



Why is Public Policy Implementation Difficult in Developing Countries? Analysis of E-Government Implementation in Lesotho

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Abstract

Governments formulate and implement public policies to intervene in the problems in the society. While policy implementation has increasingly been recognised as necessary for bridging the gap between policy goals and expected results and desired impacts, the process itself is dynamic, complex and problematic and has yet to be adequately understood. Despite the fact that implementation has emerged to be problematic across the world, literature shows that developing countries generally find it more difficult to implement government policies. Yet, the *why* question remains a largely under-investigated area of scholarship. The aim of this study is to contribute to an ongoing debate of why policy implementation is difficult in developing countries by exploring the challenges affecting electronic government (e-government) implementation in Lesotho. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather information from a purposively selected sample of government officials. The findings demonstrate that implementation in developing countries such as Lesotho is not linear, continuous and coherent. Rather, it is usually fragmented and gets interrupted all the time. The results reveal that vision and strategic planning, policy and regulatory laws, leadership, and resistance to change are the most significant factors influencing e-government implementation in Lesotho. It is recommended that the government carefully considers these factors to avoid policy hiccups and failure.

Keywords: Policy, implementation, challenges, e-government, developing countries, Lesotho

Introduction

Governments formulate and implement public policies to intervene in the problems of the society. Policy is a deliberate plan of action and it implies a broader framework to define and execute a vision, ideology, philosophy, decision, mandate or principle which are transformed into several actions, programmes and projects (Khan, 2016). It encompasses a set of actions to address an issue of interest or problem. Public policy, on the other hand, refers to a statement of declaration; defining what government intends to do or not to do and it connotes the broad statement of expected actions and outcomes, and sets down the ways and means to accomplish them (Howlett & Cashore, 2014). As a result, policies can be conceived as an output of political process and require input or commitment from the organisational structure responsible for its implementation. There is a growing recognition that policies do not succeed or fail by themselves. Their progress lies on how they are implemented (Hudson et al., 2019). Even the 'perfect' policy is of no value or significance if it is not implemented

properly or successfully.

Sager & Gofen (2022) define policy implementation as an interactive political process that starts with the transformation of political ideas into social actions. O'Toole (2003) defines it as what transpires between a government's apparent intention to act on something or stop acting on something and the ultimate effect of that action or inaction. Hence, policy implementation may be viewed as a process of "great hopes" or "ruined hopes" (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1974). Effective policy implementation encompasses the execution of a policy in such a manner that it achieves its goals and objectives, thereby producing results that are wanted or intended.

While policy implementation has increasingly been recognised as necessary and vital for bridging the gap between policy goals and expected results and desired impacts, the process is dynamic, complex and problematic and has yet to be adequately understood (Bullock & Lavis, 2019). McConnell (2010) and Osmani et al. (2022) argue that policy-implementation problems arise if a policy is confronted with challenges that prevent it from achieving the objective which policy makers set out to accomplish. Makinde (2005) states that the implementation problem occurs when the anticipated results for the target beneficiaries are not attained within a period. According to Howlett (2012), policy-implementation problem is considered to have occurred when policy intervention fails to resolve or correct an issue that a stated policy sought to resolve. These explanations provide a reasonable view that implementation problems create a gap between what has been planned and what actually happens on the ground.

While the implementation of policies has emerged to be problematic generally across the world, literature shows that developing countries find it more difficult to implement government policies. Egonmwan (1991, quoted in Ahmed & Dantata, 2016, p.61) contends that "relativity, the successful implementation of public policy is difficult in first world countries; it is more difficult in the third world, and may be most difficult in reform-oriented governments in the third world such as Africa and Latin America and most usually it is the problem of widening gap between intentions and result". Anthopoulos et al. (2016) report that more than half of the projects implemented in developing countries end up as failures, while even more fail to satisfy the expectations of the end users. Twizeyimana & Andersson (2019) contend that only 15 per cent of the projects in these countries are identified as success while 85 percent are failures—with about 50 per cent partial failure and 35 percent total failure. Generally, the majority of policy initiatives carried out by governments in developing countries have been classified as failures.

However, while literature pointing to difficulties in implementing public policies is extremely important to set the background for analysis, it produces a partial explanation underlying the root causes of the widening gap between policy promises and results. According to Wolman (1981), most implementation studies primarily intend to provide information on project results rather than to offer an explanation as to why these results occurred. Because implementation assessment is performed solely for the purpose of learning, the reasons for success or failure need to be known. The menace of the policy implementation gap and a paucity of literature on the why question prompted studies to investigate issues affecting a widening gap between policy promises and results. Some studies (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984; Tezera, 2019) took a generic approach to the topic. This is problematic because, on one hand, policies are diverse and projects implementing them also differ substantially. On the other hand, the implementation of a particular policy is context specific as it rests on the organisational, economic, social and political conditions that affect how well or how badly a policy or project has been implemented (Grindle, 2017; Meter & Horn, 1975). The focus of this study is on electronic government (e-government) in Lesotho.

Despite a relatively fair amount of research about problems facing e-government implementation in developing countries, comprehensive country-focus case studies are rare. Research on e-government implementation often generalises challenges facing developing countries, pretending that these countries are homogeneous. This is particularly acute regarding studies on e-government implementation in Africa (Rorissa & Demissie, 2010; Schuppan, 2009; Verkijika & De Wet, 2018). For example, in a study that discussed Africa's adversities attributed to African governments' practice of emulating Western e-government strategies, which may not be applicable to Africa's context, Heeks (2002, p.109) contends that "a successful African e-government system will be one that tends to match its environment". Africa is not single and monolithic. Research on e-government projects and

programmes in Africa presents a distorted view of e-government development and implementation. This is particularly true because, for instance, most countries in sub-Saharan Africa such as Lesotho are barely covered in literature (Mimbi & Lehong, 2017; Mutula, 2008). Further studies are required to cover contemporary factors affecting a successful e-government implementation in a country-specific context. Such context focus studies are critical since they capture “richness and depth understanding about e-government practicalities in particular context, environment, country and place” (Yusuf et al., 2016, p.32).

The aim of this study is to contribute to an ongoing debate of why policy implementation is difficult in developing countries. This will be done specifically by examining challenges affecting a successful implementation of e-government in Lesotho. It is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute towards better policy implementation and improved e-government services in Lesotho as well as impacting on other developing countries where the implementation of policies is still a problem. The rest of the paper begins with a review of the literature. It then describes the methodology and proceeds to the presentation and discussion of the results. It further provides a conclusion and recommendations based on the findings. The paper then explains the limitations of the study and provides suggestions for future studies. It finally concludes with contributions and implications of the study.

Literature Review

Policy Implementation Challenges

The topic of why policy implementation is challenging is ongoing, as highlighted in the literature and numerous studies have provided different perspectives on it, which are at times complex. In the study that discussed policy success and failure, FitzGerald et al. (2019) hypothesized that policy failure or success is a direct outcome of the decision-making process. The study found that policy failure is a consequence of poor policies which happen to come from bad decisions, which are as well a byproduct of a bad decision-making process. The study also showed that a particular outcome of the decision making process is by far and large encouraged by an interplay of different ideologies, interests and institutions. On the same issue of institutions, which are an important factor for policy implementation, Osmani et al. (2022) argue that implementation becomes difficult when institutions are weak to the extent that they are unable to execute their three primary functions, namely, cooperation, commitment and coordination. Taylor et al. (2021) state that ambiguity and uncertainty are important barriers to policy implementation. They argue that policies are unlikely to implement with success if policy makers have not clearly defined policy goals; and also if those who are tasked to implement the policy are uncertain or unable to interpret policy goals.

Crosby (1996) examined organisational issues that make policy implementation difficult or a failure. His results showed that a main reason for implementation failure lies with lack of attention and knowledge of the complex nature of policy implementation. It was found that policy implementation is often considered to be a coherent and continuous process. For him, policy implementation is frequently interrupted and fragmented. Wolman (1981) explored factors affecting programme success or failure. The findings attributed programme failure to a lack of understanding that implementation is intertwined with other policy stages, and thus any attempts to try to isolate it from the other stages impedes its success. The study demonstrated that the difficulty in implementation often stems from policy design rather than the implementation itself. To minimise complexities and failure, the study provided a set of issues that need to be considered before the implementation process.

While challenges confronting policy implementation are widely recognised, literature presents these barriers to be much more likely to happen in developing countries. Smith (1973) evaluated the implications of the assumption that implementation will automatically take place once a policy has been formulated. The findings showed that such an assumption is invalid, especially in Global South, because policy makers design overly broad policies which governmental bureaucracies are often less capable of implementing. Imurana et al. (2014, p. 196) argue that “the politicization of public policies in Africa has led to the formulation of overambitious policies by political parties to win political capital coupled with excessive bureaucratic procedures”, consequently creating implementation bottlenecks. Ajulor (2018) explored the problems of policy implementation in Africa and to achieve Sustainable

Development Goals. The study revealed that most countries in Africa had gone into economic recessions because of policy implementation barriers including lack of consideration of the policy environment, unrealistic goal setting, neglect of intended beneficiaries and political patronage. It was therefore recommended that Africa should establish policy goals that are executable. In another study, Abebe (2017) made the plea that governments should reconsider opting for the programmes of radical transformation because of the fragile socioeconomic base, inadequate resources and limited capacity that impede policy implementation and development in African countries.

E-government and its Implementation in Developing Countries

E-government has been an important reform process, programme and project of our lifetime; and has been initiated in all countries around the world (Alabdallat, 2020; World Bank, 2009). The core function of e-government is to integrate government activities with the cutting-edge technologies that the world has today (Eyupoglu & Kaya, 2020; Gunda et al., 2015; Utama, 2020). E-government refers to the government use of information technologies such as mobile computing, the Internet and online media that have the potential to transform its relations with other government agencies, businesses and citizens (Sharma et al., 2014). Based on its potentials, governments have not only recognised the value of e-government but have also invested in it with the aim of satisfying some of the needs of their stakeholders.

Properly designed and well executed e-government can contribute to the support and success of many priorities and government policies. Apleni & Smuts (2020) and Joseph (2015) argue that e-government has the ability to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the public sector, create responsive governance and facilitate easy communication between government and citizens and businesses. Ashaye & Irani (2014) think that with e-government, governments can be able to manage the problems relating to revenue collection. A successful implementation of e-government is anticipated to reform government structures, processes and outcomes thereby increasing transparency and accountability in government (Abusamhadana et al., 2021), reducing bureaucratic red tape, improving quality and access to service delivery, strengthening democracy and improving public participation in political affairs (Munyoka, 2019).

Despite e-government being implemented worldwide, the rate of e-government project implementation failure is reported higher in developing countries. Pangaribuan (2019) reveals that e-government implementation in developing countries is confronted with complex problems owing to inadequate planning, lack of budgeting, lack of privacy and security of information, inadequate information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure and cultural resistance. Bojang (2017) highlights corruption, bad governance, poor leadership, undemocratic values and weak political institutions that fail to hold governments accountable. Kitaw (2006) explored the practices, challenges and prospects of e-government on the African continent. The findings highlighted high illiteracy, widespread political instability, lack of citizen empowerment in government affairs, autocratic and undemocratic governments, underdeveloped telecommunication infrastructure, low Internet penetration and electricity connectivity as barriers to Africa's e-government adoption and implementation success. Some of these issues addressed by Kitaw (2006) are still prevalent in recent times. Mahlangu & Ruhode (2021) highlight issues of inadequate ICT infrastructure and electricity supply, lack of user involvement and lack of access to Internet connectivity particularly for people in the rural areas.

Although some researchers have paid attention to context specific e-government implementation, Bwalya (2018) suggests that more studies of this nature are inevitable. This is particularly because e-government project challenges differ from one context to another. Zeebaree & Aqel (2021) argue that e-government implementation obstacles vary based on each country's location, infrastructural development, politics, culture and social and organisational conditions. Al-Shboul et al. (2014) examined the factors that affect the implementation of e-government services in Jordan. The results revealed the most significant barriers to be related to employees' resistance to change, lack of awareness and legal framework, lack of financial, technology and human resources, distrust in government and issues concerning data privacy and security. Sethi (2020) examined the problems experienced by the citizens of India, which subsequently affected the overall implementation of e-government in the country. The results revealed problems related to the lack of financial sustainability, high literacy and lack of digital literacy, gender inequality and cyber security risks. Hung et al. (2006) used the case of Taiwan's online tax filing and payment system to draw an overall picture of the determinants of a

successful implementation of e-government services. The results indicated that the perceived usefulness, ease of use and perceived risks of e-government services influence their implementation.

Blom & Uwizeyimana (2020) evaluated the effectiveness of e-government and e-governance service in South Africa at the time of the national lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The findings showed that poverty and inequality, especially in the rural areas, remained as the prime challenge to the effective use of online education, health and municipality services. This is despite the necessary steps taken by the government to provide free access to these basic online services. The study recommended training for people living in the rural areas to close the urban–rural digital divide gap which is a serious obstacle for a nationwide e-government implementation. Magayane et al. (2016) examined the current state of e-government implementation in Tanzania. The findings showed that it was going to be difficult for e-government to claim any success as long as the language used to communicate and present information online was not the familiar language of the users.

E-government Implementation in Lesotho

Implementation of e-government in Lesotho began with the formulation of the ICT policy of 2005. This policy recognises e-government as an apex strategic framework destined to drive a successful implementation of an improved access and quality of government services and incorporation of the nation into the global market to mitigate new ways of reducing poverty and improving the standard of living of all the citizens. However, there have been concerns about the slow progress of the ICT policy implementation through e-government initiatives, which fail to fulfil the needs and demands of the citizens. For instance, Mutula (2008) included Lesotho in his comparative analysis of the state of e-government implementation of sub-Saharan African countries. The study indicated that Lesotho and other African countries, namely Zimbabwe, Zambia and Namibia, had not made significant strides in comparison to their counterparts in the region. More significantly, the results demonstrated that the Lesotho national e-government portal was not interactive. In a recent study, Matsieli & Sooryamoorthy (2021a) assessed the implementation of e-government websites of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho in relation to their levels of maturity to facilitate interaction between citizens and government and to deliver government services to the relevant stakeholders. The study indicated that these websites were at the early stages of e-government development and implementation, obviously hindering the achievement of a successful e-government which has the ability of transforming government relations and deliver quality and timely services to citizens. In another study, Matsieli & Sooryamoorthy (2021b) argued that the implementation of e-government services was challenging in Lesotho because the government websites through which these services are implemented were not accessible, interactive, transparent and usable.

While the contemporary state of e-government websites is critical for understanding implementation, its current presence in literature tends to overshadow the organisational and institutional challenges of policy implementation, which shape the most significant structural aspects of implementation. In pursuit of understanding why there are complexities and difficulties in e-government implementation in Lesotho, Mathaha (2015) conducted a comparative analysis of Lesotho and Sri Lanka, and Tunisia and South Korea in terms of e-government implementation and development. It was revealed that the main reason why Lesotho was lagging behind other countries was the lack of an implementing authority with the technical knowhow to prioritise and organise e-government projects. Because this study conducted a comparative desktop analysis, it recommended further studies of Lesotho with different methods and methodologies of analysis to inform plans and decisions of future e-government projects.

Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature. The scope of qualitative research is linked to the discourse of investigating and justifying why a particular situation is as it is (Stewart et al., 2008). The aim of this study is to investigate an organisational perspective in order to understand and explain why public policy implementation is difficult in developing countries by examining factors affecting a successful implementation of e-government in Lesotho. Policy implementation is linked to implementing organisation in the manner that, first, implementation occurs within a particular institutional and organisational setting. Second, implementation requires certain organisation and structure to carry it

out. In this study, an organisation refers to a unit of the governmental bureaucracy, government ministry or department to be specific. Although the role of organisation is inevitable in the implementation of policies, most research on e-government services has focused on citizen perspective and not so much on organisation. In this paper, the emphasis is on the organisational perspective. As Layne & Lee (2001) suggest, the full benefit of e-government will be attained only when technological advancements are accompanied by organisational changes.

Twelve government officials from the Department of Policy and Strategic Planning of the Ministry of Development Planning and the E-government Infrastructure Project Unit and the ICT Department of the Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology participated in the study. Purposive sampling was used to select these organisations and participants based on their direct involvement with e-government implementation in organisational, technical and administrative terms. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were used as an instrument to gather information-rich data. In-depth discussions were held with the participants to investigate their concerns, attitudes, perceptions, experiences, knowledge, beliefs and interests towards the implementation of e-government in Lesotho. All the participants were comfortable with both the official languages of Lesotho which are English and Sesotho. Thus the interviews were conducted in a mix of these two languages. With permission from the participants, interviews were audio-taped to keep an accurate verbatim record of the conversations. The data collected were later transcribed and translated into the English language. Because of the accuracy of transcriptions, a large volume of material was produced. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. This was done in line with Maree (2007) who puts emphasis on data reduction, coding and interpretation. Verbatim excerpts from the audio transcriptions of the interviews have been used to illustrate points of view. The participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study. The analysis of the data presents the main issues affecting e-government implementation in Lesotho. These issues which often overlap are vision and strategic planning, policy and regulatory laws, leadership, and resistance to change. Each of these issues will be discussed in detail below.

Vision and Strategic Planning

Vision and strategic planning have been identified in the analysis as one of the most important factors affecting policy implementation in Lesotho. Evident from the data is that vision remains the driving force for the implementing agency, which is typically duty bound to plan and champion implementation.

However, the findings suggest that Lesotho's e-government is not based on vibrant vision and concrete planning. One of the participants stated that "*there is no clear vision as to where the country wants to go in relation to the application of ICTs in government*". Based on the above view, the participants argued for the existent of strong vision and plan; articulate enough to create a picture of the future, precise enough to create an understanding of what is needed and why, explain what has to be done, by whom, how, when and with what resources and stick to it. This view resonates Pinto's (2013) finding stating that the project or programme that begins without a thorough understanding of the full content of what the programme or project aims to achieve is prone to failure.

While the participants acknowledged that e-government objectives are somehow mentioned in the ICT policy, they considered that to be inadequate. They expressed the need for a comprehensive e-government framework to embody the vision. This framework, as one of the participants elaborated, will provide a full description of "*e-government vision statement, broad objectives and a planning process with specific goals and targets*". It is clear from the above excerpt that the strong vision, which should be contained in the e-government policy or framework, would help the Government of Lesotho to state clearly what e-government means to them and what they are intending to accomplish with its adoption. Since vision is set at the early stages of policy making, it is significant for e-government implementation as it will help governments to set a course at the beginning, monitor progress and prevent or quickly correct any deviations.

In the absence of or weak e-government vision and planning, the Lesotho Government has been severely compromised in two ways. Its political direction has been undermined and its decision making power weakened. Whereas external donors point to the direction which e-government takes, the

government has rather insignificant control over the type of projects and services to be implemented. One of the participants said: “donors tell us what to do and how to do it. Even when government has prior plans or clear priorities, funding always frustrates the whole set up”. While this finding is inexplicable in the public policy making setup where the government’s key role is to steer, it is not unusual in developing countries. It corroborates those of previous researchers. For example, Khan et al. (2018) found that external donors find themselves abusing their power to control direct and indirect financial resources to shape the decisions and direction of domestic policies and processes. In a related point, Jasarevic (2014, p.1) concluded that “many others found themselves steering activities to echo donors’ preferences and keep the funding tap running”.

Indeed, developing economies such as Lesotho are struggling to fulfil and sustain their ambitions because of low budgets. With this acceptance as a starting point, governments, however, need not to fall prey and dance to the tune of the powerful funders, compromising their own direction and decision making powers. On a more general note, the government, as the authority closer to the people, needs to develop and stick firmly to its vision and plans reflective of its values and priorities to avoid bad service provision that may not directly relate to the contemporary needs and demands of the society. As stated earlier, e-government is understood as a great enabler of government policies, priorities, strategies, and services. Hence, prosperous e-government initiatives have a high potential to occur and have wide-ranging effects when planned and managed within the framework of bigger visions and strategies.

Policy and Regulatory Laws

Policy and regulatory laws are the *sine qua non* of policy implementation. One reason for e-government implementation difficulty in Lesotho is the lack of a legislation to guide policy change. The findings show that there is neither a solid policy framework to guide procedures and activities involved in e-government implementation nor regulations and legal laws for e-government operation, defining jurisdictional responsibilities with issues associated with electronic information (e-information) collaboration and sharing, electronic transactions (e-transactions) and related functionality including copyright rules and electronic crimes (e-crimes). A participant expressed that “issues concerning e-government are not penned down. All the discussions are somehow informal and not guided by any policy framework or a Government Gazette so to say”. Although this practice is not uncommon in developing nations (Ndou, 2004), it is not popular in the policy-making arena where government’s promises, decisions and activities should be in statutes.

Introducing new revolutions such as e-government requires a set of new polices, laws, rules and legislative changes to deal with activities happening online to address issues related to intellectual property rights, data protection, digital identification, electronic signatures and freedom of information. For example, to accelerate the implementation of e-government services in South Africa, the government adopted, among others, the Electronic Communications Transaction Act, 2002, the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 and the Minimum Information Security Standards (Naidoo, 2012). The Government of Nepal revised old and established new regulations and policies such as the Copyright Act, 2059 (2000) and the Electronic Transactions Act and Digital Signature Act (2008) to further reinforce the implementation of e-government (Shrestha et al., 2015). Clearly, policy with a legal base is viewed as an enabler for effective policy implementation. The participants had a strong belief that if there were policies and laws regulating e-government, the Ministry of Finance would feel obliged to allocate a budget for e-government initiatives or be legally or politically accountable for not supporting the realisation of e-government goals and objectives. Also evident from the data is that establishing legal laws relating to e-government basics including digital authentication and signatures would produce a conducive environment for e-government acceptance and use of e-government services.

In the absence of policy and regulatory laws, evidence from the analysis suggests that the government decisions will remain a declaration of intent that will never accomplish its mission. Evident from the data is that the lack of legislative frameworks is increasingly discouraging seamless transactions. As a participant critiqued:

Since government collects enormous amount of personal data through daily transactions with citizens and businesses, either through Home Affairs, Traffic Department or Lesotho Revenue

Authority (LRA), do you think anyone knows how their private information is saved and protected? Let us assume again that there is e-transaction and e-payment, what do you do in the case of fraudulent activity involving your money? How do you go about laying charges? Is there law that deals with e-crimes?

It is obvious from the above view that the lack of legal laws raises salient concerns specifically about the issues of trust, security, privacy and confidentiality. These issues are repeatedly cited as barriers for e-government implementation (Manda & Backhouse, 2016). Clearly, these challenges need to be addressed in the form of regulations before e-government services can even start in order to build trust in dealing with the government. It is common knowledge that many people are sceptical about using new technologies, particularly if the usage of such innovations would further require monetary transactions in exchange for service provision (Al-Shboul et al., 2016). This is especially true if there are neither legal laws in place nor privacy and security ensured. Building a positive perception about the deployment of e-government applications should be considered a priority to create the broader value of ICTs within governments and society at large. A formal legal route is a necessary condition for the legitimacy of online processes. It therefore goes without saying that the Government of Lesotho should pay more attention with respect to policy and law regulations to gain the optimal benefits of e-government implementation and services.

The participants had a strong view that a successful implementation of e-government in Lesotho is by and large dependent on the envisaged Electronic Transactions and Electronic Commerce (e-Transactions and e-Commerce) Act. Upon its enactment, this Act would promote the use of e-government services, provide for the regulation and facilitation of online communications and transactions, provide for the protection and safety of consumers and for other related matters (Government of Lesotho, 2013). Common experience will demonstrate that this Act will come into law or effect once the stagnant e-Transactions and e-Commerce Bill 2013 has been passed by the legislature.

However, the current political climate in Lesotho has adverse implications for policy making, consequently affecting the adoption and implementation of public policies, e-government inclusive. A pervasive lack of continuity in political leadership has been cited as a major problem that leads to the lack of policy adoption and implementation. In this regard, it came out that even in cases where a leader or government would have vision and interest for a changed programme, there would still be fragmentation since there is a widespread tendency of new leadership not to continue with the policy initiatives of its predecessor.

Leadership

Leadership is another factor that is most influential for policy implementation. The findings show that leadership is needed to state, commit and drive the will of government, mobilise support, actions and resources and monitor and evaluate programmes and projects. This means that leadership is required from politicians in government and bureaucratic top management.

In spite of that, the results support the view that politicians lack the political will to drive Lesotho's goal to have fully fledged e-government implementation, making full use of and exploiting maximum benefits from the opportunities presented by an ICT revolution in government. As the participants noted, most of the politicians in government show no interest in ICT issues, e-government in particular. As a result, e-government suffers from a lack of commitment and all-encompassing support from these politicians. While e-government initiatives rely largely on the active involvement, support, and coordination of the leadership, this finding was not unexpected. Manoharan & Ingrams (2018) theorised that the e-government phenomenon is complex and risky. Likewise, evidence from the data analysis shows that it was not necessarily going to be an easy task for many politicians to commit to and lead complex and technical matters of an e-government magnitude. Putting it in one of the participants' words: *"ICT issues are complicated hence it is not by choice but default that some of our politicians show much disinterest in e-government and that is why they are not only unwilling but unable to drive its initiatives"*. It is clear from this point that lack of e-government understanding and technical knowhow sits at the root of the problem of lack of leadership among the elected politicians.

Furthermore, the fear of losing has been cited as a barrier towards providing leadership in e-government development. Unlike technocrats who possess knowhow skills, show care and

conscientiousness in their duties and have less to lose in promoting new reform initiatives (Pinto, 2000), this study found that elected politicians rather operated under dissimilar decisional principles. Evidence from the data indicates that the politicians appear to care more about political capital hence they are less enthusiastic to champion the 'risky' e-government initiatives, which would compromise their votes or followership in the case of failure or even in comparison to social programmes including the provision of social grants.

To achieve the goal of building a technologically advanced economy, the representatives of the people in government must understand that transformation through ICT applications and systems is legitimate, absolutely necessary and must be accepted even if it bears serious implications. On the other hand, it could be reasonably logical to think that this lack of leadership sustained by a lack of interest and support among elected politicians typically leaves the task with top bureaucratic management. The problem of leadership may be deeper than could have been imagined. The challenge in Lesotho is that structures of bureaucracy are headed by unelected politicians. Each ministry is under the headship of a Principal Secretary (PS) who are political appointees. Evidence from the data points out that these personnel do not enjoy the benefit of the doubt as officials who are acting in the public interest. Rather, they are seen not to apply their minds objectively to citizens' issues but naturally act on the mandate of their political parties in safeguarding their political capital. This provides an insight into the reasons why e-government web services were not yet implemented in most of the government ministries as demonstrated above. For a successful policy implementation coupled with conscientiousness and rigorous promotion and defence of public interest, the leadership must demonstrate the government's will and support, whilst Principal Secretaries as heads of bureaux must be employed based on merit rather than political tickets.

Resistance to Change

Resistance to change is directly linked to the most significant barriers of policy implementation in Lesotho. Despite the government's attempts to transform the public sector through the deployment of ICT systems, this study found that there is a considerable amount of resistance to digital means, which has subsequently led to the slow pace of e-government implementation. As indicated earlier, e-government is a new phenomenon in developing countries and many nations are in their formative stages of transforming from paperwork methods to online systems. These changes have formed a completely new milieu in the workplace within government organisations, entirely different from what has been there for many years.

It is evident from the analysis that major obstacles to the implementation of e-government are not just technical but also highlight cultural issues. Evidence from the data points to the existence of significant beliefs, understandings, assumptions, values, ideas, behaviours and patterns that are resistant to an implementation of e-government services. While resistance to change is a natural reaction, there is no denying that any change in conflict with the norms and practice in the workplace could inevitably encounter a severe resistance and wrenching difficulty. As Alassim et al. (2017) also noted, this study found that resistance to e-government implementation has gained an enormous negative reception at different levels among top management, employees and between departments or ministries. In relation to the top management, evidence from the data shows that top bureaucracy officials see a move towards digital transformation as a menace rather than a necessary change. One of the participants expressed that "*some heads of departments are too traditional, scared of innovation and cannot move with time*". This comment illustrates an important underlying aspect of fear and inability to adapt. It is not surprising then that the concept of social inclusion or e-inclusion has taken centre stage in recent years in the discussions of e-government. A central theme of e-inclusion within e-government is that everyone should have ability to access, adapt and generate knowledge by means of ICTs (World Bank, 2009) and top managers are not exempted from this. Hence, it would be in the best interest of the Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology which is championing the ICT policy and its projects to hold training workshops. These workshops should be aimed at closing the dearth of skills and training in new technologies and sensitise all the management of the government ministries to view e-government as a benefit to them instead of a weapon of mass destruction that has emerged to upset the power balance and dwindle the power of their authority.

Furthermore, as Gupta (2018) theorised, when change is introduced, there will be forces that drive

change and forces of resistance opposing that change. Our data shows that the street-level bureaucrats are the forces resisting change. Evidence from the data denotes that employees' resistance to change has made the implementation of e-government difficult. A participant described the situation as: "*some government employees resist putting government information, especially policies online for public consumption based on their claim that they worked hard to develop such policies and so other people think they can just go online and get them freely*". While resistance to change is a normal phenomenon for employees and that the organisations undergoing reforms must face it, the view of the participants raises two important scenarios. First, it questions whether government institutions consider themselves as owners of public information, while they also feel the entitlement of not sharing it with the very same public. Second, whether it could be a lack of understanding between roles performed in an organisational mandate and roles performed in a private capacity. Either way, this clearly illustrates that employees' resistance to e-government services negatively affects or denies the people, who happen to be the rightful owners of public information an access to it. To address ignorance and misconception about the entitlement of public information, not only radical shifts in structures, rules, roles and new patterns of instruction must be instituted, but also mindset changes are required.

Referring to resistance between government organisations, the analysis has shown that the autonomy and independence of government ministries and departments has escalated the issue of resistance to digital means, negatively affecting e-government service delivery and information flow. It was found that government departments and ministries seemingly work in *silos*, which is antagonistic to the fundamental principles of e-government implementation where information sharing across the vertical and horizontal borders of government organisations is not only key but mandatory as well. A participant demonstrated: "*you see I am connected, do not ever think there is Wi-Fi or Internet in this office. I bought data bundles to do the department's work*". While the end result of e-government is a networked society where all the actors are enabled to access, control and make use of information and services anywhere at any time, based on the above excerpt it would be presumptuous to think of complex inter-organisational information exchange while there is no Internet connection to enable daily office work or permit intra-organisational information sharing through mere e-mails.

It is thus far safe to conclude that the dominantly inwardly orientated governments that typically resist change are not necessarily rejecting the need for change but lack the capacity to accept it. The Government of Lesotho needs to ensure that there is Internet connection and intranets to enhance and accelerate organisational information sharing. Creating a culture or notion of one enterprise instead of making multiple ministries and departments compete for limited resources or waste them by duplicating what could have been acquired from other departments is all that is needed.

In a broader sense, nonetheless, resistance to change indicates that something is wrong. The data shows that resistance to e-government and policy change at large is an indication of a missing policy dialogue. It is an undisputed truth that policy decisions and implementation processes tend to be highly political, hence serious questions of what to be performed, how it must be done and how the benefits will be dispersed must be negotiated.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study set out to conduct a comprehensive analysis to understand and explain the reasons why public policy implementation is difficult in developing countries. Because developing countries are not single, homogeneous and monolithic, and due to the fact that factors that shape and affect implementation are multifaceted and vary from project to project and according to local context, this study used and drew lessons from a case of e-government implementation in Lesotho. The findings echoed a nonlinearity of the implementation process of the public policies in developing countries such as Lesotho. The results showed that the progress of e-government implementation in Lesotho is largely hindered by a lack of clear vision and strategic planning, lack of a policy framework and regulatory laws, poor leadership and, resistance to change.

Based on the findings, major recommendations to the Government of Lesotho were made and are summarised as follows:

1. Establish e-government vision and strategic plans and stick to them

2. Enact e-Transactions and e-Commerce regulations
3. Ensure organisation-wide Internet connection and intranets
4. Appoint Principal Secretaries on merit not on political cards
5. Regularly have policy dialogues

Limitations of the Study and Future Research

This study is exclusively about the views of government officials who have the knowhow, expertise and significant experience in policy making and e-government projects. While perspectives from organisational and institutional settings are absolutely necessary, a comprehensive analysis of implementation requires the involvement of all stakeholders. As such, future studies in public policy implementation initiatives such as e-government should be extended to include the views of the citizens.

Contributions and Implications

This study provides major contributions to the growing body of knowledge surrounding the areas of public policy implementation and e-government revolution. It bears serious implications for theory, policy and practice. From a theoretical point of view, the study contributes to the dearth of knowledge in literature about the success and failure factors of public policy implementation by providing empirical evidence from Lesotho. In relation to the policy implication perspective, the findings of this study can be an eye-opener to the salient issue of a need to consistently establish or review old policies and legal laws to enable policy change. Regarding practical implications, this study has identified areas of concern that delay a successful implementation of e-government services in Lesotho. A careful consideration of the recommendations made to address these concerns can be of the utmost importance for improving the access and quality of service provision. Furthermore, Lesotho and other countries with similar contextual backgrounds can use the identified themes as a starting point for assessing and analysing the implementation of other policy initiatives.

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