

INTEGRATED INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
DATABASE AMONG E-GOVERNMENT WEBSITES
IN CHINA: AN ASSESSMENT

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**INTEGRATED INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM DATABASE
AMONG E-GOVERNMENT WEBSITES IN CHINA: AN ASSESSMENT**

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ABSTRACT

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The study entitled “Integrated Information Management System Database among E-Government Websites in China: An Assessment” was conducted to (1) describe the history of ICT in China; (2) determine the purposes of proposing e-government in China; (3) identify the challenges and benefits of MIS sharing in China; (4) identify the different contexts by which a shared MIS is created in China; and (5) present the experiences of other countries as regards ICT in order to provide a significant backdrop in helping China create its own unified IMS among its e-government portals.

The study made use of secondary data and literature search from other studies.

Results of the study showed that harnessing IT to boost public sector performance is an imperative no government can ignore. Researchers and practitioners have long held an interest in digitization in the public sector, especially in a developing country with a distinctive political system such as China. With uneven adoption and diffusion across the country, e-government is in a nascent stage of development in China. Implementation of IMS in China was not an easy task. Its initial implementation was not that acceptable to many government officials that there was a time when the Ministry of Culture barred websites with foreign investments from selling audio and visual products online. It has taken almost 10 years for the government to take a more relaxed view regarding outside influences. As a result, the government’s attitude toward the Internet changed much faster, and by early 1998, Beijing reversed its earlier position and started to embrace the

Internet enthusiastically. The purpose of e-government in China is for administrative reform anchored on the following aspects: reorganizing government structures; reengineering government processes, transforming government function; clarifying functions of government; reducing administrative examination and approval and improving government management.

However, the implementation of e-government in China is not without challenge. First, it was challenged on its complex interaction among and with technical organizational processes. From a technical perspective, system designers and developers must regularly overcome problems related to the existence of multiple test forms, diverse database designs and data structures, highly variable data quality and incompatible network infrastructure. From an organizational perspective, on the other hand, the challenge is that the technical processes often involve new work processes, mobilization of limited resources and evolving inter-organizational relationship. Second, it was challenged on its accessibility. This is so because China is such a big country with a large population, educational level, social development and economic growth are so unbalanced across the country and the gap between urban and rural areas is so huge.

The benefits of e-government in China is the provision of government information and public services on the Internet. Many have hoped that e-government might deliver public e-services to citizens and benefits were anchored on three aspects. The first was on technical benefits relating to data processing and information management. The second was on organized benefits relating to the solution of agency-wide problems or the enhancement of organizational capabilities. And the third focused on political benefits including better appreciation for government-wide policy goals,

more public accountability, more comprehensive public information, integrated planning and service delivery.

With regards to creating a shared IMS in China, results of the study show that this may be achieved by first, considering the business process context relating work processes including decision processes to productivity and information technology. Second it has to consider the inter-organizational context. Thus, it is evident that the formation of these relationships, involving differing goals and interest, requires negotiations and the development of commitment among participants. Lastly, it has to consider the political context, since the political environment of government agencies exerts strong institutional influences on information integration.

With regards to Indian experience in creating e-government portal, it has initiated in 1985 a new telecommunication policy to strengthen its telecommunication sector. India turns out an estimated 400,000 graduates with technical and engineering degrees per year that constitutes the third largest pool of engineering and scientific manpower in the world and second largest pool of English-speaking manpower with IT qualifications. However, IT has not yet touched the lines of the average citizen, and India is nowhere close to being a much hyped “knowledge economy or society”.

In Mexican experience, on the other hand, the national e-Mexico system is an “umbrella” initiative to develop government services and applications for the Mexican society. The mission of e-Mexico is to “be an agent of change in the country, integrating efforts from diverse public and private actors in the elimination of the digital divide and other socioeconomic differences among Mexicans, through a system with technical and social components to offer basic services on education, health, commercial interchange,

and government services, being at the same time leaders in Mexican technological development”.

As regards the US experience, its initial computerization efforts was via the income tax which was developed by the US Internal Revenue Service, during the 1960s. However, its attempt on tax system modernization has suffered from a diminishing reputation with the oversight agencies, culminating in a barrage of criticism.

This study complements the existing literature by unravelling the black box of the process of e-government implementation in the complex and emerging e-government environment in China. The study is based on a particular municipal government in a developing economy where top-down approach is well supported through centralized government control. The study has yielded useful implications for implementing information systems in developing economies, in particular, implementing e-government system in the public sectors of developing countries. But, the particular political system associated with the case may differ from other countries where a top-down approach does not work as well as it did in the case of China. Therefore, researchers may want to take this into consideration when they use the finding of the study.

Through the study, it is hoped that it generated interest and insights into Information Communication Technology (ICT) practices and research in China. The researcher hopes that the study will result in additional research in ICT implementation and diffusion at different government agencies as well as private organizations, especially in a dynamic and complex governmental and socialist business environment such as China. Beyond the revamped social security administration system, the gratifying outcomes also include a change in people's values and beliefs, enhanced efficiency in

G2C interaction, and development in business product portfolios.

Owing to the lack of resources as well as time on the part of the researcher, this research study was unable to take into account the financial cost that would be needed to fully integrate the different IMS among China's government agencies in order to build a fully functional E-government portal that would benefit the country's people. Hence, the researcher believes that this is one area where future research can be conducted in order to find out if the capital investment that is needed for the said project is worth it or not.

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INTRODUCTION

With the advent of advanced technologies from the latter half of the last century all the way to the present century, it is quite necessary for the countries who are seeking to become ahead of the rest of the pack to ensure that they are able to keep abreast of these emerging technologies. These technologies ranged from medical technologies to those with industrial applications such as information technology, both very crucial forms of technologies for any nation to develop. As such, any country's failure to do so would make it quite difficult for them to keep ahead of the rest of the group whether in terms of developing industrial products that are to be sold to other export markets or even the simple yet essential need to deliver the basic services to their citizens. Thus, although the ability of nations to implement these technologies in their countries may depend on a variety of factors such as political, social and economic; nevertheless, it is very important that they overcome the challenges from these segments of their national lives in order for them to become fully economically developed.

It has been stated by Lyotard (2007) that cybernetics (computer telecommunications systems and the various associated disciplines of language and information processing) has come to dominate society and economics since World War II. He believes that the status of knowledge has changed profoundly in this period. The major question that interests him is how knowledge gets legitimate in cybernetic society and the nature of legitimization itself.

He maintains that whatever principle society uses to legitimate knowledge must also be the principle that it uses to legitimate decision-making in society and