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Digital Governance, Inclusivity, and Service Excellence in Bangladesh: A Re-inventing Government Model Perspective

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Abstract

In an era of rapid technological advancement, governance has transformed profoundly, particularly in countries like Bangladesh. This paper examines Bangladesh's digital governance landscape, focusing on the convergence of digital innovation, inclusivity, and service delivery. Through analyzing government initiatives, it explores the nation's journey towards leveraging technology for socio-economic development. Central to this is the re-inventing government paradigm, emphasizing public sector reform for the digital age. Bangladesh's diverse socio-economic landscape provides a compelling case study for understanding digital governance's impact. Key to this transformation is inclusivity, ensuring all citizens benefit from digital advancements. Additionally, the paper discusses service excellence in digital governance, emphasizing efficient, transparent, citizen-centric services. It concludes that the re-inventing government model offers a comprehensive approach to advancing digital governance principles, promoting inclusivity, and driving sustainable development in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Digital governance; Bangladesh; Transformation; Inclusivity; Service delivery; Re-inventing government model; Government initiatives; Digital literacy; Service excellence.

INTRODUCTION

In an era characterized by rapid technological advancements and an increasingly interconnected global landscape, the concept of governance has undergone a profound transformation. Nowhere is this transformation more evident than in countries like Bangladesh, where the intersection of digital innovation, inclusivity, and service delivery has become a focal point for governmental efforts to enhance efficiency, transparency, and citizen engagement. This paper delves into the dynamic landscape of digital governance in Bangladesh, exploring how the principles of inclusivity and service excellence intersect within the framework of a re-inventing government model. By examining the various initiatives, policies, and strategies implemented by the Bangladeshi government, this paper seeks to provide insights into the country's journey towards harnessing the power of technology to drive socio-economic development and improve the lives of its citizens. At the heart of this discussion lies the concept of re-inventing government, a paradigm shift that emphasizes the need for public sector reform to adapt to the realities of the digital age. By embracing innovative technologies and adopting citizen-centric approaches, governments can streamline processes, eliminate

bureaucratic hurdles, and foster greater collaboration between state institutions and civil society. Bangladesh, with its burgeoning population and diverse socio-economic landscape, presents a compelling case study for examining the intersection of digital governance, inclusivity, and service excellence. Over the years, the government has embarked on a journey of digital transformation, leveraging technology to enhance service delivery across various sectors, from healthcare and education to agriculture and finance. Central to this transformation is the concept of inclusivity, which underscores the importance of ensuring that the benefits of digital governance are accessible to all segments of society, including marginalized communities and those living in remote areas. By bridging the digital divide and promoting digital literacy and inclusion, Bangladesh aims to create a more equitable society where every citizen can participate in and benefit from the digital economy.

Moreover, this paper explores the notion of service excellence within the context of digital governance, highlighting the importance of delivering efficient, transparent, and citizen-centric services that meet the evolving needs and expectations of the population. Through case studies and examples, we examine how innovative

digital platforms and e-governance initiatives have transformed the delivery of essential services, ranging from birth registration and passport issuance to tax filing and utility payments.

Ultimately, this paper argues that the re-inventing government model offers a holistic framework for advancing the principles of digital governance, inclusivity, and service excellence in Bangladesh. By embracing innovation, promoting inclusivity, and prioritizing citizen-centricity, the Bangladeshi government can pave the way for a more responsive, accountable, and effective governance system that empowers its citizens and drives sustainable development.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The fundamental concepts pertinent to this paper have been operationalized as follows.

Digital Governance

Digital governance, also known as e-governance or electronic governance, refers to the use of digital technologies and information and communication technologies (ICTs) to enhance the efficiency, transparency, and effectiveness of government processes and services (Heeks, 2006). It encompasses a wide range of initiatives aimed at leveraging digital tools to improve governance practices, service delivery, citizen engagement, and policy-making (UNDESA, 2018).

One key aspect of digital governance is the adoption of digital platforms and online services to facilitate interactions between governments and citizens. These platforms include government websites, mobile apps, and online portals, through which citizens can access information, apply for services, and engage with government agencies (Bhatnagar, 2003). For example, in Bangladesh, the "Bangladesh National Portal" serves as a central gateway for accessing government information and services online, providing citizens with a convenient way to interact with government agencies (GOB, n.d.).

Another important component of digital governance is the implementation of digital solutions to streamline administrative processes and improve service delivery. This includes the digitization of government records and documents, the automation of routine tasks, and the integration of ICTs into government operations (Heeks, 2006). For instance, digital payment systems, such as e-banking and mobile money, can help governments improve financial management and reduce corruption by enabling cashless transactions (UNDESA, 2018).

Moreover, digital governance plays a crucial role in promoting transparency and accountability in government operations. By making government data and information available to the public in digital formats, governments can enhance transparency and enable citizens to hold public officials accountable for their actions (UNDESA, 2018). Open data initiatives, which involve the release of government data in machine-readable formats, allow citizens, civil society organizations, and the private sector to analyze

and use government data for various purposes, including monitoring government performance and promoting civic engagement (Bertot *et al.*, 2010).

Furthermore, digital governance facilitates citizen participation and engagement in the policy-making process through online platforms and social media channels (Chadwick, 2013). Governments can use digital tools to solicit feedback from citizens, crowdsource ideas, and engage citizens in decision-making processes (UNDESA, 2018). For example, in India, the "MyGov" platform enables citizens to participate in discussions on various policy issues and submit their ideas and suggestions to the government (GOI, n.d.).

In conclusion, digital governance represents a transformative approach to governance that harnesses the power of digital technologies to improve government processes, enhance service delivery, and promote citizen engagement and participation. By embracing digital governance initiatives, governments can create more transparent, accountable, and responsive governance systems that better meet the needs and expectations of citizens in the digital age.

Digital Governance in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has embarked on a comprehensive digitalization agenda under the flagship program "Digital Bangladesh," which aims to harness the power of ICTs to accelerate socio-economic development (Hossain, 2014). Key initiatives include the establishment of digital infrastructure, promotion of e-government services, expansion of digital literacy programs, and adoption of digital payment systems. The government has invested significantly in building the National Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Infrastructure Backbone (NICTIB) to ensure broadband connectivity across the country (Ahmed and Islam, 2017).

One of the notable achievements in digital governance in Bangladesh is the establishment of various online platforms and portals to provide citizens with access to government services and information. The "Bangladesh National Portal" serves as a central gateway for accessing government services and resources online (GOB, n.d.). Additionally, the "Digital Bangladesh" initiative, launched in 2009, aims to transform Bangladesh into a knowledge-based society by leveraging ICTs to improve governance, healthcare, education, and other sectors (GOB, 2009).

Furthermore, Bangladesh has made progress in implementing digital solutions to streamline administrative processes and improve service delivery. For example, the introduction of digital payment systems has facilitated cashless transactions and improved financial management within government agencies (UNDESA, 2018). The automation of routine tasks and the digitization of government records have also contributed to increased efficiency and reduced paperwork in government operations (Heeks, 2006).

Moreover, efforts have been made to enhance transparency and accountability in governance through digital means. The government has launched open data initiatives to make government data and information available to the public in machine-readable formats (GOB, n.d.). This allows citizens, civil society organizations, and the private sector to access

and analyze government data, promoting transparency and enabling informed decision-making.

Despite these achievements, challenges remain in achieving comprehensive digitalization in Bangladesh. Limited access to ICT infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, poses a barrier to widespread digital adoption (UNDESA, 2018). Additionally, concerns about data security and privacy need to be addressed to ensure trust and confidence in digital governance initiatives (Bhatnagar, 2003).

In conclusion, while Bangladesh has made significant progress in digitalizing its governance processes, there is still work to be done to achieve comprehensive digitalization across all sectors. By addressing infrastructure challenges, enhancing data security measures, and promoting digital literacy, Bangladesh can further advance its digital governance agenda and realize the vision of a "Digital Bangladesh."

Inclusive Governance

Inclusive governance refers to a form of governance that actively involves all segments of society, particularly marginalized and vulnerable groups, in decision-making processes and ensures equitable access to opportunities, resources, and benefits. It emphasizes the participation of diverse stakeholders in shaping policies and programs, with the aim of fostering social cohesion, reducing inequalities, and promoting sustainable development.

Principles of Inclusive Governance

Participation: Inclusive governance promotes active participation and engagement of all members of society, regardless of their socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity, religion, or other characteristics. It recognizes the value of diverse perspectives and encourages meaningful involvement in decision-making processes (UNDP, 2020).

Equity and social justice: Inclusive governance prioritizes equity and social justice by addressing systemic barriers and discrimination that perpetuate inequalities. It seeks to ensure fair and equal opportunities for all individuals and groups to access essential services, resources, and opportunities (UNDP, 2013).

Transparency and accountability: Inclusive governance fosters transparency and accountability in decision-making processes and resource allocation. It promotes open and accessible government institutions, processes, and information, allowing citizens to hold authorities accountable for their actions and decisions (OECD, 2017).

Responsiveness: Inclusive governance is responsive to the needs, interests, and priorities of all segments of society, particularly marginalized and vulnerable groups. It seeks to address the specific challenges and barriers faced by these groups and tailor policies and programs to meet their needs (WB, 2013).

Achieving inclusive governance requires a concerted effort from governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, and other stakeholders. It involves building strong institutional frameworks, fostering collaboration and

dialogue among diverse stakeholders, and implementing policies and programs that promote inclusivity and equity (UNDP, 2016).

In conclusion, inclusive governance is essential for promoting social cohesion, reducing inequalities, and advancing sustainable development. By ensuring the active participation of all members of society, particularly marginalized and vulnerable groups, inclusive governance can contribute to building more resilient, inclusive, and equitable societies.

Inclusive Governance in Bangladesh

Inclusive governance in Bangladesh emphasizes the participation of all segments of society, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities, in decision-making processes and public service delivery (Islam and Azad, 2019b). The government has adopted policies and programs to promote transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement, such as the Right to Information Act and community-driven development projects. Additionally, efforts have been made to mainstream gender and social inclusion considerations into governance processes to ensure equitable access to services and opportunities (UNDP Bangladesh, 2020).

In Bangladesh, inclusive governance has become increasingly recognized as a critical component for achieving sustainable development, reducing inequalities, and promoting social cohesion. The concept of inclusive governance encompasses principles of participation, equity, transparency, accountability, and responsiveness, all of which are essential for ensuring that all segments of society have a voice in decision-making processes and equitable access to opportunities and resources.

Participation: In Bangladesh, efforts have been made to enhance citizen participation in governance processes through mechanisms such as community-based organizations, participatory budgeting, and local government institutions like Union Parishads and Upazila Parishads (Rahman, 2018). These initiatives aim to empower marginalized and vulnerable groups, including women, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities, by providing them with platforms to voice their concerns and influence policy decisions.

Equity and social justice: Bangladesh has made strides in promoting equity and social justice through various policies and programs targeting vulnerable populations. For example, the government has implemented social safety net programs such as the Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) program and the Old Age Allowance scheme to provide financial support to disadvantaged groups (WB, 2019). Additionally, efforts have been made to improve access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities for marginalized communities.

Transparency and accountability: Transparency and accountability remain key challenges in Bangladesh's governance landscape, with corruption and lack of transparency often undermining the effectiveness of development initiatives. However, there have been efforts to

enhance transparency and accountability through measures such as the establishment of anti-corruption commissions and the implementation of e-governance initiatives (ADB, 2017). For example, the Digital Bangladesh initiative aims to leverage technology to improve service delivery and enhance transparency in government operations.

Responsiveness: Bangladesh has taken steps to ensure that government policies and programs are responsive to the needs and priorities of its diverse population. For instance, the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) seeks to address the specific needs of vulnerable groups, including the ultra-poor, persons with disabilities, and ethnic minorities (ADB, 2017). Similarly, the government has prioritized disaster preparedness and response efforts to address the vulnerabilities of communities prone to natural disasters.

While Bangladesh has made progress in promoting inclusive governance, significant challenges remain, including political instability, weak institutional capacity, and limited resources. Addressing these challenges will require sustained efforts to strengthen governance institutions, promote transparency and accountability, and empower marginalized and vulnerable groups to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes.

Service Delivery Transformation

Digital technologies have revolutionized service delivery mechanisms in Bangladesh, making public services more accessible, efficient, and citizen-centric. E-government platforms, such as the National Portal of Bangladesh and various mobile applications, offer a wide range of services, including birth registration, passport issuance, tax filing, and utility bill payments (Islam, 2018a). Digital payment systems, such as bKash and Nagad, have facilitated financial inclusion and enabled cashless transactions, particularly in rural areas (Rahman *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, ICTs are being integrated into education, healthcare, agriculture, and disaster management sectors to improve service quality and reach.

Service delivery transformation in Bangladesh: Bangladesh has made significant strides in digitalizing its governance processes, leveraging information and communication technologies (ICTs) to enhance transparency, efficiency, and citizen engagement. Several initiatives have been undertaken by the government to promote digital governance, although challenges remain in achieving comprehensive digitalization across all sectors.

Introduction to Service Delivery Transformation in Bangladesh

Service delivery transformation in Bangladesh is driven by the government's commitment to improving governance, enhancing citizen satisfaction, and fostering socio-economic development. With a growing emphasis on digitalization, efficiency, and citizen-centricity, Bangladesh has embarked on various initiatives to modernize and transform its service delivery mechanisms (WB, 2020).

Digitization and E-government initiatives: Bangladesh has made significant strides in digitizing government services

and establishing e-government platforms to enhance accessibility and efficiency. Initiatives such as the National Portal of Bangladesh (bangladesh.gov.bd) and the Access to Information (a2i) program have facilitated online access to a wide range of government services, including citizen registration, tax filing, and utility bill payments (Ahmed and Islam, 2017).

Mobile technology and digital payments: Mobile technology has played a crucial role in advancing service delivery transformation in Bangladesh. Mobile banking services such as bKash and Nagad have gained widespread adoption, enabling citizens to conduct financial transactions, pay bills, and receive government subsidies electronically. These digital payment systems have contributed to greater financial inclusion and efficiency in service delivery (Rahman *et al.*, 2020).

ICT in education and healthcare: Bangladesh has also integrated information and communication technologies (ICTs) into education and healthcare systems to improve access to quality services. Initiatives such as the "Digital Bangladesh: Vision 2021" project aim to enhance digital literacy and ICT skills among students and teachers, thereby improving educational outcomes. Similarly, telemedicine and telehealth services are being expanded to provide healthcare access to remote and underserved areas.

Data-driven decision making: Data-driven decision making is increasingly being emphasized in Bangladesh to enhance service delivery outcomes. The government has established data analytics centers and dashboards to collect, analyze, and visualize data on various socio-economic indicators. These data-driven insights enable policymakers to monitor progress, identify areas for improvement, and make informed decisions to enhance service delivery effectiveness (Ahmed and Islam, 2019).

Challenges and Opportunities: Despite the progress made, service delivery transformation in Bangladesh faces challenges such as limited internet penetration, digital literacy gaps, cybersecurity risks, and infrastructural constraints. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from the government, private sector, and civil society. However, the ongoing digital transformation presents opportunities for Bangladesh to enhance citizen engagement, improve service accessibility, and drive inclusive socio-economic development.

In conclusion, service delivery transformation in Bangladesh represents a fundamental shift towards leveraging digital technologies and innovative approaches to enhance governance and improve citizen well-being. By embracing digitalization, fostering collaboration, and addressing key challenges, Bangladesh can realize its vision of delivering efficient, transparent, and citizen-centric public services to all its citizens.

Service delivery and Service Excellence

Service delivery is a critical aspect of governance, encompassing the provision of public services to citizens by government agencies. Service excellence refers to the quality, efficiency, and responsiveness of these services, aiming to

meet or exceed citizens' expectations. This paper explores strategies for enhancing service delivery and achieving service excellence in governance, with reference to relevant examples and references.

Service Delivery

Service delivery involves the efficient and effective provision of public services to citizens, ranging from basic utilities to social welfare programs and administrative functions. It encompasses processes such as application processing, case management, infrastructure maintenance, and public safety services. Efficient service delivery is essential for meeting citizens' needs, fostering trust in government institutions, and promoting socio-economic development (WB, 2013).

Service Excellence

Service excellence entails delivering high-quality services that are responsive to citizens' needs, transparent, and accountable. It involves a customer-centric approach, where the focus is on providing personalized, efficient, and accessible services that meet or exceed citizens' expectations. Service excellence enhances citizen satisfaction, promotes trust in government institutions, and contributes to overall societal well-being (Moon, 2002).

Strategies for Enhancing Service Delivery and Achieving Service Excellence

Digital transformation: Leveraging digital technologies to streamline service delivery processes, improve accessibility, and enhance citizen engagement. Examples include online service portals, mobile applications for service delivery, and digital payment systems (Fountain, 2001).

Citizen feedback mechanisms: Establishing mechanisms for citizens to provide feedback on service delivery experiences, enabling governments to identify areas for improvement and address citizens' concerns promptly. Examples include citizen satisfaction surveys, complaint management systems, and social media monitoring (Bertot *et al.*, 2010).

Performance management systems: Implementing performance management systems to monitor and evaluate service delivery performance, set targets, and measure outcomes. Examples include key performance indicators (KPIs), performance dashboards, and regular performance reviews (Dunleavy *et al.*, 2006).

Capacity building: Investing in the training and development of government staff to enhance their skills, knowledge, and capabilities in delivering high-quality services. Capacity building initiatives may include training programs, workshops, and knowledge sharing platforms (Heeks, 2006).

Public-private partnerships (PPPs): Collaborating with the private sector to leverage their expertise, resources, and innovations in delivering public services. PPPs can enhance service delivery efficiency, promote innovation, and expand service coverage, particularly in areas where government capacity is limited (Rahman, 2017).

Enhancing service delivery and achieving service excellence are central to effective governance and citizen satisfaction. By implementing strategies such as digital transformation,

citizen feedback mechanisms, performance management systems, capacity building, and public-private partnerships, governments can improve service delivery efficiency, responsiveness, and transparency, ultimately enhancing citizen trust and promoting socio-economic development.

Reinventing Government Model

The Reinventing Government model, also known as New Public Management (NPM), is a set of principles and strategies aimed at transforming traditional bureaucratic systems into more efficient, responsive, and citizen-centric entities. Some of the key principles of the Reinventing Government model include (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992):

Catalytic government: This principle emphasizes the role of government as a catalyst for change, encouraging partnerships with the private sector, civil society, and other stakeholders to address societal challenges and deliver public services more effectively.

Competitive government: The idea here is to introduce market-like competition and performance incentives into public sector operations, aiming to improve efficiency, innovation, and service quality. This involves outsourcing certain government functions to private contractors and fostering a culture of performance measurement and accountability.

Mission-driven government: Governments should articulate clear missions and goals, focusing on outcomes rather than processes. By setting ambitious targets and aligning resources accordingly, governments can drive progress towards key priorities such as economic development (Dhaka, 2026), social equity, and environmental sustainability.

Results-oriented government: This principle emphasizes the importance of setting measurable performance targets and holding public officials accountable for achieving results. Performance-based management practices, such as performance agreements, performance evaluations, and outcome-based budgeting, are central to this approach.

Customer-driven government: Governments should prioritize the needs and preferences of citizens, treating them as valued customers rather than passive recipients of services. This involves streamlining service delivery processes, enhancing accessibility and convenience, and soliciting feedback from citizens to improve service quality and responsiveness.

Enterprising government: Encouraging innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship within the public sector is essential for addressing complex challenges and seizing new opportunities. Governments should foster a culture of innovation, empower employees to take risks and experiment with new ideas, and leverage technology to drive continuous improvement.

Anticipatory government: Governments need to anticipate and proactively respond to emerging trends, risks, and opportunities, rather than merely reacting to events as they unfold. This involves strategic planning, scenario analysis, and early warning systems to identify and address potential issues before they escalate.

Decentralized government: Decentralizing decision-making authority and empowering local governments and communities can enhance responsiveness, accountability, and effectiveness in public service delivery. Devolving responsibilities to the lowest appropriate level can also promote citizen engagement and participatory governance.

Market-oriented government: Adopting market-oriented policies and practices can stimulate economic growth, attract investment, and improve the efficiency of resource allocation. This may involve deregulation, privatization, and market-based mechanisms such as competitive bidding and user fees.

Empowered government: Building institutional capacity, fostering a culture of professionalism and meritocracy, and investing in human capital are essential for strengthening governance effectiveness and efficiency. Empowering public officials and institutions with the necessary resources, skills, and authority can enable them to perform their roles more effectively and achieve desired outcomes.

These principles serve as guiding principles for governments seeking to modernize their operations, enhance service delivery, and meet the evolving needs of citizens and society. While the application of these principles may vary depending on the context and specific circumstances of each country, they provide a useful framework for driving organizational change and innovation in the public sector.

How Far Re-inventing Government Model has applied in Bangladesh?

In the context of Bangladeshi governance, the application of the Reinventing Government model has been subject to various challenges and limitations, but elements of its principles have been observed in reform initiatives and policy implementations over the years.

Catalytic government: Bangladesh has increasingly embraced public-private partnerships (PPPs) in sectors such as infrastructure development, healthcare, and education (Rahman, 2017). For example, the government has collaborated with private entities to build and manage infrastructure projects like bridges and highways. However, challenges such as regulatory complexities and capacity constraints have hindered the full realization of the catalytic potential of the government.

Competitive government: Efforts to introduce competition and market mechanisms in public service delivery have been limited. While there have been instances of outsourcing certain services to the private sector, a lack of robust regulatory frameworks and concerns about accountability have constrained the widespread adoption of competitive government practices (Islam and Nasrin, 2020).

Mission-driven government: The Bangladeshi government has articulated ambitious development goals through various policy documents, such as Vision 2021 and Vision 2041, which outline long-term objectives for economic growth, poverty reduction, and social development (GOB, 2017). However, challenges in effective implementation and

monitoring have often hampered the translation of these missions into tangible outcomes.

Results-oriented government: Bangladesh has made efforts to enhance performance measurement and accountability in the public sector through initiatives like the Annual Performance Agreement (APA) system, where government officials sign agreements committing to specific performance targets (Rahman, 2017). Despite these efforts, issues related to data reliability, political interference, and capacity constraints have undermined the effectiveness of results-oriented governance.

Customer-driven government: Initiatives aimed at improving citizen engagement and service delivery have been introduced, including the establishment of digital platforms for accessing government services and feedback mechanisms (Islam and Nasrin, 2020). However, challenges such as digital divide, bureaucratic red tape, and corruption have limited the extent to which Bangladesh has achieved a truly customer-centric government.

Enterprising government: While there have been some endeavors to foster innovation and entrepreneurship within the public sector, bureaucratic inertia, risk aversion, and limited resources have often stifled entrepreneurial initiatives (Rahman, 2017). The culture of innovation and experimentation remains nascent within Bangladeshi governance structures.

Anticipatory government: Bangladesh faces numerous socio-economic challenges, including climate change impacts, natural disasters, and demographic shifts. While the government has taken steps to address these issues through policies and strategies, gaps in planning, coordination, and resource allocation have constrained the anticipatory capacity of the government (Islam and Nasrin, 2020).

Decentralized government: Efforts to decentralize decision-making and empower local governments have been underway, including the devolution of financial resources and administrative authority to local bodies (Rahman, 2017). However, concerns about political interference, capacity gaps, and resource constraints have limited the effectiveness of decentralization efforts.

Market-oriented government: Bangladesh has implemented market-oriented policies in sectors such as agriculture, industry, and trade to promote private sector development and economic growth (WB, 2020). However, challenges related to market access, regulatory barriers, and corruption have hindered the full realization of market-oriented governance.

Empowered Government: Capacity-building initiatives for public officials and institutions have been initiated to enhance governance effectiveness and efficiency (Islam and Nasrin, 2020). However, issues such as politicization of the bureaucracy, lack of meritocracy, and institutional weaknesses have undermined efforts to empower the government.

In conclusion, while Bangladesh has made efforts to align its governance practices with the principles of the Reinventing

Government model, significant challenges remain in implementation due to institutional constraints, resource limitations, and socio-political dynamics. Continued reforms, strengthened institutional capacity, and effective governance mechanisms are essential to further advance the application of these principles in Bangladeshi governance.

Linkage between Reinventing Government, Digitalization, Inclusive Governance, and Service Excellence

The principles of Reinventing Government provide a conceptual framework for governments to adopt digitalization and inclusive governance practices in their service delivery efforts (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). For example, by embracing customer-driven government principles, governments can leverage digital technologies to co-create services with citizens, gather feedback, and tailor service delivery to meet diverse needs. Similarly, empowered government principles support efforts to build digital literacy and capacity among citizens, ensuring that all members of society can benefit from digital services. The intersection of reinventing government, digitalization, inclusive governance, and service excellence represents a transformative paradigm in contemporary governance models. Reinventing government, pioneered by Osborne and Gaebler (1992), advocates for public sector reform emphasizing efficiency, responsiveness, and citizen-centricity. This paradigm shift has gained global momentum, with governments leveraging digital technologies to enhance service delivery and foster inclusive governance. Understanding the intricate linkage between these concepts is essential for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners alike (Dunleavy *et al.*, 2006; Fountain, 2001).

Reinventing Government and Digitalization

Reinventing government emphasizes adopting innovative approaches to streamline bureaucratic processes and enhance citizen engagement (Dunleavy *et al.*, 2006). Digitalization plays a crucial role in this transformation, offering tools and platforms to digitize services and improve accessibility (Fountain, 2001). For instance, e-governance initiatives such as online portals and digital payment systems promote efficiency and transparency (Bhatnagar, 2003). The intersection of reinventing government and digitalization represents a convergence of principles and practices aimed at modernizing governance structures. Digital technologies serve as enablers for realizing the objectives of reinventing government by facilitating the implementation of innovative solutions to longstanding challenges. For instance, electronic voting systems enhance the transparency and integrity of electoral processes, aligning with the principles of accountability and citizen participation inherent in reinventing government.

The examples are:

Performance management systems: Governments employ digital tools to monitor and evaluate the performance of public agencies and officials. For instance, performance dashboards provide real-time data on key performance indicators, enabling policymakers to make data-driven

decisions and hold agencies accountable for results (Bhatnagar, 2003).

Open data initiatives: Governments release datasets in open formats to promote transparency and foster innovation. Citizens, researchers, and businesses can access and analyze this data to gain insights into government operations and service delivery. For example, the US government's Data.gov platform hosts a vast repository of datasets spanning various domains, from healthcare and education to transportation and the environment (Moon, 2002).

Citizen engagement platforms: Digital platforms facilitate direct communication between citizens and government officials, enabling citizens to voice their concerns, provide feedback, and participate in decision-making processes. For instance, Brazil's Participatory Budgeting initiative allows citizens to propose and prioritize community projects, fostering collaboration and inclusivity in public expenditure decisions (Chadwick, 2013).

The synergy between reinventing government and digitalization holds immense potential for transforming governance in the digital age. By embracing digital technologies and innovative approaches, governments can enhance service delivery, promote transparency, and foster greater citizen engagement. However, realizing the full benefits of this intersection requires a holistic approach that addresses technological, organizational, and societal challenges. Governments must invest in digital infrastructure, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement to harness the transformative power of digitalization in reinventing government.

Digitalization and Inclusive Governance

Digitalization and inclusive governance are interconnected in several ways, each reinforcing the other's objectives and outcomes. Digital technologies serve as enablers for inclusive governance by providing platforms for citizen engagement, expanding access to government services, and promoting transparency and accountability. In turn, inclusive governance principles guide the design and implementation of digital initiatives to ensure they benefit all citizens, particularly those historically marginalized or underserved. Inclusive governance ensures equal access to government services for all segments of society (UNDP, 2013). Digitalization bridges the digital divide, empowering marginalized groups to engage with government services (Bertot *et al.*, 2010). Initiatives like community digital centers enhance accessibility and promote inclusive governance.

The examples are:

Digital citizen participation platforms: Governments worldwide are deploying digital platforms to facilitate citizen engagement in decision-making processes. For example, Estonia's e-Consultation platform enables citizens to provide feedback on draft legislation and policy proposals, ensuring their voices are heard in the policymaking process.

Mobile-based service delivery: Mobile technology has emerged as a powerful tool for expanding access to

government services, particularly in remote and underserved areas. In Bangladesh, the Access to Information (a2i) program uses mobile apps to deliver essential services such as healthcare, education, and agricultural support to rural communities, bridging the digital divide and promoting inclusive development.

Open data initiatives: Governments are releasing datasets in open formats to promote transparency and accountability while fostering innovation and civic engagement. For example, the Open Data Initiative in Mexico provides access to government data on public spending, infrastructure projects, and social indicators, empowering citizens to hold government accountable for its actions and expenditures (OECD, 2017).

The linkage between digitalization and inclusive governance offers a pathway to address systemic inequities and strengthen democratic participation in the digital era. By leveraging digital technologies to promote transparency, citizen engagement, and service accessibility, governments can advance equity and inclusivity in governance processes. However, realizing the full potential of this linkage requires a concerted effort to address digital divides, ensure data privacy and security, and build capacity among marginalized communities to fully participate in the digital society.

Digitalization and Service Excellence

Service excellence emphasizes efficient and citizen-centric service delivery (Fountain, 2001). Digitalization enables governments to streamline processes and gather real-time feedback (Bhatnagar, 2003). Platforms like India's MyGov facilitate citizen engagement and enhance service quality (GOI, n.d.). Digitalization and service excellence are closely linked, with digital technologies serving as enablers for delivering superior services to citizens. Digital tools and platforms enable governments to streamline service delivery processes, gather real-time feedback, and personalize services to meet individual needs. In turn, service excellence principles guide the design and implementation of digital initiatives to ensure they prioritize citizen satisfaction and enhance the overall service experience.

The examples are:

Digital service delivery platforms: Governments are increasingly leveraging digital platforms to provide citizens with convenient and accessible access to government services. For example, the UK government's GOV.UK platform serves as a centralized hub for accessing a wide range of government services and information, streamlining the service delivery process and reducing citizens' administrative burden.

Data-driven decision-making: Digital technologies enable governments to collect and analyze data to inform decision-making and improve service delivery. For example, the City of Chicago's OpenGrid platform aggregates and visualizes data on city services, infrastructure, and quality of life indicators, empowering policymakers to identify areas for improvement and allocate resources more effectively.

Citizen feedback mechanisms: Digital platforms facilitate real-time feedback from citizens, enabling governments to monitor service performance and address issues promptly. For example, the Singapore government's "Feedback Assistant" app allows citizens to report issues or provide feedback on government services, ensuring the timely resolution of concerns and continuous improvement of service quality.

Bangladesh's Digital Bangladesh Vision 2021: A strategy to transform governance and enhance service delivery (GOB, 2009).

The linkage between digitalization and service excellence offers governments a powerful framework for delivering citizen-centric solutions that enhance the overall service experience. By leveraging digital technologies to streamline processes, gather feedback, and personalize services, governments can improve service quality, foster citizen satisfaction, and build trust and confidence in government institutions. However, realizing the full potential of this linkage requires a concerted effort to invest in digital infrastructure, build capacity among government staff, and prioritize citizen engagement and feedback in the design and delivery of digital initiatives.

The linkage between reinventing government, digitalization, inclusive governance, and service excellence offers a comprehensive approach to modernizing governance structures and improving citizen outcomes. Governments must leverage digital technologies to become more efficient, responsive, and inclusive, fostering citizen trust and engagement (Klievink *et al.*, 2016). Understanding this linkage is crucial for achieving sustainable development and societal progress. In summary, the link between Reinventing Government, digitalization, inclusive governance, and service delivery is supported by a body of literature that highlights their collective focus on transforming government operations to be more citizen-centered, transparent, and responsive. By adopting Reinventing Government principles and leveraging digital technologies, governments can enhance service delivery, promote inclusivity, and improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of public administration.

Current State of Digital Governance, Inclusiveness, and Service Excellence in Bangladesh

The current state of Digital Governance, Inclusiveness, and Service Delivery in Bangladesh reflects both progress and challenges, shaped by ongoing initiatives and systemic constraints.

Digital governance initiatives: Bangladesh has prioritized digital governance as a key component of its development agenda, with the government launching the Digital Bangladesh initiative in 2009. This initiative aims to leverage information and communication technologies (ICTs) to enhance governance processes, improve service delivery, and promote digital inclusion (Ahmed and Islam, 2017). Under the Digital Bangladesh Vision 2021, various e-government projects have been initiated to digitize administrative

processes, enhance transparency, and increase citizen engagement (Islam, 2018b).

Inclusiveness and accessibility: Despite progress in digital governance, inclusiveness remains a challenge in Bangladesh. While urban areas have relatively better access to digital services, rural and marginalized communities face barriers such as limited internet connectivity, lack of digital literacy, and language barriers (Rahman *et al.*, 2020). Initiatives like the Union Digital Centers (UDCs) aim to bridge this gap by providing digital services to rural populations, but challenges persist in reaching remote areas.

Service delivery mechanisms: Digitalization has transformed service delivery mechanisms in Bangladesh, with several government agencies offering online platforms and mobile applications to deliver services to citizens. For instance, the National Portal of Bangladesh serves as a centralized platform for accessing government services and information, including e-government services for citizen registration, tax filing, and utility bill payments (Islam, 2018b). However, challenges such as bureaucratic red tape and interoperability issues continue to hinder seamless service delivery (Ahmed and Islam, 2019).

Efficiency and transparency: Digital governance initiatives have led to improvements in service delivery efficiency and transparency. Automation of administrative processes, digitization of records, and online transaction systems have reduced processing times, minimized errors, and enhanced accountability mechanisms (Ahmed and Islam, 2017). Additionally, data-driven decision-making processes enable policymakers to monitor progress, analyze trends, and respond to emerging challenges more effectively (Islam and Azad, 2019b).

Assessing the effectiveness of Digital Governance, Inclusiveness, and Service Delivery in Bangladesh requires examining various factors, including accessibility, efficiency, transparency, and citizen satisfaction. Here's an analysis with references:

Accessibility: Digital governance initiatives have improved the accessibility of public services by reducing geographical barriers and bureaucratic hurdles. Online platforms and mobile applications facilitate convenient access to government services, enabling citizens to avail themselves of essential services without visiting physical offices (Islam, 2018b). However, challenges such as limited internet penetration and digital literacy gaps may restrict access for marginalized communities (Rahman *et al.*, 2020).

Efficiency: Digitalization has enhanced the efficiency of service delivery processes by automating administrative tasks and reducing paperwork. E-government services enable streamlined workflows, faster processing times, and fewer errors compared to traditional manual processes (Ahmed and Islam, 2017). This efficiency gains traction in areas such as tax filing, land records management, and utility bill payments, where online platforms facilitate swift transactions (Islam, 2018b).

Transparency: Digital governance promotes transparency by providing access to information and enhancing accountability

mechanisms. Online portals and databases allow citizens to track the status of their applications, monitor government expenditures, and participate in decision-making processes (Ahmed and Islam, 2019). This transparency fosters trust between the government and citizens, contributing to improved governance outcomes (Islam and Azad, 2019b).

Citizen satisfaction: The effectiveness of digital governance and service delivery can be gauged by citizen satisfaction levels. Positive feedback, increased usage of online services, and improved service ratings indicate successful implementation (Rahman *et al.*, 2020). Surveys and feedback mechanisms help policymakers assess citizen perceptions and identify areas for further improvement.

While Bangladesh has made significant strides in digital governance and service delivery, there are areas for improvement to enhance effectiveness further. Strengthening digital infrastructure, expanding internet connectivity, and addressing digital literacy challenges are essential steps to ensure inclusiveness and effectiveness (Ahmed and Islam, 2017). Additionally, continuous monitoring, evaluation, and feedback mechanisms are crucial for identifying bottlenecks and refining service delivery processes.

Case Examples of Bangladesh

Digital Bangladesh initiative: The Digital Bangladesh initiative, launched by the Government of Bangladesh, aims to harness digital technologies for inclusive development and improved service delivery (GOB, 2009). Example: The Access to Information (a2i) program under Digital Bangladesh has implemented various e-governance initiatives to enhance service delivery, such as digital birth registration, online land record management, and mobile-based agricultural advisory services.

Citizen service centers: The establishment of Citizen Service Centers (CSCs) across Bangladesh serves as a cornerstone of the government's efforts to promote inclusiveness and accessibility to government services. Example: CSCs provide citizens, especially those in rural areas, with access to a wide range of government services, including birth registration, passport application, and utility bill payments, through digital platforms and trained facilitators (Kamal *et al.*, 2020).

Mobile financial services: Bangladesh's rapid adoption of mobile financial services (MFS) has revolutionized financial inclusion and service delivery, particularly for marginalized populations. Example: Platforms like bKash and Nagad enable citizens, even those without traditional bank accounts, to access financial services such as money transfer, bill payments, and savings through their mobile phones, thus promoting financial inclusion and empowering underserved communities.

E-Government portals: The development of e-government portals serves as a centralized platform for citizens to access government services and information, promoting transparency and efficiency. Example: The Bangladesh National Portal (bangladesh.gov.bd) provides citizens with a single point of access to various government services, including tax filing, passport applications, and public

procurement, thus simplifying administrative processes and enhancing service delivery (GOB, n.d.).

Digital health initiatives: Bangladesh's digital health initiatives aim to improve healthcare access and service delivery through the integration of technology into the healthcare system. Example: Projects like the Telemedicine and Telehealth Services initiative leverage digital platforms to provide remote healthcare consultations, diagnosis, and treatment to citizens, particularly those in underserved rural areas, thus enhancing healthcare accessibility and inclusiveness.

These case examples demonstrate Bangladesh's commitment to leveraging digital technologies and reinventing government principles to promote inclusiveness, transparency, and service excellence in governance. Through innovative initiatives and strategic partnerships, Bangladesh continues to make strides towards building a more inclusive and digitally empowered society.

In conclusion, Digital Governance, Inclusiveness, and Service Delivery in Bangladesh have demonstrated effectiveness in improving accessibility, efficiency, transparency, and citizen satisfaction. However, ongoing efforts are needed to address existing challenges and maximize the impact of digital initiatives on governance outcomes.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN BANGLADESH

Despite significant progress, Bangladesh faces several challenges in realizing the full potential of digitalization, inclusive governance, and service delivery. Limited internet penetration, digital literacy gaps, cybersecurity risks, and infrastructural constraints hinder the widespread adoption of digital technologies. Additionally, issues related to data privacy, interoperability, and institutional capacity pose challenges to effective governance and service delivery. However, Bangladesh also presents numerous opportunities for leveraging digitalization to address these challenges, including the growing youth population, vibrant startup ecosystem, and increasing demand for digital services (Islam, 2018b).

Challenges

Digitalization, inclusive governance, and service delivery in Bangladesh have encountered numerous challenges despite significant progress in leveraging digital technologies to promote socio-economic development and citizen engagement. Understanding these challenges is crucial for addressing gaps, improving strategies, and ensuring the effective implementation of digital initiatives. Below, we discuss the key challenges associated with digitalization, inclusive governance, and service delivery in Bangladesh, supported by relevant references:

Digital Divide and Access Inequality

One of the primary challenges is the digital divide, which refers to the gap between those who have access to digital technologies and those who do not (Islam and Azad, 2019b). In Bangladesh, disparities in internet access, digital literacy,

and technological infrastructure persist between urban and rural areas, as well as among different socio-economic groups. Limited access to affordable internet services, inadequate ICT infrastructure, and low levels of digital literacy among marginalized communities hinder their participation in digital governance processes and access to online services (Rahman *et al.*, 2019).

Cybersecurity Risks and Data Privacy Concerns

The increasing reliance on digital platforms for governance and service delivery has exposed Bangladesh to cybersecurity risks and data privacy concerns. Weak cybersecurity infrastructure, inadequate legal frameworks, and limited awareness among users make government websites and online platforms vulnerable to cyberattacks, data breaches, and privacy violations (Ahmed and Islam, 2017). Ensuring the security of digital systems and protecting citizens' personal information are critical challenges that require robust cybersecurity measures and effective regulatory mechanisms (Islam, 2018b).

Capacity Constraints and Institutional Bottlenecks

The successful implementation of digital initiatives requires adequate institutional capacity, technical expertise, and administrative support (Hossain, 2014). However, Bangladesh faces challenges related to institutional bottlenecks, bureaucratic hurdles, and resistance to change within government agencies (Islam, 2018b). Limited human resource capacity, outdated regulatory frameworks, and fragmented coordination among stakeholders impede the effective deployment of digital technologies and the integration of e-government services (Rahman *et al.*, 2019).

Digital Literacy and User Engagement

Digital literacy and user engagement are critical factors that influence the adoption and utilization of digital services (Islam and Azad, 2019a). Despite efforts to promote digital literacy programs, many citizens, particularly in rural areas and among vulnerable groups, lack the necessary skills to navigate online platforms and utilize e-services effectively (UNDP Bangladesh, 2020). Moreover, limited awareness about available services, complex user interfaces, and language barriers hinder citizen engagement and participation in digital governance processes (Ahmed and Islam, 2017).

Infrastructure and Connectivity Challenges

Bangladesh faces infrastructural challenges, including inadequate ICT infrastructure, unreliable power supply, and limited network coverage in remote areas. Insufficient broadband connectivity, slow internet speeds, and frequent power outages hinder the accessibility and usability of digital platforms, particularly in rural and underserved areas (Hossain, 2014). Addressing infrastructure gaps and expanding connectivity are essential for ensuring equitable access to digital services and promoting inclusive governance (Rahman *et al.*, 2019).

In conclusion, overcoming the challenges associated with digitalization, inclusive governance, and service delivery is essential for realizing the full potential of digital technologies

to drive socio-economic development and citizen empowerment in Bangladesh. Addressing issues such as the digital divide, cybersecurity risks, institutional capacity constraints, digital literacy, and infrastructure challenges requires a multi-stakeholder approach, concerted efforts from government, civil society, the private sector, and development partners, and the implementation of targeted interventions tailored to the specific needs of different communities.

Opportunities

Harnessing digitalization, promoting inclusive governance, and enhancing service delivery in Bangladesh present numerous opportunities for driving socio-economic development, citizen empowerment, and government efficiency. Below, we explore these opportunities in detail, supported by relevant references:

Digital Transformation for Economic Growth

Digitalization offers the opportunity to accelerate Bangladesh's economic growth by fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, and productivity gains. The digital economy, encompassing e-commerce, digital payments, and ICT-enabled services, has the potential to create jobs, attract investments, and contribute to GDP growth (UNDP Bangladesh, 2020). By leveraging digital technologies, Bangladesh can unlock new opportunities in sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and services, leading to inclusive and sustainable economic development (Ahmed and Islam, 2017).

Enhanced Access to Government Services

Digitalization enables the delivery of government services in a more efficient, transparent, and citizen-centric manner (Rahman *et al.*, 2019). E-government initiatives, such as online portals, mobile apps, and digital platforms, offer citizens convenient access to a wide range of services, including healthcare, education, and social welfare (Islam and Azad, 2019b). By digitizing service delivery processes, Bangladesh can reduce bureaucratic delays, streamline administrative procedures, and improve the overall quality of public services (Hossain, 2014).

Empowerment of Marginalized Communities

Inclusive governance initiatives leverage digital technologies to empower marginalized communities, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities (UNDP Bangladesh, 2020). Digital platforms provide opportunities for marginalized groups to participate in decision-making processes, voice their concerns, and access information and resources (Islam, 2018b). By promoting digital literacy and ensuring digital inclusion, Bangladesh can bridge socio-economic disparities and empower marginalized communities to actively engage in civic life and governance.

Strengthened Transparency and Accountability

Digitalization enhances transparency and accountability in governance by facilitating real-time data collection, monitoring, and reporting (Ahmed and Islam, 2017). Open data initiatives, citizen feedback mechanisms, and online

complaint redressal systems enable greater transparency in government operations and decision-making processes (Rahman *et al.*, 2019). By promoting open government practices and leveraging digital tools for public oversight, Bangladesh can strengthen accountability mechanisms and build trust between government institutions and citizens (Hossain, 2014).

Improved Service Delivery in Healthcare and Education

Digitalization offers opportunities to enhance service delivery in critical sectors such as healthcare and education (UNDP Bangladesh, 2020). Telemedicine platforms, e-learning solutions, and mobile health applications enable remote access to healthcare services and educational resources, particularly in underserved areas (Islam and Azad, 2019b). By leveraging ICTs to strengthen healthcare infrastructure, digitize medical records, and deliver virtual education, Bangladesh can improve health outcomes, enhance educational attainment, and bridge rural-urban disparities (Ahmed and Islam, 2017).

Fostering Civic Engagement and Participation

Digitalization promotes civic engagement and participatory governance by enabling citizens to interact with government institutions, express their opinions, and contribute to policy-making processes (Rahman *et al.*, 2019). Social media platforms, online forums, and crowdsourcing initiatives facilitate public dialogue, community mobilization, and citizen-led initiatives (Islam, 2018b). By harnessing digital technologies for citizen engagement and feedback, Bangladesh can strengthen democratic institutions, foster social cohesion, and promote inclusive decision-making.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the integration of Reinventing Government principles, digitalization, inclusiveness, and service delivery represents a transformative approach to modern governance. By embracing the tenets of customer-driven government, results-oriented government, and empowered government, administrations can harness the power of digital technologies to revolutionize service delivery. Through inclusive governance practices, governments ensure that the benefits of digitalization are accessible to all citizens, including marginalized communities. This holistic approach fosters transparency, accountability, and responsiveness, ultimately leading to more effective and citizen-centric public administration. As governments continue to evolve in the digital age, the synergy between Reinventing Government principles and digital innovations will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of governance, driving positive outcomes for societies worldwide. The digitalization, inclusive governance, and enhanced service delivery present significant opportunities for Bangladesh to achieve its development goals and improve the well-being of its citizens. By leveraging digital technologies to drive economic growth, enhance government efficiency, empower marginalized communities, and foster civic engagement, Bangladesh can build a more inclusive and resilient society that thrives in the digital age. While Bangladesh has made significant strides in digitalization, inclusive governance, and service delivery,

several challenges persist. The journey towards harnessing the full potential of digital technologies for inclusive governance and efficient service delivery is fraught with obstacles. Challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, digital literacy gaps, cybersecurity risks, bureaucratic inertia, and political interference hamper progress in these areas. Additionally, ensuring inclusivity and equitable access to digital services remains a persistent challenge, particularly for marginalized communities and rural populations. Despite these hurdles, there are opportunities for addressing these challenges through strategic policy interventions, capacity-building initiatives, and partnerships with the private sector and civil society. By prioritizing digital inclusion, strengthening governance mechanisms, and enhancing service delivery models, Bangladesh can overcome these challenges and unlock the transformative potential of digital technologies for the benefit of all its citizens.

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Conflict of Interest

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