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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this paper is to attempt and to find out whether the new information and communication technologies can make a significant contribution to the achievement of the objective of good governance. The study identifies the factors responsible for creating a conducive environment for effective and successful implementation of e-governance for achieving good governance and the possible barriers in the implementation of e governance applications. Based on the comprehensive analysis it proposes a strategic policy framework for good governance. This paper explains the basic concepts and significance and all the stages of e-governance in brief.

Key words: Concepts and significance, Stages, Models, Barriers and Suggestions.

INTRODUCTION

The term 'Governance' is wider than 'Government'. Governance may be an activity of governing/controlling a country by its Government, controlling of an organisation or a company by its CEO or Board of Directors or controlling of a house hold by the head of the house, Accordingly E-governance may also involve governing of a country, organisation, company or a household, however with the help of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). E-governance therefore means the application of ICT to transform the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of exchange of information and transaction.

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.”
CONCEPTS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF E-GOVERNANCE

The complete transformation of the processes of Governance using the implementation of Information & Communication Technology is called E-Governance. It aims at bringing in faster and transparent service delivery, accountability, information sharing and people participation in the decision making and govt. processes. It brings in SMART Governance viz.

M-Moral: Infusing ethics and morals into officers again since anti-corruption and vigilance agencies improving.
A- Accountable: ICT helps set standards of performance and efficiently measures it.
R- Responsive: Efficient service delivery and government that is in tune with the people.
T - Transparent: Information confined to secrecy is out in the public domain bringing equity and rule of law in public agencies

STAGES OF E-GOVERNANCE:

1. Simple Information Dissemination - A one way broadcasting of information stage from Govt to the constituents.

2. Two-Way Communication - A request and response form of communication which is generally done in the manner of emails, website form filling, etc.

3. Online Service Transactions - Citizens can perform a number of online services and financial transactions on a website in a self service form.

4. Integration (Vertical & Horizontal) - Via this method the government attempts inter & intra-governmental integration by means of ICT to remove the hierarchical barriers inducing red-tapism in service delivery and information dissemination.

5. Political Participation - Online voting, online polling, online public forums and wider interaction with the government.

Another classification of the stages of E-Governance is listed below in which the first two stages are similar but the rest are as follows:

3. Third stage - Multipurpose portals integrating various departments which are used by the people as a single entry point.

4. Fourth stage - Personalization of portals by the users as per their customized settings where they create a user id and password on them and add the features they require.

5. Fifth stage - Government departments cluster services along common lines to accelerate delivery of shared services and common services.

6. Sixth stage - Integrating the front office and back office functions for smooth service.

Computerization: In the first phase, with the availability of personal computers, a large number of Government offices got equipped with computers. The use of computers began with word processing, quickly followed by data processing.

Networking: In this phase, some units of a few government organizations got connected through a hub leading to sharing of information and flow of data between different government entities.
On-line presence: With increasing internet connectivity, a need was felt for maintaining a presence on the web. This resulted in maintenance of websites by government departments and other entities. Generally, these web-pages/web-sites contained information about the organizational structure, contact details, reports and publications, objectives and vision statements of the respective government entities.

On-line interactivity: A natural consequence of on-line presence was opening up of communication channels between government entities and the citizens, civil society organizations etc.

The main aim at this stage was to minimize the scope of personal interface with government entities by providing downloadable Forms, Instructions, Acts, Rules etc. In some cases, this has already led to on-line submission of Forms. Most citizen-government transactions have the potential of being put on e-Governance mode.

**BENEFITS OF E-GOVERNANCE**

Better access to information and quality services for citizens: ICT would make available timely and reliable information on various aspects of governance. In the initial phase, information would be made available with respect to simple aspects of governance such as forms, laws, rules, procedures etc later extending to detailed information including reports (including performance reports), public database, decision making processes etc. As regards services, there would be an immediate impact in terms of savings in time, effort and money, resulting from online and one-point accessibility of public services backed up by automation of back end processes. The ultimate objective of e-Governance is to reach out to citizens by adopting a life-cycle approach i.e. providing public services to citizens which would be required right from birth to death.

Simplicity, efficiency and accountability in the government: Application of ICT to governance combined with detailed business process reengineering would lead to simplification of complicated processes, weeding out of redundant processes, simplification in structures and changes in statutes and regulations. The end result would be simplification of the functioning of government, enhanced decision making abilities and increased efficiency across government – all contributing to an overall environment of a more accountable government machinery. This, in turn, would result in enhanced productivity and efficiency in all sectors.

Expanded reach of governance: Rapid growth of communications technology and its adoption in governance would help in bringing government machinery to the doorsteps of the citizens. Expansion of telephone network, rapid strides in mobile telephony, spread of internet and strengthening of other communications infrastructure would facilitate delivery of a large number of services provided by the government.

This enhancement of the reach of government – both spatial and demographic – would also enable better participation of citizens in the process of governance.

**MODELS OF E-GOVERNANCE**

Broadcasting Model - It is a simple model that focuses on information dissemination and broadcasting which is useful to the people pertaining to Governance via ICT and convergent media. This leads to a more informed citizenry which is better able to judge the functioning of the entire governance mechanisms and make an informed opinion.
about them thus empowering the public to exercise their rights and responsibilities in a prudent and objective manner. This leads to an accountable, efficient and responsive government.

**Comparative Analysis Model** - The model focuses on gathering the best practices/best way of governance in various countries all over the world and then uses them to evaluate the current governance practices being analysed. The results are then used to advocate positive changes or influence "public opinion"

**E-Advocacy/Mobilization And Lobbying Model** –
This model focuses on adding the opinions and concerns expressed by virtual communities. It helps the global civil society to impact global decision-making processes. Its basis is setting up a planned, directed flow of information to build strong virtual allies in order to complement actions in the real world. Virtual communities are formed which share similar values and concerns and these communities in turn link up and network with or support real life groups/activities for concerted action.

**SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION**
In order to harness the benefits of ICT maximally, there is a need to develop sufficient and adequate infrastructure, provide sufficient capital and investments, enable easy and wider accessibility and generate ample, skillful HR. Let us discuss these challenges in detail.

i) Infrastructure - TO strengthen the infrastructure 'The National Task Force on Information Technology and Software Development' in 1998 recommended broadband connection (also known as 'the last mile') linkage for IT application Service Providers (ASPs), Internet Services Providers (ISPs) and IT promotional organisations either by fibre optics or by radio communication with the aim to 'boost efficiency and enhance market integration' through Internet/Intranet for sustainable regional development.

ii) Capital - High rate of investment in IT capital and supportive environment is necessary to achieve a digital economy. The economy is crunched on resources so the need is to generate resources from the market and private sector. PPP is a step in the right direction to achieve this.

iii) Access - Even though there are more than 10 million users of the Internet in the country, more than 75% of these users are in urban India alone which exposes the reach of the rural and disadvantaged sections. However, Gram Panchayats are being roped in to expand ICTs reach. The National Informatics Centre (NIC) has developed comprehensive web-based software for Panchayati Raj and rural applications viz. Andhra Pradesh which is a step in the right direction.

References: