

Re-Inventing Government: Role of e-Governance

Dr. Vijay Laxmi Mishra

Assistant Professor, SS Jain Subodh PG Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

ABSTRACT

Good Governance is a concept that has recently come into regular use in political science, public administration and, more particularly, development management. It appears alongside such concepts and terms as democracy, civil society, popular participation, human rights and social and sustainable development. In the last decade, it has been closely associated with public sector reform. The Commonwealth has shown its commitment to good governance through declarations made by Heads of State at their biennial meetings. The Bretton Woods Systems and the Development Agencies have shown their commitment through re-defining their roles and responsibilities in global governance. The significance of the emergence of Electronic Governance (e-Governance) as a mode of practice in the re-invention of Good Governance. It presents e-Governance as inclusive of Electronic Democracy (e-Democracy), Electronic Government (e-Government) and Electronic Business (e-Business), examines the nature and scope of developments in this emerging field and provides a wealth of examples to illustrate essential, embedded concepts and modes of practice. The article also explains the Commonwealth Centre for Electronic Governance (CCfEG) as a special focus centre, to date the only one of its kind in the Commonwealth and beyond, poised to be the organization of choice in moving Commonwealth member countries forward in the use of the new information and communication technologies as a tool for re-inventing Good Governance.

KEYWORDS: good, e-governance, electronic, communication, information, technologies, developments, management

INTRODUCTION

e-Governance is in essence, the application of Information and Communications Technology to government functioning in order to create 'Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent' (SMART) governance. In this report on e-Governance, the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) has tried to analyse the successes and failures of e-Governance initiatives in India and at the global level, in order to extrapolate the best practices, key reform principles and recommendations that can help the government to implement a new paradigm of governance in the country. This new paradigm would focus on the use of information technology to bring public services to the doorsteps of our citizens and businesses on the basis of revolutionary changes in our institutional structures,

procedures and practices that would transform the relationships between our three levels of government, our businesses and our citizens.[1,2]

India, being the largest democracy in the world, has much to gain from e-Governance, especially when citizen participation in governance is one of the features of the fully evolved stage of e-government. Many e-readiness assessments have been carried out at the global level that show the current state of India's e-readiness. Some of the more recent study findings are as follows: The July 2002 EIU ranking found that 55 of the countries navigating the information super highway account for 98 per cent of all IT in 150 countries. It ranked India at 54 among the group of elite 55.

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The May 2001 Mc-Connell ranking of e-readiness assessment indicated that substantial improvements were needed in the area of connectivity. Improvements are also required in the areas of E-Leadership, E-Business, Information Security and Human Capital. The Global Information Technology Report, 2002-03, ranked India 37 above China which is ranked 43rd, whereas the 2001-02 Report ranked India 54 (adapted from INDIA: E-Readiness Assessment Report 2003, Department of Information Technology, Government of India).

E-government (short for electronic government) is the use of technological communications devices, such as computers and the Internet, to provide public services to citizens and other persons in a country or region. E-government offers new opportunities for more direct and convenient citizen access to government, and for government provision of services directly to citizens. [3,4] The term consists of the digital interactions between a citizen and their government (C2G), between governments and other government agencies (G2G), between government and citizens (G2C), between government and employees (G2E), and between government and businesses/commerces (G2B). E-government delivery models can be broken down into the following categories: This interaction consists of citizens communicating with all levels of government (city, state/province, national, and international), facilitating citizen involvement in governance process using information and communication technology (ICT) (such as computers and websites) and business process re-engineering (BPR). Brabham and Guth (2017) interviewed the third party designers of e-government tools in North America about the ideals of user interaction that they build into their technologies, which include progressive values, ubiquitous participation, geolocation, and education of the public.

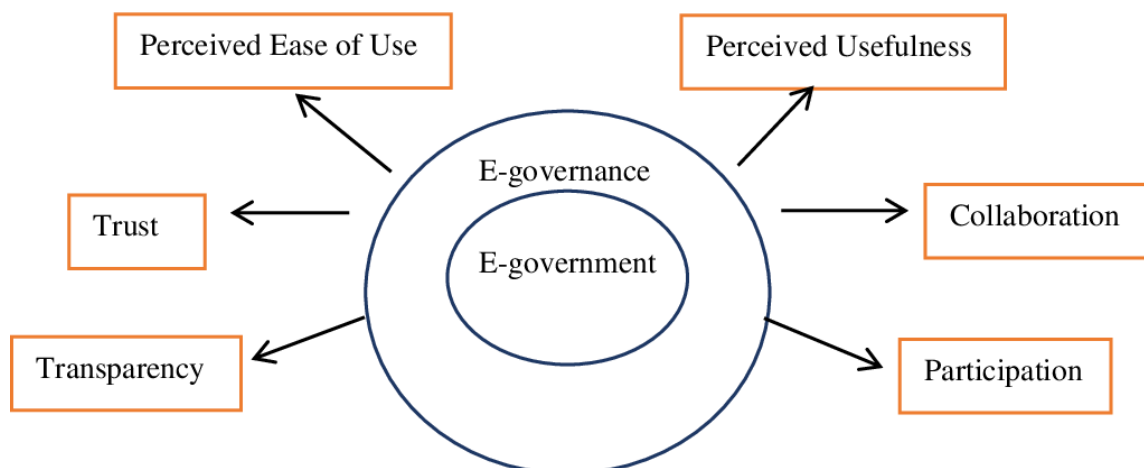


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Other definitions stray from the idea that technology is an object and defines e-government simply as facilitators or instruments and focus on specific changes in Public Administration issues. The internal transformation of a government is the definition that established the specialist technologist Mauro D. Ríos. In his paper "In Search of a Definition of Electronic Government", he says: "Digital government is a new way of organization and

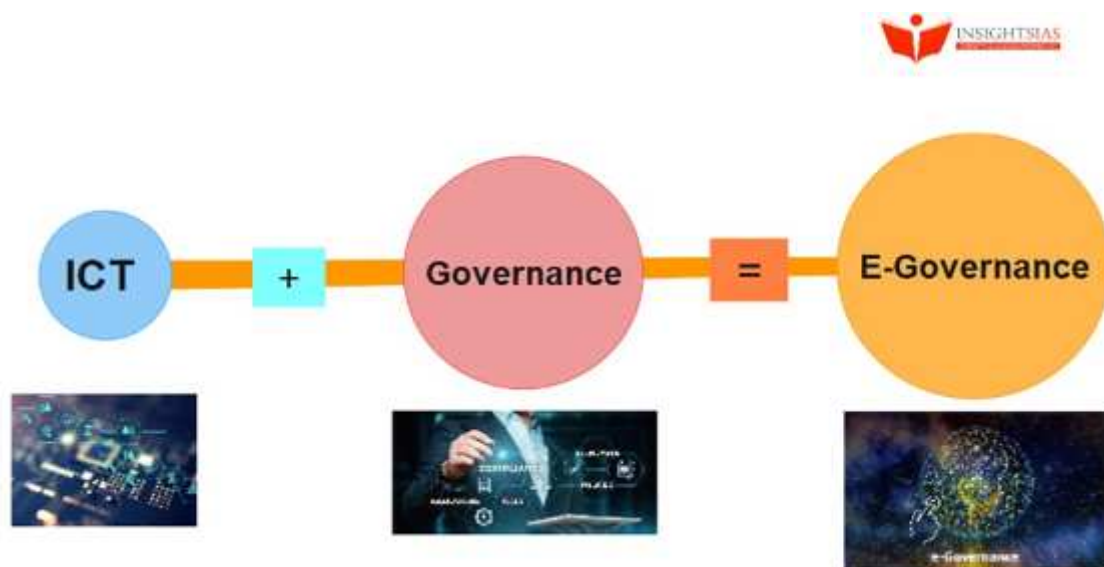
management of public affairs, introducing positive transformational processes in management and the structure itself of the organization chart, adding value to the procedures and services provided, all through the introduction and continued appropriation of information and communication technologies as a facilitator of these transformations.[5,6]

The term transformational government is usually used aspirationally, as denoting the highest level of what e-government can achieve:

1. presence, where ICT, and usually websites, are used to provide information;
2. interaction, where government interacts with citizens, and departments interact with each other, online especially by email;
3. transaction, where such things as paying taxes or licenses are carried out online;
4. transformation, which involves a reinvention of government functions and how they operate. In relation to developing countries, it is often associated with hopes of reducing corruption, and in relation to developed countries, with attempts to increase the involvement of the private and voluntary sectors in government activity.

The focus should be on:

- The use of information and communication technologies, and particularly the Internet, as a tool to achieve better government.
- The use of information and communication technologies in all facets of the operations of a government organization.
- The continuous optimization of service delivery, constituency participation, and governance by transforming internal and external relationships through technology, the Internet and new media[7,8]



While e-government is often thought of as "online government" or "Internet-based government," many non-Internet "electronic government" technologies can be used in this context. Some non-Internet forms include telephone, fax, PDA, SMS text messaging, MMS, wireless networks and services, Bluetooth, CCTV, tracking systems, RFID, biometric identification, road traffic management and regulatory enforcement, identity cards, smart cards and other near field communication applications; polling station technology (where non-online e-voting is being considered), TV and radio-based delivery of government services (e.g., CSMW), email, online community facilities, newsgroups and electronic mailing lists, online chat, and instant messaging technologies.

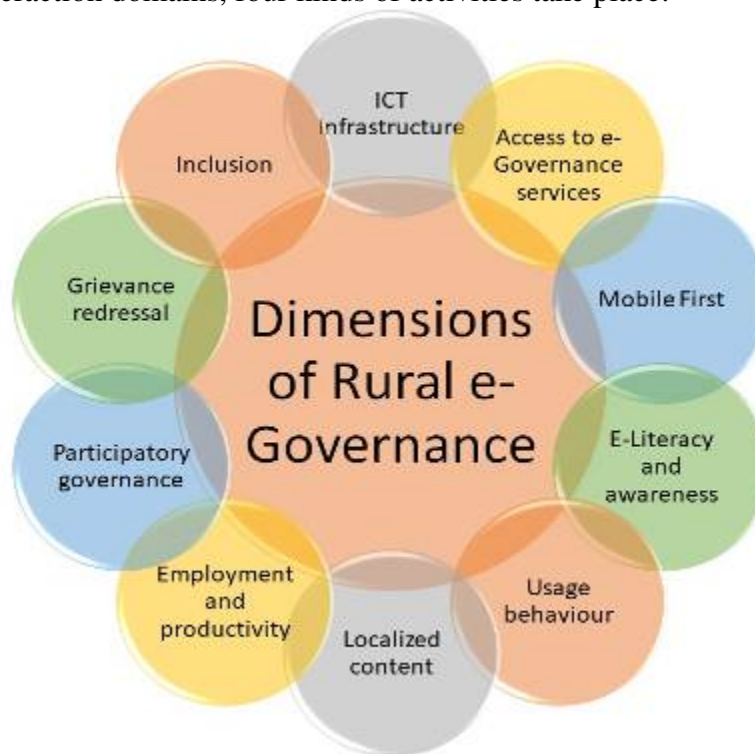
Discussion

The primary delivery models of e-government can be divided into:

- Government-to-citizen or government-to-consumer (G2C) approaches such as setting up websites where citizens can download forms, government information, etc.
- In this model, the G2C model applies the strategy of customer relationship management (CRM) with business concept.
- By managing their "customer" (citizen) relationship, the business (government) can provide the products and services required to fulfill the needs of the customer (citizen).
- In United States, the NPR (National Partnership for Reinventing Government) has been implemented from 1993.

- Government-to-business (G2B)
- Government-to-government (G2G)
- Government-to-employees (G2E)[9,10]

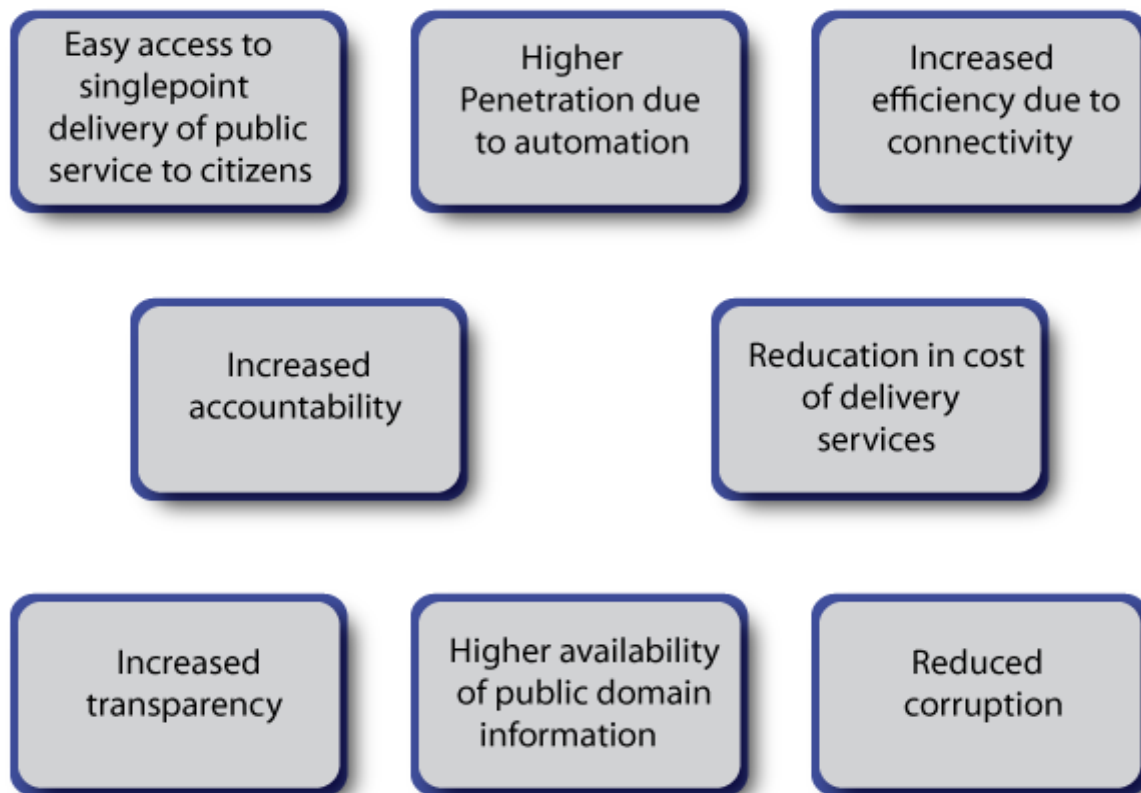
Within each of these interaction domains, four kinds of activities take place:



- pushing information over the Internet, e.g.: regulatory services, general holidays, public hearing schedules, issue briefs, notifications, etc.
- two-way communications between the agency and the citizen, a business, or another government agency. In this model, users can engage in dialogue with agencies and post problems, comments, or requests to the agency.
- conducting transactions, e.g.: lodging tax returns, applying for services and grants.
- governance, e.g.: To enable the citizen transition from passive information access to active citizen participation by:
 1. Informing the citizen
 2. Representing the citizen
 3. Encouraging the citizen to vote
 4. Consulting the citizen
 5. Involving the citizen

Because E-government is in the early stages of development in many countries and jurisdictions, it is hard to be applied to forms of government that have been institutionalized. Age-old bureaucratic practices being delivered in new mediums or using new technologies can lead to problems of miscommunication.

An example of such a practice was the automation of the Indiana welfare program that began in 2006. An audit commissioned by then Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels in 2005 found that several Family and Social Service Administration (FSSA) employees and welfare recipients were committing welfare fraud. The bureaucratic nature of Indiana's welfare system allowed people to cheat the system and cost the state large amounts of money. Daniels characterized the system as "irretrievably broken," stating that it was at a state where employees could not fix it on their own. He cited many issues that directly tie into the fact that the system had not been automated.



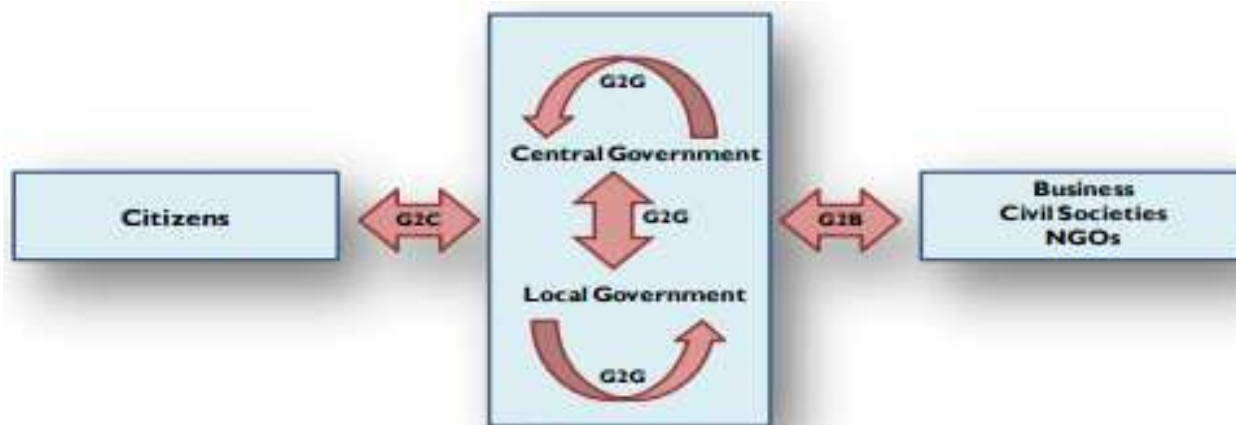
In hopes to reap the many benefits of e-government, Daniels signed into law a bill privatizing and automating the enrollment service for Indiana’s welfare programs. Daniels aimed to streamline benefits applications, privatize casework, and identify fraud. It was believed that moving away from face-to-face casework and toward electronic communication would fix the aforementioned problems and improve efficiency. [11,12]

Indiana's welfare enrollment facilities were replaced with online applications and call centers operated by IBM. These ran into issues almost immediately. The mainly face-to-face and personalized practice was modernized essentially overnight, blindsiding many people who relied on those features. The automated system worked upon a one size fits all approach that attributed errors to the recipient over anything else. Problems that were previously solvable through a single phone call with a recipient’s caseworker became increasingly complicated due to the private call center workers not being adequately trained.

Welfare recipients were denied their benefits due to lack of direct help, system errors out of their control, or simply an inability to use the technology meant to speed up the process. The transition overwhelmed not only recipients but also the employees. In October 2009, even Daniels admitted to the project being flawed and problematic, cancelling the contract with IBM. Indiana began rolling out a hybrid system starting in 2010, including caseworkers and some automation where appropriate. [13,14]

Results

The ultimate goal of the e-government is to be able to offer an increased portfolio of public services to citizens in an efficient and cost-effective manner. E-government allows for government transparency. Government transparency is important because it allows the public to be informed about what the government is working on as well as the policies they are trying to implement.



Simple tasks may be easier to perform through electronic government access. Many changes, such as marital status or address changes can be a long process and take a lot of paperwork for citizens. E-government allows these tasks to be performed efficiently with more convenience to individuals.

E-government is an easy way for the public to be more involved in political campaigns. It could increase voter awareness, which could lead to an increase in citizen participation in elections.

It is convenient and cost-effective for businesses, and the public benefits by getting easy access to the most current information available without having to spend time, energy and money to get it.

E-government helps simplify processes and makes government information more easily accessible for public sector agencies and citizens. For example, the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles simplified the process of certifying driver records to be admitted in county court proceedings. Indiana became the first state to allow government records to be digitally signed, legally certified and delivered electronically by using Electronic Postmark technology. In addition to its simplicity, e-democracy services can reduce costs. Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources, Wal-Mart and NIC developed an online hunting and fishing license service utilizing an existing computer to automate the licensing process. More than 140,000 licenses were purchased at Wal-Mart stores during the first hunting season and the agency estimates it will save \$200,000 annually from service. [15,16]

The anticipated benefits of e-government include efficiency, improved services, better accessibility of public services, sustainable community development and more transparency and accountability.[26]



One goal of some e-government initiatives is greater citizen participation. Through the Internet's Web 2.0 interactive features, people from all over the country can provide input to politicians or public servants and make their voices heard. Blogging and interactive surveys allow politicians or public servants to see the views of the people on any issue. Chat rooms can place citizens in real-time contact with elected officials or their office staff or provide them with the means to interact directly with public servants, allowing voters to have a direct impact and influence in their government. These technologies can create a more transparent government, allowing voters to immediately see how and why their representatives in the capital are voting the way they are. This helps voters decide whom to vote for in the future or how to help the public servants become more productive.

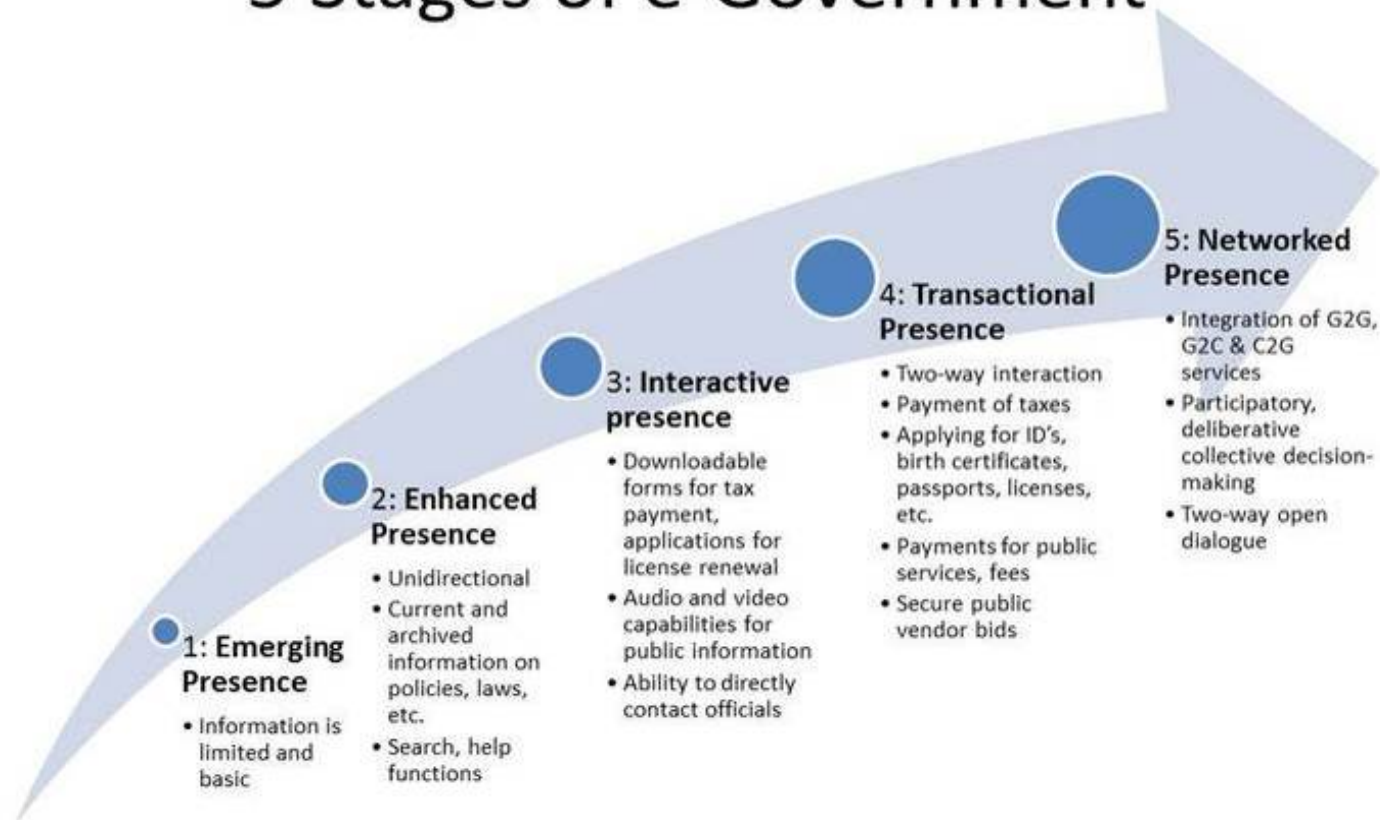
A government could theoretically move more towards a true democracy with the proper application of e-government. Government transparency will give insight to the public on how decisions are made and hold elected officials or public servants accountable for their actions. The public could become a direct and prominent influence in government legislature to some degree

E-government allows citizens to interact with computers to achieve objectives at any time and any location and eliminates the necessity for physical travel to government agents sitting behind desks and windows. Many e-government services are available to citizens with computers and Internet access 24 hours a day and seven days a week, in contrast to brick and mortar government offices, which tend to be only open during Business hours (notable exceptions are police stations and hospitals, which are usually open 24 hours a day so that staff can deal with emergencies).[17,18]

Improved accounting and record-keeping can be noted through computerization, and information and forms can be easily accessed by citizens with computers and Internet access, which may enable quicker processing time for

applications and find information. On the administrative side, access to help find or retrieve files and linked information can now be stored in electronic databases versus hard copies (paper copies) stored in various locations. Individuals with disabilities or conditions that affect their mobility no longer have to be mobile to be active in government and can access public services in the comfort of their own homes (as long as they have a computer and Internet and any accessibility equipment they may need).[25]

5 Stages of e-Government



Conclusions

There are also some technology-specific sub-categories of e-government, such as m-government (mobile government), ubiquitous government), and g-government (GIS/GPS applications for e-government). [23,24]

The previous concern about developments in E-government concerning technology are due to the limited use of online platforms for political reasons by citizens in local political participations.

The primary delivery models of e-government are classified depending on who benefits. In the development of the public sector or private sector portals and platforms, a system is created that benefits all constituents. Citizens needing to renew their vehicle registration have a convenient way to accomplish it while already engaged in meeting the regulatory inspection requirement. On behalf of a government partner, the business provides what has traditionally, and solely, managed by the government and can use this service to generate profit or attract new customers. Government agencies are relieved of the cost and complexity of having to process the transactions. [19,20]

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To develop these public sector portals or platforms, governments have the choice to internally develop and manage, outsource, or sign a self-funding contract. The self-funding model creates portals that pay for themselves through convenience fees for certain e-government transactions, known as self-funding portals.

The E-Governance initiatives and programs in India are undertaken by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY www.meity.gov.in). The current umbrella program for e-governance of Government of India is known by the title "DIGITAL INDIA" (www.digitalindia.gov.in)

Indian government has launched many e-governance initiatives, including a portal for public grievance, MCA21 Mission Mode Project, e-Filing of income tax, e-gazette, Project Nemmadi, and their overall digital India policy.[21,22]

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