

Chapter 14

E-Government in Malaysia: A Decade After

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the development of e-Services among Malaysian local government authorities. Using content analysis on 147 Local Government Authorities (LGAs), this chapter shows that all agencies have Web sites with a marked improvement in the availability of each category of e-Services. Among the motivating factors to the drastic increase of e-Services were meeting the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) established by the state and federal governments, meeting the government's requirement of providing most of the essential services online, easing the burden on staff, improving transparency, and providing more convenient service to the customers. The findings in this chapter indicate that the LGAs are implementing e-Services, which should make it easier for the government to rollout more e-Services to the LGAs under its NPM policy to help drive the country into developed nation status by the year 2020. However, there are issues that need to be addressed in order for the government to deliver services effectively and efficiently to its citizens.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of the Internet services has provided the public sector with plenty of opportunities to enhance its reach to the public. Thus, governments of many countries have taken

initiatives to make use of the Internet in order to alleviate the relationship gap and to build new partnerships with the public (Ndou, 2004). The use of such initiatives is known as e-Government (Ndou, 2004). Specifically, e-Government refers to a way for governments to use the most innovative Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to provide the public and businesses with

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more convenient access to government information and services (West, 2004). Fang (2002) argues that e-Government provides a vast technology development and innovation platform and it represents a trend in government's provision of higher quality and better services as well as enhancing communication with the public. In recognition of such benefits, many government agencies all over the world have adopted e-Government as a way to show their seriousness in providing effective and efficient services to public.

E-GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE IN MALAYSIA

Following governments of other countries, the Malaysian government has also taken this opportunity in implementing e-Government from the year 1997 to assist in the delivery of information and services. Such services include transactions between Government and Business (G2B), Government and Citizen (G2C), and among different units and levels of government (G2G) (Fang, 2002; Raman, Kaliannan, & Cheng, 2007). The vision of e-Government focuses on effective and efficient delivery of services from the government to the people of Malaysia, thus enabling the government to become more responsive to the needs of its citizens.

The e-Government landscape in Malaysia was initiated by the launch of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) in 1996 by then Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamed (Hicks, 2009; Raman, et al., 2007). The MSC, a 50 kilometer long dedicated corridor stretching from the Kuala Lumpur city center to the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, is a long-term strategic initiative (1996-2020) to ensure that the country embraces the ICT revolution as one of the means of achieving its objective of becoming a fully developed nation by the year 2020 (Raman, Kaliannan, & Cheng, 2007). As one of the flagships launched within the MSC in 1997, e-Government began with five projects

(Hicks, 2009). Over the years, more projects are being added on. To date, there are eight projects under the e-Government flagship (Kaliannan & Awang, 2008; Masrek, 2009). These projects and their objectives are summarised in Table 1 according to types of government interaction.

Many of the above projects have achieved some measure of success. For example, six years after the launch of the Electronic Procurement (EP) project, 6,000 out of the 120,000 suppliers registered with the Ministry of Finance use the system actively. Another 50,000 suppliers have systems in place that will enable them to use the EP while the others are either inactive or casual users of the system (Kaliannan, Awang, & Raman, 2009). Another example is the ELX, which has managed to capture data for 300,834 job seekers, 1,544, 881 vacancies and 823,430 job matches in 2009 (MSC, 2009).

Successes like the above are not achieved without challenges. No doubt, the success of e-Government depends on the adoption of ICT. Contrary to this famous assertion, according to the Director-General of the Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU), adoption of technology is but a small hurdle (Hicks, 2009). Much harder challenges facing the government are creation of conducive legal environment, organisational restructuring, and human resource competencies (Hicks, 2009).

The legal environment was established and developed in tandem with the development of the e-Government program itself by the enactment of several cyber laws such as the Digital Signature Act 1997 and Computer Crimes Act 1997 (Ahmad & Othman, 2007). To enhance cyber security, MAMPU introduced the Government Computer Emergency Response Team (GCERT) in 2001 to provide ICT security incident response for the government agencies (Hicks, 2009). GCERT supports the existing cyber laws of the period and newer enactments such as the Personal Data Protection Act of 2004. To mitigate the resistance to organisational restructuring and in recognition of

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