

ADDRESS BY MRS D. PURANDESWARI MOS (HRD)
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA AT THE 5TH INTERNATIONAL
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(TIME ALLOTTED: 10.50 TO 11.20 = 30 MINUTES)

I feel extremely privileged to have been called upon to address this prestigious session on e-governance in this historic city of Hyderabad.

India is a land of diversity. This diversity spans across culture, tradition, language, geography and the economic condition of the people. It is a nation that has a significant number of people who are below the minimal socio-economic benchmarks. This includes rural and urban poor, women in rural areas, street children, people belonging to historically disadvantaged castes and people living in less developed areas. The vulnerability of these sections of society has increased with globalisation and this section is prone to become even more marginalized - economically and socially. Successive governments have committed themselves to addressing these divides, but effective implementation of various economic development programmes aimed at individuals belonging to these sections of society has proved an elusive goal. Government of India recognizes that e-Governance, in the context of developing countries, provides an excellent opportunity for improving governance. Used imaginatively, it is a trigger for introducing various administrative reforms. These changes could not only go a long way in improving

the quality of life of these sections of society, but could actually provide them more equitable access to economic opportunities than ever before. In this context, the Government of India views e-Governance as a strategic tool for transforming Governance and improving the quality of services provided by the government to its people.

Put in a simple language, e-governance means the electronic systems adopted by any government for enabling transaction which aids in governing a state or a community. Osborne and Gaebler in their book "Reinventing Government" have defined governance as the process by which we collectively solve our problems and meet our society's needs. As per a typical definition, e-governance is the electronic delivery of services by the government to the citizens.

E-Governance is thus the use of Information Technology and Communication Technologies to improve efficiency, convenience, accessibility and transparency in Government. The major emphasis in current effort both at central and state government levels is to focus on these objectives from the perspective of the citizen and businesses. Various IT activities such as creation of e-Governance infrastructure, implementation of mission mode projects, assessment and replication of successful e-Governance projects, development of software applications/ solutions, GIS/GPS, standardization and content development, etc. are therefore integrated parts of unified system for delivery of e-Governance.

In terms of the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP), the Government approved National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) in May, 2006 which has accorded high priority to improving the quality of basic governance on a massive scale in the areas of concern to common person. NeGP comprises of 27 Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) with 8 support components to be implemented at the Central, State and Local Govt. It was ordained that this activity will be implemented as a centralised initiative with de-centralised implementation with a stress on delivery of citizen centric services by ensuring efficiency, transparency and reliability at affordable cost to meet the basic needs. The MMPs will be owned and spearheaded by various line Ministries concerned.

NIC has been playing a catalytic role in the promotion of e-governance and IT Application in the Govt. Sector. A large number of e-governance applications have been developed and made operational in various ministries/departments in Central, States and UTs.

India's experience in e-Governance / ICT initiatives have demonstrated significant success in improving accessibility, cutting down costs, reducing corruption, extending help and increased access to un-served groups. In this phase of experimentation, e-government initiatives have reached millions of people belonging to these sections of society. Improved access to information and services had provided economic and social development opportunities, facilitated participation and communication in policy and decision-making processes and empowerment of the weakest

groups. This has led to fostering a sense of ownership and building of social capital, which in turn, constitute a basis for local revitalization. The Government of India, in various forums, has indicated its commitment to provide efficient and transparent government to all strata of society. E-Governance is now mainly seen as a key element of the country's governance and administrative reform agenda. The Government views e-governance as a vehicle to initiate and sustain reforms by focusing on these broad areas, namely, governance, Public Services and Management.

While pursuing these goals, it is recognized that the motivations and imperatives for adopting e-governance in a developing country like India are vastly different from those in developed countries. Manpower costs and constraints were among the imperatives driving technology induction in developed countries. Further, the advent of ICT in governance preceded the emergence of the Internet. Hence one of the main challenges in these countries was to integrate heterogeneous backend computer systems through complex middleware to leverage the Internet and achieve integration of services. By contrast, in countries like India, there was hardly any significant back end computerisation in government before the advent of the Internet. Consequently, while planning e-governance projects today, the ubiquity, convenience and power of the Internet can be factored in right from the planning stage itself. Moreover, it is neither the availability constraint nor the cost of manpower that is the driver for e-governance. Primarily, the motivations are higher efficiency, transparency, accessibility and accountability as well as reduction of

procedural complexity that breeds corruption. It is also a realization that there is no other way to effectively provide services to a population of over one billion people.

Besides, the economic and social environment is very different in India compared with that in a developed country. Per capita income is much lower. Telephone, PC and Internet penetration levels are low in comparison. Availability of reliable electric power supply is still a problem, particularly in rural areas. Universal literacy is still a distant goal. IT literacy is very low, both in absolute and relative terms. India has 22 official languages. Several hundreds of dialects are spoken all over the country. Less than 5% of the population can speak English. Hence e-governance initiatives need to be planned with reference to these ground realities in the country.

The role of higher education would be to percolate research and ideas right down into tangible realizations having relevance to the place and its people. Understanding this talent and helping people utilize these can be a powerful force in developing this region to grow and prosper to its full potential.

The vision of a 21st century modern India fast emerging as a global powerhouse has opened its economic regime to immense possibilities and potentials. The impact of such reforms should go beyond its economic prosperity and should widen the social opportunities for the masses to create a better capacity index. One such vital index is education which shapes human capital and higher education in particular generates human skills for research and

development, training, provide policy options. Global emphasis is thus being put for creation of human capital through the widening and opening the scopes of higher education, training and research. Though as per the UNESCO report of 2000 ‘higher Education is no longer a luxury, but is essential to national social and economic development’ it is widely recognized that the standard of higher education and research in Indian universities have declined during the last few decades without any sign of improvement . This demands a deep and thorough investigation and focused attention.

The educational system in our country is undergoing many pedagogical as well as institutional changes. It has for too long been stymied with typification: It did not become forward looking, and was unable to go beyond the ‘talk and chalk’ percept. The academic community’s responsibility in not just teaching and educational programmes mapped out by the concerned universities. The need of the hour is restructuring and remodifying the methods adopted in pursuing the goals of the curriculum.

It is the teacher who is responsible for shaping human capital, i.e, human intelligence, creativity, talent and knowledge which is intimately linked to the dynamics of development. This underscores the importance of the teacher in higher education since the quality of higher education may be the single most important indicator of the country’s future. As the goals of education have become more complex there has been an urgency to uphold quality-ensuring mechanism in higher education.

To revamp the general English syllabus, by taking in more of comparative literature, and communication skills courses is the next concern. English retains its importance in the post colonial era, for an all India ruling class in administration, higher education and culture. However, in order for academics to continue moving in the right direction, some changes need to be made that will allow teachers to perform their jobs more successfully and function within the system more smoothly. A great disparity exists between the knowledge teachers have and the knowledge they should acquire in order to successfully educate students. So long as the creative culture is absent in our teaching community, we will continue to borrow, imitate and duplicate solutions whose roots and origin lie some where outside our country; and these solutions will neither be appropriate nor sustainable. There have been great advances made in teaching methods and styles in the past, and there continue to be new innovations which profoundly affect the profession.

Since the 1950s, the Government of India has been slowly but steadily climbing the ladder towards a citizen-centric focus on administrative reforms. Since the 1990s, it has been accepted at the national as well as state levels that there are three 'non-negotiable ingredients' for a government to be considered capable of delivering good governance of which the major components are-responsiveness, transparency and accountability. I can assure that the Government is slowly but surely moving towards this goal. With these words, I appeal to the all major stakeholders to lend their

support and cooperation to the Government instrumentalities in their grand endeavour.

Thank you