

# A Research on Various Perspective and Theoretical Concepts of E-governance in India: Opportunities and Challenges

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**Abstract –** *Public administration, governed by bureaucratic structures built on rationale principles, that dominated the twentieth century, has failed to respond to the changing requirements of the present times. E-governance, which is a paradigm shift over the traditional approaches in public administration, means rendering of government services and information to the public using electronic means. This new paradigm has brought about a revolution in the quality of service delivered to the citizens. It has ushered in transparency in the governing process; saving of time due to provision of services through single window; simplification of procedures; better office and record management; reduction in corruption; and improved attitude, behavior and job handling capacity of the dealing personnel. The present study substantiates these theoretical assumptions about e-governance by analyzing some experiences at the local, state and federal levels of government in India.*

*In this paper, we have discussed the application of ICT in improving internal efficiency of government and transforming the relationship between government and its stakeholders.*

*The theoretical underpinnings of e-governance, as discussed in this paper, come from the New Public Management (NPM). In an NPM framework, e-governance puts the citizen at the centrestage by enabling citizen participation in governance and makes government more responsive and accountable to citizens. This paper discusses the hope, hype and opportunities of e-governance initiatives by the Union government, State governments, and private/ voluntary sectors in India. While making a realistic assessment of ICT applications in governance, this paper brings out the challenges faced in scaling up and sustaining e-governance initiatives. The central argument of this paper is that ICT has immense potential to transform governance and empower citizens, and success of e-governance is contingent on creation of basic infrastructure, reengineering of processes around citizens' needs, provision of value-added services, and adoption of viable business models.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In the past, service delivery mechanisms of the government departments left much to be desired in India. Cramped spaces; shabby ambience; discourteous dealing personnel and their chronic absenteeism; demands of gratification; inefficiency in work; long queues; procrastinating officials; procedural complexities; etc., were some of the undesirable features of the working of the government departments. Consequently, a visit to government department by a citizen to make use of any service used to be a harrowing experience. 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 infusion of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has played a prominent role in strengthening such a demand. The metamorphosis in the quality of delivery of services to the citizens by the government has been more pronounced in recent years with the advent of e-governance. E-governance, which is a paradigm shift over the traditional approaches in Public Administration, means rendering of government services and information to the public using electronic means. This new paradigm has brought about a revolution in the quality of service delivered to the citizens. It has ushered in transparency in the governing process; saving of time due to provision of services through single window;

simplification of procedures; better office and record management; reduction in corruption; and improved attitude, behavior and job handling capacity of the dealing personnel. The present study substantiates these theoretical assumptions about e-governance by analyzing some experiences at the Union as well as State Government Level in India.

Public Administration, governed by bureaucratic structures built on rationale principles, that dominated the twentieth century, has failed to respond to the changing requirements of the present times. It is so because it tended to be rigid, laid too much emphasis on red-tapism; sap creativity; thwarted initiative; wore out dynamism and denied justice as of resultant delays. In addition the focus was more on following procedures and keeping records.

Consequently the government moved at snail's pace, that too, after guzzling scarce public resources. This criticism seems to be harsh and overstated, but it brings the sordid and murky picture of the system to light. The clarion call is revamp the government and the archaic governance system.

Most of the advanced countries including United Kingdom (UK), Australia, Canada, Newzeland, and United States of America (USA) have adopted series of measures under a new model based on market principles. This new model has several names such as: 'managerialism', 'new public management'; 'market based public administration'; 'the post bureaucratic paradigm'; or 'entrepreneurial government'. Though these appear to be different terms yet they convey the same message i.e. replace the traditional bureaucratic model with a new model. Have faith in market principles: cut costs; reduce budgets; improve public managements, simplify rules and procedures; check corruption; inject transparency; and strengthen market forces by minimizing the role of the state. To make the new system more effective and ensure efficacy, the use of information technology in the governance process is emphasized.

No doubt, India has introduced these global trends/measures in 1990, but no sincere exercise has been undertaken in the corresponding 15 years to examine the effects of these reformative measures, especially the role of the information technology, in the governance process. The present paper is an attempt to fill this gap in the existing literature.

The term governance needs to be understood before we move on to e-government and e-governance. Governance is not the exclusive preserve of the government. It extends to civil society and the private sector. It covers every institution and organization from family to the state. It

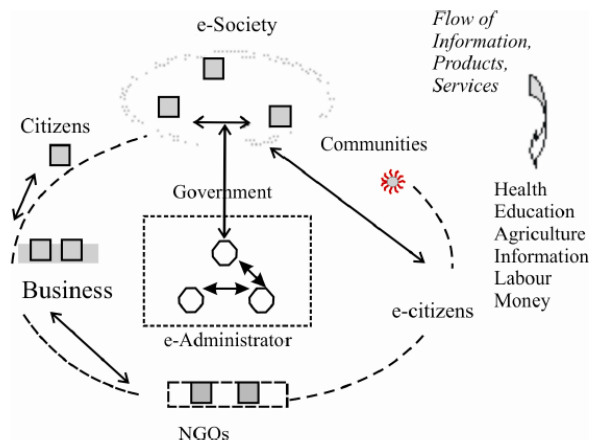
involves exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage the affairs in, and "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development". It can be better understood as, "the complex mechanisms, processes, relationships and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations and mediate their differences".

The two terms- e-government and e-governance are independent of each other, but are at times used alternatively, there by the major distinction between e-government and e-governance is missed out. E-government is understood as the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to promote more efficient and cost effective government, facilitate more convenient 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 is the use of ICT by the government, civil society and political institutions to engage citizens through dialogue and feedback to promote their greater participation in the process of governance of these institutions. Thus, e-government can be viewed as a subset of e-governance, and its focus is largely on improving administrative efficiency and reducing administrative corruption (Bhatnagar Subhash, 2004).

The theoretical underpinnings of e-governance come from the New Public Management (NPM) which originated in the late 1970s in the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, has swept across other countries since. NPM, which has been fast replacing the Old Public Administration seeks to 'reinvent' government through metamorphosis into an entrepreneurial, business-like, mission and vision-driven state, which changes its role from 'rowing' to 'steering'. The two basic principles of NPM are managerialism (a proactive, outcome-oriented, customer-centric government based on Decentralisation and participative management) and marketization (charging for public services, promotion of markets through creation of incentives, introducing competition between units through fragmenting, and competition in public service delivery through contracting).

Until quite recently, governments were plagued by a typical supply-side orientation, wherein developmental priorities were set by notions of the welfare state and centralized planning, and citizens were merely treated as passive recipients or beneficiaries of public services. E-governance has the potential to transform not only the way in which public services are delivered, but also the fundamental

relationship between government and citizens. Moon (2002) has identified five stages in the development of e-government. These include information dissemination, two-way communication, service and financial transactions, vertical and horizontal integration, and political participation. Through new modes of communication and interaction among government and various stakeholders, e-governance provides an all-encompassing framework within which e-administration grows and includes e-citizens, e-services, and e-society as presented in Figure 1. ICT is seen to be the third wave leading to the evolution of the e-society.



**Figure 1: ICT-enabled e-governance domain.**

ICT has been applied in the various 'tools' of government policy, namely, nodality, authority, treasure and organizational capacity. Nodality implies the extent to which ICT facilitates information exchange and the emergence of information networks comprising government and other stakeholders; treasure refers to the application of ICT for accounting and finance in government; authority refers to ICT applications in maintaining law and order; and organizational capacity refers to increase in information processing ability of government, improvement in efficiency enabled by ICT, and development of organized expertise (Dunleavy and Margetts, 2000). E-governance can increase the rationality in decision-making through formalization of rules and procedures reduce 'bounded rationality and modernize public administration through 'informatization'.

E-governance emphasizes the shift from process accountability towards accountability in terms of results, thus altering the traditional notions of accountability in bureaucracy. There is a lot of hope and hype on ICT applications in government. A realistic assessment, however, while accepting the potential of ICT, takes cognizance of its pitfalls. For instance, the experiences of

UK and USA with e-government are replete with examples of high-profile ICT projects that went incurably wrong. For example the introduction of computers in the UK social security agency ran over-budget and resulted in obsolete, inadequate and inflexible systems. In 1998, the inability of the UK Passport Agency to meet customer demand resulted in near collapse of the agency. The departments of social security and taxation in the US also faced similar crises (Margetts, 2003). In tune with the NPM-type of reforms, the ICT function in government in the UK and USA in recent years is increasingly being outsourced to large global ICT service providers.

The term 'e-Government' has been used too broadly to define initiatives and programmes that should rightly be deemed e-governance. Over the past few years, "governments have hurriedly adopted e-government technologies and ideas from simple, online communication of government information to real time, secure transactions for various processes and payments. Demands generated from political leadership, other associated governments, capacity building needs and perceived citizen expectations all contribute" to adoption of e-government methods for good governance.

At a broader level, apart from delivering government services, e-governance includes integration of several stand-alone systems and services between Government-to-Citizens (G2C), Government-to-Business (G2B), and Government-to-Government (G2G) as well as back office processes and interactions within entire government framework. The overall objective of such a catalogue is to enable the administration to provide services with affordable cost and optimum time to the end user (citizen). In a broader sense, 'e-governance' is all about reform in governance facilitated by the creative use of ICT.

India's e-governance transformation initiatives started in the 1990s. Since then the country has made considerable progress in the information and communication technology sector. To improve IT performance and productivity, the Government of India approved the National e-governance Plan (NeGP)<sup>3</sup> on May 18, 2006 which seeks to improve delivery of government services to citizens and business establishments with the vision to "make all government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency and reliability of such services at affordable costs to realize the basic needs of the common man".<sup>4</sup> e-governance has become the basic requirement to any form of governance at the local, regional, national or international level. While the 1980s saw the development of computerization in the government sector, the 1990s witnessed the importance of overall computerization with a centralized model in India. With the cost of communication

and IT infrastructure going downwards and demand going upwards, the e-governance initiatives took shape in the decade of 2000s. Thus the government sponsored e-governance projects with the corporate world took a big leap to provide the impetus for long-term growth of e-governance within the country. Demands generated from political leadership, capacity building needs, and perceived citizen expectations all have contributed to IT innovations. At the state level, many state governments started off their initiatives in the same period by taking up projects to serve their people through ICT. Today every state has a State Electronic Mission (SEM) to provide e-government services to the citizens.

India's e-governance transformation has been progressing rapidly. By 2013, over one billion e-government transactions have been logged and growth rate is rising exponentially.<sup>5</sup> The government has taken several initiatives in the journey from e-governance vision to implementation. Some purposeful steps and initiatives from vision to implementation include:

1. Thirty one Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) across a wide range of public services such as passport seva, e-procurement digitization of land records, national citizen database, etc.
2. Eight e-Government Support Components to help set up the required infrastructure (State Wide Area Network, State Data Centres, Common Service Centres, etc.) with technical and financial partnership with the private sector.
3. e-Government Management Structure comprising multiple committees to resolve bottlenecks and oversee programme execution.

India's base of nearly 125 million Internet users is currently the third largest in the world. In the recent past, e-governance in India has successfully penetrated deeper and wider across various Central and state government departments than ever before. The journey of e-governance is guided and empowered by the 31 Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) under the National e-governance Plan (NeGP) which acts as a powerful driving force for today's presence of e-governance in all government ministries and departments. Some standard programmes and projects at the state and central levels which offer e-governance services to citizens include : certificates, licenses, land records, utility services and tax payments, (health, education and pension), RTI and grievance, public distribution system, election, police, agriculture, local government service, employment, industry and commerce, property registration, passport and visa and state specific services.

## E-GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

E-governance originated in India during the 1970s with focus on in-house applications in the areas of Defence, economic monitoring, planning, and the deployment of ICT to manage the data intensive functions related to elections, census, tax administration etc. Most of these initiatives were stand-alone applications. During the 1980s, State Wide Area Networks (SWANs) were created, linking all districts through ICT networks. From the late 1990s onwards, the national government as well as State governments have been enthusiastically pursuing the adoption of ICTs, particularly web-based technologies including the Internet.

Key milestones of the Government of India (GoI) include the Information Technology Act, 2000, that legalizes electronic forms of communication and regulates practices relating to electronic exchange of information. Another revolutionary institutional change is the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005, that makes public institutions liable to provide information to citizens who demand such information. 1997 onwards, through the adoption of citizen's charters, each ministry/department is committed to deliver specified services to citizens in terms of explicit standards, time frames and grievance redressal mechanisms. Other prominent institutional changes include the establishment of the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (MICT) in Union government, and a Centre of Electronic Governance in Hyderabad. Most ministries/ departments have also hosted their own websites wherein they provide basic information about the ministry/ department, contact persons, citizen's charter, RTI Act, mechanism for requesting information, links to related websites, annual reports, publications and other documents. Some websites also provide an interactive interface, such as online submission of forms, and viewing status of applications. Community Information Centres (CICs) have been set up in North-Eastern States, Jammu and Kashmir, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep.

**National E-governance Plan**-In the early 1990s, the Central Administrative Reforms Committee recommended use of e-governance as an interface between the state and the citizen so as to improve efficiency, transparency and reliability of public service delivery. The midterm appraisal of the Ninth Plan and the approach paper of the Tenth Plan have lamented on the decline in governance processes. The NeGP (National E-governance Plan), conceived in mid-2003, by the Department of Information Technology (DIT) and the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DAR&PG), is aims to improve speed, reliability, accessibility and transparency in the delivery of various public services to citizens and businesses. NeGP



is based on a 'centralized planning and decentralized implementation' approach. It stresses 'process reengineering' and 'change management' as key ingredients for successful implementation of e-governance initiatives (MICT, 2006).

**E-governance Initiatives by State Governments-**Though all States have taken e-governance initiatives in some measure, the noteworthy ones include Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, New Delhi and Tamil Nadu.

A case in point is Andhra Pradesh that has a rich experience of e-governance and ICT for development projects. Each ministry in the State initiated several pilot projects because the then Chief Minister took active interest in harnessing the power of ICT for governance and development. Single window Integrated Citizen Services Centres (ICSCs) were created through which citizens could access information from government, pay utility bills and property taxes, get certificates and licenses, and receive information regarding building permits, property registration and transport procedures (Schware, 2000). However, each project was designed around the information needs of the particular ministry rather than that of the citizens (inside out perspective). The experience suggests that there is a need to first determine citizens' needs and then design the system in a citizen-centric manner (outside in perspective). Further, a backbone architecture connecting various ministries and districts could lead to seamless integration and enable service delivery through a single window<sup>4</sup>.

**E-governance Initiatives by Private/ Voluntary Sectors-**Besides the initiatives taken by the Union government and various State governments, several e-governance initiatives have been taken at local level – started by private/ voluntary sector entities in partnership with district government. One such project, Gyandoot, provides e-government as well as e-commerce services to people living in rural areas of Madhya Pradesh (Misra et al., 2001). Initially there was a lot of hype on the potential of Gyandoot to use ICT for development of rural masses. The critical factors responsible for the success of Gyandoot include leadership, champions for change, cost sharing between government and kiosk owner, and focus on citizens' needs. The challenges that Gyandoot faced include poor infrastructure in terms of power supply and Internet connectivity, frequent transfers of government officials, introduction of ICT without reengineering processes, and lack of financial sustainability (Sanjay and Gupta, 2004).

## SCOPE OF E-GOVERNMENT

While e-government encompasses a wide range of activities, we can identify three distinct areas. These include government-to-government (G to G), government-to-citizens (G to C), and government to business (G to B). Each of these represents a different combination of motivating forces. However, some common goals include improving the efficiency, reliability, and quality of services for the respective groups. In many respects, the government to government (G to G) sector represents the backbone of e-government. It is felt that governments at the union, state and local level must enhance and update their own internal systems and procedures before electronic transactions with citizens and business are introduced. Government to government e-government involves sharing data and conducting electronic exchanges between various governmental agencies. There are number of advantages with government-to-government initiatives. One benefit with this is cost savings, which is achieved by increasing the speed of the transactions, reduction in the number of personnel necessary to complete a task, and improving the consistency of outcomes. Another advantage, which flows from this, is improvement in the management of public resources.

Government to citizen (G to C) facilitates citizen interaction with government, which is primary goal of e-government. This attempts to make transactions, such as payment of taxes, renewing licenses and applying for certain benefits, less time consuming and easy to carry out. Government to citizen initiatives also strives to enhance access to public information through the use of websites and kiosks. Further, one of the main goals of implementing these initiatives has been to create a "single window" where citizens can carry out variety of tasks, especially those that involve multiple government departments, without requiring the citizen to initiate contacts with each government department individually. Thus, the G to C initiatives is driven by an urge to provide "better government" through improved efficiency and more reliable outcomes.

Government to Business (G to B) sector includes both the procurement of goods and services by the government as well as the sale of surplus government goods to the public on line. There are two motivating forces behind G to B. Currently; the business community prefers to carry out its activities such as sales, procurement, and hiring through electronic means. There are large numbers of software companies, which are producing number of products focusing on performing routine business activities on line. Thus, many companies like to extend the cost savings realized through Business to Business (B to B) transactions to their business with union, state and local level governments. The second reason for the growth of G to B is the demand for cost cutting and efficient

procurements in the government. Developing countries, where there is great pressure to minimize costs due to shortage of funds, G to B are being encouraged by the governmental agencies.

## **E-GOVERNANCE AS CITIZEN-CENTRIC GOVERNANCE**

The NPM heralds the transformation of the citizen into a customer of public services, who pays for public services, and hence has choice and the exit option, and the opportunity to give feedback on public service delivery. People wear fur hats in society – that of customer, client, citizen, and subject. As customers, they purchase private goods from markets; as clients, they consume professional services such as health care; as citizens they are entitled to certain rights; and as subjects, they receive protection. Citizens are active participants in service-delivery and co-producers of policy. As political beings, they participate in public life, have voice (Hirschman, 1970), and fulfil their collective purposes through politics. NPM transforms the traditional notions of democratic accountability by strengthening accountability of public managers downwards to customers. E-governance involves the following functions for citizens (Malick and Murthy, 2001):

- Providing information to the citizen through a single source of information, optimizing the resources of multiple Organisations, creating economies of scale for information processing and distribution, inter-government participation and establishment of public utility networks.
- Providing representation to the citizens by making elected representatives more accessible and enhancing their functions in e-government.
- Improving citizens' voice by stimulating debate, exchange of ideas and the resultant feedback for qualitative improvement in the delivery system.
- Improving citizen's participation by promoting two-way communication, participatory decision making, improving availability of services, and developing a system for public information and feedback.
- Engaging the citizens by providing a vision for partnership, community engagement and development of skills to participate in e-government, and creating conditions for information and knowledge relevant to citizens, service users, business and voluntary Organisations.

E-governance entails a partner-approach in which there is

collaboration between government and citizens in all phases of the policy cycle (Snijkers, 2005). As a partner of government, citizens are not subordinate to the government; citizens and government are placed on an equal footing. E-governance promises a plethora of benefits to citizens by accelerating and automating government-citizen interface, bringing about transparency in the functioning of the government, and enabling democratization. Government is transparent for citizens and open to citizens' scrutiny. Within this framework e-governance enables new forms of representation and accountability. E-governance develops new styles of governance through the engagement of citizens which improves citizens' trust in government. These new styles of governance represent a change from traditional bureaucratic systems to pluricentric systems. Whereas traditional accountability is organized in a vertical, hierarchical manner, e-governance entails more public forms of accountability, in which information about the results of organizations are made accessible and transparent for citizens as consumers of public services, professionals and civil society.

E-governance is in fact a step ahead of NPM as it enables the reinventing of governance (rather than reinventing government alone) through the emergence of networks where states and citizens, governments and private sectors, organizations and citizens form a web of relations (Kim et al., 2005), redefining accountability relationships, and placing the citizen at the centre of government efforts. Thus, e-governance carves out a new domain for citizen empowerment.

## **E-GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES IN INDIA**

The Government of India kick started the use of IT in the government in the right earnest by launching number of initiatives. First the Government approved the National E-governance Action plan for implementation during the year 2003-2007. The plan is an attempt to lay the foundation and provide impetus for long-term growth of e-governance within the country. It proposed to create the right governance and institutional mechanisms at the center, state and local levels to provide a citizen centric and business centric environment for governance. The Government has given approval in-principle to the plan and overall programme content; implementation approach and governance structure. While endorsing the plan, it was observed that: weight age must be given for quality and speed of implementation in procurement procedures for IT services; suitable system of motivating the states for quick adoption be incorporated; provision of delivery of services to the citizens through a single window should be encouraged; Out sourcing of services wherever and whenever feasible; efforts be made to promote and

develop public private partnerships to utilize the full potential of private sector investments; and connectivity should be improved and extended up to the block level in the states. Apart from the action plan, the following measures have also been introduced:

- Adoption of “Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 by the Government of India to provide legal framework to facilitate electronic transactions. The major aims of this act are to: recognize electronic contracts, prevents computer crimes, and make electronic filing possible. The Act came into force on 17 October, 2000;
- Establishment of the National Taskforce of Information Technology and Software Development in May 1998;
- Creation of Centre for e-governance to disseminate the best practices in the area of e-governance for the use by the Central and State Governments and act as a nodal center to provide general information on e-governance, national and international initiatives, and IT policies of the government(s);
- Developing e-office solutions to enable various ministries and departments to do their work electronically. Modules such as Workflow for Drafts for Approvals, e-file, e-notings, submission of reports, integrated personal information and financial accounting systems have been developed;
- Setting up of a High Powered Committee (HPC) with Cabinet Secretary as its Chairman to improve administrative efficiency by using Information Technology in Government;
- Designating a Joint Secretary level officer as IT manager in every Ministry/Department; and
- Instituting websites by almost all Ministries and Departments and providing information on aspects such as their objectives, policies and decisions, contact persons, etc. Some of them have started their electronic newsletter for giving publicity to their activities on wider scale; and identifying departments, which have frequent inter-face with the citizens, and computerizing them on priority basis.

Thus, it can be inferred from the above that a good beginning has been made to make e-government a reality in India, but still a lot needs to be done. Sincere efforts are required on sustained basis in future also to maintain the

momentum.

## CHALLENGES FOR E-GOVERNMENT IN INDIA

There has been an ongoing pursuit and effort on the part of the government to make governance effective for its citizens in terms of delivery of goods and services. In its aims and their realization, of course, the government has to face several difficulties. The challenge faced by the supporters of IT initiatives in India is the limited scope of expansion of the Service Catalogue to cover a varied range of services. The underlying reason for this is the style of IT implementation by service provider agencies wherein individual processes are automated.<sup>13</sup> Further, the main link of interdepartmental information exchange is largely missing and is left to the end-user to bridge by manual means leading to rework at the customer end. There is an urgent need to work at the citizen solution level at each government agency in order to build an interface layer to facilitate the information flow.

The governments both –the Union and the states must make earnest efforts to complete the daunting, but formidable task of quicker and effective E-government programs by:

- Making a policy choice in favour of computerization to overcome radically the even if it requires huge investments for the purchase of hardware and software;
- Serious efforts would be required to mobilize resources for this arduous job. One way to deal with the situation could be that governments enter into arrangements for leasing of computers. This would reduce initial heavy capital investments. There are a large number of agencies which would like to fund the leasing to the departments. Ministry of Finance can be asked to provide concessions to these agencies;
- Establishing complete connectivity between various ministries and departments so that transfer of files and papers could be done through Internet thereby choosing efficacious speed as an alternative to manual labour. To make this really effective, there is a need to make databases of various departments compatible with one another. Thus, interoperability of e- governance projects is of vital importance if the citizens are to feel the benefit of IT in day to day life;
- Supplying information to the public in a language that they understand and are comfortable with, and generally, it is the local language. As,

technology is available by which transliteration from English into other languages can be made. Therefore, the problem is manageable provided there is enough motivation to do this onerous task;

- Changing the mindset of the government employees who are used to working only in the manual mode. This is a big task and needs patience and careful planning. Workshops, seminars, and training programmes are required to be organized to spread awareness among the employees at all levels;
- Making cyber laws available to the public as early as possible so that the IT systems and information documents stored in the systems has the same legal validity as the documents stored today on paper; and
- Build supporting infrastructures of power and all weather surface transport system to bridge the digital divide between the rural and urban India

Last of all the Government must address on urgent basis: the two major concerns in the IT implementation- the security and privacy. Steps must be initiated to generate confidence among the individuals and organizations to conduct on-line transactions and communications.

## CONCLUSION

E-governance has been recognized as a vital force for transformational improvement in quality, efficiency and effectiveness of governance. Nearly all governments of the world are now moving from the traditional way of handling administrative tasks to e-governance applications to meet the expectations of the growing populations. The importance of e-governance has been recognized and applied at the highest level in the country. The government departments are now offering information and transactions services through their websites on the internet. In this way these websites will be the primary touch points for the citizens. Although sets of Organisations have been set up and several strategies, programmes and initiatives are currently at different stages of operationalization, the country lags at a lowly rank of 19 out of 57 in terms of the range of e-governance offerings.

There is a lot of hope and hype on the potential of e-governance to transform the internal efficiency of government and the relationship of government with stakeholders. E-governance provides an all-encompassing framework comprising e-administration, e-citizens, e-services and e-society. The New Public Management principles provide a useful conceptual framework to study

e-governance.

E-governance is an enabler for NPM type of government as it supports outcome orientation, customer centricity, Decentralisation, participative management, and service delivery through marketization. It makes information exchanges faster, deeper and cheaper, thereby improving the internal efficiency of government. E-governance places the citizen at the cent restage by redesigning of government processes in a citizen centric manner, delivery of e-services through single window, making government officials accountable downwards to the citizens, providing voice to citizens, empowering citizens and enabling them to participate in policy. Wadia (2000) mentions that in India, e-governance has created an avenue for its citizens to communicate with top political leaders and local ministers through such tools as videoconferencing, online grievance channels and complaint cells. With regard to this new mode of relationship, Schwabe (2000) emphasizes that it e-governance provides equal access to government and speedy and transparent responses from public servants.

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