Chapter 3
Understanding E–Governance:
A Theoretical Approach

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ABSTRACT

Another new paradigm shift is in the offing and slowly becoming distinct from the amorphous sphere of public administration. 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-governance speaks of a new way and style in every beat and pulse of the system of public administration. It brings about changes in the structure and functions of public services, ushering transformation through effectively engaging the government, businesses, and citizens—all stakeholders. It not only ensures efficiency in public service delivery but also offers unlimited potential to combat corruption and many other bureau-pathologies in the public administration system. Based on secondary sources, this chapter offers brief theoretical discussions of e-governance, including its emergence, types of service delivery, transformation stages, and relevant other issues.

INTRODUCTION

A system of public administration is all-pervasive and has been ubiquitous since times immemorial. Today, what we understand as the public administration existed even before the birth of modern states. The nature, functions, and mode of public service delivery, however, have gone through radical changes from those earlier times. This chapter offers an extension of public administration para-digms proposed and postulated by Henry (1975) and Golembiewski (1977). It also deals with the basic theoretical backgrounds of e-governance, its types of operation and transformation phases.

The birth of public administration as a separate field of study is marked by Woodrow Wilson's seminal publication from 1887. Since then to the late 1970s, Henry identified five paradigms of public administration. These are: paradigm one: the politics/administration Dichotomy 1900-1926;

paradigm two: the principles of administration 1927-1937; paradigm three: public administration as political science 1950-1970; paradigm four: public administration as management 1956-1970; and paradigm five: public administration as public administration, 1970-? Henry did not mention the exact end year of the fifth paradigm, as it was still dominant in the intellectual discourse of the discipline of Public Administration. However, we can cautiously suggest the finishing line of the fifth paradigm to be the early 90s. Since 2001, a new idea[1] slowly permeated in the theories and practice of public administration forcing a paradigm shift in the discipline. The sixth paradigm, as an extended version of Henry's paradigm, can thus be called as "*Public Administration as New Public Management (NPM), 1991-?*" However, as others suggested, we can also think of another paradigm shift in the discourses of public administration that concurrently exists with the sixth one and is very likely to be a dominant one for years to come. This seventh paradigm can be called "*Public Administration as E-governance[2] 1995-?*" By now, there is widespread agreement among the academicians and practitioners of the role that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays in the day to day operations of public administration. ICTs dramatically revolutionized the structure, processes, and radically transformed the way public administration systems work around us (Roy, 2011). E-governance has been ubiquitously adopted and adapted, to various degrees, by the governments of developed, transitional, and developing countries[3]. The glaring transformation that public administration so far has gone through with e-governance has been amazing.

In fact, over the past three decades, information and communication technology has brought changes in the operations of government organizations both in developed and developing countries. This is due to the process of converting information from analog to digital forms. The lifeblood of government is information and the digital revolution has allowed government organizations to store, analyze, and retrieve information more effectively and efficiently. This process has also been strongly affected by changes in telecommunications technology and the convergence of computer and communication technologies. The most recent manifestation of this process of technological change is the advent of Internet or World Wide Web (Bretschneider, 2003).

This reform of government administration and the provision of improved services to citizens have long been acknowledged as a major criterion for development and today's drive towards e-governance in many parts of the world can be considered as a part of this wider developmental goal (Madon, 2004). Throughout the world, governments, businesses and NGOs are working together to adopt e-governance—from Singapore to South Africa, Andhra Pradesh to Washington, or Bangladesh to Malaysia. These are not just experiments in new modes of service delivery. E-governance inevitably also embraces—and is driven by—new models of policy formulation, new forms of citizenship, new patterns of relationship and power, new options for economic development, and the search for new ways to connect people with the political process. As indicated, the rapid adoption of e-governance is facilitated by dynamic technological and telecommunication innovations. In many countries, ICTs are seen as a catalyst for e-governance. "After e-commerce and e-business," as *The Economist* (2000) predicted long ago, the next Internet revolution would be e-government." It is naturally expected that e-governance will ensure transparency, speedy information dissemination, and improved service in public administration. In the era of informed citizens, e-governance is also seen as a vehicle for cost-effective and efficient way of public service delivery (Agarwal, et al., 2003). Furthermore, e-governance is expected to empower the citizens, increase the profit margin of the businesses and enterprises, enhance flexibility in government

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