



E-GOVERNANCE: A DYNAMIC TOOL FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

SHASHIKUMAR D. N

Research Scholar of Public Administration, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Maharaja College, University of Mysore, Mysuru.

Abstract:

Public administration is witnessing rapid changes around the world these days. Every government has recently attempted to establish good governance in order to deepen democracy, promote transparency, and improve administrative accountability. The advancements in information and communication technology (ICT) have opened up new avenues of governance, allowing for greater service delivery and more effective policymaking. The goal of ICT is to enable more people to have a say in government and other public processes. In recent years, the concept of empowering governments, communities, and individuals through electronic governance, sometimes known as “e-governance,” has gained traction. The use of e-governance is a fantastic way to improve openness and accountability in government operations. Hence, e-governance has become an integral feature of any administration in a modern welfare state. It refers to a kind of administration where technology plays a central role. There is great potential for e-governance to change the very form and structure of how governments function. Therefore, this aids in achieving the goals of good governance. The current paper highlights the necessity for a shift in government from traditional governance to e-Governance. Furthermore, it focuses on how e-Governance contributes to good governance.

Keywords: *E-governance, good governance, public administration, ICT, technology, transparency, accountability, and participation*

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, public administration is undergoing several dynamic transformations. The use of e-governance is a requirement of the changing environment. Because it has been observed that the conventional bureaucratic structure of public admini

stration has failed to meet current expectations and provide quality services to citizens. To promote good governance and better citizen services, governments around the world have concentrated on adopting information and communication technology (ICT) in their functioning. As a result, in recent years, the concept of

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empowering governments, communities, and individuals through electronic governance, sometimes known as “e-governance,” has gained traction. Consequently, e-Governance becomes a new method of public administration.

In the field of public administration, e-governance has given rise to new terminology. Technology-driven administration is referred to as ‘e-Governance.’ In other terms, e-governance is the use of electronic technology in public administration. The ‘e’ in E-Governance stands for “electronic.” Therefore, the term “electronic governance” is shorthand for the use of ICT in government operations to foster “simple, moral, accountable, responsive, and transparent” (SMART) governance. It is solely based on the principle of “*minimal government, maximum governance.*”

There is no universal definition of e-governance because it is defined differently by different organizations, institutions, and governments according to their goals and objectives. According to the lexicon of public administration, “e-governance” refers to a more seamless contact between the government and citizens through the use of modern information technology. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, former President of India, envisaged e-Governance in the Indian framework as “a transparent smart e-Governance with seamless access, a secure and authentic flow of information, crossing the inter-departmental barrier,

and providing a fair and unbiased service to the citizen”.¹ Based on these definitions, it is evident that e-Governance is a socio-technical endeavor that necessitates changing business models, processes, and stakeholder mindsets.

E-Governance is described as the application of ICT to provide government services, conduct transactions, exchange information, connect services that already exist, and create information portals. It has been recognized as a critical component in delivering high-quality, efficient, and effective governance. It intends to involve, enable, and empower citizens. In addition, it attempts to reduce the expense of governance and the complications of administrative procedures. Furthermore, the purpose of e-Governance is to bring about a comprehensive technological transformation in the way services are offered to the residents of the country, rather than just computerizing government documents. This will aid in empowering citizens, improving their engagement in government, and expanding their social and economic prospects. As a result, practically all modern governments are transitioning to e-governance in order to fulfill the increasing demand and expectations of a growing population.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the concept of e-governance and its impact in the present time

¹ www.civildserviceindia.com/subject/General-Studies/notes/e-governance.

- To explore the relevance and significance of e-governance in achieving good governance
- To shed light on challenges in implementing e-governance

METHODOLOGY

This article is descriptive in nature, in accordance with the objectives of the study, and based on *secondary data* from various books, previous research papers, reports, websites, journals, articles, and that focus on the various aspects of e-governance and good governance. The accessible secondary data is used only for study purposes.

E-GOVERNANCE AS A TOOL FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

Good governance is a fundamental citizen right. It strives to provide citizens with public services that are effective, efficient, and equitable. The goal of good governance is to create an atmosphere in which all citizens, regardless of caste, class, color, race, religion, or gender, can reach their full potential. By implementing and deploying electronic technology in various fields of governance, the poor, illiterate, undernourished, and especially the disadvantaged and underprivileged section of our society improves their lives. Thus everyone needs e-governance, and it must be mandated. In this way, citizen-centric administration and good governance are inextricably linked. Citizens are willing to pay for quality services provided by the state, but they need a transparent, responsible, and

comprehensible governing structure without bias or prejudice. Strengthening governance is an essential component of the development process. Without strong governance, no development strategy can increase citizens' quality of life. In this regard, e-governance is a dynamic tool for good governance.

Good governance relates to the political and institutional processes and outcomes that are necessary to achieve the goals of development. The true test of 'good' governance is the degree to which it delivers on the promise of human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.² Good governance has 8 major characteristics. It is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law.³

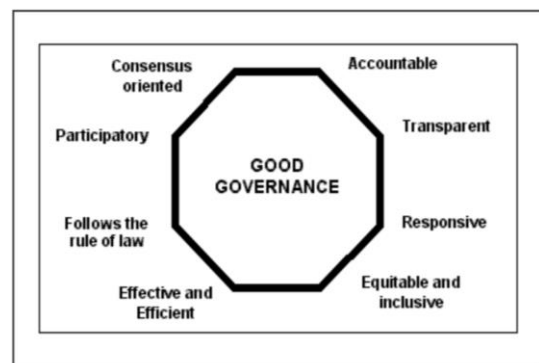


Figure 1: Characteristics of Good Governance

Source: <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/good-governance.pdf>

² www.ohchr.org/en/good-governance/about-good-governance

³ www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/good-governance

E-Governance is primarily concerned with carrying out governance functions and attaining governance outcomes through the use of ICT. The primary objective and necessity of e-governance implementation are to sustain and improve good governance in the nation. Good governance is often defined by citizen participation, openness, accountability, responsiveness, and the effectiveness and efficiency of the system. Recent research and technological advancements in ICT provide chances to reshape the interaction between citizens and government in an entirely new way. The use of ICT will encourage wide public participation in the governing process at all levels. Benefits for the government include offering improved and timelier services and enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of government administration. It also aids in broadening the scope of governance, both geologically and demographically. In this way, this helps reach the goals of good governance.

E-Governance involves reforming organizations by bringing ICT into their governance structure, destroying organizational borders, and promoting democratic procedures. A significant shift in government operations is now feasible. Hence, e-governance is regarded as a potent tool for addressing the issues plaguing the administrative system in developing countries. Thus, the majority of governments around the world have made substantial ICT investments to enhance their governance processes. It

consists of structural and operational procedures intended to improve the stability, transparency, efficiency, equity, and accountability of the governance system. Hence, e-Governance is essentially a step towards SMART governance.

What exactly is “SMART Governance”?

Simple - means the simplification of government laws and regulations as well as the avoidance of complex processes through the use of ICTs.

Moral - a new administrative and political framework with technology innovations to boost government entities' efficiency.

Accountable - create effective information management systems and other performance measures to hold public servants accountable.

Responsive - accelerate the procedures by streamlining them, which will ultimately make the system more responsive.

Transparent - publishing information on websites and other portals to make government procedures and processes transparent.

INTERACTIONS IN E-GOVERNANCE

Electronic governance implies the exchange of information and delivery of services to citizens, businesses, and the government using information and communication technology (ICT). Technology is a crucial component of these endeavors. To achieve e-governance success, the government, citizens, and commercial sector must form active

collaborations. In order to make e-government a model of good governance, their input and ideas are equally crucial. The key interactions in e-Governance are as follows:



Figure 2: Interactions in e-Governance

Source: <https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Types-of-e-government>

Government to Government (G2G): G2G is also known as “e-administration.” It simplifies government interactions. This interaction can occur between government departments and entities, between governments such as the union and state governments, or between state governments. Improved efficiency, productivity, and performance are the main goals of this interaction.

Government to Citizens (G2C): It involves government-citizen interaction. The primary goal is to establish a citizen-friendly administration. This allows citizens to receive many public services efficiently. It increases government service accessibility and quality.

Government to Business (G2B): It allows businesses to interact with the government through the use of e-governance tools. This will make government-business relations more

transparent. The main goal is to remove red-tapism in order to save time and cut operational costs.

Government to Employees (G2E): This is the type of interaction that occurs between the government and its employees. ICT tools streamline these interactions and boost employee happiness.

Government to NGO (G2N): Governments foster contact outside the confines of government through fostering communities and civil societies. It also entails the formation of various associations and interest groups to achieve the welfare of society.

Citizens to Government (C2G): In the C2G paradigm, citizens use ICT to interact with government; they give input on the government’s policies and programs and make suggestions. Citizens can file complaints and resolve issues. Also, citizens participate in government decision-making and influence government policy.

SIGNIFICANCE OF E-GOVERNANCE

The goal of implementing E-Governance is to upgrade public administration. E-governance improves accountability, transparency, efficiency, and combats corruption. In simple terms, it means bringing the government directly to the people. The significance of e-governance is expressed under two categories

STRUCTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Paperwork Reduction: With electronic communication and information storage

and retrieval, paperwork is greatly reduced. In this design, files and mail are wired to each employee's desk and managed by a computer. Thus, there's less physical activity, paper storage, and consumption.

Removal of Hierarchy: E-governance has reduced the procedural delays created by hierarchical procedures in government departments by making it feasible to communicate and receive information and data across multiple levels in an organization instantly, involving everybody in decision-making.

Computerization of Administrative Process: By adopting e-governance, governments have developed and designed software to improve operational efficiency. All departments are now computerized and network-connected. When everything is automated, the service is effective, efficient, and timely.

Shift in Administrative Culture: With e-Governance, government actions are now more visible to the public. Consequently, it eliminates "bureau-pathology" in administrative culture by generating openness, accountability, responsibility, integrity, fairness, and equity.

Transparency: Technology makes governance more transparent. ICT makes information and services available online, eliminating all concealment. Internet access would be provided to all government data. Citizens can view information and take advantage of services at any time.

Accountability: Government accountability follows transparency in the governing process. A responsible government is accountable to the people for its actions. This is possible through e-governance.

FUNCTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Quality of Services: e-governance enables the government to provide services to citizens with better accountability, responsiveness, and sensitivity. Hence, services can be obtained in an efficient, quick, and cost-effective manner. This results in higher service quality.

Cost reduction: paper based communication and service delivery are expensive since they require a large amount of resources like stationery, paper, printers, computers, etc. that must be maintained on a regular basis. E-governance reduces the cost of communication and service delivery, saving the government money.

Convenience: e-governance makes life easier for ordinary people. It offers public services to citizens on their time and schedule.

Social Development: Citizens can participate and voice their concerns in policy formation, implementation, monitoring, and service delivery through e-governance. Web-enabled engagement will also reduce social discrimination.

Improved information access: E-Government makes government information more accessible to citizens,

making it a valuable resource for daily life decisions and empowering citizens.

Speed: Both the transmission of information and the provision of services can be accelerated by the use of technology.

E-GOVERNANCE MEASURES TO PROMOTE GOOD GOVERNANCE

E-Governance, the only way to bring ICT to “ordinary people,” is a top priority in India. Administrators and policymakers are now talking about e-governance. From birth to death, the common man is part of this mode of governance. E-Governance allows Indian citizens to get information, benefits, subsidies, grants, and administration services from national and state governments. Following are the important e-governance initiatives of the Indian Government.

MyGov.in: It connects citizens and government to achieve effective governance. It is a national citizen participation forum where people may discuss policy and governance matters.

DigiLocker: is a platform that allows citizens to securely keep and exchange documents with service providers who can electronically access them.

Jeevan Pramaan: It is a biometric authentication system for pensioners based on Aadhaar.

National Agriculture Market (eNAM): It is an all-India online marketplace for agricultural products that connects the several (Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee) APMCs and Mandis across the

country to establish a unified agricultural market.

Mobile Seva: It intends to deliver government services via smart phones and tablets. The m-App store contains approximately 200 government services.

UMANG: is a unified mobile application that allows users to access central and state government services such as Digital Locker, PAN, Aadhar, Employee Provident Fund services, and so on.

DigiSevak: It connects volunteers with government ministries and organizations for Digital India projects.

National Judicial Data Grid (e Courts): It aims to improve judicial productivity and provide effective, affordable, and timely citizen-centric service delivery.

E-Hospital-Online Registration Framework (ORF): It is an online platform where residents of India's various states and union territories can register for appointments in hospitals across the nation.

Government e-Marketplace (GeM): It is an open and accessible virtual marketplace for government procurements.

National Scholarships Portal (NSP): It provides a consolidated platform for the application and distribution of any scholarship to students.

Common Services Centers 2.0 (CSC 2.0): It's being deployed to develop and support rural ICT use. It brings government, business, and social services to the public.

Aside from this, various states in the country have launched a variety of e-

initiatives to promote good governance. Following are the important e-governance initiatives of different states.

E-Seva (Andhra Pradesh) - allows for the payment of utility bills and the granting of certificates, permits, and licenses.

The Khajane Project (Karnataka) - intends to computerize all Treasury-related tasks.

Project FRIENDS (Kerala) - It is a one-stop shop for paying taxes and other financial obligations to the state government.

Lokvani Project (Uttar Pradesh) - It is a one-stop shop for addressing disputes, maintaining land records, and providing a variety of critical services.

The Bhoomi Project (Karnataka): is a self-sustaining e-government project for land record computerization and online delivery.

The Gyandoot Project (Madhya Pradesh) - is a project for providing government services to citizens via the Internet.

e-Mitra Project (Rajasthan) - The government of Rajasthan has picked the e-Mitra Project to implement the NeGP community service center initiative.

SmartGov (Andhra Pradesh) - The Andhra Pradesh Secretariat uses SmartGov to streamline operations, improve efficiency, and manage knowledge.

CHALLENGES TO E-GOVERNANCE

However, implementation of e-governance architecture is a formidable

task⁴. The obstacles to effectively implementing e-governance are the following:

Infrastructure: IT infrastructure is the backbone of e-governance. It includes proper connectivity, knowledge, data content, and capital. Inadequate Power, internet, and technology inflexibility will slow down e-governance functioning.

Digital Divide: It describes the wide disparity between ICT users and non-users. It causes a schism and inequality in access to information and resources. The disparity must be bridged before the benefits of e-governance can be fully realized.

Lack of accessibility: Due to linguistic barriers, rural infrastructural issues, and other factors, users and nonusers remain separated. E-governance suffers from a lack of internet or computers in some areas.

Trust: e-governance requires two levels of trust. First, the user must feel confident, comfortable, and trusting of the tool or technology. Government trust is the second dimension. The public's trust in e-governance has been shaken by a recent spate of data breach incidents.

Resistance to change: Government agencies and public policymakers can overlook the changes caused by information and communication technologies. One way to reduce

⁴ Kiran Bedi, P.J.Singh ,S.Srivastawva. (2001). Government@net. Sage Publication. p.248

resistance is to educate people about the new systems' benefits.

Cost: In developing nations like India, where most people live below the poverty line, cost is a key barrier to e-governance deployment. Implementation, operation, and evaluation of e-governance measures cost a lot.

Privacy and security: This is arguably the most difficult obstacle. The security and confidentiality of individuals' private information is a major roadblock to the widespread adoption of e-governance. A breach of this nature could result in the loss or disclosure of sensitive information. To protect the interests of all demographics, e-governance projects must adhere to strict security rules and regulations.

Inadequate digital literacy: E-governance implementation is hampered by digital illiteracy. E-governance is less effective in developing countries like India because most people aren't digitally literate. Due to this, e-governance struggles to take root in India, which is still in its developmental stages.

In addition to the above-mentioned challenges, e-governance also faces issues related to languages, interoperability (which allows systems and organizations of different types to work together), population (establishing Person IDs), and authentication (the right user of the services).

CONCLUSION

In a developing country like India, e-governance has emerged as the cornerstone of good governance. It empowers government servants and political representatives to serve the residents better and allow citizens to monitor government performance and activities. Besides improving service, e-Governance technology is expected to strengthen democracy by bringing citizens and governments closer together. But bringing the government online is a complex and challenging endeavor. Managing administrative, political, economic, cultural, and legal elements is necessary for a successful transition. In addition, governments must recognize that e-Governance is no longer an option but rather a necessity of the present.

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