MODULE: 1
FUNDAMENTALS OF TELECENTRES

TELECENTRE ENTREPRENEUR COURSE
MODULE 1: FUNDAMENTALS OF TELECENTRES

Structure of the Unit

1. Learning Outcomes
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3. What are Telecentres?
4. Origin of Telecentre
5. The global movement
6. The Indian Telecentre movements
7. Types of Telecentres
8. Link between Governance, E-Governance and Telecentres

1. LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the unit, you should be able to

- Explain what telecentres are
- Understand the origin of telecentre
- Understand about global telecentre movement
- Describe the telecentre movement in India
- Explain various kinds of telecentres
- Understand the link between Governance, E-Governance and telecentres

2. INTRODUCTION

To change the community and to make them more informed a Village Level Entrepreneur (VLE) can play a constructive role, for this it is important for a VLE to understand what telecentre as a technology can do. Once he/she experiences that the technologies can make the life of the community better, he/she can connect them with new information and make the life of citizens better.

The telecentre movement is one of the powerful initiative of bringing together technology (i.e. both computers and Internet) for community development. In this Unit the VLE is introduced to details related to the telecentre movement, in India and Globally. It also covers details about different kinds of telecentres and their functions. At the end of the module it explains the linkage between Governance, E-Governance and telecentres.

3. WHAT ARE TELECENTRES?

A telecentre is a public place where people have access to computers, the internet and other information and communication technologies that enable them to gather, create, learn and communicate information for social and economic development [1].

These centres offer a number of communication services which depends on the needs of the community; some of these services offered are free or subsidized by external bodies such as governments or NGOs. They tend to be publicly owned and geared towards more isolated people (like villagers), low income earners and people with little formal education; they may offer training on computer and web use, but also other kinds of training including non-formal education and distance learning in agriculture, health, basic education, entrepreneurship and other fields specifically related to community development [2]. The
centres may be of different size and verities, few of them may be simple with few computer terminals available for accessing only the Internet, and others may be more sophisticated having fax machines, printers, public phones, photocopiers, kiosks for other services, access to e-government services, and transactions processing office.

4. ORIGIN OF TELECENTRE

Telecentres exist in many countries in the world, they are known by different names in different contexts according to the type and service they provide such as tele-cottages, information shops, kiosks, and village information centre. The origin of telecentres can be traced back to Europe's tele-cottage and community technology centres (CTCs) in the United States, both of which emerged in the 1980s as a result of advances in computing [3]. According to Molnár and Karvalics, the first community technical centre was opened in Harlem, USA, in 1983, with the primary aim of bridging the growing digital divide between the upper and lower levels of society; community technical centres offered free access to technologies and placed great emphasis on training [4]. However, the idea of creating places where the members of a community could access Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can be traced back to 1985 in the villages of Vemdalens and Harjedalens in Sweden [5].

Today, ownership of computers at home is widespread in most develop and developing countries, but still there remains a need for free and affordable public access to computing to ensure that everyone has access to technologies that have become essential in daily life. However, in reality, telecentres are full of varieties and becoming more and more important policy to bridge the digital divide in rural and underserved or unserved areas of developing countries.

The purposes of establishing telecentre are [3]

- To transform the digital divide into digital opportunity in rural and remote areas of developing country;
- To provide the most effective solution in rural area for sharing the use of internet or ICT facilities among the communities;
- To create a knowledge centre in rural community;
- to educate people and to enrich living standard by having access to global information through the internet technology;
- To promote the sale of local product through the internet or electronic commerce applications;
- To provide government information such as natural disaster warning, announcement, e-government services and other e-services to the local communities.

While the objectives are below

- Overcome barriers to economic and educational developments that rely on telecommunication services.
- Trigger socioeconomic development
- Ensure equal access to necessary services across population in the country.
  Which includes access to e-gov services, access to information, access to
online services like online bill payments, flight booking, communication with others etc.

- Reduce the digital divide.
- Stimulate and respond to the demand for information and communication.

5. THE GLOBAL TELECENTRE MOVEMENT

In the 1980s, as a result of advances in computing, telecottage in Europe and Community Technology Centres (CTCs) in the United States began to emerge. Their primary purpose was to overcome the remoteness of rural and isolated location, often characterized by low purchasing power and poor quality of telecommunication infrastructure. The telecentres provided a means of reaching out and enabling the participation of the communities in the emerging information economy [6]. After the collapse of the centralized political and economic structure, more than 150 telecottages were established all over the country as part of a public funded development program supported by USAID for building the local government [7][8]. In the 1990s, telecentres spread to Africa, Asia and Latin America. Since then, numerous programmes for providing public access to new technologies have been initiated by various international agencies in the developing countries. The deployment of telecentres all across the world is referred to as the “telecentre movement” [9].

6. THE INDIAN TELECENTRE MOVEMENT

The movement in India is associated with rural areas which began around 1992, but this movement took its shape around 1998[10]. Various pilot projects like Gyandoot in Madhya Pradesh, SARI in Tamil Nadu and Tarahaat in Bundelkhand etc, were initiated in the rural areas by state government, NGOs and private agencies in different locations of the country during 1999-2000. Further the movement gained momentum with the launch of “Mission 2007”, the mission aimed to provide 100,000 ICT-based community service centres to every village of India by August 15, 2007 by the Department of Information Technology, Government of India [11].

During the year 2006 Government of India, introduced CSC Scheme as part of its commitment in the National Common Minimum Programme to introduce e-governance on a massive scale. The aim of the scheme was to provide high quality and cost-effective video, voice and data content and services, in the areas of e-governance, education, health, telemedicine, entertainment as well as other private services. Main highlight of the scheme was to offer web-enabled e-governance services in rural areas, including application forms, certificates, and utility payments such as electricity, telephone and water bills through the network of CSCs. The Scheme has created a conducive environment for the private sector and NGOs to play an active role in implementation of the CSC Scheme, thereby becoming a partner of the government in development of rural India [12]. These CSCs are envisaged to offer online integrated service delivery on ‘Anytime, Anywhere’ basis [13].

The scheme was revaluated and CSC 2.0 was introduced to set up 2.5 lakh CSC at GPs across country by 2019.

Telecentres in India are known by different names such as Common Services Centres (CSC), Village Knowledge Centres (VKC), eChoupals, Community Information Centres (CIC), Agritech Centres, Information Kiosks, Drishtee Kendras, n-Logue Centres, Gyan Chaupals, Gyan Sanchar etc.
7. TYPES OF TELECENTRES

There are many kinds of telecentres depending on the demography and the people they serve. They could be sponsored by NGOs or Government (can be state or national), be a commercial venture or university based. The table below summarizes a Telecentre models and various types of telecentres.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Management Administration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>The basic service is computer plus internet connection with cafeteria called cyber cafe, but other non-telecom services generate only a small part of the income.</td>
<td>Private Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franchise</td>
<td>Seeks to stand out by improved quality, faster connection, more and better services, atmosphere and comfort.</td>
<td>Private Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non - Government Organization</td>
<td>Wide diversity of services, orientation and target group depending on location and orientation of promoting institution. Services include internet combined with training and development activities. Hours of internet may be subordinated to use of machined for other uses by NGO staff.</td>
<td>NGO or Development institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>Many terminals (30 to 100) mainly for students but also available to general public. Specialized technical support available. Academic courses in computers and preparation of contents easy to organize.</td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>The school open its doors to the community after class hours. Services tend to be many and varied (Internet, e-mail, content preparation). Most suited are e-literacy programmers and continuing education.</td>
<td>Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal / State</td>
<td>In principle, can include a wide range of services (public and private)</td>
<td>Municipal, government directly, in partnership with other entities, or entrusted to private enterprise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multipurpose</td>
<td>Generally in Rural areas with Access to internet, e-mail and related services, commercial web hosting to community, telephone booths, sales of working materials and stationery, Internet cafe and training courses.</td>
<td>Administrative boards representing donors, service suppliers and community members.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: www.eforall.org/pdf/Telecenters.pdf, “Telecentres for Socio-Economic and rural Development in Latin America and the Caribbean.”)

8. LINK BETWEEN GOVERNANCE, E-GOVERNANCE, AND TELECENTRES

Governance

Governance is defined to refer to structures and processes that are designed to ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equity and inclusiveness, empowerment, and broad-based participation. Governance also represents the norms,
values and rules of the game through which public affairs are managed in a manner that is transparent, participatory, inclusive and responsive. International agencies define governance as the exercise of authority or power in order to manage a country’s economic, political and administrative affairs [14].

On the other hand a draft Policy research working paper by World Bank, 2010¹, defines governances as “the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised. These include:

- The process by which governments are selected, monitored, and replaced
- The capacity of the government to effectively create and carry out sound policies
- The respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them.

This system defines who decides on policies, how resources are distributed across society, and how governments are held accountable [15]. Thus, it is an ideal through which political processes translate the motives of the citizens into public policies and establish the rules that efficiently and successfully deliver services to all members of society.

Now, good governance has become a central part of the international development agenda.

**E- Governance**

The “e” in e-Governance stands for ‘electronic’. e-Governance is basically associated with carrying out the functions and achieving the results of governance through the utilization of ICT (Information and Communications Technology)[16].

In 1970 the Government of India (GoI) established Department of Electronics and subsequently in 1977 GoI has taken first major step towards implementation of e-governance by establishment of National Informatics Centre (NIC). By 1980 most of the government offices were equipped with computers but their role was confined up to word processing. With the span of time and advent of ICT, the GoI has taken a remarkable step for fostering e-governance by launching the national satellite based network NICNET in 1987 followed by District Information System of the National Informatics Centre (DISNIC) and NICNET was the first government informatics network across the world equipped with facilities like TELNET, FTP, internet along with database services (GISTNIC and MEDLARS). Up to 1990, NICNET has extended its extent from state headquarters to district headquarters. In year 2000, the GoI has established Ministry of Information Technology and identified minimum 12-points minimum agenda for e-governance. Finally in year 2006 the GoI has launched National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) with various Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) to automate essential mundane tasks [17].

Thus, e-governance is the application of ICT for delivering government services, exchange of information, communication transactions, integration of various stand-Alone systems and services between G2C, G2B as well as back office processes and interactions within the entire government frame work [18]. E-governance promotes more efficient government, allows greater public access to information, facilitates more effective and accessible government services, and makes government more accountable to citizens. Now, E-government has emerged beyond electronic service delivery and has become a crucial part

of the ongoing reform and transformation of government which is enabling participatory governance.

**Telecentres**

When a citizen has to pay for services that are often free or subsidised by the government, then it reflects that there is a lack of governance. Thus, in order to overcome the challenge of governance, Telecentres are set up to provide e Governance services to the citizens. While they cannot meet all needs, but certainly depending on their capacity some basis services are provided. For example, they share information on:

- Land deeds, sale and prices
- Birth and death certificates
- Health issues such as vaccinations, eye camps, well women checkups, diabetes camps, etc
- School entry requirements, examinations and results
- Cropping patterns, weather, water, availability of seeds, pesticides, etc
- Job vacancies and recruitment
- Education and training possibilities for young people
- Right to Information Act (RTI)
- E-Courts
- Payment of online bills

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

- Describe Telecentre in 100 words?
- Write in point’s purpose of establishing Telecentres?
- Describe Global Telecentre movement?
- When did telecentre movement start in India?
- Why were telecentres established in India?
- During which year was CSC scheme introduced in India?
- What are different types of telecentres? Explain them briefly?
- What is e-Governance?
- How are e-Governance and Telecentre linked with each other.
Reference:


[12]. CSC Scheme, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Retrieved from: http://meity.gov.in/content/csc-scheme


