

Evolving Facets of Governance: A Critical Analysis of Electronic Governance Regime in Developing Countries

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Abstract: *The use and application of Information and Communication technology has grown at an unparalleled rate in recent decades. The contemporary, computerized environment has radically altered how individuals live and interact with government. It has evolved into a very effective tool capable of transforming the whole governance process into one based on accountability, responsibility, and openness. As a result, there is a higher chance that there will be real progress and development as it gives more opportunity to people to participate in governance at all levels. The transformation in governance has sown its seeds but, in the race of implementing the digital initiatives, developing countries face many challenges. A major challenge for developing nations is determining how to harness the potential of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to improve governments' abilities to rule, service their citizens, and, eventually, improve their people's human development circumstances. In this research paper, the researchers examined the concept of governance, its changing dimensions, and its progression towards good governance as a result of Information Communication and Technology (ICT). The paper also highlighted the strategies and concerns of digital transformation in developing countries and drafted some of the Key Focus Areas for effective and actual implementation of electronic governance.*

Keywords: Information Communication Technology, Governance, Good Governance, Electronic Governance, Digital Divide

1. Concept of Governance

The term Governance in general refers to the decision making processes in the administration of an organization¹. It has a broader meaning and may also be defined as a dynamic framework that regulates the actions of any institution in order to provide better outcomes. It demonstrates how any organization may set goals, analyse risks, solve problems, and implement rules to enhance its operations.² As a result, governance refers to all governing practices used by all types of organizations, whether formal or informal.³ Governance is more than a catchphrase in social science literature over the last several decades, despite the fact that its embodiment has existed from the dawn of human social thought. It might be understood as a descriptive phrase, an analytical notion, or a normative approach that is not bound by the setting of a specific research.⁴

The word "Governance" is derived from the Latin words "gubernare," which means "to lead, control, or guide," and a Greek word "Kybernan," which means "to steer or pilot a ship."⁵ As a result, governance may be analysed as a process of steering and control⁶. According to the generic definition given by Webster's Third International Dictionary, governance is "the act or process of governing specifically

authoritative direction and control"⁷. Although the aforementioned description of governance as steering and control may seem rather repressive and top-down. However, as society has changed, the idea of governance has advanced, and the procedure has become more negotiated than authoritative, which led greater emphasis on collaboration and more negotiated models of steering in governance⁸. In recent decades, contemporary societies have witnessed the fragility of traditional governing systems as well as the rise of new governance frameworks. These developments have been studied by a number of disciplines, including public administration, sociology, international relations, and economics. Different theories and models have evolved as a result of shifting characteristics of governance across disciplines.⁹ The "Interactive Governance" also arose as a result of this shifting governance system. By interactive governance we mean the process by which a range of social and political actors with diverse interests interact to develop, promote, and achieve common goals by mobilizing, trading, and utilizing a variety of ideas, rules, and resources. The primary concern of managing the economy and society remains significant to this concept of governance, but it does it in a way that differs from how traditional governance would approach the problem.¹⁰ This welfare-based governance model has been tremendously supported by neoliberal

¹ Pankaj Sharma, *E-Governance-The New Age Governance* p.no.09 (APH Publishing Corporation, New Dehi,2004).

² Governance Today, Compliance, Performance, Sustainability, available at: <https://www.governancetoday.com> (last visited on July 29 2023).

³ Mark Bevir, *Governance, A Very Short Introduction* p.no.1 (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2012).

⁴ Alexander Stimpfle, *Different Meanings of Governance* (Spring 2010) (Jacobs University Bremen).

⁵ Jacob Torfing, B.Guy Peters, Jon Pierre, Eva Sorensen, *Interactive Governance Advancing the Paradigm* p.no.12 (Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁶ Jon Pierre, B.Guy Peters, *Advanced Introduction to Governance* p.no.2 (Elgar Publications, 2021).

⁷ *Supra* Note 1 at 10

⁸ *Supra* Note 6 at Page no 1-3

⁹ Jacob Torfing, Christopher Ansell, *Introduction to the Handbook of Theories of Governance*. P.no.10-11

¹⁰ *Id.* at 2-3

reforms, which has created the framework for the emergence of new sorts of politics and modalities of governance. These improvements, have resulted in a more effective and efficient ways of governance that is based on public welfare rather than rules and limits.¹¹ These reforms has transformed the hierarchal bureaucracy¹² to a system where the power is shared between stakeholders (Political, Non - Political, Private, and Common masses)¹³ for decision making processes. The idea of governance, from that point forward, envisioned a departure from widely held beliefs about how government aimed to address social challenges by using a top - down method.¹⁴

With the changing meaning and concept of governance in modern era, the ability of governments to respond to governance challenges, is stretched in unprecedented ways. In today's world, governments are attempting to reimagine their governance processes in a citizen - centric manner, with the objective of establishing good governance¹⁵. Good governance entails utmost concern for people's welfare, in which the government and its administration effectively implement public policies and discharge their duties with a deep sense of commitment to respecting and upholding the rule of law, ensuring and protecting human rights, encouraging civic participation, and generating transparency and accountability in government administration overall¹⁶.

Good Governance: A Shift towards New Age Governance

In this contemporary world, Governments are trying to reinvent its process of governance which leads the nation towards achieving the goal of good governance¹⁷. Good governance is a concept which relates to the quality of relationship that exists between government and its citizens¹⁸. Good governance has been in row of discussion primarily because of the importance given to it by many of the international organizations including Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), International Monetary Fund (IMF), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and most importantly by the World Bank¹⁹. "The term good governance first entered the development lexicon in a **World Bank 1989** report on "Sub - Saharan Africa: From crises to Sustainable Growth". In the introduction of that report the World bank President Barber B. Conable wrote that "A root cause of weak economic performance in the past has been the failure of public institutions. Private sector initiative and market mechanisms are important, but they must go hand in hand with good governance - a public service that is efficient, a judicial system that is reliable, and an

administration that is accountable to its public". In the year 1992, the World Bank expanded the definition three years later to "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development". It equated good governance with Sound development management²⁰". United Nations and some of its specialised agencies have also tried to promote good governance. United Nations has sought to support member states in their efforts to implement good governance reforms²¹. According to **Former United Nations Secretary - General Kofi Annan**, "Good governance is ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law; strengthening democracy; promoting transparency and capacity in public administration. " He also said that "Good Governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development"²². Various definitions already exists in law and in other social sciences, However it has been weighed on some common basic principle's which are considered as fundamental for calling any modern democratic state as a state of good governance like

- "To increase interaction between government and citizen
- To encourage citizen participation
- To bring transparency in governing processes
- To make the government accountable
- To reduce the cost of governance".

In nutshell good governance aims at providing an environment where every section of society irrespective of their caste, class and gender develop to their full potential. In the wave of transforming governance into good governance, the role of citizens play a pivotal role and its therefore true to say that the concept of good governance and citizen centric administration are undistinguishably linked²³. With the aim to provide welfare and development; citizen centricity and good governance becomes the prime aim of any government²⁴. The use and application of ICT in governance has the potential to bring all the essential attributes of good governance and has turned to be an aid to achieve the goal.

Electronic Governance: An Aid Towards Good Governance

Electronic Governance is defined as the conversion of governance processes from the traditional to the electronic mode with the goal of reorganising administrative operations and government supervision to better serve the public interest²⁵. Electronic governance is a considerably larger shift than electronic service delivery. It enhances the two - way communication channel, allowing civil society to become

¹¹Richard Bellamy, Antonino Palumbo, *From Government to Governance* p.no.34 (Routledge Publications, 2017).

¹² Mark Bevir, *Key Concepts in Governance* p.no. 1 (Sage Publications, 2009).

¹³ *Supra* Note 1 at 2

¹⁴ Abhay Prasad Singh, Krishna Murari, *Governance Issues and Challenges* p.no.6 (Pearson Education India Publication, 2018).

¹⁵ S.L.Goel, *Good Governance: An Integral Approach* p.no.6 (Deep and Deep Publications Pvt Ltd, 2007).

¹⁶ *Id.* at page no xi-xii

¹⁷ *Supra* Note 15 at 6

¹⁸ *Id.* at 7

¹⁹ Surendra Munshi, Biju Paul Abraham, Soma Chaudhuri, *The Intelligent Person's Guide to Good Governance* p.no. 2 (Sage Publications 2009).

²⁰ Robert I.Rotberg, *On Governance What It Is, What It Measures and It's Policy Uses* p.no. 93(Centre for International Governance Innovation Publication, 2016).

²¹ *Supra* Note 21 at 2-3

²² Good Governance , available at: <https://www.drishtiiias.com/to-the-points/paper4/good-governance-2> (last visited on 23 July 2023)

²³ The concept of Citizen Centric Administration, available at: <https://www.darpg.gov.in> (last visited on 13 August 2022).

²⁴ Second Administrative Reforms Commission, "12th Report on Citizen Centricity Administration, the Heart of Governance" (2009).

²⁵ Pankaj Sharma, *E-Governance- the New Age Governance* page.no. 34 (APH Publishing Corporation, 2004).

better acquainted with issues that influence their quality of life and giving them outlets to voice an educated choice. It is neither more nor less than government in an electronic environment²⁶. Electronic governance entails new management styles, new methods of discussing and making decisions, new methods of communicating with individuals, and new methods of organising and distributing information and services to the public²⁷. This new style of governance ensures that individuals are no longer passive recipients of governance services; instead, they have the opportunity to play a crucial part in determining the type of services they want and the structure that can best supply them²⁸.

By enabling rapid data processing, automatic electronic information conveyance, and radical possibilities in decision making, it has created opportunities that go well beyond the improvement syndrome. Because of the potential of ICT, governments may now take a holistic or linked - up strategy by linking departments and organs of government like never before. Additionally, technology has made external connections easier for information to be shared with other civil society organisations, which has led to the global dissemination of data and information.²⁹ ICT is now a highly leveraged enabling technology that may transform the whole governance process and move a state in the direction of good governance.³⁰



It has given the government new chances to run affairs differently and more efficiently. An intentional effort to put citizens at the forefront has been made possible by ICT. The internet revolution and the quick advancements in communication have shown to be an effective combination for citizen - centric government.³¹ Thus, the development of information and communication technologies has made it possible to change how businesses and the government interact, fostering new avenues for the realisation of good governance. It offers more chances for businesses and individuals to participate in the governance process at all levels.³² Electronic Governance is defined as the conversion of governance processes from the traditional to the electronic mode with the goal of reorganising administrative operations and government supervision to better serve the public interest³³. Electronic governance is a considerably larger shift

than electronic service delivery. It enhances the two - way communication channel, allowing civil society to become better acquainted with issues that influence their quality of life and giving them outlets to voice an educated choice. It is neither more nor less than government in an electronic environment³⁴. Electronic governance entails new management styles, new methods of discussing and making decisions, new methods of communicating with individuals, and new methods of organising and distributing information and services to the public³⁵. This new style of governance ensures that individuals are no longer passive recipients of governance services; instead, they have the opportunity to play a crucial part in determining the type of services they want and the structure that can best supply them³⁶. Electronic governance has emerged as a means of attaining good governance all around the world. Different countries are reacting to this transformation in various ways. Depending on their e - readiness and strategic planning, both developed and developing countries have used a number of ways to include citizens in the government process online³⁷. In technologically advanced nations, electronic governance has shown good outcomes in terms of delivering electronic information and services to all stakeholders. As far as developing countries are concerned electronic governance is a burgeoning technical innovation with the potential to improve government performance and efficiency, eliminate corruption, stimulate revenue development, and, offer services and encourage citizen involvement. Increased investment in ICT would allow developing countries to usher in a new revolution that would not only increase any nation's competitiveness but would also contribute to its growth³⁸. Despite the many potential advantages that e - governance initiatives hold out, developing nations still face a number of obstacles in effectively adopting and utilising these services. Poor socio - economic circumstances, education, infrastructure, and access to telecommunications services continue to be a problem for residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in developing countries. In addition, inhabitants of rural areas frequently experience delays in accessing government services as a result of a lack of knowledge about government initiatives and poor ICT infrastructural developments.³⁹ In such situations, this revolutionary trend would turn out to be a blessing in disguise, widening the gap between rich and poor groups in society and widely brings out the concept of digital divide. Developing countries have great potential to compete successfully in the new global market, but unless they embrace the ICT revolution promptly and actively, they will

²⁶ *Id at.* 19-20

²⁷ Richard Amaechi Onuigbo, Eme, Okechukwu Innocent, "Electronic Governance and Administration in Nigeria: Prospects and Challenges" Vol 5, No.3, *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, October 2015.

²⁸ *Supra* note 25 at 58

²⁹ *Id.* at 17-18

³⁰ C.S.R.Prabhu, *E-Governance: Concepts and Case Studies* p. no.2 (Prentice Hall of India, New Delhi, 2004).

³¹ *Supra* Note 26 at vii

³² *Id.* at iii

³³ Pankaj Sharma, *Supra* note at page.no.34.

³⁴ *Id.* at Page 19-20

³⁵ Richard Amaechi Onuigbo, Eme, Okechukwu Innocent, "Electronic Governance and Administration in Nigeria: Prospects and Challenges" Vol 5, No.3, *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, October 2015.

³⁶ Pankaj Sharma, *Supra* note at Page no.58

³⁷ *Idid* at Page.no. 53

³⁸ Subhajit Basu, "E-Government and Developing Countries: An Overview" Volume 18, *International Journal of Law Computers and Technology*, March 2004.

³⁹ Zaigham Mahmood, *E-Government Implementation and Practice in Developing Countries, Information Science Reference*, (An Imprint of IGI Globe)Page no xviii, 2013.

face new barriers and the risk of not just being marginalised but completely bypassed⁴⁰.

A proper perspective on the adoption of electronic governance, particularly for developing nations, requires framing and adoption of appropriate electronic governance models. Different models are adopted by emerging nations to fit their needs, and these models are continuously being developed there.⁴¹ Digital governance models have the ability to significantly alter the governing frameworks of underdeveloped nations. Simple imitation of well-liked e-governance ideas from the developed world won't work and could further marginalize those who are experiencing the digital divide. The choice and kind of e-governance model deployment should be guided by local needs and goals in an evolving fashion.⁴² Even emerging nations vary in their e-governance model adoption in the quest to digitise governance. Many developing nations are still in the early stages of e-governance development, with a portal providing one-way information from the government to citizens via a website. Even if some developing nations, like India, have moved to the interactive and transactional stages of e-governance model, but still a number of obstacles prevent its effective implementation and, in turn, widen digital divide gap.⁴³

The majority of developing nations are aware of the potential of ICT, not just as a tool for bettering government but, more importantly, as a way to raise the general standard of life. However, it would be important to note that most developing nations are making every effort to attain the digital goals while focused on e-governance initiatives and ICT. Nevertheless, without having adequate regulatory and legal frameworks, digital awareness programmes, prioritization of services, deployment of electronic governance initiatives would become ineffective⁴⁴. To achieve the objective of digital transformation through the use and application of ICT, developing countries must address certain critical core techniques in order to realistically implement digital transformation.

Effective Policy Making

Problem Identification
Policy Formulation
Policy Implementation
Policy Evaluation

Regulatory Management System

Periodic and Systematic Review of Existing Regulations
Comprehensive Policy on Public Consultation for Effective Quality Regulations to enhance:
Democratic Values
Inclusive Growth
Responsiveness in Governance

Result Based Management

Plan
Implement
Monitor
Implementation Review/Report
Learn and adapt

Environment Building

E - Preparedness
Digital Literacy
Leadership and strategic planning
Government Process Reengineering
Digital training

Without strategic planning and the prioritization of services, moving forward with more digital initiatives in the verge of rapidly transforming governance into an electronic mode embraces the nation more toward stagnation than growth. This is why electronic governance in developing countries requires proper planning and execution at every stage.

2. Conclusion

Governance is an ever-evolving concept. Governance is becoming more widely understood for its significance in almost all fields. In terms of the state's role and function in carrying out its obligations, we have witnessed a tremendous transformation in the public governance system. The use of information, communication, and technology in governance has fundamentally changed the nature of governance and enabled nations to better serve the interests of their citizens. ICT facilitate the acquisition and absorption of knowledge and offer developing countries unprecedented opportunities to change educational systems, improve policy formulation and execution, and widen the range of opportunities for business and for the poor. However, in many parts of the developing countries ICT is available only on a very limited scale, and this raises doubts about developing countries' ability to participate in the current ICT induced global knowledge economy. The main challenges facing developing countries on effective utilization of ICT include the issues of awareness, advocacy and policy formulation, connectivity capacity and institution building. Without strategic planning and the prioritization of services, moving forward with more digital initiatives in the verge of rapidly transforming governance into an electronic mode embraces the nation more toward stagnation than growth. This is why electronic governance especially in developing countries requires proper planning and execution at every stage. To achieve equitable participation in the digital society and bridge the growing digital divide, governments must make significant digital opportunities available to all, ensuring that the benefits of digital governance reach all rather than few. The objective of an organisation should be on enhancing democratic growth ideals, responsiveness in governance, inclusiveness, and maximum public welfare in order to attain digital excellence.

⁴⁰ Directorate General for Research, Developing Countries and the ICT Revolution, Working Document for the STOA Panel, Luxembourg, (March 2001).

⁴¹ *Id.* at page no 10-11

⁴² *Id.* at page no 24

⁴³ Zaigham, *Supra* note at Page no xx

⁴⁴ Subhajit Basu, *Supra* note.