Chapter 93

Challenges En-Route Towards E-Governance in Small Developing Island Nations of the South Pacific:
The Case of Papua New Guinea

Rafia Naz
University of the South Pacific, Fiji

ABSTRACT

Papua New Guinea is hampered by many factors pertaining to institutions, socio-economic, technological, legal-political factors amongst others. E-governance though is seen as a new mantra having the potential of solving immense problems from service delivery, is still many a times constrained in its capacity to yield benefits. So, what are the hurdles that Papua New Guinea faces given its contextual setting is the main research objective of this paper. This objective is achieved through a quantitative methodological framework using structured questionnaires in which a sample of 189 respondents was interviewed. The findings of this research highlight that in PNG the following barriers were cited: lack of project management, inadequate technological/data and legal infrastructure, difficulty in change management, insufficient time and money, lack of requisite competencies, improper communication environment, lack of internal will and finally the dominance of external pressure.

INTRODUCTION

The uptake of e-governance initiatives around the globe have resulted as a consequence of the immense pressure by citizens/populace at large combined with the capabilities achieved through the use of Information and Communication Technology. E-governance is a new mantra for governments globally to meet citizens' expectations. But is e-governance the complete solution? Is it in any way impacted/constrained by factors which can be considered as the barriers/challenges which may limit countries

from fully benefitting from the envisaged benefits? To answer this question, this research is conducted in small islands of the Pacific, namely Papua New Guinea. Papua New Guinea is located in Oceania group of islands including the eastern half of the island of New Guinea between the Coral Sea and the South Pacific Ocean, east of Indonesia. Its approximate population is 5,795,887[1].

In the case of PNG, Lahari's (2004) research highlights that the ICT industry is rapidly changing but the government is slow in making attempts to measure ICT in PNG. The challenge for PNG now is the issue of the demand and supply of ICT services/products and the access to these services still needs to be officially understood and accepted by the PNG government. Stanley's (2008) research pinpoints that while Telikom PNG is trying to deliver on its promise to the citizens, it is the role of the government in ensuring that competition law requirements as stated (under the competition law) must be complied with. Barker (2008) has highlighted the following key recommendations for PNG:

1. Connectivity is required between mobile phone networks and it should be affordable;
2. ICT policy formulation must be rational, transparent and participatory;
3. ICT policy should be forward-looking, enabling technological conversion;
4. Multiple gateways are required;
5. The regulatory environment must be transparent and independent;
6. Improved rural livelihoods should be the main focus ensuring access to mobile and internet including for education and banking and this should be affordable by all; and
7. Community service obligations must be fulfilled.

With regard to the overall picture, there is a need for research to identify key problems faced by Papua New Guinea citizens in accessing services and identify the way forward through policy recommendations.

Research from Gartner reports that ICT spending continues to ascend in the emerging regions of Asia-Pacific, Latin America, as well as Europe at the pace far outperforming that of the industrial world. It says that emerging regions will generate ICT spending of 1.8 trillion in 2008, which will grow by 1.3 trillion in 2011, becoming a major force of ICT growth worldwide (Anonymous, 2008). This is very much reflected even in the ITU (2008) figures where Europe, Latin America and Asia-Pacific internet usage is quite high. However, despite this trend, PNG is in need of research especially with regard to public service delivery.

It is pertinent to ask at what stage e-governance is in PNG. Based on the review it has been observed that PNG seems to have the lowest level of utilization (0-10 per cent)[2] PNG has yet to reach the transactional and connected stages. The tele density (internet penetration and usage) also highlights the status of e-governance and PNG seems to be lagging behind.

The results indicate that the government of PNG is moving ahead albeit at a slower pace, which seems to be quite normal given the contextual setting (status of e-governance); considering the challenges/barriers of infrastructure, tele density, policies, capacity development, etc.) that needs to be in place to fully implement e-governance services. Given this context there is a long way to go because these barriers/challenges need to be addressed, no doubt about it. In this paper, given the contextual setting where there is a low readiness level and so many hurdles that needs to be overcome before e-governance can be successfully implemented; the research focuses on identifying the barriers/challenges and suggesting ways to overcome the barriers/challenges. In countries that are high in readiness, studies will be more focused on identifying the successes/failures of e-governance projects and evaluating e-governance services; but in countries like PNG which are of low readiness, studies should focus more on identify-

24 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/challenges-en-route-towards-e-governance-in-small-developing-island-nations-of-the-south-pacific/235266

Related Content

Implementation of Machine Translation (MT) in University Curricula: Advantages for the First Stages of Translator Training
Belén Lozano Sañudo (2024). *Educational Innovation to Address Complex Societal Challenges (pp. 201-221).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/implementation-of-machine-translation-mt-in-university-curricula/340270

Qualitative Examination on the Influences of the Internet on Racism and its Online Manifestation
Brian TaeHyuk Keum (2021). *Research Anthology on Empowering Marginalized Communities and Mitigating Racism and Discrimination (pp. 34-44).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/qualitative-examination-on-the-influences-of-the-internet-on-racism-and-its-online-manifestation/277557

Political Consumerism and Social Networking Usage: A Case Study
Ozlen Ozgen, Veysel Karani Sukurogluand Basak Akar (2022). *Research Anthology on Citizen Engagement and Activism for Social Change (pp. 753-773).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/political-consumerism-and-social-networking-usage/295024

Free Speech: How Are Extremists Utilizing College Campuses?
Jerrid P. Freemanand Shana Warkentine Meyer (2019). *Exploring the Technological, Societal, and Institutional Dimensions of College Student Activism (pp. 40-53).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/free-speech/217118

First-Generation Students in Service-Learning Programs: An Exploration of Institutional Support Practices
Matt Newlinand Andrew Brown (2021). *The Proper Role of Higher Education in a Democratic Society (pp. 133-152).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/first-generation-students-in-service-learning-programs/285248