Chapter 1

Introduction to Electronic Government:
Development and Adoption

Ahsan Akhter Hasin
Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology, Bangladesh

Vinod Kumar
Carleton University, Canada

Uma Kumar
Carleton University, Canada

Mahmud Akhter Shareef
McMaster University, Canada

ABSTRACT

This chapter is a general introduction to the development and adoption of Electronic-Government or e-government (EG). It addresses the background of EG, its origin and importance, stages of growth, and stakeholders. To be better able to conceptualize the functions, characteristics, and development stages of EG, some related issues, concepts, and paradigms must be understood. This chapter, designed to fill that need, deals with the introductory concepts of EG and related issues. It consists of four sections; section 3 has two sub-sections.

GENERAL

Al Gore, former Vice President of the USA, has said: "In this fast-moving, fast-changing global economy — when the free flow of dollars and data are the source of economic and political strength, and whole new industries are born every day—governments must be lean, nimble, and creative, or they will surely be left behind" (Al Gore, 1993). This was the mission of EG when it was first introduced in the era of the fierce proliferation of information and communication technology (ICT). As a new and rapidly growing field, the concepts and theories of EG are still being developed. Researchers from different disciplines – such as political science, information systems,

sociology, and organizational study – address the phenomenal paradigms of EG from the viewpoint of their fields. We have analyzed many different studies that discuss EG initiatives and missions, development strategies, proliferation and adoption, service maturity, and interoperability (Reddick, 2006; Al-Mashari, 2007; Gil-Garcia and Martinez-Moyano, 2007; Heeks and Bailur, 2007; Schedler and Summermatter, 2007; Wang and Liao, 2008; Van Dijk *et al.* 2008; Kim *et al.,* 2009; Robin *et al.,* 2009; Shareef et al. 2010a). It is clear that EG from its inception until now has aimed to accomplish not only the benefits of ICT in the public administration system, but also competence and competitive advantage in the present open market competition with the private sector. It can do this by introducing top quality, cost effective, and efficient citizen-centric service; offering a political gain through good governance; reforming organizations through power decentralization; and providing a citizen-centric administration system in the government organizational structure through cultural reformation. Other important aspects of EG are equal service availability for privileged and underprivileged groups across the country, and behavioral and attitudinal changes in individual and group performance. EG offers domestic economic gain from effective government service design and from the international attention received through proper image building of the country online and global interaction.

ICT and public sector reform are intricately intertwined. The application of the Internet in the public sector is now changing the way public administration provides services and information to its stakeholders. British Former Prime Minister, Tony Blair assumed this trend quite comprehensively by addressing, "Ensuring that IT supports the business transformation of Government itself so that government can provide better, more efficient, public services" (Blair, 2004). The Internet, personal computers, land and mobile phones, and telecommunication infrastructure potentially offers individuals, institutions, business organizations, and all levels of government new opportunities for learning, restructuring and reengineering, interacting, and transacting in new global domains, and for developing their competitive performances. Population use of the Internet was just 360 million world-wide in 2000 and now it has increased to 1800 million. This is a five hundred percent increase since 2000 (internet World Stats, 2010). This technology revolution transforms public service systems, governing functions, and societies into a new wave of digital communities where interactions among stakeholders are conducted through ICT.

The World Bank website (2005) viewed EG as: "information technologies…that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government…[and] can serve a variety of different ends: better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, or more efficient government management… benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth, and/or cost reductions." The United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN, 2002) defined EG as: "…utilizing the Internet and the World Wide Web for delivering government information and services to citizens." Hernon *et al.* (2002) revealed the meaning of EG as "technology, particularly the Internet, to enhance the access to and delivery of government information and services to citizens, businesses, government employees, and other agencies." Shareef *et al*. (2010b) defined the concept of EG by focusing on its comprehensive view: "EG as an applied system can be defined as the modern evolution of government organizational structure for the presentation and delivery of all types of government information, services, and functions to all its users and stakeholders. It provides increased efficiency and efficacy in terms of service quality, time, and cost and in availability and accessibility. It also provides ease of use, transparency, participation in the public service

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