

Framework of e-Governance at the Local Government Level

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ABSTRACT

With presumptions that e-government theories prevail in various formats and concepts around the globe, nations and institutions, not many examples are there to emulate in terms of developing a framework of e-governance system at the outer periphery of the government tiers. However, surprisingly till date most of the e-government programs in the country of implementation, or e-government research at the research institution could not be taken as granted, and foremost many of them could not come out as a major accomplishment. This research would like to carry out a comprehensive analysis on various theories built around the e-governance concept, and put forward a future e-government system at the local government level.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

J. Computer Applications

J.1 Administrative Data Processing

Government

General Terms

Theory

Keywords

e-government, e-governance, framework of e-government, developing countries, community empowerment, knowledge development, local government

1. E-GOVERNMENT AT LOCAL LEVEL

Despite the popularity, potency and precision of electronic form of government (e-Government), it is yet somehow remain in uncharted territory for many countries in terms of implementing e-governance at the lowest tier of the governance system. In theory it is known as the local government in almost all countries, and in practice the lowest tier of any governance system always lack of proper incentives, adequate resources, satisfactory management and mainly any standardize framework. Moreover, due to non availability of any accepted e-governance framework (another elaborated dimension of research), some countries and agencies of implementation are yet in mere at stage of simulation or at stages of experimentation or in state of confusion, even after years of successful e-government system. Countries in the developing and transitional economies are major victims of this situation, as most of the time they just try to replicate an established system or try to simply manipulate on their own without enough researches. Not only governments, but also, development actors are revisiting the concept of e-governance in recent years, as many projects on e-governance failed throughout the

globe. Some of the international agencies have even shifted their focus area of funding. Perhaps, these could be due to design, perception, economics, transparency or simple failure due to lack of attention. This chapter is intended to look into various aspects of e-government concepts and their frameworks for promotion of e-governance at the local government level to yield positive economic benefits.

Local government is the lowest level of formal state institutions, such as district-level officials or local, publicly accountable decision-making and service-delivery organizations constituted in accordance with national laws (such as in local elections). Local government structures take different forms in different countries and vary in their levels of accountability to local people or to immediate upper-tier of governments¹.

2. THE STUDY

While electronic service delivery remains the main thrust of e-government policies at all levels, greater community contact is usually seen as more practical and desirable at the local level. In recent times, greater focus has been given to local e-government where a significant amount of 'citizen to government' or vice versa interaction takes place. Therefore, most of the local governments today are under influence to provide efficient and effective e-government information and services as a result of increased accountability and performance management (Shackleton, Fisher & Dawson, 2004). The aim is to intensify consumer's demand and choice, increase local competition, reduce the cost of service delivery at the local level, and better functioning of the government system.

A comparative study of e-government strategies of four countries are given in Table-1. From Table-1, one can speculate the emergence of e-governance in those countries. Jordan, being a country that introduced the concept of e-government very recently has adopted ambitious perspectives in it enclosing almost all the pertinent aspects of e-governance; Sri Lanka, a forerunner from many years in Asia have included a few pragmatic endeavors; Pakistan has incorporated basic strategic steps in their e-government framework, as the starter sequences; while South Korea places several strategic and structured visions in their strategies. However, successful e-government concepts should rely on rigid institutionalization, liberal laws and regulations, adoptive technologies, and promotion of business values, often terms as the four pillars of e-government (Government of Jordan, 2006; Government of Pakistan, 2005; Rainford, 2006; Kim, 2002).

Table-1: E-government strategies of four countries of study

Jordan-2006	Sri Lanka-2002	Pakistan-2005	South Korea-2002
Deliver high-quality services to consumers, businesses and organizations;	Build the national implementation capacity	Basic Infrastructure: Deploy the basic infrastructure to all government agencies	Initiation: Provision of limited information
Improve government performance and efficiency	Build the ICT infrastructure and an enabling environment	Common Applications: A portfolio of applications that are common to many or all divisions has been identified	Development: Periodic update of information
Enhance country's competitiveness;	Develop ICT based human resources	Adopt agency specific applications and e-Services for citizens	Interoperation: E-mail, E-forms
Ensure public sector transparency and accountability	Re-engineering of government and delivery of citizen services	Standards: Electronic Government Directorate (EGD) to be developed	E-commerce: Online processing of civil service
Reduce cost and increase ease of interacting with government	Leverage ICT for economic and social development	Enabling Environment: Federal Government, Agency: EGD	E-payment of taxes and fees
Promote development of country's ICT sector			Integrated administration: Interdepartmental and cross-agency Online service
Develop skills within the public sector			Converged public/civil service
Boost e-commerce activities			
Improve information security			

(Source: Government of Jordan, 2006; Government of Pakistan, 2005; Rainford, 2006; Kim, 2002)

These e-government concepts and strategies lead to develop a concrete e-governance framework in a country incorporating; development of institutional infrastructure, establishment of adequate information infrastructure, formation of liberal legal and regulatory infrastructure, and creating business value out of these services.

3. FUTURE E-GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A three prong approach may simplify delegation of local e-government at the grass roots, such as a merit is made between access policies (aimed at improving access to ICTs for all citizens), content policies (directed to improve the use of ICTs in the city administration and semi-public domains) and infrastructure policies (to improve the provision of broadband infrastructure) (Berg, Meer, Winden & Woets, 2006). In this respect, incorporation of parties actively involved at the grass roots governance processes should be involved. Furthermore, to strengthen local e-government management at the grass roots, three dimensional approach, as suggested by Austin City Council (2008) may incorporate a four dimensional approach as shown in Figure-2, making segmentations among government, non-government, academic and entrepreneurs.

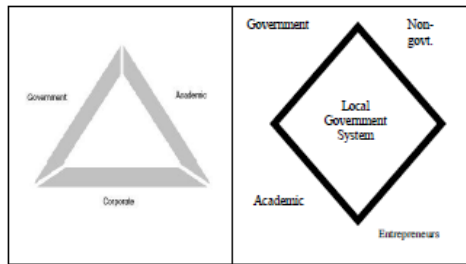


Figure-3: Increased partnership at the local level incorporating all stakeholders (Adopted from CTG, 2002; Author)

3.1 Proposed framework

A future e-government framework could be a four pronged approaches in four dimensions, including access, availability, equity and democracy (see Figure-2)

Figure- 2: A four dimensional e-government framework (Adopted from Nour, et. al., 2008)

Democracy: Integrity, accountability, transparency	Equity: Responsiveness, accountability, transparency, effectiveness, quality
Access: Information pertaining to the governance system	Availability: Efficiency, effectiveness, quality, understandability

Furthermore, the future e-government framework may take a four layer operational strategies, incorporating development, deployment, delegation, and dissemination (see Table-2).

Table-2 : Four layer e-government operational strategies

Operational strategy	Actions
Development	Network layer: Information infrastructure, servers, LANs, WANs,

	intranet, Internet
Deployment	Integration layer: Database development, e-mail, e-forms, e-portals, networked enabled system, legal boundaries, policy issues
Delegation	Management layer: skill development, business process re-engineering, demand-supply management
Dissemination	User application layer: G2G, G2C, C2G, G2B, B2G, G2NG, NG2G, G2O, O2G*

* This study would like to incorporate NG (non-government entities), and O (any other parties involved in the governance system of country, including civil societies, and marginalized communities) (Source: Sharma & Gupta, 2003; Author)

The future e-government framework could focus on a paradigm shift from the current context to a future scenario, as depicted in the Table-3.

Table-3: Paradigm shift of the current e-government system to a future e-government system

Current	Future
Fragmented services: Agent centric, semi-automated	Uninterrupted shared services: Citizen centric, partnership, synchronized, integrated, automated
Traditional form of service: Mostly single channel, push service (supply driven), mass service (not personalized)	Ubiquitous service: Multiple channels, pull service (demand driven), personalized service, knowledge driven
Functionality of service: Mainly focused on demand-supply chain, pushed by the government hierarchy, mostly controlled by the central government	Socially integrated form of service: Focus on value addition of the user, decentralized, interlinked with the local government autonomy

(Source: Government of S. Korea, 2006, Author)

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ⁱ http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-105151-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html