An Introspection of E – Governance Trends & Best Practices

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Abstract

The idea of e-Governance revolves around the application of Information Technology and allied tools and processes for better Government efficiency and user benefits. The potential to improve the performance of public organizations and deliver efficient services to the citizens is very high by implementing e- Governance initiatives over the years. The concept of e-Governance has evolved into varied dimensions, which are discussed and analyzed in detail in the paper. The paper is qualitative in nature, based on secondary sources of data and specific case studies in e- Governance implementation. The paper also generates rich insights on e-Governance Success Factors, e-Governance Conceptual Models, e-Governance Challenges and best practices across the Globe. Driven by the success of a few projects in improving delivery of services to citizens and businesses, an increasing number of governments are making ICT investments in the public sector including India.

Keyword - *E – Governance Dimensions, E- Governance Success Factors, - E- Governance Conceptual Models, E – Governance Best Practices*

1. INTRODUCTION

The paper on e-Governance attempts to look into the current status of best e-Governance practices across the globe and the understanding of the concept of e-Governance. There has been better investment climate in countries with highly equipped Information technology based systems and e--Governance initiatives. In the literature review done by various experts, most of the research focuses on success factors of e – Governance and its benefits to the stakeholders. The growing numbers of countries are adopting e-Government initiatives as a tool to deliver greater operational efficiency, cost savings and transparency (Schuppan, 2009). The UN E-government survey 2014 (UN, 2014) found that Republic of Korea has retained the top spot in 2014 with its continued leadership and focus on e-Government innovation, Australia (2nd) and Singapore (3rd) have both improved their rankings considerably over their 2012 performance.

1.1 Objective of the study

- To assess the conceptual evolution and understanding of e-Governance and its dimensions.
- To assess the key success factors & best practices of e-Governance.

1.2 Need for understanding E – Governance Dimensions and its success factors

The potential to improve the performance of public organizations and deliver efficient services to citizens is very high by implementing e-Governance initiatives (Irani et al., 2008). According to UNDP (2009), among the e-Government leaders, innovative technology solutions have gained special recognition as the means to revitalize lagging economic and social sectors. On the contrary, several e-Government initiatives have either had limited success or failed according to evidence available from prior studies in e-Governance domain (Berman & Tettey, 2001; Heeks, 2003, 2005). With increased impact of Globalization phenomena in developing countries including

India, international organizations such as the World Bank and World Trade Organization (WTO) have recommended the use of ICT to simplify customs processes and to facilitate trade (Lewis, 2009).

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative and descriptive in nature and most of the data is based on secondary sources of survey data. Such an approach is adopted in the study as the area of research is very broad and sources of data are also spread across multiple locations. To arrive at a conclusive idea of the larger picture on E - Governance and E – Society, analyzing the existing survey data and specific successful case studies of ICT based E Governance initiatives gives a better result in finding the answers to the research question framed.

3. E – GOVERNANCE DIMENSIONS

The term e-Governance and e-Government are alternatively used in the past literature and in the paper as well indicating the same term. The classification of Jansen (2005) which provides a three e- Government dimensions: e-Service, e Administration, and e-Democracy is the most indicative since it combines all views of e-Government. The examination of the e-Society dimension defined by Heeks (2001) indicates that it has the same meaning as e Democracy; as of the fourth dimension of e-Commerce – stated by Dawes (2002), it can be considered as part of e-Services. The table 1 shows these dimensions and their meanings.

Table 1 – E- Governance Dimensions

Dimension	Meaning
e-Service	Comprises the delivery of all types of electronic services .(Centre for Technology in Government, 2001; Dawes, 2002; EEurope, 2005; Fang, 2002; Grönlund 2000; Heeks, 2001; Kearns and Taylor, 2003; Prins, 2006; Schubert and Hausler, 2001; Turban et al., 2002; Wyld, 2004).
e-Administration	Includes various types of management work and internal processes and operations. (Centre for Technology in Government, 2001; Chadwick and May, 2003; Dawes, 2002; E-Europe, 2005; Fang, 2002; Grönlund 2000; Heeks, 2001; Janakova, 2004; Koh et al., 2006; Prins, 2006; Schubert and Hausler, 2001; Wimmer, 2002).
e-Democracy	Focuses on the political processes and interaction between the constituents and the government. (Centre for Technology in Government, 2001; Janakova, 2004; Dawes, 2002; Fang, 2002; Grönlund, 2000; Heeks, 2001; Prins, 2006; Schubert and Hausler, 2001; Wyld, 2004).

Source: Adapted from Jansen (2005)

Heeks (2001a) identifies three main domains of e-Governance, based on taxonomies proposed by Ntiro: E-administration: improving government processes, e-Services: connecting individual citizens with their government and E-society: building interactions with and within the civil society.

4. E- GOVERNANCE SUCCESS FACTORS

In a survey on various municipalities worldwide and their E Governance models, the classification study by Holzer (2008) identified the below variables as classification criteria (refer table 2).

Table 2 - Indicators of E-government success

S.No	Indicator
1	Information Dissemination, means and methods.
2	Two-way communication, the nature of the relationship.
3	Services that will be available to the citizen or any stakeholder.
4	Integration.
5	Political participation. To what extend the citizens will be involved in the political matters, and how it would affect it.
6	Security, how secure transactions will be.
7	Usability, how usable (easy to use) will the transactions will be, and if they are user-friendly or not.

SAI India (2015), one of the leading IT Auditors advocate that successful e Governance implementation is about four main components that are the End Users Need Identification, Business Process Modification, Use of Information Technology and most importantly Committed Government intent. The deficiencies in any of these would result in e -Governance projects failing to achieve their objectives and in the audit of various e-Governance projects in India, it was found that there seems to be discrepancy in the vested interests by various stakeholders of E Governance initiatives.

5. E- GOVERNANCE CONCEPTUAL MODELS

In the context of identifying some of the highly discussed e-Governance conceptual models, the paper revisits some of the important frameworks and models applicable for ICT based e-Governance initiatives. The successful e-Government concepts should rely on rigid institutionalization, liberal laws and regulations, adoptive technologies, and promotion of business values, often terms as the four pillars of e-Government. (Government of Jordan, 2006; Rainford, 2006). On these lines, some of the important ones include the Enterprise Architecture (EA) based frameworks which has got the highest credibility to improve service delivery and can be applied for ICT based e-Governance; and the most exhaustive and holistic ones being the Zachman framework discussed in further sections.

5.1 Enterprise Architecture (EA)

According to Saha (2012), Enterprise Architecture (EA) is the inherent design and management approach essential for organizational coherence leading to alignment, agility, and assurance. The structured Enterprise Architecture approach is often used to plan and implement efficient and effective transformation efforts. However,

the strongest driver for Enterprise Architecture is to improve service delivery and overall performance within the organization's business segments.

Conventionally, EA consists of a collection of inter -connected architectural domains (also called viewpoints or perspectives). The five domains of EA that largely represent the current state of practice in the discipline of EA are Policy and Strategy architecture, Business Architecture, Data / Information Architecture, Application Architecture and Technical Architecture.

Zachman's (1987) framework identified the kinds of work products needed for the citizens to understand and thus build a given system or entity. The Zachman framework encourages a non-rigid approach to the development of systems. Instead of a series of steps, the approach is organized around the different viewpoints, or perspectives, of the various players. This framework provides for six windows from which to view the enterprise, which Zachman terms ―perspectives on how a given entity operates.

5.2 Grass root e-Governance Frameworks:

A three prong approach may simplify delegation of local e-Government at the grass roots, such as a merit is made between access policies (aimed at improving access to ICTs for all citizens), content policies (directed to improve the use of ICTs in the city administration and semi-public domains) and infrastructure policies (to improve the provision of broadband infrastructure) (Berg, Meer, Winden & Woets, 2006). In this respect, incorporation of parties actively involved at the grass roots governance processes should be involved. Sharma and Gupta (2003), advocate a e-Government framework that may take a four layer operational strategy as in table 3 below.

Table 3 – 4 Layer e-Governance Framework

Operational Strategy	Actions
Development	Network layer: Information Infrastructure, Servers, LANs, WANs, Intranet, Internet
Deployment	Integration layer: Database Development, e-Mail, e-Forms, e-Portals, Networked Enabled System, Legal Boundaries, Policy Issues
Delegation	Management Layer: Skill Development, Business Process Re-engineering, Demand Supply Management
Dissemination	User Application Layer: G2G, G2C, C2G, G2B, B2G, G2NG, NG2G, G2O, O2G

Abdelbaset Rabaiah and Eddy Vandijck in 2009 proposed the 'Strategic framework of e-Government'. This model is the result of review of e -Government strategies of 20 countries in addition to European Union. They argued that the framework should act as a bridge between Local and Central Government and the framework proposed is a generic one (fig.1) to be adapted for any country's E Governance needs at the strategic and implementation level.

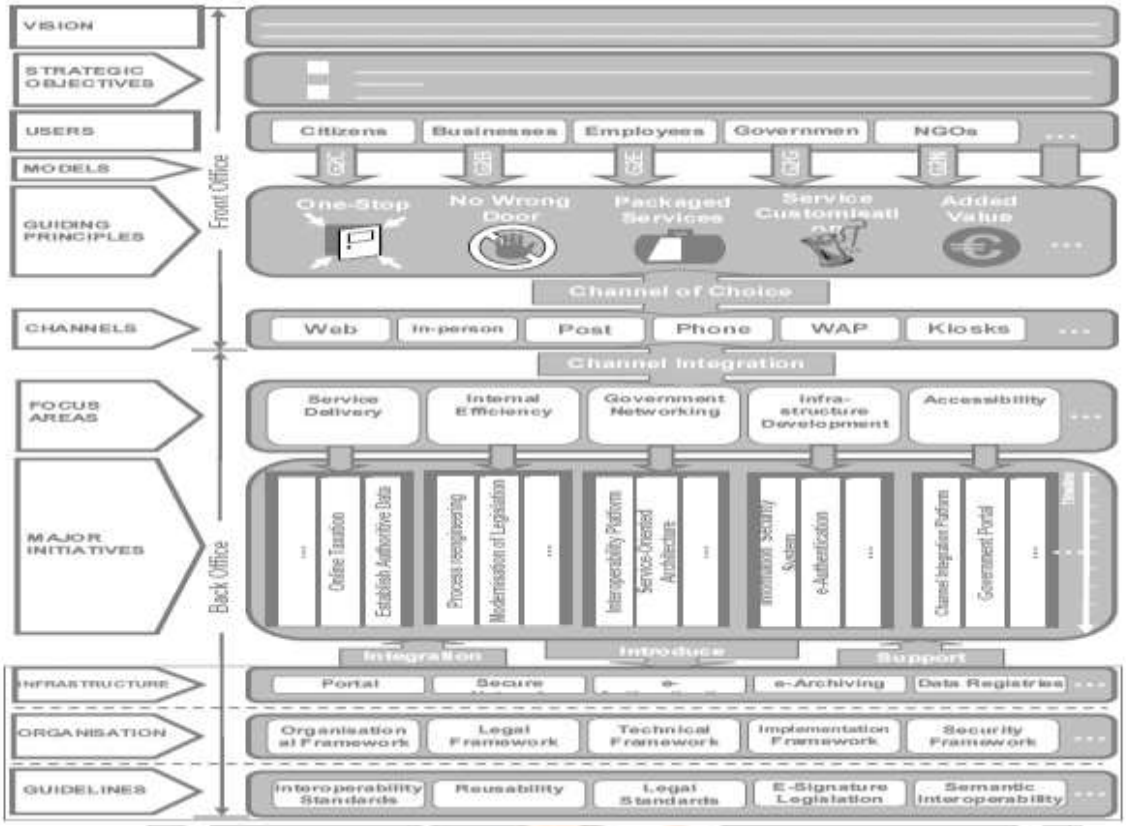

Fig.1 - Strategic framework of e-Government' (Abdelbaset Rabaiah and Eddy Vandijck in -2009)

6. E- GOVERNANCE ADOPTION: BEST PRACTICES & INITIATIVES:

The National e-Governance Project (NeGP) initiative by Government of India gives the valuable insights into adoption factors of e-Governance Implementation. Some of the major milestones of NeGP from user perspectives includes, services of various departments of Central and State Governments like 'Copies of Record of Rights for Land Records,' Issuance of Job Cards for availing employment under NREGS, Issuance of various types of Certificates – birth/death/income/caste/domicile, etc., applying for various benefits under social services schemes such as pensions – widow/handicap/old age, etc., scholarships, education assistance, etc., information about market prices of agricultural produce and commodities and even diagnostic assistance for diseases through Telemedicine, are available electronically from any place, at any time.

NASSCOM (2015), has given a lot of inputs to improve the success rate of e-Government implementation in Indian context. These can be taken forward in similar e-Governance implementation initiatives across the Globe and especially developing and highly populated countries where the information requirements and needs are similar. NASSCOM's study recommends that the government take specific steps to ensure smooth rollout of e-Governance initiatives. Some of these are given in table 4:

Table 4 – NASSCOM Recommendation for Government on e- Governance

S.No	E – Governance Recommendations
1.	Outlining RFPs, Contracts, MSAs for different category of projects, and preparing and reviewing these by Joint Government-Industry teams, including representatives from the banking sector, consultants, Department of IT and Department of Expenditure.
2.	Creating contracts that incorporate 'Conditions of Precedent' and obligations of government departments and agencies.
3.	Defining SLAs and events of default for both vendor and government departments and agencies.
4.	Publishing best practices of Infrastructure Concessionaire Agreements and Model Documents for the infrastructure sector, into e-Governance PPP Projects.
5.	Providing toolkits for PPP, BOOT Projects and Business Model options to guide departments.
6.	Standardizing on Suppliers' Debriefing, Post Project Awards, as with pre-bid meetings.

Some of the best e- Government practices (country wise) and their policies was summarized by the UN e-Governance survey of 2014 (UN, 2014) to serve as an advisory for future IT based initiatives and for striving Governments like India. The various focus areas of this summary focuses on Citizen Consultation, Transparency in public administration, Prioritized development, Mobile Participation, Integrated Financial Management Information System, Smart ID Cards, Life-Saving SMS service, SMS-based Literacy Program me for Women, Mobile government for poverty eradication and economic growth, etc…

Pradeep kumar S.F. and Vijay kumar .N (2011) have analyzed and identified the areas of failure in E Governance projects in developing countries like India and advocate the PPP (Public-Private Partnership) models for planning, design and implementation of Flagship E Governance initiatives. Build Operate Transfer (BOT) and Build Operate Own Transfer (BOOT) models are highly motivating models for the private sector to participate in Government initiatives.

7. SUMM ARY & CONCLUSION

The services offered by e-Government are categorized into three phases: publishing, interacting, and transacting. The Government websites are primarily being used to obtain information; to date limited progress has been made in interacting with citizens and online business transactions (Accenture, 2004). From the UN (2012) report it is clear that national income certainly does not, by itself, constitute or guarantee advanced e-government development, as evidenced by many outliers highlighted in Figure 2. Some countries have significantly advanced their e-Government development ranking despite their relatively low national income, just as there are many countries which are lagging despite their relatively high income and thereby have good opportunities for future improvement.

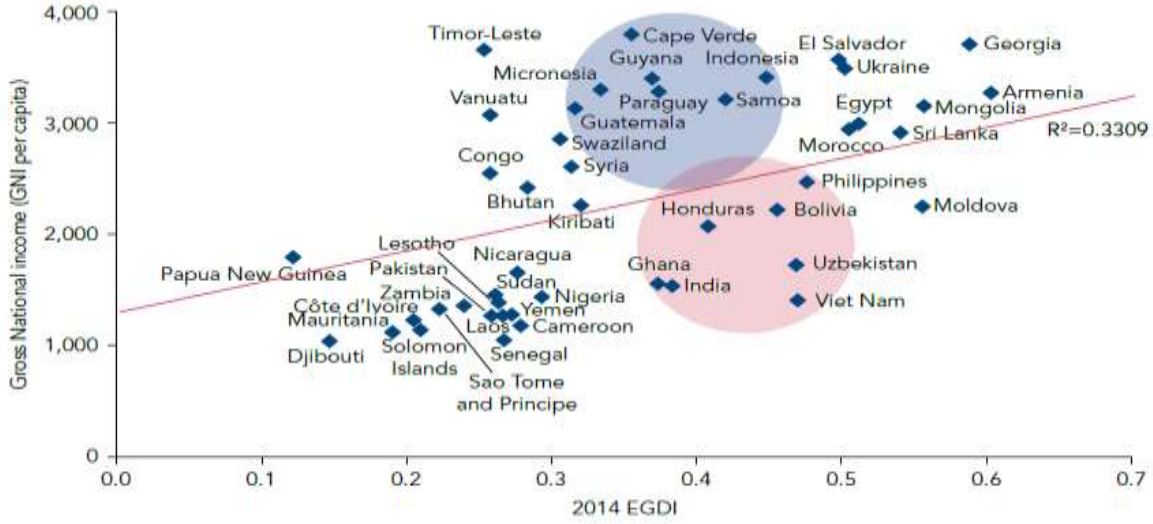

Fig 2 - Relation between EGDI and national income (GNI per capita), lower middle income countries

Though there are mixed insights in understanding the insights on E Governance, it is best left to the Government and citizens to put to best use the benefits and advantages of E Governance initiatives There is always scope for further improvement in all e-Government initiatives, which needs the commitment of the implementing Government, executives and the participation of end users in the respective initiatives. E governance is a manifold step in making transparency in running Governments, making informed decisions, evolution of e-Society benefitting the citizens, businesses and users.

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