



## **E-governance: An overview**

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### **Abstract**

The term e-government refers to government's use of technology, particularly web-based Internet applications to enhance access to and delivery of government information and services to citizens, business partners, employees, other agencies, and government entities. It is connected with the public sector's use of information and communication technologies with the aim of improving information and service delivery, encouraging participation of the citizens in the decision-making process and making government more accountable, transparent and effective. It is concerned with the development, deployment and enforcement of the policies, laws and regulations necessary to support the functioning of a Knowledge Society as well as of e-Government. Government, today, is expected to be transparent in its dealings, accountable for its activities and faster in its responses. This has made the use of ICT imperative in any agenda drawn towards achieving good governance. It has also led to the realization that such technologies could be used to achieve a wide range of objectives and lead to faster and more equitable development with a wider reach.

**Keywords:** information technology, e-governance, issues, challenges

### **Introduction**

E-Governance is not only popular in India but also worldwide. Some authors say that E-Government constitutes only a subset (though a major one) of E-Governance. According to these authors, E-Governance is a broader concept and includes the use of ICT by government and civil society to promote greater participation of citizens in the governance of political institutions, e.g., use of the Internet by politicians and political parties to elicit views from their constituencies in an efficient manner, or the publicizing of views by civil society. 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 software's, computers were put to other uses like managing databases and processing information. However, 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. A National Task Force on Information Technology and Software Development was constituted in May 1998.

The concept of e-governance has its origins in India during the seventies with a focus on the development of in-house government applications in the areas of defense, economic monitoring, planning and the deployment of IT to manage data intensive functions related to elections, census, tax administration etc. The efforts of the NIC to connect all the district headquarters during the eighties was a very significant development. From the early nineties, IT technologies were supplemented by ICT technologies to extend its use for wider sectoral applications with policy emphasis on reaching out to rural areas and taking in greater inputs from NGOs and the private sector as well. There has been an increasing involvement of international donor agencies under the framework of 'e-governance for development' to catalyse the development of e-governance laws and technologies in developing countries. e-governance in India has reached the 'transactional' stage and provides various services to citizens and business and government organizations and is dispensed by central government agencies and different state government departments. As citizens of India, we have to deal with government in our day-to-day lives. Citizens expect speedy service, courteous treatment, and quick disposal of grievances or applications. This interaction, however, is not always pleasant. The general perception among citizens is that the quality of administration is deteriorating day-by-day and that quality of governance needs to be considerably improved upon. The general feeling outside the government is that the government is huge, it lacks direction, it is unmanageable, is wasteful and it is uncaring of the citizen. But those in the government continue to feel that they are doing a fine job and nothing could be done better. There is, therefore, a wide gap between the expectations of the citizens and their experience with the government. This gap can only be filled by drastic

simplification of procedures and change in attitude of civil servants vis-à-vis the citizens.

### Objectives of Study

The paper has following objectives: -

- To discuss the E-Governance Concept, Objectives, Scope and Benefits.
- To study the various Challenges and prospectus of - Governance.

### Methodology

The present study is conceptual survey with exploratory cum descriptive in nature. It is based on the analysis of secondary data. The secondary data is availed from various journals, internet, and books.

### Concept of E-Governance

Electronic governance or e-governance is the application of information and communication technology (ICT) for delivering government services, exchange of information, communication transactions, integration of various stand-alone systems and services between government-to-citizen (G2C), government-to-business (G2B), government-to-government (G2G), government-to employees (G2E) as well as back office processes and interactions within the entire government framework. Through e-governance, government services will be made available to citizens in a convenient, efficient and transparent manner. The three main target groups that can be distinguished in governance concepts are government, citizens and businesses/interest groups. In e-governance there are no distinct boundaries.

### Definition

E-governance, expands to electronic governance, is the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in all the processes, with the aim of enhancing government ability to address the needs of the general public. The basic purpose of e-governance is to simplify processes for all, i.e. government, citizens, businesses, etc. at National, State and local levels.

### Objectives

The objective of e-Governance is to support and simplify governance for government, citizens and businesses. The use of ICT can connect all three parties and support processes and activities. Other objectives are to make government administration more transparent, speedy and accountable, while addressing the society's needs and expectations through efficient public services and effective interaction between the people, businesses and government. Following are the objectives/aims of E-Governance:

- **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.
- **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 to build a feedback framework, to get feedback from the people and to make the Government aware of people's problems.

- **To encourage citizen participation** - True democracy requires 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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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. It also does away with the physical communication thereby reducing the time required for communication while reducing cost.
- **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.

### Scope of E-Governance

Governance is all about flow of information between the Government and Citizens, Government and Businesses and Government and Government. E-Governance also covers all these relationships as follows:

- Government to Citizen (G2C).
- Citizen to Government (C2G).
- Government to Government (G2G).
- Government to Business (G2B).

#### a) Government to Citizen

Government to Citizen relationship is the most basic aspect of E-Governance. In modern times, Government deals with many aspects of the life of a citizen. The relation of a citizen with the Government starts with the birth and ends with the death of the citizen. A person transacts with the Government on every corner of his life. May it be birth registration, marriage registration, divorce or death registration.

The G2C relation will include the services provided by the Government to the Citizens. These services include the public utility services i.e. Telecommunication, Transportation, Post, Medical facilities, Electricity, Education and also some of the

democratic services relating to the citizenship such as Certification, Registration, Licensing, Taxation, Passports, ID Cards etc. Therefore, E-Governance in G2C relationship will involve facilitation of the services flowing from Government towards Citizens with the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

1. **E-Citizenship** - E-Citizenship will include the implementation of ICT for facilitation of Government Services relating to citizenship of an individual. It may involve online transactions relating to issue and renewal of documents like Ration Cards, Passports, Election Cards, Identity Cards, etc. It will require the Government to create a virtual identity of every citizen so as to enable them to access the Government services online. For the same, Government would need to create a Citizen Database which is a huge task.
2. **E-Registration** - E-Registration will cover the online registration of various contracts. An individual enters into several contracts during his life. Many of these contracts and transactions require registration for giving it legality and enforceability. Such registration may also be made ICT enabled. E-registration will help to reduce a significant amount of paperwork.
3. **E-Transportation** - E-Transportation services would include ICT enablement of services of Government relating to Transport by Road, Rail, Water or Air. This may involve online –
  - Booking and cancellation of tickets,
  - Status of vehicles, railways, boats and flights,
  - Issue and renewal of driving licences,
  - Registration and renewal of vehicles,
  - Transfer of vehicles,
  - Payment of the fees of licences,
  - Payment of fees and taxes for vehicle registration.
4. **E-Health** - E-Health services would be ICT enablement of the health services of the Government. Under this interconnection of all hospitals may take place. A patient database may be created. A local pharmacy database may also be created. All this can be done.
5. **E-Education** - E-Education would cover the implementation of ICT in imparting of education and conducting of Courses. Distant as well as classroom education will be facilitated with the use of ICT. Use of internet can reduce the communication time required in Distance education; Internet may also help in conducting online classes.
6. **E-Help** - E-Help refers to facilitation of disaster and crisis management using ICT. It includes the use of technologies like internet, SMS, etc. for the purpose of reducing the response time of the Government agencies to the disasters. NGOs help Government in providing help in situations of disasters. Online information relating to disasters, warnings and calls for help can help the Government and the NGOs coordinate their work and facilitate and speed up the rescue work.
7. **E-Taxation** - E-Taxation will facilitate the taxing process by implementing ICT in the taxing process. Online tax due alerts and online payment of taxes would help transact faster.

## b) Citizen to Government

Citizen to Government relationship will include the communication of citizens with the Government arising in the Democratic process like voting, campaigning, feedback, etc.

1. **E-Democracy** - The true concept of Democracy includes the participation of the citizens in the democratic and governing process. Today due to the increased population the active participation of the citizens in governing process is not possible. The ICT can help enable the true democratic process including voting, public opinion, feedback and Government accountability.
2. **E-Feedback** - E-Feedback includes the use of ICT for the purpose of giving feedback to the Government. Lobbying is pursuing the Government to take a certain decision. Use of ICT can enable online feedback to the Government, online debates as to the Government services.

## c) Government to Government

G2G relationship would include the relationships between Central and State Government and also the relationship between two or more Government departments.

1. **E-administration** - E-administration would include the implementation of ICT in the functioning of the Government, internally and externally. Implementation of ICT can reduce the communication time between the Government Departments and Governments. It can substantially reduce paperwork if properly used. E-administration will also bring morality and transparency to the administration of Government Departments.
2. **E-police** - The concept of E-police is little different from Cyber-Police. Cyber Police require technology experts to curb the electronic/cybercrimes. E-police refers to the use of ICT for the purpose of facilitating the work of the Police department in investigation and administration. The concept of E-police includes databases of Police Officers, their performances, Criminal databases – wanted as well as in custody, the trends in crimes and much more. ICT can help reduce the response time of the Police department and also reduce cost by reducing paperwork.
3. **E-courts** - The concept of E-Court will include the ICT enablement of the judicial process. Technology may help distant hearing, online summons and warrants and online publication of Judgments and Decrees.

## d) Government to Business

1. **E-Taxation** - Corporate sector pays many taxes, duties and dues to the Government. Payment of these taxes and duties will be made easier by E-Taxation. Online taxing and online payment of taxes can help reduce cost and time required for physical submission of taxes. ICT can also help crosscheck the frauds and deficiencies in payment, further bringing accuracy and revenue to the Government.
2. **E-Licensing** - Companies have to acquire various licences from the Government, similarly the companies have to acquire various registrations. ICT enablement of the licensing and registration can reduce time and cost.
3. **E-Tendering** - E-Tendering will include the facilities of online tendering and procurement. It will online alerts as to new opportunities of business with the Government and

also online submission of tenders and online allotment of work. It will reduce time and cost involved in the physical tendering system.

### Benefits of E-governance

- E-Governance facilitates better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, or more efficient government management.
- It simplifies internal operations and improves performance of government departments while helping all sections of society to avail government services at lower cost with maximum ease of use.
- The cost of processing transactions is reduced online, resulting in great savings.
- Interconnecting various ministries and government departments electronically to share information helps them provide better governance. Through one integrated e-Government portal, citizens and businesses can avail of various government services, conduct online transactions, access information and interact with various government bodies without standing in long queues, waiting for office hours or handling lot of paperwork, and thus save time and money.
- Reduced corruption
- High transparency
- Increased convenience
- Growth in GDP
- Direct participation of constituents
- Reduction in overall cost.
- Expanded reach of government

### Challenges of e-governance in India

People indulge in corruption by misappropriating the funds available for e-governance. Unfortunately, most of the funds available for e-governance have been either misused or not utilised at all. Even though few E-governance initiatives of India have been successful, E-governance in India has failed to materialise and make the lives of Indians better. There are however, numerous challenges. Some of the key areas needing attention are as follows: -

- **Ensuring service delivery:** e-governance projects have primarily focused on internal process automation and generally are hardware and infrastructure driven with little focus on citizen service delivery or outcomes.
- **Lack of strategies and financial plan**
- **The project implementation is generally vendor driven.**
- **Reverse compatibility of application with legacy systems are missing in several projects.**
- **The IT Infrastructures are procured before building the application or digitizing the data.**
- **Physical security is emphasized, whereas the Logical and application security is left to vendors in many cases.**
- **Lack of infrastructure for sustaining e-governance projects at national level:** Infrastructure to support e-governance initiatives does not exist within government departments. The infrastructure creation is not guided by a

uniform national policy, but it dependent on the needs of individual officers championing a few projects. Therefore, the required networking and communication equipment is either non-existent in government departments or if it exists at all, it does not serve any tangible purpose as per the requirement of e-governance project is concern.

- **Digital divide:** Even in the era of science and technology, there is still huge gap exists between users and nonusers of e-govt. services. In fact, in India, majority of the masses, who living below poverty line and they deprived of govt. services. In contrast, some portion of people are immensely using the e-services of government. However, this gap needs to be made narrow, then only, the benefits of e-governance would be utilized equally.
- **Privacy and Security:** It is one of the critical challenges of e-governance. Financial services, medical services and personal information are to be protected with security, and then only, there will be number of people trusting of it. Therefore, implementation of e-governance projects must have security standard and protocols for safeguarding the interest of all classes of masses; otherwise, citizens will lose trust and confidentiality of e-governance.
- **User friendliness of government websites:** Users of e-Governance applications are often non-expert users who may not be able to use the applications in a right manner. Such users need guidance to find the right way to perform their transactions. Therefore, government websites must be user friendly so that more and more people can use them easily. Hence, these websites can be more effective.
- **Language Dominance:** The dominance of English on the internet constrains the access of non-English speaking population. Due to overwhelming dominance of English, computers and the internet are quite useless in Indian villages.
- **Inequality:** Inequality in gaining access to public sector services between various sections of citizens, especially between urban and rural communities, between the educated and illiterate, and between the rich and poor.

### Conclusion

E-Governance is the key to the “Good Governance” for the developing countries like India to minimize corruption, provides efficient and effective or quality services to their citizens. it still has some hurdles regarding e-governance, such as: digital divide between urban and rural, poverty, illiteracy, security and cost of implementation, etc. Indian government is spending a lot of money on e-Governance projects but still these projects are not successful in all parts of India. Unawareness in people, local language of the people of a particular area, privacy for the personal data of the people etc. are main challenges which are responsible for the unsuccessful implementation of e-Governance in India. there are large and small e-governance projects being implemented but it hasn't been a smooth ride upwards for all of them like Right to Information Act and the electronic voting machine had faced a lot of negative feedback and shortcomings are exposed.

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