

Chapter 6

Government 2.0 in Korea: Focusing on E-Participation Services

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ABSTRACT

This chapter looks at the various e-participation tools and services of e-government in South Korea. Korea has recently become a test bed for many information technology tools, particularly in the e-government and e-democracy domains. Many of the e-government evaluation indexes, including those of the UN and Brown University, rank the municipal and national e-government sites of Korea very high on the list. First, this chapter highlights a variety of e-government services available in Korea such as e-ombudsman (Shin-moon-go), the Korean Public Information Disclosure System (Open Government), Civil proposal services in e-rulemaking processes, and Call & Change (110 Service), which can be compared to those of other countries. The second part of this chapter focuses on citizen participation or e-participation, which is termed 'Gov 2.0', reflecting the concept of web 2.0. Characteristics of Gov 2.0 will be illustrated and then dimensions of possible evaluation measures will be discussed. Some illuminating cases will be introduced to investigate how policy recommendations and proposals from the people transform into actual policy changes. This chapter, thus, will discuss the challenges to implementing and evaluating Gov 2.0 services as well as present recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

Information Communication Technology (ICT) has been widely adopted by and diffused to both public and civil sectors in many countries. South Korea has become an exemplary country for a high level

of Information Technology (IT) penetration. In the 1990's, there was an astonishing growth in dot com companies, distance education, e-commerce, and e-government. The Korean government's slogan, "Let us be at the front of the information revolution in the world, unlike with the industrial revolution" sums up their feelings well, stressing their strong desire to excel in building Korea's IT infrastructure

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and overall e-government services. Korea's central government (equivalent to the federal government of the U.S.) was a strong driver of this initiative, implementing many policies to promote IT infrastructure and e-government. Many evaluations of e-government indexes, including those of the UN and Brown University, rank the municipal and national e-government sites of Korea very high on the list.¹

Since the establishment of the E-government Act in 2001, Korea has built a wide range of e-government websites for most public agencies. For example, the number of websites for the 43 ministries and agencies of Korea's central government was estimated at 1,643 in 2007 (MPAS, 2008). This number is a good indicator of the growth of IT infrastructure and e-government in Korea, although the quality of the websites and citizen satisfaction with the sites are different questions to probe. In fact, President Lee's administration announced in 2008 it plans to update the national information technology development plan (including e-Korea and ubiquitous-Korea) to catalyze more usage and participation from the public.

At the local district level, Kangnam-gu in Seoul, Korea prides itself on its advanced e-government site with its innovative technology applications and services to the residents. They have won numerous awards, including top seven communities in the world award by Intelligent Community Forum (ICF), and it stands as an example of a leading local government site. Kangnam-gu's e-government services include internet kiosks in shopping malls and bus stops so that residents can download and print out necessary permits and other documents. Given its nature as a local district government, Kangnam-gu aims to embed its services in community matters more and more (H.-J. Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2008).

Two broad goals of e-government can be to bring out *good management* and *good democracy* (Musso, Weare, & Hale, 2000). In other words, the e-government movement aims to increase efficiency for the management of the *back office* and

enhance service delivery to citizens to promote more democratic discourse and participation. It is believed that the current stage of e-government in both Korea and the U.S. has achieved good management but not good democracy. Particularly, e-participation is becoming an increasingly important research topic today in public administration, public policy, and political science. For instance, we have seen ample practices and research on the increased service delivery and civil appeals in Korea's e-government development in the last decade. Yet, citizen participation and consultation in the rule-making process and democratic deliberation are still rare. This is not only true in Korea but also in other countries in general.

Currently, we are witnessing a shift toward governance and e-governance in public administration. New governance, a term coined by Lester Salamon (Salamon & Elliott, 2002), has gained attention in recent public administration scholarship. Scholars currently discuss the shift from a government paradigm to a governance paradigm. A recent issue of *Public Administration Review*, a special issue on collaborative public management (2006 December, supplement to Volume 66), epitomizes the trend of studying collaboration and governance in public administration scholarship². Other related terms are networked governance, third party government, and collaborative governance. In the information technology domain, scholars suggest that there is a shift from e-government to e-governance as well, stressing the engagement of civic groups and citizens (Brown, 2005; Coe, Paquet, & Roy, 2001; P. Kim, 2004; Riley, 2003; Snellen, 2002).

We are also witnessing a paradigm shift in information society in general, described as web 2.0, convergence or networked society. Web 2.0³ technologies are being diffused to the government sector. Some public agencies use blogs, wikis, user-generated video sharing, and social networking tools to share information and communicate with citizens. Although the term web 2.0 is disputable, this term points out that new tools in Internet

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