

Chapter 75

E-Government and Transformation of Service Delivery in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1990s e-government has been a leading feature of public sector reform in Malaysia. As elsewhere around the world, at the core Malaysia's e-government agenda is the desire to reinvent governance and service delivery so as to realize national developmental goals. Variety of e-initiatives undertaken and implemented over the past decades has improved the nation's e-profile and readiness. These programs have also brought about profound changes to the mode of service delivery and the nature of interactions between the government and citizens and other stakeholders. The paper demonstrates the current trends in e-government by focusing on some most recent initiatives and their roles in modifying governance and service delivery systems thereby producing benefits of efficiency, improved access and convenience, among others. It argues that while Malaysia has made significant inroads in e-services and is ahead of most developing countries, yet progress remains unsatisfactory when compared with regional and world leaders. The paper sheds lights on current impediments of e-government in Malaysia and their implications.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant developments in the public service in recent times is the increasing application of information and communication technology (ICT). Rapid developments in this field and the massive prospects they hold in various spheres have not only heightened public expectations for citizen-oriented administration, they have also put tremendous pressures on the government to reinvent itself to be able to meet the rising expectations of the population by offering improved services and innovative solutions to

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governance problems. Thus governments around the globe have embarked on programs and projects that seek to dramatically improve the delivery of public services through the adoption of ICT in the public sector. Various known as e-government, digital government, e-governance and government online this has, in fact, become a leading feature of the public sector reform in both developed and developing countries. Increasingly, e-government is adopted in an attempt to overcome the limitations of traditional bureaucracies and more so to improve the delivery of public services. While initially e-government initiatives were aimed at improving internal processes and operational efficiencies of public agencies, now growing number of e-government projects are employed in an attempt to provide integrated services to the citizens, businesses and other stakeholders.

Malaysia has followed the global trend and adopted e-government in order to improve governance and service delivery on the one hand and to foster national developmental goals on the other. Although Malaysia's journey towards 'knowledge economy' began with the unveiling of the Vision 2020 in 1991, it was the establishment of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) in 1996 that spurred the ICT adoption in the country. Concerted efforts have been made ever since seeking to support the nation's transition from production based-economy to a knowledge-based economy thereby leapfrogging development with ICT as an enabler. E-government is among the leading flagship projects the MSC has promoted with twin objectives - to reinvent the government in terms of its service delivery and to catalyze the successful development of the MSC with ICT as the leading sector of the economy. Relevant government documents have outlined the vision of e-government which requires the government, businesses and citizens to work together for the benefit of the country and all its citizens. This vision underscores the need for creating a collaborative environment that fosters the development of the new technology. It also calls for reinventing the government using ICT and multimedia so as to make the government agencies efficient, effective and consequently more responsive to the needs of the citizens (MAMPU, 1997).

E-government in Malaysia has been a key component of governmental strategy for achieving the national developmental goals, envisaged in Vision 2020. Increased allocations for ICT development in the public sector under subsequent five year plans have not only helped build necessary ICT infrastructure but also implement programs and projects towards economic and social developmental objectives. While Malaysia has already recorded significant gains in a number of Millennium Development Goals, challenges in other fields have made the task extremely critical for achieving a fully developed country status by 2020. In view of this, the Malaysian government has redoubled its efforts by initiating and implementing e-government programs and projects, alongside other policies and strategies. As a result, the type and number of e-government projects has grown steadily with variety of services made available electronically. More importantly, governmental initiatives have produced significant innovations and modified service delivery processes and nature of interactions in various spheres. But academic literature on e-government in the Malaysian context remains scarce; there is hardly any scholarly work that focuses on the developments and trends in service delivery domains. This paper is a contribution to this field: it is aimed at providing an overview of Malaysia's current state of e-government development to demonstrate how various e-initiatives have transformed governance and service delivery systems. In more specific terms the paper seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the current trend of e-government in Malaysia?
2. To what extent and how have they transformed governance and service delivery systems?
3. Where does Malaysia stand regionally and globally in terms of e-government development and online services?

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