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E-GOVERNANCE: A BOON OR BLISS TO SOCIETY: A RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

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. ICT 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.

KEYWORDS

e- governance, ICT, tele connectivity, Bhoomi, Satellite based network.

INTRODUCTION

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.

1. Recognising the increasing importance of electronics, the Government of India established the Department of Electronics in 1970. The subsequent establishment of the National Informatics Centre (NIC) in 1977 was the first major step towards e-Governance in India as it brought ‘information’ and its communication in focus. In the early 1980s, use of computers was confined to very few organizations. The advent of personal computers brought the storage, retrieval and processing capacities of computers to Government offices.

By the late 1980s, a large number of government officers had computers but they were mostly used for ‘word processing’. Gradually, with the introduction of better softwares, computers were put to other uses like managing databases and processing information. Advances in communications technology further improved the versatility and reach of computers, and many Government departments started using ICT for a number of applications like tracking movement of papers and files, monitoring of development programmes, processing of employees’ pay rolls, generation of reports etc.

E- GOVERNANCE INITIATIVES IN INDIA

1. Bhoomi Project in Karnataka: Online Delivery of Land Records

Bhoomi is a self-sustainable e-Governance project for the computerized delivery of 20 million rural land records to 6.7 million farmers through 177 Government-owned kiosks in the State of Karnataka. It was felt that rural land records are central conduits to delivering better IT-enabled services to citizens because they contain multiple data elements: ownership, tenancy, loans, nature of title, irrigation details, crops grown etc.

2. Gyandoot (Madhya Pradesh) 28 4.2.3.1 Gyandoot is an Intranet-based Government to Citizen (G2C) service delivery initiative. It was initiated in the Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh in January 2000 with the twin objective of providing relevant information to the rural population and acting as an interface between the district administration and the people. The basic idea behind this project was to establish and foster a technologically innovative initiative which is owned and operated by the community itself.

3. Lokvani Project in Uttar Pradesh 32 4.2.4.1 Lokvani is a public-private partnership project at Sitapur District in Uttar Pradesh which was initiated in November, 2004. Its objective is to provide a single window, self sustainable e-Governance solution with regard to handling of grievances, land record maintenance and providing a mixture of essential services.

MODI’S THRUST ON M-GOVERNANCE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has recently urged the relevant stakeholders to think about ‘mobiles first’, which, he thinks, is a must for successful implementation of e-governance. His emphasis on mobile governance is to be seen as a major push for the Digital India initiative. Further, Modi recently launched ‘Twitter Samvad’ – a new service that will deliver government’s tweets to registered mobile users every day. As per the initiative, tweets related to government services and developments will be delivered to those who sign up for the service.

e-KRANTI: ELECTRONIC DELIVERY OF SERVICES

In order to make the use of IT more pervasive, the NDA government plans to introduce interactive voice response systems to integrate buyer-seller platforms through mobile apps. This is a step towards making mobile phones an enabler for agriculture governance. Besides e-Kranti, there are eight other pillars that Digital India initiative focusses on, including Broadband Highways, Public Internet Access Programme and Digital Wallet.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The named "ICT revolution", as noted and debated by scholars, politicians, and policy-makers, has had an inordinate effect on economies and societies, leading to what has been termed a "global shift" (Cerny 1995). Erwin Alampay, in his introduction to *Living the Information Society in Asia* (2009) looks at Cerny's ideas of the 'global shift' as marking two fundamental alterations to the global political economy.

1. Ch. Radha Kumari has published her article on "Impact of e-Seva in Andhra Pradesh: A Study" The results of the study indicate that the implementation of e-governance through the mechanism of e-Seva has been received wholeheartedly by the citizens of AP state.

Since the electronically delivered services have aided the convenience and comfort of all sections of the society irrespective of age, educational background and technical awareness, citizens are willing to pay the nominal extra charges for improved and cumbersome-free services. The working days and the daily working schedule of the service centers are providing an added convenience and benefit particularly to employed citizens. The substantial role played by informal sources in the spread of information is also highlighted by the study. The study revealed that mental maturity plays a vital role in welcoming any new system like e-Seva and in analyzing critically the merits and demerits of the system introduced, since 71% of the people belonging to the age group 40-60 expressed high satisfaction with e-Seva. The study has shown that e-Seva is a highly satisfactory method of bringing about e-governance. With the implementation of e-Seva, the vision of e-government in Andhra Pradesh has seen its reality. This has become a model to be emulated by all other administrative bodies. eSeva implementation has brought the government of Andhra Pradesh, unparalleled credit for two reasons- firstly for introducing a project that has brought great convenience and comfort to its citizens and secondly, for innovating and implementing a project of a unique nature.

2. Driss Kettani, Bernard Moulin & Asmae Elmahdi have published their article on "A framework to assess the impact of e-government systems on governance" The Fez-e-government Project aims to develop a pilot e-government system to provide the municipal government of the city of Fez in Morocco with an advanced ICT platform that enables online delivery of citizen-oriented services to the local community. The main research goals of this project include the elaboration of a road map to support the development of e-government systems in Morocco and the assessment of the impact of such systems on a Moroccan's everyday life and on governance in general. In fact, there is an implicit agreement in the research community that e-government systems enhance governance. Such evidences would definitely benefit decision makers, at the top political level, to foster the deployment of e-Government systems as an asset of good governance.

This research also explored the attributes and indicators that can measure good governance. In addition, this study identified how e-government fosters the different aspects and indicators of good governance.

3. Singh Amar Jeet Singh & Sharma Mahinder have published their article on "District level e-governance Initiatives-A case of Lokmitra in Himachal Pradesh:A Study".

The intention of the Lokmitra project is noble. It is meant to provide citizen centric service and information at kiosks and redress citizen's complaints through a single window interface. In this way the harassment of the people can be put to an end, administration will become responsive and accountable and benefits of the ICT will reach the general public. Initially the project functioned satisfactorily because there was a strong leader in the District Centre who took keen interest in monitoring the project by 'thumb rule' in the absence of a proper strategy.

4. Kadam Kedar has published his article on "Usability: High value proposition for successful e-governance in India"

5. Bhattacharyya Rabindranath has published his article on "e-governance in rural West Bengal (India): impact and implications" [7] The objective of this research paper is to explore the impact of IT as an enabling force in its efforts to meet the present and emerging challenges of a digital age on the rural people in West Bengal (WB). In district has been selected for implementing the country's first rural e-governance pilot project. This paper wants to argue that introduction of rural e-governance in Burdwan, is likely to generate development gains only when it is closely adapted to the needs and capacities of the Panchayats.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research tells us to identify various issues associated with E-governance from both the user and agency side. The research is exploratory and multiple methods including interviews with state and federal government agencies are actively engaged in e-governance services with persons who are unable to physically attend interviews due to handicapped nature.

The exploratory research questions guiding the user portion of the study included the following:

- 1) What are user expectations from E-Government services and resources?
- 2) What are the issues and barriers users encounter when using E-Government services and resources?
- 3) What factors facilitate and enhance do users experiences with E-Government services and resources?

Questions with federal and state government personnel responsible for E-Government services and resources included:

- 1) What are the primary drivers of the development and implementation of E-Government services and resources?
- 2) To what extent are citizen needs and expectations included in the design and implementation of E-Government services and resources?
- 3) How are citizen identified expectations and desires in E-Government services and resources incorporated into the overall design and continual enhancement of E-Government services and resources?

In July 2010, the total mobile subscribers according to the data collected by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India was 670.60 million, an increase of 2.61 percent from July 2010. From July 2010, 9.77 % people was increased to 3.17% from the previous month.

Boston Consulting group predicts that from the present date internet will increase to reach 19% of the country's population by 2018. This is the result of the government's plan to roll out the nationwide network at the beginning of this year and to all the regions of the country.

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

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).

The current trends from the portal (<http://www.eprocurement.gov.in>) are shown below in Fig.4.1 and provide an indication of the stability, growth and success of the project.

TABLE 1

eProcurement Trends		
Financial Year	No. of Tenders	Value in Crores (INR)
2003 - 2004	1549	3623
2004 - 2005	4901	30822
2005 - 2006	9930	11892
2006 - 2007	21985	31487
2007 - 2008	33904	75119
2008 - 2009	44883	130061
2009 - 2010	26062	28208
2010 - 2011	47182	19675
2011 - 2012	49354	24436
2012 - 2013	67593	25191
2013 - 2014	93566	36845

CONCLUSION

The movement to e-governance, at its heart, is about changing the way people and businesses interact with government. It only makes sense to find out what they want, expect, don't want, and worry about. The efforts described above vary considerably in their methods and in the range and reliability of their results. A quick informal questionnaire distributed in a mall, or posted on a web site invites only those who "come there" to express their opinions - but it is a low-cost and low-effort way to get some sense of what the people think. The formal research study that generates statistically significant results or engages carefully selected focus groups tells you more reliably what the public thinks. It also costs a lot more. And all methods are limited by the way the questions are constructed and asked. All these approaches are worth considering. Just be sure to view the results with a discriminating eye and draw only the conclusions that can be supported by the data.

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