Integrated Governance (i-Gov.): The need of future E-governance in India

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Abstract

Despite being the largest democracy in the world map with an essential need to deliver effective and transparent public governance, India still stands at the bottom of the UN E-Government Survey 2012 rankings. With an increasing percentage of internet users in recent years it still lacks in population penetration and reaching out to common man. However, India is making efforts to move forward to use technology for delivering social benefits to its poor by launching different schemes and enhancing its e-government strategies. In this paper the author has focussed on strengthening the core of E-governance and its reach to end users by shifting the trend of e-governance (e-gov) towards integrated governance (i-gov) for India. Initially the conceptual framework has been suggested for India and its governance architecture. In future the technical and implementation issues of the same can be framed by the government.

Keywords: E-governance, integrated governance, ICT, GA2GA, India

1. Introduction

E-governance is not a new terminology in India anymore. With the increasing demand of ‘citizen centric’ government around the globe India too has put forward its step to deliver a transparent and approachable government to its citizens. E-government is one of the strategic innovations that many governments have considered adopting to deliver better services to citizens, to improve the democratic processes, and to support the modernization of their business process. But, deploying the government processes online and providing information as well as communication with the use of ICT is not just the demand of future. The need is to provide a user friendly, seamless, efficient and citizen centric public services which would help to increase the population penetration of these services in India. A user focussed approach would certainly help to decrease the complex structure and relationships of the government agencies which would lead to better interaction between agencies and user [1]. The integrated government (i-gov) structure can help achieve this goal, by enabling governments to appear as a single integrated organization and provide seamless and efficient one stop online service. This services integration structure will integrate people, processes, information, and technology in the aim to achieve government as well as users’ objectives. In this paper author has put focus on the importance and benefits of integrated governance (i-gov) to the users and provided a
conceptual framework for the integration of e-governance services which will lead to ‘citizen centric’ governance.

2. E-Government Models

The table below shows some e-governance models proposed by different authors. Looking at this table, there are relationships that have been broadly represented in the different studies. These relationships are


4. “Government to Employee- G2E” - manages the relationship between the government and employees.

However, Lam (2005) proposed a new model of e-government based on above relationships, namely

5. "Government agency to government agency - GA2GA" - cooperation and integration of different government agencies. Government agencies are responsible for the production and the distribution of integrated services. The collaboration is based on components reuse and information sharing

6. "Central government to government agency - CG2GA" – electronic liaising between central government and different state and other government agencies. The central government is responsible of the coordination and control of integrated projects and their progress. It includes coordination, control, funding and monitoring of e-government projects between central government and other state agencies

7. "Government agency to government users - GA2GU" - it concerns with government interaction and participation with “government user. The GA2GU represents the relationship between agencies and all the stakeholders of government which are citizens, businesses and employees [9].
Table 1. E-governance models

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lam (2005)</td>
<td>GA2GA : government agency to government agency CG2GA : central government to government agency GA2GU : government agency to government user</td>
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The distinction and literature in point 5, 6 and 7 describes the integration of e governance in a fully functional single unit which would lead to better efficiency and success of e-governance projects.

3. Integrated governance (i-gov): Horizontal Integration of e-gov.

Most of the e governance services offered by the state or central governments are not integrated. This can mainly be attributed to lack of communication between different departments. So, the information that resides with one department has no or little meaning to some other department of government. Connected governance or integrated governance is built upon the concept of interoperability that is the ability of public agencies to share and integrate information using common standards [2]. The key features of connected governance are successful service innovation and multi-channel service delivery. Service integration depends on strategies, policies and architectures that allow data, IT systems, business processes and delivery channels to interoperate. If delivery channels and back-office processes are integrated, different service delivery channels can complement each other, improving the quality of both services and the delivery to government and citizens simultaneously [3]. Integrated e-gov will in turn help foster sustainable development because national and local government are citizen-centric and economic, social and environmental aspects of government. This horizontal integration of e-governance services will act as a ‘one stop shopping’ for the citizens. In simple
case if a citizen has to move from his/her home, the basic address can be propagated to all functional agencies such as election commission or vehicle registration department from a single portal and updated to the central database. The citizen does not have to fill personal record form and submit to each individual department or agency.

4. **Issues and barriers in Integration of e-governance:**

Integrated service delivery (ISD) for integrated governance has three main characteristics: it is integrated; it has services to provide and with mission of delivery to users [10]. The different government agencies at state level have to be connected and finally have to be integrated with the central government agency. The second component of i-gov is ‘service’, defined as being a set of activities and exchanges that meet the expressed need of a person or group, i.e. a customer or a citizen. The final component is ‘delivery’, the mechanism by which a particular service is connected to a particular customer to meet a particular need. A mechanism for delivering a service is referred to as a channel.

Barriers in integrating e-governance are:

1. **Political and administrative issues:** while the political and administrative structure of Indian government seems to be same as a whole, but somehow the legal issues of different states vary in implementation. Integrating different departments which different protocols and way of working seems tedious to merge.

2. **Varied working Flowchart of individual government agencies:** The structure and work process of different departments within or outside the state are quite different. They are set to a standard which is best suited to them for an easy outcome. Implementation of a standard which is unique and common will certainly be a hard work and resistance to change by them.

3. **Operation and management:** The most technical and realistic issue for integration lies with the concept of interoperability. To implement a single integrated e governance module we require a high end feasible interoperable environment. With different services required by the users and different channels to help them out, it becomes technically a big challenge to find a solution. Managing this structure will also require a great financial aid and expertise manpower.

4. **Access and privacy issues:** Internet has been a threat to privacy of an individual from the day of its evolution till date. Privacy of data and information will be a major concern for the users: citizens, businessmen or government agency. The state of Uttarakhand has a very low rate of internet users as well as of people who are not
equipped with internet enabled devices. This would decrease the accessibility of the integrated e-governance to the common man.

5. Financial concern: It is a major issue as lot has been invested in setting up ICT structure throughout the country and at state levels. Uttarakhand, being a young state and learning to stand up on its feet has to take a hard financial aid to liaison of such structure with the central government.

5. Basic framework for i-gov in India:

The following model shows the basic integration of government agencies within a state for integration of e-governance structure. The state agencies are linked and interconnected via integration platform which will hold a list of services that can be used, service manager to manage the services being provided and a central database to all the departments as a whole.

![Basic Integration model for state ‘i-gov’](image)

The integration should be interoperable and will certainly require a study of technical capabilities of tools and experts. The structure of central database should be capable to accept
all the terminologies of all individual departments as without any discrepancies. The figure depicts the use of integrated services by the users through a single web based portal through internet accessible devices. The model below depicts the connection of state level departments with the help of state networks (SWAN) to provide seamless information sharing through a web based state portal. The D1, D2,...DN depicts the various state departments connected to

Figure 2 Basic framework of integrated nationwide ‘i-gov’
the state network. The state network can be further integrated with central government agencies with the help of internet gateways forming a national level intranet (WAN). The M1, M2,...,MN depicts the different ministries under the central government. The national portal can consist of a provision to integrate the state level web portals and providing a direct interface between the users and the information at any level of governance. The interoperable architecture will help a single gateway through which users does not have to move to different locations for different information related to different departments. This will eventually help to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of e-government services in India.

6. Conclusion

The researcher has tried to point out the importance of integrated governance in today’s scenario of effective governance. The future of e-governance and its efficiency can only be sustained through the implementation of ‘i-gov’. Citizen centric governance is the demand of future, which will in turn decrease the gap between a good government and its citizens. Though implementation of ‘i-gov’ is a crucial factor which will take time and a lot of money with mature technical tools and expertise of technocrats, its success cannot be overlooked. A conceptual model has been proposed by the researcher and in future the study of interoperability and design of technical model can be done to facilitate the beginning of new change in e-governance.

7. References

[10] E-government in Australia: The challenges of moving to integrated services John Halligan and Trevor Moore, University of Canberra