Reengineering Government
GPR, Government Process Reengineering

What is GPR?

GPR is all about review, re-looking and redefining the way (in terms of processes, procedure, trust and spirit, mindset, attitude, ...) Government needs to operate, interact, interface, and transact with its stakeholders (Citizens, Employees, Business, NGO, other Government agencies within India and other Countries, International bodies, ...) in ever changing times. GPR is more need of the hour for Government of India (GoI) than a matter of choice anymore for all practical reasons.

GPR primarily deals with right from ‘optimisation’ through ‘redefinition’ of processes and procedure that Government needs to interact, interface, and transact with its stakeholders in ever changing times. GPR primarily mean

• minimizing/ eliminating the inefficiencies & duplication in the processes & procedures;
• enhanced effectiveness with the concept of parallelism;
• built-in agility & flexibility to introduce the reforms & changes in evolutionary manner;
• dynamic workflow with built-in controls and escalation mechanism;
• built-in capability & capacity to optimally respond to scalability & ever growing complexity & volumes;
• Change management as one of the key and critical aspects; Change Management is single most significant factors that determines the success of any process reengineering;

Why GPR?

Challenges posed by Globalisation, ever changing expectations of all stakeholders, emergence of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and continuous technology advancement, ever growing volumes-complexity-&-competitiveness, ... are among the key reasons causing the need for GPR. In fact in today’s times, even the definition of Government is changing in terms of role of Government and expectations from Government. Even today, Government runs on the policies, processes & procedures those were defined ages back. Most of them have become dated and require comprehensive review and redefinition.

Just to make a reference here, Governance primarily has two streams (a) Social and (b) Commercial. In last two decades, Government services falling under ‘Commercial’ have undergone reforms & change like Telecom, Aviation, Banking, Railway, ... There are other services like direct & indirect taxation, treasury, ... which have witnessed decent level of reforms. There are sectors like Transport, Land record, External affairs that are catching up with some bit of reforms. However social sector (Agriculture, education, healthcare & family welfare, Rural & Urban development, women & social welfare, ...) has not been able to draw the serious attention.

For sure, whatever reform initiatives have happened so far; they are certainly by compulsion and reasons stated above. Due to natural reasons understood, areas covered under social sectors have been seriously neglected and/or yet to catch up the serious attention.

The Corporate world too always had and still faces all such challenges and competition as added factor; however Corporate(s) across the board have successfully adapted to the change. For Corporate, it was not the matter of choice, but it was a compulsion and the matter of survival. Irrespective of size across industries, the fittest and those who have been adopting the change timely have survived, grown, and diversified. Again, ‘adopting the change’ is a continuous process and like a journey even for Corporate sector.
Corporate adopted the change and reforms to the customer focusing processes (Sales & Marketing, order processing, customer management, Production planning & material management, ...) followed by internal backend processes (like HR, Quality, Finance, ...). However in overall context, it has been like a journey.

Agreed, Government and Corporate are not the same but not that too different as well; some of the Corporate houses are huge enough in terms of size, complexity, multi-products & brands, widely geographically spread, ... and facing the everyday business challenges. Internationally IBM is a BIG time example, may be IBM evolution and growth strategy has set the tone of change for rapidly growing organisations of today's times. In India, Tata, Reliance, Bharti, ... of the world have shown the way forward in Indian context. Even in India, some of the good old days Corporate houses have either lost their position & significance or have become irrelevant in modern days economy. One of the most critical and constant factor has been the timely decision to adapt to change.

It is not that Government is not facing similar challenges. For an example, in today's context whosoever has the given choice and financial support, opts for Private Security agencies. State owned Police function is certainly loosing space. It may not be right to conclude which is right or wrong, but Government security agencies are certainly loosing significance and positioning. Same the case with Aviation, Telecom, and Banking industries, Government is NOT able to restrict the option for Government employees/ bodies to stick to state owned bodies. Given a choice, even Government bodies are opting for options other than state owned bodies/ agencies.

**How GPR?**

Adoption of ICT is ‘the modern day tool and mantra’ to facilitate the change and implement reforms (GPR) through its very natural benefits like enhanced efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, accountability, reusability & replication, scalability, modular implementation approach, networking & connectivity, flexibility & agility during implementation to facilitate change in evolutionary manner, collaboration & workflow, concept of parallelism, reporting and analytics, ...

e-Governance (process of Government transformation) in India is happening in evolutionary manner unlike some of the other sectors like Telecom, Banking & Insurance, Aviation, White goods, ... those experienced in revolutionary manner. There have been definite reasons for evolutionary reforms in Governance for natural reasons like huge legacy, combination of Federal-State-Local Government structure, multi-party Governments in Center and across States, ...

Socio-Economic-Political (SEP) factors put together determines the challenges and success of any initiative and program, especially for a Country like India.

Government and various funding agencies like World Bank has initiated series of reform projects with tons of money in overall context like irrigation, social development, infrastructure building, ...; however not much concrete results have been seen for reasons like

- Reform initiatives in isolation and discrete in nature
- Reform program without concrete measurable parameters
- Reform program lacks definite timelines and review at appropriate levels

Adoption of ICT in Governance in India began in early eighties, but it was internally and MIS centric. The entire focus was primarily to induct ICT in Government structure and take select benefits of ICT like some level of efficiency. Till recently, there was hardly any focus on reforms. Even in today’s context, it is still in pockets and isolation; it is not yet comprehensive and integrated approach.

Introduction and implementation of Administrative REFORMS/ GPR is one BIG concern area in India. While touching on GPR, it is a BIG MUST to look at anything & everything from external stakeholder’s perspective in integrated and comprehensive manner.
GPR in India: a quick review and proposed strategy

There are reasons for slow/no GPR despite Government talking for quite a while now. Among the most significant and prominent reasons is "lack of commitment and accountability" with clearly quantifiable measurement within bureaucratic and political system. The task is certainly difficult, but not impossible. It is missing/ lack of ‘willingness’.

There are few other leading reasons responsible for slow/no GPR despite Government talking all over and spending huge money on eGov initiatives with reform/ GPR as one of the key objectives:

- Political setup in the Country, i.e. Federal & States
- Multi-political party system and diversity of parties across
- Dependency/ involvement of multiple departments in a single decision-making
- Huge social sector
- Lack of continuity of leaders and teams in a given context
- Huge legacy in terms of population, literacy, unemployment, lack of infrastructure

In India, series of ‘REFORM/ Government Reengineering’ centric projects and initiatives have been initiated/ undertaken by various agencies like World Bank (WB), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Planning Commission, MCIT (Ministry of Communication and IT), respective line Ministries, UNESCO, PFC, ... Some have been partly successful, some have been struggling, while some have not even clicked. However one thing has been consistently across, i.e. each initiative has been quite discreet, is in isolation, and lacks comprehensive integrated approach. Even in case of partial success, the overall impact is limited to little bit of efficiency and flexibility. The beneficiaries are quite limited in numbers. The overall impact in overall context has been almost negligible and certainly lacks overall vision.

Just to name a few, Government has initiated reforms in areas like Power, Pension, Land Reforms, Drinking water mission, Urban water supply, Policy reform in Family Welfare Program, health sector reform, India tax reform, Media reform, ... however the overall impact has been absolutely limited and negligible.

Government has started to embraced Industry consultants in various projects and initiatives throughout the project life cycle right from conceptualization through implementation; but the challenge has been still working around departmental perspective; sometime not even at Ministry level and/or across organisation spread Federal and States level. This has been among the key reasons for not much success. In true sense, the role and contribution of these consultants has been absolutely limited for various reasons. One of the key factors among many is dominance of bureaucrats and political leadership. In current situation, one of the key reasons for lack of true effectiveness of consultants is also lack of sufficient & desired expertise & experience among consultants.

Government of India has a separate and dedicated department for Administrative Reforms, however the concrete contribution and effectiveness of this department functioning is yet to be seen. Not too sure if the department enjoys the authority and mandate in spirit on behalf of line ministries (Federal and States) & departments to bring up administrative reforms.

As in most cases, more than one Ministry/ Department are involved in overall execution of any task; it is absolutely important to form task force(s) to understand the legacy issues, expectations of stakeholders in line with need of the hours, non-functional requirements (flexibility, change management requirements, scalability, integration, ...), and other important requirements and factors.
Like Corporate world, there would be need to reorganize the entire Government structure; changing the vertical departmental perspective to task based horizontal view. This might need to adopt the best practices from Corporate of matrix organisation involving functional and administrative reporting. Some of the large and strategic Public Sector organisations have started to adopt some of it across their functions.

It is absolutely necessary and compulsory for Government to transform itself in line with changing scenario. May be, Government need to identify few low risk low visibility departments to experiment the new model; but being too late in the day, this needs to be a BIG BANG approach; however it is a BIG MUST, it is inevitable, and it is the need of the hour; the only choice left is the timing.

Government needs to possibly review and evaluate the replication strategy, i.e. the adoption of initiatives and projects across rather than keep re-inventing the same concept/ initiatives all over from scratch. It certainly costs time and money every time. It may not be a bad idea to let various States/ departments spearhead different initiatives from conceptualization through evolving the basic framework with the vision and concept to replicate across. This way multiple initiatives can be taken up simultaneously and series of initiatives can be created in parallel. Various Governments and people involved shall certainly work beyond their respective political agenda and personal aspirations.

Government shall form separate dedicated empowered ‘task force’ with clearly defined vision & mission, objectives, critical success factors, teaming, methodology & strategy, timelines, measurable deliverables, activity-responsibility matrix, ... The task force shall work as independent team in cohesive manner with line ministries such that business-as-usual must continue, while the concerned departments shall be able to adopt to the new mantra from effective dates. The task force shall have effective & meaningful participation & involvement of Industry and other relevant stakeholders to ensure comprehensiveness and effectiveness of entire program.

There are organisations in the Country to represent industry like CII, NASSCOM, FICCI, ASSOCHAM, MAIT, ..., in meaningful and organised manner. Industry leaders ensure their active participation through these organisations. Government needs to bring a mechanism in place to bring Industry Leaders on board in effective & meaningful manner.

On the face of it, all this may look difficult, impractical, theoretical, ...; this will just be apprehension; however it is absolutely doable. Just to reiterate, it is not the matter of choice; it is inevitable and need of the hour of yesterday.

Government shall seriously consider bringing industry leaders on board under their CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), especially those who are committed to do business in India and that too with Government. Government does not require funds from corporate world, it require best practices and active involvement & commitment in helping Government transformation. Definitely, corporate leaders can make difference in GPR. Such an involvement shall further ensure continuity to minimize the impact of political and bureaucratic changes.

India has access to the best of the talent, skills, and leadership in terms of
- Internationally successful India-origin Industrialist like LN Mittal
- World class renowned management guru like CK Prahlad
- All times best of the technocrat Sam Pitroda
- Indian Industrialist like Ratan Tata, who is an institution in self
- Indian nuggets/ academicians like Dr. DB Phatak, Prof. Ashok Jhunjhunwala, Prof. SN Maheshwari, Prof. HR Krishnamurthy, Prof. Gautam Barua, ...
For all practical purposes, Industry shall be equally keen to ensure their effective participation as
Industry will be among the biggest gainer and beneficiaries. Government shall make sincere and
congruity attempts to bring such leaders on board in meaningful manner to help Government in
achieving the target results effectively.

Industry players have done enough of it in their respective organisations not once, but many times.

One of the most commonly talking points is readiness towards Commonwealth Games. It would be
certainly worth looking at the pace ‘Hotel Taj’ is re-launched in Mumbai in less than one month
despite all kind of damages. Corporate world do understand the opportunity cost very clearly and
impact/ potential looses of either not doing in time or doing late. This is just one absolutely recent
case study, there are many case studies and success stories of Corporate world on transformation
and responding to ever changing needs. There are business houses, who have grown multi-fold and
businesses going out of business.

There are set of successes well within Government and that too in India. Even within Government
sector, take a look at
• Delhi Metro. It was never easy, neither smooth sailing so far; Delhi Metro has used all the
required & techno-commercially possible; it has been a huge success.
• ‘123 agreement’ is another success despite all odds, which had the challenge of managing
internal & external factors across the Globe.
• ‘Online train reservation system' is yet another success, which is absolutely internally driven.
• ‘Implementation of CNG’ was not that easy at all, however it has happened.
• Reforms in Elections in India have been yet another success across the board.

Not too sure if all will agree, but this Country finished the terrorists impact in Punjab when it was
taken up as a task at the highest level.

In all these few cited examples, the differentiators are absolute commitment & conviction, driven
from top, and empowerment of teams. These are not even Public Sector organisations. These are
hard core Central/ State Government. The fact remains and gets reiterated “if there is a will, there
is a way”.

Government has certainly been successful in small way in adopting and redefining the way
‘Government-Industry’ shall transact in PPP (Public-Private Partnership) model and/or BOO/ BOOT/
... projects wrt. role & responsibilities, techno-financial viability, commercial modeling, risk
mitigation strategies, defining & measuring SLA (Service Level Agreement), ... However it still has a
long way to go. Even among such projects, there is a definite concern on consistency in the entire
evaluation & execution process.

One thing for sure, there is no one logic or magic that works in all situations. It is critical and crucial
to create a framework and tune the model from project to project.

It might be interesting to have a quick look at Power sector. Reforms and reengineering has
happened in Telecom, Banking Insurance & Finance, Media, and other sectors across the board and
they are unstoppable. However, at the same time, Power sector is still struggling and suffering
though it has the most crying need and impacts everyone in the society irrespective of social &
financial status. It impacts the citizens and industrial world most. The SEP challenges were not too
different in Telecom Vs Power, rather Power straight adds to vote bank. It is still an open question
and mystery WHY reforms have not happened in Power sector despite Private sector jumped into
this. This is certainly a separate point of discussions in itself.

One word of caution, no more PoC (Proof of Concept), no more Pilots; each of these initiatives must
be on real time full scale basis in real life scenario and full blown basis.
Each of the initiatives has to be above and beyond individuals. These initiatives need to be institutionalized and implemented to ensure no disappointment and no surprises subject to any changes. May be, Delhi Metro is one of the great examples in India to reference as a true replicable story. No rocket science, but just certain level of clarity and independence; however Delhi Metro leadership is equally committed and demonstrates accountability. Delhi Metro had huge challenges and series of challenges like rolling out underground Metro in locations like Chawri Bazar without creating any damages and/or disturbances. One of the key success factors for Delhi Metro has been its independence from routine political & bureaucratic influence & impact.

The reforms may need to follow spiral/evolutionary model with self-corrective mechanism at various logical check points. However, it needs to start all over fresh with a clearly defined mission with defined timelines and by putting all required components in place.

There is one good news, “Reforms are happening and there is NO U TURN’; however pace, continuity, and diversity of Reforms/GPR is a serious concern.

It is understood that Social sector progress Vs Commercial sector is expected to be slow and it has been slow. Like it or not, the very nature of sector equally plays an important role in opening up the sector, reforms, and change. The basic requirements and measurement of social sector have been quite different; hence the progress has been slow. However, India is still far from any standards of progress. The lack of comprehensive effective measurement criteria is single most reasons among the key reasons.

To conclude, there can be no reason for ‘No Transformation’. Nothing is impossible. Transformation is need of the hour like survival and it cannot be compromised. It has to be done, time is running out!

Sudhir Aggarwal
+91 981050 7655; sudagg@hotmail.com