Application of e-Governance in Development Administration: A Study of Prospects and Challenges in Bangladesh

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Abstract: E-Governance and development are interrelated and interdependent issue in the process of development administration. The necessity of e-governance is recognised at every step of human life in administration and it works to make socio-economic development in the country. This article is an attempt to discuss on e-Governance and development in the process of administrative works in Bangladesh. In the study a framework has been presented to discuss the e-Governance and development and how it is related to development administration of Bangladesh. Different factors of development are considered as tools in analysing e-Governance and development administration. The factors are explained based on concepts of e-Governance in the context of development administration of Bangladesh. The final part of the study highlights various problems of e-Governance in Bangladesh relating to development administration and makes a concluding remark on overall concepts.

1.0 Introduction

Governance refers to exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority in the management of a country. It aims to serve the citizen and preserves their legal rights and obligation. e-Governance means the performance of the governance via electronic medium in order to facilitate efficient, speedy and transparent performance of the administrative activities. E-Governance helps to bring good governance in the country and it is a process of development administration. In general sense, good governance means participation, transparency and accountability in administration and it is a vital issue for ensuring development in the administration. Development administration is an empirical process and its role is important in politics and administration of a country. In administration, E-Governance is no longer a matter of choice, but an absolute need of the day. The socio-economic development is a crucial issue in the administration of a country and it is only possible by using e-Governance.

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The process of e-Governance is a vital issue in development administration and it plays a significant role in administration. Presently, it is being used as a modern technique in administration. The techniques of e-Governance and its way of working in development administration are the main subject matter of the study. The application of e-Governance and its prospects to development administration are analyzed on the basis of a conceptual framework in the study.

2.0 Concept of e-Governance

Policy makers of the developed countries envisioned that new developments in ICT and especially the TCP/IP protocol would make a significant contribution in achieving the objectives of good governance. E-governance is a new concept in the development literature and now a day it is a buzzword to the development scholars and even in the conscious people throughout the world. With the advent of Internet technology in the early part of the last decade, the developed countries coined the concept of e-governance. There is an ambiguous idea amongst the common people that e-governance is governance through computerization of the administrative functionaries. What really means is the delivery of government services to the public by using electronic means, the use of information and communication technologies to promote more efficient government by allowing better access to information and making government more accountable to citizens. Now a-days Information Technology (IT) has been looked at as a tool for solving problems in developed and developing countries. It is a new concept into the government officials of Bangladesh involving a fear and unfounded resistance while government is taking some steps for implementation of it in order to extract possible benefit from it (Taifur 2003:3-4).

Sometimes e-governance and e-government are mistakenly used interchangeably. The fact is that the two terms bear distinction. E-governance deals with the whole spectrum of the relationship and administration of networks of government with the wider society while e-government deals with the development of online services to the citizens. So, it is clear that e-governance encompasses a series of necessary steps for government agencies to develop and administer to ensure successful implementation of e-government services to the public (Sheridan & Reily 2006:1).

So, the term e-Governance can be defined as efficient and effective use of modern ICT technology with a view to establishing good governance for any country. From the management and technological perceptions, the e-governance can also be defined as Electronic State Management System based on information and communication technologies (ICT), including the Internet technology (Kabir 2007).

3.0 Development Administration

Development administration is a new branch of public administration and it is considered as strategic tools in development of a country. It is innovative, dynamic, and proactive in nature. According to Edward W. Weidner development administration is concerned with maximizing innovation for development (Sapru 1994:123). In general sense development administration means the administration for development and development of administration. It indicates that socio-economic development of a country is highly dependent on proper functions in administration. On the other hand, development of administration is emphasized on administrative development which means the efficiency and effectiveness in administration.

Development administration is a process of planned social change and innovation in the process of administrative actions. E-governance is an innovative aspect of social change and development, used as tools in development administration. The connectivity of e-governance in administration facilitates to ensure development. So the access of e-governance make easier and faster in the process of development as well as development administration.

4.0 Objectives of the Study

Development and e-governance are very interrelated issue in the administration of developed and developing countries. E-governance is used in developed countries for bringing about socio-economic development and other challenging areas. The uses of e-governance make positive changes in the society like Bangladesh. It is considered as a potential area in the process of development in Bangladesh. In the study the following objectives are mainly focused:

a. The concept of e-Governance and its relation to development administration of Bangladesh.

b. To identify different indicators of development and how e-Governance ensures development in the process of administration.

c. Highlighting prospects and problems of e-Governance in development administration through analysing different issues of development.

5.0 Sources of Data

The study is mainly conducted by using secondary data. Besides, the sources of data are from different books, journals, and daily news papers, relevant documents from government and non government organizations. Internet websites are used to conduct the study.

6.0 Framework in the Study

Development Administration refers to dynamism, decentralization, participation, and changing process in administration. And e-governance is a new dimension to make public services speedy and efficient. Now-a-days administration is to be called development if there is a usage in effective information technology. E-governance is a new chapter in administration of Bangladesh and its proper practice makes the administration more dynamic and service- oriented, and the ultimate goal is to achieve development.

The analytical framework in the study is a combination of four basic components of e-governance involving interaction of individual citizens with government (G2C), interaction of business entities and communities with government (G2B), and interaction among officials within the government office/s (G2G). This combination of functioning through information and communication technology (ICT) makes government something that may be termed as e-Government although some scholars named third category as it.

In order to ensure the G2C and G2B interaction of e-governance it is of a great necessity to install international submarine cable (optical fibre link with global network), strengthen ICT infrastructure and set up Internet Exchange (IX) along with national security. If one of these activities is absent, the ultimate goal of the e-governance will remain unfulfilled.

Government is committed to deliver its services in a SMART (Simple, Moral, Accountable and Transparent) manner and it is possible through ICT based e-governance.

The G2G component of e-governance will require access to ICT by the actors, increased awareness among them, accessibility of IT systems, proper incentive structure, adequate training facilities, reliable maintenance of equipments, sustainability of the systems etc (Taifur 2003:5-6). It is also important to establish necessary legal framework for effective regulation, capacity building of the officials, and user-friendly software by local companies, expertise professionalism, and continuous supply of electricity across the nation, ensure low cost high reliability of internet access (Taifur 2003:8). The ultimate objective of e-governance is to establish good governance, which will eventually lead to development of administration as well as administration of development. The important aspect of e-Governance is to be interconnected with all government organizations towards providing services to people. This connectivity facilitates exchanging information among different organs of the government through electronic devices. It also makes the government officials more active, aware of their defined goals and, responsibilities.

On the other hand, the framework shows various issues of development administration, which are expected to be achieved through successful implementation of e-governance in developing countries trying to reap benefits from this networking governance process. The application of ICT promoting e-governance surmounts some of the social, political, and administrative challenges and may ensure delivery of health, education, and other social services through this a viable technology (Sharma 2006)

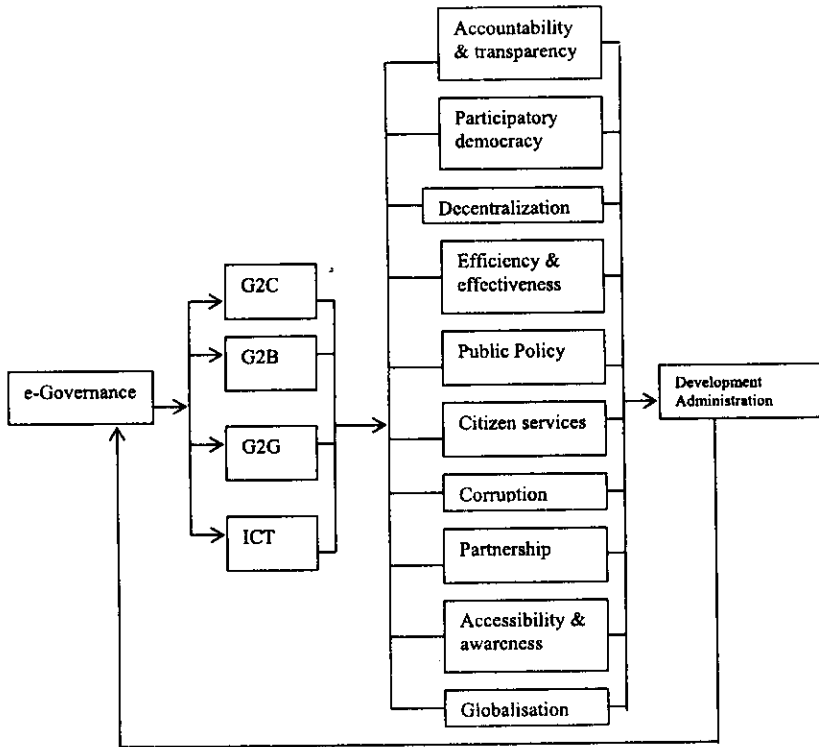The whole process may be shown in the following figure:

Figure: E-governance and development administration

6.1 Accountability and Transparency

Accountability brings transparency in administration and the ultimate goal of administration is to ensure good governance. It is part of development administration. In the administration, superior-subordinate relationships are based on exchanging information and e-Governance works as a helping tool to make it easier. This relationship helps to accountable to each-other. Government officials must be accountable to people if the access of information is available. It is called that e-Governance is network based governance, so policy maker are indirectly accountable to people for their activities.

Through the introduction of e-governance, government can practice its greater openness, transparency and accountability in performance.

Performance appraisal system will be more authentic by using modern technique of e-Governance in administration. The authorities will be able to evaluate their subordinates in an objective manner and to scrutinize it if felt to be needed. Red-tapism is the main barrier in the process of development administration and it is possible to remove by applying e-Governance in the administration.

6.2 Participatory democracy

The economic development of the country depends on democratic political environment and it is possible by using e-Governance in administration. E-Governance leads to e-Democracy and it is a process of political development. In the process of e-Governance, any political party can be able to select the possible candidate for the election democratically if it has its own website (this is also a component of e-Governance) by seeking opinion through website. This selection will reflect the opinion of the common people and thus will reduce the impact of black money in the selection of the candidature (Kabir 2007).

It is necessary to conduct a free, fair and credible election for institutionalisation of democracy. The first and foremost of this process is to produce an authentic voter-list but we were observing enormous wastage of public money in preparing politically biased error-prone voter list. The election commission of Bangladesh is now doing the job by applying scientific technology. If this voter list is presented through website, the voters may claim for necessary correction if needed, the duplication can be avoided, the time, money and labour can be saved. However, in e-Governance environment, as the citizens' basic record database is one of the vital components, it is easily possible to generate a flawless unbiased voter list with the latest status of the citizen (e.g. age, present address) in any time without spending any additional money (Kabir 2007).

6.3 Decentralization

Decentralization is the latest fashion of development administration in developing countries like Bangladesh. The process of e-Governance makes decentralization more dynamic and people oriented. Democratic form of local government is the vital and crucial part in ensuring good governance. Upazila administration is a part of decentralized administration in Bangladesh and the initiative of e-Governance at this

unit play vital role in the process of development administration Perhaps, this bottom up approach (i.e. starting from upazilla) strategy for e-governance is the most appropriate in country like ours, where the majority of the population lives in villages under Upazilla administrations (Kabir 2007). If a central database and a communication network were maintained, central-local relation would be more effective; problems would be solved within a shortest possible time. The most effective unit of local government in Bangladesh is union parishad. By using e-Governance at this unit local people can get services within shortest time. E-governance makes services speedy which is one of the important indicators of development administration. Information flow from central to local may thus pave the way for establishing main spirit of decentralization.

6.4 Efficiency and Effectiveness

The adoption of a complete integrated e-government system speeds up performance in terms of time, reliability, efficiency and effectiveness. For instance, issuance of a new passport requires many processes (e.g. police verification, validation of Birth certificate) whereas had a proper e-governance system implemented then a person would have easily applied for a new passport using his digital signature and citizenship identifier and got the passport ready within 24 hours without paying any urgent/very urgent fee or taking any other hassle. In the process of e-governance, all the departments of government are virtually integrated, when the person applies for a passport through website of the passport and immigration department, the specific data stated by the applicant will be sent to the relevant departments instantly for cross checking and validation. As for example, for getting police clearance, data provided by the applicant will be cross checked with police department's data and a report (either positive or negative) will be generated automatically and sent to the server of the Passport and Immigration department office. Subsequently in the server of the Passport and Immigration department receiving the person's application and report as required from various departments system will decide automatically whether the person is eligible to receive the new passport or not. Unfortunate incidence could be avoided if e-Governance environment prevailed here. For example, an unexpected incidence occurred in Phulbari, centring the coalmine contract with the Asia Energy. The government could take opinion from

the local people through website on this issue. On the same issue a website discussion group could have been formed which would make the government transparent in decision-making. By the people's active participation, some pro-people positive decision would come out considering the country's resource constraints, local environment, and other socio-political issues (Kabir 2007).

6.5 Public Policy

Public policy is a crucial issue of any develop or developing country in the world to ensure socio-economic development. Government has to take different policies on the basis of demand of people. Policy formulation as well as implementation is vital stage in the management of public policy. The formulation of public policy is to be appropriate if the supply of information and process have done accurately and properly. The application of e-Governance helps to manage input of policies within a very shortest period from reliable sources. To formulate public policy in developing countries like Bangladesh the comparative policies of developed countries also make easier through using e-Governance in government administration. The policy implementation is very important issue in development administration and managerial functions of government are facilitating to implement the policies. The e-governance can work as a facilitating role in managerial functions of government. So the usage of e-Governance play important role in policy formulation as well as implementation.

6.6 Citizen Services

Introduction of e-governance may serve as a tool to enhance productivity and improve the quality of government services (Sobhan 2004:5).Service to people is the main goal of e-Governance in development administration and make it nearer to people. It makes decentralization of government services and decision making easier. Through using e-Governance in different sectors citizen of the country can get maximum services and it is a vital issue in the process of development administration. Different ministry of governments have bought new dimension to the efficient provision of government service to citizen. It serves as a model for citizen-focused government services in Bangladesh. E-Governance is a easy way to get services like pay fees, download forms and necessary information from various private and public organizations.

The services of e-Governance enhance standard and quality of life to citizen which is important indicator to development administration.

6.7 Corruption

The degree of corruption in the public sector dramatically falls in the countries where e-governance has been initiated. A survey in India in 2000 has revealed that the states where e-governance has been established even partially, the corruption rate has dramatically reduced. Even in Bangladesh we may observe that due to computerization of Railway Reservation System, the number of black-marketers (middle men who used to involve in illegal ticket selling) has reduced significantly. Elimination of the middlemen in citizen-government interaction, in fact, is the major factor that acts in eradicating corruption levels. Again in the government offices, if the people interact with the government organs through web-page then colonial red tapes practices will be totally removed. This in turn will reduce the pervasive bribery practices in government offices (Kabir 2007).

6.8 Partnership

By introducing e-governance, a PPP (Public Private Partnership) framework to strengthen information flow among different category of partners like Government, Private sector or NGOs and civil society may work together for achieving hared goals and objectives which also would save time, money, expertise and other resources for ensuring sustainable development. Access of partnership may have the knowledge and process of functionaries of the factor related with this through information flow over information technology.

6.9 Accessibility and Awareness

Easy accessibility to information for all citizens is the prime concern for development, as we know that information is power in today's world. In fact, gap between availability and non-availability of information creates the major causes of non-equity and social injustice among different segments of the people in a society. If everybody gets the same extent of accessibility to e-governance then the class distance among the different groups in the society will be minimized abruptly(Kabir 2007). On the other hand, access to information raises awareness and knowledge of people to gain their dues. E-governance creates enabling conditions for national development and prosperity through accelerated economic

growth; it also facilitates the increased flow of information about the existing resources and public services. Process of e-education (online education) can be introduced like distance education (Sobhan 2004:5) . Ultimate e-governance will bring equity, social justice by reducing the digital gap among different segments of the society.

6.10 Globalisation

The development of a country is highly dependent on impact of globalization. The world is changing at every moment and the thinking and acting of people have been dramatically changed because of globalization. The changes have been occurred by bringing e-governance in administration. The relationship of e-governance and globalization is interrelated with each other and without its positive impact development cannot be ensured. The trade and commerce is an important aspect in economic development of a country and it is very much connected to globalization. The balance of commerce in developed and developing countries largely depend on impact of globalization. Bangladesh, as a Least Developed Country (LDC) the impact of globalization plays significant role in its economic development. So, e-governance would be used as a helping tool to ensure its economic development as well as balanced trade and commerce.

7.0 Problems and Challenges

In developed countries e-Governance is used as a factor to solve everyday actions and it is part and parcel of administration. Bangladesh is a developing country and the application of e-Governance is also challenging in administration. The usage of e-Governance is limited in the administration of Bangladesh due to several reasons. It hampers to make socio-economic development.

Politics is very much involvement in the implementation of e-Governance in Bangladesh. Political commitment is mandatory in ensuring e-Governance of a country. But the culture of politics in Bangladesh impacts negatively in the process of e-Governance. It hampers development process of the country. The nature of bureaucracy in Bangladesh is rigid and traditional. The red-tapism is one of the important feature bureaucratic management. It is difficult to bureaucrats to adjust innovative technology in the everyday work. So the bureaucratic norms in administration work negatively in development functions.

In society level, problems may be occurred regarding public opinion as people are skill in an ambiguous situation for their ignorance of reality about e-Governance. Moreover, participation of the people is also essential which is really a problem for a country like ours where a large portion of population is either illiterate or partially so. Proper delivery of e-Governance requires human resources having higher level technical know how about information about information and communication technologies. It also needs handsome initial investment at very outset as instalment cost. The managerial level also has to be acquainted with the up to date techniques and technologies to maximize the benefits of e-Governance.

Use of electronic media for e-Governance requires a sound legal framework to maintain and control free flow of information. There should be appropriate rule become and law to ensure intellectual properly rights, illegal in penetration ethical issues like privacy and protection of properties and goodwill of the stakeholders. For e-Governance, a strong base of infrastructure and logistic support is essential at very beginning. One it becomes possible it only requires maintenance and managerial support. In a developing country like Bangladesh the government may share private sector, media, phone etc for their purpose.

8.0 Conclusion

The e-Governance is a dynamic and contemporary issue in the process of development administration of Bangladesh. It is working as a helping instrument in delivering services to different sectors and the ultimate focused on development administration. As a developing country like Bangladesh, it is very essential to apply e-Governance at every sphere of life. Application of e-Governance is limited in Bangladesh still now due to different constraints in administration but it is considered as thrust sector. It is a changing agent of socio-economic development in the country leads development administration in different way. The efficiency and effectiveness of administration are ensured by using e-Governance, an ingredient factor of development administration. Another important factor of development administration is ensuring accountability and transparency in administration and it is to be sustained through e-Governance.

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