E-GOVERNANCE AND DIGITAL PUBLIC SERVICES: CHANGING THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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Abstract
E-Governance is a concept that entails the application of information and communication technologies (ICT) within government agencies to provide services to citizens, facilitate participation, enhance accountability and transparency. Digital public services are the principal results of e-governance that involve electronic filing of taxes and real-time grievance redress system. The paper encompasses the theoretical background, international practice, advantages, difficulties and future of e-governance. The discussion shows that that a strategic implementation of digital public services enhances efficiency of governance, expands participatory democracy, and promotes inclusion on socio-economic basis.

1. Introduction

Most industries including government administration have been transformed by the emergence of digital technology. E-Governance is a change in the mode of interaction between the government and the citizens, businesses and other stakeholders. The digital platforms are currently being used by governments to improve service delivery, become more responsive, and empower citizens.

1.1 Definition

E-Governance refers to the application of ICT to provision of government services, information sharing, and link internal and external communication systems. Digital public services are systems that are developed online as a component of e-governance to offer convenient services to the citizens, businesses and other stakeholders.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Models of E-Governance

Researchers divide e-governance models according to the nature of interaction:

- Government to Citizen (G2C): It covers online identity verification, electronic payment of taxes, and the e-health records. The Digital India portal presents G2C services to the citizens. They are able to seek employment, land records and exam results. Another example is the Passport Seva service which enables citizens to make appointments and inquire about passport status without the need to visit the office more than once. These G2C services can also be found in Common Service Centres (CSCs) found in rural regions, where skilled personnel assist individuals that are not conversant with mobile applications.

- Government to Business (G2B): Web based systems facilitate business registration, licensing and compliance. The GST portal can be cited as one of such, wherein businesses can easily submit taxes online, and do not have to visit tax offices. MCA21 portal also allows companies to make important submissions to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

- Government to Government (G2G): This model encourages information exchange and automation of workflow between government departments. It enables a department to interact with another and even exchange files, reports and data without the use of paper. An example of such projects is the e-office project which links central and state offices. The Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and System (CCTNS) is a project that is available to police departments to facilitate sharing data between police departments in India.

- Government to Employee (G2E): It is a model that contains payroll, training, and HR

portals of the public officials. G2E allows the government to relates to its employees enabling them to check on their salary, leave approvals, pension plans, job notices, among others. As an example, the former army members receive their pension information via the SPARSH portal, and employees can view credits with the help of the PFMS portal. Such portals assist employees to understand their rights and get help fast.

2.2 Theory of Digital Divide and Inclusion.
Efficient e-governance should also cover the digital divide, which covers the people who lack access to technology either economically, geographically or even due to educational reasons. Inclusive design models provide services to all including persons with disability and those in low-income brackets.

3. E-Governance Worldwide
3.1 Case Study: Estonia
Estonia is one of the most digitally developed governments in the world as 99 percent of the services are provided online. Key aspects include:
- X-Road data exchange layer
- Secure authentication through the use of electronic identity (e-ID).
- Integrated computerized health, tax and voting systems.
These inventions have minimized the cost of administration and enhanced accountability.

3.2 Case Study: India
The Digital India program is going to enhance access and decrease the amount of paperwork and combat corruption. Key components include:
- Biometric identity of more than 1.3 billion citizens (Aadhaar).
- Government Resources Software (GRS)
- DigiLocker, an online document warehouse of citizens.

4. Benefits of E-Governance
E-governance is meant to reduce the cost and increase efficiency. Digital systems simplify operations, automate processes and lessen paper work which reduces the costs of operation by the government as well as the citizens.

4.2 Transparency and Accountability.
Government activities become transparent with the help of online systems that reduce cases of corruption and create trust in the citizens.

4.3 Citizen Engagement
Citizen feedback and consultations with the population as well as interactive communication with the authorities can be organized through digital channels, including portals and mobile applications.

5. Implementation problems
5.1 Infrastructure Limitation.
A lot of locations are not well connected with broadband, secure servers and compatible systems particularly rural and low-income areas.

5.2 Privacy and Security Risks
The gathering and retention of sensitive information also bring up the issues of cyber attacks, misuse of data and surveillance.

5.3 Capacity Building

To maintain and operate e-governance systems, government officials should be trained on digital literacy, data analysis and change management.

6. Policy and Regulatory Frameworks

Good e-governance is a requirement that has good legal structures that govern:

- Data protection laws
- Electronic transactions
- Digital signatures
- Cybersecurity standards

Cases in point are the GDPR in the European Union and Digital Personal Data Protection Act in India.

7. The Future Trends and Innovations

7.1 Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI will have the opportunity to individualize the services, predict the needs of citizens, and automate simple inquiries using chatbots.

7.2 Blockchain

All of the publics records (land registries, certificates) will be stored in immutable ledgers with increased confidence and minimized fraud.

7.3 Open Data Initiatives

Publication of government statistics encourages transparency and innovation of the privates.

8. Conclusion

The state administration of the day is based on the digital public services and e-governance. Through ICT, governments are also able to work more transparently, bring democracy, and create resilient and people-oriented systems. The infrastructure is very strong, the policies are inclusive, and adaptability to changes in technology is ongoing to achieve success.

References

The following are academic and policy resources that can be read on further:
- Heeks, R. (2006). Management and Implementation of eGovernment an International Text. SAGE.
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