Strategies in Good Governance : A Case Study of Karnataka, Kerala and Orissa

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The managerial orientation that is making way into the domain of public administration with thrust on economy, efficiency and effectiveness, is also emphasizing the pursuance of governance for development by governments. This is a global phenomenon, our approach to development is now acquiring a new holistic orientation, integrating economic aspects, political elements and social processes. The human dimension to development based on accountability, responsiveness, decentralization and empowerment is gaining importance. It is being increasingly realized that governance for development has to orient towards building and strengthening human capacities and capabilities and creating a conducive environment that fosters individual dignity and equality and achieving sustainable human development. This calls for unfolding various issues of concern in governance and devising suitable strategies for human governance.

Good Governance

Kautilya in his treatise *Arthasastra* elaborated the traits of the king of a good governance state as "in the happines of his subjects lies his happiness, in their welfare his welfare, whatever pleases himself, he does not consider as good, but whatever pleases his subjects he considers as good" (*Sharma, L.N. and Sushmita Sharma, 1998*). Plato is credited with developing the concept of the philosopher king as the ideal ruler Aristotle was perhaps the first political theorist to deal with the term "governance", when he classified political organizations by indicating the manner in which they were ruled by a kind of numerical court of rule by one (dictatorship), a few (autocracy), or many (democracy) (*Sinclair, 1962*).

Kautilya mentions the following few imperatives of good governance for a king (*Sharmasastry, R.1929*) :

1. Merge his individuality with his duties.

2. Guide administration

3. Avoid extremes without missing the goal.

4. Lead a disciplined life with a code of conduct.

5. Pay fixed salaries and allowances.

6. Maintain law and order

7. Stress on *lekhaks* (writers)

8. Carry out preventive / punitive measures against corrupt officials.

9. Replace bad administrators by good ones

10. Emulate administrative qualities.

The World Bank in its document *Governance and Development 1992* defined

governance as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. The bank came to realize that "good governance is central to creating and sustaining an environment which fosters strong and equitable development and it is an essential complement to sound economic policies. It has defined good governance as the one epitomized by predictable, open, and enlightened policy making, a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos acting in furtherance" of the public good, the rule of law, transparent process and a strong civil society participating in public affairs. Poor governance (on the other hand) is characterized by arbitrary policy making, unaccountable bureaucracies, unenforced or unjust legal, a civil society unengaged in public life and widespread corruption. It identified the following three distinctitive aspects of good governance.

1.   The form of the political regions, military or civil, parliamentary or presidential, authoritative or democratic.

2.   The process by which authority is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development.

3.   The capacity of governments to design, formulate and implement policies and to discharge government functions.

The characteristics of good governance laid down by UNDP are as follows.

1.Participation, 2. Rule of Law, 3. Transparency, 4. Responsiveness, 5. Consensus Orientation, 6. Equity, 7. Effectiveness and Efficiency 8. Accountability and 9, Strategic Vision.

E-Governance

In the fast changing scenario, e-governance has become not only necessary but essential in a setup where people are the biggest stakeholders.

In this direction, the Union Ministry of Informaiton Technology has already made a number of initiatives, including the setting up of a center for e-governance at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) which will function as a forum for government officials, legislators, industry, and various other key players to come together, discuss learn and explore issues of shared importance.

Some of the objectives indicative of a road map for e-governance are as follows :

1.   Develop a system for the seamless transfer of information between offices dealing with proper administration, both at the center as well as the states.

2.   Set-up and /or facilitate specific communication networks for the government sector.

3.   Assist central and state governments in identification and implementation of suitable hardware and software packages for e-governance.

4.   Establishing links worldwide, among the institutions engaged in similar activities so as to optimize and for benefits by builders / sustaining platforms for interchange of ideas and experiences.

5.   Develop special pilot projects or paperless government on like through an electric intelligent government concept by extensive use of electronic forms and data entry interface through the use of the web and internet technology.

6.   Build convergence into connected services delivery programmes related to citizen devices.

7.   Develop commercial and governmental systems for issues and managing signatures / electronic signatures and smart cards.

8.   Identify measures for suitable protection of data during filling up, transmission and alterations by using a combination of security measures.

9.   Establish Industry Consultative Committees (ICC), Citizen Consultative Committees (CCC), Ministries Consultative Committees (MCC) to provide a forum to various users, implementation groups and organizations to contribute towards the 25 percent goal and beyond.

The e-government solution strongly supports digitization of government administration by using network technology and security technology to meet the needs of both the people providing services and those receiving them. As the internet spreads throughout the society, and in public as well as private sectors, operations such as e-applications and e-procurement become common place. Internet access is thus a prerequisite to the e-government solution.

Strategies for Reaching out to people

Undeniably, in order to reach people and with a view to making them partners of the systems and processes of governance, greater emphasis needs to be laid on school education, especially computer education. The biggest challenge for this is making personal computers (PCS) available at an affordable cost. The Hardware Vision 2005 Plan envisages PC penetration to 26 per 1000 people by 2005 from the present 6 per 1000. According to a Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) paper, the best way of achieving this would be to go local in terms of local needs, local problems, local solutions and local contents while making PCs affordable. Next to Government and business establishments, schools would be the biggest consumers of PCs. The CII estimated that 18 million PCs would be needed at the rate of 20 sets in each of nine lakh schools in the country. To be affordable, the price needs to be brought down to below Rs.15,000 per computer.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the Government of India have agreed to collaborate on a one year project to create the media laboratory Asia, which is conceived as an independent, non-profit organisation. MIT plans to develop the technology to bring the benefits of the most sophisticated emerging technologies to the daily problems of India's poorest and least educated people. The Media Lab-Asia in collaboration with IIT, Mumbai has also under taken an agro explorer programme so that farmers can benefit by various relevant information. The Ministry of Information Technology is very sensitive to the problem of language barrier and has therefore introduced a scheme of languages and IT localization. Once the scheme becomes operational, it will go a long way in reaching out to and empowering the masses. This is an important strategy for the country's development.

Strategies of Karnataka

The IT initiative of Karnataka aims to provide direct citizen interface, improve human resources and connectivity and improve the efficiency of government officials. IT has been applied in the following areas.

Secretariat Local Area Network (LAN)

This Programme envisages computerisation of all secretariat departments. It enables citizens to know the status of their file and the number of days they took to be cleared at various stages. It is a significant step in delivering good governance to the masses.

Khajane

This Rs.45 crores project is in an advanced stage of implementation. The system keeps accounts for all payments of the state, which totals to approximately Rs.24,000 crores a year. Besides government payments, the system makes payments to 6 lakh employees, 3 lakh pensioners, 13 lakh aged, widowed and handicapped pensioners. The accounts, available, real time, are stored in data centers in Bangalore and a disaster

center in dharwad. The STP is the network partner. The major benefit of the project is the instantaneous reconciliation of government accounts. In addition the system displays the money spent on all government schemes in every village. This enhances transparency and improves quality.

Bhoomi and Nondani

Bhoomi is the state's computerized land records project. It aims to cover 60 lakh farmers in175 taluks. Operational in 12 sub-registration offices in Bangalore, it accounts for about 40 percent of the total revenue. This computerised registration is operating in 48 taluks of the state.

Yava.com

This programme envisages 225 training centers all over the state run by prestigious firms like Aptech, NIIT, SSI etc. The fees in the center are already reduced. The government gives subsidy of Rs.1500 for a three month course. A maximum subsidy of Rs.4500 is offered for a six month course. The programme aims to train over 1,00,000 rural youths in a year. Over 100 centres are operational at present.

E-Lottery

The government has floated a tender to set up 10,000 terminals all over the state. Apart form running the electronic lottery the kiosks could be used to disseminate other public information.

Mukhya Vahini

This is the Chief Ministers decision support system. Presently it tracks the C.M.S. instructions, the projects sanctioned under the Global Investor meet, the constituency management system, summarized data on major projects in health, housing, and other social sector schemes. Many modules are already in use.

Common Entrance Test

Karnataka has numerous institutions of higher education and attracts students from other Indian states and countries. Every year the state conducts the common entrance test. Over 1,50,000 students take the exams and around 50 percent are from outside the state. The entire admission process is absolutely transparent. The fact that students from outside the state participate in large number shows their confidence in the local administration. Before computerization, the process attracted many questions from elected representatives and a lot of litigation. Now the system is so transparent that it has rid itself of both.

Other Initiatives

The Commercial Tax Department tracks goods using check post entries. Information about movement of goods is automatically put in the dealers assessment file. In terms of tax collection per GDP, the state is one of the best in India. The Insurance Department uses computers to track all the government vehicle insurance details. Police salary bills are computerized. The irrigation department has a major project on e-tendering and e-procurement. Silk trading exchange in Karnataka has been computerized since 1985.

Friends Project of Kerala

Friends is an extraordinarily successful project in Kerala where an IT enabled, single-window, front end interface called Friends (Fast, Reliable, Instant, Efficient, Network for Disbursement of Services) was set up for availing a range of popular public services like payment of taxes and utility charges and renewal of licenses without waiting for back-end computerization or systems integration in the government. In the span of 3 years, this project has expanded to serve 13 million people in 12 of 14 districts in Kerala.

Project Application

Usually, a citizen in Kerala has to interact with at least eight to ten government departments / agencies for accessing routine services. Traditional payment systems necessiate visiting each of these government offices and waiting in tedious queue. some transactions take as long as a day to be completed. Often staff are rude and some times bribes are demanded through touts and inter mediaries. The poor public perception of the government arises from these unpleasant experiences.

Each Friends center receives almost 1000 visitors every day and users are delighted with the service levels. The average waiting time is ten minutes. Unlike most government offices, the ambience here is pleasant and the service is courteous and corruption free. The project, likely to receive ISO certification soon. It has been a success largely because of its focus on training and motivates the employees manning these centres.

The Philosophy

The philosophy of Friends is to treat the citizen, who is paying for the servies, as a valued customer. The underlying concept is simple to provide an integrated electronic interface where by citizens can remit taxes, pay bills, access commonly required govt. services and obtain the latest information on government programmes. It was decided to focus on front-end computerization, rather than wait the completion of back end computerization of these departments to make these services immediately available. The pilot project was launched in Thiruvanthapuram in June. On the basis of its success, the project was extended to other districts.

An Innovative Approach

At Friends, 20 computerized counters work from 9 A.M. to 7 P.M. on all days of the week, in an any service any counter mode. A computerized queue management system eliminates queues and customers receive a token and await their rurn in a pleasant setting. The services offered are free. Payments can be made in cash or by demand draft. A help desk is on hand for any required assistance. The center works on the principle of 'collect and remit' and 'receive and forward' by interacting with the concerned departments/agencies. Eventually, the computers at the center will be linked with the servers of the departments on a real time basis, once the back-end computerization is completed.

Friends Computers are equipped to handle more than 1000 kinds of bills or documents. The software is robust enough to handle these requirements and new modules can be incorporated when new department / service are added. The indicative list of services offered by Friends counters are water and power utility payments, bill payments, property tax, professional tax, traders license fee, building tax, land tax, revenue recovery, fee for new ration card, one time vehicle tax, motor vehicle tax etc.

A notable feature of the project is that its personnel have been drawn from the participating departments, and no new jobs have been created. There are 50 staff members in each center, and 500 people have thus been inducted. An innovative feature of the project is the employment opportunity it provides to poor women from self-help group, who manage the help desks and provide supplementary services.

Dramatic Impact on People

Friends project has been the change in citizens perception about the government. Moreover, visitors have been impressed by the courteous and corruption free atmosphere. Friends has also demonstrated that ordinary government functionaries and poor women can

deliver high quality services in an atmosphere of excellence. The demonstration value of this project is inestimable. An unforeseen, but key out come is that Friends has succeeded in providing positive feedback on the benefits of inducting IT in all the participating departments.

Orissa Gramsat Pilot Project

The Gramsat Pilot project initiated by the Government of Orissa is a significant step in good governance. It addresses issues of transparency, accountability, responsiveness, reduction of corruption, training and skills development, peoples participation, project planning and monitoring, disaster warning etc. It also provides live communication between the state capital, districts and blocks.

Infrastructure and Functioning

The Gramsat Pilot Project is a satellite based digital communication network. The segment is supported by INSAT-3B in extended C-band. The ground segment of the network consists of a hub center at Bhubaneswar, VSAT nodes at the district and block head quarters and DRS (Direct Reception System) nodes at gram panchayats. The hub center at Bhubaneswar will consist of a digital earth station providing satellite up link. The vsat hub will have electronics with a network manager and a series of server computers holding data base and software. There will be a proxy server acting to the internet. The center will also have a transmission studio to serve at the teaching and for interactive training and at the transmission end for broadcasting.

At each of these 314 blocks and 30 district headquarters, there will be vsat hard ware consisting of vsat electronics with access router. The Gramsat network proposes to provide this connectivity to 314 blocks and 30 district head quarters, the network is capable of supporting

more vsat nodes. It is also proposed to provide direct reception system (DRS) to 800 gram panchayats in 8 KBK districts.

Application and Utility

The project proposes to create a master data base which will include spatial data on land information such as land use, land form, ground water, geology, soils, water body, village and forest boundaries, rail/road network, river and drainage network, canal network, telecommunications and power distribution network and rainfall etc. It shall be applied for inter active training for skill development, technology transfer and dissemination of information. The development information can be braodcast to people, field functionaries at the grass root level. Spatial and non-spatial geographic data base information can e accessed especial relating to natural resources, environment and infrastructure development. Management information system for e-governance can be achieved. Disaster warning, relief and rescue operations and reconstruction can be monitored through this project.

End Note

E-governance is good governance and every government is supposed to provide good governance to its citizens. Citizens want excellence in governance, high quality of governmental services delivered on time and minimum costs. They want governance to citizen centric. The focus must change from procedure-orientation, to service-orientation from supply driven to demand-driven governance. Governments should try to give up ruling attitude and should endeavor serving attitude towards its owners, the citizens. Originality is good, we all pose to be original, but lack the originality to do something original. In that case, comparative governance studies and following the best and well

done can benefit the governments. Effective use of Information Technology (IT) is increasingly becoming synonymous with good governance. It is all about connectivity. Connectivity brings proximity, which improves the delivery of services by the government. Truly information is power and the informed are powerful. Citizen should have access to information related to various policies, procedures, development schemes, government order and official pronouncements on matters concerning their life and work.

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COMPUTERIZATION / E- GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE OF PANCHAYATI RAJ DEPARTMENT

Panchayat Samities have emerged as powerful institutions for implementing schemes relating to poverty alleviation programme on Social Security Primary Education, Co-operatives,Welfare of SC/ST, Natural Disaster and MP/MLA LAD fund etc. Computerisation of 314 Blocks and 30 District Rural Development Agencies has been completed to monitor fund flow and project transparency. Steps have been taken to make the system more transparent for both project management as well as financial management by using "Rural Soft" and "Priasoft" Software. PAMIS is being developed to maintain daily cashbook. A total of 344 computer operators have been engaged in Block and District Rural Development Agencies. This will help the citizens to access the data regarding financial and physical details of projects at the Block level easily. Further the Panchayati Raj Department have already implemented one software named BETAN, for drawing salaries of all the employees of Blocks & D.R.D.As.