E-Governance Opportunities and Challenges in India

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Abstract

The emergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has provided means for faster and better communication, retrieval of data and utilization of information to its users. E-Governance is basically the application of ICT to provide government services to the citizens through internet. Public administration, governed by bureaucratic structures built on rationale principles, that dominated the twentieth century, has failed to respond to the changing requirements of the present times. 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. This new paradigm has brought about a revolution in the quality of service delivered to the citizens. It has ushered in transparency in the governing process; saving of time due to provision of services through single window; simplification of procedures; better office and record management; reduction in corruption; and improved attitude, behaviour and job handling capacity of the dealing personnel. In developing countries like India, where literacy level is very low and even most of the people are living below poverty line, people are not even aware about the benefits of e-Governance activities and people do not use Information and Communication technologies to a much extent, there exist a number of problems to implement e-Governance activities. There are a large number of obstacles in implementation of e-Governance in India. These can be categorized under the following titles: Environmental and Social Challenges, Economical Challenges and Technical Challenges. This is the main reason for Environment and social Challenges. Interoperability is the ability of systems and organizations of different qualities to work together and this causes technical challenge.

Key Words: Accountability, E-Governance, Implementation, Information Technology, Transparency.

INTRODUCTION

Growth and cost reductions'.

Governance is an ancient term taken from the Greek word KEBERNON, which means to steer. It is referred to as use of internet by the government to provide its services to the citizens i.e customers, businesses and other stakeholders. The rise of the digital society, the internet and affordable computing has brought about a shift from traditional government offices with paper-based processes towards electronic resources such as the web and intranets. This change has affected not only citizens and businesses, but also the public administrations of whole countries. E-government is not about systems and specifications, but is ultimately about how society will develop. It is this challenge that

drives governments to look to internet technology to raise the bar in public services – reducing costs while improving relationships with citizens.

According to the World Bank : E-Governance refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies (Such as WAN, The Internet and mobile computing) that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses and other arms of the 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, revenue In the present scenario electronic world is at its advance stage. Therefore government has also started managing itself electronically .This concept is referred as E-Governance-Governance has grown manifold with the advancement in information and communication technology .It has changed the whole way of interaction between citizens and government. The aim of E-Governance is to provide SMART (Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsible and Transparent) Government. AHSHAYA in Kerala was the first project to start E-Governance. It is a social and economic catalyst focusing on the various aspects of e-learning-transaction, e-governance, information and communication. The popularity of E-Governance is worldwide. Many developed and developing countries have taken useful measures for the expansion of E-Governance to make the working of their government more efficient, responsive and transparent. E-Governance includes all those services for which citizens are dependent on government internet. E-Governance is based on these four pillars
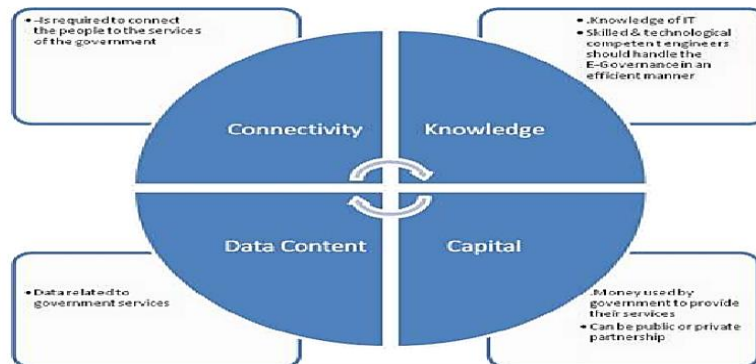

Fig 1

Models of E-Governance

Services rendered through E-Governance can be utilized by citizens, businessman, Government and employees.

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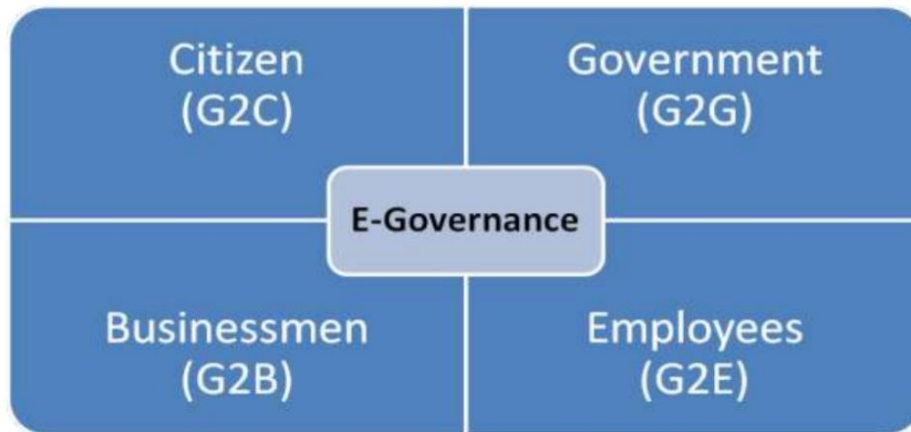
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Fig 2

1.1 Models of E-Governance

Services rendered through E-Governance can be utilized by citizens, businessman,Government and employees. Fig 2 For the effective utilization of governrnent services various models of E-Governance have been developed. Four most effective models of E-Governance are:

   a. **Government to Citizens (G2C)**

This model of E-Governance refers to those government services which are for citizens and are used by them as and when required

• Online bills payment

• Online registration of applications

• Land records keeping

• online filling of complaints

   b. **Government to Government (G2G)**

This model refers to the services which are shared between government departments or agencies

   •   Information shared between the police departments of various states

   •   Financial and budgetary work of government

   •   Exchange of government documents related to certain preparations, approval ,storage etc.

   c. **Government to Businessmen (G2B)**

This model refers to the services which are shared between private sector and government in order

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to smoothen the communication between government and businessmen

- Tax Collection

- Patent approval and rejection

- Payment of bills and penalty

- Sharing of rules and data

- Filling of complaints if any

d. Government to employees (G2E)

This model helps in increasing the transparency between government and its employees. Through this model both government and its employees can keep check on each other's working

- Data related to attendance, payroll etc. can be shared through this model

- Filling of employee complaints and their dissatisfaction

- Rules and regulations can be shared

- Payment and working record of employees can be checked

Review of Literature:

Sanjay Kumar Dwivedi & Ajay Kumar Bharti (2010), In their paper authors have discussed about the challenges faced by the government and public sector organizations all over the world in the administration of E-Governance and to making it efficient and cost effective. Effective use of Information , Communication and technology (ICT) for e-governance for to providing proper services to citizen has also been studied. Findings of their research are that E-Governance has been considered as a high priority agenda in India and it was also found out that E-governance is a good governance.

Richard Heeks (2001) studied the effect of new information and communication technologies and its significant contribution to the achievement of good governance goals. The paper outlines the three main contributions of e-governance: improving government processes (e-administration); connecting citizens (e-citizens and e-services); and building external interactions (e-society).

According to the Kuldeep Vats , Shravan Sharma, Amit Rathee [2012] in International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer Science and Software Engineering states that the following 20 Country is the top -most E-Governance which was illustrated as below:-

The study by Danish Dada (2006) provides a review of academic literature on the failure of e-governance in developing countries. Drawing from extensive research on the topic conducted by Richard Heeks, the paper suggests that there exist wide gaps between the current reality in developing countries and the future of e-governance systems.

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Objective of Study:

- Challenges faced during the implementation of E-Governance in India.

- Strategies taken to enhance the effectiveness of E-Governance.

Research Methodology

Secondary data is used to collect the information related to the study.Various Indian Government websites and researches done in this area have been used to collect the data related to E-Governance.

Analysis And Findings

The data collected was analysed on the basis of objectives taken to study the different aspects of E-Governance

Challenges in the implementation of E-Governance in India:

There are large number of challenges in front of the various elements involved in implementation of E-Governance in India.
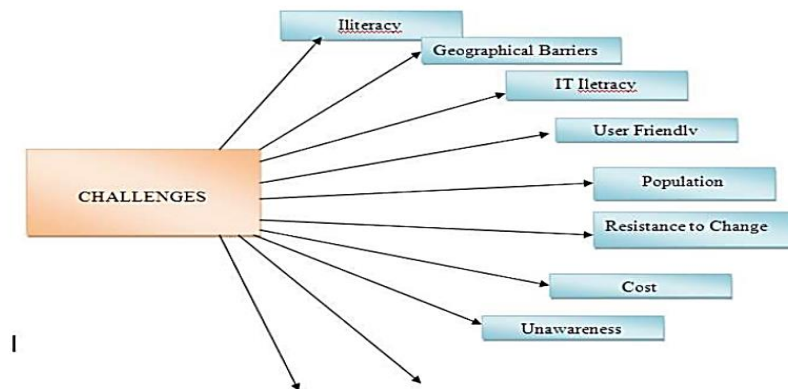
Illiteracy: Government has to take efforts to increase the literacy rate especially in rural areas. In India still there are many areas where citizens can read but cannot write therefore, they are not able to use government services effectively.

Geographical Barriers: Government network has to go to those areas also which are not suitable to live even. Language is another geographical barrier. All the government forms are in English and many people do not even know this language.

IT literacy rate: E-governance is an outcome of fast and rapid advancement in the field of Information, Communication and Technology .Therefore inorder to make E-Governance effective citizens should be well versed with the technology but the knowledge of technlogy is less among

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Indian people as a result they are not able to make effective use of projects launched by Indian Government

User Friendliness of Government websites: Government has to make their websites user friendly so that citizens can use it without any problem

Population: The population in India is very much therefore it is difficult to implement the E-Governance. However after the effort of government of providing Unique Identification to citizens this challenge is minimising

Resistance to change: People are not ready to change as E-Governance means becoming paperless and shifting to Computers and this requires learning of new things. The resistant to change phenomenon can explain much of the hesitation that occurs on the part of constituents in moving from a paper based to a Web-based system for interacting with government.

Cost: Cost is one of the most important prohibiting factor that comes in the path of e-governance implementation particularly in the developing countries like India where most of the people living below the poverty line. Elected officers and politician don't seem to be interested in implementing e-governance

Unawareness: Most of the people are unaware about the services provided by the government for their facility. However electronic media like Radio, T.V etc. are used to enhance the awareness of the services.

Economic issues

These are mainly concerned with return of investment and protect of the previous ones. Cost of implementation, operational and evolutionary maintenance must be low enough to guarantee a good cost/benefit ratio.

a) Funding: Funding is the main issue in project implementation that are part of e-Governance initiatives. The projects need to be funded either through the Government sector or through the private sector.

b) Management of Change: The Government services are deliverd to its stakeholders through the electronic media. These media would necessitate procedural and legal changes in the decision and delivery making processes. This requires fundamental changes in Government decision management. These changes need to be accepted by the Government, citizens and various interests groups like Employees unions.

c) Delivery of services: Another major issue is the ability of citizens to access these services. The penetration of PCs and Internet is very low in India. So some framework needs to be there for delivery of the e-Services that would be accessible to the poorest of the poor.

Technical challenges

- Interoperability:

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Interoperability is the ability of systems and organizations of different qualities to work together. The e-Governance applications must have this characteristic so that then wly developed and existing application scan be implemented together.

- Scale of applications:

e- Governance projects have to be designed to scale from the day one. E-Governance is supposed to affect every citizen of the country, so e-Governance applications must have the scale to interface with every citizen.

- Multimodal Interaction:

Multimodal interaction provides the user with multiple modes of interfacing with a system. An e-Government application can be really effective if its users can access it using different devices.

E-Governance Framework in India

GOI has taken a pro-active role to provide e-enabled services to the citizens through e-Governance. All the information regarding the Government and its transactions will be available on central portal called "The e-India portal". This portal will be internally connected to different Government of India portals and different state portals. All the G2G, G2C and G2B transactions will take place through this portal. The connectivity to this portal will be through Internet, LAN, WAN, Intranet for the Government organizations, where as the connectivity will be through internet, mobile telephone networks, wireless networks, home PCs, Integrated Citizen service centers, kiosks and DTVs for citizens and businesses. e-Governance framework that includes back-ends (databases of different government agencies, service providers, state governments etc.), middleware and front-end delivery channels (home PCs, mobile phones, kiosks, integrated citizen service centers etc) for citizens and businesses. The middleware comprises of communication and security infrastructure, gateways and integrated services facilitating integration of inter-departmental services.   This Core Infrastructure such as State Wide Area Networks, Data Centers.

E-Governance Model

All government services can be classified under one of the three fundamental categories: Informational, Interactive and Transactional. Governments generate huge volumes of information, which is organized and regularized. The Internet and other advanced communication technologies can bring this information quickly and more directly to citizens. The primary objective of all government initiatives is to provide the citizen with an efficient alternative medium for interacting with public sector service providers. Interactive e-government involves two-way communications, starting with basic functions like e-mail contact information for government officials or feedback forms that allow users to submit comments on legislative or policy proposals. The next step involves transaction between the government and citizens. A transaction website offers direct link to government services available at any time. This will remove the citizen"s hassle of standing in a long queue to pay bills or to renew ID cards etc. GOI has come up with a similar model as that of global model for its e-Governance initiative. This model consists of four phases like

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information collection, interaction, transaction and integration. The difficulty will increase from phase to phase.

- In this model there are four stages.

- In the first stage, Information is collected and is made available to the Citizens in the form of websites. This information will be regularly collected and updated.

- The next stage is the communication or interaction stage. The citizens will be able to download forms, contact officials and make appointments and requests online. Previously this would have been only possible with long queues near counters.

- The third stage is the transaction stage. Here the citizens can do transactions with the government through online i.e., pay bills, reserve tickets online, and finalizes decisions etc., without going to the government offices.

- The fourth and the final stage is the integrated or transformation stage. A total seamless integration of e-functions and services across administrative and departmental boundaries takes place. i.e., the citizen can interact with the government at a single point and can transact with the government.

Strategies taken to Enhance Effectiveness of E-Governance

Fig 6

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Training Related to E-Governance: Both the implementing agency as well as user should be given prior training related to the E-Governance and services rendered by government.

Assessing the Training Needs: Government should identify to whom training is to be given, how it will be given and who will give the training.

Database maintenance: Government should maintain database of resources of E-Governance which can be used as and when required.

Continuous effort: For the effective implementation of E-Governance continuous efforts should be taken by different agencies.

Team Management: Teams including key persons directly involve in effective implementation of the E-Governance should be made.

Knowledge Management: All the information related to the E-Governance should be placed at one place.

E Government Iniatives in India:

The Government of India kick started the use of IT in the government in the right earnest by launching number of initiatives. First the Government approved the National E-Governance Action plan for implementation during the year 2003-2007. The plan is an attempt to lay the foundation and provide impetus for long-term growth of e-governance within the country. It proposed to create the right governance and institutional mechanisms at the centre, state and local levels to provide a citizen centric and business centric environment for governance. The Government has given approval in-principle to the plan and overall programme content; implementation approach and governance structure. While endorsing the plan, it was observed that weight age must be given for quality and speed of implementation in procurement procedures for IT services; suitable system of motivating the states for quick adoption be incorporated; provision of delivery of services to the citizens through a single window should be encouraged; Out sourcing of services wherever and whenever feasible; efforts be made to promote and develop public private partnerships to utilize the full potential of private sector investments; and connectivity should be improved and extended up to the block level in the states. Apart from the action plan, the following measures have also been introduced:

- Establishment of the National Taskforce of Information Technology and Software Development in May 1998.

- Creation of Centre for e-governance to disseminate the best practices in the area of e-governance for the use by the Central and State Governments and act as a nodal center to provide general information on e-governance, national and international initiatives, and IT policies of the government.

- Developing e-office solutions to enable various ministries and departments to do their work electronically. Modules such as Workflow for Drafts for Approvals, e-file emoting,

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submission of reports, integrated personal information and financial accounting systems have been developed.

- Setting up of a High-Powered Committee (HPC) with Cabinet Secretary as its Chairman to Designating a Joint Secretary level officer as IT manager in every Ministry/ Department.

Conclusion:

As the usage of Information Technology is growing very fast, Indian government is making many efforts to provide services toits citizens through e-Governance. There are many opportunities available to implement e governance in India. Although Indian government is spending a lot of money on e-Governance projects but still these projects are not successful in all parts of India. Unawareness in people, local language of the people of a particular area, privacy for the personal data of the people etc. are main challenges which are responsible for the unsuccessful implementation of e Governance in India. Government must take some actions to make the people aware about the e-Governance activities so that people may take full advantage of these activities and e Governance projects can be implemented successfully. The participation of people can play a vital role in implementation of e-Governance in India. We must utilize the opportunities and face the challenges to implement e Governance in India.

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