Arguing for the Enhancement of Public Service Efficiency and Effectiveness Through e-Government: The Case of Zimbabwe

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Abstract: Emerging trends in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in governments suggest that developing countries like Zimbabwe should embrace -Government as an enabler of efficient and effective service delivery. Although there are political and economic challenges in Zimbabwe, this paper argues that the Government of Zimbabwe can improve service delivery through e-Government, as there is evidence of ICT acceptance and diffusion across all sectors of the economy. The paper discusses e-government success stories in similar African countries in order to draw lessons for Zimbabwe, critically examines Zimbabwe’s potential in adopting e-Government initiatives and proposes the development and formulation of an e-Government Strategy, which will establish a roadmap of how the Zimbabwe Government will progress to a transformational model of service delivery.

Keywords: e-Government, e-Governance, e-Readiness, Zimbabwe, developing countries, strategy.

1. Introduction

As Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are dramatically changing the lives of people around the world, governments recognise that they must find solutions that will increase public value to their citizens (UN/DESA, Compendium of Innovative e-Government Practices, 2007). It is possible for the Government of Zimbabwe to take advantage of the explosion of ICT services in the economy and implement mechanisms to improve service delivery. In his speech during the 2005 World Summit of the Information Society Conference (WSIS) in Tunis, President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe said, “ICTs can be a useful tool in generating economic growth and employment creation, improving productivity and quality of life for all people... On one level, this summit provides an opportunity for the global family of nations to address this need...”, (WSIS, Tunis, 2005)

According to the World Bank’s definition (http://web.worldbank.org), e-Government "refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government. These technologies can serve a
variety of different ends: better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, or more efficient government management. The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth, and/or cost reductions”. Analogous to e-commerce, which allows businesses to transact with each other more efficiently (B2B) and brings customers closer to businesses (B2C), e-Government aims to make the interaction between government and citizens (G2C), government and business enterprises (G2B), inter-agency relationships (G2G) and Internal Efficiency and Effectiveness (IEE) more friendly, convenient, transparent, and inexpensive (United States’ e-Government Strategy, 2003).

While ICTs have become the agents for a change agenda within governments globally, there is absence of meaningfully coordinated efforts at government level in Zimbabwe to transform government service delivery through e-government. In Zimbabwe, the private sector experienced explosive growth in Internet usage and rapid development of e-Commerce since late 90s. This created a serious problem in the government as people started demanding better service from their government. The growing pressure on the public sector to serve citizens electronically ‘forced’ the government to implement ICT-based systems in several departments and ministries. However, the execution of ICT-based projects in government was done in a piece-meal approach without any policy or strategy. This paper cites many countries in Africa with similar socio-economic background as Zimbabwe, where e-government has been systematically implemented with the aim of improving public service delivery, as a basis to argue for the implementation of a whole-of-Zimbabwe approach to e-government. The importance of this paper lies in its contribution towards better policy and strategy formulation for the adoption of e-government in Zimbabwe.

In the context of this paper, the definition of e-government is the use of ICTs in government in the transition process for information provision, one-way interaction and two-way communication through to interactive transactions. This definition is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Government Ministries and Departments in Zimbabwe are either in phase 1 or phase 2, where information is provided online or some downloadable forms are available on the Internet.

The rest of the paper is organised as follows: In section 2, we provide a review of some previous works related to e-government, focusing mainly on African countries; Section 3 discusses the state of ICTs and electronic readiness (e-Readiness) in Zimbabwe, the aim of which is to put into perspective the developments on the ground towards the adoption of e-government; Section 4 provides an argument in support of the role that e-Government initiatives can play to enhance public service efficiency. Section 5 provides recommendations on how e-Government can be achieved in Zimbabwe and conclusion to the discussion is presented in section 6.
2. Review of Related Works

In this section we provide a review of the literature, drawn mainly from developing countries in Africa, on the use of e-government for the purposes of transforming their governments. Realising the significance of ICTs as an efficient means of accelerating Africa's economic and social development, and thus reduce poverty, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), has included ICT in its priority of physical investments. The e-Africa Commission (e-AC) was set up to coordinate NEPAD’s ICT programmes. The e-AC comprises representatives of African Governments, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and ICT specialised institutions of the African Union. It works in partnership with the African Development Bank and ICT corporate business. Many African governments including South Africa, Uganda, Nigeria, etc have embarked on administrative reforms under NEPAD and have undertaken programmes for modernising public administration (e-Africa Proposal, 2002). In order to succeed in these reforms and in modernisation, e-Africa places emphasis on the need for developing countries to create electronic virtual networks that facilitate access to international resources.

2.1 e-Government in Africa

Our intention in citing successful e-government developments in other African countries is for the Zimbabwe Government to learn from counterparts with similar socio-economic environments and even some with political instability. E-Government has already arrived in Africa though it is essentially an imported concept based on imported designs (Heeks,
According to the web measure index from the UN’s worldwide e-Government Readiness Reports of 2005 and 2008, a lot of African countries are statistically registered as emerging economies that are implementing e-Government. The South African Government launched phase one of its "people first" Internet gateway, giving individuals, organisations and foreigners a single entry point to government services and information, organised according to user needs rather than government structures. (http://www.southafrica.info/public_services/citizens/services_gov/sagovtonline.htm, SA govt's 'people first' portal 2 August 2004).

The Egyptian Government is already providing extensive information about cabinet meetings online as well as extensive online public services on their website, http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/ (Schuppan, 2003). The Ministry of Education of Egypt, whose site is http://knowledge.moe.gov.eg/arabic/, has significantly improved its website by making it more interactive. Citizens can receive information via e-mail, download registration forms, and educational videos as well as listening to audio clips.

The Government of Mauritius is a major success story in e-Government implementation in Africa where a plethora of e-forms are provided online. The e-forms portal is a repository of all downloadable forms by each ministry and departments in Mauritius.

Kenya continues to work towards realizing its commitment to online service through its dedicated ‘Directorate of e-Government’, whose website is http://www.egovernment.go.ke. Kenya's example shows how even countries with constrained resources can make solid progress in e-government.

The United Nations’ e-Government Survey Report (2008) cites many other examples in Africa where the modernisation of governments through e-government is taking place. The report mentions the following: the Ministry of Finance in Rwanda (http://www.minecofin.gov.rw), provides downloads of statistical information in English and French languages; the Ministries of Labour and Social Welfare of Angola (available at http://www.mapess.gv.ao/), received high marks (80 per cent) from the United Nations’ e-Government Survey for the enhanced stage, by providing their citizens with a one-stop shop website, news section and archived information; the Ministry of Finance of Morocco whose site is http://www.finances.gov.ma, allows its citizens to create accounts online, download financial statistics and retrieve archived information; the Ministry of Finance of Lesotho (available at http://www.finance.gov.ls), permits its citizens to download forms and access financial statistics, retrieve archival information and also offers a news section and an online feedback mechanism that allows citizens to ask questions or make a suggestion; the national portal of Burkina Faso (www.primature.gov.bf), is the only African portal which allows for online consultation; the Ministry of Finance of Cape Verde (at http://www.minfin.cv), has created a one-stop shop, with downloadable financial forms and statistics, and access to the ministry’s database and archived information.

Despite unstable socio-political environments particularly in South Africa, Angola and Rwanda within the past 15 years, these governments have successfully forged ahead and placed their citizens’ welfare among their top priorities. The Zimbabwe Government can borrow a leaf from them especially after overcoming the current economic setback.

2.2 Role of Web Portals in e-Government

The Ministerial e-Government Conference held in Manchester (2005) resolved that portals could be seen as key to e-Government programmes. Delegates agreed that the potential benefits are large. Savings in time and resources from both the user and government perspective can be made through central repository of information, create efficiencies in the back office and be a means to stimulate the process of cultural change within government, by encouraging cooperation with users, and by encouraging users used to dealing with government in an online environment. During the Ministerial e-Government Conference
proceedings, Ledinger (2005) noted that a challenge for governments is providing information and services in user-friendly format and in a web-friendly way. The Open Government Project (http://www.ogproject.org), emphasises that “The offering of a “complete” web portal for the federal government will make the most efficient use of one's time. The complete portals offer a central governmental site that links to all ministerial/departmental sites. To further streamline regulatory searches all of the sub-sites or ministerial/departmental sites should be similar in lay-out to ensure ease of navigation and understanding”.

Given the foregoing, we suggest strongly that the Zimbabwe Government, by focusing on developing and enriching contents on its portals, they can reap the advantages and opportunities of ICT and the knowledge economy for collaboration, networking, better services, efficiency and effectiveness.

2.3 e-Readiness

The adoption of e-Government is determined by the degree of a country’s e-readiness (Uzoka et al., 2007). The Economist Intelligent Unit’s white paper on the 2006 e-readiness rankings define e-readiness as “the “state of play” of a country’s ICT infrastructure and the ability of its consumers, businesses and governments to use ICT for their benefit”. The e-readiness assessment of a nation provides policy makers with a detailed scorecard of their economy's competitiveness relative to international counterparts in the digital era (Ifinedo, 2005). Common variables that are used to assess e-readiness of a country are: connectivity and technology infrastructure, business environment, consumer and business adoption, legal and policy environment, socio-economic conditions, and supporting e-services (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2006). On connectivity and technology infrastructure, although great strides have been observed in Africa, the fact remains that most African countries are a long way short of the computing and telecommunications infrastructure on which many Western e-Government initiatives have been based (ITU 2002). In terms of connectivity and technology infrastructure for a networked economy (Hart, 2003), African countries have been described as low (Ifinedo, 2005). While the business environment, consumer and business adoption are moderate, the legal and policy environment in Africa is not supportive of e-Government initiatives. In most African countries, digital signatures for example, have not yet been accepted (Garfinkel 2001). The socio-economic conditions have been a major setback of technological development in Africa for some time. Inadequate economic resources and low levels of literacy play a negative role to development. However, Zimbabwe’s high literacy rate should be taken advantage of by policy makers to implement technology-based services.

The Zimbabwe Government can use other developing economies that have made significant strides towards e-government implementation as a motivating factor. It follows therefore that if a proper e-Government Strategy is formulated, Zimbabwe can also reap the benefits of ICTs and public sector modernisation. The following section discusses the state of ICT and e-Readiness in Zimbabwe with a view to demonstrating the degree of the Zimbabwe Government’s preparedness to embracing e-government.

3. State of ICT and e-Readiness in Zimbabwe

There are visible deliberate efforts in Zimbabwe towards making the country an information society. In order to discuss the argument for efficient and effective e-government, we present in Table 1 a summary of the various initiatives that have so far been undertaken by the Zimbabwe Government in promoting the adoption and use of ICTs. Table 1 is discussed in detail in the rest of this section.
Table 1: Summary of ICT Initiatives by the Zimbabwe Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICT Initiative</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
<th>Year Implemented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National ICT Policy Framework</td>
<td>To provide guidelines for national ICT implementations</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Government-wide Web Portal</td>
<td>To pull government information and services to one access point</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National e-Readiness Survey</td>
<td>To assess the degree of the country’s e-Readiness towards becoming an information society</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe Millennium Developed Goals (MDGs)</td>
<td>A report recognising ICT as a player in meeting UN’s MDGs</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrialisation Policy</td>
<td>To embrace ICTs in the manufacturing sector to boost export</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science and Technology Policy</td>
<td>To promote and harness Science and Technology for national development</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nziramasanga Education Commission Report</td>
<td>Recommended the introduction of ICT teaching and learning in schools</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1 National ICT Policy Framework

A National ICT Policy Framework was developed in Zimbabwe in 2006 whose purpose was the requisite guidance and direction to the formulation and implementation of ICT strategies and programmes in and across all sectors of the economy. It was crafted under the following vision: “to transform Zimbabwe into a knowledge-based society by the year 2020”, the Mission of which is, “ to accelerate the development and application of ICTs in support of sustainable socio-economic growth and development in Zimbabwe”. A well-defined National ICT Strategy would enable Zimbabwe to effectively participate in the global market along with other countries that have embraced ICT and the knowledge economy as well as facilitating cooperation and co-ordination of various initiatives by the government, the private sector and other stakeholders in order to optimise the allocation and utilisation of ICT resources (Zimbabwe: National Information & Communication Technology Project, 2004). The National ICT Policy Framework would enable Zimbabwe to coordinate various initiatives in the public and private sectors and of other stakeholders within and outside Zimbabwe in order to optimise the allocation and utilisation of resources in the development and use of ICTs across all sectors of the economy (National ICT Policy Framework, 2006, pp 11).

The objectives of the National ICTs Policy Framework were (i) ensure provision and maintenance of infrastructural facilities necessary for ICTs development, (ii) promotion of systematic, relevant and sustainable development of ICTs, (iii) embark on extensive educational and training programmes to provide adequate supply of qualified ICTs personnel and knowledge workers in all sectors, (iv) establish institutional mechanisms and procedures for determining sectoral application priorities and (v) encourage the development and use of, and ensure equitable access to benefits offered by ICTs across gender, youths, the disabled and the elderly (National ICT Policy Framework, 2006, pp 15).

It is our observation that this well-documented ICT Policy Framework can be a significant starting point towards coordinated efforts at adopting e-government. Of importance therefore is the need to transform the ICT policy document from just being a mere document to an action plan.
3.2 The National e-Readiness Survey Report

The Government of Zimbabwe in conjunction with the National Economic Consultative Forum (NECF) and with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) commissioned an e-Readiness Survey whose purpose was to assess the country’s readiness to become a knowledge society. The National e-Readiness Survey indicated that there was a lot of work to be done in terms of preparing Zimbabwe for e-business, for out of a score of 4, the country scored only 1.4 (National e-Readiness Survey, 2005). With respect to e-Government, the following were the findings of the e-Readiness Survey: (i) Government possesses an immense potential for e-Government through its wide area network and application systems such as SAP software, civil service payroll, national registration system and pensions processing; (ii) most of the online communication is G2B and G2C, but there is no citizen-to-government (C2G) online communication; (iii) The institutional mechanisms for ICT are not well-defined and coordinated and (iv) there is no integrated government policy framework for the development of e-Government.

The findings indicate some progress on ICT-based efforts by the government but in an uncoordinated manner due to the absence of an all-embracing ICT strategy. We can note that the main factor responsible for the low score is the backward ICT Infrastructure especially in the telecommunications sector. Many rural areas of Zimbabwe do not have electricity making it impossible to introduce ICT-based services. A well-defined e-government strategy should be able to articulate such shortcomings, prompting the central government to commit financial and other resources towards infrastructure.

3.3 Other Policies and Programmes

The Zimbabwe Government has established various policies and programmes over the years, suggesting that there is willingness by the government to adopt ICTs as drivers of the knowledge economy. The Science and Technology Policy (2002) recognises the ICT sector as a key enabler of national development and accordingly directs that Zimbabwe develop a framework to guide its development and use (National ICT Policy Framework, 2006, pp 14). The President of Zimbabwe launched the National Economic Recovery Programme (NERP) (2004 – 2006) in 2003. NERP emphasises the need for Zimbabwe to exploit the potential of Science and Technology in general and ICTs in particular in order to leap-frog national economic competitiveness and in the process increase export market penetrability (National ICT Policy Framework, 2006, pp 14). The Nziramasanga Education Commission Report of 1999 recommended the introduction and mainstreaming of computer-based teaching and learning in the pedagogy of the Zimbabwe’s education system - schools, colleges, universities and other institutions of higher learning (National ICT Policy Framework, 2006, pp 14). The Industrialisation Policy of 2004 recognises and advocates for the development and use of ICTs in the manufacturing sector in general and to undergird the national export strategy in particular. ICTs are identified as indispensable in effectively marketing industrial products both on the domestic and export markets (National ICT Policy Framework, 2006, pp 14). The WSIS Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action (2003) where Zimbabwe was represented strongly recommended the adoption and utilisation of ICTs to meet the agreed developmental goals. The WSIS in Tunis (2005) made particular reference to speed development of ICTs in order for Africa to participate fully in global markets. The Zimbabwe Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2005 recognise the role of ICTs as tools that add value and contributes significantly to the achievement of the MDGs by 2015 (National ICT Policy Framework, 2006, pp 15).

Lack of infrastructure as alluded before, is the main drawback in implementing these policies and programmes. We observed that significant steps have been taken with some programmes especially the Nziramasanga Education Commission, as computer education
was made part of the schools curriculum. However, no meaningful benefits have been realised, as many rural schools do not have electricity to carry out computer education.

3.4 Government Web Site and Computerisation of Ministries

The Government of Zimbabwe has established a Wide Area Network (WAN) that is accessible to all government departments and ministries. The reasons for the establishment of the WAN are (i) to use Internet and Intranet access to enhance public sector wide information access and exchange and (ii) to maximise the benefits of government-wide acquisition of telecommunications services. Most government ministries have now computerised, and of note is the deployment of large enterprise resource planning software (ERPs) like SAP. A regularly updated Web site portal called Zimbabwe Government Online, located at http://www.gta.gov.zw was developed. The site, whose major purpose is currently informative, has links to all the government ministries and stand-alone departments.

3.5 ICT Service Providers

The Zimbabwe Internet Service Providers Association (ZISPA) has a membership of 28, indicating that there are many Internet users in Zimbabwe (http://www.zispa.co.zw). Diffusion of computer knowledge in Zimbabwe is taking place at a high rate as most people can read and write with the literacy rate now at 90 per cent (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CIA_World_Factbook). ICT-based services in Zimbabwe are increasing, ranging from conducting business on the cell phone (m-Business) to applying for jobs on the Internet.

However, these Internet Service Providers are concentrated in urban cities where computers are accessible. This is creating an unfortunate scenario of digital divide where urban dwellers are becoming more technologically advanced while no significant progress is taking place in rural Zimbabwe. The e-government strategy should be able to address such imbalance in its roadmap.

3.6 ICTs and Political Leadership

It has been cited that of all the e-readiness issues, lack of leadership commitment is the most critical (PCIP 2002). However, an opportunity arises in Zimbabwe where there is commitment from the top political leadership to implement ICT-based initiatives. The president of Zimbabwe has donated more computers in the education sector throughout the country. In his speech during the 2005 WSIS Conference in Tunis, Mr Mugabe said, “ICTs can be a useful tool in generating economic growth and employment creation, improving productivity and quality of life for all people... On one level, this summit provides an opportunity for the global family of nations to address this need...”, (World Summit of the Information Society, Tunis, 2005). Another positive development is the establishment of a Cabinet Committee on Scientific Research, Technology Development and Applications by the Zimbabwe Government. This is clear testimony that there is willingness by all to adopt technology. The Ministry of Science and Technology Development (MoSTD) is the champion of all technology-based activities in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe Government through MoSTD, is always represented in regional and world conferences that focus on ICTs and other technology-based initiatives.

3.7 Challenges to e-Government Adoption in Zimbabwe

In this sub-section, we outline the challenges that inhibit ICT-based efforts to improve service delivery in Zimbabwe. We will also present in a later section, an argument that if a properly planned e-Government Strategy is formulated, then a need to tackle these challenges will be identified. Some of the major challenges that stand in the way of e-Government initiatives in Zimbabwe are lack of funding, rigid organization structures, poor
ICT infrastructure, low ICT literacy rate, high human resource turnover, high impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and limited Public-Private Partnerships.

It is possible to address these challenges especially when the Zimbabwe Government becomes an active participant in the global economy and embrace technology-focused establishments such as NEPAD and the e-Africa Commission. These organisations are currently addressing similar challenges in Uganda, South Africa and other countries.

4. Arguing for the Adoption of e-Government in Zimbabwe

Government Ministries and departments in Zimbabwe are still doing business manually despite glaring opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness through ICTs. While it is acknowledged that Zimbabwe’s e-Government development is still in phase 1 and 2 of the Service Delivery Process described in Section 1, there is some opportunity to progress and reach the third and fourth stages. Reaching these stages require huge financial investments, total leadership commitment as well as skills and expertise. Successful e-Government initiatives require that the challenges outlined in section 3 be addressed. The formulation of an e-Government Strategy that shows a roadmap of e-Government implementation will be used as a guideline to address the challenges as well as to suggest ways to make e-Government resources accessible to the poor, the disabled and the disadvantaged.

Therefore, for the Government of Zimbabwe to become more adaptable, innovative and responsive, there is need for transformation especially in the way public services are currently being offered to the citizens. This transformation is shown in Figure 2 below.

![Figure 2: Needed Service Delivery Transformations for e-Government](image)

4.1 Inefficiency/Problem

General observations are that people have to physically avail themselves at government offices in order to get basic information, complete and submit a form or to get any other service. Ministries of Home Affairs, Higher Education, Local Government, Gender Affairs, Legal and Justice, Small and Medium Enterprises are examples where people physically visit government offices for services that could be provided online through the Internet or Intranet. Another serious problem is where products and services, which should otherwise be sold to overseas markets, cannot be advertised and marketed to those markets due to traditional ways of marketing. The Ministry of Agriculture is a sad example where agricultural produce is poorly marketed at a time when the Zimbabwe Government has embarked on agrarian reform as the mainstay of the economy. Alongside the Ministry of Agriculture, others that are suffering from lack of modern marketing initiatives are Tourism, Industry, Mining and International Trade.
4.2 Needed Enhancement

There are several benefits that could be enjoyed by the people and businesses in Zimbabwe if all departments and ministries could provide online information and services. Delays could be avoided and costs drastically reduced if different forms could be made available online and citizens and businesses complete and submit them online. Online processing of the forms could make the whole process of service delivery even faster. The Government of Zimbabwe, under relevant ministries and departments can provide some generic freestanding services such as e-forms. This is a form bank that provides forms for filling on-line or off-line. Advertising and marketing websites could be created for those ministries that require publicity, local and far-off markets.

4.3 Enabling ICTs

These present means and solutions that can be used to transform the current situation, which is riddled with inefficiencies and problems, to the needed position of e-government. In Figure 2, the Enabling ICTs are instrument that are used to convert the Inefficiency/Problem column entries into the Needed Enhancement column elements. Large collaborative ERPs based on online databases can be the right antidotes for ministries of Finance, Agriculture, Home Affairs, Health and Child Welfare, Education and many others that require online access to information and data by citizens, the business community and other government ministries. It is important to point out that the Internet and intranets are the solution to the problem of inaccessible information like forms, examination results, tourist information and virtually all information that the public must access.

5. Recommendations for e-Government in Zimbabwe

In this section, we coalesce the public service challenges and the suggested ICT-based enhancements to propose a set of recommendations for e-government adoption in Zimbabwe. This paper recommends the development of an e-government strategy that will establish a roadmap of how the Zimbabwe Government will progress to a transformational model of government service delivery. Zimbabwe’s e-Government strategy will be to use electronic tools to transform service delivery, the internal management of government, management of broader public sector systems and interactions with citizens. The e-government transformation model shown in Figure 3 below explains the roadmap. The current state of public service delivery in Zimbabwe that is riddled with problems, challenges and inefficiencies described above is the input into the transformation process. These challenges include inadequate ICT infrastructure, inadequate ICT skills, limited institutional arrangements, inadequate financial resources, limited public private partnerships, limited data management capacity, inadequate horizontal and vertical communication and inadequate bandwidth nationally and on the gateway. As indicated earlier, a well-planned e-government strategy will uncover a need to address these challenges and problems as they are currently standing in the way of any successful e-government implementation. The creation of a citizen-centred e-government is demonstrated by efficiency and effectiveness that are the output of the transformation process. The model also shows that the enabling tools that have already been described are the drivers of the transformation process. Tools that are used during the transformation process like ERPs, CRMs and integrated databases will facilitate collaboration of the whole public sector, resulting in improvement of user-focused services as well as internal and external delivery effectiveness.
It is further recommended that for a successful e-government adoption, the strategy should clearly spell that politicians be champions for the e-government transformation agenda. Projects such as ICT literacy drive, rural electrification, computer education, etc should be championed by Members of Parliament (MPs) in their constituencies. The MPs should treat such projects as their homegrown and source for funding from the treasury and hence engage all people in their constituencies. On the same note, parliament can also be advised to move a motion that makes it compulsory for the computer curriculum at high school level to be examinable. Since the whole country has high schools including un-electrified rural areas, the government will then be ‘forced’ to act fast and channel financial resources to the development of rural areas (Ochara, 2007). The aim would not only be to boost ICT literacy and awareness, but also to promote innovation towards the building of an information and knowledge society.

Another recommendation is for the Zimbabwe Government to take a leaf from experiences of other developing countries that have launched vigorous campaigns to raise ICT awareness. Tunisia and Mauritania for example, have created cyber-caravans that travel from village to village to introduce the local population to the Internet and its applications (United Nations Conference on Trade and development, 2003). Political leaders can also take a lead in this drive. The concepts of cyber-caravans and digital kiosks
have the ability to attract the attention of non-governmental organisations and foreign governments for funding.

6. Conclusions

In this paper, we presented an argument in support of e-government adoption in Zimbabwe. ICTs in governments contribute significantly to the increase of national productivity, enhancement of wealth creation and generally increase efficiency in public administration. In developing information society like Zimbabwe, more efficient creation, management and use of information, especially through ICTs, is needed in order to create public value. We made a presentation in this paper, which exposed the inefficiencies that currently exist in service delivery in the Government of Zimbabwe and how public value can be created if e-government initiatives are properly implemented. Numerous challenges that the e-government programmes will face could be addressed if a proper e-government strategy is formulated and implemented.

This paper established that Zimbabwe is in a state of preparedness towards e-Government adoption. The Zimbabwe Government has supported a number of programmes and policies that recognise ICTs as enablers of development. The Zimbabwe National ICT Policy Framework of 2006 epitomises the willingness of the government to adopt e-government and related ICT programmes. The benefits that accrue through e-government in Zimbabwe mean that ICTs do not have to compete for national resources with health, transport services, gender equality or social development, rather these ministries require ICTs in order to function efficiently and effectively.

There is no clearly defined government strategy on e-government adoption in Zimbabwe. This absence may increase risk of poor coordination and blurred accountability (Sihlezena, 2006). While this paper focused on e-government, an equally important aspect in government service delivery is e-governance. Total lack of e-governance in Zimbabwe must prompt researchers and policy implementers to consider establishing structures that add value to service delivery and citizens’ participation in democracy and governance. Finally, it is also relevant to ensure that e-government and e-governance initiatives, when implemented, are not promoting digital divide, but are all-encompassing to the benefit of every Zimbabwean whether rich or poor, young or old, male or female, educated or uneducated, urbanites or rural dwellers.

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