Utilization of E-Government Services

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Abstract What is E-government? In this paper, E-government is defined as a way for governments to use the most innovative information and communication technologies, particularly web-based Internet applications, to provide citizens and businesses with more convenient access to government information and services, to improve the quality of the services and to provide greater opportunities to participate in democratic institutions and processes. E-government presents a tremendous impetus to move forward in the 21st century with higher quality, cost-effective, government services and a better relationship between citizens and government. The paper concludes by analyzing concepts and theoretical framework in these issues given the broader context of structural initiatives for E-government development and the recommendations for further studies of E-government in public administration.

Key Word: e-government, e-commerce, virtual organization, digital administration, administrative interface, e-governance

1 DEFINITION OF E-GOVERNMENT
E-government initiatives are complex change efforts intended to use new and emerging technologies to support a transformation in the operation and effectiveness of government derived from government reinvention.

1.1 Definition of E-Government in Broad Sense and Narrow Sense
What is exactly E-Government?
E-Government can be defined in narrow sense. In State of Texas’ s Electronic Government Strategic Plan, (Department of Information Resources, State of Texas, January 2001), Electronic government is defined as: Government activities that take place over electronic communications among all levels of government, citizens, and the business community, including: acquiring and providing products and services; placing and receiving orders; providing and obtaining information; and completing financial transactions.

The term E-Governance has different connotations:
• E-Administration—The use of ICT to modernize the state; the creation of data repositories for MIS, computerisation of records.
• E-Services—The emphasis here is to bring the state closer to the citizens. Examples include provision of online services. E-administration and e-services together constitute what is generally termed e-government.
• E-Governance—The use of IT to improve the ability of government to address the needs of society. It includes the publishing of policy and programme related information to transact with citizens. It extends beyond provision of on-line services and covers the use of IT for strategic planning and reaching development goals of the government.
• E-Democracy—The use of IT to facilitate the ability of all sections of society to participate in the governance of the state. The remit is much broader here with a stated emphasis on transparency, accountability and participation. Examples could include online disclosure.
policies, online grievance redress forums and e-referendums.

1.2 E-Government and E-Commerce

Analogous to e-commerce, which allows businesses to transact with each other more efficiently (B2B) and brings customers closer to businesses (B2C), e-government aims to make the interaction between government and citizens (G2C), government and business enterprises (G2B), and interagency relationships (G2G) more friendly, convenient, transparent, and inexpensive. It is conceivable, on the basis of the above, that the benefits of E-Government will continue to depend on the realization of technical advances in Electronic Business (E-Business) in the broadest sense. Electronic Business (E-Business) refers to a broader definition of Electronic Commerce (E-Commerce), not just buying and selling but also servicing customers and collaborating with business partners, and conducting electronic transactions within an organizational entity.

Keeping in mind the various positive impacts of e-governance; in May 2006, the Government of India approved the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) with the vision: “Make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, throughout common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency & reliability of such services at affordable costs to realize the basic needs of the common man”. The NeGP currently consists of a series of Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) and Support Components which are being implemented at the Central, State and Local Government levels. These include Projects such as Income Tax, Customs & Excise and Passports at the Central Level, Land Records, Agriculture and e-District at the State Level and Panchayats and Municipalities at the Local Level. There are also a number of integrated MMPs like e-Procurement, Service Delivery Gateway, etc. where delivery of services envisaged in the project entail coordinated implementation across multiple Departments of the Government.

1.3 E-Government and E-Governance

E-governance is beyond the scope of e-government. While e-government is defined as a mere delivery of government services and information to the public using electronic means, e-governance allows citizen direct participation of constituents in political activities going beyond government and includes E-democracy, E-voting, and participating political activity online. So, most broadly, concept of E-governance will cover government, citizens participation, political parties and organizations, Parliament and Judiciary functions.

1.4 States That Have Implemented e-Governance

Bhoomi Project (Karnataka)
Karnataka government transformed the way land records are maintained with the Bhoomi Project. The concept of digitising land records has not only brought transparency but also given 6.7 million farmers direct access to 20 million rural land records. Farmers get unhindered access to their land details through 177 kiosks across the state. Moreover, it eliminated the need for depending on middlemen.

Gyandoot (Madhya Pradesh)
This intranet-based service delivery initiative was launched in the Dhar district in January 2000. The objective has been to provide relevant information to the rural population. This initiative acted as an interface between the district administration and the people.

Lokvani Project (Uttar Pradesh)
It is a public-private partnership project initiated in November, 2004 with an objective of providing an e-Governance solution when it comes to handling of grievances, land record maintenance and providing a blend of other essential services.

FRIENDS Project (Kerala)
FRIENDS is an acronym for Fast, Reliable, Instant, Efficient Network for the Disbursement of Services. Considered as the most popular e-governance project, FRIENDS enables citizens to pay the taxes and do the necessary government related transactions with ease.

e-Mitra Project (Rajasthan)
The project has been operational since 2005. Its macro objective is to ensure anytime access to citizen services pertaining to all the government departments. Both urban and rural citizens can be assured complete security for their transactions. Instead of running around various departments, they can use an integrated e-platform to avail the services.

e-Seva (Andhra Pradesh)
The e-Seva initiative was a move to deliver ‘Government-to-Citizen’ and ‘e-Business-to-Citizen’ services. All the services are delivered online to citizens by connecting them to the respective government departments.
Source: Chief Executive group on information management and technology 1999

Figure: Triangle Relationship Model among E-Government, Business and Citizens

The following diagram illustrates the relationship among E-Government, E-Business, and E-Citizens in the context of the emergence of the so-called “knowledge society”, globalization, and sovereignty:

COSMOS (Chhattisgarh)

This online school monitoring system was a major leap in e-Governance for the state. It monitors online attendance of teachers and students in schools and tracks through biometric device. The state was selected for the National e-Governance Award 2014-15 for innovative use of geographic information technology. It developed a GIS-based web application to plot and map schools in villages to be covered under Rajiv Gandhi Shiksha Mission.

Challenges in Implementing e-Governance

India’s efforts towards bridging the urban-rural divide as well as digital divide are yet to yield substantial results so far. A recent United Nations report, which tracks the status of e-Governance preparedness across countries, has placed India at 118th position in the list of 193 countries. The report also revealed that there’s a strong correlation between the e-Government Development Index and the national income of a country. While it is convenient to pass

Table: Extent of fiscal decentralization in South Asia and the world

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>% of government expenditure done by subnational governments</th>
<th>% of government revenue raised by subnational governments</th>
<th>Transfers to subnational units as a share of subnational revenues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>&lt;2</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>64-70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>81.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>81.5</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>21.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>28.9</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Sources: India, Canada, Mexico, and world figures are from Government Finance Statistics, GFS (1999); US and Mexico figures are from GFS; Sri Lanka figures from World Bank (2006) for 2004; World average is based on the 41 countries in the GFS database.

the buck to “resistance to change” for low user adoption of web-based system for government services, there are two other challenges that are rearing their heads. In the absence of privacy law and data protection law, implementation of a majority of e-governance initiatives in India has witnessed failure. Another challenge that the government of India can’t deny for long is the poor cyber security in the country. According to the experts, e-governance without cyber security is meaningless. They are of the opinion that the apathy towards cyber security breeds from the fact that there is no mandatory e-governance services in India.

1) E-Government focus aspect in E-Government partnership The processes and structures that define the relationship between central government and local governments; the processes and structures that define the relationship between organizations and departments or agencies; the processes and structures that define the relationship between government and the employees; the processes and structures that define the relationship between Legislature and the Executive.

2) E-Business focus aspect in E-Government partnership The processes and structures that define the relationship between governments and the markets; the processes and structures that define the relationship between governments and the private sector.

3) E-Citizens focus aspect in E-Government partnership The processes and structures that define the relationship between governments and citizens; The processes and structures that define the
relationship between Government service delivery and citizens’ needs; and The processes and structures that define the relationship between countries and International institutions.

**Types of E-Government Partnerships:**

**Government-to-citizen (G2C)**

The majority of government services come under this application, towards providing citizens and others with comprehensive electronic resources to respond to individuals’ routine concerns and government transactions. Government and citizens will continuously communicate when implementing e-government, thus supporting accountability, democracy and improvements to public services. The primary goal of e-government, is to serve the citizen and facilitate citizen interaction with government by making public information more accessible through the use of websites, as well as reducing the time and cost to conduct a transaction (Ndou, 2004).

**Government-to-business (G2B)**

Government to business, or G2B, is the second major type of e-government category. G2B can bring significant efficiencies to both governments and businesses. G2B include various services exchanged between government and the business sectors, including distribution of policies, memos, rules and regulations. Business services offered include obtaining current business information, new regulations, downloading application forms, lodging taxes, renewing licenses, registering businesses, obtaining permits, and many others.

**Government-to-government (G2G)**

This refers to the online communications between government organizations, departments and agencies based on a super-government database. Moreover, it refers to the relationship between government and its employees as outlined below. The efficiency and efficacy of processes are enhanced by the use of online communication and cooperation which allows for the sharing of databases and resources and the fusion of skills and capabilities.

**E-government stage models are developed by:**

Gartner Group

Gartner Group (Baum and Di Maio, 2000) proposed a four-stage model involving web presence, interaction, transaction, and transformation further discussed as follows:

1. **Web presence** – in this stage, agencies provide a web site to post basic information to public; (immediate action is initiated toward the creation of a virtual environment on the Internet in order to provide the public with access to information)

2. **Interaction** – in this stage, users are able to contact agencies through web sites (e.g. e-mail) or do self-service (e.g. download document); (providing a web site with search ability, and to providing the public with access to various forms and sites)

3. **Transaction** – in this stage, users (including customers and businesses) can complete entire transactions (e.g. license application and procurement) online; (implicates the online execution of public services such as the payment of accounts balances and receiving licenses.)

4. **Transformation** – in this stage, governments transform the current operational processes to provide more efficient, integrated, unified, and personalized service; (the transformation stage is seen at the regional and national levels, consisting of integration among internal and external applications, in order to provide full communication between the governmental offices and non-governmental organizations)

**E-government Challenges**

**Political:**

Cyber laws not available

Slow decision making process

Hierarchy in organizations

**Social:**

Examples of some of the social challenges related to e-governance are people, (level of) education, employment, income, digital divide, rural areas vs. cities, rich vs. poor, literacy, and IT skills.

**Economic:**

Economical challenges related to e-governance are funding, cost-savings, business models, e-Commerce, and spin-offs of e-governance.

**Technical:**

Technology will be a bottleneck for e-governance in developing countries. Technological challenges involve software, hardware, infrastructure, telecom, IT skilled people, maintenance, safety and security issues.

**CONCLUSION**

E-government has the potential to greatly improve how government operates internally and how it
serves its customers. E-government is much more than a tool for improving cost-quality ratios in public services. It is an instrument of reform and a tool to transform government. Thus, e-Government is not primarily about automation of existing procedures (which may or may not be effective), but about changing the way in which government conducts business and delivers services (The World Bank, 2005). This paper examined the literature to define and illustrate the types, stages, advantages and barriers of e-government. It is clear that e-government has many advantages to offer to all sectors of government. However, many critical issues face the implementation of e-government, some of which are non-technical in nature with wide impact and require comprehensive planning. The findings in this paper indicate that it is important to conduct deep research into obstacles facing e-government implementation and understand the relationship between these barriers in order to offer some solution to overcome them. More research will be conducted on e-government implementation stage models to investigate what is required for governments to apply stages incrementally in each separate department, and how governments might apply them to the whole organization as one project.

FUTURE WORK
The outcome of this paper indicates that it is important to conduct deep research into obstacles facing e-government implementation and understand the relationship between these barriers in order to offer some solution to overcome these challenges. More research could be conducted on e-government implementation stage models to investigate if the government can apply all the stages in every single department, or whether government have to apply it to the whole organization as one project.

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Emerging with E-government, theories and practices of public administration have stepped into a new digital era. This paper proposed that contemporary issues related to E-government in public administration are administrative interface, i.e. people computer interface in management digital administration, i.e., digital process or procedures and system in management, and virtual organization, i.e., government online system, etc. Studies of these issues will be more benefits for development of theories and practices of public administration in 21st century.

The paper concludes by analyzing concepts and theoretical framework in these issues given the broader context of structural initiatives for E-government development and the recommendations for further studies of E-government in public administration stepped into a new digital era. This paper proposed that contemporary issues related to E-government in public administration are administrative interface, i.e. people computer interface in management digital administration, i.e., digital process or procedures and system in management, and virtual organization, i.e., government online system, etc. Studies of these issues will be more benefits for development of theories and practices of public administration in 21st century. The paper concludes by analyzing concepts and theoretical framework in these issues given the broader context of structural initiatives for E-government development and the recommendations for further studies of E-government in public administration.