Integrating E-Government into the Business Curriculum

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INTRODUCTION

Citizens around the globe are demanding better services and more responsiveness from their local, state, and national governments. Governments are responding to this challenge by implementing a vast range of information technologies (IT) to reengineer government processes, deliver services, and manage resources more effectively. As such e-government (electronic government), which can be defined as the government’s use of IT to exchange information and services with citizens, businesses, and other government agencies, is increasingly becoming a crucial concept for practitioners, researchers and educators.

Recognizing the importance of the topic, many universities have started offering undergraduate and graduate level courses in e-government. These courses are typically being offered as a part of the public administration curriculum. However, there is also a pressing need for incorporating e-government topics and concepts into business curriculum. Developing a sound understanding of the technological, organizational, political, social, economical, and legal aspects of e-government applications might prove extensively helpful to business graduates in their lives and chosen careers.

The incorporation of e-government into a business curriculum requires careful consideration of backgrounds and interests of business students as well as faculty. In this article, we will discuss the importance of integrating e-government into business curriculum as well as the most suitable mechanisms and procedures for teaching e-government to business students.

WHAT IS E-GOVERNMENT?

According to several researchers, the term “e-government” represents an evolutionary process, and is yet to be defined by universal standards (Basu, 2004; Jaeger, 2003; Jaeger & Thompson, 2003; Seifert, 2003). Described broadly, e-government is the application of the IT tools and techniques (such as wide area networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) to the work of government. These tools and techniques are intended to serve both the government and its citizens (Howard, 2001). Backus (2001) defines e-government as a form of e-business in governance which includes the processes and structures related to delivering electronic services to the public (citizens and businesses), collaborating with business partners and conducting electronic transactions within organizational entity.

According to the World Bank, e-government refers to the government’s use of IT in a way to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other branches of government. Seifert (20003) defines e-government in terms of specific actions (e.g., obtaining documents, accessing information, creating a shared database), or simply as the automation of services.

A 2002 Improvement and Development Agency study categorized e-government into three high-level types: e-governance, e-services, and e-knowledge. On the other hand, the Center for Democracy and Technology categorized e-government programs by three objectives:

1. Publishing or expanding access to government information,
2. Interacting or broadening civic participation in government, and
3. Providing online transactions and government services (Center for Democracy and Technology, and Information Development, 2002).

Typically, e-government is viewed as an incremental progression. The five stages of e-government include: