

ROLE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN GOVERNANCE

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Abstract : *This paper presents general background and evolution of e- governance. From the past era, governments all over the world have taken huge steps in the field of Information and Communication Technologies, ICT. But the actual goal achieved is still far behind what is actually needed by the customers like citizens, businessmen, etc. E-governance mainly focuses on the research tools and models that can help its customers for more efficient knowledge mining public administration and decision making process. This paper presents a brief review of the initiatives taken by the government and the strategies related with e- governance.*

Keywords- *governance ,ICT, initiatives, strategy*

Introduction

E-governance is regarded as the ICT-enabled route to achieving good governance since it integrates people, processes, information, and technology in the service of governance initiatives. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) play a key role in development & Economic growth of the Developing countries of the World. Political, Cultural, Socio-economic Developmental & Behavioral decisions today rests on the ability to access, gather, analyze and utilize Information and Knowledge. ICT is the conduits that transmit information and knowledge to individual to widen their choices for Economic and social empowerment. People around the Globe from few years from now will be carrying a handheld computer connected to the Web to get the information about the World at their fingertips. Government of India is having an ambitious objective of transforming the citizen-government interaction at all levels to by the electronic mode (e-Governance) by 2020.

Objectives

To explain the various types of government interactions in e- governance

To know what are the initiatives taken in this field

To explain the various strategies in the field of e-governance

Research methodology

The methodology of the study is based on secondary data from various journals, working papers, published books , websites etc.

E- GOVERNMENT AND E-GOVERNANCE

The terms e-government and e-governance are closely inter-related both of the terms are used to describe government's utilization of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to afford services to its citizens. Within the researcher people, there is an argue on the correct use of the two terms. While e-governance is the use of ICT to support in the administration or management of government, there E- government is the use of ICT to provide services in maintaining of government operations correctly. The term e- government will be used focusing on government or public services through the use of ICT .

Types of Government Interaction in e-governance.

G2G: Government to Government

G2C: Government to Citizen

G2B: Government to Business

G2E: Government to Employee

Some Initiatives in the same field

Government to Government (G2G) Initiatives:

Khajane Project in Karnataka: It is a comprehensive online treasury computerization project of the Government of Karnataka. The project has resulted in the computerization of the entire treasury related activities of the State Government and the system has the ability to track every activity right from the approval of the State Budget to the point of rendering accounts to the government. SmartGov (Andhra Pradesh): SmartGov has been developed to streamline operations, enhance efficiency through workflow automation and knowledge management for implementation in the Andhra Pradesh Secretariat.

National E-governance Plan

The National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) has been formulated by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DEITY) and Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) in 2006. The NeGP aims at improving delivery of Government services to citizens and businesses with the following vision: "Make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency & reliability of such services at affordable costs to realise the basic needs of the common man."

Government to Citizen (G2C) Initiatives:

Computerization of Land Records: In collaboration with NIC. Ensuring that landowners get computerized copies of ownership, crop and tenancy and updated copies of Records of Rights (RoRs) on demand.

Bhoomi Project: Online delivery of Land Records. Self-sustainable e-Governance project for the computerized delivery of 20 million rural land records to 6.7 million farmers through 177 Government-owned kiosks in the State of Karnataka

Gyandoot: It is an Intranet-based Government to Citizen (G2C) service delivery initiative. It was initiated in the Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh in January 2000 with the twin objective of providing relevant information to the rural population and acting as an interface between the district administration and the people.

Lokvani Project in Uttar Pradesh: Lokvani is a public-private partnership project at Sitapur District in Uttar Pradesh which was initiated in November, 2004. Its objective is to provide a single window, self-sustainable e-Governance solution with regard to handling of grievances, land record maintenance and providing a mixture of essential services.

Project FRIENDS in Kerala: FRIENDS (Fast, Reliable, Instant, Efficient Network for the Disbursement of Services) is a Single Window Facility providing citizens the means to pay taxes and other financial dues to the State Government. The services are provided through FRIENDS Janasevana Kendrams located in the district headquarters.

e-Mitra Project in Rajasthan: e-Mitra is an integrated project to facilitate the urban and the rural masses with maximum possible services related to different state government departments through Lokmitra-Janmitra Centers/Kiosks.

e-Seva (Andhra Pradesh): This project is designed to provide 'Government to Citizen' and 'e-Business to Citizen' services. The highlight of the eSeva project is that all the services are delivered online to consumers /citizens by connecting them to the respective government departments and providing online information at the point of service delivery.

Government to Business (G2B) Initiatives:

e-Procurement Project in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat:

To reduce the time and cost of doing business for both vendors and government.

MCA 21: By the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. The project aims at providing easy and secure online access to all registry related services provided by the Union Ministry of Corporate Affairs to corporates and other stakeholders at any time and in a manner that best suits them.

Advantages of e- governance

Speed: Technology makes communication speedier. Internet, Phones, Cell Phones have reduced the time taken in normal communication.

Cost Reduction: Most of the Government expenditure is appropriated towards the cost of stationary. Paper-based communication needs lots of stationary, printers, computers, etc. which calls for continuous heavy expenditure. Internet and Phones makes communication cheaper saving valuable money for the Government.

Transparency: Use of ICT makes governing process transparent. All the information of the Government would be made available on the internet. The citizens can see the information whenever they want to see. But this is only possible when every piece of information of the Government is uploaded on the internet and is available for the public to peruse. Current governing process leaves many ways to conceal the information from all the people. ICT helps make the information available online eliminating all the possibilities of concealing of information.

Accountability: Once the governing process is made transparent the Government is automatically made accountable. Accountability is answerability of the Government to the people. It is the answerability for the deeds of the Government. An accountable Government is a responsible Government.

Convenience: E-Government brings public services to citizens on their schedule and their venue.

Improved Customer Service: E-Government allows to redeploy resources from back-end processing to the front line of customer service. **Increased access to information:** E-Government improves the accessibility of government information to citizens allowing it become an important resource in the making the decisions that affect daily life and so it helps in empowerment of citizens

Disadvantages of e-governance

Electronic governments also consist on certain disadvantage. The main disadvantage of an electronic government is to move the government services into an electronic based system. This system loses the person to person interaction which is valued by a lot of people.

In addition, the implementation of an e-government service is that, with many technology based services, it is often easy to make the excuse (e.g. the server has gone down) that problems with the service provided are because of the technology.

The implementation of an e government does have certain constraints. Literacy of the users and the ability to use the computer, users who do not know how to read and write would need assistance. An example would be the senior citizens. In general, senior citizens do not have much computer education and they would have to approach a customer service officer for assistance. And also in case of rural people, it gives scope for middle man, who distort the information.

Studies have shown that there is potential for a reduction in the usability of government online due to factors such as the access to Internet technology and usability of services and the ability to access to computers

Even though the level of confidence in the security offered by government web sites are high, the public are still concerned over security, fear of spam from providing email addresses, and government retention of transaction or interaction history. There has been growing concern about the privacy of data being collected as part of UID project. The security of cyber space and misuse of data is still holding back the citizens to full adaptation of Aadhar card.

Strategies for E-Governance in India**1. To build technical infrastructure/framework across India**

India lacks a full fledged ICT framework for implementation of e-governance. Complete implementation of E-governance in India will include building technical Hardware and Software infrastructure. It will also include better and faster connectivity options. Newer connectivity options will include faster Broadband connections and faster wireless networks such as 3G and 4G. The infrastructure must be built by Government,

Private Sector as well as individuals. Infrastructure will also include promotion of Internet Cafes, Information and Interactive Kiosks. However while building technical infrastructure, disabled persons must also be considered. The technology implemented, shall incorporate the disabled persons.

2. To build institutional capacity

Apart from building technical infrastructure, the Government needs to build its institutional capacity. This will include training of Government employees, appointment of experts. Alongwith the Government has also to create an Expert database for better utilisation of intellectual resources with it. Apart from this, the Government has to equip the departments with hi-technology and has also to setup special investigating agency.

3. To build legal infrastructure

For better implementation of e-governance, the Government will need to frame laws which will fully incorporate the established as well as emerging technology. Changing technology has changed many pre-established notions; similarly the technology is growing and changing rapidly. It is important, that the Government makes laws which incorporate the current technology and has enough space to incorporate the changing future technology. These IT laws need to be flexible to adjust with the rapidly changing technology. Currently India has only the IT Act, 2000 which is mainly an E-Commerce legislation. India has also modified many laws to include electronic technology, however it is not sufficient to cover e-governance completely.

4. To build judicial infrastructure

Overall technological awareness in current Judges is very low. The judiciary as a whole needs to be trained in new technology, its benefits and drawbacks and the various usages. The judiciary may alternatively appoint new judges with new judges and setup special Courts to deal with the matters relating to ICT. The Government can also setup special tribunals to deal with matters relating with ICT.

5. To make all information available online

The Government has to publish all the information online through websites. This can be facilitated through centralised storage of information, localisation of content and content management. The information of government is public information, therefore the citizens are entitled to know every piece of information of the Government, because the Government is of the People, by the People and for the People.

6. To popularise E-governance

Literacy percentage in India is alarming. The whole world is moving towards e-governance, but India still lacks in the literacy department. The people need to be educated and made e-literate for e-governance to flourish. There are very few e-literate people in India is very low. The Government needs to campaign for e-governance, increase people's awareness towards e-governance. Government can only encourage people to go online if it can make people feel comfortable with e-governance. This can be done through educating the people about the advantages of e-governance over physical governance. This can also be done through raising awareness of the leaders who can motivate the people to go online.

7. Centre-State Partnership

Indian setup is quasi-federal. Therefore Centre-State and inter-state cooperation is necessary for smooth functioning of the democratic process. This cooperation is also necessary for successful implementation of e-governance. This cooperation shall extend to Centre-state, inter-state and inter-department relationships. For the same the Government can setup a Central Hub like the current Government of India portal, for accessing the information of all the organs of the central government and also all the state government. The states can cooperate with the Centre to create a National Citizen Database.

8. To set standards

Finally it is important to set various standards to bring e-governance to the quality and performance level of private corporate sector. The Government of India is currently working on standards management and has various drafts prepared for the same. These standards include following: Inter-operability standards, Security standards, Technical standards, Quality standards. Government websites in India currently have no uniform standard. Many Government of Maharashtra websites differ in standards within even two of its webpages. There is no set standard as to quality of the information, document, the formats, etc. It is very important for the Government to set uniform national standards to be followed by all the Governments and agencies.

Conclusion

We have seen how the concept of e-governance has evolved in Indian scenario and how much it is required for transparency and accountability on the part of government and at the same time it is also a toll to increase the participation of people in policy making by empowering them with the right information at right time. The penetration of internet, telecommunication services in India has increased in the last decade and this gives a ray of hope to the citizens of India to fight with the long persisting problems of poverty, corruption, regional disparity and unemployment. But at the same time, due to slow pace of project completion, red-tape and resistance from the side of government employees and citizens too has not given the desired result.

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