Publicness in Governance Initiatives- Bridging the Divide Digitally through Socio-technological Publicness Model for Development

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Abstract

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The term ‘governance’ has become a buzz word in the public domain. Everyone seems to be talking about improving the governance to make the administration effective by ensuring publicness in the planning and implementation processes. Many approaches have been tried over a period of time to governance participatory and inclusive but the critical analyses of these suggest very blurred pictures. One gets very confusing signals and it is very difficult know the motives behind the stakes operating to run the show. The governance seems to be more of use of political authorities for control than the management of resources for socio-economic development at large. There are conflicts of stakes as each stake claims to serve the interests of the ‘intended’ but, actually, might not be doing the same rather engaged in achieving one’s own agenda. It is generally very difficult to get the interest of common citizens especially the poor and marginalized served through direct physical participations. The representations are taken and ensured but experiences suggest that there is always ‘questions’ over the representations ‘being true’. These result in lack of ‘publicness’ in development initiatives and maximization of the benefits of ‘other stakeholders’ on the cost of ‘intended beneficiaries’. But with the advent of e-culture especially e-governance frameworks, a ray of hope has been seen. The scope of e-governance being vast and with the advancements of Information Communication and Technologies, one could explore plenty of possibilities to explore a citizen centric framework for governance.

In this paper a model titles as Socio-technological Publicness Model for Development has proposed and discussed under Rural e-Governance Framework. The model would help in ensuring citizens participation from the planning to decision making processes of programmes and policies with the purpose to fill gap between their expectations in relation to their actual needs and available development options. The model relies on the utilizations of existing infrastructures, institutional set-ups and resources at Panchayats and at the district. The model also helps in creating a culture of transparency and accountability at various levels of governance institutions.
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1. BACKGROUND

In today’s world the term governance has become very popular and widely used in matters related to strengthening of governing processes to run the system at various levels. There are concerns on the applications of governance processes. There is lots of hue and cry to strengthen governance and make it ‘Good’. It suggests that there are certainly some links which are either loosely knitted or broken. Otherwise also, the term governance, traditionally, have been understood in terms of governing and controlling. It has been developed more in relation to exerting influences towards the management of people and resources through planning, executions and other means of regulating the affairs of the state. More or less, it is understood as the manner in which powers are exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources (World Bank 1992).

The historical evolution of the term indicates towards the central theme of ‘rule of law’ (Montesquieu and Blackstone) based upon two basic constitutional principles of ‘limitation of the power of the government’ and ‘the separation of powers within government’ restricting the government to become coercive. Rather, emphasizes on the promotion of equality before the law through generic rules so that the branch of government creating the rule be distinct from like a judge applying the rule (Hayek 1960; Allan 1998).

During the 1980s and 1990s, the term gained more prominence in development circles and international public policy arena. Many academics and international development practitioners employ ‘governance’ to connote a complex set of structures and processes, both public and private, while more popular writers tend to use it synonymously with ‘government’.

2. DEFINITION AND NATURE OF GOVERNANCE

The definitions of governance and its nature seem to be more facilitative and contextual. It has resulted in multiple definitions of the term and those in operation are mainly floated by international public agencies and multilateral organizations such as UNDP, OECD, Institute of Governance, Ottawa, and Commission on Global Governance etc. These definitions were propounded by them mainly in order to achieve their organisational objectives. The World Bank played an important role in
evolving the concept of Good Governance in relation to the linkages for grant in aid to institutional reform at the country level. It was emerged prominently in bank report namely “Governance and Development” published in 1992. In 1997, World Bank redefined the concept with a broader agreement on ‘good governance’ as an effective state apparatus and necessary precondition for development.

The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) emphasized the role of public authorities in establishing the environment in which economic operators function and in determining the distribution of benefits as well as the nature of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. International Monetary Fund (IMF) and bilateral agencies like Danish Development Agency (DDA), British Overseas Development Agency (BODA) have also supported the World Bank framework and linked the developmental aid to the overall framework of the “Good Governance” as envisaged under World Bank document. (Choudhury and Skarstedt, 2005).

In continuation of this, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) under United Nations had propagated five key attributes of good governance as: transparency, responsibility, accountability, participation and effectiveness. Various resolutions of OHCHR like 2000/64, 2001/72 reaffirmed the view of the international body in this regard. (Choudhury and Skarstedt, 2005).

3. ROLES AND FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNANCE

Having defined governance in wider perspective, its role in the functioning of the government services can be visualized in terms the delivery of services. Of late, it has been seen that the term governance signifies “a change in the meaning of government, referring to a new process of governing or a changed condition of ordered rule; or the new method by which society is governed” (Stoker, 1998). In this way Governance is ultimately concerned with creating the conditions for ordered rule and collective action.

According to Stoker (1998) the various propositions of Governance could be summarized as follows:

- Governance refers to a set of institutions and actors that are drawn from but also beyond government.
- Governance identifies the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities for tackling social and economic issues.
• Governance identifies the power dependence involved in the relationship between institutions involved in collective action.
• Governance is about autonomous self governing networks of actors.
• Governance recognizes the capacity to get things done which does not rest on the power of government to command or use its authority. It sees government as able to use new tools and techniques to steer and guide.

4. e-GOVERNANCE – A TOOL TO REALIZE OBJECTIVES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

In the modern era where things are on increase – population, resources, expectations, demands, powers, duties and responsibilities, it has been very difficult to govern, at various levels, without making changes in traditional approaches of governing. It is very difficult to make access of services to people without using the applications of Information, Communication and Technologies (ICTs). In order to implement the good governance, it has become mandatory on the parts of the institutions involved in the governance at various levels to have requisite infrastructures to realize the goals. The e-governance had emerged as a tool to realize the application of Governance Framework of Administration to achieve overall objective of transparency, accountability, equity, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, rule of law etc. The structure/processes that have been created under the rubric of e- Governance focused upon the realization of these objectives

5. ACHIEVING INCLUSIVENESS THROUGH e-GOVERNANCE – THE CITIZEN DRIVEN SOCIO-TECHNICAL APPROACHES OF PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

5.1 Background

In a political and democratic setup like in India, the processes have been built to incorporate opinion of citizen in the policy formulations at various levels- National, State and Local. At national and state level mainly there are indirect processes to seek opinion of the intended beneficiaries in the designing of policies for their welfare in the form of discussions in legislature by the elected representatives, whereas at the local level it is direct participations through Gram Sabhas and Gram Panchayats in rural and municipalities in urban areas. However, it has been seen that there is gap between the expectations of the intended beneficiaries and the policy objectives finalized after different levels of discussions and consultations. In
the process it has been seen that the intended beneficiaries play a little role in the designing process and the centre stage has been taken by bureaucracy to a large extent with support from civil society, media, academia and interest groups. Besides, the roles of common man in the local level planning and executions are, generally, negligible. These situations create gap in the designed programme and the expectations of people. There could be varied reasons for this, which need to be looked into to satisfy the developmental needs of people.

In this background there is a need to design citizen driven model of e-governance where citizen play a significant role not only in designing of programmes for their own welfare but have space to check and monitor the execution and periodic outcomes in relations to the local context and needs. There are evidences highlighting the roles of Gram Sabhas, when given the opportunities and space, to work successfully on the need of local people for their development (MPRLP, SGPA 2010). The direct participations of people play a major role in the fulfilment of their expectations and these can’t be replicated by other mediums rather these need to be accelerated and supplemented through e-governance.

There might be critics of the direct participation of people in governance processes with a view that it is very difficult to ensure direct participation of people in governance. But with the advancements of ICTs it is possible in a very smooth and efficient manner. The proposed socio-technical model under e-governance framework is an attempt to provide alternatives to achieve these goals.

5.2 Different Frameworks of e Governance

The available literature on the frameworks of e-governance highlights mainly following categorizations of e-governance models.

- Government-to-Citizen or Government-to-Consumer (G2C)
- Government-to-Business (G2B)
- Government-to-Government (G2G)
- Government-to-Employees (G2E)

As the name suggest the primary stake holders across these models vary from citizen to business to government and employee. However, as per objectives of this paper the focus would be laid upon the Government-to-Citizen (abbreviated G2C) model with an addition to Citizen-to-Government Model. It is a communication link between a government and private individuals or residents. Such communication
most often takes place through Information Communication Technologies (or ICTs), but it could also include direct mail and media campaigns. It takes place at the federal, state, and local levels (White, 2007).

The proposed citizen driven model has proposed a paradigm shift in the unidirectional approach of governance to bi-directional and multi directional approaches of Government to Citizen & Citizen to Government (G2C&C2G Model). It has been seen that in G2C model the focus is on the government supported initiatives rather than the citizen initiated and driven initiatives. The major objective of the proposed model is to enhance ‘publicness’ in the governance structures and processes. The relevance of the model lies on its reliance on the existing structures, institutions, resources and infrastructures. The mechanisms, structures and roles suggested in the proposed model in following pages have powers to accommodate many factors which otherwise hinder the smooth running of e-governance initiatives e.g. accessibility of ICTs, people's technological assets, connectivity, real time interaction with government personnel, change management etc.

6. INCREASING PUBLICNESS IN GOVERNANCE THROUGH EXISTING STRUCTURES, INSTITUTIONS AND INFRASTRUCTURES

6.1 The Need

This paper and the proposed model have been developed keeping into considerations the relevance and powers of existing structures and institutions and accompanied resources within those for ensuring people’s participations. In realm of governance, the visualizations of Gram Swaraj from the days Mahatma Gandhi till the promulgations of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts could be considered as important milestones. Though there were several Acts at the national and state levels giving constitutional sanctities to the provisions for welfare and development of people at various levels yet the feasibilities were found difficult. It was only after the advents of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts and the amended state Acts the actual powers to people and dream of grassroots democracy could be translated in feasible actions. Even after the intense efforts and genuine political will the optimum utilizations of the powers devolved through these Acts couldn’t be achieved. The proposed model is building on the powerful provisions as a result of 73rd CAA in 1992.
6.2 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act – A Tool to Empower Citizens

The existence of systems of local self governance could be traced back to Chola period in India and during British period Lord Ripon played a key role in using local bodies mainly in revenue generation for British Empire. The Royal Commission (1907), Montague- Chelmsford Report, Government of India Act 1919 did play important roles in the introduction of system of “Dyarchy” where similarity in the organizational structure of urban local bodies had been visualized.

The shades of the three tiers local body structure was visible under 1884 Act where group of villages named as Panchayat taluk boards at taluk level were created for revenue collection. This Act was modified in 1920 by Madras Local Boards Act Madras Village Panchayats act which enforces the demarcation and reservation of tax powers. After independence Article 40 in part IV of the Constitution of India, state governments has been directed to take steps towards organizing village Panchayats as units of self governance. Later on various committees/commissions like Dr. Balwantrai Mehta, Santhanan, Dr Ashok Mehta, Sarkaria, G.V.K. Rao, and L.M. Singhvi reinforced the concept of Gram Swaraj.

With the promulgations of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts (CAA), Government of India has tried to fulfil the wishes of the people by involving them in planning and execution of developmental programme. It is focused upon fulfilment of grass roots expectations and to effectively develop, ownership of the common assets. Their participation in the designing and execution of the programme would enhance their active participation in the government supported programmes.

6.2.1 Salient Features of 73rd CAA, 1992

- **Enhancing Local Participation:** With the devolution of the powers at the level of Gram Panchayats governments focused upon empowering the gram Panchayats. They are playing active roles in designing and implementation of developmental programmes of local importance under various schemes of government. Such scenarios have enhanced participation of people in developmental work at village level according to their socio-economic realities. Empowering of Gram Sabhas as an institution has become forums where people can take part in direct democracy through collective decision making for their development.

- **Empowering Local Leadership:** As the Panchayat representatives have been elected by the local people, and are involved in the designing and
implementation of the developmental plan as per local need, it has contributed largely towards the encouragement and development of leadership at the grassroots. Since, they have large resources at their disposal under various government programmes; they not only understand the problems of the people but also work towards finding a viable solution through allocating required resources. It is enabling the society to move towards ‘Gram Swaraj’ as envisioned by Mahatma Gandhi.

- **Village Level Committees – Grounding Participations at Grassroots:** Part IX of the constitution intends to bring about 'devolution' in the form of democratic decentralization. In this aspect various committees have been formed keeping in view the spirit of decentralization and proper functioning of Panchayats. In Uttar Pradesh 6 committees have been constituted at every tier of Panchayat with a very systematic distribution of development powers and responsibilities. Similarly in other states too, the committees in Panchayats are existing in some form or other to work for planning and development, education, construction, health and welfare, administrative and execution, water management, other issues relevant to local socio-cultural and economic development of the areas under their jurisdictions.

The proposed model has been built up on the powerful structures and provisions of Panchayat committees. The representation of women, SCs/STs and OBCs in the committees would bring the diversity of issues raised and worked upon by committees through participatory planning at Panchayats for common good with the goals of economic development with social justice.

7. **SOCIO-TECHNOLOGICAL PUBLICNESS MODEL FOR DEVELOPMENT – A PARTICIPATORY E-GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

7.1 Background

The amalgamations of powers of ICTs and local governments i.e. Gram Panchayats in rural areas in particular the Panchayat committees besides the citizens at large have been kept at the centre of the proposed Socio-technological Publicness Model for Development (henceforth SPMD). It is because of obvious reasons of the constitutional legitimacy to Panchayats as the third tier of governance with local participations and ample resources from national (MNREGS, BRF, TFC grants) and state (SFC, Grants in aid, Assigned Revenue) and contributions and locally
Citizen representing communities/categories and users

Grievance redressal as per the given powers, duties/responsibilities with given resources

Grievance redressal as per the given powers, duties/responsibilities with given resources

PRI's/Panchayats

Unresolved issues /concerns

District Planning Committees

Unresolved issues /concerns

State Agencies/Government

协调 with Para-statal bodies

协调 with Para-statal bodies

Web Station at Panchayats

DPCs

Web Station at DPCs

KM&PMS*

Unresolved issues /concerns

Coordination with Para-statal bodies

Coordination with Para-statal bodies

Generating Weekly/Monthly Report
(In accordance with RTI's and service)

Generating Weekly/Monthly Report
(In accordance with RTI's and service)

Facilitator to put concerns/queries
Development

Village Committees

Feeding into the National Policies and Programme of Actions

Figure 1: Socio-technological Publicness Model for Development

* Development Communication Specialist

# Knowledge Management & Programme Monitoring Specialist
generated revenues (own funds like tax revenue, non tax revenue, service delivery etc.). Also, the Panchayats being local formal set-ups with plenty of ownerships of the citizens, generally, help in starting and controlling the processes locally.

 Besides the powers of ICT Design Applications, the initiations, successful executions and sustenance of certain ICT led and supported programmes at Panchayats such as e-Panchayat in Andhra Pradesh; Aasthi, Asshraya and Samanya Mahiti in Karnataka and Ruralsoft in Kerala gave confidence to propose such a model at Panchayats under e-governance framework.

7.2 The SPMD

Several approaches have been tried with varied models to give true representations to the citizens’ participations. These are accompanied with their own strengths and shortcomings. The advancements in ICTs paved ways to experiment further with technology to make the interventions transparent, accountable and speedy. The e-governance initiatives have certainly did some stirring and brought positive results but, so far, none of the initiatives are not found ‘the appropriate’, ‘to the point’ or achieving the ‘maximum’. In certain cases the smartness of technology prevails but with less emphasis on people’s participation and other contextual aspects. The CSCs are one the classic examples in this regard. This model is helping in penetrations of the technology at grassroots and availability of the electronic gadgets might be ensured to a great extent but the participations and ownership from local citizens remained to be seen. It is again becoming governing in the traditional sense and as the extended hands of the already existing machinery using ICT’s for service delivery.

It would be unrealistic to expect the citizens to be operating the systems and technology in one go or unless and until full-fledged capacity building programmes are not conducted. These aspects have been taken care of in proposed model.

The proposed Socio-technological Publicness Model for Development (SPMD) is based on the premises that there is need to;

- Translate Acts, Schemes, and Programmes into action.
- Ensure, at least, the basic functioning of the systems and processes such as village committees, Panchayats, District Planning Committees and functioning of para-statal bodies at the district and state levels besides establishments of a web station with internet connectivity.
Employ or restructuring of man-power deployments at the Panchayats to get them engaged in the roles envisioned under SPMD.

Ensure two way direct and full participations of the citizens in the designing and development of the policies and programme.

Mediate and facilitate in the governance aspects using ICT’s to enhance transparency and accountabilities.

In Socio-technological Publicness Model for Development citizens have been kept at the centre to drive processes and also to make the processes themselves empowering for them (Oakley, 1991). The basic constitutional entities i.e. Gram Panchayats and Village Committees (VCs) have been given a prominence role in it. The VCs which otherwise have been mandated as the basic entity for development have largely been found idle. The awareness on the formation and functioning of the VC are very low. One could find the formations of the VCs on paper but most of the times members themselves are not aware about their being member to certain committees and the envisaged functioning to these is a distant dream. As per the visualisations these could have supplemented greatly in overall functioning of the Panchayats and local development. The concerns of the people and area could have been reflected well with the help of VC’s.

In SPMD VCs have been considered as the basic building blocks of the development and as a medium to ensure people’s participation. Among the areas covered through VCs have scopes to accommodate a sizeable number of people from various socio-economic categories. At the core of the SPMD, the VCs have to be made functional and required capacity building to represent the concerns of the citizens as per the local socio-economic realities. As per responsibilities and powers given to members of the VCs, they would be putting or feeding the concerns in the system/portal/web station at the Panchayats. Though it will primarily be responsibilities of VC members to puts the data in the system with the help and facilitation of a newly visualized role at the web station i.e. Development Communication Specialists (DSC’s). The citizens and other stakeholders – elected representative, members of CSOs/NGOs, Academia, Media should also be encouraged to use the system to put their concerns and contribute in the local development.

The system to be kept at the Panchayats should be designed in a manner which besides managing the data should provide the information on needs of people. The work list would be generated for weekly and monthly execution and would be make available to the concern people and functionaries. The other powerful feature of SPMD is the generation of weekly and monthly reports based on the generated web
plan. These reports would also help in fixing accountabilities of the persons given responsibilities for the execution of the plans. The reports would give a clear cut picture of the work completed, in progresses, under planning phase and work not attempted with the reasons thereof. These would automatically be circulated to the people engaged with the tasks in various capacities. The responsibilities assigned and the roles envisaged to Common Service Centres could very well be added to web station at the Panchayat and vice-versa.

The SPMD has visualized having a similar arrangement at the DPC level with appointing a Knowledge Management and Programme Monitoring Specialist (KM&PMS) from within the existing manpower. It would help not only in planning of the interventions for the districts but the report generated at the district level would help in developing accountabilities towards the tasks coming under the purview of various stakeholders. This would help in making DPCs more functional, relevant and accountable as per the roles envisaged to them instead of a customary and ornamental body. The system would have features to supplements the plans and reports generated at the Panchayats and District Planning Committees.

7.2.1 Designing of the System for Web Stations at Panchayats

The Web Stations at Panchayats would be designed using Participatory ICT Design Methodology with full participation of users and other stake holders in the designing processes by providing them space of co-designers. (Rizvi and Dearden, 2008)

The possible areas to accommodate during designing of the systems might be as follows;

- MIS for Panchayats.
- The powers and duties of the Panchayats.
- The committees in Panchayats and their roles and responsibilities.
- Availability of resources through various sources and the allocation of funds.
- The manpower deployments in VC’s, Panchayats and DPC’s and their roles and responsibilities.
- The plans and priorities for the Panchayats/ DPC’s.
- The schemes and programmes for the local development besides Panchayats.
- Provisions to assess progress made against various plans and development activities in Panchayats.
- Inter linkages between different layers i.e. Village, Block, District and State level
The monitoring mechanism in VC’s, Panchayats and DPC’s.
Reports and other features and documents - As per needs and requirements

7.2.2 Salient Features

The SPMD would be far more advantageous in comparison to the other models because of the following salient features of the model;

- The model would help in enhancing the flows of information not only in Panchayats buts also would enhance working linkages with other stakeholders and institutions.
- The models would help in the direct participation of the citizens. There being no restrictions in the nature and kinds of information to be fed in the system. It would help in getting more and more information on the local needs and issues.
- The appointment of Development Communication Specialist would help in channelizing the information from the last mile and moving those upwards for the necessary follow-ups and actions.
- The model would help in generating transparency and accountabilities at various levels. It would also play a prominent role in fixing the accountabilities against the task assigned to various roles.
- The model would help in keeping pace on the functioning of the Panchayats in terms of the progresses made, achievements, and delays with reasons and failures with responsible factors.
- It would help in reducing bureaucratic intricacies, red-tapism and controlling of corruptions.
- The model will help in translating the vision of the father of nation Mahatma Gandhi into action on “Gram Swaraj”.
- It would facilitate devolution and democratization of powers in the hands of actual beneficiaries as they are at the forefront of the designing of programmes for themselves.
- It would help in evolving mechanism for other departments not connected directly with the rural populations to have their opinion on the issues of their importance.
- It would strengthen the ownership on the part of people towards the government programmes/ policies since they have been actively consulted in the process.
- As the people are actively associated with the government, it would strengthen the faith of people in the government and would strengthen the democratic process at the grass roots.
7.3 The Feasibilities of SPMD

The SPMD has been developed keeping into considerations the feasibilities to make it operational at various levels. The model is a beautiful example for the optimum utilizations of the provisions already made through various Acts, Laws, Programmes, and Schemes etc. The legal, operational, social, economic and technical feasibilities of the proposed model might be summarized, as follows;

7.3.1. Legal/Political

The constitutions of India made explicit provisions towards the strengthening of the Panchayats as units of self governance in article 40 under part IV. Subsequent to this various committees such as Balwantrai Mehta, Santhanan, Dr Ashok Mehta, Sarkaria, G.V.K. Rao, and L.M. Singhvi reinforce the strengthening of the villages Panchayats again and again. Subsequent to this government of India promulgated 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts giving comprehensive directions towards strengthening of the Panchayati Rajya Institutions (PRI’s). The provision under article 243ZD state to establish ‘District Planning Committee (DPC)’, primarily aimed towards consolidation of plans prepared by Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti, Zila Parishad and Municipalities. These provisions have given legal safeguards to these institutions directly responsible for people’s development.

The political feasibility of SPMD model is already there as DPC which is a constitutional body as per provision of Article 243ZD has been placed at the centre of SPMD model. Entire activities revolve around this body with a prime focus on integration of village level planning with the resources available at the district. The various committees at Panchayats have been kept as the basic operational units in the model, which are again got legal sanctities.

7.3.2. Operational/Institutional

Apparently there is no question on the operational feasibility of the model as the Panchayats, its committees and District Planning Committees are already existing and operational. There are well structured institutional setups for the Panchayats at the village and district level as proposed in SPMD model. No new structure has either been added in the existing setup except visualisations of two ‘roles’ from within the existing human resources to give a ‘system’ to the activities undertaken as proposed in the model. On the other hand the model would help in creating transparency, accountability in Panchayat functioning.
7.3.3 Social

The Panchayats besides being legal structures at local level are the social groups because the representatives are locally elected. They are from within the community and not hired and imposed conglomeration of external people. To encourage the Panchayat committees to realize their roles and function for the welfare of local masses would help in developing a ‘we feeling’ and encourage the social cohesion. The constitutions of committees are in accordance with the prevailing social categories so it would further help in the representations of their interests through grass root planning and implementation as per constitutional provisions.

7.3.4. Economic

In 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Indian Constitution, the Article 243I has provision of State Finance Commission, to review the financial position of Panchayats and to make recommendations on the principles which should govern the distribution between the State and the Panchayats of the net proceeds of the taxes, duties, tolls and fees leviable by the State, which may be divided between them and allocation between the Panchayats at all levels of their respective shares of such proceeds, the determination of the taxes, duties, tolls and fees which may be assigned to, or appropriated by, the Panchayats and the grants-in-aid to the Panchayats from the Consolidated Fund of the State.

The proposed SPMD model is economically viable because of the existing mechanisms for sharing and generation of the financial resources at Panchayats. The proposed setup will lead towards the effective utilization of the resources generated and the grant received towards the development of people. The allocation of fund at the grass roots will be governed by the need of local people as captured with the help of model. Further it will lead to the effective utilization of the semi-tied fund available to the selected districts under ‘Backward Regional Grant Fund (BRGF)’ scheme, wherever applicable.

7.3.5. Technical

The existing ICT infrastructures at the Panchayats may be strengthened with required changes (software as well as hardware) as per the requirements of SPMD. There might be need of designing few more features in the existing ICT infrastructures using participatory ICT development methodologies. The successful ICT design solution might be adopted for the Panchayats with modifications suiting
to the local needs. There might be need of designing, altogether, new design solution as per the arrangements suggested in SPMD but that too would be difficult and costly. The exiting funds for the improvement of infrastructure - human as well as technological for PRI’s, may be consolidated for SPMD model.

8. CONCLUSION

The model proposed under rural e-governance framework is very pragmatic and feasible. It has tried to accommodate the resources available locally with the Panchayats. It is not demanding things in an over ambitious manner. The only demands it put forth is the genuine political will on the parts of people who are already involved in the planning and executions. It emphasizes not only on the ‘accomplishments of the developments’ tasks through Panchayats and other responsible agencies but also have scopes to made ‘corrections’ in the existing approaches. At the top of everything the model if applied in true spirit has powers to bring a culture of transparency in the Panchayat functioning and in fixing accountabilities at various levels. The model could also be used as a power tool in bringing a culture of ‘Role based Commitments’.

The proposed model is innovative, exploratory and emerging but does not claims to be foolproof in itself rather it is open for constructive criticisms and further supplementations to enrich it further.
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