E- Governance: An Approach to Manage Bureaucratic Impediments

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Premises:

This paper presents a conceptual framework of operationalizing e-Governance. The framework is based on three basic premises. These are:

- The present bureaucratic structure is inadequate to respond to the call of e-Governance, because of the certain impediments, which are detrimental for the adaptation of this kind of system.

- There is a possibility of transforming present conventional system of bureaucracy into Neo-Bureaucratic system with the help of interventional strategies of e-Governance that requires a careful study of interplay of its various components before planning and designing the strategies.

- The importance of e-Governance lies in creating a global society, which has capacity to absorb divergent value patterns to eventually form universal normative axis having thrust on humane element.

Preamble

The capacity of man to visualize, to rationalize and then to transform the society has always put different institutions on test for their abilities to cater to the changing expectations of people. Plethora of literature is available on what is e- Governance, what are its objectives, how to design various activities related to it. Precisely, it focuses on automation, informatisation, and transformation so as to increase the pace of development. Thus the fundamental objectives are,

- to have governance which economizes,
- to have governance which multiplies output at same cost manifold
to have governance which functions faster, better and creatively.

- to have governance which retrieves facts completely from archives to help bureaucrats to recycle them in such a way that this feedback can be utilized for making more prudent policies.

However to understand that how e-governance can transpose government as an instrument for building up a society, based on a collaborative mixture of conventional values with scientific approach, to create a better world, it would be essential to identify various components of e-governance and their interrelationships with each other.

1.00 The Ecology of e-Governance

The last few decades in the history of mankind has seen enormous growth of technology and its utilization for creating a better global society by disseminating the knowledge down to common man, thereby transcending the geographical boundaries. The accessibility of knowledge is not confined to any nation. Thus the whole world has acquired a bigger vision of coexisting with divergent societal patterns. To understand the ecology of E-Governance it would be pertinent to identify the components, then to elaborate upon how these components interact with each other to deliver the output into society.

1.10 Components of E-governance:

The following components can be identified,

- Technological Component with Electronic dimension.
- Social Component with Egalitarian dimension.
- Cultural Component with Ethical dimension.
- Political Component with Enactment dimension.
- Psychological Component with Extensional dimension.
- Service Component with Empowerment dimension

1.11 Technological Component: This relates to educate people who are in the bureaucratic structure or outside its periphery regarding use of electronic means to develop better connectivity within and with the system. It requires use of computers (a) in developing the data-base,(b) in networking to facilitate the communication,(c) in creating e-knowledge workers so as to increase their potentiality. This focuses on “e” of electronic knowledge and its proper utilization.

1.12 Social Component: The fundamental duty of any government is to educate a society which is based on the principles of equality and justice. A society which is classless with no distinction between haves and have-nots, where nobody is marginalized from the main stream, and is committed to provide a respectful essence of life to its people without any discrimination of cast or race must be set up. This is possible when people will be aware of their rights & duties on the one hand, and know about the governmental
policies made for them on related issues on the other, hence a vigilant society can be evolved where they can raise their voices by questioning the governmental decisions. This would help in attaining the “e” of egalitarian society with thrust on equality.

1.13 **Cultural Component**: With the advent of the era of knowledge explosion there is a need to reorient some of the value patterns without eroding the fundamental normative structure of any social system. The need to create value patterns conducive for e-governance to operate focusing on work ethos therefore cannot be denied. Thus to work out the ethical framework is the key to move further by discarding obsolete set of values that come in the way of potential utilization. Thus “e” of ethical framework has to be the focal point in constructing a morality-based system.

1.14 **Political Component**: The political system is essential aspect of governance. It holds responsibility of rationalizing various operative frameworks by enacting laws. This helps to maintain & sustain the cohesive force that is required by society to integrate its people and abide them to follow a uniform policy to fulfill their targets. This refers to the importance of “e” of enactment of laws to stop society from disintegration.

1.15 **Psychological Component**: Developing required psyche so as to facilitate formation and inculcation of right type of attitudes in the people is prerequisite for efficiency. Apart from this; readiness to connect to people, to listen to their queries, to look for solutions, to improve communicative skills etc. will be necessary elements for behavioral modifications. Hence personality adjustments must be carried out to cater to the needs of common man. This specifically relates to “e” of extension of self so as to have constructive collaborative social relationships.

1.16 **Service Component**: The ultimate function of any welfare government is to serve. As a provider of good services to its people it has to assimilate the basic needs and also expectations of common man in to the documentation of policy, which then has to be implemented in the right spirit. This develops a constant pressure on the government to respond to public demands as this leads to the realization of power they can exercise on government to maintain impartiality, integrity and transparency in its functioning. This explains “e” of empowerment of people in any system.

1.20 **Interaction Between Various Components**: It would be pertinent to analyze the interactive relationship amongst the various components identified above so as to get an insight in to understanding the ecology of e-Governance. These components are not only interdependent but are also interrelated with each other in the way that output of one component becomes input of the other component. Thus a relationship of all purpose type emerges which gets substantiated by assimilating the impact of external forces. A schematic representation is self explanatory in these regards. The definitive interrelationships between the various components reciprocate e-
Governance, in such a way that resultant impact would be the transformation of society into one that has right knowledge, right morality, and right way of perpetuating practicing ethos.

2.0 BUREAUCRATIC IMPEDIMENTS

The ideal typical model of Bureaucracy given by Max Weber is the milestone in understanding the functioning of modern government. The Weberian model categorically focuses on two dimensions (i) The Structural, relating to the hierarchical arrangement of positions, legal rational basis of authority, with system of compensation, and (ii) The Behavioral, relating to the merit based selections of officials with the emphasis on training. He considered bureaucracy as the efficient form of modern government. Since this has been the ideal typical model the operational reality has been different from the enumerated characteristics. Thus bureaucracy that was created to implement policies took a different road with following realities,

\[ E_1 = \text{enactment}; \quad E_2 = \text{electronic know-how}; \quad E_3 = \text{egalitarian} \]
\[ E_4 = \text{economization}; \quad E_5 = \text{extension}; \quad E_6 = \text{empowerment} \]
- Powerful instrument of letting out the self-interest in whimsical manner.
- As an elitist social class which is status conscious.
- By becoming judgmental in nature it has violated the principle of merit in practice.
- Training could not help much in bringing out desirable changes in the attitudes of bureaucrats.
- Manifestations in terms of pathetic bureaucratic features like red-tapism, delays in decision-making, favoritism, corruption etc.
- With the passage of time bureaucracy became so rule dependent that the objective of transformation could not be achieved.

Thus conventional bureaucratic system based on bureaucratic impersonality and procedural orthodoxy manifests itself in the form impediments, which continue to affect it negatively. Followings are the impediments,

2.10 **Elitist class values**: A selected section of society which forms the part of bureaucratic system develops its own value structure. This marginalizes the existing pattern of societal values at large to the extent that a parallel normative axis emerges, which revolves round power, status, wealth etc. This retards the growth of any society and is detrimental for development.

2.11 **Procedural Stagnation**: Bureaucracy keeps following procedures that are obsolete, expensive and do not help in achieving the extended domains of work and responsibility. The entire potentiality gets trapped in routinism thereby blocking the flow of potential energy thus bringing out dissatisfaction amongst the people at large. The stagnation ultimately would bring out decay in the administration.

2.13 **Attitudinal Fixtures**: The captivity of ideas amongst the bureaucrats results in the fixation of attitudes thereby giving rise to the definitive mindsets to look at situation in the limited perspective. The resultant impact gets manifested in the form of denial of innovative ways to resolve issues of public importance. Hence it stops an effective communication to take place in the system, the absence of which will not facilitate free flow of ideas to look at the situations.

2.14 **Rule bounded ness**: The rules are framed to develop behavioral patterns that reduce human variance factor in the organization. Rules are also framed to give allocation of authority a legal rational basis within the defined domain of work jurisdiction. But when rules fail to respond to the requirements of change due to excessive dependence on them, then the ultimate result would be non-performance. Apart from this the interpretation
of rules might sometimes lead to the situational conflicts hence delaying the achievement of objectives. This can also be viewed as an escapist root for not doing tasks they have been given.

2.15 *Parochial Interest*: Once people enter in the bureaucracy the job security given to them in the form of career does not help them in becoming visionary. In addition to this it looses its value because rather than working as an instrument for conversion of social demands into reality it has focused more on fulfilling self-interest.

2.16 *Social Discontentment*: Bureaucracy due to interplay of above stated impediments virtually leaves its people dissatisfied as their needs remain unfulfilled. It thus send negative fillers of its being an instrument of abusing authority. Hence it becomes a source of social discontentment and a feeling of not fulfilling the social obligation affects their performance.

2.17 *Burn out Syndrome*: Any system which is low at taking risk causes mental and physical fatigue in people who are manning such organization. By strictly adhering to the routine, the work is taken as burden; this leaves no scope for challenging roles. This in turn brings out feeling of non-performer. In addition to this another reason may be illusion of being overburdened with excessive of workload which would subsequently lead to burn out syndrome. This declines the efficiency of the system.

In the era of knowledge management the features examined earlier must give way to pragmatism, and progressiveness to create a more humane society. This requires breaking away from the conventional system of rigidity towards a more evolved system focusing on the utilization of knowledge for facilitating the conversions of needs into reality. Thus there is a need to explore the possibilities of reshaping bureaucracy with renewed thrust. It is at this point that interventional strategies of *e-Governance* can be designed in such a way that desirable results can be produced with the purpose of replacing conventional system of bureaucracy with neo bureaucratic structure.

3.0 **Interventional strategies of e-Governance**: As e-Governance has shortened the gap between different cultures by trying to create a global society with mega cultural emphasis the following strategies can be identified, the use of which will facilitate achievement of this objective, though management of these would vary in pace in different countries.

3.10 *Transitive Counseling*--- in order to reduce the resistance, people need to be prepared for coming out of transitional phase. Thus proper counseling is required regarding changes in attitudes, reorienting mind sets etc. at various levels of governmental functioning.
3.11 *Electronic Accessibility*: There is a need to equip people with necessary knowledge regarding use of electronic multi media by imparting it through various Institutions. Technologically advanced Institutes with expertise must be set up which must established themselves as the centers of excellence by imparting to people the e-knowledge.

3.12 *Institutional Networking*: Various agencies needed at different levels of governmental functionaries must be brought within the purview of constitutional framework by enacting laws for controlling their formal as well as informal constituents. A large-scale connectivity has to be ensured.

3.13 *Ethical Framework*: Apart from legal framework morality has to be the key area where any society must work out strategic plan by designing ethos before adopting e- governance. The framework has to be supportive of fundamental societal normative pattern so that it gets extra leverage for perpetuating necessary values patterns.

3.14 *Role Shifting Strategies*: New stresses are the by products of knowledge based society. Hence more humanitarian psychological coping mechanisms based on collaborative role shifts have to be introduced. Each role, organizational as well as personal must shift in such a way that effects of change can be managed without resulting into situation of crisis. This is to be learn that how & where role shift is required.

4.0 *Neo- Bureaucratic Structure: A Consequence of e-Governance*

The conventional bureaucratic structure has many impediments due to which it has failed to respond to the changes in the desirable manner. However with the help of strategic planning a renewed bureaucratic structure can be created as an instrument capable of channelizing free flow of energy by molding itself as sensitivity- nurturant system based on the ethos of professional culture. By understanding ecology of e-governance, strategies must be designed to evolve a system having following features.

4.11 *Universal Social Values*. The elitist sets of values need to be replaced by universal set of values based on equal representation from all sections of society. This accumulation of divergent value sets must be rationalized through proper convergences to form a just society by inoculating virtuous elements blended with basic scientific approach to look, analyze then respond to situations. This would release people from the pressures that are put on them because they represent certain sets of values.

4.12 *Procedural Innovativeness*: Obsolescence in procedures has no place in emerging scenario of e- governance. Procedures need to be updated in light of technological advancement In addition to learn about technical know how,
people must know how to evolve creative ways in which maximum output can be delivered for societal development.

4.13 **Attitudinal Mobility**: fixation of attitudes is detrimental to the growth. Attitudes must have mobility so that sufficient space for collaborating other positive ideas can be created. Reorientation of mind set in the direction to delearn old premises then to learn new procedures must take place so that fresh ideas gets it place in the administration. It is only through creativity that performance can be enhanced to the level of excellence.

4.14 **Rule Flexibility**: Rules are required to form a formal structure based on the allocation of authority. But the rigidity of rules with excessive dependence leaves room for alternative interpretations. Thus what is needed is set of well-framed rules with no ambiguity with and enough flexibility so that required changes can be incorporated to cater to demands.

4.15 **Wider Interest**: Bureaucracy because has to work for societal interest it must create an open system which is transparent, responsive and accountable. This is possible when broader outlook replaces narrower outlook with commitment to the equality and justice. The associational reflections need to be completely avoided.

4.16 **Social Contentment**: When system gets evolved to a higher level of functioning as an effective instrument of converting public demands into reality its utility gets reestablished. This also helps in understanding the importance of institutions and their social responsibilities thus bureaucracy emerges as a contended system.

4.17 **Energy Recycling Syndrome**: Once the energy blockers in the form of impediments are removed smooth flow of energy revitalizes the system. The entire potentiality of system as well as of others is utilized to its optimum. This facilitates the capacity utilization.

The schematic representation of the relationship between bureaucracy, interventional strategy and neo-bureaucratic structure is shown as follows. This process of conversion explains the dynamics involved.
PROCESS OF CONVERSION

Conventional Bureaucratic Structure  Neo- Bureaucratic Structure

Elitist Values              Universal Values
Procedural Stagnation       Interplay of components
Attitudinal fixture         Procedural-Innovativeness
Rule bounded ness           Attitudinal mobility
Parochial Interest          Strategies of E-Governance
Burn Out Syndrome           Transitive Counseling
(Managing Impediments)      E- accessibility
                           Networking
                           Role-Shift strategies
                           Ethical Framework
( Restructuring System)

FORMATION OF GLOBAL SOCIETY
- Transcending geographical boundaries
- Universalization of value patterns
- Visionary world
- Ideological collaborations
- Peaceful coexistences
- A well knitted world with proper networking
- An eco friendly universe with humane thrust

5.0 A Few Validations From Indian Panorama:

Though India is one of the progressive nations it has yet to achieve the status of a developed nation. A few important efforts made by the Indian government in adapting its system to e-governance would be worth mentioning. Amongst the States, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh are ahead in adapting this system, especially in the field of networking.
and computerizing the important land records. State Secretariat that is the top most functionary of administration is well webbed with other administrative functionaries at different levels in these States, thereby setting the example of model States for others to follow. The most important efforts include:

- Developing Institutions both engineering as well as management for knowledge accessibility,
- Extension of training facilities for administrators,
- Enactment of IT Act 2000, by the Government of India having provisions for investment, for masses, for research development, etc.
- Establishment of Cyber Appellate Tribunal, Cyber Regulations Advisory Committee,
- Setting up of Internet Modes at all Telecom Districts.
- Terrestrial Bandwidth upgraded to ST M16,
- Telecom Dispute Settlement & Appellate Tribunal,
- IT Parks in States,
- Software development.

The future projection on the basis of this conceptual framework indicates the inevitability of e-governance even for those countries that are in the transitional phase of development. The capacity of a system to utilize knowledge for evolving a visionary society however must take into account the supremacy of mind over machine, as mind and heart are the epicenters of human dynamics.

Notes

2. The terminology of Collaborative Role Shift is first used by Prof. Sangeeta Sharma in the National Seminar on Changing Patterns of Family and Kinship held on 18th -20th December 2003 in the presentation entitled *Alchemy Of Role Shift*(Forthcoming publication)
3. Indian IT Act 2000, has all provisions relating to developing software, cyber laws, mass connectivity, defining standards its operation and other objectives.
4. New terminology used is coined by the author herself.