Chapter 14
Turkish Case of E-Government Policy-Formulation Process as an Emerging and Innovative Public Policymaking Area

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ABSTRACT

Use of (Information Communication Technologies) ICTs by governments all over the world has opened new avenues in terms of redesigning the relationship between the state and the society as well as between the state and the businesses. These new forms of relationships create wider meanings especially for the society as a whole, and bring fresh ideas and practices to be put in place regarding policy making process.

While enjoying centralist tendencies and a strict hierarchical bureaucratic model intrinsic to the inner cycles of the organizational levels, the Turkish administrative system has been trying new forms of governance models exemplified in e-government policies. This paper tries to analyze and discuss the main tenets, actors, coordinating and partnership mechanisms, undertakings, evaluation techniques and prospects of e-government policies as a newly emerging policy area with specific reference to Turkish e-transformation efforts, policies and initiatives.

The paper would concentrate on the "formation" and "participation" (formulation) dimension and stage of the ICT policy process. Presenting up-to-date information and analyses regarding the developments in recent and current stage of evolution, guidelines and suggestions for future are provided.

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INTRODUCTION

Use of ICTs by governments all over the world, has opened new avenues in terms of redesigning the relationship between the state and the society as well as between the state and the businesses. These new forms of relationships create wider meanings especially for the society as a whole and bring fresh ideas and practices to be put in place regarding policy making process.

With the extensive use of ICTs and global transition to information/knowledge society; structures, techniques, and mechanisms of public policy making process have radically and swiftly been transformed in accordance with the principles and dynamics of governance. In addition to changes in the traditional policy areas, new public policy fields have also emerged as a repercussion of the revolution of information and communications technologies. E-government emerged as a quite new and unprecedented public policy sphere in terms of decision-making structures, implementation and evaluation techniques. In this context, e-government as a public policy area contains participation, coordination and partnerships of many different public and private actors such as public bureaucracies, civil society institutions, political bodies, non-governmental organizations, private sectors, local governments and even international organizations (Nohutçu, 2009: 409).

The effects of ICTs in policy making process could be seen as important from a variety of perspectives. Historically there is a one way communication between states and their citizens (Altınsoy, 2009: 237). However, there are certain limitations of this approach. The communication channels should be enhanced so that there is a two way communication and even interaction between states and citizens. This is where ICTs could take apart and the communication channels are improved. With the enhanced communication, the policy process is positively affected and a mutual recognition and understanding in the society towards the policies to be adopted could be achieved. Also, the civil societal institutions and pressure groups can take the advantages of ICTs so that they can network among themselves and create more pressure towards the policy makers. For example, in a case analyzed by Altınsoy, with the increasing communication opportunities some youth groups have been using ICT facilities successfully to exert pressure on policy makers (Altınsoy, 2009: 246).

While enjoying centralist tendencies and a strict hierarchical bureaucratic model intrinsic to the inner cycles of the organizational levels, the Turkish administrative system has been trying new forms of governance models exemplified in e-government policies. Thanks to the developments that have been taking place towards the information society, the politicians and as well as the higher levels of the bureaucracy finally has captured the idea of including wider segments of the society to realize the full benefits of the e-government applications.

E-government policies in Turkey could be seen as a new avenue of this transformative trend of public policymaking. In decision-making process, for example, all related actors from a wide spectrum of public and private realms have a say about the content and direction of the policies, unlike other classical policy areas. The head of the official Internet Committee, given a role in transition to information society, was chosen from among the members of a wide range of civil society organizations. This was, for example, a radical challenge to classical bureaucratic policy-making process (Nohutçu, 2009: 410). Also, in the formation of e-Transformation Turkey Executive Committee, the representatives of the related stakeholders and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have included so that their voices could be taken into account in the ICT related policy making processes.

In this vein, this paper tries to analyze and discuss the main tenets, actors, coordinating and partnership mechanisms, undertakings, evaluation techniques and prospects of e-government policies

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