

Chapter XXIII

The Functionality of Website-Based Services of Metropolitan Municipalities in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to evaluate the e-government practices in metropolitan municipalities in Turkey by determining functionality levels of metropolitan municipalities' Web site-based services. In this context, it firstly explains the concept of e-government briefly. Secondly, it summarizes the concept of local e-government and evaluates the potential of e-government to help local governments. This chapter examines the situation of e-government practices in local governments in Turkey. Finally, the chapter analyzes the e-government practices in respect of functionality of Web site services in metropolitan municipalities by using a comparative functionality analysis. According to this analysis, they are inadequate in the provision of Web site-based e-government services. Furthermore, the authors aim to present an original and functional method that will make it possible to comparatively analyze the Web site-based services offered by the metropolitan municipalities.

INTRODUCTION

The twenty first century is viewed as a century of total transformation. The transformation that

has global dimensions has a direct impact on every state and every society, and this process of impact comes about on the grounds of political, legal, administrative, social, economical,

and cultural axis. In this connection, one of the important areas in which this transformation is experienced is the public administration. The formation of public policies at the present day and the delivery of public services seem to have accomplished a relatively different format and content in comparison to the past.

One of the basic reasons of this transformation concerned is the developments in information and communication technologies. An amazing pace of development in information and communication technologies also influences the public institutions. In fact, Heeks (1999) states that, in addition to “high national debt level” and “more knowledgeable and more demanding citizens”, “improvements in information technologies” compel the public administration of nations into more reforms. Public institutions are directly or indirectly influenced by these developments in such a way that they have no other option but to benefit from those colossal technological knowledge and experiences. In parallel to the developments in information and communication technologies, while, on the one hand, the states that aim to make public administrations more effective, efficient and sensitive to the citizens, have started to benefit from information and communication technologies, a new concept, on the other hand, has emerged: “*E-government*”.

The phenomenon of e-government in which very different theoretical and practical approaches are exhibited, is gradually to influence the public services units more deeply at all levels at present and in the future. One of the those leading units is the local governments that have intensive service traffic with the citizens. Especially for the large-scale local governments, the e-government includes instruments capable of maintaining more economical and efficient public services on more participatory and transparent grounds.

In this connection, this study of a book chapter, following the initial brief conceptual explication of e-government, establishes the aims of e-government and its dimensions, followed by an emphasis

on the local e-government, which is the original conceptual framework. After drawing the conceptual framework, the e-government practices on the local government level in Turkey are to be assessed. Subsequently, the e-government practices in all the metropolitan municipalities (in 16 metropolitan municipalities) are comparatively analysed within the framework of the functionality of services provided on their websites. This part of the study is devoted to an empirical research in which the websites of 16 metropolitan municipalities are examined in detail and then compared. The findings obtained as a result of those examinations were originally synthesized and interpreted in the conclusion section of the study and finally suggestions were made based on those evaluations.

The basic aims of this article are to make a theoretical and empirical contributions to the e-government literature of local governments on the international level, to share the e-government practices of local governments of a developing country with its large population and fast growing economy, to analyze the e-government activities in the largest and the most developed settlement centres (16 metropolitan municipalities) within the framework of website service functionality, to propose some concrete suggestions based on the findings and assessments obtained as a result of the empirical studies, in terms of increasing the functionality of public services offered on the websites of metropolitan municipalities, to introduce the decision makers and executors to the new perspectives in this field, to develop an original method in the analysis of website service functionality and guide the studies in this field.

E-GOVERNMENT: THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

E-government, also referred to as digital government (Dawes, et al., 1999; LaVigne, 2002) is the use of information technologies with the aim of

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