

Executive Summary

The dynamics of public administration in India have changed drastically with the introduction of e-governance as a guiding concept in the early 1990s. Citizens, the world over, have been demanding smaller, effective and responsive governments, obviously inspired by the unprecedented and rapid success of the finance capital in the global market. Consequently, policy makers began the search for smaller and efficient governments. Re-engineering of service systems, performance management, transparency in government operations, downsizing or right-sizing the government workforce, emphasis on delivery of reliable and quick public services and citizen satisfaction came to be considered as benchmarks by most of the administrators. Quick decision-making, data-based planning and effective implementation have been the hallmarks of good governance. The potential and scope for application of information & communication technologies in governance are enormous. E-government has the ability to transform traditional administrative systems through effective utilization of ICTs.

Research in e-Governance

Research can be done primarily on applications and impacts of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the government arena, spanning across diverse functions such as rationalization of administration, service innovation, democratic renewal and efficient governance in multi-level political systems. Thrust should be on introduction of e-government in the area of public administration (*e-administration*), especially regarding the interface between technology and organization. With the expansion of online service delivery new challenges are gaining importance, such as reorganizing service processes, co-operating across different tiers of government, guaranteeing access and secure communication for all as well as analyzing economic and social impacts of e-governance. With effective implementation of administrative modernization modules, the research focus can also be

expanded towards the largely neglected role of ICTs in policy-making and governance. The current research project intends to advance the way research is carried out with respect to quality, efficiency, innovation and impact of e-governance programmes in India.

E-Governance in India

E-Governance practices in India emerged and evolved mainly from native intuition, but the range of success of e-Governance initiatives has not been uniform. The bottom-up demand for delivery of electronic services was bleak initially, but the change in public perception was for the better with the governments roping in private industry and service-oriented organizations gradually. This trend can be established definitely with a review of the success of path-breaking e-governance models in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala. Time and costs for availing public services have come down drastically bringing in a positive change in peoples' perception of e-governance. This holds equally true for both the rural and urban populace. The result of all these radical changes in public administration systems is the enhanced satisfaction level of the citizenry on the delivery of public services.

Methodology of the study

Nine e-Governance projects in three states – e-Seva, CARD, VOICE & Saukaryam in AP; Bhoomi, KAVERI, BangaloreOne in Karnataka; Akshaya, FRIENDS and e-Collectorate in Kerala – were selected for this study to gauge the impact of e-governance on society with relative emphasis on the satisfaction of electronic services availing citizens in terms of transparency, accountability, responsiveness and reduction in time and costs. Other factors like digital divide, gender divide, cultural and ethnic values were also factored in to probe the extent and depth of e-governance systems besides their overall impact on societal transformation. The study covered 30 districts in the three South Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and

Kerala and the total sample size is 2,761 including users, bureaucrats, and Technology providers.

Major findings of this study

- There is an increasing bottom-up demand for more electronic delivery of public services in urban areas, particularly cities and towns. The success of e-Seva, FRIENDS and BangaloreOne illustrates this point.
- E-services can be implemented successfully even in the rural areas with innovative and productive modules. Projects like Akshaya, Bhoomi and CARD are shining examples in this context
- Total networking of district administration is in the realm of possibility. Effective coordination among various departments is crucial to set up an integrated network right from the village panchayat to the district level. E-Collectorate of Palakkad can be a model for the entire country

Constraints

Though a slew of positive attributes/impacts of different e-governance projects have been observed at the grassroots level in the course of this study, a number of inhibiting factors or constraints too have come to the fore.

- Ideas from early experiments in e-governance have definitely contributed to technology development and to the improvement of government practices. There is a wealth of experience already at hand at the local, state and central levels which can be made good use of.
- From the citizen's perception, achievements in the field of e-governance have been access to government information, cross-departmental portals and government portals.
- Broadening electronic services is imperative. Issues like authenticity and protection of data, information management, and usability are the major hurdles.

Major Recommendations

The following are the major recommendations for effective implementation of e-governance projects at all levels in India:

- Replication of successful technology modules on a national scale can save precious public funds and pave way for funding of e-governance projects in unexplored avenues
- Transparency, accountability, responsiveness and reduction in time and costs in electronic delivery of public services that collectively enhance the satisfaction levels of the citizens are the key factors that determine the success of any e-governance project
- Adapting institutions and personnel so as to maximize their capabilities in concert with new technologies which are hard to implement in public administrative systems that do not want to forego traditional authority
- Improving trustworthiness by providing broader access to government information and assuring information systems security and user privacy
- Bridging considerable gaps between successful models of e-governance and ongoing projects
- Making e-services more citizen-centric than government-centric
- Ensuring comprehensive and effective public-private collaboration in conceptualizing, designing and implementing e-governance projects
- Integration of State Wide Area Network (SWAN) up to the panchayat level and cross-networking of SWANs with the Union government can ultimately establish an e-government