

E-Records Readiness of Eswatini for Strategic Governance

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter is based on a study whose aim was to assess e-records readiness in Eswatini government ministries. The study seeks to answer three basic questions: How are e-records currently managed within government ministries of Eswatini? Is there a legal and policy framework for managing e-records in an e-government environment? Do the existing practices for managing e-records adequately support e-government services? The study used the interpretive research paradigm and adopted qualitative approach using phenomenological design. Maximum variation sampling was used to identify the research sample. Findings revealed that although there is evidence of availability and use of e-records in government ministries, the e-records readiness and efficiency levels in support of e-government were low; the management of e-records is not yet streamlined to the majority registries; and e-Government implementation maturity level is low. The study recommends improvement of legislative and policy framework.

BACKGROUND

The advent of information and communication technology (ICT) have provided means for better and faster communication, efficient storage, retrieval, processing of data, exchange and utilization of information to its users, organizations or governments. Information and communication technology (ICT) offer a powerful tool that, if deployed equitably, can ensure citizens are empowered and Government can deliver services more efficiently, effectively and in a transparent and accountable manner. As governments implement e-Government, it is crucial to pay attention to the management of e-records. This is so because electronic transactions carried out through e-Government applications produce e-records whose quality and integrity need to be upheld (IRMT, 2004; Mnjama & Wamukoya, 2004). The IRMT (2004:1) thus cautions that, “funds and effort will likely be wasted unless e-Government initiatives are supported by a solid records and information management programme.” Taking this notion into account, it can be said that e-Government can be successful if it is driven by a robust e-records management system. The Commonwealth Secretariat (2013) argues that the major challenges facing the implementation of e-Government in Eswatini and other Sub-Saharan African countries are the lack of a proper ICT infrastructure that supports e-records management. The Commonwealth Secretariat (2013) is of the view that among other salient factors e-Government can only be implemented successfully if it is supported by functional and readily accessible e-records.

CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW OF E-RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND E-GOVERNMENT

E-Government

E-Government is also known by different terms such as electronic government, electronic governance, digital government, online government, e-Gov, etc. (Wirtz & Daiser, 2017). There are many definitions for the term e-Government and the differences reflect the priorities in the government strategies. E-Government is the use of information and communication technology in the transformation of government; primarily aiming to the improvement of accessibility, effectiveness, and responsibility. It is based on the diffusion of information and information policy development. Electronic government guides to increasing citizens’ participation and active citizens’ development affecting the mechanisms of democracy” (Spirakis, Spiraki and Nikolopoulos 2010:75).

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