

Chapter 37

Thailand Citizen Centric e–Government Service: Maturity and Challenges

Jirapon Tubtimhin

Ministry of Science and Technology/International Academy of CIO, Thailand

ABSTRACT

Thailand started its race for e-government with the consecutive IT 2000, IT 2001, and followed by the first ICT Master Plan during 2002-2008, a key policy framework planning to incorporate 5 key “e” strategy flagships: e-government, e-commerce, e-industry, e-education, and e-society, in order to lead the country toward knowledge economy by 2010. E-government development has been reflected through various projects and initiatives, especially some prominent online initiatives. These public service showcases for certain extent and appropriate condition have proved that “citizen centric” approach has been a critical factor for their achievements.

The country’s current ICT master plan aims at the end of the plan in 2013 for being “Smart Thailand” where sustainable ICT implementation will be based on IT-literate-human capacity in all levels of society and on the good governance foundation in all development sectors as well as the accessible-to-all infrastructure. Key government bodies to drive implementation of the country master plan range from policy level of Ministry of ICT (MICT) to implementation level, including every single ministry and department under its supervision. Results of an e-government maturity survey in 2004 revealed that the overall e-services development in early years lacked attention on integration among government agencies, whereas the e-government maturity model used in the survey placed the “integration” level among the 5 stages in an order of advancement. These are: information, interaction, interchange transaction, integration, and intelligence. A later survey in 2008 showed maturity improvement, which contributed, for a certain extent, to citizen centric activities and projects. Challenges are among how to cater such leverages which could secure them from the burden of big investment and of falling into the pitfall of fast-moving ICT.

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The current ICT master plan has put more attention on the governance factor since there have been lessons learnt during the first master plan implementation: a lack of properly conducted governance caused most project misconducts and less citizen engagement. Therefore e-governance has been underlined both in terms of front and back-end services. Likewise, challenges toward success for the next phase of e-government are to define clearly the governance elements in both vertical and horizontal dimensions. Most importantly, “citizen centricity” is crucial in all those angles to keep the online activities in high record of citizen community attention. Above all, the e-government development efforts must lead the country toward a smarter and more sustainable condition and environment.

E-GOVERNMENT, DEFINITION AND EVOLUTION

e-Government has been prone to public attention regarding ICT development in public sector when the World Bank defined e-Government as the use of information and communication technologies or ICT to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability to service delivery to citizens (World Bank) (Halachmi, 2004). While at the same time United Nations referred e-Government to the use of ICT in public sector to enhance efficiency and effectiveness as well as to enhance relationship between public organization and citizens and later evolved to the use of ICT such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing by government agencies (UN) (Halachmi, 2004). While OECD noted that e-Government refers to the use of ICT and particularly the Internet, as a tool to achieve better government (OECD) (Halachmi, 2004).

In fact e-Government evolved from the dot com era of e-Commerce when business sectors flocked into the internet world to succeed their business transaction during the past decade. Public sector then caught up this phenomenon and started turning on to reinvent itself into “Electronic Service Delivery” or ESD which has been emerging all over the world to date.

SHIFTING TO THE SECOND GENERATION E-GOVERNMENT PARADIGM

The report of United Nations, UN E-Government Survey 2008 (the United Nations [UN], 2008), From E-Government to Connected Governance, took an important note on e-Government development that paved direction of ICT development of public organization into the Second Generation e-Government Paradigm where value creation for citizens has to be called for attention. The report emphasized about the whole concept e-Government as noted that “The emerging ICT-for-development approach towards public sector transformation is creating new perceptions about government and governance. The twin objective of achieving further improvements in service delivery and efficacy in government functioning is bringing about a rethinking of the role of ICT. Governments are increasingly looking towards *e-government-as-a-whole concept* which focuses on the provision of services at the front-end, supported by integration, consolidation and innovation in back-end processes and systems to achieve maximum cost savings and improved service delivery”. While stressed on public domain integration helps enhance value to public service to citizen quoted as mentioning “Within the ambit of the whole-of-government approach, the focus of the second generation e-government initiatives has shifted from the provision of services to the use of ICTs to increase the *value* of services. As

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