

Chapter LXXIV

E–Mexico:

Collaborative Structures in Mexican Public Administration

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ABSTRACT

After six years of challenges and learning pushing forward the e-Government agenda in Mexico, the Presidential succession brought an opportunity for assessing the current progress, recognizing the main unsolved problems, and planning the vision for the future of e-Government in Mexico. This case provides a rich description of the e-Mexico system, including its main objectives and goals, governance structures, IT infrastructure, collaboration processes, main results, and current challenges. Some background information about Mexico is also provided at the beginning of the case. Playing the role of a consultant working for the new Mexican CIO, the reader is asked to evaluate the current situation and help in the design of a work plan, including a proposal for organizing the ICT function, the main strategic objectives, and some specific lines of action for the next six years.

INTRODUCTION

Three years of presidential election campaign finally came to an end on July 2, 2006. Aspirants from the three main political parties worked hard to attract voters' preferences since 2003, but everything got resolved in a single election day. Results were so close that the Federal Elections Institute decided not to pronounce any winner on the basis of their "fast count" program, but to wait

for the complete counting of votes. For the first time since 1929, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) was not the first force in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Actually, PRI became the third political force with about 21% of the legislators in the House of Representatives. The National Action Party (PAN) became the first political force with about 42%, and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) became the second force with about 25%.

Just a couple of weeks after the election, Pedro Torres,¹ who was going to be appointed by the elected President to organize the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) function in the Federal Government for the next six years, was gathering information about the current state of digital government in Mexico. He needed to prepare an assessment of the current progress and needs, and to present a work plan, including a proposal for organizing the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) function, the main strategic objectives and some specific lines of action. He asked for your advice as a consultant in this process. The following sections in the document constitute a summary of the information Pedro had gathered and shared with you to work in this assessing and planning process.

BACKGROUND

The official name of Mexico is the United Mexican States and is a federal republic formed by 31 states and a Federal District, which is Mexico City. There are three levels of government: federal, state, and municipal. Each level has certain degree of political and administrative autonomy. Municipalities have an elected council chaired by the municipal president. This council—called “cabildo”—has both executive and legislative functions. At the state level, there is a Governor, representing the

executive branch, a state legislature, and a state judicial branch headed by the state supreme court of justice. Finally, at the federal level the president is the head of the Executive branch; she is elected by democratic direct voting for a six-year period without possibility of reelection. The legislative branch is conformed by the Senate and the House of Representatives, 128 senators and 500 representatives. The judicial branch is represented by the Supreme Court with 11 Justices. Supreme Court Justices are elected by the House of Representatives every 15 years. The legal system is a combination of the Roman and French systems (Lowe, Armstrong, & Mathias, 2002). Politically, Mexico was governed by the same political party (PRI) from 1929 to 2000 in a quasi-single-party system.

The country's borders are with the United States of America to the north and with Guatemala and Belize to the south. The Mexican territory spans 1,964,375 square kilometers.

Mexico's politico-administrative regime includes characteristics similar to the United States, Canada, and France, among others. Table 1 summarizes the main characteristics using the framework developed by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2000). Regarding the basic structure of the state, as mentioned before, Mexico is a federal system by constitution and the autonomy of state and local governments is clearly established. However, for more than 60 years a single political party dominated the three levels of government and there was a *de facto* centralization of power around the federal government. A decentralization process started in 2000, but there are still examples of this quasi-federal regime. Regarding the horizontal co-ordination at the federal level, two ministries have historically “called the shots” as far as administrative reform is concerned: the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Public Administration (former Office of the Federal Comptroller).

Regarding the nature of executive government, Mexico is in a transition period from a mostly majoritarian regime to a more consensual one (probably intermediate). For many years, Mexican presidents had a significant majority of the legislature from the same political party. They rarely

Table 1. Mexico's Politico-Administrative Regime

Key Feature	Mexico
State Structure	Federal Fairly Centralized Co-ordinated
Executive Government	Intermediate (formerly Majoritarian)
Minister/Mandarin Relations	Separate Fairly Politicized
Administrative Culture	Predominantly <i>Rechtsstaat</i>
Diversity of Policy Advice	Mainly Political Appointees and civil servants Increasingly consultants, academics and corporations

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