Chapter 1

General Adoption and Applications of ICT in Public Sector: Asia Experience and Findings

ABSTRACT

The emergence of the Internet and concerns for effective service delivery in the public sector have called for adoption of ICT in processing capacity as well as data storage since the 1990s. This, to some extent, has significantly altered the environment for ICT utilizations across society and governmental institutions and agencies to meet the demand of their people. While the long-term effects of this digital revolution are likely to bring some challenges, the needs for fast delivery of services and information have drastically pressured the public sectors to improve performances, capitalize on external opportunities within the environment, and prepare to overcome both internal weaknesses as well as external threats. This chapter looks within the context of the Asian experience of technology adoption and highlights various benefits and challenges encountered in practice by different parts of the countries in the continent.

INTRODUCTION

For any country to survive and prosper in this competitive global economy, it must manage its human capital and material resources both efficiently and effectively. The world is moving towards more democratic and open forms of governance. Hence, governments are under increasing pressure to improve managerial performance of their public sectors. Electronic government application, with special reference to IT, lies at the heart of any management process to build the interface between the government and its people. With the growing complexity of modern organisations, not to speak of the systems of public sector, information technology is playing greater role in providing integration, coordination in public sectors and in building the interface between the government and its services to the people.

In the light of the above, the chapter examines the application of electronic government in public sector focusing on benefits and challenges it poses...
on developing countries. The chapter begins with driving forces that spearhead the application of e-government in public sector. It goes on to discuss the core areas of e-government interfaces in order to trace the root of benefits and challenges in e-government application. Finally, it puts forward some ways to “move-on” in implementations of e-government and overcoming the problematic issues in ICT adoptions and applications in public sector.

The emergence of the Internet and concerns for developments in processing capacity as well as data storage over the 1990s has significantly altered the environment for ICT use across society and governmental institutions and agencies. While the long-term effects of this digital revolution are likely to be profound, the needs for developments have drastically pressurized the public sectors to improve performances, capitalize on external opportunities within the environment and prepare to overcome both internal weaknesses as well as external threats (Bhatnagar, 2014).

Due to the differences in ideological lens and/or perception of individuals, e-government means different things to different people. According to Stephen (2001), e-government is the use of Internet technology and protocols to transform agency effectiveness, efficiency, and service quality. In a different way, Gartner Group (2000, p.2) describes e-government as “the continuous optimization of service delivery, constituency participation and governance by transforming internal and external relationships through technology, the Internet and new media.” Detlor and Finn (2002, p.101) define electronic government as “the delivery and administration of government products and services over an information technology infrastructure.” According to Gronlund (2001, p.1), “E-Government generally refers certainly to more use of IT, but more importantly to attempts to achieve more strategic for the use of ICT in public sector.” In a more comprehensive way, Kieley, et al. (2002, p.341) defines electronic government as “an IT-led reconfiguration of public sector governance-and how knowledge, power and purpose are redistributed in light of new technological realities.” In this chapter, electronic government is defined as the use of information and communications technology (ICT) to promote more efficient and cost-effective government, facilitate more convenient government services, allow greater public access to information and make government more accountable to its citizens.

ROLE OF INFORMATION-SOCIETY ON E-GOVERNMENT

The advent of Information Society is creating unprecedented conditions for access to, and exploitation of, public sector information and represents a potential turning point in the ways in which societies are governed, administered and public services delivered. In other words, Information and Communication Technologies can be argued to be a driving force and a powerful tool to help achieve the Millennium’s developmental goals. Indeed, the Millennium declaration and its road map to globalisation campaigns have called on governments to pursue a strategic-management through the knowledge infrastructure, particularly ICTs, via a creative partnership. In fact, the mainstream of ICT within planning and design of improving strategies in public sectors is pivotal, both at national, local and regional levels of government administrative bodies. Hence, e-government becomes a particularly important ICT application in public sector.

More importantly, the “World Summit on the Information Society,” which took place in Geneva, December 2003 and Tunis, 2005, pointed out the international community’s readiness to improve initiatives that enhance the role of ICT for political, cultural and economic development. The summit specifically explored the best practices in new ICT based modes of interaction between government and its citizens. As such, e-government can be considered a process, or a means to an end, rather
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