



GOOD GOVERNANCE THROUGH E-GOVERNANCE : MOMENTS FOR RETROSPECTION

Political Science

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ABSTRACT

India is moving towards achieving e-governance. The spread of e-governance initiatives have had a positive impact on the quality of governance. Geographical, social, & economic disparities are the biggest barriers for full-fledged e-governance. Illiteracy, lack of infrastructure, security and privacy of personal and financial data are other constraints. Being the largest democracy, second in terms of population and diversified geography itself creates the big challenges. E-governance in India is an evolutionary phenomenon, and requires a change in the mindset of all – citizen, executives and the government. With the support of the Internet, the government processes can be made efficient, effective, and citizen friendly. There are many challenging issues lying ahead. Security is the main concern for the citizen. To be effective, e-governance 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. Despite various limitations e-governance has proved meritorious service to the people at large.

KEYWORDS

Government, Communication, Good governance, Technology, Rural.

INTRODUCTION:

An efficient, effective and democratic government is the best guarantor of social justice as it forms an orderly society. India is moving towards achieving e-governance. The spread of e-governance initiatives have had a positive impact on the quality of governance. E-Governance is an important tool to enhance the quality of government services to citizens, to bring in more transparency, to reduce corruption, to reduce costs for citizens and to make government more accessible. The principal response of the state, is to facilitate, to enable and to coordinate. Efficiency and effectiveness, rule of law, people's participation, democracy, inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights are the main indicators of good governance. Neither the market nor the civil society can perform this role as effectively as the government. The strong political will power and the social acceptability of e-governance is required in urban as well as rural areas. However, geographical, social, & economic disparities are the biggest barriers for full-fledged e-governance. Governments need to continue their efforts to develop 'Information and Communication Technology' (ICT) infrastructure especially concentrating their efforts in the rural areas. Doing research in this area will be an attempt to contribute to the important issue lacking coverage as India is not excluded from the global debate of e-governance and good governance.

It makes an effort to provide a framework for e-governance against a theoretical background by identifying its essential features and the shortcomings in its working and emphasizes need for innovative approaches that could provide guidance to new e-governance programmes in the development context. If e-governance is the input, good governance is the output and the major variables are: democratic political system, good economy, effective legal system, open culture, technical infrastructure. The major question addressed in the paper is: Does the introduction of ICT produce good governance in India? Is there a direct causal relationship between the adoption of information and communication technology by government agencies and the practice of good governance? The paper also highlights flaws in the present government system in India and in order to address the systemic inefficiencies suggests key legislative and institutional reforms. The results of this study would help to better understand the concept of 'e-governance and good governance', to facilitate its adoption and to prioritize its practices. Through this study, there is an attempt to explore the lessons, which should be learnt to face the challenges. It offers beneficial source of information for policymakers, activists, academicians and researchers. Despite the fact that e-governance has made significant contribution in the economies of developed countries in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as well as to the efficiency of the public management systems, the same

cannot be said about developing countries especially India.

Conceptual Framework: Good Governance

According to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (1999), "In practice, Good governance is ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law; strengthening democracy; promoting transparency and capacity in public administration".

Good Governance is a concept that has recently come into use in political science and public administration. It appears alongside concepts such as democracy, civil society, people's participation, human rights and social and sustainable development. In the last decade, it has been closely associated with public sector reform. For instance, for John Rawls: Social justice is fairness; for Amartya Sen: Development of freedom; In Atlantic Charter: World free from fear and want; In UNDP: Human development, According to John Paul II: Freedom of a person to live out his/her creative potential; In Commonwealth: Commitment to the democratic process and institutions, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, just and honest government, and fundamental human rights. Good governance's essentials were prevalent in India since ancient times. In Arthshastra, Kautilya had described the qualities of a King as: "The happiness of the people is the happiness of the king; their good alone is his. Therefore let the King be active in working for the prosperity and welfare of his people".

Good governance is a reflection of successful functioning of healthy democratic society. It entails free and open participation in the political processes by the people. In India, good governance as exercise of power, within the framework of the Constitution is exercised through the institutions of state. In the Indian Constitution, there are three pillars of democracy- Parliament, Executive and Judiciary. Wider involvement of the civil society in the political process, deeper engagement of the youth with the institutions of democracy and quick dispensation of justice to the people lead to good governance. Election is a symbol of democracy and reflects peace and prosperity. The deep roots of Indian democracy can be witnessed from the fact that from a level of about 58 per cent in both the 2004 and 2009 General Elections, the voter turnout has gone up to an encouraging 66 per cent in 2014 elections. Fundamental rights are essential to preserve human dignity. Human dignity cannot be assured without the elimination of poverty. The Directive Principles are an essential guide to good governance practices. Only good governance can eradicate backwardness. The provision of freedom of speech and expression has given rise to a powerful and vigilant media. It depends upon ethical and responsible behaviour of media.

An important aspect of the rise of civil society is the proliferation of

voluntary or nongovernmental organizations. Technology and the use of digital media have changed the way youth participate in activism globally, and youth are more active in media than older generations. Good governance demands quick dispensation of justice to the people. Judiciary has been vigilant to protect the individual rights. Good governance demands ethical and responsible behavior of media. The Right to Information Act (RTI) is an Act of the Parliament of India "to provide for setting out the practical regime of right to information for citizens". Citizens should be conscious of duties and responsibility besides rights. It calls for ever-increasing engagement of the youth in the institutions and processes of democracy. Good governance is critically dependent on inviolable adherence to rule of law, existence of participatory decision-making structure, responsiveness, transparency, accountability, corruption-free society, equity and inclusiveness. In short, Good governance calls for adequate decentralization of power. The 73rd Amendment in the Constitution of India had been hailed as a great landmark in the evolution of

Third tier of governance (PRIs). Panchayati Raj institutions need financial autonomy and administrative ability. Reforms in this third tier of governance are necessary for sharing of real power with the people. A sound education system is the mirror of an enlightened society. The institutes of higher learning are the cradle of future administrators and policy makers. The government and the people must ensure that these institutions perform their duties with responsibility. In the context of Indian democracy, good governance is a reflection of the successful functioning of the institutions of state with the singular intention of the well-being of citizens.

E-government And E-governance: A Facilitator For Good Governance

In the past, service delivery mechanisms of the government departments was characterized by inefficiency in work, attitude of officials, procedural complexities, corruption etc. Public administration, governed by bureaucratic structures built on rationale principles, has failed to respond to the changing requirements of the present times. With the rising awareness amongst the citizens and their better experiences with the private sector, the demand for better services on the part of government departments became more pronounced. The concept of empowering the citizen via electronic governance has been gaining momentum.

The infusion of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has played a prominent role in strengthening this demand. A new model based on market principles has several names such as: 'managerialism', 'new public management', 'market based public administration', 'the post bureaucratic paradigm', or 'entrepreneurial government' (Hughes 1998). To make the new system more effective and ensure efficiency, the use of information technology in the governance process is emphasized. India has introduced these global trends in 1990. E-governance i.e., rendering of government services and information to the public using electronic means, is a paradigm shift over the traditional approaches in public administration.

E-governance promotes the efficiency and enforces accountability in the working of the government system. The two terms- e-government and egovernance are independent of each other. E-government is understood as the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to promote more efficient and cost effective government, facilitate government services and allow greater public access to information, and make government more accountable to citizens, whereas governance is a wider term which covers the state's institutional arrangements, decision making processes, implementation capacity and the relationship between government officials and the public.

E-GOVERNANCE IN KARNATAKA

Karnataka:

The important projects undertaken by the Govt. of Karnataka are Bhoomi, Khajane and Kaveri.

Bhoomi:

Twenty million rural land records belonging to over 6.7 million farmers have been computerized in Karnataka. Citizens can obtain land records with ownership and crop details to obtain loans from banks through 177 government kiosks. This facility has helped farmers to not only secure land records speedily without speed money and middlemen, but also save the time and money earlier spent on visiting

government offices where they were harassed by corrupt officials. Now, farmers can obtain all RTC (record of rights, tenancy and crops) copy of their land records within 30 minutes by paying Rs.15.00. Copies can be obtained for any land parcel in the taluka by providing the name of the owner or the plot number (<http://www.bangaloreit.com/html/egovern/Bhoomifrm.html>).

Kaveri:

Computerization of land registration in Karnataka known as Kaveri intends to facilitate speedy registration without intermediaries and speed money. Indeed, the registration of sale and mortgage deeds earlier required much manual labour and time for registration, which has been reduced with the introduction of this project.

Khajane:

Treasuries all over Karnataka have been computerized under a project known as Khajane to facilitate transparency and speedy delivery of services. Treasuries have been directly connected to rural local bodies accounting around for 4,500 zilla panchayats, taluka panchayats and gram panchayats. As a result of this network, Rs.20,000 crores are handled in 225 treasuries serving 4.7 lakh clients in the State.

Critical Issues for E-Governance

E-governance is a big challenge and a far big opportunity to bring services to all citizens. The most significant characteristic of any successful e-government application is its quality and accessibility. In the Indian context, there are numerous challenges to good governance including size of population, decentralization, decision making process etc. Redefining rules and procedures, information transparency, legal issues, infrastructure, skill and awareness, access to right information, inter-departmental collaboration, tendency to resist the change in work culture, are the main concerns for the government. 21 lakh 37 thousand villages are participating in decision making process. It is a complex job where technology can help to find the solution in multi lingual, multi-cultural, multi ethnic population. As the information collected by governments may be politically sensitive, appropriate security mechanisms may be an important technical consideration. At the same time, many other policy issues need to be resolved, such as authentication and confidentiality. Even if internet population is growing in India, there is a significant portion of the people who may not be able to access services for various reasons like limited access to ICT technologies, low literacy in Computer. India lacks a full-fledged ICT framework for implementation of e-governance. Lack of infrastructure in rural and urban area, concern for security, less Computer literacy lack of awareness of the function, social and economic disparity, security & privacy through biometrics etc. are the critical issues. Criminalization of politics, corruption, and illiteracy, lack of infrastructure, security and privacy of personal and financial data are the other major constraints. Simple tasks may be easier to perform through electronic government access. Many changes, such as marital status or address changes can be along process and take a lot of time and paper work.

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. Good governance is not given naturally in any system. It has to be nurtured by developing institutions of democracy. Good governance implies a framework that has well-being of the people as its focal point.

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