

Mechanism of E-Government Undertaking in Japan

Yuko Kaneko

University of Yamagata, Japan

INTRODUCTION

According to the report submitted by the Evaluation Committee of Experts, Government ICT Strategy Headquarters in December 2005 (ECE, 2005), Japan has already established the globally advanced e-government infrastructures for such services as online application and filing. The report also acknowledged that the quantity and quality of information, guidance and search engine at the government portal, “e-Gov”, and individual government Web sites have reached almost the same level as those of the government Web sites of the other world-famous ICT nations.

These achievements have resulted from the continuous undertaking of introducing information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the government operations from 1960s (ECHMCA, 2001).

In this article, the successful accomplishments of e-government initiative are described followed by the analysis of institutional arrangements and mechanisms concerning e-government initiatives. Lastly, the future challenges will be suggested.

BACKGROUND

The Japanese government started its government-wide efforts for the management reform of administrative affairs in the late 1950s. Coincidentally, the first computer in the national government was introduced by the Meteorological Agency in 1958. Since then, the government has been aggressively introducing computer and communication equipments and systems for improving efficiency and efficacy of public administration. This undertaking was not carried out independently by individual ministries. In 1968, the Cabinet decided on the future measures for the use of computers and at the same time an interministerial committee of computer use was established to promote the use of computers in more coordinated way. The committee was organized by a central management office, the former Administrative Management Agency of the Prime Minister’s Office, consisted of the representatives from all the ministries and agencies who were the heads of the data processing divisions. The

committee decided the computer utilization plan every fiscal year and all the ministries and agencies carried out necessary measures for promoting computer use in their organizations based on the plan (ECHMCA, 2001).

From 1960s to 1980s, the number of mainframe computers in the government kept on growing rapidly (Kaneko, 2004a). Batch processing of mass data by huge mainframes was the way of the day. Computers were utilized initially in the areas of research and statistics and then, by late 1970s, in such areas needing process of massive data as drivers’ licenses, social insurances, and so forth (Kaneko, 2001). Databases for supporting policy formulation emerged later in the 1980s.

In the late 1980s, such remarkable development as downsizing, open-system, networking and user-friendly software was achieved in the ICT field. The government’s undertakings to introduce personal computers (PCs) into policy planning/development and implementation lagged behind those of the private sector. With a view to promoting aggressive introduction and exploitation of ICT, a government-wide action program was needed. In 1994, the Cabinet decided upon a Master Plan for Promoting Government-Wide Use of ICT for realizing efficient and effective public administration by aggressively making use of ICT in all the government affairs.

Based on the master plan, the introduction of PCs and construction of LANs (local area networks) in the government offices progressed reasonably. Moreover, a WAN (wide area network) system (so-called Kasumigaseki WAN), connecting all ministries to facilitate the safe exchange of information between them, was constructed and it was put into operation in 1997 (Kaneko, 2004a).

Thus, it can be said that these continuous undertakings from 1960s have paved the way to the e-government initiatives.

ANALYTICAL VIEWPOINTS

All OECD countries have some sort of e-government program such as PAGSI in France, BundOnline in Germany and UK Online (OECD, 2003a, 2003b). Some are based on laws and top-level political commitment on the other hand other countries have a less ambitious e-

government program, in which e-government is more a method to improve government outcomes within existing structures. As all countries have an e-government program, all countries have some sort of organizations with overarching responsibility for carrying out the program. The authority of these organizations differs widely from imposing mandatory obligation to offering solutions (OECD, 2005).

In this article, mechanism of e-government undertaking includes a national e-government program and institutional arrangements for implementing the e-government program. In describing the Japanese case, two viewpoints are adopted. One is the degree of political commitment concerning an e-government program and the other is the degree of the authority of the organization that is responsible for implementing an e-government program.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS TOWARD E-GOVERNMENT

The Japanese e-government program envisages two main goals, one is to provide “user-oriented administrative services” and the other is to realize “streamlined public administration with high budget efficiency” (GOJ, 2003b). And the various initiatives have been executed based on these two goals. The major achievements of the government’s actions toward e-government as of December 2005 (Kaneko, 2005) are described according to the goals of the e-government program.

To Provide “User-oriented Administrative Services”

Online Processing

There has been real progress enabling citizens and businesses conduct online application and filing for almost all

the national administrative procedures (GOJ, 2005). As of March, 2005, 96% of the targeted national administrative procedures are available online such as filing tax and applying for the social insurance system. As basic underpinning of online application, various initiatives have been completed such as GPKI enabling to confirm authenticity mutually, LGCA, enabling to confirm identification and the online payment systems allowing citizens to pay charges online. According to the survey conducted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications in 2004 (MIC, 2004), more than 80% of applications and filings were conducted online.

Improvement of the Government Portal “e-Gov”

A government portal site, “e-Gov” (<http://www.e-gov.go.jp>) has been in operation since April 2001 to make the people access the government information more easily and comprehensively (GOJ, 2005). Not only guidance for administrative procedures but also a powerful search engine to look for all the government Web sites, a law data retrieval system and extensive links to databases provided by the ministries are on “e-Gov.” From January 2004, the public comment information has been integrated and the policy proposals from the citizens can be accepted at “e-Gov.”

One-Stop Service

A single window service was started for the export/import procedures and the port control procedures in July 2003 (GOJ, 2005). Likewise, a new one-stop service for registration and other procedures related to owning automobiles was started in December 2005.

To Realize “Streamlined Public Administration with High Budget Efficiency”

ICT Infrastructure

Each official is provided with one PC and all ministries have completed deploying the ministry LAN environment, which is connected to the government-wide network, Kasumigaseki WAN enabling mutual access among ministry LANs (MIC, 2002). The network infrastructure in the government sector has been extended to involve LGWAN (local government-wide area network) linking the entire local governments and the judicial network (court network) linking the court branches (MIC, 2004).

Figure 1. Achievements in online processing

Achievements	Date
96% of all administrative procedures of the national government by on-line	Mar-05
GPKI (Government Public Key Infrastructure)	Apr-01
LGCA (Local Government Certification Authorities) services	Jan-04
E-payment system for fees and other revenues	Jan-04
E-bidding for procurement and purchasing	Mar-04

7 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/mechanism-government-undertaking-japan/11656

Related Content

E-Government in Vietnam: Situation, Prospects, Trends, and Challenges

Ngo Tan Vu Khanh, Ma Thanh Danhand Gwangyong Gim (2016). *Trends, Prospects, and Challenges in Asian E-Governance* (pp. 256-280).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/e-government-in-vietnam/140372

E-Government Controls in Service-Oriented Auditing Perspective: Beyond Single Window

Faiza Allah Bukhshand Hans Weigand (2012). *International Journal of Electronic Government Research* (pp. 34-53).

www.irma-international.org/article/government-controls-service-oriented-auditing/74813

Predicting Mobile Health Technology Acceptance by the Indian Rural Community: A Qualitative Study

Rajesh R. Paiand Sreejith Alathur (2019). *International Journal of Electronic Government Research* (pp. 37-62).

www.irma-international.org/article/predicting-mobile-health-technology-acceptance-by-the-indian-rural-community/257489

Analysing Open Data in Virtual Research Environments: New Collaboration Opportunities to Improve Policy Making

Anneke Zuiderwijk (2017). *International Journal of Electronic Government Research* (pp. 76-92).

www.irma-international.org/article/analysing-open-data-in-virtual-research-environments/199814

E-Government Adoption and Proliferation Across Different Stages of Evolution

Amitabh Ojha, Rakhi Tripathiand M. P. Gupta (2011). *Stakeholder Adoption of E-Government Services: Driving and Resisting Factors* (pp. 137-150).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/government-adoption-proliferation-across-different/54124