

Public Participation and Institutionalism Analysis in E-Governance



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ABSTRACT: *E-Governance contributes to enhanced knowledge management, improves information-sharing and helps to create conditions for an open and transparent society based on trust and liability. E-Governance provides political, economic, social and cultural development through democratic, efficient and effective public service delivery. Institutional and economic limitations are the influencing factors for the speed of the adoption of e-Governance in the governments. The integration of information communication technology (ICT) in governance processes has the major objective of transforming the relations between governments and their people, by improving the efficiency and accountability of governments and by allowing citizens to become dynamic stakeholders in the decision-making process. This paper focuses on the institutional and contextual determinants of e-Governance implementation and public participation as well as the role played by institutional components. E-Government includes the essential institutional arrangements and competence, and a set of policies, procedures and systems, and technical norms that will maintain implementation of the e-Government program, operations and management.*

Keywords: Institution, Institutionalism, e-Government, e-Governance, Public Participation

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1. Introduction

E-Government refers to the use by government organizations of information technologies that have the ability to establish relations with public or citizens, businesses, and other government elements. These technologies can provide a variety of different services such as better delivery of government services to people, frequent interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through information transformation and effective government management. The results of this might be minimized corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth and cost reductions. (World Bank, 2004). E-Governance has significance to transform the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of informational and transactional exchanges within government, between government and government organizations of national, state, municipal and local levels, citizen and businesses, and to allow citizens through access of information.

Establishing good governance and public administration has become a main concern for sustainable socio-economic development. It has been identified that development can't take place without sound and capable governance. Institutional and economic

factors play pivotal role for the pace of the implementation of e-Governance in the governments. In this context, a majority of countries have initiated improvements to public services aimed at the implementation of good governance. It has also been recognized that in public or private, small or large, the efficient use of ICT can considerably develop institutional and organizational performance. This is also acceptable for public administration and governance where ICT can shorten procedures, increase communication speed and assist decision and policy-making. All countries resolved to fight against poverty and accelerate overall social and economic development, the implementation of e-Governance can make a precious contribution. It facilitates to create new jobs, encourage the development of business, increase citizens' participation in decision-making and improve the effectiveness of government services. In this connection, e-Governance can contribute to capacity-building, enhance the accountability of governments and increase citizens' trust in them (Sharma et al., 2012).

There is an extensive agreement in the widespread research on internal factors at state and municipal levels that institutional and contextual components are key determinants of e-Government adoption (Tolbert et al, 2008). Although some researchers have studied these elements in particular states (Ho & Ni, 2004), none of them have determined the institutional and contextual factors influencing county e-Government across the United States. Tolbert et al. (2008) stated that institutional capacity is a major prominent factor in e-Government innovation at the state level. States that have significant institutional infrastructure and capacity, such as information technology departments and legislative committees will have higher levels of e-Government utilization than nations with lesser institutional capacity. Among local governments, an orientation towards improvement tends to result in a management form of government that is more receptive to innovative implementation of technology.

The term 'institution' is used generally in political science to indicate everything from a formal structure as a parliament to amorphous entities like social class, with other components of the socio-political universe such as law and markets also being considered as institutions (Robinson, 1991). Institutions are described by their strength and their capability to influence behavior of individuals for generations. The study of human behavior can not ignore the adaptability of humans to the institutions that they generate and transform (Jones, 2001: 22). Human behaviors will be intentional but not willful, when individuals are motivated by the values of their institutions. The sense of appropriateness also operates in less extreme situations. In majority of situations the logic of appropriateness in government institutions may be manifested through normal activities such as serving the client as well as possible, or not engaging in corruption on the job (Johnston and Heidenheimer, 1989).

An important element of an institution is that it is a structural characteristic of the society. The structure can be formal (a legislature, an agency in the public bureaucracy of a legal framework) or it may be informal (a network of interacting organizations). In this case, an institution transcends people to involve groups of individuals in some part of patterned interactions that are expected, based upon specified relationships among the actors (Peters, 2005). The institution must influence individual behavior and it should restrain the behavior of its members. The constraints may be formal or informal. The success of behavioralism and rational choice is the background for new institutionalism. The initial believers of the new institutionalism particularly James March and Johan Olsen who made the movement in 1984, made positive statements about their belief on empirical political theory. The statement put forward by March and Olsen is that modern-day political science, as the time of their writing, tended to subordinate political phenomena to contextual phenomena such as the economic growth, class structure and socio-economic cleavages (1984: 735). Considering about history plays a crucial role for the new institutionalists and functionalism represents a review of the way in which the behavioral and rational choice approaches had dealt with history. The structural functionalists in comparative politics believe that societies are moving from lower to higher forms of political society. Laver and Hart (1992) made assumption that the parties move towards some aggressive equilibrium based upon conscious adjustments to the demands of the political market-place.

People and businesses are important characters that push towards the modernization in structural and legal infrastructures of a nation and e-Government encourages the need for public administration services to support themselves more closely so as to become the citizen's and the business's 'new partner'. The citizen has a right to access the government services and expect that their request is fulfilled. E-Government plays a significant role in resolving the public administration's drawbacks. It addresses this through the re-allocation of the appropriate human resources, the improvement of financial practices, the application of ICTs and the re-organization of bureaucratic processes. On the other hand, the trends to move towards complicated e-Governance principles establish security issues, communication standards, data standards and common information infrastructures. People make a new way of delivering public services, focused on public needs and based on a multichannel integrated structure. The center mission of e-Government is the simplification and speeding up of processes between the citizen and public administration but also of internal processes of both administrations and the business segment. Government needs to support the formation

of a democratic culture. Thus, e-participation implements and develops new forms of participation. The communication should involve citizens, public authorities and elected representatives from the people.

The purpose of this paper is to emphasize the institutional and contextual determinants of e-Governance adoption and public participation and the role played by such institutional components. Establishing standard norms for ICT systems is a mutual and consultative process. E-Governance is not just about improving delivery of services to public, businesses and government employees, it is also about combination of ICT with administrative reforms to make government more efficient. If implemented appropriately, it can be an advantage for the un-served and under-served areas and help drive new levels of efficiency to government services. In the process of drafting the vision of the nation, needs and expectations of major stakeholders have been taken into account. These include people, businesses and other stakeholders comprising of government agencies and related establishments, financial and educational institutions. Standards and policies and their maintenance are an ongoing concern, it is important to establish an institutional mechanism to develop them and put in place a process for adopting and maintaining them.

2. Institutionalism

The foundations of governments are the study of institutions. Two theoretical backgrounds behavioralism and rational choice believe that individuals act autonomously based either on socio-psychological characteristics or rational calculation of their personal value (Peters, 2005). In either theory, individuals were not seriously constrained by either formal or informal institutions, but would make their own choices. The new institutionalism identifies the differences and verifies alternative ways of organizing political life and the differences this makes for the performance of the systems. The new institutionalism is a type with a number of specific species within it. These approaches to institutions also should be observed as harmonizing, even if the partisans of one or the other may often claim pride of place. The internal difference of the institutionalist approach indicates several supplementary things about contemporary theoretical developments (Ostrom, 1990). Montesquieu (1989) determines the need for balance in political structures and served as a basis for the American 'separation of powers' policy for the weakening of potentially autocratic governments (Rohr, 1995; Fontana, 1994). Political thinking has its foundations in the analysis and design of institutions. The Anglo-American political culture assigned a less significant task to the state than did the Continental tradition, but American institutionalist still were concerned with the formal institutions of government. The academic study of Woodrow Wilson was famous and focused on the role of institutions. His famous essay on bureaucracy indicated to what American governments appeared to be short of the participatory ethos of the United States (Doig, 1983).

Within the rational choice practice there are two standard ways to reflect about institutions. The initial way takes institutions as exogenous constraints, or as an exogenously given game form. The economic historian Douglass North, for instance, thinks of them as "the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction" (North 1990, 3). An institution is a script that provides the names of the actors, their behavioral strategies, the order in which the actors choose from them, the information they have when they make their selections, and the outcome resulting from the combination of actor choices. Once added actor evaluations of outcomes to this mix, actor preferences, are transformed the game forms into a game. Structured Institutions is the highest success of the rational choice institutionalism analysis. The Archimedian level of rational choice institutionalism is delivered by the structure of structured institutions. This structure embeds the reason of optimization in a tactical context. The context of unstructured institutions is more fluid, providing a less firm analysis.

Rational choice institutionalism established as pure theft, lifting analytical methods from mathematics, operations research, and economics. In its focus on institutions in politics, economics and society, it developed boundaries and individuality. The assumption of rationality is demanding, developments in bounded rationality and behavioral economics are responding to this (Green and Shapiro 1994). Some scholars assumed that rational actors would have trouble in the world of politics living up to the expectations of the invisible-hand standards of market exchange, explorations of transaction-cost phenomena attempt to deal with some of these frictions. Some others focused on the quality of rational choice institutionalism; history-dependent and contextualized aspects are now a part of game theory, and prosperous historical cases are now examined, controlled and monitored in a thoroughly analytical way.

American political thought has been less state-centric than that of Continental Europe, it should be noted that two of the great studies of American old institutionalism were works on the state. The first one was conducted by Woodrow Wilson and the other was T.D. Woolsey. These academic figures pointed out political science as the study of the state and an exercise in formal

-legal analysis. Wilson's book was in numerous ways a remark on German legal and institutional theory of the time. The explanation as a 'stateless society', major theorists in the United States had a conception of the state and its place in society (Stillman, 1991). New institutionalism could only be the initial point for the interdisciplinary approach required after the post-impasse of conceptual models that fulfill the gap between observable micro-level and macro-level, institutionally based and produced social alteration.

In Europe, the rising nature of political science was different from the United States. The difference was that political science was closely associated with other areas of study and was slower to come forward as a separate area of investigation. The study of political development process remained a part of other areas of enquiry, usually law in most Continental European countries. Government was in the process of formation and application of law through public institutions, with politics a very minor part of the exercise. Legalism is the primary defining characteristic which develops from old institutionalism as it is concerned with law and the fundamental role of law is governing. Law includes both the framework of the public sector and a significant way in which government affects the people's behavior (Pagett and Ansell, 1993). Law figures in the accounts of 'old institutionalists' scholars of politics and therefore its establishment are for an emerging theory of government (Damaska, 1986).

The study of the law as a prominent factor for political knowledge achieved its importance in the Prussian state and thereafter in Germany. It has been argued that the supremacy of law was significant in socializing a new generation of the German elite into a way of life built in large part on public responsibility and commitment to the state (Konig, 1993). Wilson's major study into comparative politics 'The State' (1998) also had a number of arguments that broadened on theoretical term. Bismarkian law was crucial to the formation of a particular German pattern of industrial relations that persisted into the 1990s, and early choices about state intervention shaped American capitalism as well as the nature of government itself (Sbragia, 1996; Orren and Skowronek, 2002). The old institutionalists developed a rich and main body of academics. These scholars pointed out many factors that motivate contemporary institutionalist analysis. In order to understand the new institutionalists, it is crucial to understand not only the old institutionalists but also the thought that emerged in between the times.

March and Olsen and their associates are clear about the patterns of transform within institutions once they are formed than they are about the initial formation processes (Brunsson and Olsen, 1993). The reason of change in institutions is one of the strongest and most influential factors of their statement. The normative institutionalist literature indicates the existence of several stimuli for change, but focuses on processes of learning as a principal means for adjustment (Olsen and Peters, 1996; Levinthal and March, 1994). The basic statement is that institutions recognize and then become accustomed to changing circumstances in their environment though learning. In a succeeding work Olsen, along with Nils Brunsson addressed the question of change in organizations and institutions directly. Institutional crises are the cause of conceptualizing the change. Furthermore, the more obvious that may deals with an institution, crises also arise from a growing mismatch between environmental conditions and demands and the normative orientations of the institution. Based upon the above literature, the major objective of institutional analysis has been highlighted below:

- Study of existing human resources and capacity building requirements to support the re-engineered processes
- Expand an organizational structure including functions, roles and responsibilities, job requirements, job roles etc.
- Evaluation of organizational strengths and weaknesses
- Assessment of change readiness assessment within the department
- Improvement of a flexible change management plan to transition the entire organization
- Study of existing technology infrastructure and analysis and design of technology enablement plan to suit the needs of the re-engineered organization

Government organizations should work towards institutionalizing the program management structures into a stable e-Governance function within the organization with exclusive focus on e-Governance and should emphasize on building capacities for these teams to conquest program management functions.

3. Institutional theories

The interest in institutional theory and institutional analysis has increased rapidly in latest time and they are progressively

recognized as major tools for discussing and understanding the world of politics and government. Peters (2005) argues that there are a number of versions of institutionalism and including rational choice, historical and empirical approaches to institutions and their impact on public policy. He examines these different versions by posing for each set of similar questions that investigate their assumptions about institutions, and makes conclusion by bearing in mind whether there are many different approaches to institutionalism or if there is sufficient agreement among the approaches to argue that there really is one institutional theory.

The first theories of institutional approaches was developed by March and Olsen (1984) and then in a range of other academic articles (1996). The term 'normative institutionalism' was selected because of the very strong focus of authors place on the norms of institutions as a means of understanding how they work and how they decide. March and Olsen keep a great deal of importance on the 'logic of appropriateness' as a means of shaping the behavior of the members of institutions. These values may come into the frame of reference of individuals, but are complicated to place within a utility-maximizing structure. Being guided by values and norms, scholars working within institutional framework argue that behaviors are a function of rules and incentives. Institutions are thus systems of rules and norms to behavior in which individuals make effort to maximize their own values (Weingast, 2002). Furthermore, institutions can answer one of the problems of rational choice analysis and facilitate to meet social and economic needs of the people who are in frequent touch with government (Knight, 1992:94).

The next approach to the role of governance structures is historical institutionalism. A number of academics (Krasner, 1984; Pierson and Skocpol, 2002) argued that policies are 'path dependent' and once launched on that path they will maintain in that pattern until some important force intervenes to deflect from the established direction. The term 'new institutionalism' was derived from the work of March and Olsen (1984, 1989, 1996). They argue that political and other sciences were approaching of its theoretical and conceptual energies that would weaken the significance of political utilities. As such, political analysis was being replaced with individualistic assumptions and methodologies. The individualistic assumptions were unable to address the important questions of political life, provided that they could not incorporate individual action with fundamental normative premises. Even if they were engaging for a return of the discipline to its intellectual foundations, there have been a number of criticisms of March and Olsen's solutions to the theoretical problems they introduced (Pederson, 1991; Jordan, 1990; Sened, 1991). These responses involve a number of assessments arguing that they had misinterpreted rational choice theory (Dowding, 1994) and hence pulled down a straw person.

People are not atomistic but are embedded in a complex series of relationships with other individuals and with collectivities (Granovetter, 1985). This complexity of interactions for most individuals with multiple institutions in their environments reveals that they may have to choose among competing institutional loyalties as they perform. They are supposed to be affected by their full range of organizational attachments and cannot be the autonomous, utility-maximizing and fully rational individuals assumed by rational choice theories. March and Olsen conceive between their approach to politics and the main exchange conception of politics is in the difference between exogenous and endogenous preference formation (March and Olsen, 1996). For exchange theories the preferences of political actors are exogenous to the political process, and are shaped by forces beyond the concern of the immediate choice situation. For institutional theories, individual preferences are shaped to a large extent by their involvement with institutions.

Durkheim (1992) focused on the significant consequence of symbols in structuring human behavior, inside and outside of formal institutions. Sociology emphasized the importance of values in defining the nature of institutions, organizations and individual behavior within those structures. Role theory can be observed as a more general element in the study of political institutions (Searing, 1991). In any version of institutional theory there should be a means of linking the micro-behavior and constraints of the institution with the micro-behavior of the individual who operates within that institution. Sewell (1992) argued that there is a mutual causation of cause and structure in institution. This indicates a continuing dynamic process linking two basic components of social theory as well as a meaning that institutions cannot really escape a means of linking individuals with the more formal elements of behavioral, social and individual life. The basic transformations of social and legal institutions were obtained through simply not complying with a number of rules, regulations and policies of the existing political order.

In the perspective of increasing globalization, there is a dispute about the tendency of political systems to follow a pattern that tends to differences being increasingly less important. Even as the supporters of the theories of divergence state that various institutional contexts produce diverging results, the supporters of convergence define that political system approach to be identical. The divergence theorists assume that public policies lead to strengthen and reproduce a pattern of effective performance or path dependence (Pierson and Skocpol, 2002; Hall, 1993). In the meantime, the convergence theorists argue that the globalization

of markets and the existence of supranational areas, like the EU stimulates junction in the design of public policies and in their results (Thatcher, 2000). In the particular field of the promotion of ICTs in public administration, a third group of authors states that the acceptance of technology, for example in the development of governmental portals, has become a worldwide trend. On the other hand, it is also mentioned that these policies simply underline the pattern of already existing actions. In summary, for these authors a process of convergence has taken place in practice but not in the results, which are conditioned by the institutional framework and by the degree of autonomy of bureaucracies (Wong and Welch, 2004).

4. Public participation and institutional issues

The implementation of e-Governance has been able to enhance public service delivery, one of the core functions of governments based on quality, operations and processes. The most important influence of e-Governance on the application for learner's license is speeding up of processes and improved quality of service in terms of responsiveness and consistency. E-Governance delivers information available on government operations and public services, provides public feedback and allows direct participation by the ordinary people in decision-making (Heeks, 2001; Norris, 2001). The e-Governance reform not only delivers higher quality and better delivery of public services and a greater awareness of entitlements but also claims to present stronger relations between public servants and public based on transparency and accountability. E-Governance has enhanced public service delivery of that particular e-service in terms of better quality, modernized and personalized service, clearer information, and rapid process. Nevertheless, the e-service still has certain weaknesses in terms physical and online, untimely and incorrect communication as well as lack of feedback and monitoring.

The present emphasize of governments on providing easily accessible online services facilitates the push to e-participation, in that it presents a confront to governments, whether the public is considered as a consumer or as a citizen. In the case of the user, implementation is focused on services, if the public, the focus is on policies which promote e-participation and social equality (Roy, 2001). E-Governance is thus a new means of formulating and implementing policies and decisions relating to administration, services and public participation, using ICT as a tool for establishing trust in governments and enhanced transparency and public service delivery. Earlier ICT has also brought new opportunities for improved public participation in decision-making, and has therefore contributed to the establishment of the bonds between public and governments. Benefits for the government are better and more efficient services in terms of time, reducing transaction costs and improved transparency and accountability (Sharma et al., 2012). In the case of many advantages offered by ICTs such as speed, wider reach and cost reduction, they are now vital for the public sector, civil society organizations and for governments, which use them for intra-governmental communication as well as for providing public services and communicating with public. It can be argued that ICTs develop public participation by facilitating citizens to interact better with each other and with their elected officials which known as e-participation. E-Governance and e-participation are therefore significant stages in the development of online or digital government processes.

The institutional issues affecting e-Governance can be well understood using the structure presented in Figure 1. The local government can be considered as a service provider. Public will be in touch with the local government as consumers for services such as birth/death certificates, licenses and payment of taxes. The customers approach the provider and make a payment for the service. If the quality of the service provided in the market is not enough to meet the needs of the customers, they will find for other service providers. Thus the 'exit' route is used if the service is found to be undesirable. On the other hand, public as customers will not normally exit, if the service provided by the local government is found to be unsatisfactory. In order to search for improvements in the quality of service provided by local government, the customers have to raise voice their complaints. They may express their criticism against the local governments through individual or group protests. People can also implement the 'voice option' through their elected representatives forcing them to obstruct on their behalf. It is also acceptable that the elected representatives may use their collaborative strategies within the local government office to develop the service provided to customers. A clear structure to analyze this institutional framework helps to understand the different routes through which public as customers put forth pressure on local governments. The framework is also useful to analyze some of the widely used instruments to improve public service delivery in government organizations.

The e-Governance in local governments takes place within the wider institutional environment of such governments. The rules and procedures, under which government operates, are therefore influence the pace of computerization. This will affect employees' participation in e-Governance efforts. There can also be existing rules regarding the financial resources allocation, nature of record-keeping and division of responsibilities within the local government offices, and provide the ease in the implementation of e-Governance. Based on the framework shown in Fig. 1, we can locate three wide sets of components that influence the e-

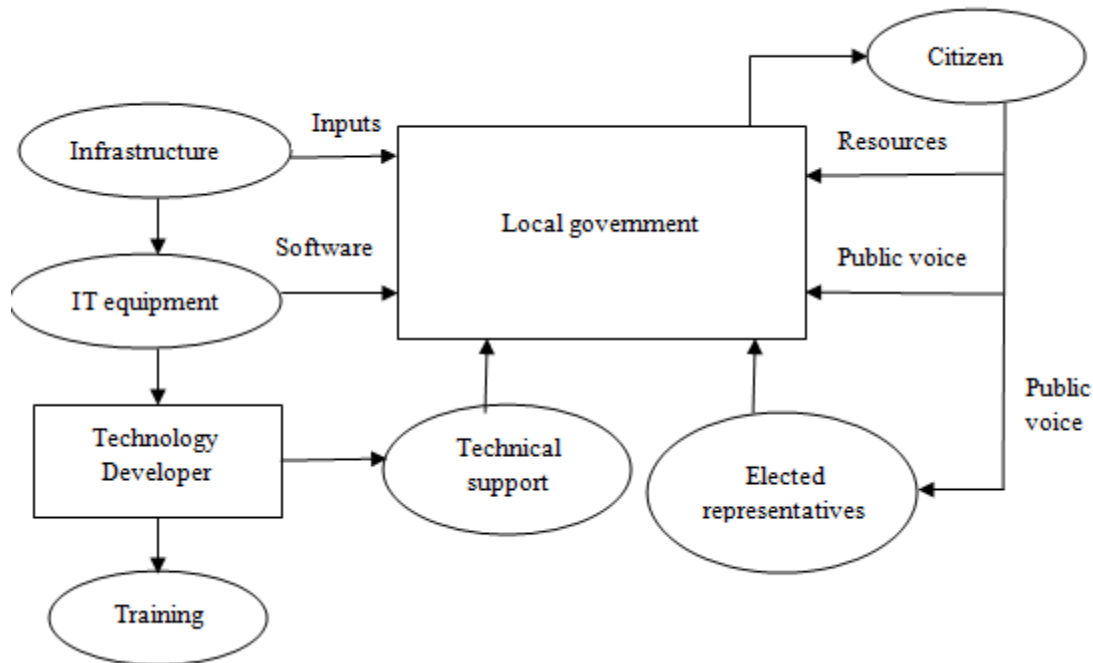


Figure 1. Framework for e-Governance and institutional issues

Governance. These components are related to (a) demand (b) supply and (c) institutional environment. One can anticipate variation in the demand factors among the different local governments. The local governments and elected representatives are likely to differ across locations, and this may lead to different demand patterns for e-Governance. It may also be mandatory to look into factors such as the computer service provided by other organizations functioning within different institutional environments. Provided such underlying concerns, the study employs strong methodology and sampling techniques to account for most of the factors that have an effect on e-Governance in the local governments.

Online participation can activate public to engage with others within their society, express their needs and open up new ideas for responding to existing challenges. New trends of digital citizenship, principally mobile technologies, have the potential to improve the commitment of stakeholders in the political process, reversing a tendency towards disengagement, enabling better access to information and focusing services for needy people (Gajendra et al., 2012). Public participation is strictly linked to the concepts of sustainable development and democratic governance. The concept of good governance carries in it the spirit of democracy through the mechanism of institutionalized public participation (Coulibaly, 2004). An institutional evaluation of the e-Government is essential to be undertaken to align the institutional arrangements with global trends towards convergence and to conform to international best practices while acknowledging the local context. Updated government policy and regulatory environment offers as a vital pillar of a broader policy review institutional arrangements to meet the discrete policy, regulatory and operational functions required for the effective governance of the sector. A sufficient resource is needed to acquire the necessary skills to perform this critical function for the long terms development of the sector and to enable the co-ordination of regional policy with national policy. This should involve the financial regulation of operators and service providers and the promotion of ICTs across the economy and society through precise demand stimulation strategies, to acquire critical mass of consumers and people using digital services.

The establishments of programs that move from government as a characteristic of the unitary state, to governance by and through networks of institutions and individuals that extend well beyond any geographical location and act held together by relations of trust (Bevir and Rhodes, 2004). Ansell (2000) suggests the emergences of a networked polity, in which state and non-state institutions cooperate in a variety of deliverables and jurisdictions that the globalization leads to more profound questions about the way in which modern society should be governed. E-government finds to mention the roles and responsibilities of different government departments and institutions using modern ICT to promote the re-organization of government's internal and external information, functions and activities with the objective of shifting the delivery of government services to the online world.

5. Conclusion

There are significant institutional issues that restrain the implementation of e-Governance in the governments of different nations. These cannot be solved entirely by technological or supply-side measures. However, alternative technology delivery or technology management strategies could be implemented. Alternative strategies to develop and install new e-government software could be promptly put in place in all local governments and steps taken to provide training and technical assistance programs. Government has a greater variety of ways to conduct public affairs and the delivery of public services as well as to increase efficiency of both government administrations and organizations. This will facilitate to increase public participation and their direct engagement in government activities. E-Governance is an evolutionary phenomenon, and requires a change in the attitude of public, executives or the government. With the support of the Internet, the government processes defined by specializations can be made efficient, effective, and people friendly. There are a number of challenging issues lying ahead. Security is the vital concern for the public, and redefining rules and procedures, information transparency, legal issues, infrastructure, inter-departmental collaboration, tendency to resist the change in work culture are the main concerns for the government to concentrate. The countries that established a strong institutional framework for information society development showed exceptional progress in the implementation of their respective strategies and action plans. The government also needs to reinforce and rationalize the existing institutional framework for e-Government, and put in place a set of policies, systems, procedures and technical standards.

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