E-GOVERNMENT AND EMPOWERMENT: IMPACTS ON EQUAL ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND DEVELOPING PUBLIC LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT:
Undoubtedly, e-government can accelerate the rate of information distribution, and add to the number of people who can access and apply the information. But, e-government may have both functional and dysfunctional affects on social justice situations.
Access to information can create many opportunities for better use of money, power, and knowledge. E-Government can act as a facilitator for equal access to information, and can empower people in all aspects of social arenas. But the question is, how poor people who do not have enough money, power, and knowledge can enjoy the benefits of e-government and its functional impacts.

The central premise of this research is that e-government can affect the public language. Language is the main channel for conveying and development of knowledge. No one can stop people from language benefits, because language belongs to all people, and it will convey information and its products to others. Therefore, the development of e-government language can make it beneficial to all people from different income levels.

In addition, governments must provide a situation that everyone can benefit from e-government. Because, in near future, information technology and e-solutions will become as the necessities of social life, and anyone who does not posses these skills, cannot continue to live within the society. In this article, e-government and its dual functional impacts, and its roles in developing public language and people empowerment will be discussed. Besides, the roles of governments in reinforcing equal access to e-governments benefits will be studied.

Keywords: E-government, Empowerment, Public Language

INTRODUCTION

In order to empower people, there is a need for an approach which considers all people and their needs, in different eras and arenas. A good example for such a solution is language. Language has a public feature that enables it to be used by everyone. On the other hand, it seems that e-government and information technology creates a new language that will be opposed to next generations. As a result, the nature of poverty and wealth will change in future. Therefore, governments should pay much attention to this reality, and consider it in their public policies on development programs.

There is an idea that e-government transition can be accelerated when the public can speak the information technology language (Pourezzat, 2007). The development of IT language affects the public empowerment, and vice versa. So, governments should provide opportunities for more equal access to information through e-government, in order to empower their citizens.

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LANGUAGE, KNOWLEDGE, AND EMPOWERMENT

Knowledge has become the main source of power in today life. However, access to it, and its development greatly depends on the language and information processing. People should know the right language in order to acquire information and use it effectively as a way to develop new progress opportunities, and affect others. Empowerment is a process through which people gain a momentum to actively participate in different social life arenas, demand their own rights, use the opportunities to make progress, and develop their capabilities to acquire required knowledge. Empowerment means having the right and opportunity to select from among various options. That is, people can decide how to live.

Every decision making needs information, and e-government can facilitate access to it. Decision making can affect the success and failures of people in their lives and can result to their being poor or wealthy. Hong and Padney (2007, p. 27) research show that level of education, Job training, and health conditions affect the likelihood of being poor. Human endeavor in order to eradicate poverty and empower poor people has not been completely successful as it was planned. In analyzing and fighting poverty, the determination of causes of poverty is key (World Bank, 2000). It is not enough to find out who is poor, we also need to examine why they are poor. In order to determine the factors behind poverty it is necessary to examine in a more critical manner the nature of poverty. The concept of poverty is divergent in terms of its dynamics, intricacies, and definitions (Hye, 1996).

Poverty, the inability to attain a minimal standard of living, refers to forms of economic, social and psychological deprivation occurring among people lacking sufficient ownership, control over or access to resources to maintain or provide individual or collective minimum levels of living (Ullah and Routray, 2007). Major policy implications have been that solution to poverty is about changing the poor to be different and better in some ways (Hong and Pandey, 2007, pp.19). An aspect of poverty reduction embraces access to various social and economic facilities (Adarkwa and Oppong, 2007, p. 23).

It seems that planning for empowering people and reducing poverty, requires an alternative that is equally available for all people, and there is no discrimination in accessing to it. A phenomena like language. E-government can change the current language in all societies. This new language will function concurrently with all existing languages in the world, and no one can avoid people from using it (Pourezzat, 2007). E-government enhances equal access to information and create new opportunities. It seems that e-government will become the main media means for communications of people to people (P2P), government to people (G2P), people to government (P2G), government to business (G2B), business to government (B2G), business to business (B2B), and government to government (G2G). Therefore, it is obvious that e-language and all other e-solutions will dominate the interaction of people, businesses, and governments.

ICT in public administrations combined with organizational change and new skills in order to improve public services and democratic processes, and strengthen support to public policies" (European Commission, 2003).Of course, e-government is a sword with two opposite functions; it can be used for both negative and positive purposes. If the public organizations tend to equality, accountability, and transparency in their decision makings, e-government leads to good governance (Pourezzat, et al, 2007). However, if public officials tend to force their decisions and deceive people, e-government may act as a dominating instrument (Morgan, 2006), which can make the situation more complex for ordinary people, and create new opportunities for a limited interest group to have control on all aspects of public life (Table 1).

Table 1: Functional and Dysfunctional impacts of e-government in social life (Pourezzat, et al, 2007)

Functional outcomes	Dysfunctional outcomes
• E-Government can help to easier and better distribution of information to the public; • So, E-Government can increase transparency, answerability and accountability to the public; • So, it can lead to public participation; • So, it can lead to public maturity, voice and empowerment; • So, it can lead to autonomous poverty eradication in a holographic perspective.	• E-Government is a powerful instrument; so it can be an instrument for more intensive domination of the policy maker, and some interest groups; • So, it can increase the gap between different groups within the society in case of wealth, power, and consciousness; • So, it can increase the opportunity for rant and discrimination.

So, e-government may lead to many functional and dysfunctional outcomes and impacts.
In fact, e-government can:
a)   Eliminate or reduce human intervention in policy making process;
b)   Facilitate the mutual interaction between nation and state;
c)   Act as an effective instrument for implementing public policy.
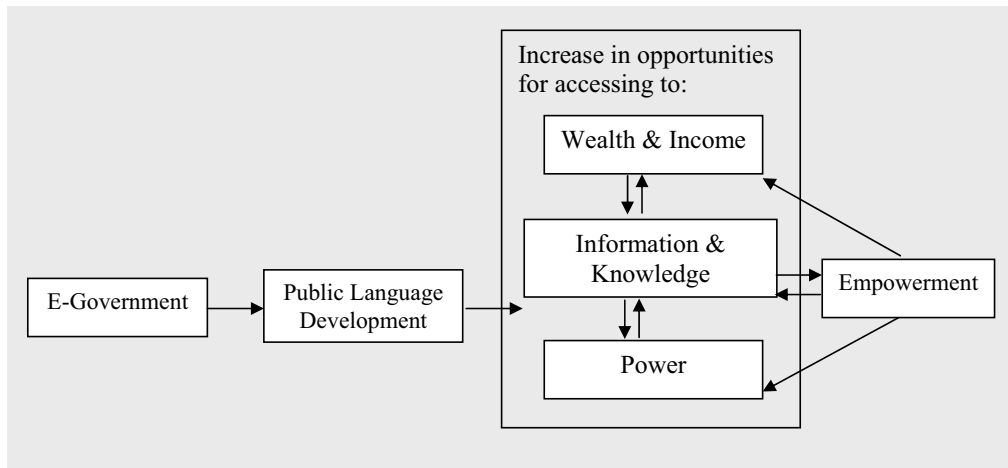It also can:
a)   Become a powerful instrument for manipulating the information to the benefit of a limited interest group;
b)   Increase discrimination and differences in the society, if
it is not properly managed.

It is important to consider that all the above functional and dysfunctional impacts happen through the language context.

E-GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT:

E-government will institutionalize the information technology language among people, because it will create a situation that people cannot live without using it. It will empower people for more equal access to wealth, information and knowledge, and power sources (Fig. 1).

Figure 1: Impacts of e-government and empowerment on increasing equal progress opportunities through public language development

Of course, governments must provide facilities for their nation in order to learn the IT language, and gain the related skills for using e-government opportunities. When the public language is equipped with the e-government literature, knowledge distribution will be equal and just. With developing the distributive justice in the knowledge development process, we can expect that information justice will be reinforced and the interactional and procedural justice in the interaction of people and government will be realized. E-government will create an opportunity for empowering the public, because everyone will then have access to its language and can use it effectively. Therefore, information discrimination will fade away, and opportunities will be available to more people. It is expected that governments use this phenomenon and enhance the life quality of their people.

CONCLUSION

Despite its functional and dysfunctional impacts, e-government is becoming a widely used means in today's' life and people will need to be capable of challenging its features, in order to have a successful life. As a result,

governments should provide an opportunity for their citizens to learn this language and apply it effectively in their lives. Distribution of social opportunities through language is consistent with justice-oriented purposes, because it is available to all people, and no one can stop other people from accessing it. Therefore, if social justice is realized through development of public language, there is more hope for it to be ongoing, and lead to public excellence.

The authors hope that with the development of e-government and its accessibility for everyone, poverty will eradicate from the human life, so that poverty will become a history, and only can be found in the conceptual museums without any fact in our real life.

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