



## E GOVERNANCE PRACTICES IN INDIA: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

**Dr. B. Praveen Kumar**

*Faculty in the Department of Public Administration, Telangana University, Telangana.*

### Introduction

The “e” in e-Governance stands for ‘electronic’. Thus, e-Governance is basically associated with carrying out the functions and achieving the results of governance through the utilization of ICT (Information and Communications Technology).

While Governance relates to safeguarding the legal rights of all citizens, an equally important aspect is concerned with ensuring equitable access to public services and the benefits of economic growth to all. It also ensures government to be transparent in its dealings, accountable for its activities and faster in its responses as part of good governance.

However, this would require the government to change itself – its processes, its outlook, laws, rules and regulations and also its way of interacting with the citizens. It would also require capacity building within the government and creation of general awareness about e-Governance among the citizens.

### Defining e-Governance

Although the term ‘e-Governance’ has gained currency in recent years, there is no standard definition of this term. Different governments and organizations define this term to suit their own aims and objectives. Sometimes, the term ‘e-government’ is also used instead of ‘e-Governance’. Some widely used definitions are listed below:

#### 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.”

Thus, the stress here is on use of information technologies in improving citizen-government interactions, cost-cutting and generation of revenue and transparency.

Basically, e-Governance is generally understood as the use of Information and communications Technology (ICT) at all levels of the Government in order to provide services to the citizens, interaction with business enterprises and communication and exchange of information between different agencies of the Government in a speedy, convenient efficient and transparent manner. **Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam**, has visualized e-Governance in the Indian context to mean:

“A transparent smart e-Governance with seamless access, secure and authentic flow of information crossing the interdepartmental barrier and providing a fair and unbiased service to the citizen.”

Several State Governments have taken various innovative steps to promote e-Governance and have drawn up a roadmap for IT implementation and delivery of services to the citizens online. The applications that have been implemented are targeted towards providing Government to Citizen (G2C), Government to Business (G2B) and Government to Government (G2G) services with emphasis on use of local language. Every State has the flexibility of identifying up to five additional State-specific Mission Mode Projects (relevant for economic development within the State). In cases where Central Assistance is required, such inclusions are considered on the advice of the concerned Line Ministries/ Departments. States have MMPs on Agriculture, Commercial Taxes, e-District, Employment Exchange, Land Records, Municipalities, Gram Panchayats, Police, Road Transport, Treasuries, etc. Apart from MMPs, the States have other e-Governance initiatives also Provides efficient storing and retrieval of data, instantaneous transmission of information, processing information and data faster than the earlier manual systems, speeding up governmental processes, taking decisions expeditiously and judiciously, increasing transparency and enforcing accountability. It also helps in increasing the reach of government – both geographically and demographically.

### Types of Interactions in e-Governance

e-Governance facilitates interaction between different stake holders in governance. These interactions may be described as follows:



- **G2G (Government to Government):** In this case, Information and Communications Technology is used not only to restructure the governmental processes involved in the functioning of government entities but also to increase the flow of information and services within and between different entities. This kind of interaction is only within the sphere of government and can be both horizontal i.e. between different government agencies as well as between different functional areas within an organization, or vertical i.e. between national, provincial and local government agencies as well as between different levels within an organization. The primary objective is to increase efficiency, performance and output.
- **G2C (Government to Citizens):** In this case, an interface is created between the government and citizens which enables the citizens to benefit from efficient delivery of a large range of public services. This expands the availability and accessibility of public services on the one hand and improves the quality of services on the other. It gives citizens the choice of when to interact with the government (e.g. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week), from where to interact with the government (e.g. service centre, unattended kiosk or from one's home/workplace) and how to interact with the government (e.g. through internet, fax, telephone, email, face-to-face, etc). The primary purpose is to make government, citizen-friendly.
- **G2B (Government to Business):** Here, e-Governance tools are used to aid the business community – providers of goods and services – to seamlessly interact with the government. The objective is to cut red tape, save time, reduce operational costs and to create a more transparent business environment when dealing with the government. The G2B initiatives can be transactional, such as in licensing, permits, procurement and revenue collection. They can also be promotional and facilitative, such as in trade, tourism and investment. These measures help to provide a congenial environment to businesses to enable them to perform more efficiently.
- **G2E (Government to Employees):** Government is by far the biggest employer and like any organization, it has to interact with its employees on a regular basis. This interaction is a two-way process between the organization and the employee. Use of ICT tools helps in making these interactions fast and efficient on the one hand and increase satisfaction levels of employees on the other.

#### **E- Governance in India**

In India, the main thrust for e-Governance was provided by the launching of NICNET in 1987 – the national satellite-based computer network. This was followed by the launch of the District Information System of the National Informatics Centre (DISNIC) programme to computerize all district offices in the country for which free hardware and software was offered to the State Governments. NICNET was extended via the State capitals to all district headquarters by 1990. In the ensuing years, with ongoing computerization, tele-connectivity and internet connectivity established a large number of e-Governance initiatives, both at the Union and State levels.

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.”

#### **Central Government Initiatives as Mission Mode Projects (MMP)**

- **e-Office:** The Government of India has recognized the need to modernize the Central Government offices through the introduction of Information and Communications Technology. e-Office is aimed at increasing the usage of work flow and rule based file routing, quick search and retrieval of files and office orders, digital signatures for authentication, forms and reporting components.
- **Immigration, Visa and Foreigner's Registration & Tracking (IVFRT):** India has emerged as a key tourist destination, besides being a major business and service hub. Immigration Check Post is the first point of contact that generates public and popular perception about the country, thus necessitating a state of the art system for prompt and user-friendly services.
- **UID:** The unique identification project was conceived as an initiative that would provide identification for each resident across the country and would be used primarily as the basis for efficient delivery of welfare services. It would also act as a tool for effective monitoring of various programs and schemes of the government.
- **Pensions:** The pensions MMP is primarily aimed at making the pension/ retirement related information, services and grievances handling mechanism accessible online to the needy pensioners, through a combination of interactive and non-interactive components, and thus, help bridge the gap between the pensioners and the government.



- **Banking:** The Banking MMP is yet another step towards improving operational efficiency and reducing the delays and efforts involved in handling and settling transactions. The MMP which is being implemented by the banking industry aims at streamlining various e-services initiatives undertaken by individual banks. Implementation is being done by the banks concerned, with the banking Department providing a broad framework and guidance.
- **Posts:** Modernization of Postal Services has been undertaken by the Department of Posts through computerization and networking of all post offices using a central server-based system, and setting up of computerized registration centers (CRCs).

#### State Mission Mode Projects

- a) **e-Governance in Municipalities:** It is a unique initiative of the Government of India conceptualized under the umbrella of the overall National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) and the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (Jnnurm) aimed at improving operational efficiencies within Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).
- b) **Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems:** Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS) MMP aims at creating a comprehensive and integrated system for enhancing the efficiency and effective policing at all levels and especially at the Police Station level through adoption of principles of e-Governance, and creation of a nationwide networked infrastructure for evolution of IT-enabled state-of-the-art tracking system.
- c) **Public Distribution System:** Computerization of the PDS is envisaged as an end-to-end project covering key functional areas such as supply chain management including allocation and utilization reporting, storage and movement of food grains, grievance redressal and transparency portal, digitization of beneficiary database, Fair Price Shop automation, etc.
- d) **Health:** ICT for programme management has been undertaken by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare in the Mother and Child Tracking System (MCTS) programme and the Ministry envisages a more comprehensive use of ICT including for Hospital Information Systems, supply chain management for drugs and vaccines, providing ICT tools to ASHA and ANM workers, programme management of National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), etc through this MMP.
- e) **e-Panchayat:** The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are saddled with the problems of inadequate physical and financial resources, technical capabilities and extremely limited computerization. As a result, the potential of PRIs as the preferred delivery channel for the schemes of State and Centre as well as for citizen services has not been fully realized. While some computerization efforts for PRIs have been made by NIC over the years, the e-Governance revolution sweeping the country has not touched the PRIs yet in significant measure. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India has therefore decided to take up the computerization of PRIs on a mission mode basis.
- f) **e-District:** e-District is one of the 31 Mission Mode Projects under National e Governance Plan (NeGP) with the DIT, GoI being the nodal ministry. This project aims at providing support to the basic administrative unit i.e. District Administration by undertaking backend computerization to enable electronic delivery of high volume citizen centric government services which would optimally leverage and utilize the three infrastructure pillars of State Wide Area Networks (SWAN), State Data Centers (SDC) and Common Service Centers (CSCs) to deliver services to the citizen at his doorsteps.

#### Following are the 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.

### Conclusion

It is evident from above discussion that objectives of achieving e-governance and transforming India goes far beyond mere computerization of standalone back office operations. It means, to fundamentally change as to how the government operates, and this implies a new set of responsibilities for the executive and politicians. It will require basic change in work culture and goal orientation, and simultaneous change in the existing processes. Foremost of them is to create a culture of maintaining, processing and retrieving the information through an electronic system and use that information for decision making. It will require skilled navigation to ensure a smooth transition from old processes and manual operations to new automated services without hampering the existing services. This can be achieved by initially moving ahead in smaller informed initiatives in a time bound manner and avoiding large and expensive steps without understanding the full social implications. Every small step thus taken should be used to learn about hurdles and improve upon the next steps, both in terms of direction and magnitude. The proposed changes are likely to be met with a lot of inertia which can not be overcome by lower and middle level officials with half hearted attempts to diffuse the technology. The change in the mindset to develop and accept the distributed and flat structured e-governance system is required at the top level system to beat the inertia. 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. Although there is a criticism on e-governance practice but the e-governance policy and practices in India definitely improved service delivery and saved time and cost of citizen.

### References

1. C.S.R. Prabhu, E-Governance: Concepts and Cases Studies, Prentice Hall of India, 2004.
2. Darwish, A. M. "Egypt: From e-Government to e-Governance The Road to Fast Pace Development", ICEGOV 2008.
3. Dey, Bata K. (2000), "E-governance in India: Problems, Challenges and Opportunities – A Futures Vision", Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol. XLVI, No.
4. Ghosh, A. , "Initiatives in ICT for Rural Development: an Indian Perspective", Global Media Journal-Indian Edition" Vol. 2 No. 2, 2011.
5. Kalsi, N. S. , Kiran, R. and Vaidya, S. C. , "Effective e-Governance for good governance in India", International Review of Business Research Papers Vol. 5 No. 1, January 2009, 212-229.
6. Kochhar, S., G. Dhanjal (2004). "From governance to e-governance: An initial assessment of some of India's best projects, Technical Report, New Delhi: Skoch Consultancy Services.
7. Mahajan, P. , "E-Governance initiatives in India with Special Reference to Punjab", Asia-Pacific Journal of Social Sciences, Vol. I(1), Jan-June 2009, 142-155.
8. Singh, S. "Promoting e-Governance through Right to Information: a case study of India", International Journal of Scientific & Engineering Research, Vol. 1, Issue 2, November 2011.