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E-GOVERNMENT IN TURKEY: AN ASSESSMENT FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

ABSTRACT

21st century is undergoing a very rapid change, and the electronic environment plays an important role in the provision of public services. As new technologies penetrate our lives, our habits change and these habits turn into demand and demand. In this context, public institutions, which are the primary addressees of responding to the relevant requests, had to take action. With all these developments, public institutions have moved away from the traditional and classical ones towards e-Government applications, which is a product of the New Public Management (NPM) understanding. In the most general definition, e-government is the provision of public works electronically. However, the success of e-government depends on being fast, reliable and uninterrupted. It aims at efficiency and productivity in e-government transactions based on the systematic management of information technologies. In parallel with the growing importance of e-government in the world in general in Turkey is adopted and implemented e-government system. In this context, many institutions in Turkey this technology-based system offers to citizens and ultimately to integrate the administrative process. In this respect, e-government can save time and place by facilitating the communication and interaction between the institution-institution or institution-state. On the other hand, e-government is not easy to operate flawlessly and requires a comprehensive infrastructure. In addition, even if a necessary and comprehensive infrastructure is provided, some potential problems may be encountered. The purpose of the study within the scope of all these expressions; Putting out the increasing importance of information technology to make the case for the analysis of e-government system in Turkey and offers suggestions for related processes. In this context, this study examined the concept of e-government and by analyzing the current situation in Turkey has made some suggestions.
Keywords: E-Government, Public Operation and Service, Information and Communication Technologies.

TÜRKİYE'DE E-DEVLET: KAMU YÖNETİMİ İÇİN BİR DEĞERLENDİRME

ÖZET

21.yüzyıl çok hızlı bir değişim geçirmekte, elektronik ortam ise kamu hizmetlerinin temininde önemli bir işlev üstlenmektedir. Yeni teknolojiler hayatımıza nüfus ettikçe alışkanlıklarımız değişmekte ve bu alışkanlıklar talep ve isteğe dönüşmektedir. Bu kapsamda ilgili taleplere cevap vermenin birincil muhatapları olan kamu kurumları da harekete geçmek durumunda kalmıştır. Tüm bu gelişmeler ile birlikte kamu kurumları geleneksel ve klasik olandan uzaklaşarak Yeni Kamu Yönetimi (YKY) anlayışının bir ürünü olan e-Devlet uygulamalarına yönelmiştir. E-devlet en genel tanımıyla kamusal işlerin elektronik ortamda sağlanmasıdır. Fakat e-devletin başarısı hızlı, güvenilir ve kesintisiz olmasına bağlıdır. Bilgi teknolojilerinin sistematik olarak yönetilmesine dayanan e-devlet işlemlerde etkinlik ve verimliliği hedeflemektedir.

E-devletin dünya genelinde artan önemine paralel olarak Türkiye'de de e-devlet sistemi benimsenmekte ve uygulanmaktadır. Bu kapsamda Türkiye'deki birçok kurum bu teknoloji tabanlı sistemleri yönetsel süreçlerine entegre etmekte ve nihai olarak vatandaşlara sunmaktadır. Bu yönüyle e-devlet kurum-kurum veya kurum-devlet arasındaki iletişim ve etkileşimi kolaylaştırarak zamandan ve mekandan tasarruf sağlayabilmektedir. Diğer yandan e-devletin kusursuz bir şekilde işletilmesi kolay değildir ve kapsamlı bir altyapı gerektirmektedir. Ayrıca gerekli ve kapsamlı bir altyapı sağlansa bile bazı potansiyel problemlerle karşılaşılabilmektedir. Tüm bu ifadeler ışığında çalışmanın amacı bilgi teknolojilerinin artan önemini ortaya koyarak Türkiye'deki e-devlet sistemine yönelik durum analizi yapmak ve ilgili süreçlere yönelik öneriler sunmaktadır. Bu kapsamda çalışmada e-devlet kavramı incelenmiş ve Türkiye'deki mevcut durum analiz edilerek bazı önerilerde bulunulmuştur.
Anahtar Kelimeler: E-Devlet, Kamu İşleyişi ve Hizmet, Bilgi ve İletişim Teknolojileri

1. INTRODUCTION

While the information age we are in shapes societies, producing, classifying and transferring knowledge gains importance day by day. The information and informatics age, which affects people and society so much, also affects public institutions whose focus is citizens. In this context, together with the intensity of state-citizen interaction, the effective use of communication channels and time savings have created the concept of e-government. States aim to reduce the cost of services as well as increasing all services offered to their citizens in terms of speed and efficiency. In this context, almost all e-government applications aim to carry out all activities from a single source and to provide efficiency with low-cost service provision. With e-government, it becomes possible to provide more effective service with fewer public officials, to ensure coordination between institutions and to keep institution records electronically. These possibilities save time and place. Electronic document management, which is another important issue, will eliminate procedures such as filing and archives, as well as speeding up the current operation. In addition, the successful and trouble-free electronic services provided by the state contribute to the state-citizen relationship. While today's world eliminates borders and rapidly becomes globalized, with the increasing importance of information technologies, electronic operation and services have become a necessity for public institutions as well as for private institutions. In this context, it is a fact that public institutions that adopt these systems by getting rid of traditional methods and engage in activities for interaction will be closer to the society and successful (Ozan, 2018). On the other hand, the successful and uninterrupted operation of e-government applications is not easy, and high-cost technical infrastructure and adaptation studies are also required. This study aims to demonstrate the increasing value of technology is to explain the concept of e-government and assess the processes related to Turkey. In addition, with this study, some solution suggestions have been presented in order to maintain the system more functionally. In the study, firstly, the concept of e-government was examined theoretically; Then, various suggestions were developed by presenting the existing problems (Ozan, 2019).

2. E-GOVERNMENT AND ELECTRONIC OPERATION

The rapid change of the world and not to remain insensitive to the developments that occur due to this change has become one of the main duties of the states. Being able to meet these developments requires being open to change. In this context, the inadequacy of the traditional state understanding to keep pace with developments and service demands has revealed the New Public Management (NPM) understanding based on participation and interaction. The understanding of NPM, which emerged with the aim of improving bureaucratic functioning, ensuring citizen participation, and creating a minimal but effective administration, imposed new duties on the state. In this direction, e-government and electronic functioning, which emerged in parallel with the understanding of NPM, is a social and technical field that covers political, economic, legal and social interaction rather than just a technical issue (Sobacı and Yıldız, 2012: 649). In line with the understanding of NPM, as scientific and technological developments seriously affected social structures and lifestyles, public institutions have also been affected by these developments. The understanding of NPM, which emerged as a reaction to the characteristics of Traditional Public Administration (TPM) such as centralized, cumbersome, inefficient, secret and closed management, adopts more decentralized, flexible, productive, open and result-oriented management. It is possible to count the e-government application as a product or output of NPM.

In the recent past, the electronic operation was only adopted in areas such as the banking sector and virtual commerce. But today, innovations in the field of informatics and the continuous flow of information have pushed the states to an up-to-date structure. In this context, with the adaptation of the public to change, infrastructure works have accelerated and electronic operation has started to be adopted. Increasing use of the internet and many factors such as individuals performing their daily work electronically have caused public institutions to operate electronically (Eryılmaz, 2008: 15). On the other hand, although it seems like a new habit for developing countries that public institutions offer their electronic services on a digital platform, the increase in the use of technology for all age groups quickly makes these processes ordinary. The interactionist understanding based on the participation of all stakeholders is a key element in achieving the desired level of the electronic government. Improving the

electronic state can only be achieved by involving internal and external stakeholders. This situation lays the groundwork for a participatory, transparent and democratic administration.

The understanding of e-government, which is a citizen-oriented conscious initiative, can be developed systematically and comprehensively. In this direction, it is also important to have a good feedback mechanism based on interaction for the necessary improvements. With the implementation of public functioning through electronic information systems, information sharing among public institutions is rapidly shifting towards the understanding of NPM that is based on speed and efficiency rather than the cumbersome understanding of traditional understanding. In terms of electronic service, if a citizen or any organization performs its transactions regardless of time and place, the service cost will be greatly reduced due to many conveniences.

One of the important issues for e-government operation and services is standardization. Using a single system instead of using different systems on behalf of organizations reduces financial burden and ensures standardization. The most important criterion for the success of the electronic government system is a citizen-oriented approach that ensures stakeholder participation. The answers to questions such as how much to invest in these systems or what is targeted in the long term are also of particular importance (Ozan, 2020). Looking at the developed countries, it is seen that there are high-speed internet network and infrastructural activities for security. In this context, it is a fact that states focusing on infrastructural improvements for the relevant processes will be more successful in information and communication technologies.

Before technology was integrated into human life, institutions used to conduct their data and operations only on paper and its derivatives. In addition to these conditions, the fact that the computers used were large in size but limited in performance was one of the factors that hampered this functioning (Odabaş, 2009: 207). However, today, with the development of electronic devices, electronic document management and electronic signature, which facilitate public operations, are widely used. While internet usage has increased in the world in the 1990s, significant breakthroughs have been made in web-based information systems. One of the most remarkable developments in this period is related to document management. This rapid change forces institutions to transfer documents and archive records to electronic media. Today, with the widespread use of electronic documents, the cumbersome procedures of bureaucracy leave their place to informatics-based systems (Ozan, 2018).

Using documents in traditional ways can slow down public operations and cause possible errors or losses. On the other hand, with Electronic Document Systems, which is one of the important elements of electronic functioning in the public, access to documents is faster and easier. The enormous traditional archive areas are a physical burden for public institutions. Storing, processing and presenting a large number of information was almost impossible in the classical management approach. While e-government applications alleviate the bureaucracy; at the same time, it saves time, significantly reduces stationery and other costs.

Additional measures to be taken to protect these important documents may also cause a financial burden. With the Electronic Document System, the need for physical storage is eliminated, while the amount spent on security procedures is reduced to a minimum. Although physical document archives have high risks such as fire, flood, theft or unauthorized access, such risks are completely eliminated in the electronic storage system. In addition to the more robust and easy storage of data, it is easier for individuals to participate in management more quickly and practically. Another application used in the electronic operation is an electronic signature. The electronic signature is the information data added to a document in an electronic environment and declaring the identity of the signer. While the electronic signature has the same legal validity as a wet signature, it is more reliable than the wet signature. The e-signature, which ensures that the information transferred during the electronic transaction does not change and belongs to the sender, also confirms the identity information of the persons (Ermiş, 2006: 124). This method also provides convenience in terms of the fact that it cannot be forged, the signature is verified and can be controlled (Ozan, 2018).

3. E-GOVERNMENT APPLICATIONS IN TURKEY

It is a fact that states that cannot keep up with the change in the world where all borders have disappeared are under the burden. States that have adopted electronic operation and services are in a stronger position compared to other states. In this context, rapid developments in information and communication technologies require a new structuring on behalf of states. The aims of this structuring are; transparency of the state, rapid and effective functioning, the participation of citizens at all levels in relevant processes, ensuring information exchange between institutions, improving public interest and informed decision-making processes.

Turkey has experienced in the past to the present developments relating to e-government applications. Relevant developments in this context; The Central Population Management System (MERNIS), which was initiated in 1972 and used online in the following years, the Accountancy Automation Project (SAYOTO) initiated by the Ministry of Finance in 1985, the Tax Office Automation Project (VEDOP), which was launched in 2001, and The Land Registry and Cadastre Information System (TAKBIS), which enables the transfer to the electronic environment, POLNET, which enables the police to carry out related transactions online in 2002, the Customs Systems Automation (GIMOP), MEB-NET Application started in 2003 by the Ministry of National Education and the National Judicial Network Project (UYAP) initiated to ensure the coordination of the units within the Ministry of Justice (Seferoğlu, Çelen & Çelik, 2011: 286-288). Similar applications of this kind are increasing rapidly today.

Electronic government services in Turkey are accessed through the "www.turkiye.gov.tr (e-Government Gateway)". Access to the site can be provided with alternative authentication options such as e-government password, electronic signature, mobile signature, TR ID card and internet banking password. E-government, which provides a single point of access to public services; ensures that citizens, businesses and public institutions receive efficient and uninterrupted service in the electronic environment. In addition, citizens using the e-government system; They can access many services provided by central / local governments and private organizations. The e-government system also supports electronic participation. In this context, citizens can directly convey their ideas, requests and complaints to institutions via e-government. Also in this way, citizens; They can participate in decision-making and policy-making processes of institutions and develop more effective solutions to existing problems. Finally, the password used to access the e-government can be obtained from General Directorate of Post Office (PTT) branches with an identity with a TR identification number. Although it is not possible to specify all the services on the e-government website, as of the date of this study (December 2020), the 20 most used services in the e-government system are as follows (E-Devlet Kapısı, n.d):

1. Social Security Institution Document Inquiry
2. Ministry of Health COVID-19 Services
3. Ministry of Justice Case File Inquiry
4. Revenue Administration Tax File Inquiry
5. Turkey Union of Notaries Vehicle Inquiry
6. Questioning the Fines Written on the Vehicle Plate of the General Directorate of Security
7. Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services Social Assistance Information Inquiry
8. Social Security Institution Incapacity Payment Inquiry
9. Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services Pandemic Social Support Pre-Application
10. General Directorate of Land Registry and Cadastre Land Registry Information Inquiry
11. Social Security Institution Document Inquiry 2
12. Ministry of Justice Enforcement File Inquiry
13. PTT General Directorate Vehicle Fast Pass System Account Information Inquiry

14. Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure Vehicle Inspection Report Inquiry
15. Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure Vehicle Inspection Appointment Listing
16. Ministry of Environment and Urbanization Exhaust Gas Emission Measurement Inquiry
17. Ministry of Treasury and Finance Electronic Payroll Service
18. Turkey Business Association - Unemployment Allowance and Job Loss Compensation Inquiry
19. Information Technologies and Communication Authority Mobile Line Inquiry
20. General Directorate of Population and Citizenship Affairs Settlement Inquiry

The "e-Government Gateway" has approximately 52 million users as of December 2020. In addition, citizens can benefit from 5301 services provided by 696 institutions. The number of services that are also open to mobile use is 2839 (E-Devlet Kapısı, n.d). In the most general sense in the e-government system; There are an institution, municipality, firm and university services. This numerical information is not fixed and is increasing day by day.

4. POSSIBLE PROBLEMS AND EVALUATIONS IN E-GOVERNMENT PROCESS IN TURKEY

Utilization of information and communication technologies in public services is an important factor that increases the efficiency and quality of these services. Presenting and using these services electronically saves time and place for both the public and the citizens. Besides, having an internet connection is not the only factor to benefit from e-Government services. In this context, orientation and infrastructure improvement studies are also very important for public institutions and citizens to benefit from these services at the highest level. Otherwise, it is inevitable to encounter some problems in the process of electronic operation and electronic service provision / use. In this context, when looking at the general problems related to e-government around the world, it is seen that the following elements are common (Ndou, 2004: 12):

- The negative difference between population and utilization rate
- Management reluctance
- Uncertainty of goals
- Insufficient service type and channels
- Failure to ensure security and confidentiality or sharing information with third persons
- Infrastructure problems and lack of standards in information technologies
- Financing problem

This indicated below are general and potential problems for Turkey within the scope of the assessments made:

- At the end of 2019, according to the Turkey Statistical Institute data, Turkey's population is 83 million 154 thousand 997 people (TUIK, n.d). On the other hand, there are approximately 52 million citizens registered in the e-Government system as of December 2020 (E-Devlet Kapısı, n.d). In this context, the upper limit use of the e-Government Portal in Turkey constitutes about 62% of the total population. This numerical difference means that approximately 38% of society cannot / does not benefit from e-Government services. In this context, although this difference decreases every year, it is important to accelerate and continue this policy.
- The foundations of the transition to electronic operation in Turkey were laid in 1972 with the MERNIS. And it has continued until today with the subsequent developments. In this context, it is possible to say that there is no general reluctance.

- Turkey e-government web site "Frequently Asked Questions" about under the heading of the e-Government objectives are clearly stated. In this context, it is possible to say that the goals are understandable and clear.
- As mentioned in the previous section, 5301 services are offered through the e-Devlet website. In addition, e-Government operations and services can be accessed via mobile devices. In this context, it can be said that the service type and channels are sufficient.
- There is an informative text on the Turkey e-Government website for privacy, usage and protection of personal data. In the internet and literature researches, no incident or finding regarding the violation of privacy and the sharing of personal information was found.
- When examined in terms of the information infrastructure of e-Government, it is seen that some problems have been experienced in the recent past. In February 2018, there was an intensity in the Sub-Family Genealogy Inquiry service provided by the General Directorate of Population and Citizenship Affairs, and the site came to a standstill and the interrogation procedures could not be carried out for a while. This case highlights the need for infrastructure improvements.

Besides all these possible problems and evaluations, it is also important to make some administrative and legal regulations. For example, the use of electronic signature, which is a product of electronic operation, instead of wet signature in some transactions and the absence or unknown of the relevant legal regulations in this context may put both public employees and service users in a difficult situation. This situation may prevent e-Government from reaching the desired levels and becoming widespread. In this context, it is necessary and important to adopt an understandable, participatory, informative and proactive attitude regarding electronic service and operation.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With the New Public Management approach, it is aimed to leave the traditional and cumbersome state to the minimal but effective state. This situation brought about the change of the existing bureaucracy. Despite the cumbersome associated with bureaucracy, e-Government is a functioning and service system independent of time and place. In this context, it is a fact that states that invest in technology and information systems are in a stronger position compared to other countries. Based on this fact, it is an important issue for states to include all stakeholders in information processes and to adopt an interactive understanding. In this direction, many factors such as the awareness of decision-makers, efforts of public officials, coordination and standardization come to the fore. Focusing on electronic infrastructure has become a necessity for governments in today's world, where all relevant processes have shifted to the electronic environment. In addition, in today's world where even money is increasingly a virtual instrument, pioneering or keeping up with electronic transformation makes countries superior to each other. In this context possible solutions to the problems of the e-government system in Turkey and can be experienced in this process are as follows:

- The number of citizens registered with the e-government system in Turkey is about 52 million as of December 2020. This means that the e-Government upper limit of use constitutes approximately 62% of the total population. In this context, Turkey, e-Government can not use or do not use citizens should continue its efforts to engage the system.
- In order for citizens to benefit from e-Government services at the highest level, training should be given in order to increase their current knowledge and skills in information technologies, correct guidance should be provided and orientation studies should be carried out in order to establish the necessary information infrastructure.
- Information and communication technologies should be closely followed and up-to-date information systems should be used, and common standards should be established in the investments and applications of public institutions regarding technology infrastructures.
- “Service Utilization Quota” determined daily for some e-Government services can be associated with system inadequacies. In this context, long-term infrastructural improvements should be made.

- Budget allocation, which is closely related to technical infrastructure, is an important issue for e-Government and the capacity of the system is directly proportional to the budget allocated to information technologies. In this context, the use of Public-Private Partnership models should be considered when necessary to maintain the functionality of the system, to share high investment costs and to solve possible problems related to infrastructure.

e-Government is an informatics model that is based on the strategic use of information and communication technologies, responds to the needs of the society, and saves time and place by providing the interaction between citizen-state and institution-institution in an electronic environment. With this model, it is possible for citizens to receive faster quality and economical service and to do more with less cost with the services provided by the state. Providing wide access to relevant processes, e-Government also ensures openness and transparency in the public. On the other hand, the transition to both electronic operation and electronic service provision and usage is not easy. In this context, the transition and adoption processes to the e-Government system do not occur in the short term. In addition, the technical infrastructure that may be sufficient for existing and potential users is high cost. In addition to these, low computer literacy in developing countries, difficulties in keeping up with technological developments, and resistance of managers / employees to these important changes in the public functioning are some of the obstacles in the proliferation process of e-Government systems and applications. As a result, states should adopt an interactive structure that includes all stakeholders in the relevant processes in order to develop these systems. In this context, it is important to work on e-government understanding in public institutions and to closely follow and adopt information technologies. As a result, if these are realized, it is possible to carry the information revolution to public institutions.

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