

Chapter 1

E–Governance vs. E–Readiness in Urban Municipal Governments in Tamil Nadu, India

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ABSTRACT

The fast growing information and communication technology (ICT) sector brought in the use of computers, internet and mobile phones not only by the technocrats but also by the general public to receive and send communication faster, cheaper and easier. This situation brought out visible changes in people life, government function and cities spatial form and structure. Globally, the e-Governance system approach attempts to change the government-centered planning and delivery of civic services to people-centered planning and execution of development. It is also evident that the transformation is prominent not only in the planning and production of services but also in terms of urban local government system. This is to state that there are two noticeable visible changes in the government system such as (a) Government to Governance, and (b) Governance to e-Governance. These changes make the central, state and local governments more responsible, transparent, and participatory in terms of planning, development and management of towns and cities. But due to the urgency and cope with the World order the central, state and local governments in India introduce e-Governance without looking into the concept of e-Readiness. This chapter attempts to explore the basic question such as how the application of e-Governance system to be considered as an important means towards improvement in the service delivery systems of urban local governments within the perspective of e-Readiness.

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INTRODUCTION

Urban Development is an important area of concern to Central, State and Local Governments, professionals, academics, NGO's and people of India. Due to the increase in number of urban settlements globally it becomes a challenge for the urban municipal governments to meet the ever growing and changing needs of the people. The needs include access to shelter, trade and business, transportation, recreation, employment, civic and other social infrastructure facilities. It is imperative that the issues like legal support, application of new technology, good institutional framework, organizational pattern and administrative system, manpower and financial health becomes essential for e-Governance. e-Governance system facilitates the urban municipal governments to make effective and efficient planning, executing and managing urban service delivery to the people.

The impact of globalization and economic liberalization brought in adapting new methods of planning and governance system of Indian towns and cities. The most visible aspect in this regard is the introduction of electronic system in administrative and organizational aspects of urban municipalities in India. The establishment of computerized infrastructure in the central, state and local government's office in India is evident from the large scale investments by the central and state governments. But what is the invisible fact is the slow pace of adaptation to the technology and the organizational climate in terms of the need for the change in the work environment both the physical and human perspective. Also the issue of e-Governance Vs e-Readiness where the principle it is e-Readiness and then e-Governance, but in reality it is noticed that e-Governance first and e-Readiness latter with the case of local governments in India.

The main focus of this chapter is to highlight the e-Governance practice in the urban municipality of Tamil Nadu whereby the e-Governance is in practice without fulfilling the e-Readiness

factors in order. Broadly the chapter is organized in terms of (a) a bird's eye view of e-Governance and e-Government in India, (b) the theoretical and global perspective of e-Governance Vs e-Readiness, (c) the existing status of e-Governance and e-Readiness in the state of Tamil Nadu and situation in Tambaram Municipality as a case study, and (d) at the end along with stating a few relevant solutions and recommendation, some points on the future research direction also been mentioned.

E-GOVERNANCE AND GOVERNMENT IN INDIA

The adaption of the Habitat Agenda (1996) urban governance has become a priority issue in most of the developing countries in search of ways and means of improve the functioning of local government and promoting decentralization and devolution of power to the local government. The essential of computers and internet becomes considered and used by the local government in the municipal administration for the delivery of civic and public services. Good governance reforms aim to address these shortcomings. Yet progress – after many years of effort in implementing such reforms in India – has been much more limited than expected.

Historically, India faced tremendous challenges when it set on its Information and Communication Technology (ICT) journey. The ICT industry, at a very nascent stage, appeared far behind its Western counterpart. In 2005, the scenario has undergone an amazing transformation. Indian ICT organizations are now counted among the well known and reputed ICT solutions and services providers across the world and scores of global ICT leaders have invested in India, making the country their hub for software development, offshore outsourcing and R&D.

According to Khopkar, and Bodat, (2007) ICT is becoming part and parcel of National Develop-

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