

## 8. The Essence of E-Governance in the Modern Era of Indian Public Administration Today

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### **Abstract:**

*In today's society the pace of change is immensely faster, and it will only continue to accelerate more in near future. Organizations and people that don't embrace change are bound to lose ground and remain stagnate. Thus, as an eventual consequence every government in the modern world has started imparting changes in the administration in order to cope with the altering circumstances around. The traditional pattern and processes of administration have undergone critical analysis by this time. Its excessive dependence on bureaucracy, hierarchy, rules and regulations was proved to be ineffective in delivering proper services to the citizens and when the twenty first century was seen to be characterised by the impact of globalization which has the potential to transform the social, cultural, economic and political arena worldwide in one way or another, the net effect is the need for change and innovation in the delivery of public services. Since 1990s, the concept and practice "reinventing government" has been getting much attention among the advocacy for transforming the public administration. The concept of 'good governance' as a result emerged in 1989 through a World Bank Report and thereafter the objective of attaining 'good governance' through various ways of 're-inventing' government started gaining much consideration. This paper attempts to trace the essence of e-government in the modern era of Indian Public Administration today as another new paradigm shift is in the offspring and slowly becoming distinct from the amorphous shape of Public Administration in the Indian context with the ICT-blessed governance, or e-Governance.*

### **Keywords:**

*Public Administration, E-Governance, Information Technology and India*

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# The Essence of E-Governance in the Modern Era of Indian Public Administration Today

*"The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking.  
It cannot be changed without changing our thinking."*

*-Albert Einstein*

It's often said that change is only constant in life, yet humans are evolutionarily predisposed to resist change because of the risk associated with it and despite this resistance to change, it is more important than ever to carry out a better way of living with good governance. Napoleon once said, "One must change one's tactics every 10 years if one wishes to maintain one's superiority." In today's society the pace of change is immensely faster, and it will only continue to accelerate more in near future. Organizations and people that don't embrace change are bound to lose ground and remain stagnate. Thus, as an eventual consequence every government in the modern world has started imparting changes in the administration in order to cope with the altering circumstances around. The traditional pattern and processes of administration have undergone critical analysis by this time. Its excessive dependence on bureaucracy, hierarchy, rules and regulations was proved to be ineffective in delivering proper services to the citizens and when the twenty first century was seen to be characterised by the impact of globalization which has the potential to transform the social, cultural, economic and political arena worldwide in one way or another, the net effect is the need for change and innovation in the delivery of public services. Since 1990s, the concept and practice "reinventing government" has been getting much attention among the advocacy for transforming the public administration.<sup>1</sup> The concept of 'good governance' as a result emerged in 1989 through a World Bank Report and thereafter the objective of attaining 'good governance' through various ways of 're-inventing' government started gaining much consideration.<sup>2</sup> The introduction of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) started to induce many changes in the way governments function and this paradigm shift in the information age has actually redefined the processes and mechanisms of service delivery. Many developed nations have already taken steps to enhance the effectiveness of interface between the citizens and administration while majority of the developing nations including India are in the path of re-inventing the public service through the implementation of Information and Communication Technologies.

<sup>1</sup> S. P. Naidu. (2013). Public Administration: Concepts and Theories, New Age International (P) Limited, New Delhi

<sup>2</sup> Amreshwar, Avasthi, A. & Maheshwari, S. (1993). Public administration in India. Agra: Lakshmi Narain Agarwal

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## Genesis of Public Administration and E-Governance in International and Indian Scenario:

Public Administration as a discipline is not very old and it is only a hundred years. During these years Public Administration has passed through several phases of development and evolved as the agency of state which runs the administration of the country. According to Woodrow Wilson the late evolution of public administration was due to the fact that the governments had passed through three Stages-the period of absolute rulers; the period of struggle for constitutionalism and popular control; and the period when on winning political battles, people started thinking about freedom and perfect machinery for democratic administration.<sup>3</sup> The first systematic writer on Public Administration was the American President Woodrow Wilson whose article entitled “The study of public administration” in the Political Science Quarterly in 1887 set the ball rolling for the study of Public Administration as a separate discipline.

Then, in 1900 Frank Goodnow in his influential work ‘Politics and Administration’, put forth the thesis that the fields of politics and administration were separate areas of public life and hence the two must be separate and Public Administration must study only the field of administration and the study of politics to Political Science which resulted in the development of permanent Civil Service free from political influence. Many later writers have attempted to reduce the scope of Public Administration in an attempt to provide focus to the study of modalities of policy implementation rather than policy formation. “Introduction to the study of Public Administration”, by L.D White published in 1926 primarily focused on the study of various principles of Public Administration and promoted further development of Public Administration in U.S.A.<sup>4</sup> White has moreover defined Public Administration as consisting of all those operations having for their purpose the fulfillment or enforcement of Public Policy. The emphasis here is on the activities of the executive branch of the government and the classic work L.D. White had the effect of directing the study of Public Administration towards the executive branch. Other prominent scholars like Luther Gullick and Herbert Simon also had the same opinion.

By 1939 we see that Public Administration had made great strides in its development into a science and in that year the American Society for Public Administration was formed with its Quarterly Journal, the Public Administration Review. The American Society of Public Administration provided a

<sup>3</sup> Basu, R. (2004). *Public administration: Concepts and theories*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private

<sup>4</sup> National Conference on Public Administration in the 21st Century, Bava, N., & Indian Institute of Public Administration. (2004). *Public administration in the 21st century*. New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, Distributors

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forum for the scholars and practitioners to meet together and exchange views which helped in the spread of theories, ideas and led to the development of science of Public Administration. This development in U.S.A was also aided by some management scholars who developed the scientific management movement in the country.<sup>5</sup> The 'father' of the Scientific Management Movement in U.S.A was F. W. Taylor. The Human Relations School of Elton Mayo (to which school Herbert Simon belonged) contributed a human dimension to Public Administration which emphasized on the individual and his behavior in organizations. This development turned Public Administration from purely a mechanical study of the process of policy implementation as projected by Willoughby into a human subject interested in the role of the individual in the organization and in devising means to get the best out of the individuals manning the administration.

In the post war years, Public Administration changed its character and there was a change in its scope and methods of investigation. Till the end of the World War II, the development of the science of Public Administration was confined to U.S.A and Europe and most of the scholars and practitioners in the field studied the administrative systems of USA or Europe and arrived at generalizations which they tried to apply to in all countries. After World War II came to an end, there came about the independence of the colonies and the need for development of administrative systems suited to these colonies arose. Scholars, therefore, found the need to arrive at generalizations in the field of Public Administration which would be applicable in these countries with diverse political, economic and social systems. Led by scholars like F.W. Riggs, Ferrel Heady, Gabriel A. Almond and others, the comparative Public Administration came into being and it started the comparative study of systems of Public Administration, comparing the systems of different countries, developed, underdeveloped, and arriving at principles applicable across a broad range of countries.<sup>6</sup>

The comparative Public Administration movement greatly broadened the study of Public Administration by emphasizing the development of principles of administration applicable across the board in different situations. It was a timely extension in the scope of the subject because it greatly helped the process of economic development in the developing countries of Asia and Africa and made the study of Public Administration truly universal.<sup>7</sup> The contribution of Ferrel Heady and F.W. Riggs in this area is important, because they provided the impetus needed for the extension of the scope of Public Administration which led to the development of the Comparative Administration movement and the rise of Development Administration as an important part of the Public Administration. Now the modern view of public administration is that it is government-in-action.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Bhattacharya, M. (1997). Restructuring Public Administration. New Delhi: Jawahar Publishers and Distributors

<sup>6</sup> Bidyut, Chakrabarty, Bhattacharya.M.(2003). Public Administration: A Reader. New Delhi: Oxford, 2003

<sup>7</sup> Chakrabarty, Bidyut (2007). Reinventing Public Administration: The Indian Experience, New Delhi: Orient Longman

<sup>8</sup> Retrieved online (Illumination IAS)

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With this another new paradigm shift is in the offing and slowly becoming distinct from the amorphous shape of Public Administration and it is the ICT-blessed governance, or e-Governance. The adoption of ICTs and the new approach to management in symbiosis are e-Governance. E-Government is the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to improve the activities of public sector organizations. Some definitions restrict e-government to Internet-enabled applications only, or only to interactions between government and outside groups. In simple terms, e-governance revolves around the idea of performing the policy, service and development functions of the government with the help of the ICTs so as to manage and steer the multi-sectoral stakeholder relations on a non-hierarchical way.<sup>9</sup>

The impact that ICTs have in our society in general as well as on the nature, scope, understanding and practice of public administration in particular is immense. All the contributing authors in this volume, from different parts of the world, thus shed light on the way e-governance is operating as well as progressing, along with the challenges and constraints it still faces. Among many others, themes covered in the volume include citizens' engagement, cross-governmental partnerships, IT product quality, and anti-corruption – all relating to e-governance. Researchers, academics, civil servants, policy advisers and students who seek a genuine understanding of the evolution of public administration in this era of digital or electronic governance should find this book a timely addition to the literature.<sup>10</sup>

E-Government i.e. Electronic Government is the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to run or carry on the business of the Government of a Country. However the term E-government is misleading, as it implies an electronic substitute for the physical government. Electronic substitution of a government is not possible as Government is an unit of people coming together to administer a country. A Government is a group of people responsible for the administration and control of a Country/State. It involves people like the Heads of States, Ministers, Government Employees, etc. It also involves public participation. So, electronic substitution for a Government is not possible. Therefore, E-Government may only refer to a Government using in conducting its business. The term 'Governance' is wider than 'Government'. Governance may be an activity of governing/controlling a country by its Government, controlling of an organization or a company by its CEO or Board of Directors or controlling of a house hold by the head of the house, Accordingly E-governance may also involve governing of a country, organization,

<sup>9</sup> Bhatnagar Subhash (2004), e-government from vision to implementation, sage publications, [2] Dey, Bata K. (2000), "E-governance .in India: Problems, Challenges and Opportunities – A Futures Vision", Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol. XLVI, No. 3  
<sup>10</sup> Gupta, M.P.(2004) Towards E-Government Management Challenges. Tata McGraw-Hill

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company or a household, however with the help of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).<sup>11</sup>

But when we talk of E-Governance in the popular parlance we only refer to the governing of a Country/State using ICT. E-governance therefore means the application of ICT to transform the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of exchange of information and transaction:

1. between Governments,
2. between Government agencies,
3. between Government and Citizens
4. between Government and businesses

E-governance also aims to empower people through giving them access to information.<sup>12</sup>

The object of E-Governance is to provide a SMARRT Government. The Acronym SMART refers to Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive, Responsible and Transparent Government.

**S**- The use of ICT brings simplicity in governance through electronic documentation, online submission, online service delivery, etc.

**M** - It brings Morality to governance as immoralities like bribing; red-tapism, etc. are eliminated.

**A** - It makes the Government accountable as all the data and information of Government is available online for consideration of every citizen, the NGOs and the media.

**R** - Due to reduced paperwork and increased communication speeds and decreased communication time, the Government agencies become responsive.

**R** - Technology can help convert an irresponsible Government Responsible. Increased access to information makes more informed citizens. And these empowered citizens make a responsible Government.

<sup>11</sup> Prabhu, C. (2012) E-Governance: Concepts and Case Studies. New Delhi: PHI Learning Private Limited

<[www.egovindia.org/egovportals.html](http://www.egovindia.org/egovportals.html)>

<sup>12</sup> Grönlund, Å. (2004) Introducing e-GOV: History, Definitions and Issues. Communications of the Association for Information Systems

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**T** - With increased morality, online availability of information and reduced red-tapism the process of governance becomes transparent leaving no room for the Government to conceal any information from the citizens.

These objects of E-Governance are achievable with the use of ICT and therefore the concept is very alluring and desirable.<sup>13</sup>

### **Advantages of E-Governance:**

Following are the advantages of E-Governance-

- 1. Speed** – Technology makes communication speedier. Internet, Phones, Cell Phones have reduced the time taken in normal communication.
- 2. Cost Reduction** – Most of the Government expenditure is appropriated towards the cost of stationary. Paper-based communication needs lots of stationary, printers, computers, etc. which calls for continuous heavy expenditure. Internet and Phones makes communication cheaper saving valuable money for the Government.
- 3. Transparency** – Use of ICT makes governing process transparent. All the information of the Government would be made available on the internet. The citizens can see the information whenever they want to see. But this is only possible when every piece of information of the Government is uploaded on the internet and is available for the public to peruse. Current governing process leaves many ways to conceal the information from all the people. ICT helps make the information available online eliminating all the possibilities of concealing of information.
- 4. Accountability** – Once the governing process is made transparent the Government is automatically made accountable. Accountability is answerability of the Government to the people. It is the answerability for the deeds of the Government. An accountable Government is a responsible Government.<sup>14</sup>

The administration worldwide has got qualitative and quantitative transformations through the implementation of ICTs. The impact of e-governance in reforming public administration has become a part of the academic discourse on 'good governance'. The device of e-governance now has become an accepted apparatus for improving the quality of the delivery of public service. Re-engineering of

<sup>13</sup> [www.egovindia.org/egovportals.html](http://www.egovindia.org/egovportals.html)

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

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the government processes is essential for bringing about transparency, efficiency, productivity and reducing the bureaucratic controls. The pace and transparency associated with e-governance has the potential to make public administration responsive to ensure good governance.<sup>15</sup>

E-Governance was started in India by AHSAYA in Kerala. This project involves setting up around 5000 multipurpose community technology centers called Akshaya e- Kendra's across Kerala. Run by private entrepreneurs, each e-Kendra set up within 2-3 kilometers of every household, will cater to the requirements of around 1000-3000 families to make available the power of networking and connectivity to common man. Akshaya is a social and economic catalyst focusing on the various facets of e-learning, e-transaction, e-governance, information and communication.<sup>16</sup>

### Essence of E-Governance:

E-Governance is not only popular in India but also worldwide. To make working of government more efficient, responsive and transparent many developed and developing countries have taken some useful steps for the expansion of e-governance in their respective countries. Countries which are in the race of e-governance implementation are UK, USA, New Zealand, Brazil etc. The most literate Indian state, Kerala is highly adaptive to newer initiatives even though the civil society is very critical in its socio-economic and political outlook. As part of reform measures, the Kerala Government adopted IT policy to utilize the potential of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to bring development in the society. Even though the Kerala society is most literate, the number of people who are having e-literacy is less. Considering this circumstance, the government is trying to popularize the initiatives of e-governance including e-literacy also. It is quite relevant to study the impact of a new initiative like e-governance on Kerala civil society. Besides, e-governance is often hailed to be a panacea for the ailment of corruption. Even if Kerala is the least corrupt state in India, corruption is visible in the State also. In such a scenario, a study conducted in a society like Kerala is very much helpful in analyzing the output of the application of ICTs in re-engineering public service.<sup>17</sup>

The term e-governance has been defined in many ways. According to the World Bank, "E-government refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government. These technologies can serve a variety of different ends: better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to

<sup>15</sup> Chaturvedi, T.N. (2000). Fifty Years on Indian Administration: Retrospect and Prospects. New Delhi: Indian Institute of Public Administration

<sup>16</sup> Goel, S.L. (2007) Good Governance: An Integral Approach. Delhi: Deep and Deep Publishers

<sup>17</sup> <http://indiaegovernance.blogspot.in/2008/03/object-of-e-governance.html>

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information, or more efficient government management. The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth and / or cost relations." This definition concentrates on the use of information technologies in improving citizen-government interactions, cost-cutting, generation of revenue and transparency. The UNESCO defines the concept of e-governance as follows—"Governance refers to the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs including citizen's articulation of their interests and exercise of their legal rights and obligations. E-governance may be understood as the performance of this governance in 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". This definition emphasizes the utilization of electronic medium in the background of new governance.<sup>18</sup>

According to Richard Heeks, "the term 'e-government' is not merely confined to use of the web and / or internet based applications in government. Instead, it encompasses all use of digital information, technology (primarily computers and networks) in the public sector". This definition gives a simplified version of e-governance as the incorporation of digital information technology in the public sector. The UN E-Government survey 2008, describes e-governance as "in the current era of technological advancement that is taking place all over the world, a new kind of rationalization has been introduced in the public sector by the use of modern information and communication technologies (ICTs). Increasingly the use of ICT tools and associations are leading to transformational shifts in public policy, processes and functions. E- government is being deployed not only to provide citizen services but for public sector efficiency purposes, improving transparency and accountability in government functions and allowing for cost savings in government administration. ICTs are changing the way the government does business for the people. In this context, e-government is seen to be a lever for the transformation of government." The Report of the Working Group Convergence and E-Governance for the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007) of the Planning Commission in India envisions that "e-Governance or electronic governance" is basically the application of Information and Communication Technology to the process of Government functioning in order to bring about "Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent" (SMART) governance." The acronym SMART has become synonymous for e-governance in India. The Government machinery often makes a reference of this definition to present the benefits of e-governance implementation. In all sense, this definition of e-governance conveys the comprehensive meaning and objectives underlying the concept of e-government in a simple way. While the US E-government Act of 2002 defines electronic government to mean "the use by the Government of web-based Internet application and other information technologies, confined with processes that implement these technologies to (A) enhance the access to and delivery of government information and services to the public, other agencies and

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

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other government entities; or (B) bring about improvements in government operation that may include effectiveness, efficiency, service quality or transformation."<sup>19</sup> This definition encompasses the strategy of US Government in e-governance for improving government operations on the one hand and enhancing the access and delivery of information and services to citizens and government on the other. The Council of Europe has viewed e-governance to mean "the use of electronic technologies in three areas of public sector: - relations between public authorities and civil society. - functioning of the public authorities at all stages of the democratic process (electronic democracy) - the provision of public services (electronic public services)" This definition clearly focuses on the potentiality of e-governance in improving democracy, public services and interactions in civil society. The former President of India Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam has a vision on e-governance in the Indian context to mean: "A transparent smart e-Governance with seamless access, secure and authentic flow of information crossing the inter departmental barrier and providing a fair and unbiased service to citizen." This definition emphasizes on Government to Government and Government to Citizen Interaction with much focus on transparency.<sup>20</sup>

### Theoretical linkages:

The neo-liberal perception of governance somewhat overlaps with rational choice theory. Both of them draw on micro-economic analysis with its endeavor to impact social life in terms of individual actions as well as to explain individual actions in terms of rationality conceived as utility-maximizing actions. When neoliberals conceived such analysis to promote market and the New Public Management, rational choice theorists were often more interested in exploring cases where institutions or norms were honored even in the absence of a higher authority. It uncovers social facts, institutions and patterns of rule dominantly by analyses of individuals acting and reflects individuals acting on the assumption that they adopt the course of action most in accordance with their preference. Rational choice theorists argue that institutions structure people's strategic interactions with one another: stable institutions influence individuals' actions by giving them reasonable expectations about the outcome of the varied courses of action that the individuals might choose. Another particular issue is to model weakly institutionalized environments in which the absence of a higher authority leads people to break agreements and thereby create instability. This theory of governance explores self-enforcing agreements, the costs and outcomes associated with them and the circumstance in which they are broken. The institutional approach which dominated the study of

<sup>19</sup> Ake G., Thomas A. Horan, O. (2004) Introducing E-Gov: History, Definitions and Issues, Communications of the Association for Information Systems, Volume 15, 713-729

<sup>20</sup> Sheridan, W., and Riley, T.B. (2006) Commonwealth Centre for e-Governance, e-Gov Monitor, Monday, 3 July, 2006

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public administration and politics around 1940s focused on formal rules, procedures and organizations including constitutions, electoral systems and political parties.<sup>21</sup>

### Success of E-Governance:

According to Sheridan and Riley (2006), e-governance is a broader concept that deals with the whole spectrum of the relationship and networks within government regarding the usage and application of ICTs whereas e-government is limited to the development of online services). According to them, e-government is an institutional approach to jurisdictional political operations where as e-governance is a procedural approach to co-operative administrative relations, i.e. the encompassing of basic and standard procedures within the confines of public administration. The technology and the methods used in E-Governance project provide a roadmap for efficient delivery of services at the door step. In today's time the development of any country depends on the uses of E-Governance and also their penetration. Development of any country can be judge by the scope of E-Governance in that country. Moreover, today's government has also full faith in E-Governance and its widespread network across the world proves it. Due to widespread demand of E-governance and exponentially increasing size of data, new technologies like Open source solutions and cloud computing need to be incorporated. E-Governance has made the working of government more efficient and more transparent to its citizens.<sup>22</sup>

According to Nikita Yadav and V. B. Singh there are four pillars of E-Governance:

1. **CONNECTIVITY:-**Connectivity is required to connect the people to the services of the government. There should be a strong connectivity for an effective e-governance.
2. **KNOWLEDGE:** - Here knowledge refers to IT knowledge. Government should employ skill full engineers who can handle the e-governance in an efficient way. These engineers also handle all kind of fault that may occur during the working of e-governance.
3. **DATA CONTENT:** - To share any kind of knowledge or information over the internet, there should be its database. This database should have the data content which is related to government services.

<sup>21</sup> Self, Peter.(1981).Administrative theories and Practices: An Enquiry into the Structure and Processes of Modern Government, New Delhi: S. Chand

<sup>22</sup> Implementing the President's Management Agenda for E-Government E-Government Strategy(online resource)

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4. CAPITAL:-Capital can be on public or private partnership. It refers to money used by government to provide their services or to that sector of the economy based on its operation

### Conclusion:

Most researchers and practitioners interpret E-Governance as having something to do with governments. According to our definition and domain framework, that connotation is very misleading. All organizations – public or private, large or small, for profit or non profit – exploit IT and Internet to accomplish efficient and effective governance of their diverse functions at multiple levels of management. Now the conference organizers can decide – what is their focus – E-Governance or E-Government or both. Our best hope is that researchers and practitioners worldwide will embrace this framework and avoid any more confusion in all kinds of communications – research papers, text books, conferences, speeches, presentations. E-Governance is all over – so we did not attempt to provide its status around the world.<sup>23</sup> However, we have provided status of e-Government around the world. E Governance is ways to solve the social as well as economical problems exist in the developing countries like India. Deepak Ghaisas, former Chairman NASSCOM Product Forum and CEO India Operations estimate “23 percent of government spending goes on defense, while 46 percent of it on governance. If a small fraction is spent on technology, namely to streamline the processes, it will really boost the domestic tech industry”.<sup>24</sup> According to WEF Global Information Technology Report <sup>25</sup>, India ranks 24th out of 134 countries with 5.38 score in accessing and overall priority of ICT. Therefore, there is tremendous potential for e-Governance to provide exponentially benefit to their citizens and maximize return on government investment. Which represents the growth of e-Governance in India is quite encouraging. In spite of poor infrastructure, poverty, illiteracy, language dominance and all the other reasons India has number of award winning e-governance projects. Effective promotion schemes by the Indian government will also a boosting factor to provide quality services to their citizen, which means there is huge potential for the development of e-governance in various sectors. According to Skoch consultancy New Delhi,<sup>26</sup> 81% citizens report reduction in corruption, 95% find cost of e-governance affordable and 78% favors fast of delivery of services. Therefore, we can say that e-Governance is the key to the “Good Governance” for the developing countries like India to minimize corruption, provides efficient and effective or quality services to their citizens.

<sup>23</sup> Dawes, S. S. (2008). The Evolution and Continuing Challenges of E-Governance. Public Administration Review, 86-100

<sup>24</sup> Deepak G. (2007). <http://egovindia.wordpress.com/2007/04/22/National-Policy-on-egovernance-required>

<sup>25</sup> WEF Global Information Technology Report. <http://www.weforum.org/pdf/gitr/2009/fullreport.pdf>, pg no. 348, 350

epot.pdf, pg no. 348, 350

<sup>26</sup> Kochhar, S. & G. Dhanjal. (2004). From governance to e-governance: An initial assessment of some of India's best projects, Technical Report, New Delhi: Skoch Consultancy Services

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