Concept of E-Governance : An overview

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Introduction

The advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has a high leveraged enabling tool for delivering of information based products and services in the public and private sector. Computer hardware, software, communication device and communication networks are the basic of an e-governance. The government uses two kinds of electronic networks in meeting public information needs namely, Intranet and Internet. The Intranet supports the internal values and operations of an organization and the Internet supports the external values and policies of the organization. E-governance is the commitment to utilize appropriate technologies to enhance governmental relationship both internal and external, in order to advance democratic expression, human dignity and autonomy, support economic development and encourage the fair and efficient delivery of services.

Conceptual meaning of governance and e-governance

Governance is the process of making collective public decisions for good of society and in the interest of the country. E-governance means techniques and technologies in managing and referring community based information services and products to the public. E-governance is the application of information technology to the government functioning in order to bring about Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent (SMART) governance. E-governance is a highly complex process requiring provision of hardware, software, networking and re-engineering of the procedures for better delivery of services. In e-governance, the interaction takes place virtually using internet based technology, thus reducing time and cost involved.

What is e-governance?

E-governance is beyond the scope of e-government. E-government is defined as delivery of government services and information to the public using electronic means, e-governance allows citizens direct participation of constituents in political activities going beyond government and includes e-democracy, e-voting etc. Hence the concept of e-governance will cover government, citizen's active participation, political parties, pressure groups, and parliament and judiciary functions. E-governance is not just about government website and e-mail. It is not just about service delivery over the internet. It is the application of information and communication technologies to transform the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of informational and transactional exchange between government as well as government agencies of national, state, municipal and local levels and citizens through access and use of information.

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Wikipedia defines e-governance as : The application of information and communication technology to enhance the effectiveness of a legislative, judiciary or administration either to improve efficiency or to change the relationship between citizen and government or both.

E-governance evolution: History and Present Status

Global shift towards increased deployment of IT by government emerged in the nineties, with the advent of the www. The technology as well as e-governance initiatives have come a long way since then. With the increase in internet and mobile connections, the citizens are learning to exploit their new mode of access in wide running ways. They have started expecting more and more information and services online from government and corporate organizations to further their civic, professional and personalities, thus creating abundant evidence that the new 'e-citizenship' is taking hold.

The efforts of the National Information Center (NIC) to connect all the district headquarters during the eighties was a very significant development. From the early nineties IT technologies were supplemented by ICT technologies extend its use for wider sectoral applications with policy emphasis on reaching out to rural areas and taking in greater inputs from NGOs and private sector as well.

Advantages of e-governance

E-governance offers a number of advantages for the government as well as the society. It shifts the center of power from human agencies to technology, which is easier to deal with. Some of these advantages are as follows.

a) Advantages for the public
     1. Faster, better, satisfactory
     2. Easy access to information
     3. Diminishes the changes of corruption and administrative delay.

b) Advantages for the government
     1. Cut down the cost.
     2. Surplus staff can be employed in other work.
     3. Reduces inefficiencies in office.
     4. Increases productivity.
     5. Enhance working time, as e-governance provides opportunity for timely 24 hours access of the public resources.
     6. Fixes the responsibility of officials.

Stages of e-governance development

1. Cataloguing : This is the first stage. It is very simple. In this stage, administration website is created. The department home pages have a description of the department and some links to the other pages.

2. Transaction : In this stage, citizens can perform transactions such as online payment of taxes, electricity and telephone bills and renewal of licenses and passport. Here customer moves from passive to active role.

3. Vertical Integration : The aim of this stage is to integrate the central and local systems within similar functionalities for cross referencing and checking.

4. Horizontal Integration : This stage of e-governance will facilitate 'one stop shopping' for the citizens. The system is horizontally integrated across different functional units. It will provide the facilities of communication of databases across these functional areas.

Technical Advancement : its impact on governance

The term 'technology' refers to how an organization transfers its input into output. Government is an organization or an institutional arrangement which transfers resources (input) into development (output). From the point of view of e-governance, the much discussed technology is ICT., which uses sophisticated electronic and convergent media. Along with the internet, they include community ratios, ratios, electronic mails, local area networks and wireless applications. A few impacts that technology can have on governance are as follows.

1) Single window clearances : In dealing with the clearances for business enterprises, a lot of time is needed as various departments are to be consulted. However this task has been simplified with the advent of technology. In single window clearance, various departments are now integrated through a computer network.

2) Team culture : The complex task processing a vast amount of information and materials requires exchange of information and creative idea. This is not possible in the traditional organizational set up.

3) Reduction of hierarchy : The use of technologies has reduce unnecessary paper works. The files can now be transferred from lower to higher level and vice versa. With the advent of ICT, the middle layer of management has to be a larger extent, lost its relevance.

4) Cutting process cost : Technological intervention also helps in galloping improves in the output by lessening both monetary and time burden. Computerization of the processes is an alternative to it.

5) Creating Empowerment : Technology ensures empowerment by true transfer of power, authority, responsibility and resources for process from their existing area to new ones. Generally this shift is to vulnerable sections of the society and can be treated as decentralization, making room for easy supervision.

6) Free flow of information : The success of democracy depends on how informed are its citizens about the functioning of the government. The more open the administration is, the lesser chances are there for corruption. Once the technology is used in administration and computers in government offices are interconnected, people get easy access to all the information.

7) Enforcing accountability : As the movement of files becomes transparent, it is easier to identify who legs behind in his duty. This helps in fixing out the responsibility of the employer, whereby the accountability of the administration is ensured.

8) Social purpose : If an officer is entrusted with both the routine and policy function, he will be more involved with routine activities. This will lead him to work mechanically. If he is relieved from the routine activities, he can give more time to important activities. This will develop a sense of purpose with his job, leading to reduced job satisfaction.

9) Security : A computer system at any time can be exposed to external attack. As the government transfers its core processes to the internet, it is becoming more vulnerable. In this case, protection is possible with anti-virus software, firewall at gateways.

10) IT department : With the implementation of e-governance, information technology department is becoming more and more important in government operations. Hence, professionalism is increasing in the IT department.

Dimensions of e-governance
Government to Citizen (G2C)

G2C will connect government to citizens by providing information for all. It will improve the government service by getting citizens' feedback and provide better services to the citizens through single point delivery mechanism. It deals with the relationship between government and citizens. E-governance allows government agencies to talk, listen, relate and promote unending communication with its citizens. G2C allows customers to access government information and services instantly, conveniently, from everywhere, by use of multiple channel. It also enables and reinforces their participation in local community life.

Government to Government (G2G)

In G2G, all the government missionaries are integrated to produce synergy among them. It will improve government processes by cutting cost, reduction in paper work, time cut, managing performances and making strategic connections within government. It covers a e-secretariat, e-police, e-court and state wise networks etc. It refers to the relationship among governmental organizations or with other foreign government organizations. Government depends on other levels of government within the state to effectively deliver services and allocate responsibilities. Online communication and co-operation allows government agencies and departments to hare database, resources etc.

Government to Business (G2B)

It will cover all the areas related to commercial activities like e-commerce and e-taxation. Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) is required for secure and authentic transactions. It consists of the electronic interactions between government agencies and private business companies everywhere, which are conducting business -to-business e-commerce in order to lower their costs and improve inventory control. The opportunity to conduct online transactions with government

reduces red tape and administrative stagnancy and simplifies regularity process, thus helping business to become more competitive.

Government to NGOs (G2N)

It will involve building various associations or interest groups (non-Governmental) that will ensure the betterment of the society. The interaction between government and citizens is essential to achieve G2N dimension of e-government. All the data should be electronically interchanged between citizens, as the citizen has right to get every government information, and governmental activities. Government encompasses a broad range of activities to civil society as well as NGO. As civil society organizations ry to have a visible footprint in the socio-economic field, they always maintain a continuous dialogue with the government and e-governance facilities. Through the applications of ICT, the civil society organizations influence the socio-economic policy of the government.

Consumer to Government (C2G)

It will involve the areas where the citizen interacts with the government such as elections, to cost the vote for the government, census to provide information about him and taxation to pay taxes to the government.

E-governance in Indian scenario

India is a nation of villages. According to the census data for 2011, there are 6,38,387 villages in India that represent more than 72 % of the total population. In a Indian participatory democratic society, e-governance can be used for good governance, enhancing democratization and citizen empowerment. In the age of information the states of India can utilize e-governance to implement the government's plans and programmes to the people. In this context, the government of West Bengol is committed to build a citizen-centric, inclusive and information-driven welfare society which strives to make available all the services offered by the government with minimum bureaucratic and procedural formalities. The state of kerala has applied mobile phones for the effective and efficient delivery of e-governance services to citizens. It has set up a unique short code 537252, which is reserved exclusively for the Kerala Government. Citizens of Kerala will get automatic SMS alert related to the status of applications submitted from this number.

India plays a pioneer role in implementing a large number of e-governance prototypes. The success of many of these projects is attributed to the work put in by young, technically sound Indian IT professionals who could execute projects despite of heavy odds. The support from many sections of the society (including the political leadership) over the past decade too, has been instrumental in the success of these projects. Following are some of the e-governance projects implemented by the various state governments.

SR.NO	STATE	TITLE
1	Andhra Pradesh	E-Seva
2	Bihar	Sales Tax Administration management Information
3	Chhattisgarh	E-Linking Project
4	Delhi	Automatic Vehicle Tracking System
5	Goa	Dharani Project
6	Gujarat	Mahiti Shakti
7	Haryana	Nai Disha
8	Himachal Pradesh	Lok Mitra
9	Karnataka	Bhoomi
10	Maharashtra	SETU

Summary

Government is a body of the authorities elected by the people. There should be transparency between the government and the people. E-governance plays a vital role in maintaining this transparency. Government interacts with the people by launching various e-governance projects. SETU, Nai Disha, Lok Mitra are some of these projects.

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