MEANING, NATURE, SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF DIGITAL GOVERNANCE

M.A. Semester II

Paper: VII

Digital Governance: Theory and Practice

Unit I

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Meaning and Nature of Digital Governance:

Digital governance refers to carrying out governance process in a digital way to deliver digital services.

Digital governance is also known as electronic governance, internet governance, online governance, transformational governance, and connected governance.

E-governance refers to the use of information and communication technologies by government or public agencies for public governance.

E-governance is the application of information and communications technology by government agencies to their functioning in order to make simple, moral, accountable, responsive and transparent (SMART) governance a reality.

The ultimate objective of e-governance is to improve performance of government agencies by fulfilling aspirations, expectations and needs of citizens.

E-government is not about 'e' but about 'government'; it is not about computers and websites, but about services to citizens and businesses.

E-government is also not about translating processes; it is about transforming them.

E-government is concerned with the transformation of government, modernization of government processes and functions and better public service delivery mechanisms through technology so that government can be put on an auto-pilot mode.

The *four pillars* of e-government are *people, process, technology* and *resources.*

The *key considerations* in e-governance are as below:

Process: simplicity, efficiency, citizen – centricity, sustainability, cost – effectiveness;

People: vision, leadership, commitment, competency, change;

Technology: architecture, open standards, reliability, scalability, security;

Resources: holistic, efficient, service – oriented, sustained, adequate (Second Administrative Reforms Commission, Eleventh Report: Promoting e-Governance, the SMART Way Forward, December 2008).

<u>*Lisa Welchman*</u> in her book '<u>*Managing Chaos: Digital Governance by Design*</u>' has described digital governance as a discipline that focuses on establishing clear accountability for digital strategy, policy, and standards. A digital governance framework, when effectively designed and implemented, helps to streamline digital development and dampen debates around digital channel "ownership".

According to <u>ActiveStandards.com</u>, digital governance is a framework for establishing accountability, roles, and decision-making authority for an organization's digital presence - which means its websites, mobile sites, social channels, and any other Internet and web-enabled products and services.

According to *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*, "Governance refers to the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs, including citizens' articulation of their interests and exercise of their legal rights and obligations. E-governance may be understood as the performance of this governance via the electronic medium in order to facilitate an efficient, speedy and transparent process of disseminating information to the public, and other agencies, and for performing government administration activities."[1]

The *Council of Europe* regards e-governance as "the use of electronic technologies in three areas of public action: relations between the public authorities and civil society, functioning of the public authorities at all stages of the

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[1] Second Administrative Reforms Commission, Government of India, New Delhi, December 2008, Eleventh Report, Promoting e-Governance, the SMART Way Forward, Chapter 2, Page 8-9, http://arc.gov.in/11threp/ARC_11thReport_Ch2.pdf accessed on 06.10.2011

democratic process (electronic democracy), and the provision of public services (electronic public services)."[2]

The *Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development* has defined *four stages* of e-government.

These are:

i. *Information*: putting information on web-sites.

ii. *Interaction*: allowing citizens to enquire about services, procedures etc., and filling up forms and submitting them online.

iii. *Transaction*: allowing payments online.

iv. *Transformation*: a mix of all the above and allowing the citizen to participate in governance

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[2] Second Administrative Reforms Commission, Government of India, New Delhi, December 2008, Eleventh Report, Promoting e-Governance, the SMART Way Forward, Chapter 2, Page 9, http://arc.gov.in/11threp/ARC_11thReport_Ch2.pdf accessed on 06.10.2011

through information and communications technology.[3]

The *goals* of e-governance are: better service delivery to citizens, ushering in transparency and accountability, empowering people through information, improved efficiency within governments, and improve interface with business and industry (Second Administrative Reforms Commission, Eleventh Report, 2008).

Broadly, *three categories* of services are covered under e-governance:

1. Providing *information*;

2. Improving *processing efficiency*; and

3. Facilitating *transactions*.

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[3] Second Administrative Reforms Commission, Government of India, New Delhi, December 2008, Eleventh Report, Promoting e-Governance, the SMART Way Forward, Chapter 6, page 68, http://arc.gov.in/11threp/ARC_11thReport_Ch6.pdf

Core Principles of E-governance:

Second Administrative Reforms Commission in its *Eleventh Report*, *Promoting e-Governance, the SMART Way Forward* (December 2008) has identified following as core principles of e-governance[4]:

1. *Clarity of Purpose:*

There needs to be a clear understanding and appreciation of the purposes and objectives to be achieved through e-governance.

2. *Environment Building:*

There is need to change the mind-set of all the stakeholders involved, that is, politicians, government officials and civil society at large.

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[4] Second Administrative Reforms Commission, Government of India, New Delhi, December 2008, Eleventh Report, Promoting e-Governance, the SMART Way Forward, Chapter 5, pages 59-64, http://arc.gov.in/11threp/ARC_11thReport_Ch5.pdf accessed on 06.10.2011

The environment should be such that the perceived threat to entrenched interests is removed and resistance to change is addressed by dealing with actual grievances.

3.   E-governance as an Integral Part of Reform in Governance:

E-governance has to be an integral part of the governance structure and processes.

4.   E-preparedness and Step-wise Approach:

There has to be a step-wise approach to e-governance so that outcomes are maximized and citizens reap early benefits from e-governance.

These steps are: e-preparedness; identification of e-governance projects by each organization/entity; prioritization; business process re-engineering; developing technological solutions; and implementation of projects.

5.   Disciplined Way of Working:

E-governance requires a disciplined and systematic way of working in organizations.

6.   Monitoring and Evaluation:

Close monitoring of e-governance projects is necessary in both the pilot phase as well as during the actual working of the up-scaled project.

Apart from periodic monitoring of e-governance initiatives in the post-implementation stage, there would also be a need for evaluation of the impact of such initiatives through independent agencies.

7.   Developing Secure, Fail-safe Systems and Disaster Recovery Systems:

The technological architecture on which e-governance applications are mounted would need to be made not only secure but also fail-safe.

Mechanisms would have to be incorporated which would put the systems in the safe mode in times of crisis.

8.   Sustainability:

E-governance initiatives need to be sustainable. Once it has been established that any particular initiative is the better way of providing services or information to the people or conducting the business of government, it should not be allowed to relapse on grounds of expediency.

9.   Allowing for Horizontal Applicability:

To make e-governance more cost effective and successful, successes need to be adopted across states and organizations thereby minimizing costly repetitions and in many cases, failure.

10.   Development of Local Language Interfaces:

E-governance initiatives need to provide citizen interfaces in the respective local language.

11. E-governance - a Continuing Process:

E-governance represents a paradigm shift in the field of governance reforms. Bringing it about would have to be a continuing process which would require many adjustments.

Scope of Digital Governance / E-governance:

Scope of digital governance is very wide.

Scope has to be understood in terms of dimensions, domains, layers, sectors and stages / phases.

Dimensions:

The main dimensions of e-governance are: *Government to Citizens (G2C); Government to Government (G2G);*

Government to Employees (G2E); and *Government to Business (G2B).*

<u>*Government to Citizens (G2C)*</u>:

The goal of G2C is to provide one-stop, online access to information and services to individuals.

One of the key mandates of Common Service Centres (CSC) scheme under Digital India Programme is to deliver Government to Citizen (G2C) services.

Various G2C services of Central Government Ministries and departments, apart from State-specific services have been integrated on the Digital Seva portal for delivery to citizens in rural and remote areas of the country through the network of CSCs.

<u>*Government to Government (G2G)*</u>:

Government to government (G2G) is the electronic sharing of data and/or information systems between government agencies, departments or organizations.

The goal of G2G is to support e-government initiatives by improving communication, data access and data sharing.

G2G services take place at two levels: at the local or domestic level and at the international level. G2G services are transactions between the central-state government, state-local governments, and between department-level and attached agencies and bureaus.

Khajane is a major e-Governance initiative of the state government of Karnataka.

It is first project of its kind in the country where the entire array of Treasury activities has been computerized.

This is the only project where from the time of approval of State Budget to the point of rendering accounts to the

government the entire activity can be tracked in the system.

Khajane project has been implemented mainly to eliminate systemic deficiencies in the manual Treasury system and for the efficient management of State finances (administrative units below districts).

Government to Employees (G2E):

G2E services are specialized services that cover only government employees, such as online services of payrolls, tax information, the provision of human resource training and development that improve the bureaucracy's day-to-day functions and dealings with citizens.

The key issue of G2E e services is empowerment of the employee and resulting accountability.

E-samarth is a G2E initiative of the Controller General of Accounts.

e-Samarth follows a very transparent approach in providing a comprehensive resource of GPF-related information through a website open to all account holders and accounting units.

This powerful e-governance initiative focuses on increasing value in the management of General Provident Fund accounts and enhancing subscriber relationships with its minimum agenda of e-governance.

It aims at integrating Government functions (G2G) and empowering employees (G2E).

Government to Business (G2B):

G2B (Government to Business) is a term that refers to the relationships between organizations (subjects) of public administration and enterprises (businesses).

The objective of G2B is to reduce burdens on business, provide one-stop access to information and enable digital communication using the language of e-business (XML).

For businesses, G2B interactions can result in increased awareness of opportunities to work with the government and in cost savings and improved efficiency in performing transactions.

For governments, G2B interactions offer benefits in reducing costs and increasing efficiency in procurement processes plus providing new avenues for selling surplus items.

Domains:

The fundamental domains of e-governance are: *e-Administration* (improving government processes); *e-Citizens* and *e-Services* (connecting citizens); and *e-Society* (building external interactions).

Sectors:

Digital governance is being used in all sectors.

In India the government broadly comprises following 30 sectors.

(1) Agriculture and Cooperation; (2) Animal Husbandry and Fishing; (3) Art and Culture; (4) Chemicals and Fertilizers; (5) Coal and Mine; (6) Commerce and Industry; (7) Communications and Information Technology; (8) Defence; (9) Education and Training; (10) Employment and Labour; (11) Energy and Power; (12) Environment and Natural Resources; (13) Finance, Banking and Insurance; (14) Food and Public Distribution; (15) Forestry and Wildlife; (16) Governance and Administration; (17) Health and Family welfare; (18) Home affairs and National Security; (19) Housing and Urban Development; (20) Information and Broadcasting; (21) International Affairs; (22) Law and Justice; (23) People and Organizations; (24) Petroleum, Oil and

Natural Gas; (25) Rural Development and Panchayati Raj; (26) Science, Technology and Research; (27) Social Justice and Empowerment; (28) Tourism; (29) Transport and Infrastructure; and (30) Youth Affairs and Sports.

Stages / Phases:

Every production process has 03 stages / phases: pre-production, production, and post-production.

Digital governance is present in all 03 stages / phases.

Need for Digital Governance and its Significance:

Digital governance minimizes human intervention thus making the administrative process more efficient and transparent.

The biggest benefit of e-governance is the elimination of touts and middlemen who are often responsible for corruption, delays and red-tape.

E-governance initiatives give the citizens fair and equal access to the government and make the process more inclusive.

E-governance is meant for bringing about reform in governance by creative and innovative uses of information and communications technology.

 E-governance transforms the business of governance by providing user – friendly interface between government and citizens; reducing transaction costs both for citizens and government operations; increasing revenue; making available timely and reliable information on various aspects of governance; lessening red tape, delay and inconveniences; simplifying structures, processes; eliminating redundant and outmoded processes; avoiding

duplication; simplifying functioning of government; enhancing decision making abilities; bringing about greater coordination and communication; increasing transparency; improving internal efficiency; restructuring and renovating administrative processes; improving service delivery, in terms of timeliness and quality; making public services more convenient and affordable to people at large by providing web based and satellite based services at one common counter / platform; bringing government machinery to the doorsteps of the citizens; increasing flexibility of service use; saving time, money and effort; producing measurable improvements for citizens; promoting knowledge sharing for continuously improving the quality of governance; and making development process more inclusive.

E-governance facilitates efficient storage and recovery of data, immediate and quick transmission as well as processing of information; expeditious and prudent

decision making; transparency and enforcement of accountability.

It facilitates strengthening of institutional structures and service delivery mechanisms.

It helps in increasing the expanse and range of government, both geographically and demographically.

It enables providing traceable records; and enforcing individual performance, accountability, efficiency, effectiveness, productivity, and transparency of policies and processes.

The tools, techniques and instruments of e-governance, thus, contribute to the attainment of good governance.

E-governance is visualized as a mode for implementing a new paradigm of governance in the country.

This new paradigm focuses on the use of information and communications technology to bring public services to the doorsteps of citizens and businesses.

This requires sweeping changes in institutional structures, procedures and practices that will transfigure the relationships between three levels of government, businesses and citizens.

E-governance provides for wider participation of citizens in public affairs. It brings the citizens to the centre stage by perceiving them as customers and clients.

This leads to citizen empowerment and citizen-centric and customer-focused governance through access to information or more efficient government management.

E-governance makes interaction between government and citizens, government and business enterprises and inter-agency relationships more cordial, proximate, convenient, transparent and economical.

It improves governance processes and outcomes with a view to improving the delivery of public services.

The resulting impacts of e-governance are cost saving, process simplification, reduced corruption, increased transparency, revenue growth and convenience for citizens.