at all levels of government organizations. The technology challenges might be in the form of independent decisions taken by different government organisations regarding acquiring hardware and software and due to lack of coordination between different departments; each department may be spending individually for the similar tasks.

The strategies for successful implementation of E-Governance are clarity of objective behind pursuing E-governance, clarity in vision and priorities for E-governance, clarity about the nature of E-governance to be implemented, strong political will to lead the e-governance initiative, proper selection of E-governance projects, efficient planning and management of E-government projects, efficient handling of resistance to change from within the government, measurement and communication of the progress/failure of a project under E-governance, strategic alliance with private sector, deliberate efforts to improve citizen participation in public affairs.

CONCLUSION

E-Governance is the shift from 'In line' to 'On line'. For successful e-governance the central and state governments must make intense efforts to complete the task of quicker and effective E-government programmes. Adequate policies and provisions in favour of computerization of all government departments' investments should be made. Computer leasing policy may be adopted to reduce initial heavy capital investments. Complete connectivity between various ministries and departments for electronic transfer of files and papers should be established through Internet. Inter governmental departmental database compatibility should be maintained. The e-seva to general public should be made available in local languages for optimum utility. For the same the change in the mindset of the government employees and enhancement of professional approach among them is required. Awareness about cyber laws among general public should be increased. The infrastructure for bridging the digital divide between the rural and urban India should be developed. The e-privacy and e-security issues should be properly and seriously tackled. E-governance models which are not beneficial to the rural delivery system will contribute too little for good governance. The ultimate objective of e-governance is to benefit rural India and bridge the digital divide. More political and organizational will for taking hard decisions is the need of the time.

REFERENCES

1. Monga, "E-government in India: Opportunities and challenges", JOAAG, Vol. 3. (2008)
2. Pankaj Sharma, "E-Governance", APH Publishing Corporation, New Delhi (2004)
3. Roadmap for E-government in the Developing World, "10 Questions E-Government Leaders Should Ask themselves", (2002)
4. Report of The working group on convergence and e-governance for the tenth five year plan (2002-2007) by Government of India, planning commission (2001)
5. Saxena, K.B.C. Reengineering public administration in developing countries. Long Range Planning, Vol. 29(5),(1996)
6. Sharma P.C., "e-Governance: The next chapter", Proceedings of the Second Roundtable on IT in Governance, March 12th, Hyatt Regency, New Delhi. (2002)
7. Subash Bhatnagar "e-Government: From Vision to Implementation", Sage Publications, (2004)
8. The E-government Handbook for Developing Countries, Center of Democracy and Technology (2002)
9. UN E-government Survey 2008, "From E-government to Connected Governance"
10. http://www.mit.gov.in/sites/upload_files/dit/files/DMUReport12_122010.pdf
11. http://go.worldbank.org/M1JHE0Z280
12. http://www.mit.gov.in/content/national-e-governance-plan
13. http://www.mit.gov.in/content/e-governance-infrastructure
14. http://www.mgsipap.org/egov-conference

***

CA Pradeep Ramchandra Thite
134/2, Plot no. 06, Siddhakala society, near BAIF,
Warje, Pune – 411058 (Maharashtra).
Research Scholar, Shivaji University, Kolhapur.
p.thite@gmail.com 9673098964