Chapter 2.18
The E–Government Development, IT Strategies, and Portals of the Hong Kong SAR Government

Kevin K.W. Ho
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong

ABSTRACT

This case describes the development of information technology (IT) and electronic government (e-Government) projects of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (the HKSARG) from the late 1990s to 2005. During this period, the HKSARG launched its first IT Strategic Plan, Digital 21 IT Strategy, which provides the roadmap for the IT development for the city. In this eight-year period, the HKSARG committed about US$1,100M on various types of e-government projects. New e-Government applications and portals, such as Electronic Service Delivery (ESD) and Central Cyber Government Office (CCGO), were developed and rolled out from 2000 onwards to facilitate electronic transactions between the HKSARG and its external (business firms and citizens) and internal (government departments and employees) customers.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Hong Kong was a British colony between 1842 and June 1997 and was reunified with Mainland China on July 1, 1997. Table 1 summarizes the key economic and social indicators in Hong Kong in 1997 and in 2005. After Hong Kong was handed back, several mishaps occurred in the following years, which made the newly established Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (the HKSARG) face severe problems. First, the outbreak of H5N1 avian influenza at local farms and wet markets, which subsequently evolved to the first batch of human inflection cases, in 1997 (WHO, 2005) had shaken the public's confidence in the administration. Members of the public criticized the slow response of the government in handling this crisis. Afterwards, the Asian Financial Crisis and the bursting of the property asset bubble in the city between 1997 and 1998 put extra pressure on the local economy and triggered

Table 1. Key economic and social indicators of Hong Kong in 1997 and in 2005

Economic and Social Indicators	1997	2005
Population: 　　Male 　　Female 　　Total:	3.242M (49.7%) 3.275M (50.3%) 6.517M	3.332M (47.8%) 3.634M (52.2%) 6.966M
Labor Force: 　　Unemployment rate 　　Underemployment rate	2.2% 1.1%	5.6% 2.8%
Per capita GDP (at 2000 prices):	US$24,026	US$29,944
Consumer Price Indices (A): (Oct 2004 – Sept 2005 = 100)	110.6	100.3
No. of Civil Servants:	185,196	155,522

Source: Censes and Statistics Department (http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/)
Note: All data are year-end data unless specified.

an economic recession, which was the first major recession since the Energy Crisis in the 1970s. Five years later, the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in the first half of 2003 (WHO, 2003) further hampered the local economy. From 1999 to 2003, the unemployment rate of Hong Kong rose from around 2% in the early 1990s to nearly 8% in 2003, and the city suffered from deflation during this period. Figure 1 shows the unemployment rate and Consumer Price Index (A) of Hong Kong from 1998 to 2005.

"It was the best of times; it was the worst of times". Hon. Mr. Anthony Leung, the then Financial Secretary of Hong Kong, used the famous opening of Charles Dicken's A Tale of Two Cities to describe the severe economic position of Hong Kong when he delivered his budget speech in early 2003, which was just before the first wave of SARS outbreaks in Hong Kong (FSTB, 2003). While Hon. Mr. Leung acknowledged that Hong Kong was facing its worst of times, he was confident that the dawn was coming: His prediction was partially fulfilled as the unemployment rate started to drop from 2003, and deflation was eventually gone two years later.

Obviously, Hong Kong faced a lot of changes and challenges from the late 1990s to the early 21st Century. During this critical moment, the formulation of information technology (IT) policy and the development of electronic government (e-Government) of the HKSARG played an important role in the re-engineering of the public sector. Through examining the development of e-Government of Hong Kong during the captioned period, we can gain insight on how the government of this Far-eastern metropolis tried to employ IT to enhance its operational efficiency and achieve the saving targets.

SETTING THE STAGE

The first wave of impact of IT on public administrations occurred in the late 1970s when personal computers became office equipment and were being used for handling routine business tasks of both business and public organizations. At that time, people were interested in whether the use of personal computers could enhance the efficiency of public sectors (Kraemer, 1977;

17 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/government-development-strategies-portals-hong/9747

Related Content

E-Government and Opportunities for Participation: The Case of the Mexican State Web Portals
J. Ramon Gil-Garciaand Fernando González Miranda (2010). *Politics, Democracy and E-Government: Participation and Service Delivery (pp. 56-74).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/government-opportunities-participation/42574

Framing Information Technology Governance in the Public Sector: Opportunities and Challenges
Khalifa Al-Farsiand Ramzi EL Haddadeh (2015). *International Journal of Electronic Government Research (pp. 89-101).*
www.irma-international.org/article/framing-information-technology-governance-in-the-public-sector-opportunities-and-challenges/147646

Debate on E-Debate: Between Acceptance and Refusal
Ewa Krzatala-Jaworska (2012). *Active Citizen Participation in E-Government: A Global Perspective (pp. 510-527).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/debate-debate-between-acceptance-refusal/63387

Citizens and Service Channels: Channel Choice and Channel Management Implications
Willem Pieterson (2010). *International Journal of Electronic Government Research (pp. 37-53).*
www.irma-international.org/article/citizens-service-channels/42146

Measuring Citizens' Adoption of Electronic Complaint Service (ECS) in Jordan: Validation of the Extended Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)
Mohammad Abdallah Ali Alryalat (2017). *International Journal of Electronic Government Research (pp. 47-65).*
www.irma-international.org/article/measuring-citizens-adoption-of-electronic-complaint-service-ecs-in-jordan/185648