



Impact Factor: 4.081

## CONCEPT OF GOOD GOVERNANCE AND E-GOVERNANCE: GUJARAT

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### Abstract

India is moving towards achieving e-governance. The spread of e-governance initiatives have had a positive impact on the quality of governance. Geographical, social, & economic disparities are the biggest barriers for full-fledged e-governance. Illiteracy, lack of infrastructure, security and privacy of personal and financial data are other constraints. Being the largest democracy, second in terms of population and diversified geography itself creates the big challenges. The aim of this paper is to discuss the position of India in e-governance environment, the issues, challenges and obstacles ahead. It makes an effort to provide a framework for e-governance in India by identifying its essential features and analyzing the shortcomings in its working and emphasizes need for innovative approaches. The goal of the paper is to evaluate the programme against a theoretical background, and also to draw practical lessons from the programme that could provide guidance to new e-governance programmes in the development context.

**Keywords:** e-Governance, corruption, India, administration, women

**“Good Governance needs self-discipline. Only discipline within can ensure disciplinewithout.” - Shri Narendra Modi**

### GOOD GOVERNANCE & E-GOVERNANCE

Governance is a broader term than government. The principle elements of government are the constitution, legislature, executive and judiciary. Governance involves interaction between these formal institutions and those of civil society<sup>1</sup>.

The progress in the Information and Communication Technology has completely changed the human life, making it easier and faster. Good governance and people having access to information are essentials for a successful democracy. The access to the information by the people is ensured and made possible by the government due to the emergence of new technologies. No more passive role is played by the citizens to whom merely services were provided. Rather they have started playing active role, wherein they decide the standards of their services. People have greater access and control over governance which ultimately results in a more transparent, accountable and efficient governance. To shift from more of the paper work and to be faster in the communication between the government and the society the world has moved towards E-Governance<sup>2</sup>.

E-governance is no more and no less than governance in an electronic environment. It is both governance of that environment and governance within that environment, using electronic tools. When the word ‘e’ adds as a prefix to the word governance it sounds good, but it is to be remembered that the e-word doesn’t mean an instant change from old systems to this new electronic world. This is an ongoing exercise whereby systems need to be evaluated, new architectures designed, processes modeled, infrastructure buildup and staff trained. There are also the issues of accessibility,

usability, security and transparency. Thus, security may conflict with access and transparency with ease of use<sup>3</sup>.

### CASE STUDY GUJARAT

Gujarat was a bit late to lay down the efforts to bring ICT in the governance and is still in the race to catch up faster. The IT policy of Gujarat includes the mission “to help improve processes in the governance by using computing devices, communication systems associated electronics and software to provide better delivery systems to the citizens.<sup>4</sup>”

To improve this process in the governance, the Gujarat government started electronic system in mostly all the sectors that are connected with government. This has brought both the government and the people near to each other through the means of electronic systems. Different websites for different services are provided by the government. But the residents of Gujarat are provided with the facility of a single stop portal for all the e-governance services. Not only this but these services are flashed in the regional language Gujarati to make it more suitable for the local and village people too to use the services<sup>5</sup>.

The sectors major sectors wherein the e-facility is provided are:

#### EDUCATION SECTOR

The government of Gujarat has initiated the implementation of the e-governance from the education department. Literate citizen is the best capital of the state. Executing this thought Gujarat Government started ‘e’ system in the education department. Basic information regarding the government schools and colleges are available from the Gujarat Portal website which is a government site. Government schools and colleges are provided with the computer laboratory and internet facilities. Students are able to get the e-books, e-

journals very easily. In Gujarat, universities and colleges have their own language laboratory. Government certificate is provided to the students for computer and for the language course as now even the government recruitments need the computer literacy. Although, the people currently working as the government employees and have lack of computer literacy are given training for the same. The BISAG lectures have been started wherein far of places students can attend live lectures of experts of the subjects and an interaction session is also conducted under the facility. The government libraries have started the 'e' system wherein the person can search the books of the library through the computer and not by the note making system.

The system of maintaining the record of the attendance of the students has also turned to the electronic way. In Gujarat Technical University if a student does not come to the college for about 5-7 days then an automatic message is delivered to the parents of the student.

Gujarat Public Service Commission (GPSC) applications are accepted online which are further processed electronically. The candidate can download the form for the examination online, the photo and the signature of the candidate is sent via internet. This makes the work of the candidate easier as he/she can sit in any corner of the state and apply for the examination. In the same way the process for the GSET – Gujarat State Eligibility Test and other state level examination is performed. Notifications and Recruitment of the government jobs is done online.

More new universities are to be constructed in Gujarat which will provide new update technological facilities that would make available new online services to the students.

## 2. HEALTH SECTOR

The health service provided by a state is an important development indicator. There was lack of emergency service provided in the state. But now after an excellent implementation of the 108 emergency mobile hospital 24 hours free service, it has become very easy and simple to save thousands of the lives of the people of Gujarat. This service is far more quick responsive than the 911 service provided by the US Government.

Inspired by the success of 108 emergency services, the Gujarat government hospitals have initiated ICU on wheels facility. It's the first of its kind facility in India. Through initiative medical services will be expanded to district level also. It has also been planned that a telephonic diagnosis service will be launched in the state. Through this service free medical assistance and consultations will be provided to patients even in remote areas. ICU on wheels has sophisticated equipments that help to transfer critically ill patients to hospitals in fractions of time. In each ICU on wheels unit there is transport ventilator, a sophisticated multi-parameter monitor and defibrillator-cum-pace maker. Such each unit also have an adequate backup of oxygen and power supply. To help doctors keep track of

patient's condition there is also a wireless data transfer facility equipped in each unit.

There is also a proposal to launch telemedicine in coming months. Telemedicine is the use of telecommunication and information technologies in order to provide health care from a distance to each and every corner of the state<sup>6</sup>.

## 3. TRANSPORT

All the major cities and villages of Gujarat are well connected by roads. According to a World Bank report the transport infrastructure in Gujarat is the best model through which other states can get the example and the inspiration to build up the same<sup>7</sup>. Regional Transport Office (RTO) in Gujarat like one in Ahmedabad has also started e-services. The applications for obtaining or renewal of the driving license can be filled up online and later on the examination for the same is also held online. The license is provided to the owner at home by post itself.

Bus Rapid Transport System (BRTS) is one of the unique transport models operating in India. This is unique because it has its own lane that is separated from the general traffic. Thus it provides quick as well as cheap conveyance. It runs throughout the city and plans have been made to expand it to outer areas nearby city. The commuters in BRTS can obtain computerized tickets and also monthly/yearly pass cards which facilitate their journey. A plan has been proposed to introduce cycle sharing system where commuters can take bike to reach to and from BRTS to their destinations. One smart card can be used for both BRTS and cycle rental<sup>8</sup>.

Gujarat State Road Transport Corporation (GSRTC) has introduced Volvo buses with Wife facilities for which the booking can be made at the GSRTC website. This helps the passengers to get their tickets been booked without going to the latter's offices<sup>9</sup>.

## 4. MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS

Government of Gujarat is pro active in the initiatives and also ranks as the first state in the country that has made e-governance function in all its Municipalities and Municipal Corporations.

Ahmadabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) is the first Municipal Corporation in India to facilitate better performance of the delivery of municipal services like birth and death registration, building plan, primary health and education, city cleanliness, water supply, sewage, road, street-lights, parks and garden through e-governance to citizens of the city. For this AMC has established six City Civic Centers located in five zones of the city and also created forty-three ward civic offices all these interconnected via intranet/internet connectivity<sup>10</sup>. AMC website also features a service

which provides people to address their grievances like water, roads, electricity, drainage and other similar issues.

Rajkot Municipal Corporation has launched e-governance in the city at the cost of around Rs. 20 core, which aims to provide people a Responsive Intelligent Transparent and Effective service (RITE). RITE is claimed to be first of its kind integrated e-governance system in the country which will seek implementation of innovative initiative and their sustenance. Supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) for water distribution and street lights, vehicle tracking system, digitalization of the records, personal information system, solid waste management, document management system and mobile governance. SCADA will help to check water wastage, illegal water tap connections, use of electric motors for fetching excessive water. RMC claims that all the municipal services will be covered with SMS based governance services. People will soon have access to their property tax and professional tax dues, building permissions etc. There is also a facility to pay taxes from their mobiles once a special designed software is installed<sup>11</sup>.

In order to improve informal public transport system in the city, Rajkot Municipal Corporation has invited offers from interested parties to begin a dial an auto-rickshaw service. Through this facility people can dial for a rickshaw anytime and anywhere to go to their desired destination in the city<sup>12</sup>.

Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC) is planning to launch a service whereby citizen may be able to get updates regarding their birth, deaths and marriages certificates over SMS. Citizens registering the birth of a child can get reminders regarding the immunization of their child once this project is launched. The person will be asked to give his mobile number. As soon as the application for the query is addressed the person would be informed through alerts on his mobile<sup>13</sup>.

To curb corruption in Gujarat anti-corruption software is to be put into application. Earlier launched in Mumbai, requestaction.com or sitibajao.com is initiative of India Against Corruption (IAC). It enables citizens to register online complaints of corruption against services like taxi, school, hospital, municipal or government offices. The complaint is then transferred to the relevant department or officers so that action can be taken against it. This service aims to bring transparency and accountability in the administration<sup>14</sup>.

Food and Civil Supplies Department in Gujarat has also launched e-services which include processing of a new or renewal of Rashan card. Details regarding what thing should be given at what price is also mentioned in the Gujarat Portal website. This website also features in detail about the various schemes that has been initiated by the state

government for the upliftment of the socially backward classes.

SWAGAT – State Wide Attention on Grievances through Application of Technology is one of the best projects led by the Gujarat government. This project connects common people directly with the Gujarat government. SWAGAT project is been hosted on every 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of every month in the presence of the Chief Minister in the Jansampark Department. Chief Minister with all the department heads and the district representatives listen to the complaints of the common people through Video conference. The best possible solutions are provided to the problems of the common man.

Gujarat government launched E-gram Vishwagram project. This project initiates connecting 13716 Gram Panchayats and 6000 Citizens Common Service Centers. This project is intact with the features like Videos conferencing facilities at all villages, free of cost communication between panchayats, common service facilities, and many more facilities are provided through the online e-Gram project website.

E-Dhara improves complete Computerization of Land Records across the state. Eradication of Manual Records, computer controlled transformation process and self sustainability is the leading objectives of e-Dhara system.

Sachivalaya Integrated Communication Network is a network owned by government of Gujarat for their Voice Communication needs. This network is spread in the periphery of 12 km connecting almost all the Government Boards & Corporation offices. The objective of this project is to bring various departments of the government near to each other and work efficiently together<sup>15</sup>.

Undeniably, e-Governance in Gujarat has emerged as a powerful tool for any citizen centric, transparent and effective governance system. But due to some issues it has not reached to all the corners of the state. Though there are projects been laid down by the government, though the infrastructure for the same has been prepared but there are few consequences due to which the smooth use of these facilities is yet to happen. The ground reality is that in the remote areas the person operating the computer a government employee has hardly any depth knowledge of the technical concepts.

It has been seen in the report by UNDP – United Nations Development Programme that though the government of Gujarat has created e-state but the HDI – Human Development Index of Gujarat on an overall bases ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in India, on income base it ranks 5<sup>th</sup> whereas on the education and health it ranks 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> respectively<sup>15</sup>.

Above all such debates it is still that the government is trying hard to prove itself and crash down all the drawbacks and make them as the strengths of the e-governance of the state. E-

governance acts as a tool for good governance. This paper is not here to defend the e-system of Gujarat government but we are trying to asses and explore future prospects in e-services. Continuing the development, Gujarat government has suggested mobile governance to solve the problems of the people

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