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Literature Review on E-government

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Literature Review on E-government

Abstract

With the growth of internet it is now possible to have online service delivery in what is called an e-government [2]. This paper looks at challenges and some of the problems that have been identified to lead to the need of an e-government. E-government can improve the interaction between the government and its citizens. It also enables quick and easy delivery of governmental information and services as citizens no longer need to go to government offices but simply go online for the services provided [9]. With an e-government the public can email the government departments directly, however a good response from government officials is very important in boosting public confidence in e-government [2]. For an E-Government to be successful, access to internet and ICT skills of the citizens are of importance as these have an impact on citizen’s adoption of e-government services.

Keywords: E-government

Introduction

Governments around the world are moving towards the use of internet to allow people to access government information and services on websites. E-government refers to the use of Information technologies (ICTs) by the government [3]. There are many e-government projects which use Information technologies to deliver information and services to the public; this transforms access of information to the public [3]. One of such projects is the Electronic Polling System for Remote Voting Operation (ePoll) which aims at implementing polling system remotely to simplify the voting process through the use of ICTs which will be more accessible to everyone importantly to disabled people and blind people [5]. E-government can simplify life for people therefore their services needs to be made readily available. Responsive from the government is however very important to boost public confidence in e-government services [2].

E-government can not be successful if the public does not benefit from it or make use of it, so it is very important to look at some of the aspects that will get the public involved when moving towards e-government. Some services may not be offered by the government website, but it is important to provide links to relevant sites [3]. Some government tends to focus a lot on the technical aspects and little on the people [9]. Research done in china showed that very little is done to increase awareness of e-government to people [9]. Very few people know of the existence of e-government services and most do not have internet access, which is a necessity to make use of e-government services [9]. Most of the people that have internet access in developing countries like China are mostly the educated people, old people and poor people in rural area do not benefit from e-government services as they either do not have internet access because it is very expensive and sometimes due to lack of awareness and education [9]. Research suggests more awareness and training on how to use e-government services should be enforced. Computers and internet also need to be supplied freely or at a lower cost to enable poorer people to make use of e-government services [9].
Some of the problems leading to the need of an e-government

In some countries like Indiana, disadvantaged needy citizens receive benefits from the government which they are entitled to [10]. However, citizens often have to go through a process of visiting several offices in and outside their residence area in order to finally receive the benefits [10]. This process is so time-consuming and very complex, thus citizens often get frustrated and quit before they complete the process; therefore they do not receive the benefits from the government as they did not complete the process [10]. A typical scenario is of a person who has a disability and must first visit Division of Family and Children for her information to be entered into the system [10]. This person may be directed to the Department of Workforce Development to register in the Client-Service System (DWD) which may be located outside of town and the person would need to travel there [10]. The officer at the DWD may direct the person further to the Division of Family and Children (DFC) to register for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families in order to receive benefits for being disabled and for her children [10]. At the DFC, the person might be further redirected to other offices which may be outside of town [10]. This is clearly frustrating for many clients and they drop out of the program which is very sad because these people need assistance from the government [10]. A model of this can be achieved by connecting systems of different government offices together so that the process can be done at one go online [10].

Voting is also another process which can be time-consuming and may be inconvenient to old people, disabled and blind people who cannot stand for too long in line to wait to vote [5]. One of the projects being implemented for this is the ePoll, which implement polling system remotely to simplify the voting process [5]. EPoll enables a full traditional paper re-counting, it therefore guarantee the correctness and fairness of the result [5]. The ePoll make use of smart card loaded with voter’s finger prints for identification, so no one can vote twice. With the use of ePoll, citizens can vote wherever they may be on Election Day [5].

There has been research on e-government in Europe for the situation where citizens have to register their new living places and perform affiliated tasks as they moved from one city to another city in Europe [4]. The focus was on the registration processes which are time-consuming; they developed a FASME-project with a generic e-government service with a built prototype of registering three cities [4]. The hope is that registration on the prototype will be much more efficient than registering manually, in which case an e-government would be more helpful.

Provision of services online is one way to overcome these problems, services like tax payment, viewing a record of payment, contacting government departments, making appointments and finding information on the websites are a few that are done on line in some countries. Good design involves bringing online services together so that all different departmental websites for different services can all be linked together in one website [3]. Often people have to give the same information more than once to the same or sometimes different government organization, this is time-consuming and it is better to have online services that can share information of the same person repeatedly [3]. E-government provides a number of transactions that a user can conduct on the site. Making services and information available on a large scale on websites require extensive use of databases [3]. A site can be viewed as an interface between the user and the many large databases that are needed to support the transactions made and services offered on the site. [3] This implies that in setting up e-government a good knowledge of database is needed [3].
Challenges of an E-government

The success of an e-government depends on how much the government involves citizens into using online public services [6]. Research indicates that e-government have failed to provoke the general public to accept the e-services offered by agencies in their countries, this implies that extensive efforts are necessary to increase citizen’s awareness of on line service delivery. In order to prevent digital divide in terms of who has access to government service, it is necessary for all citizens from all segments of society to be equipped with basic ICT skills and high speed internet connections [6]. This needs to be resolved because they are critical challenges to citizens’ adoption of the emerging e-government services [6]. E-Government services serve no purpose if the public has no access to using them. Digital divide mentioned above refers to the gap between people with access to digital and information technology and those with limited or no access at all [7].

One of the countries that have been reported to show unequal access to e-government services is China, only fewer people have access to e-government. Research done in Chinese e-government shows that Chinese e-government implementation focus more on the technical aspects, there is very little research on the users [9]. There have been reports on some of the challenges that could be some of the reasons why Chinese e-government serves few people; these were lack of awareness of e-government, little or no education, and income gap [9]. If people are not aware of the existence of e-government services offered than it is meaningless to have them in the first place. Suggestions on the need for alternative strategies to enhance awareness of e-government services in China have been made [9]. Internet has a major role in the use of e-government by the public so more focus on internet access needs to be considered, internet is also expensive in developing countries which makes it difficult for poor people to make use of e-government services [9].

Reports show that most people in China that use internet are mostly the educated people. Research suggests that people need general computer, internet skills to be able to use e-government services [9]. Middle aged, people in the rural area are more at a disadvantage as they have very little education [9]. The other challenge that was reported was the income gap, a typical house hold income in China is low and with the high cost of internet this prohibits its usage by the majority of the citizens [9]. South Korea has replaced its manual tax filing forms with electronic tax filing forms. Individual and corporations in South Korea are both capable of using the internet and this has eased the government in transforming its major civil affairs administration functions into an e-government system [8].

Governments around the world are moving towards online service delivery with high hopes that government services will be more responsive [2]. Responsiveness is one of e-government aspects and it is the ability for the government to respond to citizen’s request. An article “How responsive is E-Government? Evidence from Australia and New Zealand” by Gauld R, Gray A and McComb S reports governments’ response based on the basic capacity to answer a simple question posted by email [2]. An email was sent to list of relevant agencies in Australia and New Zealand, at the same time out of office hours. Results showed that Australia did not respond much to their email compared to New Zealand [2]. Non response or slowness to respond or failure to answer the questions correctly even though it’s a simple scenario, it has the ability to lower public confidence in e-government [2].
Conclusion

E-government need to serve a lot of people, therefore internet access of citizens needs to be considered when adopting an e-government. It seem that most governments are more focused on the technical aspects of implementing e-government and pay little focus on perspective citizen’s access to e-government services [9]. A lot of awareness needs to be done to increase the citizen’s chances of using e-government services [9]. Education is also a major challenge to the use of e-government services, people with no education will find very it very difficult to adopt an e-government. Some sort of training need to be incorporated into e-government services to allow for uneducated people to be able to use e-government services [9]. E-government can have lots of benefits if consideration into how people would use the services is considered. This would imply making e-government systems easy to use and to offer services that are needed by the citizens. One of the very important aspects to consider is digital divide [6], while many governments around the world are moving towards E-Governments, very little is done to equip people with ICT skills and high speed fast internet connections [6]. This can limit people usage of the services if not resolved, and e-government services are not successful if the public does not use them. It is very important to have a good response from the services offered, as it may further lower down the public confidence in using e-government services. Some countries have adopted e-government initiatives and have been very successful, it is very important that both the corporation and individuals are capable and have access to the internet for a good success of an E-government service [8].
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