

Review Article: E-Governance Strategies - An Overview

Vinti Parmar

*Department of CSA,
F.L.T.M.S.B.P GCW, Rewari(Hr.), India.*

Amit Kumar

*Department of CSA,
F.L.T.M.S.B.P GCW, Rewari(Hr.), India.*

Reena

*Department of CSA
F.L.T.M.S.B.PGCW, Rewari(Hr.), India.*

Abstract

E-governance defined as a set of technology-mediated processes that are changing both the delivery of public services and the broader interactions between citizens and government. This paper proposes three ‘models’ of e-governance that are currently operating – though we accept that national e-governance efforts may combine elements from one or more model.

Keywords: e-governance, ICT, privacy, interoperability.

1. INTRODUCTION

Electronic governance or e-governance is the make use of of information and communication technology (ICT) for delivering government services, interchange of information, communication transactions, assimilation of various stand-alone systems and services between government-to-customer (G2C), government-to-business (G2B),

government-to-government (G2G) as well as back office processes and interactions within the entire government framework.[1] Through e-governance, government services will be accessible to citizens in suitable, efficient and transparent manner. The three important end groups that can be distinguished in governance concepts are government, citizens and businesses/interest groups. In e-governance there are no clear boundaries [2]. Generally four basic models are available – government-to-citizen (customer), government-to-employees, government-to-government and government-to-business.

2. STEPS FOR E-GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

1. Build technical infrastructure.

Execution of E-governance in India will include developing technical Hardware and Software infrastructure. However while building technical infrastructure, disabled persons must also be considered. The technology implemented, shall incorporate the disabled persons.

2. Build institutional Faculty

It contribute to training of Government employees, appointment of experts. Along with the Government has also to create an Expert database for better utilization of intellectual resources with it.

3. Build authorized 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.

4. 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. Make all information available online

The Government has to publish all the information online through websites. This can be facilitated through centralized storage of information, localization 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. [3]

6. Encourage 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..

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.[4]

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

3. STAGES OF E-GOVERNANCE

United Nations E-Readiness Survey contemplates the following stages of E-governance as to the online presence of Governments worldwide:

1. *Emerging Presence:* The Stage I i.e. Emerging presence considers online availability of limited and basic information. A basic online presence of an e-government involves an official website and few WebPages. Links to ministries and departments of Central Government, regional/local Government may or may not be available. The website at this stage may also have some archived information such as

the head of states' messages or the constitution. However at this stage most of the information remains static without there being any options for citizens.

2. *Enhanced Presence:* The Stage II contemplated by UN is Enhanced presence of the Government online. At this stage the Government provides more public information resources such as policies of the Government, laws, regulations, reports, newsletters. This may also be downloadable at this stage. This stage may allow users to search the information within the documents available online. A help and a sitemap feature may also be provided on the website to make navigation of the website simpler. At this stage though there are more number of documents available online, the navigation of the website is still not sophisticated and is unidirectional. There are no interactivity at this stage as the information is only flowing towards the citizens rather than also from citizens to Government.

3. *Interactive Presence:* The Stage III of Interactive presence considers Governments to initiate interactivity in their websites. It involves availability of online services of the government to enhance convenience of the consumer. This will include downloadable forms and applications for payment of bills, taxes and renewal of licenses.

4. *Transactional Presence:* The Stage IV i.e. transactional presence allows two-way interaction between the citizens and Government. It includes options such as paying taxes, applying for ID cards, birth certificates, passports, license renewals and other similar C2G interactions by allowing the citizen to submit forms and applications online 24/7.

5. *Networked Presence:* The Stage V as contemplated by UN Survey is 'Networked Presence' which represents the most sophisticated level in the online e-government initiatives. It can be characterized by an integration of G2G, G2C and C2G interactions. The government at this stage encourages citizen participation, online participatory decision-making and is willing and able to involve the society in a two-way open dialogue. [5]

4. OBJECTIVES OF E-GOVERNANCE

Following are the objectives/aims of E-Governance:

1. *To build an informed society:* An informed society is an empowered society. Only informed people can make a Government responsible. So providing access to all, to every piece of information of the Government and of public importance is one of the basic objective of E-Governance.

2. *To increase Government and Citizen Interaction:* In the physical world, the Government and Citizens hardly interact. The amount of feedback from and to the citizens is very negligible. E-Governance aims at build a feedback framework, to get feedback from the people and to make the Government aware of people's problems.

3. *Enhancement in citizen participation:* Real democracy needs participation of each individual citizen. Increased population has led to representative democracy, which is not democracy in the true sense. E-governance aims to restore democracy to its true meaning by improving citizen participation in the Governing process, by improving the feedback, access to information and overall participation of the citizens in the decision making.

4. *To bring transparency in the governing process:* E-governance carries an objective to make the Governing process transparent by making all the Government data and information available to the people for access. It is to make people know the decisions, and policies of the Government.

5. *To make the Government accountable:* Government is responsible and answerable for every act decision taken by it. E-Governance aims and will help make the Government more accountable than now by bringing transparency's and making the citizens more informed.

6. *To reduce the cost of Governance:* E-Governance also aims to reduce cost of governance by cutting down on expenditure on physical delivery of information and services. It aims to do this by cutting down on stationary, which amounts to the most of the government's expenditure.

7. *To reduce the reaction time of the Government:* Normally due to red-tapism and other reasons, the Government takes long to reply to people's queries and problems. E-Governance aims to reduce the reaction time of the Government to the people's queries and problems, because's problems are basically Government's problems as Government is for the people.

5. BENEFITS OF E-GOVERNANCE

Following are the advantages of E-Governance

1. *Speed:* Technology enhances communication. Internet, Phones, Cell Phones have reduced the time taken in normal communication.

2. *Lower Price:* Most of the Government expenses are towards the cost of stationary. Paper-based communication needs numerous of stationary, printers, computers, etc. which increase expenditure. Internet and Phones makes communication cheaper saving valuable money for the Government.

3. *Clarity*: Use of ICT makes governing process clear. 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.

4. *Liability*: The governing process is made accountable automatically if it is made transparent. Liability is answerability of the Government to the people. [6]

6. CONCLUSIONS

The early life of e-governance initiatives has already seen a shift in understanding, from the view that increasing access to services by putting them on the web was all that was needed, to a more sophisticated notion of a transformed public realm. ICTs of course only enable this transformation, they do not create it and hence the social and political norms in any areas will determine the outcome of the 'e-governance' systems. We are now starting to see change in governmental institutions: a greater emphasis on 'partnership working,' both with citizens, businesses and third sector organizations; decentralization and changes in working processes; more knowledge intensive and personalized services and in some cases, greater openness and transparency of political processes. All of these trends have a long way to go and many could be stopped in their tracks, by issues of uneven access to technology or content which alienates or patronizes users.

We need to develop far more sophisticated systems for capturing and measuring the impact of e-governance, so that we can judge its success in other than just crude, 'availability' terms. And we need to be able to judge the real impact on citizens, not just changes in production or distribution of public services. Above all, e-governance needs to be seen as part of governance, not as an add-on. Decisions about technology from use of open source to the treatment of personal data are more and more in the political realm and this is to be welcomed. Because only when we can drop the 'e' and return to talking about governance, can e-governance be said to have succeeded. [7]

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