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# A Critical Study of E-Governance in India

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## ABSTRACT

*E-Governance implies government functioning with the application of information and communication technology. India is a highly populated country used governance through traditional methods and techniques has become very difficult and hampers efficiency. E-Governance refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, business and other arms of government. It aims to make the interaction between government and citizens, government and business enterprises and inter agency relationships more friendly, convenient, transparent and inexpensive. These technologies can save 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. E-Governance benefits can be less corruption, increase transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth and cost reduction. E-governance bring in simplicity, efficiency and accountability in government and also extends reach of effective governance to a larger population. The government expenditure is appropriated towards the cost of stationary. Paper-based communication needs lots of stationaries, printers, computers, etc. which calls for continuous heavy expenditure. The internet and phones make communication cheaper, saving valuable money for the government. In India, there has been a lot of enthusiasm generated on the use of information technology for efficient governance. The application of information technology is halfhearted and it has delivered less than optional results. Lack of information on the Human resource requirements to support the central and state e-governance mission. Non-availability of specific standards, policy guidelines for e-governance. A huge amount of money is involved in implementation, operational and evolutionary maintenance tasks. E-governance and information for transforming the nature and style of India's public administration into a participative culture taking the people as partners in developing administration.*

**Keywords:** E-governance, Citizens, Government, Information, Technology.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation in governance can be said as new normal for the government's new innovation in technology and the increasing expectation to citizens for improved delivery of

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public services has made the government to move from traditional governance to digital governance development of internet and other digital innovation have encouraged the government to use the information communication technology tools in delivery of public services. The traditional governance is more dependent on the paperwork, which ultimately delays the administrative efficiency of government. In the use of digital technology in governance improves the efficiency of government and quick delivery of public services digitization of services place a significant role in the delivery of public services in the developed and technology countries. E governance model of every nation is designed according to the needs of citizens.

## **II. DEFINING E-GOVERNANCE**

World Bank explained the E governance as 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."

According to international organization, UNESCO, "Governance refers to the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs, including citizens' articulation of their interests and exercise of their legal rights and obligations. E-Governance may be understood as the performance of this governance via the electronic medium in order to facilitate an efficient, speedy and transparent process of disseminating information to the public, and other agencies, and for performing government administration activities".

The Council of Europe elaborated e-Governance as "the use of electronic technologies in three areas of public action such as relations between the public authorities and civil society, functioning of the public authorities at all stages of the democratic process and the provision of public services.

### **Significance of E-governance**

1. According to the World Bank, e-governance has following benefits

2. Simplifying the process of information accumulation for the citizens and business sector.
3. E-governance empower the citizens to collect information regarding the government policies and getting involved in the decision-making process.
4. E-governance strengthens the democratic values by ensuring citizen participation at all level in the governance process.
5. E-governance leads to automation of various services and insuring the excess of information to citizens regarding the public welfare policies.
6. E-governance insures accountability, transparency in government transactions and public sector agencies.
7. E-governance helps in the coordination and monitoring the activities of various government agencies.
8. Proper implementation of e-governance helps the citizens to avail the public services through online mode. Thus, saving the citizens time and money from having a physical visit to government office.
9. Adopting e-governance policy is useful for delivery of public services to citizens which in turn promotes better government communication with businesses and industries.
10. e-governance helps in bridging the trust gap between the government, citizens and business community. E- governance has facilitated the process of getting in touch with government bodies by various means like social media, common service centre etc.

### **III. E-GOVERNANCE: MAJOR CHALLENGES IN INDIA**

Poor people and poor infrastructure are major challenges in countries like India. It poses a major challenge in reaping the full benefits of service provision under e-governance. The various barriers can be enumerated as follows:

1. Poverty: Accessing Internet is a costly affair for the poor who struggle for their livelihood in developing countries like India. Required infrastructure in the form of installing the necessary telephone lines needed for internet or email access is equally unaffordable in most poor countries.
2. Technical illiteracy: There is general lack of technical literacy as well as literacy in countries like India.

3. **Language Dominance:** The dominance of English on the internet constrains the access of non-English- speaking population. In the case of India, 95 percent of the population does not speak English. Due to such overwhelming dominance of English over these communication channels, computers and the internet are quite useless in Indian villages.
4. **Unawareness:** There is general lack of awareness regarding benefits of E-Governance as well as the process involved in implementing successful G-C, G-G and G-B projects.
5. **Inequality:** Inequality in gaining access to public sector services between various sections of citizens, especially between urban and rural communities, between the educated and illiterate, and between the rich and poor.
6. **Infrastructure:** Lack of necessary infrastructure like electricity, internet, technology and ways of communications will affect the speed which delays the implementation.
7. **Impediments for the Re-Engineering process:** Implementation of E-Governance projects requires lots of restructuring in administrative processes, redefining of administrative procedures and formats which finds the resistance in almost all the departments at all the levels.

#### **IV. ISSUES IN E-GOVERNANCE**

Development of ICT helps in strengthening the democratic values in the country. ICT makes governance accountable, responsiveness, and transparent. Use of ICT plays a crucial role in building public trust among public, private and civil society organizations.

1. For e-governance to be executed efficiently, the government does not have enough committed manpower to manage the e-governance. to enhance the capacity building there is need of skilled human resource. This human resource should be knowledgeable, with communication and interpersonal skills. For implementing the e-government strategically, it is important to fill the readiness gap between the capacities needed to implement the e-governance and the existing condition of government capacities. There is lack of availability of personnels with appropriate background and technical skills. There is also lack of appropriate institutional framework to address the issue of capacity enhancement of personnels. There is

absence of policy guidelines related to skill enhancement of personnels. Absence of personnel policy affects the outcome of personnel policy.

2. There is a serious need to relook the management of current e-governance programmes. Many of the e- governance projects have failed in developed countries. The cost of these failed projects was too high but these projects delivered no outcome and neither it benefitted the citizens.
3. There is lack of clarity and purpose in the e-governance strategy of e-governance initiatives. There is conflict between “what the technology can deliver” and “what the organisation needs”. This conflict affects the effectiveness of e-governance projects.
4. ICT enabled projects require significant changes both in terms of input and output. To change an existing condition requires a strong leadership. there is lack of leadership and willingness at the political level and senior management level to introduce the required changes. People in leadership position do not have the required skills to exercise the effective leadership of ICT enabled changes.
5. E-governance projects have failed to engage with the user’s needs. For e-governance project to be successful it is crucial the need of users to be identified. Every service requires different users, different attitude and different response to users’ problem. Therefore e-governance projects should work in close coordination with citizen’s needs.
6. In e-governance initiatives in public sector, there exists a lack of effective engagement with all the stakeholders. ICT enabled public sector projects involves many stakeholders like – service users, suppliers, delivery partners in public and private sector, bureaucrats, politicians, and the media. As there is no coordination between the stakeholders it increases the chances of failure of e-governance projects.
7. There is lack of understanding and awareness about the enterprise architecture model and its benefits. For e- governance to be successful, issue of security, interoperability and scalable architecture are to be addressed. For citizen centric e-governance, there is a need for standard based architectures that is must for integration and interoperability of various citizens services across the central and state governments. Enterprise architecture represents the current or future structure, behaviour of an organizations work culture, processes, information systems, personnel information’s, various sub divisions, departments which are aligned to achieve organizational goals. There is no

one set standard for the interoperability of citizens services across the various departments.

8. E-governance when implemented strategically gives desired outcomes. The results of e-governance project in one department are not shared with another department. This leads to duplication of work, effort and financial resources. This duplication of work results in the rising of the financial cost of the e-governance projects.
9. There is lack of integration of different applications across the government departments, with each department following its own rules and regulations and management procedures. The government departments do not follow one uniform set of standards. This results in duplication of work and increases the financial burden on the government.
10. The issue of data security, data integrity and data reliability are mostly left to the discretion of the government departments or the private sector personnels who work on the e-governance projects. Many of these e-governance projects do not follow the security protocol related to data management. For the effective execution of the e-governance projects, it is important that to ensure the security of sensitive data of citizens, government transactions and complying with the international standard security protocol in e-governance.
11. Many of the citizens fear to use the online services, due to security issues like cyber frauds, data theft, phishing etc. when the government provides any online services to citizens, it must be authenticated that the concerned person is eligible to receive such online services. use of digital signatures can help in authenticating the service recipients.
12. With the centralization of data and data storage at one place there is fear of data being leaked in open market. It is important to secure the centralization of data and data storage through high level security protocol.
13. With the implementation of e-governance, there is large amount of data that generated due to digitization. Since the main focus is on execution of e-governance, less importance is given on the issue of data ownership and question of accountability in case of data theft. There is need to introduce necessary reforms for addressing the issues of data ownership and data accountability in e-governance.

E-governance should address the issue of “digital divide”. It is observed in many of our families, many of the elder family members do not use the internet enabled services while

other members use digital services. this has given the concept of digital divide. Family members may not be using the e-services due to fear arising from the cyber frauds etc.

## **V. E-GOVERNANCE INITIATIVES IN INDIA**

India has been able to provide good governance. The Government of India started the use of IT by launching number of initiatives. 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. The government in India has been continuously endeavoring to provide citizen services in a better manner. There have been several successful initiatives and many noteworthy projects have been undertaken in various states of India. Thus, a good beginning has been made to make e-government a reality in India. Sincere efforts are required to maintain the momentum. A number of state governments have initiated measures to introduce information technology and its tools in the governance process. Various e- government projects across India with a view to explore the natures of implementations of these projects, benefits imparted from them to citizens are noteworthy. Project Sustainable Access in Rural India (SARI) in the State of Tamil Nadu, in a tiny village called path in ettangudi, are experiencing IT revolution. They are using e-mails, voice mail and web cams. Around 30 other villages around path in ettangudi are also covered under SARI project. Chandigarh Administration in an effort to provide a responsive and effective administration has effectively relied on the Information Technology.

## **VI. E-GOVERNANCE SOLUTIONS**

ICT provides many ways to achieve E-governance. Maintenance of ICT is a key success factor in rapidly changing technical regularity environment. Information management aims at reducing cost and improving performance. Economic issues are mainly concerned with return of investment. Cost of implementation, operational and evolutionary maintenance must be low enough to guarantee a good cost/benefit ratio. A well skilled labour force is needed for timely and regular maintenance. The Government should look after inter-operability standards, security standards, technical standards and quality standards. In India, Government websites have no uniform standard. It is very important for the Government to set uniform national standards to be followed by all the state governments. The solution lies not merely in creating more institutions but in strengthening and reforming the existing institutions to deliver results.

Complete implementation of e-governance in India will include hardware and software



infrastructure. The infrastructure must be built by Government, private sector as well as individuals. The Government needs to build its institutional capacity including training of Government employees and appointment of experts. The Government has to equip the departments with hi-technology. For better implementation of e-governance, the Government will need to frame laws which will fully incorporate the technology. The IT laws need to be flexible to adjust with the rapidly changing technology. National Informatics Centre (NIC) is providing the base of network and a wide range of ICT services to government organizations throughout India. Several drafts have also been passed by IT department to implement E- Governance with the new technologies. E-Government is to be able to offer an increased portfolio of public services to citizens in an efficient and cost-effective manner. In India, where literacy rate is low, e-governance is a real challenge. Lack of IT literacy and awareness regarding benefits of e-governance has to be emphasized. The people are often non-expert users and need guidance. Educational system encourages innovation and qualified manpower. To be effective, Governmental websites must be user friendly. The web sites should also have the facility to access in native or local language. A reconceptualization of government services is mandatory for successful implementation and to get social acceptance. This will happen only if government processes will be organized for citizens' convenience. The citizens should be made aware and acquainted of the facilities offered by the e-government infrastructure. E-governance means less interaction with government servants, which in turn will reduce bribery and corruption. This task require an honest and strong will power of the politicians and leaders.

**Benefits of E-Governance**

1. Organisational efficiency enhancement
2. Improved services delivery better service, more convenient, more reliable and lower cost
3. Greater participation of citizens in government affairs
4. Lower transaction costs
5. Helpful in building trust between government and citizen
6. Providing greater people's access to government information
7. Making government more accountable by making the operations more transparent
8. Enhanced control of fraud and reduction of corruption

9. Providing wider development opportunities, especially benefiting rural and traditionally underserved communities and marginalised sections of society.
10. Challenging existing ways of doing work
11. Creating a general climate of organization wide reform
12. Harnessing organisational energy/resources through networking or organizational synergy

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

E-government allows for government transparency. Government transparency allows the public to be informed about the government's policies. What ails India is not e-governance deficit but governance-deficit. It is good governance that will propel and sustain economic growth in India. It is good governance that will open up new employment opportunities. Good governance can restore trust of citizens in governments and make governments accountable to them. Citizens have to play an active role as democracy cannot be healthy without participation. The country needs to make serious effort in implementing the policies. The biggest contribution of e-governance would be if it channelizes all energies, debates and resources into a singular mission of improving governance in India not just for service delivery but also in policy settings, resources allocation, and its implementation. Good governance should be technology- independent so that the focus is on providing good governance to everyone. The institutions should be strengthened and re-invented in order to be competitive, efficient and accountable. E-governance in India is an evolutionary phenomenon, and requires a change in the mindset of all – citizen, executives and the government. There are many challenging issues lying ahead. Security is the main concern for the citizen. To be effective, e-government should be integrated within a holistic approach that includes a supportive and democratic leadership, a viable communication infrastructure, and qualified personnel to operate the new technology. The government needs to make significant investments in areas such as IT training, assessment and awareness. The need of the hour is to maintain a proper database of all the citizens and well developed infrastructure. The strong political will power and the social acceptability of e-governance in urban as well as rural areas is required. From the study, it is clear that e-governance initiatives have been found successful in ensuring good governance.

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