THE ROLE OF ICT IN FACILITATING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE LEGISLATIVE AND OVERSIGHT FUNCTIONS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN PARLIAMENT

Gonnie Naidoo
Director: Information & Communications Technology
Parliament of South Africa

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Gnaidoo@parliament.gov.za
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1. South Africa: The Rainbow Nation
2. Parliament of South Africa
3. IT Strategy for Parliament
4. Public Participation: Background
5. Challenges
6. Legislative processes where Public can participate
7. SA National ICT role-players
8. Enabling technologies
9. Recommendations
Background - South Africa (The Rainbow Nation): FACTS

- **Location:**
  Southern tip of the African continent. Has a coastline of 2,798 km.

- **Natural resources:**
  Gold, chromium, antimony, coal, iron ore, manganese, nickel, phosphates, tin, uranium, gem diamonds, platinum, copper, vanadium, salt, natural gas.

- **Population**
  43m. 11 official languages.

- **Constitution:**
  - Certified by the Constitutional Court on 4/12/1996.
  - Spheres of government include the Executive, Parliament and the Judiciary.
  - 1st Democratic elections held in 1994.
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Parliament of South Africa

- National Assembly (400 seats); National Council of Provinces (90 seats); There are 9 provinces and each has its own Legislature, Premier and Ministers.
- Administrative staff increased from 300 in 1994 to over 950 in 2005.
- Budget increased from R250m (31m euros) in 1994 to R885m (110m euros) in 2005.
- Over 800 bills passed from 1994 to 2005.
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Background and Objectives of the MSP for SA Parliament

- To align ICT initiatives to strategic objectives of Parliament.
- To align ICT with business requirements.
- To identify inefficiencies in the usage of technology.
- To identify gaps in the current provision of ICT services.
- To identify opportunities for Parliament in using technology.
- To improve efficiencies in Parliament through improved usage of information.
- To chart the way forward for Parliament in its usage of technology.
Approach used to produce the MSP

1. Business vision and strategy
2. Business processes and information
3. Required ICT systems and support
4. Current ICT systems and support
5. Gap
6. Prioritised list of initiatives
7. MSP

Order of steps:
- Business vision and strategy
- Business processes and information
- Required ICT systems and support
- Current ICT systems and support
- Gap
- Prioritised list of initiatives
- MSP
Parliament’s Business Strategy

**Strategic Intent**

**Strategic Direction**

- Legislation
- International Participation
- Co-operative Government
- Oversight
- Public Participation

**Increase in Focus**

**Legislation**

**Legislation in action**
Parliament’s Business Architecture

### Management Support

- Ensure compliance to the legislative mandate and promote good governance
- Develop and implement policies, strategies and programs

### Introduce
- New Bills
- Amend Bills
- Evaluate International Laws and treaties

### Facilitate
- Communicate to public
- Educate Public
- Debate
- Voting

### Adopt
- Pass bills
- International laws and treaties

### Monitor
- Oversight
- Review Constitution
- Legislation rollout
- Effectiveness of implemented legislation
- Feasibility Studies
- Capacity Planning
- Budget spend
- Co-operative Government
- Service delivery to citizens

### Outputs / Outcomes

1. Passed Bills
2. Oversight of Government
3. Public Participation
4. Co-operative Government
5. Sound International Relations

### Support Services

- Financial Management
- ICT services
- Internal Audit
- Legal Services
- Human Resource Management
- Communication services
- Protection services
- International Relations
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The SA Constitution..section 59..Public access to and involvement in the National Assembly

(1) The National Assembly must -

a) Facilitate public involvement in the legislative and other processes of the Assembly and its committees; and

b) Conduct its business in an open manner, and hold its sittings, and those of its committees, in public, but reasonable measures may be taken –

   I. To regulate public access, including access to the media to the Assembly and its committees; and

   II. To provide for the searching of any person and, where appropriate, the refusal of entry to, or the removal of, any person.

(2) The National Assembly may not exclude the public, including the media, from a sitting of a committee unless it is reasonable and justifiable to do so in an open and democratic society.
72. (1) The National Council of Provinces must -
   a) facilitate public involvement in the legislative and other processes of the Council and its committees; and
   b) conduct its business in an open manner, and hold its sittings, and those of its committees, in public, but reasonable measures may be taken -
      I. to regulate public access, including access of the media, to the Council and its committees; and
      II. to provide for the searching of any person and, where appropriate, the refusal of entry to, or the removal of, any person.

(2) The National Council of Provinces may not exclude the public, including the media, from a sitting of a committee unless it is reasonable and justifiable to do so in an open and democratic society.
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Challenges in public participation

- Limited facilities are provided to involve Public in Legislative processes.
  - Physical location of Parliament – inaccessible to make submissions and presentations.
  - Committee rooms not physically structured to accommodate the public and press…apartheid Govt. did not permit such transparency of its activities.
  - Parliament website is not interactive..does not accept public comment on Bills, etc.
  - Sittings of Houses and Committees are not broadcast on national television…only highlights are carried in news clips.
  - Pay TV has a dedicated channel on Parliament but does not also broadcast full sittings and meetings.
  - Organised groups (lobbyists) appear to have more of a voice in Parliament than the general public and the reliance on participation is largely placed on elected MP’s.

- Many of the public not quite aware of: -
  - how the Parliament serves them,
  - what legislation is being tabled, what the status of legislation is, what their rights are (with respect to legislation) and how they can participate.
  - what issues of public and political concern are being debated,
  - what checks are being done on the work of the Executive,
  - what checks are being done on the budget and government spending,

- New legislation is not proactively marketed: -
  - Sometimes there is a misunderstanding on the content and intent as insufficient information is communicated to the Public before a bill is passed.
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# Processes that Public can participate in..Section 75 Bills

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1. **MP introduces Bill**
2. **First Reading**
3. **Second Reading Debate**
4. **Vote**
5. **Submission/Hearings Presentations/Revision**
6. **Referred to Select Committee**
7. **√**
8. **X**
9. **Vote**
10. **√**
11. **Vote**
12. **President signs Bill**
13. **Secretary signs Bill**
14. **Act Gazetted**
15. **Implements law**
16. ** Implemented**

- **Green Paper**
- **White Paper**
- **Draft Bill - approved by (Cabinet)**
- **Committee introduces Bill**
- **Submission/Hearings Presentations/Revision**
- **Applies law**
Processes that Public can participate in..Section 76 Bills

- Public
- Government
- Parliament
- NA
- NCOP
- Portfolio Committee
- Select Committee
- Judiciary
- Provincial Government
- Local Government
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National ICT Roleplayers... strategic alliances and partnerships with Parliament of SA

- Government Communication Information System (GCIS) – Office of the Presidency
- Government Core Communication Network (GCCN) - SITA
- Local Government Network (LGNet)
- Batho Pele Gateway
LGNet (Local Government Network)

- LGNet is a local government private network using the internet and satellite linkages
- The objective of LGNet is to provide a one stop support service to municipalities (284) to enable them to become better functioning entities.
- The LGNet will:
  - Provide ICT infrastructure to local governments
  - Provide a framework for the functional monitoring of municipalities
  - Provide a centralised source of data and information
  - Allow for a focused approach to capacity building and the measuring of the impact of interventions
  - Provide for improved communication and sharing of information
  - Create a channel for training and development
  - Allow for rational planning and policy formulation
  - Improve co-ordination at all spheres of government
Batho Pele Gateway

- The Batho Pele Gateway is an initiative to improve public access to government services.

- Services are provided through Public Information Terminals (PIT’s) at post offices and Multi-Purpose Community Centres (MPCCs), which are government one-stop service centres offering basic services and government information to residents.

- 64 MPCCs were built by the end of 2004.

- The intention is to have a PIT in each of the 284 municipal areas.
GCCN (Government Core Communication Network)

- The GCCN is a wide area network infrastructure to service the whole of government and is provided by the State Information Technology Agency (SITA).

- SITA resides under the ministry of DPSA, which is an initiative of the Honourable Minister Fraser Moleketi.

- The VPN enabled GCCN provides:
  - A platform for e-government
  - Exploitation of economies of scale
  - Full multimedia functionality such as the support for voice and video.
GCIS

- The Government Communication Information System (GCIS) is located in the Office of the Presidency.

- GCIS's vision is to help meet the communication and information needs of government and the people.

- GCIS's mission is to provide leadership in government communication and to ensure that the public is informed of government's implementation of its mandate.

- GCIS' strategic objectives are to:
  - ensure that the voice of government is heard
  - foster a more positive communication environment
  - have a clear understanding of the public information needs and government's communication needs
  - promote interactive communications between government and the public
  - set high standards for government communication
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Rationale for Technology utilization in SA Parliament

- Facilitator of service delivery.
- Bridge divide between Public and MP
- Bridge divide between Public and Parliament
- Bridge divide between Public and Government
- Create a logical extension of Parliament – take Parliament to the People.
Enabling technologies

- Citizens Portal
- E-Knowledge Base
- Parliamentary website (NA and NCOP)
- Video conferencing
- Audio conferencing
- Call center
- Radio
- Television
- Geographic Information System (GIS)
Citizen’s Portal

- A citizens portal would in essence create a logical extension of the Parliament and effectively serve to take Parliament to the people.

- The wide area network (WAN) infrastructure of SITA, GCIS and LGNet is to be utilised:

- A touch screen activated application with the following functionality is to be developed:
  - Member lists and contact detail
  - List of green and white papers – consolidated by subject across government departments
  - List of Bills - consolidated by subject across government departments
  - Status of Bills
  - Bills requiring Public input, (date, where, etc.)
  - Discussion threads on Bills
  - Issues of Public importance
  - Webcasts of NA and NCOP sittings and Committee meetings – view sittings and meetings live
  - Audio casts of NA and NCOP sittings and Committee meetings – hear audio of sittings and meetings in language of choice
  - Ask your MP!
  - Accept video letters – to cater for illiteracy
  - Acts (Plain language version in official languages)

- The application will be deployed on PIT’s, MPCC’s, Provincial legislative offices, Government offices and local municipalities.
e-Knowledge Base

- An e-Knowledge Base will provide a singular web-enabled repository of Parliament, Provincial and Local Government legislation.

- Information will be represented in the form of a cascading tree structure (ie. drop down lists) :
  - Legislator (Parliament, Provincial Govt., District Municipality, Local Municipality)
  - Bills
  - Acts
  - By-laws

- The e-KB will be deployed on PITS and MPCC’s across the country using SITA’s GCCN, GCIS and LGNET.

- The Public would be able to view, track and participate in the process of legislation within any of the legislative offices across the country.
The Parliamentary website is to be re-developed to incorporate the NCOP website into a singular website for the Parliament.

The website will include the following functionality:

- Audio casts (for sittings in both Houses and committees)
- Web casts (for sittings in both Houses and committees)
- Discussion threads on issues of public interest, bills, etc.

Audio casts would enable the public to hear the proceedings of Houses and Committees in their language of choice.

Web casts would enable the public to see the proceedings of Houses and Committees.

Discussion threads would be based on specific topics of interest and enable the public to state their viewpoint on various legislation and matters affecting oversight.
Video and audio conferencing

- Will cater for Committees to meet virtually.
- Project initiated to provide the 9 provinces and SA Parliament with video conferencing facilities.
- Further plans to extend project to local government. In this way, the Public would be able to make remote presentations and interact live with Members of Parliament during committee meetings.
- SITA’s GCCN network would be used to link the conferencing units.
Radio

- Parliament will utilise GCIS services to broadcast sittings in the Houses and Committees (in official languages).

- A centralised broadcasting facility has already been set up in the Parliament.

- The public would be able to hear and be informed of the proceedings of Houses and Committees.
Discussions in progress to make use of the national public broadcaster’s services to broadcast full sittings of Houses and Committees.

The Public would be able to view the full sittings of Houses and Committees.
A Call center will be set up to provide the public with a centralised point to obtain legislative information and to register enquiries, etc.

The intention is to make use of SITA’s call centre to facilitate this service.
Geographic Information System (e-GIS)

- An e-GIS will serve to provide a consolidated database of information that is represented graphically and geographically.

- The database will contain relevant and factual information that would serve each of the committees eg, education and health.

- The database would enhance and facilitate the oversight process. Both Members and the Public would be able to view the information through the usage of web browsers.
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Recommendations

1. Identify medium to long term goals for the utilization of technology to facilitate public participation. (Develop an IT strategy).

2. Analyse your internal ICT competencies and identify gaps in service provision.

3. Identify key projects. Make sure that IT strategy is aligned to the business strategy of your Parliament and/or Government.

4. Establish business collaboration and alliances with national ICT role players (where possible).

5. Capacitate your ICT organization (ICT structure, ICT governance and management, policies, etc.).

6. Capacitate your ICT infrastructure (servers, pc’s, network, etc).

7. Ensure that projects are managed according to recognised best practices.

8. To maintain focus, ensure that ICT initiatives are always aligned to your business strategy and operates from a macro perspective. Loosely defined or selected initiatives could construe long term aspirations.
SCIENCE WITHOUT HUMANITY

“If science becomes all technique and technology, it quickly degenerates into man against humanity. Technologies comes from the paradigms of science. And if there’s very little understanding of the higher human purposes that the technology is striving to serve, we become victims of our own technocracy”

Mahatma Ghandi, (7 deadly sins of mankind)
THANK YOU
DEMOCRACY

“Democracy is government for the People by the People and not government of the People – Public servants are there to serve.”