ABSTRACT

E-governance is the application of ICT (Information, Communication and Technology) creating an interface for the citizens for the efficient delivery of government services. E-governance involves citizen participation in framing the policy matters so that need based e-services are delivered. It takes a holistic approach, where the success lies on sophisticated technology, virtual infrastructure, departmental integration, back-end operations, capacity building, security standards, reducing digital divide etc. This paper focuses on some of the best e-governance practices globally: e-governance initiatives of the central government and a few states in India – hurdles, challenges and suggestions.

Keywords: E-governance initiatives, digital divide, challenges and suggestions.

Introduction

Most of the countries worldwide are embracing e-governance because of the benefits it holds. It’s not only a platform where things are done electronically along with that we see participative governance where the ideas and suggestions of the people are heard. It bridges the gap between administration and service delivery. The main objective of this research paper is to first give a bird’s eye view of e-governance at global level. The second part deals with how e-governance is gaining its prominence in different states in India.

E-governance – A Global experience

At the global front we have many countries working out their way in E-governance. In 2016, 128 out of 193 UN member states provided e-access of government expenditure to the general public. All that required a concrete plan and implementation, heavy capital expenditure etc. Discussing some of the global experience can give us a good insight into the success factors of e-governance.

❖ Government 3.0 (Republic of Korea)

It is an initiative of the republic of Korea (south) for better governance. It is the refined version of Government 2.0 aimed at providing customized public services, better citizen centric delivery channels, one stop-shop for business support services, narrowing digital divide, removing barriers between government departments, promoting public private partnerships etc. Its success factors lies on being competent and transparent.

❖ e-Services for e-citizens (Denmark)

E-governance in Denmark are delivered effectively by researching Continuously on public needs. It includes services like social security benefits, personal documents (passport, driving license), declaration to the police in case of theft, e-certificates (Birth and death) etc. In addition to that a wide range of digital self-service solutions have been made mandatory like student grants, Medical costs reimbursement etc.
Finland- Bridging the digital divide

Finland through its e-governance programme called FINeID offers an array of certification authority services like citizen certificate for safe online service, organization certificates to verify a given person’s position as a representative of business etc.

The projects above shows innovative techniques in e-governance adopted globally. Moving on to discuss how e-governance initiatives of central government and various states in India has its web stretched enhancing participatory e-governance, its commitment in delivering sectorial and transactional services, how ICT enables good governance by automation of processes, vertical and horizontal integration of various government services etc.

E-governance initiatives in India

1. E-governance in Karnataka (An integrated Bhoomi project)

Bhoomi is a flagship project of the Karnataka government aimed at computerization of land records benefiting the farmers. The farmers can get the copy of RTC online. This can prevent any forgery of land documents. The Bhoomi records are integrated with Bhoomi Bank to simplify the process of loan applications for farmers. Almost all banks all over Karnataka state have access to Bhoomi Bank web applications. Likewise the registration process of property is computerised under KAVERI application. This data gets transferred to Bhoomi application so that duplication of data entry work is avoided.

2. E-governance in Kerala (Akshaya)

The kerala state IT Mission project named Akshaya has won the prestigious SKOCH-2016 award for its citizen centric projects like E-Grantz (timely disbursement of scholarships), Sevana (online certificates like Birth, Death, Marriage certificate etc) e-district (Integration of various departmental services at any common service centers, certificate verification, application status etc). The services provided under this project were instrumental in e-governance success.

3. E-governance in Maharashtra

E-governance in Maharashtra is based on transforming government (G2G), fostering growth (G2B) and service delivery (G2C). Under transforming government we find creation and movement of files/receipts in electronic mode, central data repository and state-of-the art training room. Under G2B we find online tax payment, e-tendering, single window clearance etc. under G2C nearly 80% of the government services are made online. Citizens also have the option for assisted service access through common service centers (CSC).

4. E- governance in Punjab

It includes Punjab Seva online (a one stop portal for common man that provides comprehensive information to all its citizens) Suwidha (services like old age pensions, Nationality certificates, Issuance of NOC etc.) similar to project Bhoomi in Karnataka it has land records management system, Saarthi and Vahan services for driving license and RC.

The central government in India has contributed to its share of E-governance apart from providing a central database management repository to the states. Its initiatives stand on the threshold of democracy- where prominence is given to the suggestions and opinions of general public.
The website Mygov.in are a collection of draft regulations regarding Smart city projects, e-governance service maturity model, National Health Policy 2017, where the citizens can express their views, actively participate in discussions, poll, etc. Different competitions are also open for citizens (e-Greetings design contest for Ram Navami 2017, ThankYouPapa, Essay competitions etc). Platforms like this where we can express our opinions gives us a sense of being honoured. Another revolutionary citizen centric platform is digilocker. As soon we register with our mobile number and aadhaar number our digilocker account is created. We can access our e-aadhaar, LPG subscription voucher under issued documents section. From the option of pull documents we can retrieve driving license and vehicle registration certificates in electronic form.

The National portal of India (India.gov.in) provides services like eSign- online digital signature service, where the beneficiary is required to obtain a Digital signature certificate (DSC) from a certifying authority (CA) licensed by the controller of certifying Authorities (CCA). e-mudhra is one of the certifying authority to issue a DSC, Charges varies for different type of eSign from Rs. 899-2000.

This portal also helps us to post our innovative ideas in sectors like agriculture, rural energy, farming etc. e-verification of income tax returns are possible using net banking, Aadhaar OTP, registered mobile number etc.

Challenges in E-governance

The digital revolution in India has grown by leaps and bounds. Although India has taken great strides in rolling out of its 4G services, India’s average Internet speed is 3.5 Mbps and its ranking has improved considerably from 114 to 105 on a global scale. For the success of e-governancedigital reach and its speed should be taken care of. The digital strength displays the sign of future potential of e-governance. Some major challenges are discussed below.

1. The strength of network makes the delivery of e-services a cause of worry especially in rural areas.
2. Digital literacy rate in India is only 20-25%. Most of the citizens also depend on Common Service Centers or they still go for the traditional way of carrying out administrative work. The Digital inclusion of citizen is one of the major challenges.
3. The Internet users in India as on 2016 is just 34.8%. That means the penetration level is not even 50% of the total population. This stands as a hurdle for implementation of E-governance.
4. In rural areas the lack of technical knowledge of operators working in Common Service Centers create repetition of the same work which entails high administrative cost. Convincing people about the safety of their privacy and securing the bulk database especially in a populous country like India needs cutting edge technology.
5. At the rural areas servicing and maintenance of computer terminals causes delay in e-service delivery.
6. Lack of awareness among the people even in the cities makes people depend on cyber centers to apply for government benefits thereby compromising on their privacy.

Suggestions

1. Eliminating digital divide in rural and urban areas through better investment in infrastructure. India has been ranked 138th in 2016 ICT development index out of a total of 175 countries. This calls for necessary action to bridge the digital gap.
2. Focusing on capacity augmentation and user friendly Content Creation. Conducting web application based training programmes to support staffs.
3. Much needed improvement in those delivery channels which encounters more traffic.
4. Enhancing E-governance through cloud computing to back up the files for disaster management.
5. Providing uninterrupted power supply to Common Service Centers for providing hassle-free services for the citizens.
6. Creating applications for specific users and bundling them up, thereby eliminating the need for downloading and installing multiple applications.
7. Creating an Universal Patient ID which helps track the medical history of patients in one portal. This can avoid duplication of Medical tests. Separate login ID’s for patients and hospitals. We have Digital AIIMS in India – a separate unique health identification number for every patients visiting AIIMs. But this portal is restricted only to patients admitted in government hospitals. This services had to be extended even in private hospitals as majority of patients visits private hospitals.
8. Reducing rigidity in bureaucracy and faster digitization of approvals, registration, grievance setcreudes corruption and frustrations among citizens.
9. Effective e-governance can improve India’s ranking in ease of doing business.
10. Building confidence and creating awareness among the people to use more of e-services.

This can be done by using various advertisement strategies like Human Billboad, Social media contest, discounts on digital payments of government bills, posting in social media short videos on using e-services independently etc.

Conclusion
E-governance through a digital platform can take great strides in providing yeomen service to its citizens. Such initiatives also build confidence among the citizens towards the governance and they feel more honoured, dignified and respected, especially the poor. To achieve better transformation in e-governance the digital literacy rate has to be enhanced; still there are a lot of Indians who miss out so many things being published by the government in their websites. When information’s are spread across multiple websites probably it becomes difficult for the citizens to keep track on all the useful links. In the present scenario where most of the details are stored electronically the concerned government should think of better data management policies and should immediately fix the loopholes in e-governance management.

References