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**E-GOVERNMENT IN LESOTHO: A POLICY ANALYSIS OF THE GOVERNMENT
WEBSITES WITH REFERENCE TO SERVICE DELIVERY**

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June 2020

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'I am because we are' (Renaud *et al*, 2015: 1).

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ABSTRACT

The upsurge in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in almost all facets of human endeavour has forced governments to think of innovative ways of serving and interacting with their citizens. E-government has been proposed and adopted by many governments around the world as an important system and a framework for transformation and reform. Properly designed and implemented e-government provides governments with effective tools to improve public sector efficiency, thereby enhancing access to quality services and strengthening relationships with citizens and other stakeholders. The primary aim of this study was to analyse the status of e-government in Lesotho and the context within which it is implemented. The purpose was to understand the progress of e-government implementation since the adoption of the ICT policy of 2005. In particular, a content analysis study was conducted to determine the current status of the websites of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho in relation to their level of maturity to deliver e-government services. The results were matched with the 2001 United Nations five-stage model of e-government assessment from simple to sophisticated features. The study also focused on exploring organisational perspectives in respect of issues affecting the implementation of e-government services in the country. This facilitated in identifying main factors important for e-government success and failure in the Lesotho context. The study employed qualitative methods to provide a better understanding of the research issue and address the research questions. It triangulated data collection methods by observing and evaluating government websites and interviewing purposively sampled government officials. The findings revealed that Lesotho has not given due attention to the issue of e-government service delivery. This is evidenced by the fact that the websites of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho are either not fully developed or do not yet exist, which clearly impedes the government objective to reap and seize maximum benefits from the opportunities brought by ICTs. The results also revealed important factors affecting the adoption and implementation of e-government in the Lesotho context. These issues, in which their presence encourages success and their absence encourages failure, include vision, policy and regulatory laws, political uncertainty, political will, leadership support and resource mobilisation, resistance to change, digital divide and policy monitoring and evaluation. Recommendations based on the findings of the study have been made to address the challenges encountered.

Key words: e-government, Government of Lesotho, current status, factors affecting e-government, e-government service delivery

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABC:	All Basotho Conversion
AD:	Alliance of Democrats
ADB:	African Development Bank
AGOA:	African Growth and Opportunity Act
ASPA:	American Society for Public Administration
AU:	African Union
BCP:	Basutoland Congress Party
DC:	Democratic Congress
E-application:	Electronic Application
E-business:	Electronic Business
E-commerce:	Electronic Commerce
E-consultation:	Electronic Consultation
E-crime:	Electronic Crime
E-engagement:	Electronic Engagement
E-governance:	Electronic Governance
E-government:	Electronic Government
E-information:	Electronic Information
E-involvement:	Electronic Involvement
E-parliament:	Electronic Parliament
E-participation:	Electronic Participation
E-payment:	Electronic Payment
E-services:	Electronic Services
E-transactions:	Electronic Transactions
E-visa:	Electronic Visa
E-voting:	Electronic Voting
EGDI:	E-government Development Index
FAQs:	Frequently Asked Questions
G2B:	Government to Business
G2C:	Government to Citizen

G2E:	Government to Employees
G2G:	Government to Government
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
GIN:	Government Information Network
ICT:	Information and Communication Technology
IDs:	Identity Documents
IEC:	Independent Electoral Commission
IEE:	Internal Efficiency and Effectiveness
IMF:	International Monetary Fund
IS:	Information Society
ISO:	International Standard Organisation
IT:	Information Technology
ITU:	International Telecommunication Union
LCD:	Lesotho Congress for Democracy
LHWP:	Lesotho Highlands Water Project
LOSI:	Local Online Service Index
M&E:	Monitoring and Evaluation
MAFS:	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
MDP:	Ministry of Development Planning
MFRSC:	Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation
MMS:	Multimedia Messaging Service
MoF:	Ministry of Finance
MoHA:	Ministry of Home Affairs
MTEC:	Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture
NEPAD:	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGOs:	Non-Governmental Organisations
NMDS:	National Manpower Development Secretariat
NPM:	New Public Management
NSDP:	National Strategic Development Plan
PPP:	Public-Private Partnership

PS:	Principal Secretary
PSP:	Policy and Strategic Planning
RCL:	Reformed Congress of Lesotho
S&T:	Science and Technology
SACU:	Southern African Customs Union
SADC:	Southern African Development Community
SMS:	Short Message Service
SSA:	Sub-Saharan Africa
UN:	United Nations
URL:	Uniform Resource Locator
WSIS:	World Summit on the Information Society
WWW:	World Wide Web

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0.BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The disruption of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the modern-day information society (IS) has brought serious changes to the traditional way of doing things. These changes are all-encompassing; the way universities register and deliver lectures to students, the way business enterprises advertise products and market services, and the way banking entities render services and products to customers (Basl and Gála, 2009; Basweti *et al*, 2013; Ombati *et al*, 2010; Sarkar, 2012; Sigwejo, 2015). The advances in technology have enabled the private sector to improve the interaction between the service providers and service users, deliver services cheaper and at more convenience to customers than ever before, helping to eliminate long bureaucratic and inefficient approval procedures and reduce processing time and paperwork backlog (Repley, 2014). These developments suggest that the public sector organisations should reinvent themselves, and provide services online through information technology (IT) innovations to strengthen their capacity and gain competitive advantages.

Over many years, academic research has paid more attention to the private sector (Chipeta, 2018). The public sector has been side-lined because of its lateness in adopting modern technologies and business models. Only recently have scholarly investigations leaned towards the public sector. Research on this sector indicated that many government institutions around the world are still faced with issues of a quickly changing environment and are increasingly struggling to respond to rising expectations and demands of citizens for more efficient and interactive government (OECD, 2019). As Nkwe (2012) stated, when people hear about government departments, they eventually think of a nightmare; long queues, overcrowded spaces, unreasonable complicated administrative procedure, a lot of paperwork and frustrations. The dawn of the Internet, explosion and deployment of electronic business (e-business) and electronic commerce (e-commerce) models in the business sector have forced government agencies to think of innovative, non-hierarchical and non-bureaucratic models. “Customers of government”, as Osborne and Gaebler (1992) referred to citizens and businesses, are increasingly demanding that their governments adopt e-business models of the private sector to allow them similar experiences with public service in terms of accessibility, usability, convenience and effectiveness (Ranerup *et al*, 2016).

To accomplish this transformation, many governments have started embracing technological advancements in their organisational capacities, structures and practices in their approach. They mobilise, deploy and utilise the technological and financial resources, information and human capital for delivering services to citizens (Bennett and Yiu, 2019; OECD, 2017; Tapscott *et al*, 2008). In this context, ICT is seen as an essential tool advancing the goals of the public sector. According to Mawela (2017), implementing ICT techniques as a channel for service delivery should become a vital means by changing what government does and how it does it. Naidoo (2012) stated that when properly applied, ICTs have the potential to strengthen democratic institutions, address social problems and empower people to overcome development obstacles.

Although ICT presents an unprecedented risk of a deepening digital divide especially in developing countries (Ohiagu, 2013; Wong, 2001), nations which may be unable to acknowledge and utilise IT for entering the information age and for dealing with developmental issues, will suffer an important impediment in the form of information paucity that may well weaken economic growth and competitiveness (Ndou, 2004). Electronic government (e-government) is the term that refers to the deployment of ICT applications in enhancing governance through “reinventing” the role of government – equipping the public sector with tools to improve performance and transform the delivery of public services (Misuraca, 2007).

The basic nature of e-government is to integrate government actions with the innovative technologies of our modern day (Gunda *et al*, 2015). However, the UN (2008) emphasised that the actual benefit of e-government lies in its application to processes of transformation but not in the use of technology *per se*. E-government provides public services through websites and has the ability to support and simplify governance for all stakeholders, thus improving competence, effectiveness and quality in the provision of public services (Fang, 2002).

Despite the potential benefits gained by using modern technologies, various research investigations have raised concerns about developing countries’ e-government projects, most of which have failed to achieve the expected goals. Gunda *et al* (2015) revealed that governments are still struggling with the issues of inflexible, ineffective processes and processes that are not appropriately designed for the successful implementation of e-government services. Ahmed *et al* (2013) pointed out that a shift from the traditional

government to online government is composite as it involves the cultural, political, organisational and technical aspects of the government and other public service providers. Heeks (2003) found that where the goals of e-government were not met, it was mostly because of a techno-centric orientation towards e-government rather than political, organisational and cultural centric- focus. In confronting this challenge, Hakfin (2009) advised that policy makers should understand that an important word in the e-government concept is government but not electronic and thus the emphasis should not be on technology but on government and governance.

As illustrated above, e-government has become one of the pivotal topics. Developed countries have developed technical systems parallel with institutional development over a long time to allow proper execution of e-government, and most research has shown interest in these countries (Bakunzibake *et al*, 2016). Today there is a high increase of e-government of development in developing countries. Not only is it an important opportunity for legislature in these countries to understand the e-government policy process, its design, execution and evaluation, but it is equally important for researchers to explore e-government in developing countries.

E-government implementation in the current dispensation is non-negotiable for the government to discharge its functions, interact with its citizens and deliver services. For some years now, e-government implementation efforts in developed economies have moved from publishing government information to providing interactive transaction, and to some extent integrated based services to citizens. Having realised these developments, various governments in less and under developed economies have adopted strategic plans which, according to Sigwejo's (2015) observation, are normally executed following crucial steps of e-readiness assessment. Although the plans are not an assurance of effective implementation and use of e-government services, they give direction towards the country's vision.

In line with the world trends, Lesotho, an African country, designed and adopted legislative frameworks to guide the development of ICTs for an effective service delivery which has drastically deteriorated in recent years. The National Vision 2020 – Lesotho's long-term framework – articulated the country's plan to advance the diffusion of science and technology in order to transform Lesotho into a country with a well-established technology. According to the National Vision 2020 document, the widespread and appropriate usage of technology will open access to communication and online consultations with socio-economic

groups across the country, thereby eradicating poverty and improving service delivery in all segments of the economy.

However, according to GoL (2013), the online services are delayed in Lesotho due to a consistent limp in infrastructural development including the deployment of government websites and internet connectivity. With a stagnant pace of the online service delivery, the country seems to be trailing behind its commitment to embrace and support innovation, develop technology infrastructure and improve access to it, improve ICT literacy and encourage the use of ICTs, ensure cyber security, and digitise functions and operations, thereby enhancing online service delivery (ibid.). This shows that the National Vision 2020 document is only a planning instrument which roadmaps the national development initiatives. Its success, yet to be realised, lies with its implementation.

In tandem, macro-economic and social policies have been established to facilitate the implementation of the National Vision 2020. The National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 2012/13 - 2016/17 is the main strategy for implementing the vision. The NSDP has realised the development and appropriate utilisation of ICT as a vehicle towards achieving the national priorities and goals. Acknowledging the poor state of service delivery in the country, the NSDP reiterated the role ICTs could play not only in improving the provision but also the quality and access to public services such as education and health. These promises are also reinforced in the Science and Technology (S&T) Policy 2006-2011.

Science is central to development (Sooryamoorthy, 2015). Technology is the ideal of applying scientific understanding and ideas to practical aims of human life (Boon, 2006). Yet efforts have not always been enough for promoting and investigating science and the use of technologies in Lesotho to achieve S&T goals and objectives. The S&T policy mission is to '[t]ransform Lesotho into a modern state, having enough highly skilled, innovative and technically trained personnel with a competitive S&T infrastructure to support a growing and dynamic economy' (GoL, 2005b:27). Through a successful implementation, the S&T policy would be a potent enabler of the economic development of this country.

On the premise of interest in developing the ICT sector, the National Vision 2020 and the NSDP alluded to and laid the foundation for the formulation of ICT policy. As such, the ICT Policy of 2005 is seen as an instrument destined to accomplish the national vision of 'creating a knowledge-based society fully integrated in the global economy by 2020' (GoL, 2005a:18). Although the extent to which the ICT policy is implemented is unknown, it is stated that this

policy aims at coordinating the implementation of ICTs and promoting the uncapped use of ICT services to ensure that this vision comes true. This policy spells out ten cross cutting catalysts to provide a framework for the successful implementation of the policy, namely, legal and regulatory framework, ICT infrastructure, human resource and education development, rapid delivery of ICT services, e-government, gender and youth, e-commerce, health, environment and natural resources, agriculture and food security and tourism. Although these strategic programmes are intertwined and inseparable, this study mainly focuses on e-government, a research area that has been given little attention among scholars in the country. Like in many other countries, e-government in Lesotho aims at enhancing access and quality to service provision as well as improving democratic institutions and political processes.

1.1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the efforts by governments around the world to adopt ICT strategies to transform public service reform and enhance public sector performance, there is still a problem in the provision of public services in Lesotho. Although the Government of Lesotho has made noticeable progress in pursuance of its National Vision 2020 goal to make Lesotho ‘a country with a well-established technology’, it faces serious challenges and obstacles towards becoming a technology competent country, increasingly inhibiting services from being delivered in a convenient and timely manner (LCA, 2017). There are considerable delays and lack of service delivery at both Local and National Government. Specifically, there is an overwhelming backlog in the provision of driver’s licences and car disk renewals, orphanage grants, old age pensions and in the delivery of passports, identity documents (IDs), birth/death certificates, and marriage/divorce certificates (Killam, 2015). Ordinarily, service delivery mechanisms of the government institutions and departments have left much to be desired in this country. In practice in Lesotho, most of government agencies continue to rely on traditional systems for delivering public services including paperwork. Bureaucracy continues to do work mainly in the conventional manual way, congesting spaces with citizens waiting for long times in queues for services. Consequently, a visit to the government department for services is seen as a traumatic experience.

A harrowing experience by citizens in the 21st century where ICTs have brought about a radical change in the quality of provision services is unprecedented. This massive revolution of technological advances and government reinvention, particularly e-government, represents an important drive to serve citizens with more convenient access to high quality government

services and information and to allow greater opportunity to participate in political processes and democratic institutions (Kanyemba, 2017; Monga, 2008; Nkwe, 2012; Sodhi, 2016).

Despite these benefits and opportunities, Lesotho, like many other nations in the developing countries and Africa in particular, has not yet utilised the full benefits of e-government. The problem, according to Heeks (2003) and Schuppan (2009), is that e-government – an imported concept from the industrialised countries – was transferred and introduced to Africa without due diligence. However, the current situation of e-government services in African countries is not well documented (Rorissa and Demissie, 2010). E-government processes are complex and it is expected that context-specific issues such as social, political and cultural conditions are thoroughly understood not only before and during implementation (Alsaif, 2013; Meiyanti *et al*, 2018), but also during assessments and investigations.

To the best knowledge of the researcher, there is currently a dearth of information about e-government progress and development in Lesotho. Most of the information available on Lesotho's e-government covers the African region as a whole. This is problematic since several countries in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) such as Lesotho are hardly addressed in literature (Mutula, 2008). The aim of this policy analysis study is to bridge the knowledge gap in literature by investigating the progress of e-government in Lesotho and the context within which it is implemented.

1.2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To evaluate and describe the current status of the websites of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho in relation to their maturity level to deliver e-government services.
2. To examine factors important for the success of e-government implementation in Lesotho from an organisational point of view.
3. To assess challenges and barriers that exist in terms of e-government implementation in Lesotho from an organisational point of view.

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

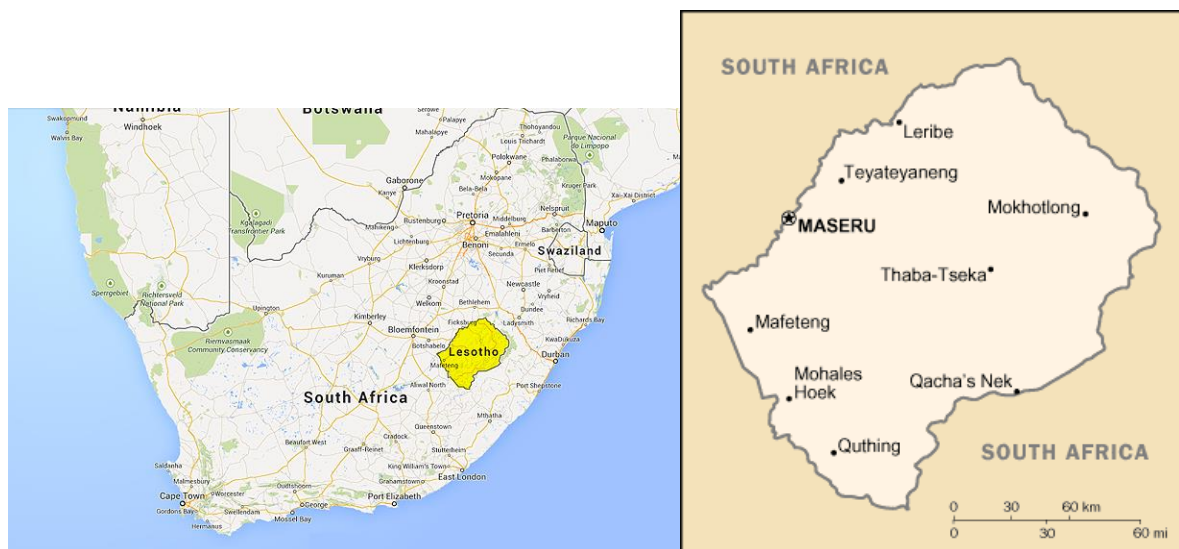
1. What is the current status of the websites of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho in relation to their maturity level to deliver e-government services?
2. What factors are important for the success of e-government implementation in Lesotho from an organisational point of view?

3. What challenges and barriers exist in terms of e-government implementation in Lesotho from an organisational point of view?

1.4. LESOTHO CONTEXT

The main challenge that has been crucial to Lesotho's development and the public services delivery is its political culture. Lesotho's political arena has ever been struck by instability, subsequently weakening its economy and ability to achieve its policy goals (Kabi *et al*, 2014). Lesotho, officially the Kingdom of Lesotho, is a landlocked sovereign country in Southern Africa. Although it is an enclave of South Africa, Lesotho has not taken full advantage of South Africa, which has one of the largest ICT markets in Africa by value.

Figure 1.1: Map of Lesotho



Source: Nthimo (2010:1)

Lesotho is typically rural and about 75% of the population live in rural areas, relying on informal business and subsistence farming (UN, 2019). While the mountainous terrain virtually constrains the sectoral composition of growth, the agricultural and commercial sectors, on the other hand, continue to show poor performance (Motsoari *et al*, 2015; UNESCO, 2019). Over the past 5 years, Lesotho's economy has been negatively affected by the political turmoil and a decline in Southern African Customs Union (SACU) revenues. With population only estimated to be 2,108,328 in 2018 (UN, 2019), the country remains a low middle-income economy. It has a low gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (recorded at 1401.60 US dollars in 2018) and a high level of poverty, hunger and unemployment (ibid). The prevailing economic crisis has devastating consequences on Lesotho's economy, thus presenting a weak starting point for the ICT policy implementation.

The ratio of unemployed people to the labour force is extremely high, putting pressure not only on the migrant labour but also on government for social welfare services. Whereas a high percentage of the economically active populace are engaged in subsistence farming where they receive no salaries at all or very miserable wages, only a small percentage are in formal wage employment (CBL, 2012). One such working force that earn meagre wages are textile and clothing industry workers. Despite exportation of manufactured goods to the United States of America (USA) through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) provisions, employees in the textile sector are exploited (Daemane, 2014). They are working under poor conditions with frustrating salaries (Chesetsi, 2018). Hence, they contribute to the population of low-income earners who cannot have access to affordable smart devices such as smartphones, tablets and laptops, which play a vital role in facilitating access to the Internet (LCA, 2017). The state revenue is relatively boosted by customs union revenue and foreign grants.

Lesotho shares a membership in several regional, political and economic groups including the Southern African Development Community (SADC), SACU, New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Union, which together offer a number of opportunities for infrastructure and ICT development and skills sharing (Buti, 2018). Besides USA's AGOA, Lesotho also enjoys other concessional trade agreements with African, Caribbean and the Pacific Group of States as well as European Union protocols, to mention but a few. Lesotho, however, has not fully exploited many of these concessions due to the country's poor science and technology infrastructure and low value adding capacity.

Lesotho prides itself on rich minerals yet is still categorised as a low middle-income economy. The Highveld of this mountainous country is the mineral hub. Lesotho has diamond mines and the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP). The LHWP harbours, stores and trades water to South Africa. If effectively leveraged, the gains from the extraction of water and diamonds could support other developments aimed at delivering services to citizens.

With its current leased developed country status, Lesotho is faced with scores of developmental challenges that call for innovative and firm leadership, an effective technical human capacity and most importantly, well-coordinated ICT structures (UNESCO, 2018). Currently, the country's ICT efforts and developments are facing hurdles including a rising level of poverty, obsolete information sharing and communication practices, and an

increasing gap in demand and supply of information technology (IT)-skilled personnel (Maphephe *et al*, 2014).

Despite economic and social odds, the Lesotho literacy rate is one of the highest in Africa, with about 85% of the adult inhabitants (UNESCO, 2019), in part because the country spends about 12% of its GDP on education. Good literacy skill is fundamental to modern society and the globalised world and serves as a foundation for digital literacy. Primary education, at least in theory, is declared free, universal and compulsory, immensely increasing learner-teacher ratio. Access to secondary education – education which is paid for by parents – is low due to unemployment, low income and HIV/AIDS (Makhasane, 2010). The country's universities, the National University of Lesotho, Botho University of Technology and Limkwokwing University of Technology lack the capacity to accommodate potential students. This prompts a need for the Government of Lesotho to think of innovative ways of teaching and learning including open learning.

Lesotho like most African countries received its independence in the mid-1960s and became a constitutional monarchy within a parliamentary system. The King is head of state and enjoys a ceremonial function, assumes no executive authority and is prohibited from engaging in political activities. The Prime Minister is head of government and exercises executive power. Whereas other sister nations like South Africa and Botswana have attained significant economic and political stability post-independence, Lesotho remains one of the politically unstable and underdeveloped countries in the African region. This has been one of the challenges affecting policy initiatives and delivery of service in the country.

The corrosion of socio-economic development in Lesotho's constitutional monarchy stems from the recurrent changes in the administrative regime and unceasing inter- and intra-political conflicts and unrest. This contrasts with the country's goal to be stable and peaceful as stipulated in its Vision 2020 document. Since independence in 1966, Lesotho has been experiencing political turmoil with a negative impact on human development. The first democratic government was elected in 1993 after decades of autocratic and authoritarian commands including the military command (Matlosa and Sello, 2005). From inception, the monarchy was not comfortable with this arrangement as it restricted its power (Monyane, 2009). In 1997, unflattering factions within the ruling Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) saw the Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhehle forming the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD)

inside the Houses of Parliament (Sekatle, 1997). The majority of the members of parliament (MPs) followed Mokhehle, enabling the LCD to assume administrative power.

In 1998, the LCD won the general election overwhelmingly under Mokhehle's successor, Pakalitha Mosisili, gaining 79 out of 80 seats. Opposition parties rejected the results and embarked on violent protest (Matlosa and Sello, 2005). The contestation occurred despite international observers' pronouncement which declared the elections transparent, fair and free (Venter, 2003). The disgruntled army aggravated the political unrest, which caused havoc and torching in the capital Maseru (Makoa, 2014), affecting service delivery and destroying information technology (IT) infrastructure among others. Following the electoral system reform facilitated by the Interim Political Authority, which introduced the Mixed Member Proportional Representation – a hybrid between constituency-based and proportional representation – the LCD won the 2002 elections. In 2006, the LCD split and bred the All Basotho Convention (ABC). Nonetheless, the LCD was re-elected in the snap elections of 2007.

However, conflicts erupted within the ruling LCD and the incumbent Prime Minister Mosisili founded the Democratic Congress (DC). The majority of MPs joined him and formed a new government in February 2012. Even though the newly formed DC won the majority of seats following the May 2012 elections, it failed to maintain minimum seats to form government (Weisfelder, 2015). Thabane's ABC, Thesele Maseribane's Basotho National Party (BNP) and Metsing's LCD formed the first coalition government in the history of the political arena in Lesotho, and it was led by Thabane. This government was dissolved two years later following infighting among the coalition partners. Early elections were called and held in 2015. The DC, LCD and five other small parties formed another coalition government led by Mosisili (Mohloboli, 2015). Resulting from political unrest, opposition leaders including Thabane, Thesele and Keketso Rantso, the leader of the LCD's splinter, Reformed Congress of Lesotho (RLC), fled the country to neighbouring South Africa. The triumvirate returned home on February 10, 2017 after almost two years in exile (Modise, 2017). After the failed attempts to unseat the DC party leader, Prime Minister Mosisili, the deputy party leader, Moleleki and other DC National Executive Committee members broke away from the DC and formed the Alliance of Democrats (AD) (*The Post*, 2016). This weakened the ruling force. As a result, the parliament was dissolved, and elections were called for June 3, 2017. The Thabane-led ABC clinched more votes but failed to win an outright majority to form a government. It then forged the country's third coalition government with the AD, BNP and

RLC. With coalition governments, Lesotho seems to be unstable since it has been noticed that struggle for power and disorders arising from conflicting interests and ideologies put the country at a halt (Mahlakeng, 2016).

Politics in Lesotho, especially frequent changes of political administration, has caused dysfunctional governments, resulting in policy standstills and red tape in the delivery of government services (Buti, 2018). As Ngulube (2007) noted, if politics is wrong, e-government initiatives will not succeed. Under stable circumstances, Lesotho holds regular general elections every five years. However, current developments have presented a vicious trend in the history of politics not only in Lesotho but in Africa as a whole. Three general elections were successfully held within a period of 5 years from 2012 to 2017.

Lesotho is nicknamed “Kingdom in the sky” because of its mountainous terrain. While a negligible percentage is covered with water, the rivers that run through the country play a significant role in the economy and development of the nation. Much of Lesotho’s export revenue comes from water and much of its power obtained from hydroelectricity (World Bank, 2017), which can become advantageous for rolling out electricity across the country.

Lesotho is 30,355 square kilometres in area with low population density in the highlands. Its mountainous topography and sparse population makes it difficult and expensive for infrastructure and technology developments such as telecommunication networks. Lesotho is the only nation in the world that lies completely above 1,000 metres in elevation (CIA, 2018), with eighty percent of the country lying above 1,800 metres in altitude. Its lowest point is 1,400 metres, which is the highest point of any country (Murphy, 2007).

Almost 100% (99.7%) of the inhabitants of Lesotho are the native people (Basotho) while the remaining percentage constitutes Europeans and Asians (World Bank Group, 2017). This makes Lesotho not only almost a homogeneous nation, but it is also monolingual in Sesotho (UNICEF, 2016). Although English and Sesotho are both official languages, Sesotho (the native language) is widely spoken while English (the inherent imperial language) has ever remained the language of prestige, power, administration and computing.

As stipulated in the five-year National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 2012/13 - 2016/17, Lesotho identifies ICTs as the spine of contemporary economy, contributing to the lessening of risks related to poverty, inequality, unemployment, urbanisation and poor infrastructure. Yet, as of February 2020, Internet penetration remained below 45% of the population (Kemp, 2020). This is despite an increase of about 10% (9.8%) of Internet users

(ibid.). The gap between individuals who do not have access to the Internet (have nots) and those with access (haves) reinforces existing inequalities, and widens the digital divide, which socially excludes have nots from information economy. While connectivity and access to the Internet remain elusive for Lesotho, encompassing e-government can be fundamental in mitigating the effects of exclusion and improving people's living standards.

1.5. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This thesis is organised in five chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This introductory chapter gives the background and overview of the study. It defines the statement of the problem, outlining why there is a crisis worth looking into. The aim, research objectives and key research questions to be addressed in the study are stated. It is in this chapter that the Lesotho context within which the study is conducted is described, focusing on the economic and political setting. The chapter finally presents the layout of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature review

In this chapter, the concept of e-government is clearly defined and problematised with the view to exposing its multi-faceted nature. Emerging from this discussion, a working definition is established and put forth to ensure that the reader has a common understanding in the context of the study. The existing literature around the subject matter is reviewed with the view to locate this study in the broader context. While the chapter discusses literature on e-government and services delivery in a broader context, it focuses more on developing countries, Africa in particular. The analysis of the literature focuses on the aim of previous research, the purpose why a study was undertaken and the research findings. The gaps in literature are identified and how they are addressed is presented.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

Whilst chapters 1 and 2 set the background for this study and enable the researcher to understand and identify the research problem, Chapter 3 provides details on how the study was conducted to generate data used to write up this thesis. This includes both the methods used to access existing data and those employed by the researcher in order to obtain empirical data. This chapter basically explains the research methodology in terms of the research objectives. It covers research design, data collection methods, sampling strategy and methods of data analysis. Ethical considerations for undertaking this research are outlined as well.

Chapter 4: Analysis of data

In Chapter 4, empirical data collected on the issues that were investigated is analysed. The analysis is based on the results obtained from observation and evaluation of the websites and the interviews with government officials.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations

This final chapter concludes the dissertation by providing a brief review of the study. It revisits the research objectives and the research questions with the view to establish if the study has succeeded in addressing them. It summarises and discusses the main findings in respect of e-government implementation from Lesotho's public sector. It further highlights limitations of the study, discusses policy and practical implications and makes suggestions for future research. It finally gives general conclusions and makes recommendations for a successful implementation of e-government in Lesotho.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0. INTRODUCTION

Governments worldwide are increasingly reinventing themselves through electronic government (e-government). Nripendra *et al* (2013) observed that e-government is narrowly understood to imply the government deployment of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to deliver cheaper and faster services to citizens and other stakeholders. Thus, the intricate relationship between government and ICT has gained the necessary attention of academic researchers in a number of fields including information science, public administration, public policy and political science. As observed by Alfarraj *et al* (2011), Makoza (2013) and Mimbi and Lehong (2017), although prior research has addressed the issues of government interaction and relationship with citizens, advantages, challenges and impact of e-government, there exists a persistent lack of research on web-based service delivery.

Chapter 2 presents and analyses research that has been done to advance our knowledge of the e-government phenomenon, with particular attention to e-government service delivery. The insights emerging from this review of the literature may serve well as a foundation for further research in the implementation and evaluation of e-government initiatives, especially in developing countries. A review of literature represents an examination of documented information related to the research area. Blankenship (2010) contended that the rationale for examining literature in research is to gather scholarly information about the topic to enable the researcher to build the foundation knowledge related to the study. According to him, by reviewing literature, a researcher can identify factual information and theories that are related to the research topic. This information can help the researcher in establishing the research problem and justification for the study. Blankenship (2010) further suggested that a review of the literature can assist a researcher to clarify the research problem, establish the research questions and identify what has been studied or needs to be researched further.

This chapter is structured as follows: it first reviews the literature which explains the scope and definitions of e-government. Then it differentiates between e-governance and e-government for the purpose of further defining the scope of this research. Existing literature is explored to provide an in-depth coverage of different perspectives about e-government evolution. A taxonomy of e-government services and interactions then follows. Moreover, this chapter reviews related literature concerning challenges and barriers and benefits and

opportunities of e-government. Success stories are discussed as well. Literature is also reviewed regarding e-government models. Furthermore, this chapter provides and discusses contents and features considered when evaluating e-government websites. Finally, an outline of e-government practices in different regions and countries is presented and studies on Lesotho are explored to identify gaps in literature.

2.1. E-GOVERNMENT: DEFINITIONS AND SCOPE

According to the UN (2011) Expert Group Meeting Report on “e-government and new technologies: towards better citizen engagement for development”, e-government has increasingly gained an overwhelming popularity, not only as donor or policy makers’ agenda but also among academics. It was discovered that several scholars have shown interest in researching on a wide-range of different research studies *vis-à-vis* different topics within the area including studies into e-government research.

Ndou (2004) contended that many researchers agree upon the fact that there is a challenge with e-government as a research domain since e-government means different things to different groups of people. Based on that, in his study of “big questions on e-government research”, Yildiz (2012) argued that even the definition of e-government concept is vague and it keeps on changing depending on the rapid change of technology itself, and a wide variety of government applications and all the public policy issues these technologies can be applied to. Thus legislature and academics in the e-government field, as put by Calista and Melitski (2012), lack clarity regarding the precise meaning of this term. This subsequently has adverse implications on the implementation and utilisation of e-government services.

In the study that assessed the current research on e-government fields, with an underlying purpose to give a direction for further research, Lofstedt (2005) stated that there are deficiencies and gaps in the field of e-government research. Previous research concentrated largely on the national level. Despite a lacuna in the current literature about e-government development at other governmental spheres such as local government, ministerial and departmental levels, the discrepancies also affect how e-government as a concept and practice is perceived and defined.

Alateyah *et al* (2013) explored factors of e-government service adoption in Saudi Arabia. Their findings affirmed that though e-government as a concept has become known and used widely, there is evidence of lack of agreement on what exactly e-government is and means. More often, e-government is considered as or used interchangeably with words like eGov,

digital government, connected government, open government and e-governance (Alshehri and Drew, 2010; Grönlund, 2004; Hu *et al.*, 2009). It is understood that while this has a severe impact on the conceptualisation of e-government – depending on how those other words are used and applied – e-government service implementation is subsequently affected.

Despite escalating research efforts on e-government, existing literature has not adequately dealt with the imprecise meaning of the e-government concept. Yildiz (2007) critically analysed the development and several definitions of the e-government concept. The findings indicated that ‘e-government research suffers from definitional vagueness of the e-government concept, oversimplification of the e-government development processes within complex political and institutional environments, and various methodological limitations’ (ibid:246). In order to address the conceptual complexity and nuances sufficiently, various definitions need to be explored.

Rajah and Lekorwe (2017) showed that the existing literature classifies e-government definitions into three major groups: (1) e-government as the government use of ICTs, (2) e-government as the internet service delivery and (3) e-government as an enabler for public service transformation by the means of ICTs. Accordingly, the definitions stress three broad aspects: context (government), technology (Internet) and outcome (transformation enabler). The classification of these definitions is based on their areas of emphasis. In this understanding, e-government can be described from the viewpoint of context, technology and results. E-government is understood narrowly to be government provision of services through the deployment of a particular technology.

According to Ngulube (2007), e-government is perceived as the application of emerging ICTs such as the Internet and World Wide Web to deliver services and information to citizens and businesses. It may also comprise deployment of other ICTs in addition to the Web and the Internet including non-Internet e-government technologies including fax, short message service (SMS), telephone, wireless networks, multimedia messaging service (MMS), Bluetooth, radio and television.

To some, e-government does not only relate to the ICT application but the deployment of these tools in government processes or functions for the purpose of improving public service delivery and reinforcing support for public policies. For example, the UN and ASPA (2002) described e-government as utilising the World Wide Web and the Internet to deliver government services and information to citizens. E-government can consist of the publication

of information and services on a government website so that downloadable material can be accessed by citizens. For Bhatnagar (2003), while e-government can also involve the actual delivery of services such as renewing a licence and filing a tax return, more sophisticated applications may include processing on-line payments.

Bwalya and Mutula (2014) explained that e-government can be used as a broader term to suggest a use of ICT applications in public services including providing electronic readable passports (e-passport), health services (e-health), technology-enabled voting (e-voting) and encouraging of public participation in parliamentary debates via ICTs (e-debate). This clearly indicates that e-government presents itself as a platform where local citizens can exchange information with government online and access services anywhere and anytime at their convenience.

Despite growing interest in e-government research, contemporary studies have demonstrated that there is no consensus about a definite e-government concept. However, Bhatnagar (2004) contended that e-government is used to describe a general term for government use of ICTs, in particular web-based technologies. Almarabeh and AbuAli (2010) expanded that the main aim for the application of web-based technologies in the public sector or government institutions is to improve quality of services, facilitate more ease of access to public information and allow citizen participation in governance and democratic processes. As a result, this improves relationships, increases all-encompassing customer bases and enhances businesses through re-assessment of internal processes.

E-government, therefore, appears to be much more about how government transforms itself by enabling citizens to interact and access public services from anywhere at a time convenient to them. According to Lofstedt (2005), e-government defines public sector organisations, groups of individuals, and processes that operate within it. This implies that e-government is not only about technology but also about transforming the way in which governments interact with employees, governmental enterprises, citizens and businesses. E-government is about strengthening democracy and its processes and also about exploring new ideas for the purpose of simplifying citizens lives by, for instance, restructuring internal processes, allowing economic growth, and reinstating the role of government in society.

Definitions of e-government invariably reveal that the e-government phenomenon is synonymous with governance transformation's agenda, seeking to reshape society, economy and polity. For example, the UN (2008) maintained that e-government can contribute

significantly to the processes of transformation and towards a more effective and efficient government. It can encourage two-way communication and increase authorities' coordination within organisations and down to the departmental level. Moreover, e-government can hasten the competence and performance of the public sector by transforming processes, reducing costs, making better research capabilities and improving documentation and record-keeping.

Boyle and Nicholson (2003) evaluated e-government in New Zealand. Their findings highlighted that despite efforts by some researchers to give a detailed account of e-government as the strategy to deliver electronic services (e-services) to citizens, practitioners in this field are adamant that e-government is far more than simply putting services online. In their view, 'e-government runs wide across all aspects of government, deep within the core of every governmental entity, and will inevitably be a transforming agent for government and governance' (ibid:90). Thus, e-government implies the use of web-based technologies in public administration not only to reform structures but also government processes.

To a larger extent, e-government is also defined to consider the relations government has with citizens and other entities. The World Bank (2012) argued that e-government is government use of ITs that have the potential to transform government relationships. These technologies can serve a variety of different ends: enhance citizens' access to better government services 24/7, improve interactions with industry and business, empowerment of citizens through enhanced information access, or strengthen effective government management. The far-reaching outcomes can be of greater convenience, increasing transparency and lessening corruption.

The bipolar nature of the e-government concept also advances how the term is understood and defined. In their study that aimed at understanding whether e-government is governing or managing, Budd and Harris (2009) explained that the integration of the "e-" prefix to "government" combines principal characteristics of technological advancement and public administration. For Misuraca (2007), the conventional use of the prefix "e-" denotes that an activity is digital or electronic in nature. By accepting this, e-government would simply refer to the use of ICTs in undertaking all kind of government activities. However, the UN (2003) underscored that the incorporation of electronics into "government" demonstrates that a government administration is in the process of reforming its external and internal relationships with deployment of modern technologies.

This makes e-government more about “government” than about “e” (electronics). The OECD (2003) identified ‘how governments can embed good governance principles into solutions that exploit 21st century ... ICTs to achieve public policy goals within a context of changing social, economic and political circumstances’. The findings presented that e-government can facilitate public administration’s transformation, subsequently improving government’s responsiveness to a more customer-focused service delivery. Hence e-government is a bipolar phenomenon whose concentration is on customer service (front office), and organisational structure (back office). This further suggests that e-government is framed on the premise that the back-office reform to realising effective government is as important as the reform of the front office (service delivery channels).

In spite of variations in e-government definitions and understanding as demonstrated above, it could be learned, as echoed by Hakfin (2009), that the main word in e-government remains government but not electronic, and thus the emphasis should not be on technology but government and governance. Sheridan and Reiley (2006) shared similar views. According to them, e-government is seen as “government”, a superstructure in “governance” responsible for e-workflow, e-voting and delivery of e-services to citizens, businesses and other government institutions. Thus, the real benefit of e-government, as cited by the UN (2008), does not necessarily depend on the technology usage but in its deployment to processes of transformation.

Bwalya and Mutula (2014) noticed that e-government is presented as one of the components of consolidating the democratic institutions and processes, service productivity, citizen involvement via ICT platforms in different issues of national importance, and facilitation of social inclusion. E-government simply becomes a tool to improve service delivery models, encourage ordinary citizens from constituencies to be involved in governance affairs, and facilitate administrative and external relationships.

Based on the literature review of the e-government concept, it can be concluded that while e-government is everybody’s talk, everyone has a different interpretation (Halchin, 2004; Hu *et al*, 2008; Wimmer, 2002). Despite a variety of interpretations, analysis suggests that e-government is an instrument of reform with great potential to improve internal operations of government and how government interacts with the external world (Alshehri and Drew, 2010; Shailendra *et al*, 2009; World Bank, 2005).

In summary, evidence from the review of literature suggests that some researchers bemoaned that while e-government has been widely researched, its imprecise meaning is not only worrisome but also bears serious implications on its adoption and implementation. The complexity and vagueness of this concept challenge future researchers to be more explicit about how it should be understood through their own lenses. While there are variations in terms of how e-government is conceptualised and defined, review suggested that e-government generally involves application of ICTs especially web-based technologies in government, reinventing government and transforming public service delivery. This implies that e-government frames itself within government structures and processes. Also evident is that e-government is often used interchangeably with other contemporary concepts. The major question is whether it is correct for scholars to treat the e-government concept with a similar status to other concepts, especially e-governance.

2.2. IS E-GOVERNMENT E-GOVERNANCE?

Bernhard (2013) conducted a study of e-government and e-governance. This was a Swedish case study with a focus on the local government level. Through the review of literature, Bernhard (2013) discovered that e-governance and e-government are used interchangeably and synonymously in most research. According to him, this is confusing since these two concepts have never been synonyms. As a result, he strongly suggested that e-government should always be differentiated from e-governance for simplicity.

Similar to Bernhard (2013), Shailendra *et al* (2007) found that there is considerable confusion existing in explaining e-government and e-governance. In an attempt to resolve the ambiguities and level the amount of confusion, Shailendra *et al* (2007) conducted a literature review study, which was to develop a framework for e-government and e-governance domains and definitions by coming up with what they alleged to be “clear and non-overlapping” definitions. They opined that e-government focuses on constituencies and stakeholders external to the organisation, whether it is the government or public institution at the international, state, national or local levels. On the other hand, they argued that e-governance’s focus is on administration and management within an organisation, whether it is private or public, small or large.

For Maina (2006), although the concepts of e-governance and e-government are similar, there is a slight but significant difference. His line of argument, like Shailendra *et al* (2007), was based on previous research analysis, including Bannister and Walsh (2002) and Howard

(2001), which explained that e-government constitutes only part of e-governance. According to his findings, Maine (2006) observed that e-governance is commonly used to refer to a broader term that represents the holistic utilisation of ICT applications by government and the public sector for improving governance, and by civil society to facilitate inclusive participation of citizens in the governance of political and democratic institutions. Drawing from this observation, Maina (2006) concurred that e-governance is distinct in the sense that it encompasses administration and management of both the public and private sector and beyond, whereas e-government is exclusive to the government or public sector.

Following the observation that many countries failed to achieve the acclaimed benefits of e-governance due to a techno-centric approach to e-governance initiatives rather than a governance-centric approach under the banner of “excellent e-governance”, Saxena (2005) utilised a case study inquiry for developing the concept of excellent e-governance. The purpose was to describe a methodology for a governance-centric focus towards implementing such excellent e-governance. The results indicated that excellence (or governance-centricism) in e-governance requires initiatives not to be merely efficiency-driven but effective-driven. Because this requires initiatives to be led by a “good governance” driven purpose or goal, Saxena (2005) suggested that distinction first be made between government and governance. Leading the discussion, Saxena (2005:500) synthesised that:

‘Governments are important institutions that contribute to governance ... Representative governments seek and receive political capital, but they also require the active cooperation and support from their public servants. Governance is the outcome of politics, policies, and programmes. Governance is distinct from government in that it concerns longer-term processes rather than immediate decisions. The result of this focus on processes instead of decisions is that the primary concern of governance is “goals” than rules ... In perspective of governance, what is important is the objective rather than the rules of behaviour for achieving it. Finally, the “bottom line” for governance is outcomes rather than the outputs of government’.

Like Saxena (2005), Singh and Sharma (2009) undertook a study on “some initiatives of e-government and e-governance”. They argued that one main reason for e-government and e-governance initiatives challenges lies with poor conceptualisation of these terms, which often

gives them similar treatment. As they put it, the failure to have a proper understanding of these concepts has serious limitations on the direction and outcomes of the initiatives. Therefore, they established that in order to have thorough understanding of these terms, it is imperative to have a comprehensive understanding of governance and government since e-governance and e-government stem from these terms respectively.

In accordance, in a study which explored power and governance in a partly globalised world, Keohane (2002:202) contrasted that:

‘By [g]overnance, they mean the processes and institutions, both formal and informal, that guide and restrain the collective activities of a group. Government is the subset that acts with authority and creates formal obligations. Governance need not necessarily be conducted exclusively by governments. Private firms, associations of firms, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and associations of NGOs all engage in it, often in association with government bodies, to create governance; sometimes without governmental authority’.

The above definition, which is self-explanatory, is of most importance because it insinuates that e-government is not tantamount to e-governance but just a subset, although a major one, of e-governance. This is in line with Godse and Garg’s (2000) study of “from e-government to e-governance”. In this study, Godse and Garg (2000) aimed at creating clarity in relation to the concept of e-government and e-governance mainly because these two terms have been used interchangeably. The findings indicated that e-governance is a wider concept that deals with the whole spectrum of the relationships and networks within and outside government mandates whereas e-government deals with governance issues inevitably in the hands of government.

Inasmuch as e-governance deals with relationships and networks, it is apparent, however, that it operates “in the shadow” of e-government. Still using government and governance to explain and differentiate between e-government and e-governance, Jessop (1997), in his study that aimed at making a commentary on governance, government and regulations based on capitalism and its future, argued that government as a political authority is more concerned with systematically arranging the “self-organisation” of collaborative partnerships and governance establishments. He contended – which is worth quoting in length – that government should:

‘provide the ground rules for governance; ensure the compatibility of different governance mechanisms and regimes; deploy a relative monopoly of organi[s]ational intelligence and information with which to shape cognitive expectations; act as a “court of appeal” for disputes arising within and over governance; seek to rebalance power differentials by strengthening weaker forces or systems in the interests of system integration and/or social cohesion; try to modify the self-understanding of identities, strategic capacities and the interests of individual and collective actors in different strategic contexts and hence alter their implications for preferred strategies and tactics; and also assume political responsibility in the event of governance failure’ (Jessop 1997:575).

One simple way of illustrating the point above made by Jessop (1997) is to put it this way: whereas governance can exist without government, it is upon government to strengthen its capacity to continue governing. Thus, e-government is understood and applied in the current study to imply a “discourse of reinventing government”.

In summary, it becomes evident from the reviewed literature that e-government embodies a case of a research field whose meaning is fuzzy and inadequate. Because of it being blurry, the review showed that e-government is usually used interchangeably with e-governance, a mistake that is not supposed to be done. However, evidence from the review suggested that while there might be similarities between e-government and e-governance, each term means a different thing, making it distinct from the other. One such distinction made was that e-government is exclusive to the government or public sector whereas e-governance extends to non-government organisations including the private sector. As would be seen, the literature suggested that the best way of understanding the difference between e-governance and e-government is to have a comprehensive understanding of the words governance and government respectively as e-governance and e-government stem from them. Because these terms are not tantamount, reviewed research made it clear that their scope should be perceived the same.

2.3. ORIGIN OF E-GOVERNMENT: DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

2.3.1. Theoretical and historical understanding

Although governments are progressively deploying ICTs in their daily business, the question of how this has surfaced is ever investigated. Gil-Garcia and Martinez-Moyano (2007)

utilised institutional theory and the study of rules as the catalyst of change to explain why and how e-government evolved. Their study identified two essential dynamics in e-government evolution. First, e-government is initially born out of the Internet boom. Second, e-government activities are emerging from national level down to local government. On aggregate, Gil-Garcia and Martinez-Moyano's (2007) theory described that e-government has been adding more organisational and technological sophistication as subsequent to both institutional isomorphism and pressures from citizens, businesses, interest groups, politicians and other stakeholders. The situation described above may imply a change from a "one-size-fits-all" approach to service delivery to a more customised service delivery, which draws its mandate from citizen customers themselves.

Janowski (2017) used the four-stage Digital Government Evolution Model to understand e-government emergence. This model better explains the evolution of e-government from a transformational or reform perspective. It comprises the following stages: (1) digitisation (technology in government) (2) transformation (electronic government) (3) engagement (electronic governance) and (4) contextualisation (policy-driven electronic governance).

The synopsis of this model suggests that e-government emerged in the quest for transforming internal processes of government and the relationships between government and other political and social actors in a bid for local strategies to capture essential differences in political and social set ups in various countries.

Dawes (2016), on the other hand, indicated that the emergence of e-government in concept, research and practice has been a major development in public administration over a couple of decades. Ingrams (2014) argued that evolution of e-government generally results from a need to streamline public administration and reinvent governments. Accordingly, Brown (2005) looked at e-government in the comparative public administration context. His study described e-government as arising from the interactions between three distinct sets of forces, each of which has gone through its own revolution: government itself, ICTs, and management concepts. On the government aspect, Brown (2005) showed that e-government mainly emerged from government's need to respond to the growing and ever-changing demands and capabilities of the public and of the economy and society.

Mimbi and Lehong (2017) underscored that e-government emerged as the new public management (NPM) strategy to bridge a gap between government and citizens that was created by the 1990s' "managerialism". This change brought about competence and

performance in overcoming problems related to public administration ineffectiveness. These problems are understood to include inadequate provision of public services and lack of citizen trust in both political and administrative office bearers.

In explaining the history and development of e-government, Thomas (2005) put that the complexity and risks attached to technology have created an important role in the government sector for management of administration. In the affirmative, Ashaye (2014) added that e-government is a result of change from technology to management and the development of scope performance and policy intentions. It is understood that government saw the Internet as more than a “bolt-on” to corporate processes. E-government is based on the incorporation of IT capacity, primarily intranets, databases and websites, to facilitate self-service through an ICT platform. However, the e-government phenomenon is considered relatively novel and an imported concept in developing countries.

2.3.2. From theory to practice

The review of past research shows that there is agreement relating to where e-government originated. As would be expected, studies show that e-government emerged from Europe, although a question of where in particular still ranges wide.

Asogwa in Sodhi (2015) opined that e-government origin can be traced from Britain. His assertion is based on the work by Koontze (2003) who has revealed that in 1957 the British Government commanded the telecommunication service’s technical support, to assess and advise government on government officials’ use of computers. It appears that most European countries followed suit and e-government became commonly used in the 1990s after the revolution of the World Wide Web and Internet.

However, a vast majority of research is adamant that e-government, as is commonly understood today, was first coined and applied in the USA. According to Spremic *et al* (2009), the dawn of e-government started in 1993, when the then President Bill Clinton requested Vice President Al Gore to lead the National Performance Review, a campaign to reinvent the federal government. Within his vision to link the citizens to the several government agencies, Al Gore adopted e-government in an attempt to re-engineer government through getting all kinds of government services automated. While this resulted in launching the federal links portal, FirstGov (www.firstgov.gov), Ashaye (2014) contended that it is equally important to highlight that every government department had already established their websites way before the federal portal.

2.3.3. E-government evolution in Africa

Ochara (2008) used theoretical discourse analysis to investigate the rising e-government artefact in Kenya, the Eastern African country. The findings from the analysis of literature sources suggested that while e-government in general is plausible, its introduction into the African continent is imposed, hence a chronic existence of unexpected consequences that solidify and possibly exacerbate the social exclusion problem. Put in his words, Ochara (2008:18) laments that ‘e-government, introduced in African countries under the banner of New Public Management (NPM), is... [t]he imported model... transferred to African countries as a panacea to bad governance by carriers such as international donor agencies, consultants, [IT] vendors and Western-trained civil servants’. With such dejected reality, Ochara (2008) remarked that e-government success in African countries that is reliant on the World Wide Web (www) needs a socially wide-ranging national information infrastructure.

Researchers attested to the irony relating to e-government evolution in developing countries. Warf (2017) undertook a research on “e-government in Asia: origins, politics, impacts, geographies”. He underscored that in the developing world, which Africa is part of, international donors and actors such as the IMF, USAID and the World Bank, have appeared to refer to e-government as an instrument to endorse “good governance”. Wamukoya and Mutula (2005) emphasised that this “good governance” hype or public sector reforms as it is portrayed to be, was not negotiated but demanded by these international powerhouses. Despite the adoption of electronic systems which African governments have been subjected to, the research findings of a study by Wamukoya and Mutula (2005) indicated that nothing has changed much in Southern and Eastern Africa in terms of accountability and transparency.

In the same breath, Mnjama *et al* (2008) argued that many countries, including those in the African continent, subsequently began to introduce computers into their public administration since the directive of the British Government to employ IT in their governance. The argument made here insinuates that African countries have adopted computers or used ICTs in their public service willingly or voluntarily. To a varying degree, Mimbi and Lehong (2017) seemed to share similar sentiments. They suggested that because of learning, mostly from success stories of developed countries, African counterparts gradually implemented e-government projects to be on the competitive edge in the economic world. Considering that as a matter of fact, the question would then be whether the websites of African governments

are ready or have reached maturity to deliver e-government services and enable these governments to compete in the global economy.

In summary, Section 2.3 discussed literature on e-government origin. It looked at different perspectives. Evidence emerging from the analysis of the literature suggested that e-government evolution can be understood from theoretical-based and historical perspectives. It emerged that different researchers used different theoretical frameworks and models to assess the rise of e-government. It became clear from the review that e-government is also conceptualised and understood differently in relation to its theoretical setting. From an historical perspective, reviewed literature discussed where the e-government phenomenon was first practiced. Although literature is divided about the exact place, it emerged that e-government was first practiced in industrialised nations and later imported to the developing worlds such as Africa. While some scholars argued that Africa employed ICTs willingly, there is confidence in the literature that a high e-government initiative failure in Africa is attributed to the fact that e-government was initially developed for industrialised and not developing and less developed nations.

2.4. A TAXONOMY OF E-GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND INTERACTIONS

Kim *et al* (2009) utilised institutional theory as an analytical framework to investigate into the establishment of an anti-corruption structure known as OPEN (Online Procedures Enhancement for civil application) in the Seoul Metropolitan Government, South Korea. They espoused that e-government was initially meant to improve public administration's internal efficiency. Today, e-government is increasingly considered one most important strategy to support and simplify governance by bringing multiple stakeholders such as business communities, citizens, and other government organisations closer to their government services. In pursuit of building close relationships with these stakeholders, governments deliver services in many ways.

The onus of e-government is to allow those within its authority to interact directly and do electronic transactions with government during the process of service delivery. Put simply by Bwalya and Mutula (2014), e-government is meant to automate and stream government processes so that accountability and efficiency are mixed and conventional transaction costs are minimised. However, vast research on e-government services is blurry and lacking with regard to the exact forms of interactions and transactions government conducts with each group of stakeholders.

Fang (2002) disclosed that research on e-government shows that more often governments recognise and embrace eight categories of e-government that may offer tremendous benefits to the employees, government, business, citizens and other political and social organisations and non-profit establishments. In this arrangement, e-government is organised into eight types: government to citizens (G2C), citizens to government (C2G), government to government (G2G), government to employee (G2E), non-profit to government (N2G) government to business (G2B), business to government (B2G) and government to non-profit (G2N).

While e-government may comprise of a set of actors, especially those who confuse e-government with e-governance as is exposed above, Lu *et al* (2004) maintained that there are three distinct transactional exchanges. These include G2C, G2G and G2B transactions. Although the immediate objective of these exchanges is to accomplish good governance principles, *inter alia*, transparency, effectiveness, accountability and efficiency, Dawes *et al* (1999) argued that interaction with government has a far-reaching objective to integrate policy goals, technology that works together to realise public goals, organisational processes and information content.

Alshehri and Drew (2010) contended that government e-services are targeted to four main groups, namely citizens, business sectors, government employees and government institutions. The online interactions and transactions between government and each group form the web of e-government relationships. Thus, four key categories of e-government encompass G2C, G2B, G2G and G2E.

Rao (2011) investigated issues and challenges to collaborative G2E services. Their study argued that e-government primarily entails two parts, viz. back-office and front-office. The G2C and G2B services are characterised as front-office while G2G and G2E are categorised as back-office. However, the study discovered that a majority of e-government academics research about the first three blocks (G2C, G2B and G2G) without recognising the fourth (G2E) or merely considering it as part of the G2G category. Most governments have not yet started to establish collaborative G2E services.

Despite insufficient recognition given to G2E, Ndou (2004) further contends that the transactions, interactions and relationships that public service employees have with government, in point of fact constitute another enormous e-government block which requires special consideration. This is so because nowadays employees are considered as internal

customers. Hence, for e-government implementation to be citizen-focused, it needs to consider requirements of this block as well.

At this juncture, it could be noticed that the extant literature presents several categories of e-government services. While each of researchers may have a different viewpoint, many of them interpret that e-government encompasses interactions and transactions between government and government, government and citizens, government and business and, government and employees. Hence, in this thesis, e-government is limited to the government utilisation of web-based technologies to improve access to G2C, G2B, G2G and G2E services, and to facilitate all sections of society to make meaningful contributions to policy decisions through greater participation in democratic institutions and processes.

2.4.1. Government to Citizens (G2C) services

Makene (2009) examined e-government's role in effective service delivery. The findings denoted that the essence of e-government is to link public administration activities to the most innovative technologies. By so doing, government seeks to bring service delivery closer to the people. Captured this way, the G2C arrangement defines all activities that take place between citizens and their government through digital platforms.

In the study which explored the implementation of e-government in developing countries, Bwalya and Mutula (2014) presented G2C to be two-fold. On one hand, G2C initiatives open government services to public accessibility. These services may include applications for licence renewals, passports, income tax, acquiring of birth/death certificates and getting information on basic public services including health care, social grants and State facilities such as libraries, schools and places of interest. On the other hand, G2C accords citizens the opportunity to take part in governance and in the government processes to influence policy direction through digital means.

In part of the study of "e-governance status in India", Dutta and Devi (2015) explored the Government of India's initiatives to digitise G2C services. Their findings suggest positive strides by the Government of India. They revealed that the Government has increasingly made the best possible use of modern technologies to provide detailed information about the department concerned, its mission statement and values, citizen charters and availability of online grievance facilities. These basic services which seem to be lacking in most websites of the developing countries (Alsaghier *et al*, 2009), are provided through national websites such as "MyGov.gov.in", "India.gov.in" and "Dial.gov".

Warf (2017) assessed e-government in Asia. The findings stated that G2C is the most popular among specific Asian countries studied. This form is used *inter alia*, for paying utility bills, fines and dues, digital collections of taxes, applications for public assistance, licences and permits, and accessing public data including census results. Thus, Asian people strongly expressed their satisfaction in G2C services for their convenience in terms of information acquisition, reduced uncertainties and less visits to and bureaucratic procedures at government offices.

In a more specific manner, Warf's (2017) findings suggested that G2C applications closed the service delivery gap between rural and urban areas. Services like telemedicine and distance education through e-learning have been offered in every remote area where people in these communities would not be served under traditional systems of service delivery. Governments at local levels usually utilise the Internet to attract foreign investors and tourists, and interactive websites of municipalities provide local citizens with access to information about hospitals, libraries, schools and bus times. These findings suggest that as public records become more open and accessible, transparency in government improves hence assists to galvanise objections to arbitrary state actions.

Pappa and Stergioulas (2006) investigated e-government from a citizen's perspective, under the light of G2C. The findings reveal that G2C services comprise a number of stages that range from simple provision of information to two-way interactions and transactions. This includes information on services provided, requirements needed and who to contact for further information. At the higher levels, citizen users can download and submit applications through electronic means, complete transactions and lodge complaints with managers. Although these findings are based on European countries such as the United Kingdom and Greece, evidence from literature shows that citizens from the least developed countries could benefit more from G2C services since travelling costs to government departments would be reduced.

2.4.2. Government to Business (G2B) services

Fang (2002:6) put that the G2B aspect of e-government focuses on the structures and processes that describe the relationship between the governments and the markets and the structures and processes that describe the relationship between the governments and the private sector. G2B implementation refers to interactions and transactions between government and the business community via e-government websites. It is understood that at a

complex level, the interaction between government and private sector is largely about bids on government contracts and tax collection.

Jain (2017) examined the literature to define and illustrate utilisation of e-government services among different groups in the community. The analysis suggested that G2B initiatives bring fundamental efficacies to both government and business sectors. It is stated that the G2B domain is driven by two primary forces: a need for the business community to carry out various commonplace activities, and an increasing demand by policy makers to cut costs and improve procurement processes. The opportunity to conduct online transactions with government reduces bottlenecks and abridges regulatory processes, therefore assisting businesses to become more competitive (Ndou, 2004). However, it is equally important to highlight that the government commitment to satisfy the needs of business is not an end-objective but a means to achieve citizen satisfaction through quality service provision offered by business partners.

Ali *et al* (2017) argued that G2B services cover all service interactions between government agents and the business sector. G2B enables the business sector to be abreast with business opportunities in government and government information including regulations, memos, rules and policies. Businesses also benefit through the downloading of application and registration forms, obtaining current business information and permits as well as renewing of licences. All these activities are reported to happen in a transparent manner, discouraging bribes and corruption among public officials. Furthermore, the findings anticipated that G2B services might be easier than G2C services to implement in countries with low economies because the business sector tends to have access to a broader range of advanced technological infrastructure than the average citizen.

Indeed, it has been empirically proven that G2B services are easier to implement, not only in low economies but also in the developed world. Lu *et al* (2010) undertook a study to develop ‘a hybrid semantic recommendation system to provide personalised G2B e-services for Australian small to medium enterprises (SMEs)’. In the review of literature, Lu *et al* (2010) echoed that e-government in Europe is rolling faster for G2B e-services than for G2C e-services. Evidence shows that business enterprises are in a better position to make effective use of e-government services than citizens.

Nonetheless, because of the nature of the relationships and interactions government has with businesses, G2B application seems to be more compromised. Awan (2007) conducted an

empirical study on G2B implementation which evaluated the G2B aspect of Dubai e-government. The findings revealed that despite enduring government efforts to offer online services for business entities such as visa processing and collection of import duties, most businesses appeared not to conduct online transactions with government. It is understood that this reluctance is due to lack of trust as well as privacy and security concerns.

On the other hand, Zhao *et al* (2007) investigated the quality of G2B e-government services and user satisfaction of the 50 states in United States and Washington, D.C. The findings reported of five e-government services provided by most G2B portals with effective information, interactive, navigation, intelligent and transactional capacities. Businesses were able to obtain business permits, licences and regulations, information on employment and the workforce, and guidelines on how to start a new business. Business entities could also do actual business with the State.

2.4.3. Government to Government (G2G) services

Hamza *et al* (2011) identified, categorised and organised factors that may influence relationships between government institutions. This was done to propose a conceptual model that would help government executives to improve their G2G policies and services. The findings indicated that relationships between government departments – government to government (G2G) – are mainly influenced by ICT and organisational factors. As they put it, the key objective of e-government is to offer services to citizens through a single-entry point. Consequently, government agencies collaborate with each other to deliver online services in this fashion, to share information and to integrate their business functions. In short, the findings suggested that G2G constitutes electronically supported government activities between two or more government agencies. Therefore, different government agencies have to coordinate their activities for better service delivery to citizens.

Abdulla (2015) employed a case study technique to explore challenges to G2G e-government in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport. Without appearing to discredit the findings relating to the investigated issue, it is worth mentioning that what stood out are the findings from the analysis of literature on the concept of G2G. Drawing from the review of literature, Abudulla (2015) describes G2G as a form of e-government focused on intra- and inter-government transactions. G2G is understood to comprise of ‘systems that support the back-office functions of government, where the back-office functions support the delivery of front-line or core government services’ (ibid:27). Thus G2G refers to ‘the information sharing,

streamlining and automating of government services and processes within a government department (intra) or between government departments (inter)' (ibid). Inter-government transactions include both vertical and horizontal transactions covering all government spheres including local, district and national, and or within the same organisation at different levels of government.

Fang (2002) elaborated that the sharing of information among different state authorities and hierarchal levels has to be on policy making, administrative laws and acts, background information to decisions, government projects and many more. This is suggestive of a need for government departments in all spheres to develop and revise their own internal procedures and systems before thinking of successful e-transactions with citizens.

The evidence from the literature points out to a notion that for any meaningful e-government development, laws and policies should be in place to legitimize the effect of G2G services. Jing and Zhang (2009) conducted a study to create comprehensive understanding of the G2G information exchange in China. Their results indicated that without leadership and political support, the progress of G2G information sharing is slow. In the absence of support and commitment, regulation of data sharing becomes a challenge. The study further revealed that where there is no formal law to support G2G interaction, a sharing of information between government agencies is difficult if not almost impossible, as it seems discretionary at the behest of non-existent and compelling forces of formal law.

In sum, G2G as documented by Jain (2017) referred to electronic communications (e-communications) between government agencies based on the database of a central government. The effectiveness of processes is not only encouraged through the utilisation of e-communications but also a full cooperation which allows for the fusion of skills and capabilities and sharing of resources and databases. With cooperation, messages can easily be passed to improve performance and generate economic scale in the delivery of electronic services (e-services). This, as earlier articulated, needs guiding legislative frameworks and support from political leadership and administrative personnel.

2.4.4. Government to Employees (G2E) services

Baležentis and Paražinskaitė (2012) analysed literature to get a clear understanding of the G2E phenomenon. The purpose was to establish theoretical assessments for development of the G2E model. The first question that arose during the analysis was how to call this phenomenon of G2E. As they wrote, 'is it a model...or is it an approach, initiative, effort,

partnership, services group or a portal?’ (ibid:56). The results suggested that some researchers such as Rahim (2006) described G2E as systems that are e-government applications in nature, which use an intra-government network allowing public institutions to provide a comprehensive package of e-services and e-products to their employees. According to this narrative, these types of portals provide not only general information about a public department for its employees, but also some services are aimed at supporting employees in undertaking their duty tasks without the assistance of administrative staff.

Whereas Cartier and Belanger (2004) and Lee *et al* (2005) argued that G2E should be referred to as IEE (Internal Efficiency and Effectiveness), Tang *et al* (2011) described G2E as the interactions that take place online through instant communication applications between government departments and their employees. Tang *et al* (2011) gave this clarity in their paper which argues that personalised e-government information can make it more convenient for users, including employees. They maintained that through “data mining” G2E can provide employees with the opportunity to access information concerning civil rights, notification of training and education opportunities, travel information as well as compensation, benefits and health policies. In a way, G2E services are meant to offer electronic learning (e-learning) to employees, connecting them together and endorsing knowledge sharing systems.

To put this into context, Chanana (2007) examined the need for outsourcing of non-core, non-critical G2E services in the Indian Government departments. This was done to propose a suggestive outsourcing model for G2E applications. The argument put forth by this author was that because a majority of both the state and central departments of the Indian Government were still inhibited by a continuum of problems pertaining to development, management and maintenance, it was vital to outsource non-essential G2E services to facilitate departments’ critical consideration for the core service provision. While Chanana (2007) identified crucial sectors that require close attention in the Indian Government domain including asset management, file management and tracking, procurement, messaging and workflow automation, he stated that the generic G2E services comprise, *inter alia*, human resource management, project management services stores and procurement, administration and e-learning. In this fashion, G2E services are understood to be such that concern back-office administration performed by individuals employed in public institutions in their day-to-day business at work.

2.5. BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF E-GOVERNMENT: A BROADER PERSPECTIVE

Literature is replete with significant benefits that e-government offers to both the developing and developed nations. UN (2016) observed, however, that the only difference is that the extent in which developing countries exploit these opportunities is worrisome. According to Heeks (2002), developing countries had not started reaping the full potentials of e-government due to their limited ICT usage.

Ali *et al* (2017) undertook a study based on service-orientated architecture to evaluate the benefits experienced by departments that have currently implemented e-government initiatives. This was a survey study with professionals in government organisations. According to the findings, while e-government helps to transform the public administration's internal processes, the end result is more efficient and transparent government, which is enabled to deliver services to citizens much faster and easier. E-government implementations are designed to enable consumers of government-related services to do online transactions in a timely and efficient fashion. This, as reported by Sudan (2005), increases citizenship satisfaction, trust in government, high efficiency and low processing time hence reduced costs.

Furthermore, a study by Ashaye and Irani (2014) indicated that e-government initiatives offer checks and balances on a country's political instability through good governance practices such as accountability, efficiency and transparency. This study was aimed at examining the benefits, challenges and risks of implementing e-government in developing nations. It employed a case study approach, with face-to-face interviews and surveys to collect data from public service institutions in Nigeria. The results demonstrated that if e-government is implemented properly, it does not only monitor government performance but can also assist in improving the norms and culture in the country and reform administrative structures, processes and functions.

Based on the work of India's Administrative Reforms Commission of 2005, Misra (2006) concluded that e-government is premised on two essential planks. First, e-government can reduce delays, inconveniences and red tape through technology interventions, including the application of modern instruments, tools and techniques of e-governance. Second, e-government serves as a platform for knowledge sharing and promotion to realise constant improvement in the quality of governance.

In the study that attempted to understand the state of e-government readiness in the African continent, Asogwa (2011) anticipated that in the foreseeable future, African communities will be enjoying outcomes of e-government like their counterparts in the developed nations currently do. It is stated that successful implementation of e-government in this continent will transform structures and processes of governments to establish government administrations that are less bureaucratic, more responsive to their citizens' demands and more empowering.

Hypothesising whether e-government is myth or opportunity for Africa, Kitaw (2006) put that e-government possesses the capability to encourage and promote the advent of an African-adapted cyber-culture, accelerate ICT literacy and thus stimulating the development and application of electronic agriculture (e-agriculture), electronic commerce (e-commerce), electronic library (e-library), electronic education (e-education) and electronic health (e-health). It has enormous impact on the effectiveness of government, reduced costs, and empowerment of citizens, more especially those in rural or underdeveloped areas.

Shaikh *et al* (2016) explored the contrast between manual and electronic delivery of the public service system and its relationship with decentralisation, good governance and socioeconomic development in the context of Pakistan. They described e-government as an appropriate instrument to curb public service inefficiency.

Chukwuemeka *et al* (2017) employed descriptive methodology to direct the study of “the effect of e-government on service delivery in Federal University Ndufu-Alike Ikwo, Ebonyi State Nigeria”. Their findings reiterated the argument put forth in various e-government research, which suggests that there is no discussion of service delivery in the advent of technology without mentioning e-government. E-government and service delivery are inseparable, hence the impact of the former on the latter is undoubted. E-government enhances the performance of public servants. This is because the deployment of ICT applications in public administration reduces waste of time, mistakes and delays on the part of officials in the discharge of their duties. Based on this analogy, it becomes apparent that public service institutions should invest more in IT infrastructure and stick to their strategies in order to achieve their organisational goals in the digital era.

Indeed, e-government is viewed as fundamental for helping governments to provide services online hence saving more public funds and resources. As put by Joseph (2015), when implemented properly, e-government may end in better-quality service provision that is appropriate, relevant and efficient. Putting services online leads to minimised costs of public

services compared with the manual way of handling operations hence creating responsive governance processes.

Unlike many other contemporary researchers who have joined the chorus of e-government rhetoric, Salam (2013) carried out an empirical study in Bangladesh. His study, which employed mixed methods, assessed efficiency and implications of district e-service centres of Bangladesh and validating the e-governance for good governance. The findings showed correlation between effective service delivery provision, citizen satisfaction and good governance. Put in his words, Salam (2013) addressed that e-government services are effectively associated to better governance and that good governance has the ability to enhance delivery of services and citizen satisfaction. Thus the use of ICT applications to deliver e-services enhances transparency, minimises corruption and promotes accountability through the accessibility and greater convenience of interaction.

Through the analysis of the existing research, it deems axiomatic that e-government improves the delivery of public services. Without disputing this fact, it also becomes apparent from the review of the existing literature that without the consideration of other enablers, e-government goals of making public service delivery more efficient and effective would not be possible or attainable.

Aritonang (2017) investigated the effect of e-government reform on the quality of public services in Indonesia. This empirical qualitative study focused on policy implementation and related problems in central and local governments. The findings dismissed a misleading conception or notion which supposed that the deployment of e-government strategies alone is exclusive to public service transformation. Thus, Aritonang (2017) cautioned that the delivery of quality e-government services also depends on other institutional factors including financial support, other technical issues, maintenance of the technology infrastructure and work culture of the e-government management.

Accordingly, Bwalya (2009) assessed opportunities, challenges and issues *vis-à-vis* successful execution of e-government services into the Zambian contextual environment. Based on the results, Bwalya (2009) proposed a conceptual model that would lay the foundation for enhanced service delivery. The model suggested that there should be construction of sufficient IT infrastructure, commitment and political will of government leaders and officials, provision of information and website content in local languages (as opposed to the dominance of English), efficient change management procedures and

contextualisation of e-government practices. Without due consideration of these issues, e-government initiatives are subjected to failure.

The review of literature suggests that the far-reaching anticipated objectives of e-government include client focus government and improved levels of service delivery.

2.6. CHALLENGES FACING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF E-GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Daily reports and academic research consistently point out to deteriorating service delivery which on numerous occasions have resulted in protest action, particularly in more resilient communities. Many a time, the issue of ineffective service delivery is linked to poor public sector management. For instance, Shaikh *et al* (2016) stated that this problem persists because services are provided through manual working systems, with a lower level of transparency and accountability. Manual working systems risk a challenge to red tape which normally results from inefficient bureaucratic approach or processes. Subsequently, the public feel stressed and deprived for not receiving critical services such as education and health. Hence providing services online where possible is recommended as an alternative means to deal with these impediments.

Nonetheless, despite benefits and opportunities that e-government promises to offer, empirical evidence points to the chronic increasing service delivery gap. Ramli (2017) conducted a comparative study to explore implementation challenges of e-government in South Korea and Malaysia. The findings indicated that despite many governments across the world seeing e-government as a grand opportunity to improve public service provision, government agencies and researchers alike have not yet paid enough attention to issues that can prevent citizens from reaping the benefits that e-government promises to offer. Ramli (2007) therefore suggested a careful consideration of these issues before they can manifest themselves into challenges and barriers. Contrary to Ramli (2007), Alateyah *et al* (2013) contended that many researchers relatively explored and discussed obstacles that face e-government implementation and development in various countries. Some of these issues which have been fairly discussed in most research include security, privacy and trust. In the same breath, Wang and Hou (2010) advised that since countries and governments are not homogeneous, e-government implementations and challenges also differ substantially. These challenges do not only differ from department to department within one agency or from city to city, but also country to country. Given the diversity and complex nature of e-government challenges, more studies that can provide context base are needed.

Hwang *et al* (2004) proposed that e-government challenges and obstacles be classified or understood from four perspectives: cultural, legal, political and social aspects. Technical obstacles include challenges pertaining to construction of IT infrastructure, promotion of security mechanisms, secure online transactions and integrity. While legal aspects involve issues of network crime and lack of technology laws, political challenges comprise policy propagation, service provision, process standardisation, and accountability of the authority. Whereas the other aspects seem to be challenges to institutions or service providers, cultural challenges appear to be viewed from a user perspective. These obstacles include user lack of confidence and cognition of using information services, threat of user's personal data and the right of privacy.

Gil-Garcia and Pardo (2005) reviewed a selected literature on the challenges facing IT implementations. They used the resulting analysis to develop a "practitioner guide" for e-government initiatives. The findings revealed that even though there is no single list of challenges, there are consistent commonalities across the disciplines. Thus, Gil-Garcia and Pardo (2005) classified challenges into five groups. Those categories are institutional and environmental, information and data, organisational and managerial, information technology, and legal and regulatory.

Looking at these studies that investigated factors delaying and speeding up e-government service implementation, it can be concluded that although extant literature presented that e-government may offer many benefits, their overall impact has remained minimal in developing countries. As seen above, successful execution of government online services has been plugged with a plethora of constraints. The critical goal of e-government is to seek to make government services accessible to the public in a fast and cheap manner at any time without being constrained.

2.6.1. Challenges and barriers of e-government in developing countries

Earlier and most current studies alike allude to the mounting problems and related challenges that hamper developing countries from benefiting from the opportunities that e-government presents. Generally, the drive for e-government is to promote the delivery of government services efficiency. In the study that examined the readiness state of countries in the developing world in carrying out e-government initiatives to improve the delivery of services, Noruwana (2015) made a very bold general statement. He claimed that developing countries have little knowledge of what requires to be established for them to be regarded ready for the

implementation of e-government projects. In essence, Noruwana (2015) implied that developing countries implement projects inadequately prepared, hence they fail.

Trying to understand this failure, Heeks (2003) examined the underneath reasons that cause e-government projects failure in less developed countries. The results suggested that although there are incidences of success in e-government implementation in these countries, albeit few (15%), most projects fail either partially or completely. It was revealed that where projects fail partially, attempts were made, however, to attain optimal goals even though the outcome results become significantly undesirable. The results further presented a total failure. In this case, it turned out that projects initially planned are abandoned or never implemented. The high failure of implementation – both partial and complete – is attributed to the “design and reality gap”. According to Heeks (2003), this gap is in terms of human and financial resources, management systems, values, information and technology. For instance, Heeks (2003) indicated that one such reality gap that could be easily identified is the gap between models of implementing e-government and actual situations on the ground. He claimed that these models are designed for industrialised nations, not developing countries who in their nature are not equipped with up-to-date technologies.

Despite exaggerated facts about e-government and developing countries, a study by Bwalya and Mutula (2014) noted, however, that e-government remains an abstract concept in most developing countries. According to this study, many governments in these countries are still developing a basic technology infrastructure while some are only in the early stages of translating e-government vision, including trying to formulate policies to guide e-government implementation.

To further understand the merits of the argument, which often gives a generalised view on and about developing countries, Ndou (2004) undertook a website survey of 15 case studies in nine developing economies. The purpose was to assess the potentials of e-government initiatives in these countries and analyse the key challenges that may be encountered. The results pointed to the social, economic and political hindrances that cause e-government potential in developing countries to be mostly unexploited.

The ITU (2008) commissioned a case study-based research to assess e-government service adoption in countries with less developed economies. The objective was to provide policy makers and managers in government in these nations with strategies on how to be successful in using information technologies to carry out government activities in ways that sincerely

support growth of human kind. The findings are no different from what has already been echoed. They indicated that developing countries' e-government services are in most cases compromised by a set of political, legal, public policy, human capital, technological and organisational factors.

Ashaye (2014) conducted a research which employed a multi-method and wider multi-level inquiry to assess the progress of e-government implementation in developing countries from an organisational viewpoint. His results showed that managers in IT departments and researchers in government institutions strongly believed that challenges and obstacles facing e-governments were highly connected to political and socio-economic environments. This view seems to be in line with the general image of the developing countries which suggests that these nations are economically poor, corrupt, illiterate and bureaucratic.

Implementation in these countries is faced with many obstacles. As Meiyanti *et al* (2018) argued, while e-government can enhance access and improve value of service delivery, government must pay attention to numerous issues that impede its implementation and development. The high e-government failure in less developed countries as reported by Elkadi (2013), Gunawong and Gao (2017) and Heeks (2003) encourages a particular focus on issues, barriers and trends of adopting and implementing e-government in Africa.

It is evident from the review of literature on e-government development that a goal of e-government to improve government services is a difficult task, especially for the less developed countries.

2.6.2. E-government challenges in Africa

Although there is a relatively fair amount of literature about problems facing Africa's governance, further studies are needed to cover contemporary issues and challenges of e-government services. Earlier work by Kitaw (2006) argued that African countries face a couple of challenges to fully implement and adapt e-government applications. These obstacles prevent Africa from exploiting the opportunities presented by ICT applications in general. The obstacles are an overall illiteracy rate, lack of technology infrastructure, insufficient commitment from government to genuine transformation towards open and citizen-centric governance, and lack of digital laws and policies. All these issues do not only become barriers to e-government but to development at large. In line with this thinking, Bojang (2017) investigated critical issues affecting the development of Africa. In particular, he critically explored e-government, governance and democracy as solutions for socio-

economic development in Africa. The findings corroborated the results of the prior research on challenges and barriers of e-government as presented above. These challenges include but are not limited to corruption, poor governance and commitment from top officials.

Research on e-government in Africa makes it possible to understand what is wrong with this continent. As observed by Bojang (2017), Africa's development is hampered by government's inability to act responsibly and politically accountable. Clearly, e-government in Africa largely relies on the continent's political culture. Evidence presented by Bojang (2017) asserted that Africa's developmental challenges include weak political institutions, bad governance, corruption and bribery and undemocratic values. Wolde (2017) stated that while these challenges facing Africa are real and many, SSA countries can overcome them through policy and institutional reforms, strengthening democracy and enhancing good governance.

2.6.3. Challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa

Evidence from previous research stated that some of the key ingredients of e-government are information, human resource and infrastructure. Ngulube (2007) investigated accessibility and the nature of e-government in SSA. The findings suggested that all these essential ingredients of e-government are insufficient in this region. The technology infrastructure remains unevenly distributed to rural areas. The results further revealed that in most cases where communities are lucky enough to have ICT equipment and infrastructure, it is common to find that both government personnel and ordinary citizens who may wish to utilise e-government services do not possess necessary skills. In addition, public data is not appropriately in order since record keeping systems in several countries are falling apart.

Nkohkwo and Islam (2013) shared a similar view pointing to the fact that e-government initiatives in SSA are faced with challenges to successful implementation. They undertook a study of documents and papers about e-government. The analysis was based on the challenges that face e-government projects and programmes' success in 49 SSA countries for the period between 2001 and 2012. The results indicated that e-government implementations are faced with issues that hamper their progress including the digital divide, legal laws and policy frameworks, human resources, ICT infrastructure and Internet access and connectivity. While these challenges remain, Nkohkwo and Islam (2013) argued that the most important challenges are those infrastructural and human and so the respective governments in SSA should address them first before adopting implementation strategies.

Schuppan (2009) was of the view that e-government initiatives in Africa, and in SSA in particular, fail and/or are considered to fail because different institutional, cultural and administrative contexts are not considered. As is the case, developing countries merely import IT solutions and associated organisational concepts from industrial nations. Schuppan (2009) found this inappropriate because although e-government is a worldwide phenomenon, the problems which need to be solved by e-government are not necessarily the same. As a result, he strongly advised SSA countries to take a context-centric approach to allow the effective e-government progress and avoid unintended effects.

In general, the literature discussed above suggested that people in SSA, like many in the developing regions, have not realised the full potential of ICT applications and strategies. It is clear that there are persistent hindrances and obstacles negatively influencing the progress and development of e-government in SSA's public administration. It is based on this view that Munyoka and Manzira (2014) suggested that e-government benefits in a seriously troubled SSA can only be reaped if certain minimum precautions are taken into consideration. This view was also echoed by Munyoka and Maharaj (2017) who underscored a need for countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region to seriously deal with factors that hinder promotion and exploitation of e-government services.

2.6.4. A review of the SADC and its member states

The SADC is not immune to the issues influencing e-government initiatives in other regions in developing worlds. Evidence shows that while there are good stories about e-government implementations in this region, there are also stories of failure. Bwalya and Healy (2010) argued that the main problem with e-government failure in the SADC lies with the inability to establish and properly adopt e-government strategy that considers local context and multi-dimensionality of e-government. Using Davis' 1989 Technology Acceptance Model theoretical framework, Bwalya and Healy's (2010) study developed and proposed a conceptual e-government adoption model, which may be appropriate in promoting e-government growth in the SADC region.

Unfortunately, in the case where strategy for e-government is adopted in the SADC region, evidence from literature points out that such strategies may not be aligned to other national frameworks (and *vice versa*), further creating hostile environment for e-government development. Twinomurinzi and Visser (2009) investigated one of the SADC member states, South Africa, and looked at its primary service delivery programmes, social grants. Their

study, which utilised interpretive design, sought to expand knowledge of the e-government phenomenon in delivering government services within the South African local government. The results revealed that South African e-government is not aligned to this country's service delivery philosophy – Batho Pele. Because of this, e-government becomes relatively unable to address inefficiency in public service delivery.

In the view of Malawi, efforts have been made to channel resources towards ICTs so that there would be growth in e-government practices as an alternate model of enhancing public service delivery efficiency. However, Malanga (2016) found that despite making e-government a national priority, there is a vicious circle of obstacles continuing to impede the advancement of e-government in the country. Among other challenges, Malanga (2016) pointed out to weak and inconsistencies in policy and legal frameworks, which need to be addressed and aligned to e-government strategy. He further postulated that Malawi is the lowest on the African continent regarding ICT penetration hence there is poor ICT infrastructure and connectivity, and inadequate power supply. This has resulted in an urban-rural digital divide where rural communities experience a high rate of computer illiteracy.

The Botswana government has embarked on major service delivery reforms aimed at providing citizenry with easy access to services and information to better their lives. This started with the launch of the government national web portal. According to the Botswana National ICT Policy 2007, the portal is assumed to extend the reach of government to citizens, from virtually any location and at any time. Nevertheless, the results and implications of the study conducted by Nkwe (2012) suggested that Botswana fails to keep pace with ICT advances especially in the delivery of online government services. Owing to the literature analysis and empirical research, the findings and outcomes of Moatshe (2014) recommend awareness campaigns to conscientise people to exploit e-government initiatives.

There is exorbitant evidence emerging from a review of previous research suggesting that the discourse of e-government utilisation in the SADC region remains subdued. Munyoka and Maharaj (2017) investigated Zimbabwe and Zambia to understand e-government utilisation within the SADC region. Their results showed that the main challenge facing the use of e-government services in this region does not necessarily lie with a lack of use but inadequate research to understand those dynamics that influence citizens' decisions to utilise e-government services within the context of a particular country. Since the SADC is not homogeneous, Munyoka and Maharaj (2017) rather recommend further studies be taken to

understand economic, political and social, and cultural situations of each SADC member state.

In sum, it is apparent from literature that the SADC region is no exception to other regions in respect of policy and programme implementation. The review suggested that for implementing successful e-government, multi-dimensional challenges must be clearly understood first before commissioning the actual implementation. As Bwalya and Healy (2010) argued, such implementation challenges and problems can, however, be avoided through due consideration of the local context. This should be practised since SADC member countries, as observed by Munyoka and Maharaj (2017), are not similar and thus the environment within which e-government is executed is not homogeneous across the SADC.

2.7. SUCCESS STORIES OF E-GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

While literature is replete with obstacles and failures of e-government in economies that are developing and Africa in particular, Schuppan (2009) asserted that there are many success stories albeit concentrated in developed countries. Muller and Skau (2015) utilised Webster and Watson's (2002) review methodology, which analyses the past to predict the future, to review 61 articles on success factors for implementing online public services at various phases of maturity. Lee's (2001) maturity model was used as an analytic tool. The findings suggested that success stories of e-government adoption and implementation are documented but emphasis is placed on the challenges so that they could be rectified for a broader positive result. Where e-government projects became successful, Muller and Skau (2015) observed that internal, external and technology factors interplayed.

Unlike Muller and Skau (2015) whose research was overgeneralised, Fabian (2019) examined e-government development usage in one of the European countries, Estonia. The main question as depicted from the research topic was "how exclusive is the Estonian e-governance success story?" This question sought to test hypothesis that "it is not only size that matters", but also age and trust. The findings posited that while Estonia was not the only country in Europe that was successful in e-government development, its e-government was celebrated worldwide as an example of radical public transformation via digital means. The results suggested that the reasons for Estonian e-government success were not farfetched. These results, as Fabian (2019) described, suggested that the Estonian e-government represented one line of argument stating that e-government is more successful in small

countries with a small population that have a considerable amount of trust in government institutions and are ready to address previous communication problems.

Similar to Fabian's (2019) study which was context specific, Ahmed and Hossen (2016) conducted a study in Dubai. It was stated that the UN ranked Dubai as the 32nd most sophisticated nation in e-government development around the globe. The study discussed success factors that led Dubai to be among the best countries in the implementation of e-government. The results suggested that Dubai's success may be attributed to the requisite ICT infrastructure that was ensured before e-government services were launched. For instance, the concerned team developed a centralised Government Information Network (GIN) at the planning stages. Among many other things, the GIN provided security for government documents. Moreover, government departments were integrated for coordinating services purposes. The results also indicated that the championing team mobilised support from almost all relevant stakeholders, which made it easy for e-government to be prioritised by government and become popular with and trusted by citizens.

Naidoo (2012) investigated the South African e-government policy initiatives. The purpose was to reflect on e-government successes and obstacles and map the way forward. Dwelling on the successes, Naidoo (2012) highlighted that the South African Revenue Services' e-filing system is one most effective and successful e-government initiatives in Africa. This system allows online interaction and transactions between business organisations and government related to tax returns. Furthermore, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) has been successful in promoting free and fair elections via e-government channels. The results highlighted that voters could enquire about their eligibility to vote and the voting stations details with the IEC via short message service (SMS). The National Traffic Information System is another successful e-government project which enables motorists to apply for learners and driver's licences and registration of motor vehicles while the Labour Department website is an excellent example of a feature-rich site that is a one-stop-shop for labour matters.

Abdulkareem and Ishola (2016) reported that e-government initiatives in Nigeria were recorded as successful on average. Their study investigated the level of Nigeria's progress after the sixteen years of e-government launch in the country, which happened in the early 2000s. Using the UN E-government Development Index (EGDI) and UN's five stage model as an analytic framework, Abdulkareem and Ishola (2016) revealed that the majority of the

surveyed ministries recorded success as they reached higher e-government development levels. The results showed that three out of the five surveyed websites reached the transactional stage while one out five reached a seamless web presence. This success is attributed to the launching of the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) in 2003, which championed the NITDA Act of 2007 through collaborative partnership with the National E-government Strategy Limited, which is a private establishment.

In summary, the literature presented above on success stories of e-government projects and development in developing democracies suggested that e-government benefits are not entirely exclusive to the developed economies. As stated by Alshehri and Drew (2010), Rokhman (2011) and Sejdini (2010), the developments in technology have vast potential for assisting governments across the world to address the contemporary challenges of service delivery transformation and improved relationships between government and citizens and businesses. It is evident from the review of the previous research that governments however react differently to these challenges. As could be noticed, despite hitches that mostly affect the effective implementation of e-government in developing countries, some countries in the region have achieved tremendous progress while countries lacking behind can adapt their success strategies and models.

2.8. MATURITY MODELS

While there is insufficient literature on government service delivery via ministerial websites, reports on national portals point out to immaturity of national websites/portals, particularly in the least developed economies. The concepts of immaturity and maturity are commonly employed to embody the state of a particular level in an ongoing process (Andersen and Hanriksen, 2006). Das *et al* (2016) stated that prior studies on e-government conceptualised “maturity” by employing an evolutionary paradigm. In this line of thinking, e-government is considered to progress via a succession of stages as a function of complexity and integration, or as a function of increasing online activity intensity and customer focus.

The concept “website maturity” better explains the terms maturity and immaturity of e-government development. In their research that sought to find whether ICTs improve accountability and transparency in the European Union local and regional governments, Pina *et al* (2007) referred to website maturity as the complexity of websites. This sophistication is in terms of provision of video or audio files, content organised according to life

events/business episodes, use of digital signatures for transactions, credit card payments, live broadcast of official events or speeches, and the use of the website for electronic involvement (e-involvement) and citizen electronic consultation (e-consultation). In other words, while the presence of these features represents “maturity” of the website, non-existence of these features represents “immaturity” of the website.

Das *et al* (2016) added that the maturity is realised when websites provide features including free access to online databases and publications as well as a range of paid for and free online services. Jaeger (2006) also stated that perfectly designed e-government sites use multimedia to complement text in several languages and enable access from extensive computing devices like smart phones and tablets. Well-established government sites should ensure that it is easy for users to raise their queries and provide feedback, with more focus on disability access. However, usability and accessibility are largely determined by user trust in respective sites therefore accompanying privacy and security policies must also be clearly displayed.

The requirements furnished above for an ideal e-government website may not be obtained overnight, and as articulated by Das *et al* (2016), e-government maturity typically describes a set of developmental stages, from making information known to supporting digital transactions, with some having developed more than others. Hence, different maturity or stage models have been proposed.

In their study titled “indicators and metrics for e-government maturity model in Croatia”, Perkovic *et al* (2017) indicated that maturity models are applied to assess, compare and benchmark development and success of e-government implementations. Like any other technological systems, e-government goes through phases for growth (Makoza, 2013). Needless to say, Perkovic *et al* (2017) highlighted that when applying stage models, special attention should, however, not only be given to technological but also to sociological and institutional issues.

Evidence from literature demonstrates that a number of researchers are increasingly reviewing e-government models of maturity to compare and synthesise them. Likewise, Fath-Allah *et al* (2014) carried out a comparative study of 25 e-government models of maturity. The aim was to find differences and similarities between them and also to identify their strengths and weaknesses. The findings showed that even though these models present great similarities between them, the features included in those models differ from one model to the

other. Another major finding is that while some models of maturity do include some features and bring in new ones, it appears that others are just not considering them.

A similar study was undertaken by Almuftah *et al* (2016). Unlike Fath-Allah *et al*'s (2014), Almuftah *et al*'s (2016) results demonstrated that almost all the models in their study have similarities among them and some common features. Also, despite dissimilar names of the maturity model stages, it appears that their contents are very similar. These findings were of a comparative analysis of various e-government models (Accenture 2003; Alhomod 2012; Chen 2011; CISCO 2007; Ernst and Young 2003; Hiller and Belanger 2001; IBM 2003; Kim and Grant 2010; Lee and Kwak 2012; Layne and Lee, 2001; PWC, 2012; UN, 2001; Westcott 2001; World Bank, 2003).

The primary purpose of Almuftah *et al*'s (2016) analysis was to do a thorough review of the literature around the topic area by identifying and mapping cohesions across the models. The analysis further revealed that a majority of the models either have four or five stages, with the exception of the Westcott model which has six stages. These stages range from basic to complicated online interaction competence. Also, outstanding about this analysis is the finding that relates to the limitation of most models to recent times of the information or connected society. The results indicated that '[m]any models were developed during 2002-2006 when many tools and applications such as social media, and other collaboration tools had not yet evolved'. According to this finding, it appears that only a limited number of models, *inter alia* the Lee and Kwak maturity model which includes the use of such new applications including social media. In general, stage models are used to determine maturity of e-government websites. By applying a maturity model to benchmark e-government websites, governments, practitioners and researchers have an end goal of seeking improved e-government services, relationships and interactions.

Shahkooh *et al* (2008) explained and analysed nine e-government models of maturity: Accenture's five-stage model, Asia Pacific six-stage model, Delloite's six-stage model, Gartner's four-stage model, Hiller and Blanger's five-stage model, Layne and Lee's four-stage model, UN's five-stage model, the World Bank's three-stage model and West's four-stage model. Using the Meta-Synthesis approach, these authors summarise that there are basically five main stages in e-government maturity: online presence, interaction, transaction, fully integrated and transformed e-government, and digital democracy.

It is apparent from the analysis of the literature on e-government models that these models differ because they are developed from different perspectives. Following steps used in meta-ethnography, Siu and Long (2005) undertook a qualitative meta-synthesis approach to synthesise different stage models of e-government. The findings suggested that different e-government stage models differ because they are developed from different viewpoints. For example, the findings showed that Deloitte's (2001) six-stage model is focused on the customer service aspect; Hiller's (2001) five-stage model and ASPA's five-stage model is based on a web-based public service; Moon's (2002) five-stage model and Layne and Lee's (2001) four-stage model are based on a general or an integrated perspective combining organisational, technical and managerial feasibility. Gartner's (2000) four-stage model seems straightforward and concise. However, like the model suggested by Layne and Lee (2001), Gartner's (2000) four-stage model misses out on the political participation element and does not address the likely changes in the way decisions are made in government. It is on this basis that Siu and Long (2005) proposed a synthesised conceptual framework for policy makers to understand, implement and evaluate e-government development.

In general, as observed by Magayane *et al* (2016), a number of e-government implementation models outline that e-government implementation has to start with disseminating information to citizens through websites, bringing interactivity between citizen customers and government, building the technology infrastructure that will allow users to make fully and secured transactional activities online, and finally integrating all government agencies to allow citizen users to access all government services in a single window. Ideally what these models expound is that at the end there will be a friendly environment between citizens and government should these models be properly implemented.

Apparently, these models which are useful in evaluating the development of e-government have to be context-specific. In their study to assess the existing e-government maturity models for sustainable e-government services, Joshi and Islam (2018) observed that many studies point to an increasing number of high failures of e-government projects in developing countries. Subsequently, this failure results in poor sustainability of e-government services. The reason why the projects are failing in developing countries, as put by Joshi and Islam (2018), lies with the fact that the e-government maturity models adopted by these countries are failing to provide correct strategic plans to maintain sustainable e-government services. Hence, Joshi and Islam (218) proposed a new e-government maturity model which is believed to have the necessary requirements to address the limitations of contemporary e-

government maturity models and would support governments in developing countries to accomplish sustainable e-government services.

Almuftah *et al* (2016) did a qualitative meta-synthesis study to compare and contrast e-government maturity models. Based on their analysis, the 2001 UN model ‘presents a realistic picture of e-government maturity...The model has five stages, and they represent the stages of emerging economies to the highly developed countries’ (ibid:72). The five stages include emerging presence, enhanced presence, interactive presence, transactional presence, and seamless or fully integrated presence. The UN developed this model as a post observation of the practices of its 193-member states.

2.9. EVALUATING E-GOVERNMENT WEBSITES: CONTENTS AND FEATURES

The vast majority of research has commonly defined e-government to refer to the application of ICT tools, particularly the web-based Internet, to increase the access to and provision of government services and information to businesses, citizens, and other government agencies. Wong and Welch (2004) argued that the adoption of web-based innovations to deliver government services has become a worldwide trend in the sector. This is partly for the reason that e-government is alleged to offer improved public administration in terms of effective and efficient quality of services. Hence, many studies in recent years have been conducted to evaluate e-government websites albeit few studies into sub-national government websites.

Henriksson *et al* (2006) described an instrument for assessing the quality of government websites. This instrument constitutes explanations of the survey questions that are asked, along with advice on how to determine sought after information from sites. Although the instrument embodies a number of questions, these questions are categorised into six sections: security/privacy, usability, content, services, citizen participation and features. This instrument, as Henriksson *et al* (2006) argued, may be easily tailored to accommodate distinct requirements at different levels of government, and used as a base for extended internal evaluation of websites.

Thompson *et al* (2003) underpinned that evaluation of websites and online services is fundamental to creating better legislative and policy frameworks such as accessibility requirements for individuals with disabilities and to maintaining high levels of e-government. This is expressed in Thompson’s *et al* (2003) study that evaluated the USA’s Federal websites for improving e-government for the people. Their study makes it clear that it is government, consulting agencies, researchers and policy commentators’ responsibility to

understand some important aspects when analysing e-government websites to inform policy direction.

Korsten and Bothma (2005) explored South African government websites with the aim of contributing towards enhancing effectiveness and the quality of online information and service provision by the South African government. The findings demonstrated that content is the most important element in the general criteria for web evaluation. The website content must be comprehensive, current, of high quality and authoritative, that is well written, caters for the need of a wide range of audiences and which fulfils the publishing institution's communication and information dissemination objectives.

Parajuli (2007) conducted a study to evaluate the ministerial websites of the Government of Nepal. This was done to analyse and describe the overall impression of government websites in Nepal. Because an e-government transcends all citizens, Parajuli (2007) proclaimed that any government website has to be transparent, accessible, usable and interactive. However, the study found that web features that are key in fostering government openness and transparency, G2G communication, and citizen satisfaction and participation were still rare or completely non-existent in the ministerial websites. It consequently makes it understandable why the study finally recommended that the Government of Nepal should cultivate standards for its websites design in order to exploit the benefits offered by ICTs to promote good governance through e-government.

Based on the review of past studies, Kokula (2014) expressed that concerning contact information, other than making email information visible as a dominant machinery of communication in government sites, other contact information of the organisation and officials must also be available. To foster greater interaction during and beyond working hours, the deployment and use of other ICT tools such as telephone and fax are suggested. Whereas the UN (2005) maintained that to target a larger audience, use of web media such as discussion forums, feedback features, interaction bulletin boards and chat rooms are necessary. The idea is supported by Parajuli (2007) as another avenue to facilitate G2G interactivity and further to be useful in understanding citizens' voices.

De Juana-Espinosa *et al* (2014) undertook a longitudinal survey to assess the municipalities' chief information officers' perceptions in relation to the benefits expected from launching corporate websites. Their main argument was that the majority of the research about government websites attempts to offer an objective analysis of the accessibility, features and

applications of these tools. For instance, they noted that Gil-Garcia and Pardo (2006) utilised statistical techniques to gather information from government websites and they also used the statistical results as input for two qualitative case studies. Furthermore, de Juana-Espinosa *et al* (2014) noticed that Miranda *et al* (2009) conducted a quantitative assessment in order to develop a website evaluation tool based on data from European websites. Owing to the fact that the Internet and other technologies are constantly changing, de Juana-Espinosa *et al* (2014) argued that the results of any given statistical study will not be valid for long periods of time.

The UN carried out a pilot study in 2018 to assess subnational or local delivery of e-government services. In this study, the UN (2018) used the Local Online Service Index (LOSI) to survey information and services provided to citizens by cities and/or municipalities through their official websites. According to the LOSI, e-government websites should be evaluated on 60 elements which could be categorised into four criteria: service provision, content provision, technology, and participation and engagement.

In summary, content provision focuses on the relevance of information provided to the citizens. Elements under this criterion include issues such as the presence of privacy policies, access to contact information regarding the organisational structure of the municipal government, and access to public documents. The technology criterion is based on the content and services assembled and made available in a municipality/city website. The service provision criterion focuses on the delivery of fundamental electronic services such as application and delivery of licences and certificates, electronic payments, ‘the ability of users to apply or register for municipal events or services online, forms and reports submission and registration for services, participation in tenders and e-procurement’ (UN, 2018:217). The participation and engagement criteria evaluate the presence of relevant online participation and engagement mechanisms and initiatives such as complaint forms, forums and on-line surveys.

In the study that looked into e-government in Asia with reference to its origins, geographies, politics and impacts, Warf (2017) listed variables that should naturally be included when evaluating e-government websites. Those include reliability; user-friendliness; contact details; publications and data displayed; languages in which information is provided; missing links; ability to use credit cards and digital signatures on transactions; privacy and security policies; sound and video clips; and opportunity for citizen feedback. Zhang and von Dran

(2001) added that websites must also have up-to-date and accurate information, and clear layout of such information. Presence of all these dimensions symbolises how seriously a government takes care of its individual citizens.

2.10. AN OVERVIEW OF E-GOVERNMENT WEBSITES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Al-wazir and Zheng (2012) described government websites as interfaces between government and internal employees, government and citizens, government and government and government and business. As Torres *et al* (2005) observed, government websites are capable of providing more sophisticated services, because they typically incorporate services and resources based on user's demands. As per that, the design and function of these websites, as stated by Al-wazir and Zheng (2014), is a direct reflection of government strategy. Some studies assessed and discussed the government websites in developing countries.

Makoza (2013) posited that e-government research seems to be concentrating on creating a research gap in the context of developing countries. Insights from this context, particularly on the development and progress of e-government websites, may assist in understanding how to overcome obstacles based on local settings.

Butt *et al* (2019) explored the emerging trends of e-government in Pakistan. The focus point of their empirical study was on the level of development of e-government websites, availability and quality of online services. Thirty-eight websites in the Punjab web portal were evaluated using the "Four-Stage Development Model". This model has publishing, interacting, transacting and transforming stages. The results revealed that only few websites were on the last two stages. Most of the websites were at the first (publishing) and second (interacting) stage of development. For the effective delivery of e-government services, websites require to be on the third (transacting) and fourth (transforming) stages.

Still with the application of stage models to measure e-government development, Drew and AlGhamdi (2011) investigated the rate of web development progress of vital government websites in Saudi Arabia. The study focused on main portals for delivering their online services to the varying categories of e-government, including G2C, G2G and G2B. The results indicated that certain Saudi ministries have not given the required attention to this vital issue. This is due to the fact that some of their websites were not fully developed or did not yet exist, which clearly delayed those particular ministries from appropriately delivering e-government services.

Despite many obstacles, *inter alia*, high illiteracy rate, low economic development, lack of infrastructure, and a variety of cultural factors, Rorissa and Demissie (2010) assured that many African countries have made recognisable progress during the last couple of decades. Their study analysed 582 government websites in 52 African countries, focusing on the type of the e-government website, features available and services provided as well as determining the level of development of e-government services. Their results demonstrated that all African governments now have some online presence, providing fully fledged e-government services, albeit in small numbers. As observed in this study, the current status of e-government websites with respect to service delivery in African countries is not well documented in detail.

Similar to Rorissa and Demissie's (2010) results are Asogwa's (2011) findings, which reported that while many governments in Africa have shown their willingness to apply ICT tools in their public sector, many of them were at the emerging and enhanced stages. The strength of their web presence consistently diminished as they moved upward the benchmark or the ladder to integrated governance. A very serious obstruction which described e-government readiness in all the African governments was increasing poverty, discontinuity which emerged from their inability to update their websites, and low level of financial muscle and human capital. The effects are unsatisfactory delivery of services and underutilisation of technology infrastructure in Africa which might result in the broadening of the access divide between the poor and the rich.

Oni *et al* (2016) carried out a content analysis study to understand the contemporary state of e-government implementation in one of African country, Nigeria. Thirty-six official government websites were evaluated for their content, functional and construction features. Their results presented that 64 percent (23 out of 36) had websites. Even though this number seems promising, it is found that these websites largely provided textual information while only few of them provided downloadable electronic documents and functional online interactions. Thus, Oni *et al* (2016) recommend that the website designers must acknowledge the significance of government websites as key for information distribution, for facilitating interaction and relationships between citizens and government and for reforming government structures and processes. The underlying message is that government websites must be functional, dynamic and interactive rather than static notice boards.

Verkijika and Wet (2018) evaluated 279 e-government websites from 31 countries in SSA, based on the public values perspective. The assessed public values included quality of information and services, citizen engagement, accessibility, development of trust, responsiveness and dialogue. Their results showed that the performance of e-government websites in SSA was highly unsatisfactory when it comes to the provision of public values. This probably provides an explanation as to why the SSA region has been persistently ranked the worst in terms of e-government development, as e-government development focuses on the delivery of public values.

Only little research has currently been done to examine the level of e-government development in the SADC region. Mimbi and Lehong (2017) compared the national government websites development in 10 SADC countries. The results indicated that Tanzania and Mauritius were the only countries that demonstrated the highest level of website development. At their time of the study, Mauritius' national portal remained the only website that allowed credit card payment in the region. Devastating even more was the fact that the Tanzanian national portal was found to be the only one with audio access to support visually impaired individuals. Furthermore, the findings also showed that there had not been much progress in public administration as most websites lacked the prerequisite interactivity to support two-way communication for effective participatory policy processes between the government and citizens. This, as a consequence effect, had negative implications on openness and transparency thereby compromising e-government accountability in SADC countries.

In summary, it could be highlighted that the debate about whether or not there are investigations on e-government websites in developing worlds is over; literature is replete with this information. Evidence pointed out that e-government has developed substantially in the last decade. However, literature has presented that developing countries have not fully recognised websites as an important channel through which government can provide services and interact with citizens. As has been observed, literature presented that e-governments are not only being underutilised websites in developing countries, but they are as well far from being satisfactory. Evidence suggested that these websites continue to lack fundamental content that can promote public sector transformation, further widening the access divide between developing and developed nations.

2.11. SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA'S E-GOVERNMENT STATUS: A COMPARISON WITH DEVELOPED NATIONS AND OTHER REGIONS

Despite high levels of e-government development reported globally, it appears that SSA and Africa in general is still faced with a persistent negative trend of e-government development. The UN (2018) released a report based on the UN 2018 e-government development analysis. Evidence from this report indicates that SSA nations are in the bottom two tiers of e-government development. Elusive connectivity and access to new technologies, inability to consider inherent unprecedented risks, failure to perform constant monitoring and evaluation of programmes, and regular update of websites are cited as major reasons describing the limp of e-government development in Africa and SSA in particular.

Moreover, this report – which is 10th edition of the UN survey series, continuously tracking e-government development of UN member states since the 1st edition in 2001 – further suggested that countries with high income enjoy top rankings owing to better access to information advanced, e-service delivery and more efficient government management in the E-government Development Index (EGDI). The top three were (1) Denmark (Europe), (2) Australia (Oceania) and (3) The Republic of Korea (Asia). As would be expected, the majority of the fifteen countries in Low-EGDI-level were from Africa (87%) followed by two countries in Asia constituting thirteen percent.

Through the analysis of this 2018 UN survey, a constant widening gap between developing and developed nations, and among regions around the world could be noticed. Citing the work of UNPAN (2005) and Accenture (2004), Ifinedo (2006) had put that almost all the governments around the globe have incorporated one form of e-government or another. However, many industrialised countries have embraced complex services whilst developing economies are just starting to understand the significance of such a concept in governance. Unfortunately, the majority of African countries fall into the latter category.

Similar to Rorissa and Demissie (2010), who could relate why Africa was once labelled a “technological desert”, Mutula (2008) found that the deployment of ICT applications to provide e-government services is minimal. According to Mutula (2008), in comparison, Africa trails far behind Asia, Europe and North America in e-government, with the SSA region being the worst. Several issues including policy, laws, skills, and infrastructure issues were identified as hindering SSA's success to transform government and reform public services. Six years down the line, Bwalya and Mutula (2014:40) undertook what may appear to be a follow up study. Their results stated that, in general, e-government is being employed

in both the developing and developed world contexts. In the developed context, ‘the e-government institution...is well advanced...[and] comparatively developed’. This provokes those who have interest in e-government development in developing countries such as Lesotho to get a detailed account of where Africa stands when aspersions are cast.

2.12. STUDIES ON AND ABOUT E-GOVERNMENT IN LESOTHO

Earlier research by Mutula (2008) compared e-government status among SSA countries. His results indicated that Lesotho was among the countries in SSA which had not progressed substantially in e-government development as was the case with other counterpart countries in the region. It is reported that although the Lesotho Government National Portal focused on government ministries, not enough information was available on G2C interaction.

Mathaha (2015) undertook research to identify important success factors for implementing e-government in three countries, Sri Lanka, South Korea and Tunisia. The study revealed that these countries were ahead of Lesotho in the UN’s EGDI. Therefore, a comparative study was performed where the current status of e-government of Lesotho was compared to that of the mentioned countries. The purpose was to determine where Lesotho lags. According to the results, Lesotho ranked significantly low, more especially in the human capital and online service components of the EGDI. The findings also showed that, in comparison to the other three countries, Lesotho lacked political will to prioritise ICT projects and organisational structure and know-how expertise to implement e-government initiatives. Given the nature of Mathaha’s (2015) study, it is safe to think that further empirical studies would help to capture the true reflection of the contemporary situation of the Lesotho’s e-government development.

Maphephe (2013) conducted a study between 2009 and 2013. This study investigated challenges and prospects for implementing e-government in Lesotho. This was done in connection to provide an implementation framework for effective service delivery. The study therefore employed the benchmark model proposed by Rorissa *et al* (2011) to assess and analyse e-government progress in Lesotho. The findings showed that despite efforts to put in place ICT policy to channel and mobilise the investment of ICT tools to enhance service delivery, the country is still largely struggling to shift itself forward towards an IT-enabled state. This, in turn, detrimentally undermined the nations’ vision of building an information society of the 21st century.

Rammea and Grobbelaar (2017) sought to understand the status and progress of e-government in Lesotho and how that would assist the legislature in planning and launching e-

government initiatives. Their study used the Human-Organisation-Technology Fit framework, which is a socio-technical model that understands e-government systems from an organisational, technology and human perspective. Rammea and Grobbelaar's (2017) study had particular focus on the case of Lesotho Company Registry System implemented by the Lesotho Ministry of Trade and Industry. Generally, the results of their study suggested that the technology and organisation factors were more challenging to e-government implementation and development in comparison to the human perspective counterpart. Their findings further unfolded that the implementation of the system was at the initial stage of transactional level of e-government development.

2.13. SYNTHESISING THE REVIEWED LITERATURE: TOWARDS CLOSING GAPS

Lofstedt (2005) was adamant that there is little or no doubt that e-government is a topic of interest in both practice and research. As it could be noticed from the review of literature in the preceding sections, many studies have been undertaken into e-government practice and research with a diversity of research themes. Section 2.13 offers a brief summary of gaps identified in the review of e-government literature. The analysis focuses on several perspectives including research methodology and methods, regional context, and framework knowledge. The selection of focus areas of analysis is influenced by the earlier research such as that of Heeks and Bailur (2007). The analysis can be adapted as a base for the development and evaluation of e-government services in Lesotho, and a foundation for future research agenda especially in the developing countries context.

2.13.1. Methods and methodologies in e-government research

The analysis of the literature corroborates the findings of Heeks and Bailur (2007) of what they coined "bad practice" in e-government research. In their study, "analysing e-government research: practice, philosophies, perspectives, methods and theories", Heeks and Bailur (2007) described bad practice as lack of clarity about or sufficient information underlying assumptions, about methodologies, and about data collection methods for the reported research. It is discovered during a review of literature above that numerous studies do not sufficiently present or describe the research methodology while others do not even have a methodology section. In some incidences, research methods could be implied but in some studies it was hard, if not impossible, to comprehend how data had been produced. This limitation does not only need to be addressed but, from the research practice perspective, seriously weakens the credibility of e-government as a research domain.

Of those studies that methodology was prescribed, there are cases where primary data were not utilised. Of course, there are exceptions. According to Bryman (2008:297-299), secondary sources of high-quality data offer researchers advantages and opportunities to ‘save money and time...perform subgroup and cross-cultural analyses...and to re-analyse data for new interpretations’. However, Bryman (2008:300) contrasted that secondary data sources can pose limitations due to a ‘lack of familiarity with data...complexity of the data...no control over data quality... [and an] absence of key variables’ needed by a researcher’. It is equally important to emphasise that this does not necessarily invalidate research, but it weakens it as large tranches of data concerning subjects and settings may be inaccessible to such desktop researchers. Hence, more original data using empirical studies are needed for understanding and presenting ‘a balanced sociotechnical perspective on e-government’ (Heeks and Bailur, 2007:257).

Another weakness is that there is limited evidence of a triangulation of methods including websites evaluation and interviews. Gil-Garcia and Pardo (2006) explained e-government as a multifaceted phenomenon which comprises environmental, organisational, technical and institutional facets, hence using mixed methods can help to address the issue of complexity and obtain more comprehensive explanations. This means triangulating methods form a base for rigour and validity in research findings rather than individual approaches (Creswell and Plano, 2007) as no single method, according to Bertot and Snead (2004), is likely to provide all the required data essential for understanding an activity or a phenomenon.

Again, evident from the literature is that quite a number of research projects are exploratory in nature. More research efforts are needed to build on exploratory research designs to describe and explain e-government processes (Snead and Wright, 2014). This will allow a broader set of questions such as “what”, “why” and “how” to be asked and enable discovery of more comprehensive and robust findings.

The notion of researchers who use data that they did not play a part in collecting, as articulated earlier, unearthed itself during the analysis, extending to the disappointing habit of the use of generalisation, where the norms of diligence were often violated. As noticed by Yusuf *et al* (2016), many e-government researches employ a case study approach. Case study ‘captures richness and depth understanding about [e]-[g]overnment practicalities in particular context, environment, country and place’ (ibid: 32). Based on that, and the fact that social, culture, politics, legal, economics and many other factors influence implementation of e-

government and make each context totally different, generalising results for other contexts may not be appropriate. To be precise, rich case study research is not generalisable (ibid.). Unfortunately, that is not the case with the reviewed literature. Heeks and Bailur (2007:257) realised that a number of researchers ‘played fast and loose with their findings, typically generali[s]ing their findings to all e-government projects’. More research efforts that will stick to the legitimacy of generalisation are needed.

2.13.2. Framework knowledge in e-government research

Heeks and Bailur (2007) indicated that a continuum of model frameworks is used and developed within e-government research. Wahid (2012) underlined that model-based research has mostly adopted web or stage models of e-government development. Nginindza (2008) showed that among stage models, the 2001 UN five stage e-government model is popular within research about e-government in UN Member States. However, there is insufficient evidence pointing to the application of this model in e-government research pertaining to Lesotho’s e-government, more especially at the level lower than national sphere. Recognising how useful the UN’s model is (Almufittah *et al*, 2016), it would be in the best interest of new research, especially the current study, to employ this model in evaluating websites of sub-structures of government such as ministries and departments.

2.14. CONCLUSION

This chapter typically presented a review of prior research about e-government, considering all its aspects and sides. It discussed definitions and scope of e-government, distinguished e-government from e-governance and traced origins of e-government looking at different perspectives. In addition, a brief account on the types of e-government services and interactions was also provided. It evaluated literature about benefits, opportunities and challenges of e-government in developing worlds, with more attention to the African continent. Developing countries’ success stories of e-government were also presented. Furthermore, the chapter evaluated different maturity and assessment models used to benchmark e-government services and it discussed content and features important in evaluating e-government websites. It presented an overview of e-government websites research in less developed nations and compared the status of SSA’s e-government status with that of the rest of other regions on the continent as well as other continents. Lastly, Chapter 2 analysed literature specifically on and about Lesotho in an attempt to identify theoretical and methodological gaps.

The central lesson emerged from the review of prior research is that e-government, like other contemporary concepts is complex and has multiple definitions, thus a clear working definition is needed. It also became apparent that some scholars, like practitioners and policy makers, take a techno-centric approach towards e-government. Since technology is not what e-government focuses on but government and governance, more governance-centric studies are needed.

Evidence in this chapter suggested that e-government has emerged as one of the innovations for service delivery and information provision to citizens. E-government generally aims to reinvent government, improve government services and reinforce good governance ethos including effectiveness, efficiency, responsiveness, transparency, participation, inclusiveness and accountability. Nevertheless, it is established from the review that while e-government practice including the delivery of government e-services has not yet reached high levels of satisfaction in developing countries, more research is still needed to capture a true reflection of initiatives and status of e-government in these countries.

Generally, Chapter 2 presented the findings of international and national studies regarding implementation and assessment of e-government with a general view to identify gaps which this study sought to address. Despite a vast number of researchers in the field of e-government, literature on Lesotho, especially at levels other than at national, is still lacking, opening gaps for future studies such as that of the researcher. Evidence emerging from Chapter 2 demonstrated that the Government of Lesotho has made progress in developing its websites to enhance access to service delivery and allow greater participation of citizens in government affairs. However, the extent of these initiatives remains elusive. Furthermore, discussions and debates on issues affecting success and failure of e-government in Lesotho remain limited.

In general, until recently, there is inadequate e-government service research in Lesotho. Few research efforts about Lesotho or which mentioned Lesotho in their general studies (Mathaha, 2015; Mutula, 2008; UN, 2008; 2016) lie firmly at the national level, evaluating service provision through the national web portal. Evidence from the review of literature suggested that there is insufficient research with reference to sub-structures of government such as ministries and departments, which in fact, have a significant effect on citizens' daily lives. Additionally, each ministry provides specific services unique to its context, hence exclusive

attention to the national web portal would not help much in assisting each ministry to deliver and account for its own delivery of online services.

The little information available about Lesotho's e-government largely covers the African region as a whole, which often considers SSA or Africa at large as a homogeneous society. Such information has high potential to misrepresent the accurate status of e-government in SSA, since most countries including Lesotho are hardly and thoroughly studied or covered in literature (Mutula, 2008). The preliminary literature on Lesotho lacks depth as it is either largely in the UN and its agencies reports or in scholarly research, unfortunately, in a comparative or grouping assessment. Understanding that Lesotho is a unique country with its own challenges and opportunities, academic research solely focusing on this country is inevitable.

Furthermore, the majority of the studies discussing e-government in Lesotho or Lesotho's websites show insufficient scientific credibility of the statistics. They are implicit about the sampled units within the government web portal and sample size (i.e. number of ministries and other bodies if any). According to Asogwa (2015), this is because most of the academic researchers on e-government in SSA use information they played no part in collecting. Thus, it makes it quite reasonable to understand the claim once laid by Heeks and Bailur (2009) suggesting that e-government studies in the SSA region are of researchers sitting on their desks producing "I think it, therefore it is true" type of work.

In spite of that, it is equally necessary to remember that there is nothing wrong in assessing e-government at continental or regional level. Consideration of e-government at these levels is significant as nations progressively exchange information. However, as Sneed and Wright (2014) alluded, that nations establish sets of directives at national levels that inform how their governments deploy e-government to enhance citizens' access to internal and external resources and services. The execution of e-government is influenced by socio-economic dynamics and is dependent on internal (national) sets of directives. Hence, there is a need for further research on each specific country to understand and inform efficient and effective delivery of public services to meet the needs of their citizens at both the national and sub-national spheres.

Still with research that firmly concerned itself at the national level, what is also absent in the treatment of the subject of e-government in Lesotho, is a rigorous assessment of the political situation of the processes of e-government development, and an important acknowledgement

of the complex institutional and political culture. The vast majority of research material has limited itself to the content analysis of e-government websites without an equal effort to perform qualitative studies to understand the context within which these websites are implemented. As a consequence, considering the political processes underpinning the development of e-government is important for overcoming investigative limitations.

With all these challenges and discrepancies identified through the review of the literature, more empirical grounded studies following proper methodology protocols are a prerequisite. Thus the current study has a legitimate role, not only to add new knowledge that gives a true reflection of the contemporary state of e-government in Lesotho and the context within which it is implemented, but also to contribute in closing methodological gaps. This study has implications for future research as a reference for investigating e-government areas, specifically for understanding benefits, challenges and opportunities for adopting and evaluating e-government service delivery especially in less developed economies such as Lesotho. The next chapter deals with the methodological approaches employed to capture the situation of e-government in Lesotho.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0. INTRODUCTION

The theoretical framework underpinning this study is public policy analysis which was employed to facilitate the collection of data and its analysis. The basic objective of public policy analysis is to assess the degree to which the policies are meeting their goals (Walker, 2000). The rationale behind this approach was to enable the researcher to investigate and evaluate the progress of e-government service implementation in Lesotho since the adoption of the ICT policy of 2005. This framework, which has its roots in systems analysis, is used in Public Administration to enable activists, public policy practitioners and researchers to examine, evaluate and determine the best available policy options to implement government goals (Geva-May and Pal, 1999). This chapter presents how the study was carried out. It deals with research methodology, describing and explaining whatever activities that the researcher decided to involve in the study. According to Silverman (2010), research methodology entails techniques and relationships that exist between thinking and researching. This research methodology chapter offers detailed discussion of the research process, with a particular focus on research design and methodology. The chapter provides information concerning the types of research design applied to answer the research questions. It also describes strategies, procedures and methods of collecting and analysing data, as well as the type of analysis that will be used for data in Chapter 4. The chapter ends with the description of ethical considerations.

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

Durrheim (1999) described design in research to mean a strategic plan for action that serves as a connection between research questions and the actual implementation of the research. Polit and Hungler (1997) averred that research design refers to the overall strategic framework that the researcher selects and applies to guide the arrangement of conditions for gathering and analysing data in a coherent logical way to integrate relevance to purpose of the research with economy in procedure. Captured in this way, the research design is tantamount to a route planner for the researcher.

Burns and Grove (2001) explained that crafting a study assists the researcher to plan and execute the study in a way that will ensure the attainment of the intended results thus enhancing the chances of gaining information that could be linked to the real situation. According to Maree (2007), research design is a strategic plan which moves from the

underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of participants, the data collection techniques to be used and the data analysis to be done. It deals mainly with intentions, aims, purposes, uses and plans within the practical constraints of time, location, money and availability of participants.

A research design does not only reflect the nature of conclusions the researcher intends to draw, but also the purpose of inquiry. There are different classifications of research design including exploration, description, evaluation, history and explanatory (Van Wyk, 2012). For example, Dhamodharam and Saminathan (2011) used descriptive analysis to demonstrate Nigeria's shortcomings and highlight positive trends of the top-ranking countries in terms of e-government index value. Shrestha *et al* (2015) explored challenges and factors that affect e-governance practices in Nepal. Magayane *et al* (2016) evaluated the current state of e-government implementation in Tanzania by exploring government agencies websites. Mirandilla and San Pascual (2007) used descriptive-exploratory study to assess e-government in the Philippines. Key research questions of a study ultimately determine the type of design to complete an accurate investigation of the topic at hand. The current study was conducted to meet and answer the research objectives and key questions stated in Chapter 1, Section 1.3. As could be seen from those research objectives and questions, this research has elements of evaluation and descriptive and exploratory enquiry.

3.1.1. Evaluation

The study employed the evaluation inquiry as part of its research design. In public policy analysis research, evaluation entails the utilisation of scientific methods to assess the implementation and outcomes of programs for decision making purposes (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). In research, as put by Fredman and Rossi (1993), evaluation as the systematic application of social science procedures is used to assess the conceptualisation, design and implementation and efficacy of social intervention programmes. In this study, evaluation design was used to assess the websites of the Government of Lesotho in relation to their level of maturity to deliver e-government services. George (2004) referred to website evaluation as the use of investigative procedures or research to systematically determine the effectiveness of a web-based information system on an ongoing basis.

The basis for utilising website evaluation was to determine the content and services provided by the websites. In recent years, as observed by Schneider (2004), a website has increasingly been seen as an object in social research. Magayane *et al* (2016) recommended evaluation of

websites since websites are an essential part of e-government implementation; governments post information and services for public consumption on them. As demonstrated in Section 3.4.1, all the ministries of the Government of Lesotho, as listed in the Lesotho National Government Portal, were regularly visited. However, not all ministerial websites visited were finally included in the evaluation because some ministries either did not have a web address (URL) or their URLs were not clickable. Table 4.3. depicted all the ministries whose online content was evaluated. Section 4.0 and 4.1 of Chapter 4 provide a detailed account of website evaluation procedure.

3.1.2. Exploratory

Sekaran and Bougie (2010) explained that exploratory studies are normally undertaken when there is little or relatively unknown about the research problem at hand. To the best knowledge of the researcher, as demonstrated in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, there is inadequate research conducted or very little information documented on e-government implementation in Lesotho. This study was conducted to gain an understanding, new insights, new knowledge, and new meanings into this phenomenon.

An exploratory exercise was performed after observing the government websites. The purpose was to understand “why” the observed websites behaved or were behaving in the manner that they were at the time of evaluation. This was done to explore policy gaps of the ICT policy by trying to understand the environment within which e-government is implemented. This information was gained through identifying the salient factors, challenges and opportunities (Brink and Wood, 1998). Polit and Hungler (1995) averred that this information could be collected by using a variety of methods such pilot studies, group discussions, interviews, experiments and other tactics. The current study employed a very flexible approach by conducting semi-structured interviews.

3.1.3. Descriptive

De Vaus (2001) urged that the manner in which researchers develop a research design is chiefly determined by whether the study is exploratory or descriptive. While exploratory asks the question of “what is going on”, (De Vaus, 2001) stated that descriptive inquiry asks, “why is it going on”.

The purpose of descriptive studies is to observe and record and provide an accurate and valid description of a phenomenon (Durrheim in Terra Blanch *et al*, 2004). According to Knupfer and McLellan (2001), descriptive research is not exclusive to either quantitative or qualitative

research methodologies, but it sometimes can utilise elements of both, often within the same study. For Lambert *et al* (2012), although some researchers believe that qualitative descriptive study does not exist and consequently being ashamed to name their studies qualitative descriptive, this inquiry is a viable and acceptable label for a qualitative research design. Lambert *et al* (2012) maintained that data collection of qualitative descriptive studies is meant to discover the nature and patterns of the specific object under investigation. Qualitative descriptive studies are mainly concerned with finding out the “what is” question. Thus, in the quest to give a picture on the question of what level are government websites in relation to the maturity to deliver e-government services, descriptive design was deemed appropriate.

3.2. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Methodological doctrines require that the most suitable methodology, methods and instruments should always be chosen when research is being conducted (Gardner, 1978). Rajasekar *et al* (2006) defined research methodology as an organised way to solve a problem. Dawson (2002) perceived it as the holistic approach to understanding a research topic and comprises issues such as the limitations, dilemmas and ethical choices within the research. This means research methodology is the general principle or philosophy which guides a research. It is simply a science of strategising how research is to be carried out, from the problem identification to the final plans for data collection and analysis (Burns and Grove 2001).

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), a research methodology as a strategy is influenced by the nature of the subject under investigation and the research question. As a result, the research format employed in a study should be seen as a tool to answer the research question. The current research aimed at evaluating the current status of e-government in Lesotho and the context within which it is implemented. While vast social science research literature pointed to two broad commonly used methodologies, namely quantitative and qualitative (Maree, 2007; Newman, 1998; Nieuwenhuis, 1997), this research utilised qualitative methodology. This methodology is central to policy analysis studies (Geva-May and Pal, 1999).

3.2.1. Qualitative versus quantitative approach

At the most basic, the quantitative approach collects numerical data and uses mathematically based methods, especially statistics, to analyse data (Creswell, 1994). A qualitative paradigm,

in contrast, produces research outcomes that are not derived from other means of quantification or statistical procedures to be precise (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Terre-Blanche *et al* (2006) explained that qualitative research obtains data in the form of spoken language or written, or in the form of observations that are recorded in language, and analyses the data by identifying and categorising themes. It is apparent from the comparison that each of the two approaches may have some limitations on its own and competitive strengths. As such, there have been many debates in social research regarding suitability of different approaches, in particular qualitative and quantitative (Bryman 2004; Kelle, 2001). While there are similarities, a major feature of contestation is the differences these approaches have. These differences are succinctly summarised by Cassel and Symon (1994) when they listed defining qualities of qualitative approach, which ideally distinguish it from quantitative studies. These authors referred to qualitative research as:

‘A focus on interpretation rather than quantification; an emphasis on subjectivity rather than objectivity, flexibility in the process of conducting research, an orientation towards process rather than outcome, a concern with context-regarding behaviour and situation as inextricably linked in forming experience, and finally, an explicit recognition of the impact of the research process on the research situation’ (Cassel and Symon, 1994:7).

In a similar vein, a quantitative method seeks to measure a phenomenon objectively rather than subjectively using numerical values and statistical analysis (Welman *et al*, 2005). It allows the researcher to select from a specialised and standardised form of data analysis techniques unlike qualitative analysis which does not follow any strict standardised framework (Kreuger and Neuman 2006). Analysis in qualitative research is viewed as a less distinct final stage in terms of the research process because the results produced from qualitative data serve as a guide to subsequent data collection, unlike in quantitative study where the researcher cannot start analysis until data is collected and transformed into numbers. To satisfy the objectives of this study, qualitative methodology was employed.

3.3. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

A research methodology entails a combination of process and methods, tools, techniques, or procedures employed to collect data (Kaplan, 1964; Nunamaker *et al*, 1990). Data collection

is a process of collecting data from all the relevant sources, using appropriate instruments and methods to find answers to the research problem.

Literature on research methodology presents different forms of data collection. Douglas (2015) argued that these various forms or methods of collecting data can all be classified into primary and secondary. Primary data is the one which is gathered originally by the researcher while secondary data is already collected and published by others. This research used the primary data collection strategy. The reason for this method was to enable the researcher to gather information that is original, which reflects the current status of e-government adoption and implementation in Lesotho.

Babbie (2001) and Dudovskiy (2018) contended that studies whose main aim is to generate greater in-depth understanding of a phenomenon employ qualitative data collection methods including observation, focus groups, case studies, interviews, to mention but a few. Such in-depth and detail is usually necessary ‘to determine the appropriate questions to ask in an evaluation, and to identify the situational and contextual conditions under which a policy, programme or project works or fails to work’ (UK Government, 2003:9). In actual research projects, these methods are used (Oltmann, 2016).

The current study used the triangulation method of collecting data. As applied in this study, triangulation denotes convergence, correspondence or results from different methods. Malterud (2001) argued that triangulation is used to gain insights into a complex phenomenon. In this study, triangulation is demonstrated through observation and evaluating the government websites and interviewing government officials. Interviews were mainly used to collect in-depth data in respect of factors that affect the successful implementation of e-government services as well as to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons for certain behaviours of the websites as observed during the web evaluation. It was through this triangulation process that the research results were enhanced.

3.3.1. Interviews

This study utilised interviews to collect data from 12 participants. As Nieuwenhuis (1997) observed, in conducting qualitative studies, the crucial issue is the quality of data collected, which relies heavily on the mode of data collection used. Interviews are the backbone of primary data collection in policy analysis utilising qualitative research. Silverman (2016) put that an interview is probably the most widely employed format of data collection technique for qualitative researchers. Unlike quantitative studies, the scope of qualitative studies, as

Stewart *et al* (2008) described, is linked to the agenda of exploring and justifying why a particular phenomenon is the way it is. As such, effective primary data collection methods are vital and at the centre of them is the interview.

As quoted in Adhabi and Anozie (2017:88), Sewell defined interviews in qualitative research as ‘attempts to understand the world from the subject’s point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples’ experiences, to uncover their lived world before scientific explanations’. Schostak (2006) described them as the data collection technique that allows the researcher to gain opinions of the participants’ concerns, interests, beliefs, experiences, values, knowledge and ways of seeing, thinking and acting. In an attempt to get insights of participants about factors affecting the adoption and implementation of e-government services in Lesotho, interviews were conducted.

There are several types of interviews. Most research (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Camara *et al*, 2015; Edwards and Holland, 2013; Stuckey, 2013) referred to the three frequently employed in social sciences: unstructured, structured and semi-structured. Gray (2009) underscored that ‘unstructured interview resembles a conversation more than an interview and is always thought to be a “controlled conversation,” which is skewed towards the interests of the interviewer’. Jamshed (2014) opined that in structured interview, the interviewer and interviewee would have little freedom. The interviewer asks predetermined direct questions that require immediate responses, mostly “yes” or “no” type. The current study on e-government in Lesotho employed semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were used as instruments for collecting data from 12 government officials. According to Nieuwenhuis (1997), the semi-structured interviews are usually used in research projects to corroborate information emerging from other data sources. In this case, researchers already know what they want to investigate. On the other hand, this kind of interview enables researchers to follow-up new ideas that appear during the interview process.

Unlike with structured interviews where the researchers ask predetermined questions in the order of their listing in the interview schedule, semi-structured interviews allow flexibility in terms of covering questions (Opie, 2004). The order of questions is free to vary to allow information flow. Many reasons led the researcher to use less structured interviews. First, the researcher was not looking for “yes” or “no” answers, thus semi-structured interviews would be ideal for fairly open and two-way communication. This allowed the researcher to collect

the maximum amount of data, which is accurate through elucidating questions and probing participants to get clarity. Second, since the researcher started with web observations, he wanted to understand more from the participant perspective the reasons why the government websites are in the state that they are. As put by Fylan in Miles and Gilbert (2005), semi-structured interviews are pivotal for finding out “why” rather than “how much” or “how many”. Semi-structured interviews became integral more especially in group interviewing. The researcher was able to create more understanding by exploring agreements and contradictions within officials’ accounts.

Furthermore, participants were able to express themselves in a more relaxed manner and were able to stress areas they believe to be of great importance. In order to build rapport and to enable flexibility, participants were allowed to choose the medium of interview from the two official languages of Lesotho, namely Sesotho and English. But all the interviewees seemed to be comfortable with both languages. This made all conversations to be more in code-mixing mode while English seemed to dominate in cases where meaning and value of some technical concepts could not be better explained in Sesotho.

With permission from the participants, interviews were taped to keep an accurate verbatim record of the conversation. Notes were also taken, and follow-up questions asked where clarity was needed. The interviews were planned in accordance with Kvale (1996) who pinpointed seven steps of an interview study – ‘thematising, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analysing, verifying and reporting’ – as these are significant to bring up to achieve scientific quality. Individual and group interviews were key to this study.

3.3.1.1. One-on-one interviews

While participants of this study were 12 in total, only six took part in one-on-one semi-structured interviews. As demonstrated earlier, qualitative data are not measured in terms of quantity or frequency but rather are examined for in-depth meanings and processes. Sandelowski (2002) alleged that one-on-one interviews are the most commonly utilised data collection strategies in gathering deeper meanings. One-on-one interviews are usually conducted face-to-face. Through choosing one-on-one, face-to-face interviews instead of email and telephone interviews, the researcher hoped to interact with participants, gain in-depth understanding of their constructions and opportunity to interpret non-verbal cues through body language, eye contact and facial expression. Inasmuch as the one-on-one interview is a social interaction, Kvale (1996) and Ryan *et al* (2009) established, however,

that this type of interview is more than just a conversational interaction. This reminder provoked the interviewer's skill to interact with purpose thus enhancing the quality and reliability of the data collected. The researcher also chose one-on-one interviews to complement group interviews in recognition of the latter's limitations relating to power dynamics outside the group, which can potentially influence response patterns within the group.

3.3.1.2. Group interview

To complement one-on-one interviews, a group interview was conducted. Six officials participated. Kumar (1987) noted that many social science researchers have overlooked the group interview design in which several participants in a social context can be interviewed simultaneously. Frey and Fontana (1991) argued that group interviews can be helpful in policy studies in determining perceptions and reactions of an affected or involved population to a policy change, thus this strategy was deemed appropriate for the current study.

The rationale for utilising group interviewing lies firmly within Frey and Fontana's (1991) framework. While Frey and Fontana (1991) identified several conditions or purposes under which group interviewing can be conducted, including pre-test, this study used it for the exploratory, triangulation and phenomenological purposes. This strategy was used to explore views, opinions, expectations and experiences of the participants working in the newly established E-government Infrastructure Project (e-Gov Project) unit in order to understand social and organisational context within which e-government in Lesotho is championed. Bringing together several knowledgeable individuals who were familiar with e-government as a social issue under investigation was not only important but obligatory (Blumer, 1969). The researcher assembled all non-management, multi-faced technical staff from the e-Gov Project. These group participants were responsible and experts in diverse issues relating but not limited to funding, website design and infrastructure development.

Since the researcher had been informed of a very tight schedule of the participants, a group interview was only strategy that would allow the researcher to gather opinions of a large number of participants in a relatively easy-to-access fashion. This strategy triangulated data collected from the group with those from the one-on-one setting. Furthermore, inasmuch as a group interview is not and should not be equated to focus groups (Maree, 2006), group interviewing allowed participant members to build on others' ideas, qualify and add comments to the statements earlier provided by others. This became helpful to gather rich

information, which could have not been gained if one-on-one interviews were the only strategy applied.

3.3.2. Observation

This study used the observation method for the purpose of evaluating government websites' maturity to deliver e-government services. Observation is one of the tools of data collection in policy studies, used where methods other than observation cannot prove to be useful. Although all human beings are constantly involved in observation of things that happen around them on daily basis, Wani (2017) argued that not all of these observations are scientific. According to Wani (2017), observation becomes scientific and thus to be applied in academic research only if the following prevail:

- a) It is goal oriented. It must serve a formulated research purpose.
- b) It must be planned systematically.
- c) It should be recorded by the researcher.
- d) It must be linked with theoretical assumption.

Observation as a data collection technique is the systematic process of accurate looking at participants, events and objects and recording their behavioural patterns. Maree (2006) put that this process with purpose and focus should be connected to the key research question of the study. In the current study, ministries were systematically checked to record whether they had online web presence or functional websites. Content analysis was then conducted with only the ministries with functional websites.

3.4. SAMPLING

Although many types of sampling are possible when conducting research, Terre-Blanche (1999) argued that qualitative researchers usually focus on relatively small samples. Sampling is about determining who or what the participants of the study will be. Participants may include individuals, groups, and organisations (Babbie, 1989) who are generally selected because they are able to offer rich descriptions of their knowledge and are willing to express their experiences, thereby providing data which is rich and that will be able to challenge and enhance the researcher's understanding (Crabtree and Miller, 1992; Hutchinson and Wilson, 1991). Bhattacharjee (2012) stated that inanimate objects such as websites where the nature of conclusions that can be drawn from the research depend directly upon, can also be selected as participants or subjects in the study. The researcher of this study used both the government officials and ministerial websites as subjects. Non-probability sampling strategies, namely

purposeful sampling and convenience sampling, were used to select government officials and ministerial websites respectively.

3.4.1. Purposeful sampling

Purposeful sampling was chosen because it suited the nature of this study. In purposeful sampling, participants are chosen because of some defining qualities that make them the holders of the information needed for the study (Maree, 2007). Patton (2015) reinforced that the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in choosing information-rich subjects. This strategy is employed when the researcher uses his/her judgment or purposively selects who or what, in their opinion, could best be a relevant source for the required data. Government officials and websites were selected to meet the research questions.

In investigating organisational perspectives concerning factors affecting the implementation of e-government in Lesotho, 12 government officials were handpicked as participants. Marlow (1998) indicated that in purposeful sampling, the researcher handpicks the sample according to the nature of the problem and phenomenon under investigation. Inasmuch as Sarantakos (2005) purported that there is no finite procedure involved in the actual choice of participants, the basic criteria for selecting participants were based on the researcher's knowledge of the participants around the research area.

The information-rich data and in-depth understanding about e-government in Lesotho was gathered from officials from the Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology's (MCST) ICT Department and the E-government Infrastructure Project Unit. Information was also collected from officials from the Department of Policy and Strategic Planning (PSP) of the Ministry of Development Planning (MDP). The MDP was chosen because it has obligations for national strategic planning as well as monitoring and evaluating the national policies. Whereas the ICT policy was by MCST, the MDP facilitated and gave guidance to its formulation. The MCST is also charged with the overall responsibility to implement the ICT policy and its programmes including e-government. The choice of the E-government Infrastructure Project unit in particular is based on the fact that Lesotho is on its first phase of e-government implementations, and so far this unit is the sole custodian tasked to ensure that there is infrastructural development including the establishment and maintenance of government websites.

The researcher aligned himself with Kumar (2011) by choosing samples before the study. A total of 12 officials were involved in interviews. Three (3) senior officials from the PSP were

handpicked and were involved in one-on-one interviews. These participants were purposefully selected not only because of their seniority but also because of their specialised knowledge and experience in national policy planning and formulation. Three (3) officials who also participated in one-on-one interviews and six (6) who were involved in the group interview from MCST were chosen because of their oversight role and technical expertise in e-government.

As indicated above, the criteria used to determine participants for interview selection were based on their direct involvement with e-government and its implementation in technical, administrative and organisational terms. Because it is a procedure within the Lesotho public sector, the researcher sent the emails requesting to conduct the study to the Principal Secretaries of the concerned ministries. Upon the Principal Secretaries' approvals, the researcher had face-to-face discussions with the purposively selected officials about the study. All the individuals selected agreed to participate in the study. They signed the informed consent form (see Appendix 2), which is further discussed in Section 3.9 below.

Since the main goal of the qualitative data was not to generalise the findings (Terre-Blanche *et al*, 2006), schedule of 12 knowledge-rich officials who participated in the interviews was reasonable. The sample of this magnitude is justified in qualitative studies. According to Gray (2004), the sample in qualitative research must be small and purposive. For Miles and Huberman (1994), the sample size is not as important as the analysis and the availability of sufficient information. In the same breath, some authors (Marshall, 1996; Orbele, 2002; Wilson and Hutchinson, 1991) put emphasis on data saturation, when new themes stop emerging. Convenience sampling was used to select the websites of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho.

3.4.2. Convenience sampling

Convenience sampling, also known as availability sampling, is a specific type of non-probability or non-random sampling method that relies on data collection from population members that meet certain criteria and are conveniently available and accessible to participate in the study (Given and Lisa, 2008). In essence, in convenience sampling the researcher gets subjects wherever he or she can find them and typically where it is convenient. The use of convenience sampling often gets criticised and discouraged, mostly because it is misused (Etikan *et al*, 2016). Nevertheless, this method may be the only option available in certain situations. For example, there is no other organisation that can be convenient other than the

one used as a case study (Saunders *et al*, 2012). Similarly, the rationale for the researcher of this study to choose ministerial websites is that no other websites could have been chosen, observed and evaluated in the context of this study other than the ministerial websites themselves. Like purposeful sampling, convenience sampling equates to the criterion-based selection in the sense that researchers use specific criteria in choosing subjects to be studied. In this case, the researcher established in advance the attributes that the units for his study should possess and searched for exemplars that match the specified selection.

The researcher adapted the criterion that has been employed by previous researchers (Kaaya, 2004; Magayane *et al*, 2016; Makoza, 2013; Oni *et al*, 2016). All the 26 ministries of the Government of Lesotho (including the Office of the Prime Minister) were observed in relation to their ability to provide e-government web-based services: Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS); Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology (MCST); Ministry of Defence and National Security; Ministry of Development Planning (MDP); Ministry of Education and Training; Ministry of Energy; Ministry of Finance (MoF); Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Relations; Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA); Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Correctional Services; Ministry of Labour and Employment; Ministry of Law and Constitutional Affairs; Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship Affairs; Ministry of Small Business Development, Co-operatives and Marketing; Ministry of Social Development; Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture (MTEC); Office of the Prime Minister; Ministry of Trade and Industry; Ministry of Mining; Ministry of Police and Public Safety; Ministry of Water Affairs; Ministry of Public Service; Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation and Ministry of Public Works and Transport. All these ministries were readily available or listed in the Lesotho National Portal, www.gov.ls.

However, not all the observed ministries were analysed, because some either did not have web addresses, or their web addresses were not clickable to allow content analysis of their features. Only four ministries, through their websites, were evaluated and analysed and those are the MoF, MFRSC, MTEC and MDP. Chapter 4 provides a detailed account of the procedure and analysis of the website evaluation.

3.5. DATA ANALYSIS

As put by Elo and Kynga (2007), there are several approaches for analysing qualitative data. In this study, content analysis was conducted to analyse empirical data collected with the

view to evaluate the websites of the Government of Lesotho. It also conducted thematic analysis to analyse the organisational perspective relating to the issues that hinder or aid e-government service provision.

Mouton and Marais (1991) defined data analysis as the process whereby a phenomenon is broken down into its basic parts in order for it to be understood better. Analysis brings order, structure and meaning to the volume of collected data. According to Mouton (1990), this process which is messy and ambiguous involves identification of patterns and themes in the data and drawing of certain conclusions. The aim of data analysis is to transform information or data into an answer to the original research question. In its simplest form, data analysis is the activity of making sense of the research problem through conceptualising and interpreting data. Rugg and Petre (2007) argued that the manner in which data is analysed is typically determined by the purpose, overall context and the nature of the study. This study aimed at evaluating the current status of e-government in Lesotho and the context within which it is implemented.

3.5.1. Analysis of the data collected through website evaluation: Content analysis

Content analysis is a research instrument used to determine the presence of certain concepts, words or themes within given qualitative data. As described by Krippendorff (1989:403), 'content analysis is the research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context'. Content analysis study was conducted to determine the status of the websites of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho. Content analysis is one of the several research strategies used to analyse text data. Research on qualitative content analysis places its focus on the characteristics of language as communication, paying attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text (Tesch, 1990). This suggests that 'qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely counting words to examining language intensely for the purpose of classifying large amounts into an efficient number of categories that represent similar meanings' (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005:1278). It follows a precept of rules that conform to a systematic analysis, with focus on the manifest of data seeking to produce specific contextual insights (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). For Bengtsson (2016), there are no established rules that must be followed, for instance, group interview, or observation of situations and behaviours. However, content analysis can be applied to all forms of written texts no matter where the material derived (Berg, 2001; Downe-Wambolt, 1992; Eastwood, 2011). Text data might be electronic form, print or verbal and might have been obtained from narrative responses, focus groups, interviews, observations, open-ended survey questions or print

media such as manuals, articles or books (Kondracki and Wellman, 2002). In this study, government websites were evaluated of their content to determine their level of maturity with reference to their ability to deliver e-government services. Data were collected through survey questionnaires adapted from ASPA and UN (2002). Data collected was then broken down or coded into manageable categories for analysis. Seven codes categories were developed: visibility and availability; accessibility; transparency and openness; usability; interactivity; transactional services, and connected government. Since content analysis can also be based on theory or model (Burns and Grove 2005), the 2001 UN five-stage model was then used as an analytic framework to further categorise the seven categories into “code categories” to summarise data even further.

According to Ginindza (2008), the UN model of e-government analysis is not only one of the most famous models to determine the maturity of the e-government, but it is the most appropriate model to guide and benchmark development of e-government services in least developed economies, hence was found to be appropriate for the Lesotho context. This, however, is despite the fact that this model is renowned for being an essential tool in benchmarking governments’ national portals. There is lack of evidence on the application of this model in assessing the maturity level of government ministries’ websites.

3.5.2. Analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews: Thematic Analysis

Cohen *et al* (2007) argued that qualitative data analysis extracts some form of understanding, interpretation or explanation from the qualitative data collected from people. Perceived in this manner, qualitative data analysis was used in this study in order to establish how the research participants made meaning of the e-government in Lesotho by analysing their understanding, experiences, knowledge, feelings and attitudes.

There is no absolute way of analysing qualitative data nor single data analysis approach, which is widely accepted. Streubert and Carpenter (1999:60) suggested that qualitative data analysis ‘begins with listening to participants’ verbal descriptions and is followed by reading and re-reading the verbatim transcriptions or written responses’. Maree (2007) unfolded that qualitative data analysis is usually non-linear and an ongoing process. Rugg and Petre (2007) indicated that although other researchers recommend that recorded tapes are transcribed first, they started that researchers can analyse straight off the tape. What could be inferred here is that data analysis is not an end in itself, but a repertoire of processes utilised to come to at a particular stage. Thematic analysis was used on the data collected through semi-structured

interviews to determine factors that aid or hinder the successful implementation of e-government in Lesotho.

While thematic analysis is a widely used and poorly defined method of qualitative data analysis (Aronson, 1994; Patton, 2002), Braun (2009:66) described it as ‘a method for systematically identifying, organising, and offering insight into, patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset’. Through focusing on meaning across a dataset, thematic analysis enables the researcher to see and make sense of shared or collective meanings and experiences.

Banister *et al* (1994:57) defined thematic analysis as a comprehensive way of organising or reading interview material in relation to specific research question, under thematic headings in ways that try to do justice both to elements of the research question and to the pre-occupations of the interviewees. This approach often starts with an identification of the research question and then choosing a sample, from which text is drawn. Once transcribed, the text is broken down for sentences and phrases that can be regarded as descriptive of the research question (Eagle,1998).

In applying some of the basic laws of thematic analysis, thematic identification was guided by the research questions and important aspects emerging from the data. The participants’ words or phrases about these themes were then rearranged in thematic categories and their experiences and knowledge rewritten within the scope of this study. This was done in line with Miles and Huberman (1994) and Maree (2007), who put emphasis on data reduction, coding and interpretation. Data reduction is broadly the process of organising and managing data. Namey *et al* (2008) described data reduction as a process of eliminating data which is deemed not relevant to the analysis or extracting data which deem relevant. Miles *et al* (2014) defined coding as the process of checking data for categories and meanings. It is the process of assigning a label to a text that holds important meaning. Interpretation is understood by Terre-Blanche *et al* (1999) as the written account of the phenomenon a researcher has studied. Its ultimate aim is to come to findings and draw conclusions.

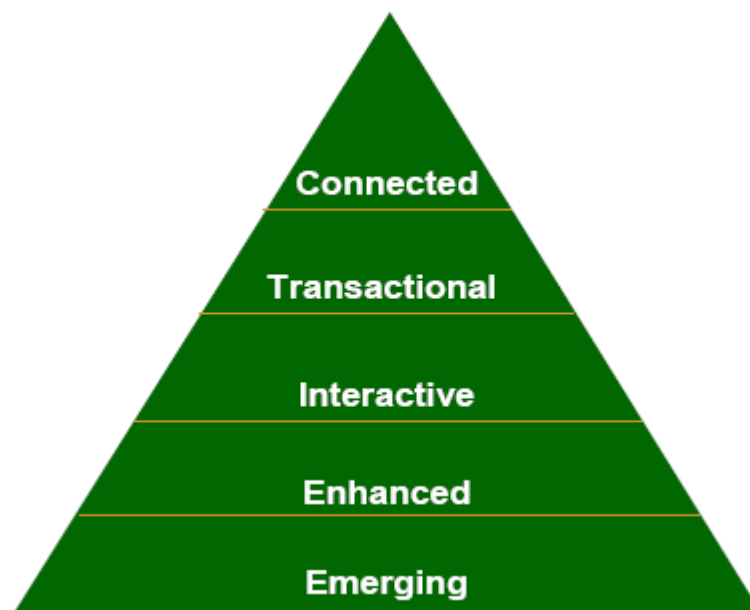
In this study, data collected from the interviews through voice recordings were transcribed. Because of the accuracy of transcriptions, a large volume of words material was produced. In order to produce the final report, there was a need to cut and categorise data. In simple technical terms, data was coded into meaningful units. Categories were based on the themes and issues that recurred in the data. Putting raw data into categories represented some level of

data interpretation (Maree, 2007). However, the next step was a shift from this level of interpretation to an analytic understanding that connects meanings.

3.6. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The UN five stage e-government model (as shown in Figure 3.1.) assisted in answering the research question about the current status of ministerial websites of the Government of Lesotho. A descriptive account of this model is presented in the following section.

Figure 3.1. 2001 United Nations Five-Stage Model of E-government



Source: UN (2008)

Stage One: *Emerging web presence*

In this initial stage, an official government website presence exists with the information that is limited, basic and static. Information only flows from government to citizens. Such information may include contact details of the department and officials. Occasionally, some features such as FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) may be found.

Stage Two: *Enhanced web presence*

At enhanced web presence, government websites improve and information becomes dynamic, specialised and regularly updated at this stage. Even though presence is enhanced, communication is still one way (from government to a range of stakeholders). Information provided may include government legislations, publications and newsletters.

Stage Three: *Interactive web presence*

This stage comprises a simple two-way communication between government and all stakeholders as well a range of online services. Stakeholders can access information according to their interests. They can send emails to officials, post comments, download forms and applications and be able to submit them online. In some instances, passwords are used to access more customised and secure services.

Stage Four: *Transactional web presence*

At stage four, stakeholders can actually conduct complete secure online transactions 24/7. These transactions may include paying utility bills, fines and taxes, licences, passports and visas, and birth and death certificates. In this regard, user passwords and digital signatures may be utilised.

Stage Five: *Connected/Seamless web presence*

There are full networked functions and service delivery across all government departments in seamless presence. Lines of demarcation are removed in cyberspace. Services are clustered along common needs and can be accessed at any time from a central location. This is the most sophisticated stage. It is characterised by connections among government agencies (horizontal connections), central and local government agencies (vertical connections), interoperability issues (infrastructure connections), connections between governments and citizens, and connections among different stakeholders including the private sector, government, civic organisations and academic institutions.

3.7. VALIDITY

Validity is a concept of crucial importance in understanding issues of measurement in a scientific research (Gray, 2004). According to Pretorius (2003), research validity should be concerned with accuracy and trustworthiness of scientific findings. A valid study should demonstrate that which actually exists, and a valid instrument should measure what it is supposed to measure (Brink 1991). In predominantly qualitative research, validity may be increased through triangulation which is the use of two or more data collection methods in a study (Cohen *et al*, 2007). In this study, content validity was enhanced by comparing the findings of the interviews with those of the websites' evaluation.

The features observed during the websites' evaluation were in line with the conceptual framework of the research. Also, while keeping with the semi-structured interviews, the issue of validity was directly addressed by making sure that the question content focused on the

research objectives. As also advocated by Arksey and Knight (1999), the researcher strengthened validity by:

- Using interview techniques that build rapport and trust, thus giving participants the scope to express themselves.
- Prompting participants to exemplify and expand on their initial responses.
- Ensuring that the interview process sufficiently explores the subject matter in depth.

3.8. RELIABILITY

Reliability is the degree or consistency or dependability with which the instrument measures the attributes it is designed to measure (Bush, 2002). Therefore, reliability is concerned with the consistency, stability, and the repeatability of the participants' account as well as the researcher's ability to record information accurately (Brink, 1996). According to Wellington (2004), reliability refers to the extent to which a data gathering instrument produces similar results across a range of settings. However, Gray (2004) argued that there might be differences found in traits between the prevailing groups or individuals, but he contended that those would be expected to be based on real differences between the individuals and not be due to inconsistencies in the measuring instrument. The study was guided by these conceptions of reliability measures.

3.9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues are major concern in any study (Eide and Kahn, 2008), more especially social science research (Kelman, 1982). All researches that involve human beings are required to show quality of ethical issues. The ethics of the research include the appropriateness of the researcher to adhere to legal, social and professional obligations to the participants of the research (Gray, 2004; Mollet, 2001).

Although there are quite a few approaches to ethics, there are four widely accepted ethical principles to consider when conducting research (Wassenaar in Terre-Blanche *et al*, 2006). According to Beauchamp and Childress (2001), these essential principles are autonomy; non-maleficence; beneficence and justice. The principle of autonomy translates that individuals have right to choose to participate in a research project. The non-maleficence principle holds that the research should not purposely or indirectly cause physical or psychological harm to those who participate in it while the principle of beneficence requires that the research should bring benefit to the participant and society. Justice in research means that all participants must be treated fairly and with equal respect.

In keeping with these principles, which corroborate the University of KwaZulu-Natal Research Ethics Policy, the participants were provided with the informed consent letter. The letter clearly stipulated that participation is voluntary and that participants were free to withdraw from participation at any stage for any reason whatsoever. The letter also assured confidentiality of the information provided. It further stipulated that the research was for academic purposes only. It was also necessary to verbalise that upon the completion of this study the researcher would share the research findings with the participants. Having read, understood, and consenting to participate in the study, a declaration form was made available to be signed by respective participants. The interviews were then conducted in safe environments with careful consideration of sensitivity.

3.10. CONCLUSION

E-government research and practice is a relatively new phenomenon in developing worlds, African countries in particular. This study sought to understand e-government in Lesotho. Chapter 3 described how the study was conducted; it explained design of the research and how the research was carried out, from problem identification to the final plans for ways of collecting data and analysis.

This Chapter demonstrated that this study, which was qualitative in nature, used evaluation and descriptive design to understand the maturity level of the websites of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho with reference to service delivery. The chapter also showed that this study used exploratory tools to investigate government officials' perspective on the factors critical to the success and failure of the implementation of e-government services. Organisational perspective was obtained through semi-structured in-depth interviews with 12 officials from the MCST and MDP. It became apparent from the discussion in this chapter that six officials who were selected purposefully participated in one-on-one interviews while the other six were involved in a group interview. Justifications for these methods of collecting data were discussed in the chapter. In total, 12 officials participated in the interviews. Data collected from these interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. Convenience sampling was found suited to choosing all the 26 government ministries, which were readily available in the National Government Portal, www.gov.co.ls. Content analysis was used to analyse these data that were collected through website surveys and observation. Four ministries, namely the MFRSC, MTEC, MDP and MoF, became units of analysis since they had functional websites. Moreover, Chapter 3 dealt with issues of accuracy and trustworthiness of scientific findings, the degree or consistency or dependability with which

the instruments measured the attributes they were designed to measure. This chapter finally addressed the reliability and validity of data and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 analyses data.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.0. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 described how data were collected. Chapter 4 aims at analysing the data that were collected with the general view to evaluate the current status of e-government in Lesotho and the context within which it is implemented. The purpose was to understand the progress of the e-government development since the implementation of the ICT Policy of 2005. The objectives and key questions of this study were stated in Chapter 1, Section 1.3.

This chapter draws from empirical data that were obtained from the fieldwork but also makes reference to existing literature. To this end, Chapter 4 is divided into two sections. Section A focuses on the content analysis of the data collected with a view to evaluate the websites of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho in relation to their maturity level to deliver e-government services. The results were matched with the UN five-stage of e-government model as an analytic framework starting from simple to sophisticated features. The model was decided upon after a review of other stage models as justified in Chapter 3. While Table 4.1 presents the UN five-stage e-government model of analysis, Appendix 5 presents the website evaluation guide. As indicated in Chapter 3, an observation and evaluation of the websites was conducted between 14 June and 27 June 2019 using the website evaluation form adapted from the UN (2008). This guide comprised of 31 questions aiming to gather qualitative data. While the idea was to record whether or not a website under observation had particular information about content and features, the questions were also kept open-ended to enable the researcher to record exactly what the attribute entailed. For example, one of the questions goes like: Is there organisational information such as management official(s) or person(s) in charge, and their credentials including names, photo, position, duty, contact details? This implies that if the answer was “yes”, the attribute available was also supposed to be listed. To note who in particular heads or is the contact person for the ministry is necessary for it helps not only to determine the status of the website but also to determine the political dynamics within which e-government in the country is implemented.

As demonstrated in Chapter 3, the UN stage model of e-government was adopted because it is not only commonly used in assessing government websites but also because it is suitable for underdeveloped and developing nations whose democracies are not consolidated. The findings are organised in themes of the research issues that were raised in Chapter 2. Some of the results are presented in tables. As stated by Locke *et al* (1998), while tables are suited for

summarising primary findings, data presented in tables is easily read. Basically, the questions on the website evaluation guide were meant to collect information about the attributes presented in Table 4.1 under “features”. Data collected was then coded and analysed under seven rubrics, namely visibility and availability, accessibility, transparency and openness, usability, interactivity, transactional services and connected government.

Table 4.1. 2001 UN E-government stage model of analysis

STAGE	FEATURES
Stage I Emerging Web Presence	Presence of ministerial postal and physical address, telephone number and email address, and working hours. Vision and mission statement. Managerial team credentials (i.e. current and previous position, photo, contact details). Contact person
Stage II Enhanced Web Presence	Publications such as bills, reports, latest news, calendar of events, tenders, vacancies, official statements, circulars. Indication that information is current and frequently updated (at least in every 6 months). Online privacy and security policy.
Stage III Interactive Web Presence	Presence of FAQs, Search tools, feedback, contact us feature and Site map. Presence of the downloadable forms; online specialised databases, online registrations, online applications, online submission of forms; chatrooms, user log-in and password, links to other agencies and social media.
Stage IV Transactional Web Presence	Complete and secure transactions, user log-in, password and digital signature, e-services, online payment, confirmation of request via e-mail, use of credit and debit cards, subscription to information.
Stage V Fully integrated Web Presence	Services clustered along common needs. Fully transactional services.

Adapted from: UN (2002)

Section B draws from empirical data gathered through semi-structured interviews with purposively selected participants. Open-ended questions were used in an attempt to allow participants to discuss freely about the subject matter and to give more information than would have been obtained through closed questions. Chapter 4 analyses data obtained during both the group interview and one-on-one interviews with officials from the MDP and MCST. These professionals deal directly with national policy formulation and planning as well as e-

government, ICT policy and related issues in the country respectively. In this study, 12 government officials participated: six were involved in one-on-one interviews while the other six were involved in a group interview.

Section B presents analyses of the data collected with the view to investigate the organisational perspective in respect of factors that influence e-government service implementation in Lesotho. This helped in assessing factors critical for e-government failure and success in the country. As it has already been mentioned in Chapter 2, studies have not focused on the unique factors influencing e-government practices in Lesotho, hence section B attempts to bridge the knowledge gap.

Data collected from the participants is mainly organised according to the themes frequently emerging from the interviews. These themes are also influenced by the literature on policy analysis of the factors that may aid or hinder successful implementation of policy programmes. This section makes use of excerpts from the audio transcriptions of the interviews to provide evidence of themes recognised in the data. This serves as a way of giving reports and explanations in respect of data analysis. Participants involved in one-on-one interviews were given reference numbers from P1 to P6 whereas participants involved in the group interview were coded as G1 to G6 to protect their identity as promised.

Section A: Data Analysis from Websites Observation and Evaluation

This section presents and analyses data concerning the current situation of the websites of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho in respect of their level of maturity to provide e-government services. While all the 26 ministries observed are recognised, Section A mainly focuses on the content analysis of the four ministries which had functional websites. The section focuses on the visibility and availability, accessibility, transparency and openness, usability, interactivity and transactional services and connected government.

4.1. VISIBILITY AND AVAILABILITY

In order to analyse the content of the websites, their availability had first be ensured. Availability of a website means its existence or visibility when searched. Unlike in some studies (i.e. Holliday, 2002; Kaaya, 2004) where the approach to assess the visibility of websites was to do the Internet search using powerful search engines such as MSN, Google and Yahoo, this study used Liu's (2010) approach which utilised a government portal. According to Saldhana and Hat (2007) a government portal is the fundamental component of e-government because it acts as a one stop information resource, integrating different

government agencies. Thus the Lesotho National Government Portal (www.gov.ls) was used as the gateway to access the visibility of ministerial websites. This was convenient because all the government ministries were listed in this national portal. Table 4.2 does not only show the ministries of the Government of Lesotho; what is also important is that all these ministries were available in the portal.

Table 4.2 illustrates the results of the availability of the websites of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho. The findings suggested that less than half (46.2%) of the government ministries had web addresses. The existence of the websites was measured by the availability of a ministerial web address, known as a Uniform Resource Locator (URL), which represents the homepage of a website.

The results further revealed that only 33.3% of the available URLs were functional. The functionality of the URL was determined by its “clickability” to allow the user to have access to emerging, enhanced, interactive, transactional or fully integrated digital services. The majority of the URLs available (66.7%) were not clickable. This means the ministries with a functional website roughly represented a minor percentage (15.4%) of the total population of the Government ministries. This leaves the majority (84.6%) of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho with no web presence, which means they had not yet provided web-based services. This clearly shows no good precedence for e-government development. Table 4.3 profiles ministries which had functional websites.

Table 4.2. Visibility and availability of the websites of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho

No	Ministry	Web address	URL clickable	URL unclickable
1	Ministry of Energy	Not available	–	–
2	Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology	Not available	–	–
3	Ministry of Public Works and Transport	Not available	–	–
4	Ministry of Development Planning	www.planning.gov.ls	Yes	No
5	Ministry of Education and Training	www.education.gov.ls	No	Yes
6	Ministry Agriculture and Food Security	Not available	–	–
7	Ministry of Finance	www.finance.gov.ls	Yes	–
8	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Affairs	www.foreign.gov.ls	No	Yes

9	Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation	www.forestry.gov.ls	Yes	No
10	Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation	www.gender.gov.ls	No	Yes
11	Ministry of Health	www.health.gov.ls	No	Yes
12	Ministry of Small Business Development, Co-operatives and Marketing	Not available	–	–
13	Ministry of Public Service	www.publicservice.gov.ls	No	Yes
14	Ministry of Labour and Employment	www.labour.gov.ls	No	Yes
15	Ministry of Social Development	Not available	–	–
16	Ministry of Local Government and of Chieftainship Affairs	Not available	–	–
17	Ministry of Water Affairs	Not available	–	–
18	Ministry of Police and Public Safety	Not available	–	–
19	Office of the Prime Minister	Not available	–	–
20	Ministry of Justice Human Rights and Correctional Services	www.justice.gov.ls	No	Yes
21	Ministry of Home Affairs	Not available	–	–
22	Ministry of Defence, Police and National Security	Not available	–	–
23	Ministry of Law and Constitutional Affairs	Not available	–	–
24	Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture	www.mtec.gov.ls	Yes	No
25	Ministry of Trade and Industry	www.mticm.gov.ls	No	Yes
26	Ministry of Mining	Not available	–	–

Table 4.3 captures the ministries with an online presence/functional website. These ministries include the MoF, MFRSC, MTEC as well as the MDP. While there is acknowledgement of all the observed 26 ministries, content analysis was limited to the mentioned four, which had already delivered e-government services.

Table 4.3. Ministries with functional websites

No.	Ministry	Website address
1	Ministry of Finance	www.finance.gov.ls
2	Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation	www.forestry.gov.ls
3	Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture	www.mtec.gov.ls
4	Ministry of Development Planning	www.planning.gov.ls

4.2. ACCESSIBILITY

Evidence from the analysis suggests that the websites of the Government of Lesotho were in one way or another inaccessible to users. From its inception, the World Wide Web (www) was perceived and implemented as a platform-neutral, device-independent means of accessing the content of the website. In the situation of e-government, accessibility is a prime feature in highly usable websites. Hereto, accessibility was understood to refer to the extent to which websites and their contents were available to all people, with emphasis to enabling the disadvantaged persons to have equal access to information and services in the language they understand (Mutula, 2010). This suggests that whereas accessibility's goal is to enhance greater access to information on the website, the site brands itself as a "great equalizer", cutting across social boundaries and breaking down both geographical and personal barriers.

Despite this emphasis, the browsed and evaluated ministerial websites of the Government of Lesotho clearly ignored issues of content accessibility and universal design. Manolopoulos *et al*, (2003) defined universal design to suggest the design of websites that are usable to all individuals, to the utmost extent possible, without the necessity for case-by-case accommodation. Web accessibility refers to the ability of any form of web browsing technology to enable anyone visiting a website not only to get a comprehensive understanding of the information but also a tremendous opportunity to interact with the site when considered necessary (Letoumeau, 2002). This set the standard for governments when designing web pages for government-wide online service delivery.

The findings, however, suggested that often the websites of the Government of Lesotho were designed in such a manner that they were unlikely to be accessible to the majority of the local people (the Basotho nation), hence likely to eliminate them from information consumption and participation in governance affairs. One of the founding principles of a civilised government is its commitment to ensuring that all of its citizens have an opportunity to play a full part in its life and that none are excluded (Gerber, 2002). Exclusion takes many forms hence language became a key determinant. With that in mind, accessibility of government websites was assessed through analysing the language used in delivering content, the

availability of the “language change option menu” as well as the presence of different medium (multimedia).

4.2.1. Language(s) used

Table 4.4 indicates whether or not the content of the ministerial website was offered in the two official languages of Lesotho, namely Sesotho and English. The moral underpinning this particular focus was to investigate whether the language used on the websites represented the language(s) understood by the majority of the population for which the e-government services were intended.

Evident from the data is that none of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho used Sesotho as the medium of conversation and website content. All the analysed websites used the English language. This shows a negative trend towards an effective implementation of e-government and fundamentals of accessibility. As Abanumy *et al* (2005) outlined, one of the core principles of e-government is to direct services and information to all citizens and residents. According to the report released by the World Bank Group (2017), 99.7% of the inhabitants of Lesotho are the native people (Basotho), making this country not only homogeneous, but also monolingual in Sesotho. Accordingly, the native and mother tongue language (Sesotho) is widely spoken while the imported imperial English language remains the language of status and power and the language of the elite (UNICEF, 2016). As per Makhasane (2010), the inherent English is the language spoken and fully understood by the few who managed to go beyond primary school education. Delivering website content in a language other than Sesotho signifies government’s well-orchestrated public relations campaign to deliver services but, not to the majority of the Lesotho population. This truly weakens the very fabric of e-government and democracy by disabling greater participation and engagement in government and governance. Thus, while the web is an important ICT instrument to deliver services, it does not only need innovative design but conscious political leadership to make it accessible not only to everyone but especially the disadvantaged e.g. people who are illiterate and incompetent in the English language.

Table 4.4. Language

No.	Ministry	Language used		Language change option menu	
		Sesotho	English	Yes	No
01	MoF	-	√	-	√
02	MFRSC	-	√	-	√
03	MTEC	-	√	-	√
04	MDP	-	√	-	√

On the other hand, although English does not have to enjoy the monopoly of information content at the expense of Sesotho, its use is necessary especially in the context of Global Information. The use of English as a global language extends a wider reach for content accessibility to non-native language speaking individuals. For example, when following the link provided by MoF as demonstrated in Section 4.5.1.2, it was learned that Lesotho had an electronic visa (e-Visa) website, www.evisalesotho.com. The use of international languages such as English on the e-Visa website and other government sites that share links to e-Visa strengthens the government's intention to make its e-government services accessible across borders, more especially to the potential applicants of e-Visa. This, however, may require that the government takes cognizance of a multilingual or bilingual approach to online content delivery. Hence, government web designers must ensure that a "language change option" menu is built on government websites.

4.2.2. Language change option tab

Table 4.4 also indicates whether or not the website had a language change option tab to allow users to change to the desired language immediately after clicking on it. The underlying purpose was to assess whether or not the analysed government websites provided users an option to choose between the two official languages of Lesotho. Drawing lessons from other countries, Eswatini, like Lesotho, has two official languages, with English as a medium of administration and schooling. UNICEF (2018) demonstrated that the Eswatini's Ministry of Education and Training improved its website by enhancing its accessibility by providing content both in English and siSwati, which is the native language. The Eswatini case is enabled by the language change option feature, which allows users to change between languages. In contrast, Lesotho presented a trend that collides with "African culture", which its fundamental doctrine is to place native language speakers at heart. The results showed that none of the analysed government websites, whose content is in inherent English, had the language change feature for the native Sesotho.

4.2.3. Multimedia

Table 4.5 indicates whether or not each of the ministerial websites provided content in different formats. This typically means that each website was assessed to determine whether or not more than one type of media including textual, aural or visual were used in delivering content. It is worth emphasising that while there are two ways in which multimedia can be added on the webpage, external media and inline media, the analysis in this context of accessibility considered the latter, in which video or audio is placed within a web page as an

embedded object. The external media which represents a file or media accessed through a useful link is dealt with in Section 4.5.1 under website interactivity.

Table 4.5. Medium

No.	Ministry	Text		Audio clip		Video	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1	MoF	√	-	-	√	-	√
2	MFRSC	√	-	-	√	-	√
3	MTEC	√	-	-	√	-	√
4	MDP	√	-	-	√	-	√

As demonstrated in Table 4.5, the web content of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho was predominately textual. The results showed that neither videos nor audio clips formed part of the websites content. All the analysed websites provided information through textual media. The failure to integrate a variety of media shows a poor tailoring of e-government websites in the 21st century. Evidence from Stanziola *et al* (2006) stated that poorly designed e-government websites do not only hinder accessibility to services and prevents government-wide e-government adoption and implementation, but also has negative social effects.

4.3. TRANSPARENCY AND OPENNESS

The findings suggested that by creating government websites including those of the ministries and the National Portal, the Government of Lesotho naturally committed to be more transparent and open in its operations and functioning. The issue of transparency within good governance is grounded in the free flow of information. Lockwood (2010) argued that transparency is a requirement built on the ethics of stakeholders' rights to access to information about matters that concern them. The analysis shows that this information, however, needs to go beyond that question of access. Transparency must take cognizance of the quality of content delivered by government. It is opined that the public is likely to make informed participation in policy choices if it has free access to unrestricted and timely information (Magayane *et al*, 2016; Oni *et al*, 2016).

Since e-government refers to the utilisation of the web-based service delivery and information, openness of administration means government's efforts in utilising websites as channels to continually make known official information to the public. As Kaaya (2004) observed, this exercise is favourable to citizens, potential investors or collaborative partners alike. Thus transparency and openness, which subsequently instigate trust in government and

its operations, strengthen the implementation of e-government not only by attracting website visitors and e-service consumers. They also provide checks against authority and corruption and hence encourage not only accountability on the side of public administration but also create a conducive environment for investment and collaboration.

On that basis, five measures, namely, contact information, organisational introductory information, publications as well as a privacy and security policy, were considered in assessing transparency and openness of the Government of Lesotho through its ministerial websites. The results are summarised in Table 4.6. It was found that the ministries under study were doing quite well in relation to openness and transparency but with the exception of the privacy and security dimension, which has become an area of concern. Although it may appear that government ensures access to useful information, the basic informational presence of government on the website is appreciated and will remain important, but it is only a beginning.

4.3.1. Contact information

Table 4.6 reveals whether or not the ministerial website had transparency and openness web-based elements. As far as contact information is concerned, analysis suggests that the Government of Lesotho is doing commendable work. All the analysed websites had contact information, which is a significant trait of a website because when a user goes online, they first interact with it and not a person. Rosen and Purinton (2004) highlighted that if the contact information is scarce or invisible, users are likely to lose trust and interest in further exploring the site and thus resent using such a site. The more government opens up about who to contact and through which means in relation to queries, information and services, the more trusted is the site visited. This enhances e-government development.

Table 4.6. Transparency and openness of the Government of Lesotho

No .	Ministry	Contact information		Organisational introductory Information		Working hours		Publications		Privacy & security policy	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1	MoF	√	-	√	-	-	√	√	-	-	√
2	MFRSC	√	-	√	-	-	√	√	-	-	√
3	MTEC	√	-	√	-	-	√	√	-	-	√
4	MDP	√	-	√	-	-	√	√	-	-	√

The content of the contact information, which the ministerial websites were evaluated upon, included the contact details of each ministry, managerial leadership and contact person(s). All

the analysed websites had these variables. The information common to all the websites was about persons in charge, senior management officials such as the Minister and Principal Secretary (PS). Physical and postal address of a ministry, names, photos, email addresses and telephone numbers of these senior officials were provided. Whereas the site of the MTEC had also published information about the Chief Information Officer, the MFRSC added that of the District Coordinators, and the MoF further included information about Directors and Heads of Departments. Limited to the site of the MoF and MFRSC were the current and previous positions and the qualifications of all these displayed senior management officials. The unique information on each website set the tone for openness for other ministerial websites. Openness may also be considered one of the indicators of government accountability since a government ministry can be constantly evaluated by citizens through everyday interactions.

4.3.2. Working hours

While all the analysed ministerial websites had contact information, which is plausible for emerging web presence, only the website of the MDP was open about its working hours. One of the major purposes of the Government of Lesotho – and most probably all governments worldwide – is to introduce e-government as a system of saving time, simplifying life, improving quality of services and enhancing the public sector's effectiveness and performance. Hence the failure of the majority of government websites to showcase working hours as depicted from Table 4.6 denies citizens an equal opportunity (to government) to save time and money. It is in the public interest to make known when government offices open and close so as to avoid uninformed physical visits or phone calls that may never be attended to because the bureaucrats had already left their offices.

La Porte *et al* (2002) stated that the attitude of public institutions or lack of openness tantamount to incapability or refusal to serve the people. Regular contact and good relations between citizens and government officials, often create a positive result on the citizens' trust levels towards public institutions. This suggests that displaying working hours may be a viable option for those who may require information so that they may at later stage have direct accessibility and interactivity.

4.3.3. Organisational introductory information

Openness and transparency of the Government of Lesotho is undoubted insofar as organisational introductory information is concerned. The results, as presented in Table 4.6, showed that all the four ministries had this information on their websites. According to the

UN e-government stage model, organisational introductory information is one of the basic information that emerging websites should provide. This information is necessary in understanding a particular agency. It sheds light on the structure of the institution, its values and aspirations.

Each of the analysed ministerial websites gave detailed information about ministries including the mission, strategic aims and functional values of the ministry. For example, the website of the MDP explicitly stated the vision of the ministry, which captured that by 2022 the MDP shall be a leading institution in promoting results-based national integrated planning, inclusive economic growth and sustainable development. The mission of the MFRSC as stated on their website is to protect and rehabilitate the physical environment through management of rangeland resources, forestry and harvesting of water and control of soil erosion in order to improve means of livelihoods of local communities. The website of the MoF opened up about the core values that guide the officials in their day to day conduct and these include collaboration/teamwork, integrity, professionalism and responsiveness. The importance of publishing and being transparent about all this information is to afford citizens the opportunity to hold public institutions accountable in the case of inefficiencies or deviations.

Accountability calls for government departments to ensure that citizens are informed and can easily access public information. According to Lockwood (2010), a government is accountable when its leaders are responsive to the demands of the citizens, deliver on the mandate of their institutions and answerable to their constituencies or public at large. Thus accountability means holding accountable politically elected or appointed officials and institutions charged with a public mandate to account for specific plans, processes, activities or decisions to the public from whom their authority derives.

The use of ICTs in administration, in particular the World Wide Web, is an important tool to evaluate public organisations openness. As such, e-government websites have increasingly become the interface of government, and they do not only instigate and reflect organisational plans but also internal structural and procedural dimensions of organisations on the ground. On the basis of this, the findings indicated that the analysed ministries openly made known the departments each ministry has, despite the fear of scrutiny against those departments which are publicly associated with ineffectiveness and inefficiency. For example, as is the name, the MFRSC has the following departments: Forestry, Range and Conservation.

Similarly, departments in the MoF include Budget, Pensions, Support services, Private Sector Development, Procurement Policy and Advisory, Internal Audit, Debt and Aid management as well as Economic Policy. This information is necessary in the sense that citizens become aware as to which unit deals specifically with a particular set of services.

4.3.4. Publications

The government publications dimension is one of the key facets of transparency. Government publications are precisely what the name articulates: all materials published by the government. These are collections of documents on a vast range of subjects. Government documents play a crucial role in e-government's development because they enable citizen users to know about intentions and progress of government. The publications information which the websites of the Government of Lesotho were evaluated on included bills, reports, laws and regulations, latest news, calendar of events, tenders, vacancies, official statements and circulars. In this view, transparency was understood and applied to mean the extent to which public institutions, ministries in particular, generally provide data, documents and accurate information about all government intentions and maintain timely communication directly to citizens, more especially in the case of Lesotho, the forgotten nation distant from the District Administration's offices where some of this information is occasionally posted.

As in Table 4.6, all the analysed ministries dedicated their websites to publicising important information. For instance, the website of the MoF has important publications relating to Legal and Policy documents, Debt and Aid Management documents, Ministerial Speeches and Public Financial documents. The MDP website alike had published, among others, legislative frameworks such as National Strategy for Statistics, Population Policy Management, 2014 Economic Activity Census and National Manpower Development Plan. Publications on the website of the MTEC comprised of Acts, press release, tenders, vacancies, circulars, newsletters, official speeches and calendar of events. This shows that these ministries envision the deployment of e-government as a means to encourage efficiency and transparency.

Contrary to the recommendations for transparent governance and open administration, the ministries that do not have a web presence heavily compromise the Government of Lesotho in its mission to have a wide-spread delivery of services. If we were to look at the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Correctional Services, for example, it could be concluded that its online absence makes us question whether this ministry goes by what it advocates. The irony

is that the very same ministry which is supposed to be promoting and protecting efficient delivery of justice and accessibility thereto and ensuring a culture of non-tolerance to corrupt activities and violation of Human Rights is the one that breaches what it ought to promote and protect. Potential victims and perpetrators of injustice are – perhaps through digital means – not educated about how they can live together in harmony. In general, citizens are denied their right to information flow. This forfeits the purpose of e-government, democracy and good governance. Openness and transparency are potentially unique measures of public service efficiency or behaviour especially suited for analysing the current wave of political and administrative reform in the country.

4.3.5. Privacy and security statement

Despite encouraging citizens' electronic involvement (e-involvement) and electronic engagement (e-engagement) through the adoption of e-government systems, the Government of Lesotho appears not to be considerate (transparent) about issues concerning electronic participation (e-participation). Online participation, and e-government in general, call for effective, efficient and transparent democratic and policy processes. However, the analysis suggested that the government is not open and transparent about how private data is protected. This attitude is alarming. It first raises the question of under what circumstances can government not be explicit as to how the data it collects through interactions is managed. Can that be interpreted as a red flag for perpetuation and preservation of corrupt and criminal activities? Second, this further raises a question of whether personal and business information stored by government is or will be protected against foreign bodies, cyber criminals.

Privacy and security are critical for e-government development as they determine e-government acceptance and continuance use of e-services. In e-government, both policy and technical responses are required when addressing privacy and security issues. The findings suggested, however, that the websites of the Government Lesotho face usability risk due to lack of openness and transparency, as far as privacy and security issues are concerned.

As seen in Table 4.6, not even a single website had a privacy and security statement. This statement informs users of the website about the security of their personal and business data and provides specific guidelines as well as terms and conditions governing the use of the website. Basu (2007) suggested that the approach towards e-government implementation should lean towards the protection of individual privacy. Unfortunately, as also evident from the data collected from the interviewees, there were no policy and legal regulations

addressing this issue at the time of this study's investigation. At the centre of most e-government systems is not only the collection but also storage of large volumes of citizen information such as names, addresses, contact numbers, medical records, employment histories and monetary or wealth-related records. Given the nature of private and confidential data e-government projects manage, it is apparent that governments must become extra cautious in managing any private information shared with a government agency. Yang *et al* (2018), Luo (2015) and Sarabdeen *et al* (2014) noted that if a privacy and security statement is not displayed on the website, users' trust, which is one of the important obstacles to the adoption of e-government systems, is weakened, thus creating low usage of the website. This implies that the presence of a security and privacy policy fosters the use of websites while its absence becomes a hindrance.

Because e-government is simply defined to refer to the delivery of public services to citizens and other relevant stakeholders through web based technologies efficiently, effectively and transparently, it deems important that privacy and security must not only be protected but also be openly ensured, in a form of statement, to increase trust while using government services. As e-services advance, cyber-attacks increase instantaneously. Hence, while policy solutions are guaranteed, technical solutions must equally be instituted.

4.4. USABILITY

The availability of the ministries online, albeit a disappointing turnout, signifies how less serious the Government of Lesotho takes e-government. By launching e-government websites, the government envisioned vast improvement in the administrative efficiency, enhanced democratic governance and trust in government. However, the analysis points out that return on e-government investment is generally poor in many aspects because government websites do not show good signs of usability. While the four ministries analysed are plausible for their web presence, it also poses significant challenges for their web designers to ensure that the designed websites are usable. Websites that are not properly designed from a usability viewpoint have the potential to discourage their use, as poor usability negatively impacts on website interaction (Verkijika and de Wet, 2018).

In the English language, usability is typically defined as the "capability of being used" (Bevan *et al*, 2015). Herein, the International Standard Organisation (ISO) 9241's definition was applied, and government websites were evaluated on their usability by citizens to realise set goals with success, efficiency and satisfaction in a defined government e-service context.

Navigation tools and freshness of a website were utilised to assess the degree of ease, quickness and satisfaction. The results are summarised in Table 4.7 and clearly indicated that the analysed ministerial websites were suffering from usability issues.

Table 4.7. Navigation instruments

No.	Ministry	FAQs		Search function		Sitemap	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1	MoF	-	√	-	√	-	√
2	MFRSC	-	√	√	√	-	√
3	MTEC	-	√	√	-	-	√
4	MDP	-	√	-	-	-	√

4.4.1. Navigation tools

Table 4.7 presents whether or not the government websites had navigation instruments for *inter alia*, search function, frequently asked questions (FAQs) and site map.

4.4.1.1. Search function

The results, as summarised in Table 4.7, revealed that only two ministries of the Government of Lesotho, namely MTEC and MDP, had search tool features on their websites, which is a necessary indicator for usability and subsequently users' e-government acceptance. This feature is often the first place to go when looking for information. Since government intention with e-government is to automate public services, it becomes quite clear that as government websites reach higher levels of maturity, there will be volumes of information and services and so a search feature will offer users a way to locate a particular content without needing to navigate through the structure of the website. Usability of government websites, in this regard, was assessed on the website's ability to provide users with the search function which signified how quick and with ease users can obtain relevant and accurate search results with a lower response time.

4.4.1.2. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

In relation to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), the findings suggested that this feature had been completely overlooked. None of the analysed websites had FAQs. This is worrisome because while e-government generally aims to address the needs of society, one primary objective is to ensure minimalist approach to service delivery. Information sharing can be too costly, both for its owner and its users. From the government's viewpoint, e-government websites can reduce the number of enquiries staff has to deal with by providing answers to the common queries or questions, consensually known as FAQs it normally

receives, and thus reduce the amount of staff effort and costs needed to respond to them. This implies a cost-effective service delivery. From a users' perspective, efficiency of e-government lies in websites' ability to provide services in a cheap, faster and convenient manner. The failure to meet these expectations often results in complete rejection or underutilisation of these e-government websites. It becomes common knowledge that data and the Internet seem to be expensive for citizens in countries with a low economy like Lesotho. Making available FAQs will grant users the opportunity to have quick access to specific information and instant answers.

However, this does not suggest that FAQs must replace the main content of the websites. FAQs should supplement the main content. Again, an e-government website also provides government agencies with an opportunity to systematically gather information from users, thus it deems important as well not to have FAQs as a substitute but rather a co-feature. FAQs must be alongside other features including contact information of the officials and feedback features to maintain customisation of users and their needs.

4.4.1.3. Sitemap

While sitemap is of great importance for any website, the Government of Lesotho seemed to have greatly underestimated it. Like FAQs, sitemap as seen in Table 4.7, appeared not to feature in any of the government websites. As the name suggests, sitemap is essentially a map of the website, providing, among others, the structure of the site as well as the sections in it. This feature makes navigating the website easier. It helps users find specific information under a certain section of a website very quickly and with ease. As has been articulated earlier, the quicker the information is accessed, the more the site is considered usable. The consequence of the websites that are unusable becomes the failure of e-government system, which the Government of Lesotho intends not to risk.

4.4.2. Freshness

The e-government website should naturally focus on providing information, and such information must be reliable. As noted by Zhang and von Dran (2001), up-to-date and proper (fresh) information forms the basis for its reliability. It is also understood that the more the website incorporates the latest developments and trends, the more it is likely to be visited or frequently used (Magayane, 2016). Herein, the usability of government websites was analysed on how fresh the information is. The date of last update and the copyright date were used as metrics.

Technically, copyright date as displayed at the bottom of each website, appeared to be a year contributions were last made on the website. The date of the last update, which correlated with copyright date, was captured from e.g. the official speeches, calendar of events or any document that can reflect a date of publication on the website. The sites that were updated way before 12 months at the time of this study were regarded to contain inaccurate information, making them slow in realising enhanced delivery and access to e-government services (Kaaya, 2004). The results as in Table 4.8 showed a positive trend, which needs to be maintained.

Table 4.8. Website freshness

No.	Ministry	Copyright date	Last updating date
1	MoF	2019	June 2019
2	MFRSC	-	March2019
3	MTEC	2019	April 2019
4	MDP	2019	June 2019

Table 4.8 captures whether or not a ministry had the copyright date and the date of last update. The findings suggested that government provided accurate and timely information. This shows a high level of responsiveness, responsibility and accountability, more especially if government truly considers websites as an important avenue for community engagement. The results indicated that 100% of the analysed websites provided accurate and frequently updated information since their websites were last updated within the last three months. The MoF and MDP frequently updated their information until the very last month of this study survey which was in June 2019. The last update for the MTC and MFRSC were in April and March respectively, which is not too long. Furthermore, with the exception of the MFRSC, all the analysed websites displayed copyright date. It is worth mentioning that the copyright date on each of those three websites was of the current year, 2019. From the analysis point of view, users were not put at risk of accessing and using information that was not in use any more at that particular time. This implies that users were well informed, hence at liberty to make sound decisions. In general, the analysed ministerial websites were usable since they were reliable.

4.5. INTERACTIVITY

As Dwivedi *et al* (2017) stated, e-government aims to enable individuals, private and public sector to collaborate and interact with government. Interaction is a necessary requirement for fostering transparency, engagement, participation, and collaboration. Based on this benefit,

the government website becomes a civic platform to achieve the social governance and participatory citizenship. Thus the designers of government portals and websites must ensure that interactivity is enabled. Interactive website hereto refers to a website that allows its users to engage with its content or the one on which its users can post comments and suggestions to communicate with the person behind that website about any issues relating to the organisation the website represents. In the context of e-government, website interactivity denotes the level of two-way communication between a government agency and users. In this study, government websites were evaluated and analysed on the following attributes: important links, interactive features as well as downloadable material and online applications. The results showed varying levels of interactivity among and within the analysed websites.

4.5.1. Important links

E-government is a system that is linked to IS and the opportunities associated with it. Therefore, analysis of the websites focused on the ability of the websites to allow government ministries to integrate their web-based services for quicker access and convenient services. Hence, a website with links to other important agencies outside and within the government system was considered interactive because it allowed the user to juggle among different websites just by a click to a link provided on the website to access the required information rather than doing a new search or have to leave the site. The more the links, the more the agency the website represented was considered to be heading towards full operation of e-government services. In the respect of quick links, as demonstrated in Table 4.9, the interactivity of a government website was determined by its ability to provide quick links to social media, government bodies and non-government agencies.

Table 4.9. Quick links

No.	Ministry	Social media		Government agencies		Other relevant bodies	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1	MoF	-	√	√	-	√	-
2	MFRSC	-	√	-	√	-	√
3	MTEC	√	-	√	-	√	-
4	MDP	√	-	√	√	-	√

4.5.1.1. Links to social media

The analysis of the websites suggested that while e-government is the deployment of ICTs in government functions to enable citizens to exchange, conduct business and build relationships with government via a range of digital media, the Government of Lesotho had

not yet made significant strides to link its official websites to social media. More recently, social media has become an important space that is easily accessible to individuals with Internet connection, and the favourite communication channel for a large number of people (Khasawneh and Abu-Shanab, 2017).

Carlo *et al* (2011) presented social media as an opportunity that will support governments to become more transparent by providing citizens with enhanced information access and improved services, opening an active communication platform with them, empowering them and making them more involved. Furthermore, if governments use such channels effectively and efficiently, it will open doors for the people to become more influential and effectively involved in the world in which they live. In terms of electronic participation (e-participation), social media offers new ways of communication through which governments can deliver information to citizens more effectively and quickly.

Given the considerable evidence suggesting a constant increase in the prevalence of social media among people all over the world, it would be expected that government agencies would be responsible to their citizens as they become accountable for promoting and maintaining the interest of the general populace. This can be demonstrated through the provision of the links to the social media channels that are not only much loved but also interactive, convenient and efficient.

Table 4.9 illustrates that only 50% of the analysed ministries had links to social media. The website of the MDP had quick links to Facebook, Feed, and YouTube whereas the MTEC had links to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. This means that while on the same government official website, the user can click onto the Twitter link, for example, to follow the discussions or engage directly on the policy issues involving a particular regulation seen or published on the official website. The far-reaching benefit of an interactive website with links to social media is the enhanced two-way communication and electronic participation (e-participation).

4.5.1.2. Links to government agencies and other relevant bodies

Evident from Table 4.9 is that while the websites of the MoF and MTEC had links to both government agencies and other relevant bodies, the MDP only had links to the former. The website of the MFRSC neither had links to government agencies nor other important bodies. The MDP had quick links to its departments (Bureau of Statistics, Administration, Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and Strategic Planning, National Manpower Development

Secretariat and Project Cycle Management), Minister's Office and the Office of the PS. The website of the MoF represented an ideal interactive website with its Local Links and International Links. Local Links directed the users to e-Visa, the Lesotho Government Portal, the Central Bank, the Lesotho Revenue Authority and many other government institutions, and International Links directed them to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the African Development Bank, the World Bank and the Millennium Challenge Corporation among others. Among important links that the MTEC website had was to other government agencies such as the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation, Lesotho Star Grading, and Lesotho Trade Portal.

4.5.2. Interactive features

An ideal for e-government is to develop and enhance the relationship between citizens and government. Based on that, the websites were analysed on two feature-aspects that are appropriate for government-citizen relationship. Interactive features captured were a subscribe button and feedback feature. Table 4.10 presents the results under this criterion, which are not impressive as far as interactivity is concerned.

Table 4.10. Interactive features

No.	Ministry	Feedback feature		Subscribe button	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	MoF	-	√	-	√
2	MFRSC	√	-	-	√
3	MTEC	-	√	-	√
4	MDP	√	-	√	-

4.5.2.1. Feedback feature

Table 4.10 demonstrates whether or not the ministry's website had feedback feature. The results showed that while the websites of the MoF and MTEC had no feedback features, those of the MDP and MFRSC had a display of these features. Feedback feature offers great benefits to both citizens and governments. The data presented in Table 4.10 reflected that with the exception of the MDP and MFRSC, the rest of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho first denied themselves an opportunity to gather positive information and criticisms about e-service or information it provided. This information is necessary to guide government in enhancing public sector performance. Second, the results clearly sent a message to citizens that the government has no intention to interact with them or respond to their needs. By

interacting with citizens, government establishes connections and builds relationships with citizens.

On the positive side, the feedback feature that the website of the MDP had is “Stay with us”. This feature provided a box in which users could write a message and post it to the agency by a click of “Contact Now” button. A name, e-mail and contact details of the user are required, and this is a clear indication that the ministry was ready to respond or contact back the user. The MFRSC had a “Contact us” box. This box has a message that reads “If you wish to share anything related to our work, have some comments on our services, or request some kind of data, do not hesitate, just email us or hit the link below. The link will lead you to an email application and there you can send us your message”. This feedback feature cannot be explained better than the message it contained. It is user-friendly to the extent that it gives the user a sense of not only interacting *with* the website or content but also a feeling of interacting *through* the website. Exploring this feature makes the user feel like s/he is directly interacting with a human being. The websites of the MDP and MFRSC were interactive because they communicate that government is willing to cooperate and address the unique needs of individuals. This builds the relationship between the ministry/government and citizen users, which leads to the improved personalised service delivery.

4.5.2.2. Subscribe button

The Subscribe button feature is a key ingredient of an interactive website. The website of the MDP seemed to be consistent in its interactivity nature, as it had the subscribe button. Table 4.10 shows that this website became the only ministerial site that had the subscribe button feature. The MDP gave individual users the option to subscribe to newsletters. Interactivity in this sense represents user control. This simply means the website allowed each of its users to have control over what kind of information s/he receives. In the context of e-government as a communication mechanism, interactivity comes into play to the extent that the communicator (government) showed its willingness to facilitate and respond to the communication needs or request of the recipient (individual citizens). Contrary to the fundamentals of communication discourse, the rest of the ministerial websites were considered non-interactive because they failed to recognise the individual users and customise content. This is to the extent that when newsletters were published, they were put at the exposure of every visitor regardless of whether they would like such content. Interactivity would imply the afforded opportunity to choose which kind of information, for example, sport news, politics, education or health, would the user subscribe to receive.

4.5.3. Downloadable material and online applications

Table 4.11 provides information on whether or not a ministerial website had downloadable materials, online applications and registrations. The results demonstrated that 100% of the analysed ministerial websites neither had online applications nor online registrations. In respect of downloadable material, the MoF is seen to have interactive web presence because it allowed visitors to interact with the website, as opposed to static websites that only display content. The website contained a downloadable form. This was a Supplier Registration Form, which allows vendors to apply to be registered on the supplier database. This is a good start for interactive web presence (stage III of e-government stage model). Despite the promising efforts, the Supplier Registration Form cannot be submitted online, the physical address was provided where the completed form could be submitted off-line. Focused on the notion of user control, interactivity of this website appeared to be elementary since users cannot make complete transactions online, download the form, modify its content and submit it digitally.

Table 4.11. Downloadable material and online applications

No.	Ministry	Downloadable material		Online application/registration	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	MoF	√	-	-	√
2	MFRSC	-	√	-	√
3	MTEC	-	√	-	√
4	MDP	-	√	-	√

4.6. TRANSACTIONAL SERVICES

Despite the users' needs and the level of e-government development, governments use a wide range of services to reach out to their citizens electronically. At the transactional phase, users can actually conduct full and secure financial transactions online for paying utility bills, fines and taxes or obtaining licences, passports, visas and birth/death certificates. Complete and secure online transactions and forms of payment and authentication were used to benchmark these online self-service processes.

Table 4.12 shows whether or not the ministry's website could allow a complete and secure online transaction; and if that was the case, what forms of payment and authentication arrangement were made. The results showed that 100% of the analysed ministries could not allow businesses and individual users to conduct complete and secure transactions. In terms of payment arrangement, the websites were assessed whether or not they enabled users to pay for services using credit, debit card or bank. The results demonstrated that no ministry had

these features. Passwords, pin numbers and digital signatures were used to assess which way of authentication users could use to conduct secure transactions. The results showed that all the ministries did not have these features. This is primarily because there were no transactional services provided.

Table 4.12. Complete and secure online transactions

No.	Ministry	Complete and secure transaction		Payment arrangement		Authentication	
		Yes	No	Credit/debit card	Bank card	Password/pin	Digital signature
1	MoF	-	√	-	-	-	-
2	MFRSC	-	√	-	-	-	-
3	MTEC	-	√	-	-	-	-
4	MDP	-	√	-	-	-	-

4.7. CONNECTED GOVERNMENT

Government ministries were examined on how they manage their back-office processes. As was done by the UN (2008), the idea of connected government was looked at from the perspective where e-government should be seen as a strategy to realise enhanced quality services and optimal cost savings. The underlying principle for connected government is to transform the public sector's internal processes by reducing transactional costs and time, to better manage the workflow and processes and to improve institutional linkages between different government agencies. As demonstrated in Table 4.13, under connected government criteria websites were assessed for their ability to allow fully integrated or seamless services.

Table 4.13. Connected government

No.	Ministry	Fully integrated	
		Yes	No
1	MoF	-	√
2	MFRSC	-	√
3	MTEC	-	√
4	MDP	-	√

Table 4.13 captured whether or not a ministry was fully networked with other government ministries and departments. The results indicated that neither the MoF, MFRSC, MTEC or MDP was fully integrated to provide seamless services. For ministries to be considered “connected”, they were supposed to be fully integrated with other government ministries, departments and units, with services being clustered along common needs.

In summary, this was the full rigour of the process of website evaluation, yet it clearly suggested that the Government of Lesotho's websites still need considerable efforts to become more accessible, transparent and open, usable and interactive and ensure that they provide transactional and seamless transactions. The results of the evaluation also suggested that government sites need to have more features, bringing about satisfaction to the target users. If a website is not considerate of all these, e-government will not be successful. The government should pay attention to the challenges that impede web development progress of its ministerial websites and e-government at large.

4.8. EXTENT OF MATURITY LEVEL OF THE LESOTHO'S E-GOVERNMENT WEBSITES

The UN's 2001 e-government model is referred to and adapted as an assessment instrument and analytic framework to evaluate the maturity level of the four analysed ministerial websites of the Government of Lesotho. Nawafleh *et al* (2012), Rorissa and Demissie (2010) and Saebo (2017) reported that often in developing countries, most e-government websites range from stage I to stage III of e-government service development. The results of the current study are no different from the findings of this prior research. Table 4.14 summarises the stages reached by ministerial websites of the Government of Lesotho.

Table 4.14. Summary of observations on e-government stages

No.	Ministry	Stage I Emerging	Stage II Enhanced	Stage III Interactive	Stage IV Transactional	Stage V Seamless
1	MoF	Presence of contact details, organisational introductory information, managerial team credentials, and working hours not displayed.	Textual information, frequently updated information, other publications, no online privacy and security policy.	Downloadable forms but no submission of online forms, no online applications and registrations, no database, there are links to government agencies and relevant bodies but not to social media, no subscribe button and feedback feature, no navigation tools.	No transactional services nor their support thereof.	No seamless services.
2	MFRSC	Contact details, organisational introductory information, managerial team credentials, but working hours not displayed.	Timely information, textual information, other publication, no online privacy and security statement.	FAQs and sitemap, feedback feature, no search function, no subscribe button, no downloadable material, no online applications and registration, no important links, no navigation tools.	No transactional services nor their support thereof.	No seamless services.

3	MTEC	Contact details, organisational introductory information and, managerial team credentials, no working hours.	Current information, completely textual, publication of documents, no privacy and security statement.	Search function, no sitemap and FAQs, no downloadable material, no online applications and registration, there are links to social media and other relevant bodies but not to government agencies, no subscribe button.	No transactional services nor their support thereof.	No seamless services.
4	MDP	Presence of contact details, vision and mission statement and managerial team credentials, working hours not published.	Timely information, completely textual, publication of documents, no privacy and security statement.	There are quick links, subscribe button, feedback feature, search function, no sitemap and FAQs, no downloadable material, no online applications and registration.	No transactional services nor their support thereof.	No seamless services.

Stage I: Emerging Web Presence

Table 4.14 demonstrates that all the four websites analysed have all the necessary content and features for Stage I except for working hours attributes, which seemed to be missing in all the websites. As demonstrated in Section 4.3.2, being open about working hours does not only simplify life for citizens, saving them time and money, but also increases regular visits to the websites for users who may want to confirm the operating time of the government office. The results indicated that all the websites of the evaluated ministries have information about the contact details of each ministry such as telephone number, email address, contact person(s), physical and postal address. The information also concerned the organisational introductory information which included the ministry's vision, mission statement, goals and core values and information about the credentials of the senior management officials including their current and former positions, their qualifications and other accolades. The availability of this information which signifies transparency and openness enriches the strength of e-government at this stage.

La Porte (2002) stated that governmental transparency and openness is unnegotiable strategy and work ethic for government reform. Being open about minor but important information such as the website owner is critical in cyberspace where everyone including those whose intentions are to scam others have access to publishing information. Transparency and openness show trustworthiness. Van de Walle *et al* (2005) argued that there is a co-relationship between lack of openness and loss of trust in government as well as a decline in public service. Clearly, openness and transparency make government more efficient and

eases the functioning of network-like arrangements between public organisations and citizens and the private sector. This has positive effect in empowering citizens to play a stronger role in interacting with government, which is a prerequisite for e-government implementation in democratic discourse.

As the evidence shows, the ministries of the Government of Lesotho are very strong at Stage I. However, as the name says, Stage I is just an emerging web presence. To many commentators and observers, despite it providing static information, Stage I provides information, which to some extent is biased. UNDESA and ASPA (2002:16) succinctly summarised:

‘e-government program development at this stage is ‘erratic and disparate ...Official information...is predominately of a highly partisan, political nature, i.e. bias and predictable spin on the prime minister or the party in power. The number of sites disproportionately favour the political parties over the service-provision or administrative sites’.

From the evidence above, we can see that the information provided at Emerging Presence level is as good as little or no data that would enable an individual to access a particular government service (UNDESA and ASPA, 2002). This argument is consistent with the finding from this study’s interview with one of the participants whose observation cautioned that ‘... *some of the ministries with websites are as good as those that do not have. What is the use of the website if it is only a platform for top officials to brag about their accolades rather than displaying information that is helpful to the users?*’ (P3). In the main, content at Stage I could hardly be considered as citizen-centric; it needs to be enhanced.

Stage II: Enhanced Web Presence

Table 4.14 shows the content of the ministerial websites at an Enhanced Stage. Ingrams and Manoharan (2018) indicated that at this Stage II of e-government development, governments publish important information about government. Information is at the cornerstone of every policy decision, response, initiative, activity, interaction and transaction between government and citizens, among government agencies and government and businesses. The data from Table 4.14 reveals that the Government of Lesotho provides timely government release and other important documents. As depicted in Section 4.3.4, this information includes timely reports and latest news, calendar of events, regulatory laws and policy frameworks, circulars,

tenders and official statements. This is contrary to the findings of the UNDESA and ASPA's (2002) 2001 survey, which suggested that it was uncommon among African countries at that time to publish this kind of information that the Government of Lesotho has today. This trend clearly shows an epic e-government progress in Lesotho since 2001, especially in the service and information provision.

For transparent governance and open administration, government publications such as bills, policies or circulars are necessary as they reveal government intentions. As Galster (2018) stated, e-government promotes open processes that improve transparent government. Transparency is the ability to see through government's operations, understand the actions and admit responsibility and accountability. Displaying tenders, for example, clearly indicates that the Government of Lesotho is not only on a mission to improve economic growth but also to make processes open and transparent. Effective implementation of e-government offers the opportunity to revitalise processes and reduce layers of bureaucracy that are involved in conducting common transactions (Bhatnagar, 2002; Cordella, 2015). Thus, although publishing current tenders on government platforms does not necessarily suggest that procurement processes would be open and fair, it certainly gives everyone a sense of equity and equal opportunity specially to isolated groups.

In addition, evidence presented in Chapter 1 highlighted that there is high level of unemployment in Lesotho, especially among youth. InfoDev (2009), demonstrated that citizens in many countries around the world usually spend money and time discovering and accessing government services. Unemployed youth from remote communities are more disadvantaged in this regard given the distance required to travel to get to government offices for face-to-face services. According to Section 26 (2) of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Lesotho, 'the State shall take appropriate measures in order to promote equality of opportunity for the disadvantaged groups in the society to enable them to participate fully in all spheres of public life' (GoL, 1993). Clearly, by publishing current vacancies on its websites, the Government of Lesotho brings services to the door steps of the majority of the Basotho nation who, according to the evidence provided in Chapter 1, are remote from the offices of the District Administrators where government information is occasionally posted. This means e-government is used to make possible decentralised access to services, saving money and time for citizens who would otherwise have to walk long distances to government departments.

On the other hand, analysis suggests that government is failing to maintain an e-government development high standard with reference to service provision at Enhanced Presence levels. This is, however, consistent with the results of the UN (2008), which showed that most governments in developing countries face similar challenges. The data presented in Table 4.14 illustrates that information published on all government websites is completely textual. As demonstrated in Section 4.5 and in Table 4.5 in particular, this information does not include any other media such as videos and voice clips other than it being textual. The challenge with this kind of information is that it does not consider the complex issues of the diverse populace.

To start with, the data from the websites' evaluation brought about the current picture of e-government practice in Lesotho. This picture not only portrayed the current practice status and technical issues hindering the progress of e-government in the country, but also hinted at cultural and policy related issues. As Al-Hujran (2011) and Mazebe *et al* (2014) observed, the results of this study also suggest that e-government must be sensitive to cultural issues. According to Kramsch (2002), language cultivates culture to which the Government of Lesotho seems not sensitive. The analysis suggests that Lesotho risks acceptance, accessibility and usability of the government websites and services because their content is culture insensitive.

The results, as shown in Table 4.4, indicated that none of the websites possessed a language change option tab. This means users, specifically illiterate citizens and residents, are dictated to transact and interact in the imposed English language used on the website despite whether or not they understand it. Evident from analysis of the previous research is that inasmuch as English is spoken widely, more often it is a third or second language, utilised to conducting business (World Bank, 2009). As a result, Magayane *et al* (2016) commented that government websites should not only be designed in such a way that their content is provided mainly in the native language – a language that is much understood by and is comfortable with the majority of the citizen populace – but the website language change option feature must also reflect that understanding. This is because even native language usage presents serious problem in nations that have several ethnic or local dialects. Effective implementation of e-government must provide for a language change option feature that would allow users to tap to their languages of their choice.

Based on the fact that Sesotho is a mother tongue language in Lesotho, one would expect that if the websites' content is not mainly in it, there must be a language change option tab for users to click on in order to get information in this language. This expectation aligns with the UN's (2008) recommendation that citizens should be afforded the chance to receive information and take part in national discussions about their country in their local language. This is not only for easy understanding and informed participation but also a reflection that the government cares more about its citizens as much as it does for the international communities. Although the e-Visa website did not qualify to be part of analysis in this study, but came into the picture because of the direct link to it as demonstrated in 4.5.1.2, it can be used as a good reference. The site has a language change option tab, which allows users to choose among seven different languages. These languages are Dansk, Nederland, Francais, Deutsch, Italiano, English and Espanola. Since e-Visa has an independent website, it would be advisable that it be adopted by or be part of the contents of the website of the MoHA. This would strengthen the accessibility of the website of this ministry.

Website accessibility necessitates that web pages are "user-friendly" in the broadest sense for all those visiting the site. Hence, it is worth endorsing that the websites of the Government of Lesotho should not only have content in at least the two official languages of the country but also a language change option tab, which would allow citizens to opt for any language they prefer. The persistent failure to do so reflects government's unwillingness towards equity, inclusiveness and participatory democracy.

It can be noticed from the analysis that the importance of language in an IT-orientated environment is irrefutable. As observed by Haritos-Shea (2003) and Zhao *et al* (2012), this study establishes that language is one most significant and complex issues related to content accessibility and broader issues of e-government and social inclusion. Language determines who can access information and services and participate in the State affairs. Access to services and information by speakers and users of foreign languages, as seems a priority in the case of Lesotho, should be as important as access by the mother tongue language speakers and users. The ability of an e-government service to be easily reached by citizens regardless of their education status brings the biggest benefit to e-government. With its ability to offer the same services and information to citizens equitably, e-government strengthens the governance capacity to increase citizens' opportunity to interact with government and engage in political activities.

Furthermore, in this digital age, government websites – and e-government at large – should be no more trying to replicate business models of interacting with and delivering value to customers but rather focusing on competing with the e-business websites. As stated by Haung and Benyoucef (2014), an e-business website gives value to customers for it understands their special needs and delivers accordingly. Because it limits itself to textual content, the Government of Lesotho socially excludes the other important part of the community who cannot read, either because of visual challenges or literacy issues, by denying them access to information through other media means.

More often officials such as ministers ordinarily deliver their speeches in the local language (Sesotho) when they address the local people or issues concerning them. These speeches for locals are later translated into English for online publication. This is not entirely surprising because English maintains its status of being the language of Internet *lingua franca* (Mares, 2016). Using the English language for wider international access does not have to be at the expense of the access by the local people who cannot read English or decide not to read in English. This assertion is consistent with the results of Warschauer (2003) which suggested that access to service delivery must be sensitive to social systems and processes, and also with understanding that by providing services online is not to overcome a digital divide but rather to further the processes of social inclusion.

Bonina and Cordella (2008) and Saxena (2005) stated that e-government emerged to ameliorate governmental structures and processes for the purpose of promoting and delivering more citizen-centric government services and encouraging public value creation. Hence, podcasting and streaming media would give value to the local citizens to whom textual content is not favourable. In respect of podcasting, the websites were evaluated for the ability to offer digital audio files that can be interacted with, played, paused or downloaded, and the results are so negative. Similar results are found in the assessment to determine streaming media, which is video or audio content that is played immediately or is constantly received by and presented to a website end-user while being delivered by a provider.

The review of the literature showed that e-government websites offer services and information to citizens and can help building democratic ethos. However, such benefits cannot be reaped if websites are not accessible (Oni *et al*, 2016). The analysis suggests that the websites of the Government of Lesotho are partially accessible. The design of the websites only allows those who are most privileged such as those who are literate and those

who can “master the art of English” to access the websites content. Whereas those who are less fortunate including individuals with visual impairments and those who cannot read English or speak in English are denied access and their civic right to contribute to the issues that affect them. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, Makhasane (2010) discovered that many Basotho are forced to drop out of school before secondary education due to social and economic circumstance. Evidence emerged from his study suggested that it is largely those who went through secondary education that have competence in the English language. This implies that the use of language, which is not considerate of the realities as presented by Makhasane (2010) neglects a big portion of the society. Thus, e-government at an Enhanced Stage should entail government’s execution of a variety of defined functions in such a way that the ultimate possible quantity of wealth is generated for the people through the efficient, transparent and equitable sharing of and access to public information.

Furthermore, it is evident from the analysis that the Government of Lesotho has lost its obligation to ensure citizens’ rights in respect of privacy and security of their personal data collected for legitimate purposes only. Evidence emerging from this study, both from the analysis of the interviews and websites evaluation, indicates that neither has government legal laws regulating the use and protection of private data nor a privacy and security policy. Table 4.14 illustrates that none of the analysed government ministries have published privacy and security statements on their websites as one of the most mandatory requirements for an Enhanced Web Presence. E-government should, therefore, be approached with a view to protect individual privacy and, government websites should reflect that by providing a “guaranteeing” statement. The failure to do so does not only raise openness concerns and trust issues but also impacts on the government websites’ usability, ultimately affecting e-government services. For wider utilisation of e-government services and effective communication between government and citizens, both technical and legislative responses must be addressed.

Stage III: Interactive Web Presence

Lesser (2018) and Wang *et al* (2005) suggested that the Interactive Web Presence seriously characterises the citizen-focus paradigm as content, services and information align with what individuals and communities require instead of what governments decide to offer. Information and service provision is expected to maximise the value of the consumer by making sure that interaction with them is priority. Table 4.14 provides content of the

government ministries at an Interactive Web Presence. According to Torres *et al* (2005), this Stage III of e-government development embodies effective interactions using digital channels for some part of a service or transaction. A site's presence expands drastically with access to multiple government services and institutions. Ordinarily, a more complex level of formal interactions between service providers and citizens is present through feedback features or "talk to us" area. Interactive sites offer regularly updated information, host forms to download, applications to submit, search capabilities and linkages to other relevant websites.

However, the analysis suggests that the ministries of the Government of Lesotho are at their embryonic stage of Interactive Web Presence. Although there are variations in terms of interactive services among the ministries, each provides a very limited service at this stage. For instance, as seen from Table 4.14, the MoF has remained the only ministry that exposes users to the downloadable material. As depicted from Table 4.11, the MoF website has a Supplier Registration Form, which allows vendors to apply to be registered on the supplier database. It should be emphasised that with this mammoth initiative, the MoF, however, does not allow full interaction, which makes the interactivity of its website elementary. The Supplier Registration Form cannot be submitted online but requires vendors to submit it physically at the departments. To a larger degree, this forfeits the whole e-government purpose whose intentions are to permit citizens to transact with government at their own convenience and saves them travelling costs. Understanding what is good for citizens will create good relationships.

In contrast, the implication for the kind of relationship the rest of the ministries have with citizens is very severe, to the fact that citizens are denied the opportunity of online applications and registrations and access to the downloadable materials. Librarians, archivists and other information science professionals are forced to be physically at government offices to access government documents. This is not good presidency considering the bureaucracy procedures citizens will be subjected to. As Nkwe (2012) observed, visiting government offices is a complete torture, characterised with frustrations. Restricting researchers from downloadable government documents is no better than denying them their citizen's right to information.

With the development of ITs, e-government has been instrumental in strengthening democracy and obtaining effectiveness and efficiency in the public sector. E-government means the use of web-based technologies to enhance government information and services to

citizens, businesses, government entities and employees. Thus, effective e-government, especially at the Interactive, Transactional and Seamless Phase, allows government to connect citizens with other organs, State or non-State. The analysis suggests that properly designed and interactive government websites should have quick links connecting users to other websites. The findings show that government has done generally well in widening channels of interaction by providing links that network citizens with government and its workforce and other important agencies, nationally and internationally. “Networking” citizens shows ability and preparedness for vertical and horizontal governance, which is a prerequisite for connected e-government.

Table 4.14 shows that 50% of the analysed ministries have links to the social media. New social media tools provide an enormous opportunity for government to interact with citizens and other stakeholders in dynamic policy development. Governments that do not link citizens to social media are not serious about effective two-way communication in modern days. Khasawneh and Abu-Shanab (2017) stated that in recent years, social media has become a platform that is easily accessible to anyone with Internet connection, and the favourite communication channel for a large number of people. Carlo *et al* (2011) presented social media as an opportunity that supports governments to become more transparent by providing citizens with enhanced information access and improved services, opening an active communication platform, empowering and making them more involved.

Government failure to provide links to the social media – as demonstrated by some ministries as profiled in Table 4.14 – is tantamount to self-hate. Social media offers a new opportunity for government to gather as much information more effectively and quickly from citizens through electronic engagement (e-engagement) and electronic participation (e-participation). Creating and using channels for e-engagement and e-participation brings democracy. InfoDev (2009) demonstrated that more often citizens feel distant from their elected leaders and civil servants. By making information and services interactive, e-government does not only close the gap between elected officials, public servants and citizens, but also instils an ideal of participation in government and democratic processes, involving stakeholders in all policy development stages including formulation, implementation and feedback processes.

Feedback features were used to assess how interactive the Government of Lesotho is during the processes of service delivery. Evidence presented in Table 4.14 reveals that only the

MFRSC and MDP have interactive features, allowing users to communicate with officials at the back office.

According to Baxter (2018), participating through enabled technologies brings value to citizens as that embodies the principles of inclusive democracy. The benefit is that if people are included in governmental affairs and in issues that affect them, they feel empowered and thus feel ownership of government initiatives, ultimately promoting, utilising and protecting them (Halpin, 2013; Kaaya, 2004; Koneru, 2007). In keeping with this, it would be expected that government agencies provide interactive services to encourage democracy and enable citizens not necessarily to consume services that government has decided to provide but rather to influence the kind of services they would like to receive. Evidence emerging from the findings of Ohemeng (2010) suggested that one of the main reasons for government failure is the erroneous practice of one-size-fits-all approach to service delivery. Therefore, provision of public services especially e-government services should be considerate of “individualism”. A blanket approach to service delivery, as demonstrated by other ministries, must be discouraged at all costs. The freedom to choose should be respected and observed. The subscribe button is such a feature that shows government’s understanding of personalised or customised services.

However, evident from the data presented in Table 4.14 is that the majority (75%) of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho do not have a subscribe button, suggesting the passive role users are subjected to in respect to information and services to receive. The failure to allow customisation of services is non-interactive since interactivity recognises the user’s control over information and services to receive. As a result, this study established that government websites should be developed to allow maximum interactive service delivery.

Stage IV: Transactional Web Presence

The different maturity levels can be determined in terms of complexity, value and integration levels. Some previous research (i.e. Kunstelj, 2004; Nicholas *et al*, 2016) found that while it is easier for many countries to reach interactive levels of service delivery, it is harder for many countries to reach transactional services. Putting it in Irani *et al*’s (2006:1) words, ‘the evidence suggests that a significant number of project failures occur at this stage and thus frustrate the endeavour to achieve a coherent uniform means of access to [g]overnment’. Clearly, because this second last stage is marked with vertical integration, it requires

considerable intervention in the back-office systems and negotiations across various organisations and jurisdictions.

Chhabra (2012) and Williams *et al* (2018) stated that the advancements of ICTs offer users an opportunity to get services easily and at times that are convenient to them. However, it is not a common practice for the Government of Lesotho to allow citizens to enjoy such benefits or services. Traditionally, the public sector services may have required lengthy waits and confrontation with unnecessary time-consuming bureaucracy. Evidence emerging from the analysis suggests that citizens are still forced to visit government offices, stand in long queues to pay for utility bills and fines and obtain licences and birth/death certificates. This result is consistent with the finding from Asogwa (2011) which stated that although online transactions are one of the prime services that demonstrate e-government's utility, the vast majority of African countries have not reached the Transactional Web Presence stage.

The results of this study as presented in Table 4.14 show that none of the Lesotho's government ministries is providing transactional services. While it is acknowledged that most governments' organisations worldwide are still at the websites creation, it is also important to note that a few have transformed to the stage of providing transactional and personalised e-government services (Nengomasha and Uutoni, 2015). Therefore, if Lesotho is serious about the endeavour to promote a healthy society capable of exploiting the full potential of ICTs by the year 2020 as pledged in the 2005 ICT Policy document, it would be in the best interest that the country breaks away from a held tradition in most African governments of providing e-government services but not to the level of Transactional Web Presence. There could not be a more appropriate time than today to reach the 2005 ICT Policy mission to incorporate ICTs in the everyday life of the Basotho. Evidence from the interviews indicated that the Basotho are already involved in e-transactions provided by, *inter alia*, Mobile Money Transfer Services such as M-Pesa and EcoCash. Properly implemented e-transactional services, which is an idea of Lesotho's public sector, are secure and can be accessed via the use of authentication features such as digital signatures or the use of passwords and bank, credit or debit cards as a form of payment arrangement.

Allowing customer option or opportunity to use bank debit, credit card or by any digital means to purchase service, enables free flow of two-way information between government and citizens, which is fundamental for e-government. Effective e-government implementation

that promotes two-way interaction and seamless customer-centric services delivery demands the Government of Lesotho improve its websites to achieve the optimal level of user.

Stage V: Seamless Web Presence

As observed by the UN (2008), UNDESA and ASPA (2001) and Zamanian (2018), the Seamless Web Presence phase is not as easy to qualify as the other four stages of e-government development discussed above. This stage is characterised by the objective of having all online information and services available to the user through a single point of entry that is driven by a super-search engine. Unfortunately, but not surprising, none of the ministries studied has fully actualised the Seamless Web Presence (Stage V) because networked or connected governance has the tasks of providing better organised, aligned and integrated information flows and transactional services. The findings suggest that the idea of realising connected government may be an abstract or remote objective in developing countries such as Lesotho. Evident from the data is that users, through clicking on the ministerial website, driven by a super-search engine, are still not able to instantly have access to seamless e-services. Government agencies or ministries are not networked together to blur lines of demarcation in cyberspace. This shows that the government has not reached the ultimate goal of both the governance and e-government of having vertical and horizontal interactions.

The World Bank (2009) stated that the Seamless Web Presence phase entails redefined relationships between government, citizens, employees and business communities delivering seamless experiences and rich levels of interaction derived from new connectivity and business models for service delivery and policy design and development. As has been overemphasised, the integration of information, channels and processes across various government organisations allows a user to start and complete an entire transaction easily, confidently, and securely. This reinforces the concept of integrated and transformational service. In this way, users of the websites of the Government of Lesotho would be able to access any information or service in a comprehensive “end-to-end” package where the existing boundaries between ministry, department or other agencies do not interrupt or interfere with the service outcome, and where the services are clustered along the common user’s needs.

It is inevitable that the public sector has increasingly entered a period of unprecedented obstacles, driven in part by innovations in technology that are fundamentally changing how

government connects with its people. Given the challenges facing the implementation of e-government in Lesotho, as emerged from the data analysis of the interviews conducted in this study, it makes us realise that fully integrated e-government services are far from being obtained. A realistic political vision is needed to reorganise internal administrative structures of government's responsibilities to materialise the delivery of seamless online services by eliminating or reducing administrative boundaries. This will allow citizens to interact with government and receive services 24/7. Thus e-government, hereto, meant the use and impact of ICTs in governance systems. It entails new styles of leadership, new channels for interacting with government, new methods of transacting and new systems for organising and delivering information and services.

In summary, while not overlooking other ministries, Section A presented an analysis of the four ministries of the Government of Lesotho which have already provided information and services online. Content analysis was done to analyse contents and features of the websites, focusing on visibility and availability, accessibility, transparency and openness, usability, interactivity and transactional services and connected government features and functions. Based on the findings, the UN model of e-government was utilised to determine the level of maturity of each website in relation to delivery of services.

Section B: Presentation and Analysis of the Data Collected from the Interviews

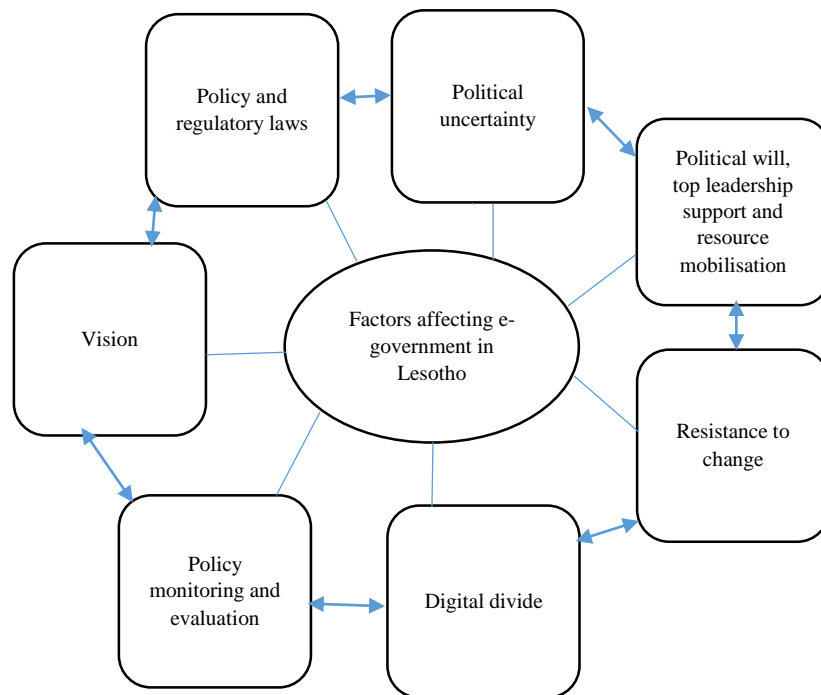
4.9. FACTORS AFFECTING E-GOVERNMENT IMPLEMENTATION IN LESOTHO

Section A aims at analysing the data that were collected with the view to investigate important factors affecting implementation of e-government services in Lesotho. The purpose was to understand the progress and development of e-government in the country since the adoption of the ICT policy of 2005. Because the objective of this study was to gain the viewpoint of government, data presented here was collected from government officials through semi-structured in-depth interviews. In total, 12 officials participated in this study. Six of them were involved in one-on-one interviews while the other six were involved in a group interview. The study under investigation was about e-government, which is among the ten strategies identified to harness the implementation of the ICT policy. As such, ministries that are at proximity with ICT policy and e-government strategy are the MCST and MDP from whom the sample was drawn. The MDP has obligations for national strategic planning as well as monitoring and evaluation of the national policies and strategic frameworks. It has the mandate to direct and coordinate other ministries in policy making in general. As such, a

purposeful sample of three senior officials was drawn from the MDP's Policy and Strategic Planning (PSP) Department. On the other hand, nine participants were purposefully drawn from the MCST. The rationale for involving participants from the MCST is because the ICT policy, which also enshrines e-government, is formulated within this ministry. The MCST is essentially charged with overall responsibility to implement the ICT policy and its programmes including e-government. Hence, participants came from the MCST's Department of Information & Communication Technology and E-government Infrastructure Project unit. These participants were purposefully chosen based on their strategic positions and technical expertise.

The participants argued that there is neither a single recognised way nor best practice that would lead to the effective implementation of e-government. They generally opined, however, that whilst in broad terms factors for public sector success and failure are generally known, the way they are interpreted and applied must be context-based and programme specific. Hence, the Lesotho's e-government implementation relies on essential and unique factors. Inasmuch as several issues emerged from the interviews, the analysis grouped them into seven (7) themes as presented in Figure 4.3. It is important to highlight that these issues, in which their presence encourages success and their absence encourages failure include vision; policy and regulatory laws; political uncertainty; political will, leadership support and resource mobilisation; resistance to change; digital divide; and policy monitoring and evaluation. The detailed account of each of these factors is presented in sections that follow. The arrows used in Figure 4.3 show the relationship between different factors and illustrate that all these factors influence one another in some way.

Figure 4.1. Factors affecting e-government in Lesotho



4.9.1. Vision

One of the issues identified in the data analysis significant to e-government is vision. According to Allen (1995), a vision should be lucid enough to establish a recognisable picture of the future; be strong enough to bring into commitment to performance; be powerful enough to stress what realistically can be; and elucidate what can be. UNESCO (2005) stated that any country or government institution implementing e-government must state its own e-government vision, outlining what e-government means to them and what they are hoping to achieve by adopting e-government. In this study, the concept of vision was broadly applied to encompass the e-government vision statement, mission, strategy and implementation plan.

The findings suggested that e-government in Lesotho was not guided by vibrant vision, which became a main challenge to the e-government service implementation. Data indicated that effective e-government requires establishing a comprehensive vision outlining objectives and strategic plans ahead of time, which according to the participants is a dream yet to come. Notwithstanding, while the participants acknowledged that e-government policy objectives and strategies are incorporated in the national ICT policy, they strongly lashed out that there should be e-government framework for which the ICT policy lays a foundation. This framework, as they stated, would give a more detailed account for *‘e-government vision statement, broad objectives at national level, and a planning process with specific goals and*

targets' (P3). This statement provided evidence that vision, which should be contained in the e-government framework or policy, was necessary to help government and its departments set a course at the start, monitor progress forthrightly, assist orientation of individual initiatives and make frequent mid-course corrections. Evident from the data is that turning vision into practicality would definitely lead to successful e-government implementation.

The findings also emphasised that the purpose of government is to advance the shared goals of a society. Realising goals takes a vision, with a direction to the desired future. Although a common vision is not a goal in itself, the findings revealed, however, that it becomes a means to achieve policy priorities. Vision serves as a roadmap for how to reach the intended objectives, which becomes the goal for all decisions and plans in the whole agency.

Asked if there was vision for e-government in the country, one of the participants stated that e-government was adopted to intervene in the escalating service delivery backlog. The participant articulated that:

There is red tape in public service. One fundamental problem is the delay in the allocation of passports and IDs (identity documents). Therefore, as government, we take it to be our responsibility to ensure that people get services quicker, cheaper and in a convenient manner. As you would remember, the Government of Lesotho has launched e-visa in 2017 through the Ministry of Home Affairs. The e-visa platform has facilitated easier and quicker access for tourists (P4).

What P4 rather explained were the benefits and opportunities for e-government in the country. Without e-government framework outlining the e-government vision, it will always be difficult to explain the country's future in the digital age and ways in which the anticipated future would be achieved. Needless to say, if governments are to have any substantive influence on the public sector performance, they should not be limiting their actions to a simple transfer of their services and information online without really aligning e-government to the current over-arching government policies and philosophies. Accordingly, evidence from the data supported that e-government in Lesotho is aligned and designed to meet the goals of the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) and National Vision 2020. These two national frameworks provide policy direction for the country. As evidence suggested, by integrating e-government strategy in the ICT policy and aligning it to the other national frameworks will in future, when e-government has reached higher levels of maturity, allow

the government to execute a number of projects aimed at eradicating poverty, improving public administration, and enhancing effectiveness accountability and openness in the delivery of service to citizens.

It was opined that government-wide vision, in the form of Vision 2020, NSDP and many other national policy frameworks including Poverty Reduction Strategy, would help interlace e-government programmes with wider reform and strategic objectives. P3 stated that having a broader vision of reform could help to sustain consistency and a sense of meaning in the carrying out of e-government services and assist endorse inter- and intra-ministerial co-ordination. But since there was no clear e-government plan, this was not the case in Lesotho's e-government context. Evident from the data on government websites' evaluation undertaken by this study is that the majority of the Government ministries (84.6%) did not provide web-based services: Ministry of Defence and National Security; Ministry of Education and Training; Ministry of Energy; Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Relations; Ministry of Health; MoHA; MAFS; Ministry of Labour and Employment; Ministry of Law and Constitutional Affairs; Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship Affairs; Ministry of Small Business Development, Co-operatives and Marketing; Ministry of Social Development; Office of the Prime Minister; Ministry of Trade and Industry; Ministry of Mining; Ministry of Police and Public Safety; Ministry of Water Affairs; Ministry of Public Service; Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation and Ministry of Public Works and Transport. Only four ministries already provided e-government services: the MDP, MTEC, MoF, and MFRSC.

In general, the analysis suggested that the lack of concrete planning made it difficult for the government to have a coordinated attention on many facets and processes, a whole-of-government e-government vision, lasting focus and objectives. In the absence of e-government vision the government independent decision-making power is subdued.

The participants asserted that the Government of Lesotho had minimal control in deciding on the nature of e-government projects and services in the country since the government relies on funding from external sources. Asked whether there was strategic plan for e-government implementation, G2 aggrieved that, *'donors tell us what to do... Our plan is based on funding'*. This finding is, however, not uncommon. It corroborated those of the previous research. For example, Khan *et al* (2018) argued that because of the ability to control indirect financial resources as well as direct financial and political incentives, external donors abuse

their power to influence policy decisions and processes. In her study “Dancing with donors: When the ability of NPOs set their own direction compromised”, Jasarevic (2014) penned that ‘many others found themselves steering activities to echo donors’ preferences and keep the funding tap running’.

Counter to this argument, which suggested that coordinated focus is lost in the absence of a common vision, another participant objected that: *‘since there is no clear vision as to where the country wants to go in relation to the application of information technologies in public administration’s operations, we cannot really say external funders suppress our decision making power or redirect us from our initial plans or e-government vision’* (G4). This suggested that vision can only be taken away where it previously existed but where it did not exist, such as in Lesotho, it cannot be taken away or redirected but can rather be directed. This ideally emphasised how important strategic planning or the absence of it interplays in the implementation of policy initiatives.

Inasmuch as G4’s point sounded convincing, G3 maintained the initial stance by indicating that *‘the African Development Bank (ADB) proposed to fund the Government of Lesotho, clearly stipulating how the money should be used and within what timeframe’*. This implied that even if the government had prior plans or priorities, funding would have frustrated the whole set up. But as Al-rawahna (2016) observed, it can be argued that challenges to e-government are only barriers to the extent that government has no strategy and implementation plan that are also rooted in a very strong and focused vision.

4.9.2. Policy and regulatory laws

As e-government practice is completely revolutionising the way the public sector performs its duties, new policy and legal concerns continue to mount. Alshehri and Drew (2010) noted that as a result of this, institutional capacity is required to harmonise the transformation process, most importantly because e-government has never been a technical subject, but an organisational matter. Admittedly, the participants submitted that policy makers must ensure the development of policy and update of legal laws to administer government’s adoption and proper implementation.

Evident from the data is that e-government vision alone does not translate into or guarantee e-government implementation’s success. The participants stated that the plan shows only what needs to be done, when, by who and with what resources. Thus, neither implementation plan nor vision guarantees implementation. The effectiveness of e-government processes and

initiatives, as the participants elaborated, is highly dependent on the role of government in making sure that there is a proper legislative framework for e-government function. Prerequisite for e-government processes to be introduced and accepted is their formal legal equal value and status with the paper process.

However, the participants were explicit in citing lack of legislation as an obstacle for implementing e-government in Lesotho. As earlier demonstrated, the findings pointed to a non-existence of policy framework to guide actions and procedures involved in e-government implementation. One of the participants expressed that *'issues concerning e-government are not penned down. All discussions, are somehow informal, not guided by e-government policy framework'* (P5).

For policy framework to be effective, Ndou (2004) and Shrestha and Devkota (2015) recommended it to be in existence with legal laws and regulations, which cover all documents and transactions as well as applications and related functionality *inter alia* e-mail usage, e-commerce, e-business, copyright rules, e-payments and e-crimes. The existence and effectiveness of these regulatory laws will, according to the participants, create an enabling environment for implementation of electronic applications. These laws as they put it could, for instance, oblige the MoF to allocate a budget for e-government initiatives or be held politically and legally accountable for not bringing in financial support to accomplish e-government objectives. In essence, the findings suggested that in the absence of policy and regulatory laws, e-government will remain a declaration of intent that may never materialise.

The implementation of a policy initiative, e-government inclusive, is not ineludibly a logical, linear process; rather, it is often interrupted and fragmented. These were the words of the participants when demonstrating that policy implementation often requires critical changes, not only in the supporting stakeholder coalition and institutional structures but also in the rules that create an enabling environment. However, the participants highlighted that the difficulties in certain changes had caused the e-government infrastructure project process to be prolonged, disrupted by, among others, change in political regime. They demonstrated that even in the midst of these turbulences, e-government processes would be unshaken should e-government be viewed legitimate by the legislature.

In that spirit, legitimacy may express itself through expressions of government to act. Ordinarily, the legitimacy of government intentions to act is usually institutionalised into policy (Brooks, 1989). There has to be a comprehensive framework of values and ideas

within which decisions and actions, or inactions, are taken by government in relation to some issue or problem. Hence, to gain legitimacy in automating services can only be conferred by legislative measures and supported by an effective legal framework. This framework should be capable of identifying and dealing with legal obstacles to e-government. Legal problems may include the differences that exist between traditional data management requirements – collecting, storing and sharing data with various government agencies – and the ease of electronically collecting and sharing data.

Until the completion of this study, there was no legal framework in force in Lesotho that dealt with issues relating to electronic information (e-information) sharing, electronic transactions (e-transactions) and related functionality. According to the participants, effective e-government implementation in this country relies on the government's sense of urgency to adopt the envisaged Lesotho's Electronic Transactions and Electronic Commerce Bill of 2013, which was still, surprisingly so, with the office of parliamentary council drafters. This Bill, which is known as the e-transactions and e-commerce bill, largely follows international trends. As was addressed by the participants, once effective, the Act will '*regulate and facilitate online communication and transactions; protect consumer's rights and, provide for service providers' limitation of liability; promote the utilisation of e-government and related services*' (P4).

It became clear, according to the participants, that e-transactions and e-commerce regulations would enhance e-government acceptance and implementation in the country. On one hand, these laws are perceived that they will force public administration to embrace the age of technology by enabling a complete shift from paperwork to electronic means. It appeared that will not only reduce citizens' travelling costs and save them time but will also promote a complete online transaction. One participant related that the current system did not recognise electronic receipts, which by virtue of that discourages e-government transactions. The participant demonstrated this point by creating the following scenario:

Let us say I want to apply for driver's licence online..., there is no law which regulates electronic transactions and payments. Apparently, our systems do not recognise electronic receipts (e-receipts). Now what is the whole idea of applying online while at the same time I would still be expected to travel from Mokhotlong to Maseru [about 150 kilometres] to submit proof of payment in the form of physical receipt? (P4)

This was enough evidence to suggest for legislation which would not only regulate or give effect to electronic application (e-application) and electronic payment (e-payment) but also e-receipt. In addition, evidence from the data suggested that e-transactions and e-commerce Act will address issues of cyberattacks and online criminal activities. As s/he continued, P4 expressed in support that the successful e-government implementation must be based on government competence to safeguard those who use its services:

Let us again assume that there is electronic transaction and 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? Look, Basotho are already engaging in digital transactions i.e. using mobile phone-based money transfers such as M-Pesa and EcoCash. ... have you ever thought what could happen should someone's money get missing in their phone account? In short, parliament needs to speed up the crafting of and adopt e-transaction and e-commerce bill into Act to safeguard people against malpractices.

It was clear from this point that lack of legal framework raises salient concerns especially around the issue of trust, privacy, confidentiality and security. These issues are frequently cited barriers for e-government development (Manda and Backhouse, 2016; Munyoka, 2019; Yang, 2019). Participants expressed that these issues need to be ensured in the form of legislation before digital services can even advance. As Al-Shboul *et al* (2014) observed, it is common knowledge that many people are sceptical about using new technologies especially if the use of such applications would further require monetary transactions in exchange for services provided. The participants added that the situation even exacerbates if there are neither legal laws in place nor security and privacy policy ensured. As ascertained by one participant, *'citizens cannot transact with government when there are no policies and laws to safeguard their banking and private data as well as authentications information'* (G1).

The ITU (2009) established that creating legal laws pertaining to e-government basics including digital authentication and signatures will create a warm environment for e-government acceptance. The participants indicated that since government collects enormous amount of data through daily transactions with citizens, it should act responsibly in protecting personal information while making effective use of it. Inability to constitute protections and legal reforms was said to affect users' trust in relation to privacy and security concerns, thus

creating reluctance in doing electronic transactions. This implied that the presence of legislation would foster e-government service usage while its absence would become a hindrance. Hence, the participants were firm in their assertion that the launching of e-transactions and e-commerce regulations to guarantee privacy and secure transactions would encourage e-government service usage.

The participants further indicated that a success in e-government implementation in Lesotho also lies with security and privacy, which without doubt would articulate users' rights to privacy and give assurance that the information shared and processed is only for legitimate purposes. This assertion seemed to be in line with Mutimukwe (2019) and Sarabdeen (2014) who argued that ensuring people's expectations and rights, especially through policy framework, is critical as it does not only reflect a means to building citizens trust and confidence, but also a means to express government's commitment to seamless transactions and delivery of services.

Needless to say, the analysis unfolded that until completion of this study, there was still no absolute ownership and the right to some sensitive data. Participants expressed that private and business information shared with the government was, like with any other governments around the world or private organisations, at risk of leakages, hackers and cyberattacks. If data collected and stored by government is at risk, not only government as the accountable custodian is threatened, but also acclaimed providers. For successful e-government acceptance, security of information should be leveraged. It is worth noting that the best, and probably the only way, users would be sure that their data is protected is through security and privacy policies and laws.

The findings suggested that as e-government implementation matures in Lesotho, obviously online transactions will become more complex and government will find itself under an intense pressure to address issues of confidentiality, privacy and security. As participants indicated, one of the sophisticated applications of e-government is e-voting, which uses electronic ballots that allow voters to transmit their vote to election officials over the Internet. This application requires extensive security approaches to secure the voting process and protect the voter's personal data.

Moreover, the analysis further contrasted that while legal laws are significant for G2C and G2B relations, legislative and regulatory frameworks around are equally important for government to government (G2G) functioning. Traditionally, current governance frameworks

assume that each agency works in *silos* in terms of performance management, accountability, data ownership and sharing. Therefore, participants were of the view that if e-government truly means exchange of data and abilities and taking collective responsibility, new regulatory frameworks or alteration of the old ones must be developed to allow collaboration and information sharing between government agencies. They underlined that proper regulatory framework was also required to harmonise the economic conditions for accessible ICTs equipment, services and infrastructures.

In an ideal world, a legal base that grants for the execution of e-government services and processes will endow with the statutory basis of, obligation for, and laws related to the government information, processes and services that may be delivered online (Basu, 2004). It will assign responsibilities for and ownership rights to the information provided and collected digitally. This framework will clearly establish jurisdictional responsibilities in relation to intergovernmental transactions as well as personal and business transactions with government. This means that while a legal framework preserves basic public goals such as access to public information and right to privacy and security, it also provides mechanisms by which legal standards are recognised and enforced. However, the participants concluded that bold political decisions are required to establish legislative frameworks for e-government – a phenomenon that has proved to be risky.

4.9.3. Political uncertainty

The participants revealed that political uncertainty has become a prominent problem confronting the implementation of policies in Lesotho. As such, implementation of the ICT policy (2005) and e-government in particular, is not immune to this challenge. Political uncertainty, which is an endemic condition to policy making and implementation, encompasses domestic violence, military tensions, and political regime change, to mention but a few. Paudel (2009) claimed that political uncertainty is likely to be more prominent in less developed and developing countries due to inadequate resources, wide-ranging demands for public services and investment, frail political institutions and limited capacities for policymaking and programme implementation amidst all other challenging conditions.

In the case of Lesotho, a developing country in Southern Africa, political uncertainty which is a pervasive phenomenon appeared to be more inherent in the political processes, especially elections. Inasmuch as free elections are fundamental to the institutional structure of democratic governments and connect citizens to their representatives, the participants

lamented that elections create uncertainty over the outcome. It is about who the successors will be, for how long they will hold the office and what policy directions they will be pursuing. From the participants' point of view, uncertainty naturally arises because different candidates running for government, if elected, either go slowly on the initiatives implemented by their predecessors or implement completely different policies. Within a space of five years (2012-2017), Lesotho had already conducted three general elections, in which each saw the incoming of a fragile coalition government whose rampages are still witnessed, not only on economy but on service delivery as well.

Cerna (2013) theorised that change is a most important part of human life, whether it is in technology, firms or across sectors including health care, social policies or education. Yet it is still not adequately known how and when change will occur. Bunce (1980) remarked that one most notable change in government administration is through regime change, which is the replacement of one rule with another. The findings showed that this change has severe implications on the delivery of public service. Addressing whether or not change in political administration affects implementation of e-government, the research informants expressed that:

E-government is not immune to issues that affect other projects or policy intentions. Change in political administration hits us hard. For example, there was funding given by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) some years back to sponsor the formulation of cyber laws, data protection laws and e-commerce laws. We were very advanced with policy processes because stakeholders such as local banks and security forces including the army had already made their submissions. But due to new phenomenon whereby there is change of government in every two years [sic.], you find that new parliament does not continue with the bills of the past government(s). As a result, we still do not have such laws. In rare cases where new government may want to pursue such policies, they want to start processes from the scratch. This becomes a huge problem because stakeholders and technocrats alike seem to be reluctant to do one thing more than once or twice (P5).

This revelation explicates a diaspora tendency of lack of a new political power to continue with the strategic plans of the predecessor. It is worth mentioning, however, that this practice is not strange in global politics. Like Bunce (1980), Meyer and Cloete (2000) commented that

the most policy change, often spearheaded by the nature of parliamentary democracies which allow regular elections, mostly occurs when one party is replaced by another as a ruling party. For example, such change happened in South Africa in the mid-1990s when Mandela took over from F.W. de Klerk. It also occurred in the USA when Bill Clinton's Democratic Party took over from the Republican Party. The only difference is that, in more consolidated-like democracies such as the USA and arguably South Africa, this kind of change is more driven by ideological and philosophical frameworks instead of negligence and lack of accountability as it appeared to be in the case of Lesotho.

Participants established that regime change in Lesotho has drastically affected development in general, ICT initiatives and e-government in particular. One of the participants expressed that:

Every new government comes with new principal secretaries and directors. Thus, change in such strategic positions means a drastic change in whole set-up. To be concise, many things have stopped in this department due to the changes we are referring to. This project of building ICT infrastructure was supposed to have ended last year (2017) but we are still far from finishing amid one-year extension we are in. The problem is that it takes new government time to understand why they should continue with the ongoing project (G2).

This trend is partly attributed to the contending priorities each governing political party has. Responding in the affirmative that change in political administration has an immense impact on the development of projects and programs, the participants blamed the party politics type of government system which is not for the good of the general public. The participants reckoned that each governing party has its own priorities and suggested that '*if the incumbent government prioritises education, you would find that a next government's priority is health or unemployment*' (P3). This suggested that a policy that runs contrary to the manifesto of the reigning government may suffer at the implementation stage because it may lack support, both administrative and financial.

At the other end, apart from the acclaimed priorities which sometimes culminate in discontinuity as explained above, the underlying reason for abandoning "good" initiatives that were already started by predecessors may not be farfetched. It may be traced not to the ideological differences but the ego of our political leaders. The participants put forth that it

feels no convincing, for example, to build a complete new departmental website while the current website may only need to be updated. As put by Makinde (2005:65), successors want to make a name for themselves hence they find it necessary to establish new programmes. This may not only explain one of the reasons why it is likely to find abandoned projects all over Lesotho but also shows a lack of mercy towards the public purse.

The gist of the matter is that while political uncertainties in the form of electoral outcomes may not be avoided, especially in democratic countries such as Lesotho, their impacts are not desirable for the common good for the citizens. Change in political regime is a constraint that alters the effective implementation of e-government services. Of course, we would not imagine changes in our daily life without a government reactive or pre-emptive approach to policy making to adapt and realise the demanding needs of the society. However, such changes in policy making and decisions must be rational and purposeful and be guided by appropriate policy change models. It deems inappropriate for a government in succession to abandon a predecessor's project just to start new projects with similar or the same strategic policy objectives. The participants overemphasised that existing projects and programmes must be maintained or slightly amended to achieve the original policy goals. They were adamant that the persistent discontinuity of policy initiatives further places the country at risk of losing lucrative investment deals including those aimed at harnessing e-government services. This line of argument corroborated the words once spoken by Matekane as quoted by the *Lesotho Times Online* (2019), Matekane said, '...when a country is unstable...then it becomes a challenge for business to come in because they do not like to inject money into unpredictable environment. They will simply look for other countries to invest in'.

4.9.4. Political will, top leadership support and resource mobilisation

The findings suggested that political will, top leadership support and resource mobilisation were together necessary for implementing e-government in Lesotho. While it is general knowledge that to implement a new policy, programme or project, financial, material, human and technical resources must be set aside (Makinde, 2005; Wolman, 1981), the participants stated that such resources (inputs), however, need to be converted into outputs – goods and services. This was understood to suggest that resources are not an end in themselves. Resources need to be mobilised. Resource mobilisation for adoption of new technologies into government operations refers to statements defining actions about whom, where, when and how resources are to be used. Similarly, statements must be effected. The participants believed that an effective e-government implementation in the country must also involve a set

of actions including establishing and putting into effect directives, employing and deploying personnel, to mention but a few. Responding to what did that mean, G6 explained that even if the government would have accumulated all the necessary resources, there was no assurance that e-government would eventually execute the assigned policy change if there was no action. G3 elaborated by stating that until the presence of leadership and top management commitment to mobilise resources, e-government is mostly theoretical.

The participants were in agreement that in an ideal situation, there must be forward thinking leadership to explain, support, mobilise resources and drive every new innovative initiative. E-government projects are not immune to this philosophy. The broad goal of e-government in Lesotho, as stipulated in the ICT policy of 2005, is to transform the public sector and better the lives of the Basotho nation through the delivery of improved quality services and democratic political processes. It was based on this understanding and on the basis that e-government initiatives are multifaceted, risky, expensive and strategic that the participants maintained that committed and sustained leadership is a prerequisite.

Evident from the data is that strong leadership to manage issues of and mobilise resources for e-government is critical at both administrative and political levels and at all the stages of e-government cycle. At the infancy stages, leadership support is needed for e-government to be adopted and legislated. However, the issue of whether or not there was necessary leadership and commitment at the political level sparked an interesting debate among the group interview participants. Some strongly argued that there was insufficient commitment because *'some of the politicians in government show no interest in ICT issues'* (G5). Those who came out to oppose, however, attested that *'ICT issues are complicated hence it is by default (not by will) that some of the politicians may show disinterest and so unable to drive and promote e-government initiatives'* (G1). From the analysis point of view, both arguments affirm that *'it is hard for some of the politicians to commit to technical and complex issues'* (G6), hence the inability to offer profound support and resource mobilisation for the programmes of such magnitude.

While politicians ensure e-government on the national reforms (G2), the findings suggested that there has to be strong civic management leadership (i.e. directors and coordinators) to legitimise e-government and mobilise stakeholder support and resources (G1). Inasmuch as these technocrats may also be an obstacle to government intentions due to their discretionary power, at least they have a knowhow expertise, do their job diligently and have less to lose in

promoting e-government. Generally, these technocrats function under rather dissimilar decisional principles than the political leadership. The findings indicated that the elected politicians care more about political capital and are reluctant to champion risky initiatives such as e-government that may compromise their followership or votes in case of failure or even in comparison to social programmes including social grants provision.

On the other hand, the participants argued that it is advantageous to work with politicians because they are easy to manipulate. Put it in their own words, *'it is easy to twist politician's arm. Politicians succumb to the populist rhetoric: "service delivery to the people". For that reason, they portray themselves as paragons of virtue. Hence, once you convince them that an initiative is meant to enhance service delivery, they support it'* (P4). This resonated the point that while the politicians are concerned with balancing the interests of their constituencies, the bureau is anxious about maximising output and rationalising scant resources (Crosby, 1996). Bureaucracy is seen to be based on conscientiousness and rigorous defence of the public interest. Therefore, participants called for genuine commitment from the top public service management, which is necessary not only to motivate the rest of the staff but also to influence support from elected politicians and other relevant institutions.

Against this backdrop, it could be assumed that it would be easier for the public service to get elected politicians to buy-in. The challenge in Lesotho is that bureaucratic structures are contemporarily headed by unelected politicians instead of technocratic staff such as director generals, who are employed solely based on their expertise knowledge and skills. Each ministry is under the "chieftainship" of a Principal Secretary (PS) who is undeniably politically deployed. These bureaucrats do not enjoy the benefit of the doubt as officials who are acting in the public interest. Instead they are viewed not to apply their minds objectively to policy change but naturally act on the mandate of their political parties in ensuring and defending political capital. This is one of the many reasons suggested by the participants pointing to why e-government in the country was facing serious challenges, which make its adoption and implementation difficult.

Opinions differed when participants responded to the question of whether there was willingness and commitment at the political level to drive the e-government implementation. One line of argument was that government was committed to advance e-government. This argument was justified by reckoning that e-government as a concept and phenomenon never

existed anywhere in government statutes but today there is official recognition of this phenomenon. It was put:

Just like any country in the world, Lesotho subscribes to the global and regional society. There were a number of summits whereby building an Information Society (IS) became a major issue, and IT was found to be an enabler. That is why our ICT policy was reviewed to include e-government. As a member of the African Union (AU), Lesotho draws from AU Summit which suggested that member countries should go and use ICTs to transform all sectors, be it education, health, agriculture or any other sector. (P5).

Although the move by government to include e-government section in the ICT policy has received positivism, some have questioned whether government commitment could only be limited to that. This act is arguably seen to be nothing but pseudo as it may reflect that government only wanted to report back to the AU.

It became apparent from the interviews that government is expected to do more to show its commitment. As to that, some participants argued that there was no political will. Their line of argument was based on lack of statutory laws expressing the will of the legislature. As they maintained:

The will of the government, if existed, could have been reflected in the e-government vision envisaged in the e-government framework. At the moment, there is neither vision nor political will to develop one. Section 3.5 of the ICT policy on e-government only lays foundation for e-government policy or framework (G2).

In agreement that e-government adoption and implementation had suffered from willingness absence, another participant raised a critical question which reads: ‘*assuming government has shown political will to adopt e-government system by drafting e-transactions and e-commerce bill, why has that draft bill taken many years without it being discussed in and passed by the parliament*’ (G1)? All these concerns were indicative that it was less likely for the country to accomplish complex online transactional services amid lack of genuine commitment at the political level to create a positive environment that encourages implementation and complete e-government service use.

Strengthening the point that political will and leadership support are main ingredients for e-government failure and success, the participants even went further to show that the absence of adequate management support and political leadership commitment had manifested into other numerous implementation problems. One identified difficulty that e-government implementation encountered was a lack of political will to mobilise external funding and allocate a budget for e-government development. This is parallel to the guiding principle as stipulated in the ICT policy, which stated that to help ensure that the country overcome the challenges that face the implementation of a policy of ICT magnitude, Lesotho must have '[p]olitical commitment and proactive leadership in the implementation of the policy, including a leadership role in the attraction and mobilisation of investment needed to achieve policy goals and strategies' (GoL, 2005:16).

It would not be wrong to think that government would do whatever it takes to ensure accumulation of adequate financial resources for the support of e-government implementation. As the participants observed, the problem with implementing e-government in the country was more of a lack of a political will to ensure adequate funding to develop and sustain e-government initiatives than funding being a challenge in itself.

On one hand, all the participants shared a common understanding that e-government implementation systems require mobilisation of actions and resources. In the absence of support and will for e-government development, many opportunities, including securing funding for the execution of e-government services, were missed. For example, one participant illustrated:

... even when there is budget for ICT infrastructure, websites are not prioritised. I think it is time to build an information society. In this case, government websites are enabling platform. The websites bring services closer to the people. That is where government can post important information for public consumption. For example, you do not have to wait for news bulletin on radio in the next hour to know that a minister is coming to your local area. What if you miss them due to the busy schedule...? (P6).

The underlying message depicted above indicates that monetary resources may not be the main challenge. The analysis suggested that the main challenge is with the lack of support for e-government and in particular lack of will to prioritise and champion the development of

government websites, which are fundamental for e-government service delivery. This is not surprising, though, in the current state where the country had no clear e-government vision as highlighted in Section 4.9.1 above.

On the other hand, the lack of funding, in particular for websites development, does not only reflect the government inability to mobilise adequate funding from external sources; it also reveals government's lack of political will to allocate a budget for e-government development, e-government websites in particular. Ordinarily, not only does government mobilise financial support from external donors, it also sets aside funds for e-government. Generally, the participants averred that the least the government could do to show their will and support for e-government was to ensure that e-government gets a place in the government annual budget, which seemed not to be the case.

The government failure to allocate a budget for e-government challenges the legitimacy of the argument, which supposes the insufficient funding. In fact, the social critics would argue that the inadequate funding chorus was usually a scapegoat argument because it is empirically irrefutable (Wolman, 1981). The analysis suggested that no matter how much funding external funders could assist with, if government did not consider web-based service delivery as a priority, it could always be said that there was not enough funding for websites development.

The findings indicated that for the successful e-government, its implementation needed the support from the top management and leaders of government. As Alshehri and Drew (2011) suggested, the participants referred to top management support to the commitment from leadership structures to accept, support and adopt the e-government systems and applications. As shown earlier, government promises must come in the form of statutes. Participants believed that this would create policy certainty.

Meanwhile, when asked if there was a degree of certainty for future funding in order to provide sustainability to e-government, the participants were resolute that there was no certainty. They indicated that although infrastructure development was just part of the first phase, there was no certainty about funding of other programmes in the pipeline including education and skills development, which form the basis for succeeding phases. While sceptical about future funding, participants were, however, unwavering that where there is political will and mobilisation of actions, continuity and sustainability are not questionable but guaranteed.

Because there appeared to be lack of political will to mobilise resources and actions, participants seemed to be more concerned about the future of e-government development in the country. One participant cautioned; *'what if government will not fund the coming programmes... All we are hopeful of is government's political will. In the absence of future funding, the IT infrastructure we are busy building will just be a white elephant'* (G3). The subsequent effect as expressed by another participant was whether there would be money to pay independent companies as most of the work under construction was being outsourced or whether government would have the financial capacity to train staff to ensure continuity towards e-government service delivery. While these critical questions were raised, the other participant summarised the frustration of not knowing about the future developments by reckoning:

We would be in the best position to speculate the future of the envisioned programmes if we already secured a given amount of money to implement these programmes. Furthermore, it would be better if we say we already have an x amount of money to enrol a given number of youth into universities or certain budget already set aside for training x number of officials. Nevertheless, when we ask the Ministry of Finance to allocate funds to us, they really consider us (P4).

The above expression does not only reflect the paternal monopoly that the political leadership seemed to be enjoying in the running of the public service, but also policy uncertainty caused by lack of political will to attract foreign investment, which is keen on the availability of the existing allocated budget and expected budgetary resources to achieve policy goals. In normal situations where public service is financially empowered, the MoF is only approached for additional funds where the need arises. As argued by the UNDP (2006), financial resources must consistently be allocated to developing and managing systems, building up technology infrastructure, and coordinating systems and initiatives. In practice, financing e-government projects would therefore require justification and approval on an annual basis since the Government of Lesotho operates on a budget that is allocated annually mostly for short term projects. This would see e-government receiving equal recognition like any other systems and services such as health and education. Therefore, the analysis suggested a consistent funding mechanism on the side of government.

However, the results indicated that the hope for e-government implementation and success in the country was limited mainly towards the support from bilateral financial institutions. Given the complexity and breadth of e-government implementation, participants expressed that sound leadership was not only needed to lobby support from government and these foreign/regional institutions. Support also needed to be mobilised from the local private sector. The analysis of the data showed that engagement with the private sector is an integral element in the e-government development process. Public-private partnership (PPP) has been a feature of almost all e-government activities (Alshehri and Drew, 2011).

Whereas PPPs benefit both government and business sector, the former can benefit more as these relationships can be a strategic way of government to reinvent itself, get closer to the people and forge closer relationships with the business sector. As was also echoed by the participants, implementing e-government is an expensive exercise, including the high cost of systems hardware and maintenance, as well as training and education. While the ultimate objective for PPPs would be to get concrete and intangible products, reduce risks and government spending as well as acquiring knowledge and specialised skills, the end-goal is and should always be the enhancement of service delivery for the betterment of the citizens. The participants therefore suggested that the Government of Lesotho expands its governing capacity by using the private sector as a front counter of government, delivering services to citizens and other relevant beneficiaries. As Al-Shboul *et al* (2014) suggested, policy framework is needed for proper PPP arrangement. Thus government's will to attract business enterprises should be seen through the establishment of an e-government PPP framework, which lies firmly in the hands of government's political leadership.

Moreover, the findings indicated that top management support was necessary for coordinating day-to-day activities and ensuring that websites were up-to-date and overseeing that outcomes were achieved as intended. Alshehri and Drew (2010) argued that top management support, as earlier stated, has to be understood to suggest the commitment from top management to provide a conducive environment that encourages participation in e-government systems. Thus participants suggested that e-government initiatives should require support from the highest level of government for adoption and successful implementation.

Based on the findings, strong leadership to devise and promote e-government vision and strategies should include, among others, the legislature, cabinet, and public service top management such as Principal Secretaries and directors. E-government planning and

execution would also mean the involvement of lower level managers such as coordinators and programme managers, who are able to translate e-government vision, policies and objectives into action. Munkuli (2015) observed that there is a trend in many countries of allowing e-government to be coordinated by an inter-ministerial committee or unit established for the sole purpose of defining the e-government vision, developing relevant policies and leading e-government initiatives. The involvement of all-levels leadership, with the integrated vision to transform the society through ICTs and collaborative partnership with external partners, was seen by the participants to be mandatory in championing successful e-government projects. It was seen to have potential to harness vertical e-government planning and resource acquisition.

Although collaboration and involvement of all tiers of leadership is required, the findings revealed that they steer conflicts arising from the differing priorities of leaders and departments they represent, which eventually disrupts the implementation progress. Ordinarily, leaders who are committed to the broader reform agenda and have trust in e-government potentials are likely to support and put e-government on top of their agenda, even in the face of obstacles (Kroukamp, 2005; Seifert and Bonham, 2003). On the other hand, those who do not perceive any gain from the promotion of e-government are likely to pay little attention to ensuring that ICT policy and projects are established to meet the needs of the citizenry (Accenture 2003; Ndou, 2004). Because their support might be strongly needed at later stages, participants argued that it is important not to quickly count out those who e-government is not their top priority, but rather to sensitise them. This will require lines of accountability clearly spelled out, with each of the members knowing what to do, when and with what resources.

Generally, public sector agencies show resistance to the huge financial investment into e-government systems and applications (Al-Shboul *et al*, 2014). Therefore, in order to achieve the government vision of improving citizen participation, enhance delivery of services, and increase efficiency and transparency, then strong leadership and management support is a prerequisite to ensure that these objectives are met regardless of emerging challenges.

4.9.5. Resistance to change

The findings showed that resistance to change within government agencies is one of the most serious challenges when implementing e-government. Participants stated that resistance to change has important implications for the success of policy projects in the country and so e-

government would not be an exception. Their explanation was that the policy environment is very dynamic, with changes taking place every day. The forces in the political, cultural, social and technological environments put pressure on legislators to effect changes. E-government is such a reactive policy change to pressing demands of the 21st century in the public administration. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, e-government is a new phenomenon in less developed countries and many of the sub-Saharan countries are in their initial stages of transforming from paperwork methods to digital means. These changes have created a completely new milieu in the workplace within government organisations compared to what has been used for many years.

The data demonstrated strong evidence of the fact that the key challenges to the adoption and implementation of e-government are not just technical, but also hinge on cultural implications of modern-day innovations brought by technologies. Alshehri and Drew (2011) defined culture as a continuum of significant ideas, understandings, beliefs, values and behaviour patterns of a particular society or group of people. This entails that any change in contradiction to the norms of the society has the likelihood of facing great resistance and wrenching difficulty. This corroborates the finding of Seng *et al* (2010) which suggested that cultural issues have adverse implications on e-government's implementation and usage in both the developed and developing countries.

In keeping with that, the findings demonstrated that e-government system's implementation in Lesotho had gained some level of negative reception, especially for departments, employees and managers who see e-government as a menace rather than a challenge. Evident from the data is that there was a recognisable amount of resistance to electronic delivery of services in the country. This finding corroborated those of Alassim *et al* (2017), Ndou (2004) and Weerakkody *et al* (2007) suggesting that organisational culture and institutional and environmental challenges largely contribute to resistance to change. Asked why there was inconsistency in the implementation of web-based services across the government departments, P5 stated that, '*some head of departments is too traditional, scared of innovation and cannot move with time*'. One of the main reasons for this resistance was attributed to the top government officials' perceptions. It appeared that managers perceived e-government as threatening to their viability and bureaucratic power of bureaucracy. These senior officials were understood to contend that the use of ICT tools challenges hierarchies and bureaucracies.

What this finding of resistance to change by high ranking officials disclosed is an erroneous assumption that existed in public policy making, which suggested that policy change occurs in an enclosed system, where inputs and outcomes are under direct control of first the decision maker (legislature) and then the implementer (public service). As Crosby (1981:1403) once observed, this impression derives from a popular narrative which considers implementation ‘as part of a linear process that proceeds directly from the predictions and prescriptions given by the economist to the policy maker, to policy selection by the appropriate decision-maker(s), to implementation, and then to policy outcomes’. The participants argued that since the nature of policy change is that it cuts across sectors and interests, it must perpetually be implemented in highly open systems. They opined that while unelected officials technically charged with policy implementation responsibility lead bureaucratic processes, it is unlikely that they may not express their own discretion dissimilar to the directives implied by the policy change.

Moreover, evidence from the data showed that the independence and autonomy of the departments of the Government of Lesotho escalated the issue of resistance to change. E-government means information sharing across the horizontal and vertical boundaries of government agencies (Yang *et al*, 2014). However, the findings indicated that government ministries and departments seemingly work in *silos*. This anomalous behaviour was attributed to lack of intranets and connectivity as pointed out by one of the participants who cried foul: ‘*you see I am connected [sic.], do not ever think there is Wi-Fi or Internet in this office. I bought data bundles to do the department’s work*’ (P1). At basic, this participant could be interpreted as saying it could be presumptuous to think of intricate intra-organisational service delivery while there was no Internet connection to allow inter-organisational information sharing via mere e-mails. However, the underlying impression, as will be demonstrated in the next paragraphs, was that employees would not share information they generated through their own personal funds.

The analysis of the data presented strong evidence of the impact of resistance by street-level bureaucratic staff on e-government. While e-government means government use of ICTs to improve the access and provision of government information and service to businesses, citizens, employees and government entities (Aroon *et al*, 2018), it was found that there was resistance to that. As opined by P3, some government employees resisted putting government information or 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...’.

This kind of resistance at surface level raised two fundamental scenarios; it questioned whether government agencies consider themselves as owners of particular information and they feel the entitlement of not sharing it, or whether it could be a lack of understanding between roles performed in a private capacity and roles performed in an organisational mandate. Either way, the participants were of the view that this demonstrated some level of resistance, subsequently denying the people (rightful owners) an access to public information, thus sabotaging e-government goals. They averred that whilst there was a need to put a strategy in place to bring government employees on board, there also had to be a mind-set change and change management to allow quick e-government service delivery and all-encompassing citizen involvement in democratic institutions and processes.

Participants established that resistance to policy change at large and e-government in particular, dictated a missing policy dialogue. They stated that policy decisions and carrying out processes tend to be extremely political, hence important questions of what needs to be executed, how it has to be done, and how benefits will be distributed must be negotiated. When change happens, relationships between stakeholders at different levels will be shifted. Those who feel threatened by change will be in a position to apply powerful and effective opposition. All this reasoning provided a strong case for the participants to argue their point that e-government requires to be introduced in a culturally sensitive way.

The analysis of data suggested, however, that the processes of e-government adoption and implementation in Lesotho seemed not to occur in a persistent and gentle setting that inserted acceptance and ownership culture. The results revealed that more often, negotiations about an e-government system occurred among a narrow set of policy actors with conditions agreed to only hesitantly. As the results demonstrated, the stimulus for e-government implementation in Lesotho comes from the outside. In exchange for assistance, participants learned that funders usually required substantive changes in the economic policy framework. The supposed changes appeared to attract unpredictable resistance as external funders, in many ways, suggested dramatic departure from or major alterations to the country’s normal practices and policies.

It became apparent, at this juncture, that e-government as a policy change for service delivery came into being because of some prior intellectual discourse. Despite the nature of the

dialogues or how the e-government idea was introduced, attempts to implement e-government seemed to attract negative attitudes, decisions and inactions. Participants stated that major policy changes and innovations were almost impossible in an organisation without the administrative and political support of senior management and street-level bureaucrats. Evident from the data was that any attempt to orchestrate the implementation of e-government without approval of these personnel would have severe implications for online service delivery. Participants reinforced that to maximise success chances, any attempt to implement e-government services would have to overcome environmental and cultural beliefs and misunderstandings that were the driving force for resistance. This suggested a need for a national e-government vision and championing team to articulate and persuade government intentions.

The views of the participants provided evidence that there were organisational challenges that presented resistance to e-government as a policy change. As demonstrated by the participants, this resistance signified a deficit in policy design, attesting to the lack of a vibrant e-government vision, mission, strategy and implementation plan. Evident from the data is that this “bad” policy design ultimately caused some government agencies to provide web-based e-government services while others appeared to be resistant. As P4 concluded, this naturally created not only an imbalance between government departments but also a digital divide between users of government services.

4.9.6. Digital divide

The results showed that digital divide is another major challenge in Lesotho, which should be attended to in order to harness e-government usage. As previously argued by Pimienta (2009:33), participants described digital divide as ‘nothing other than the reflection of the social divide in the digital world’. Demonstrating this divide, participants stated that there is a gap in opportunity in the global digital information age we are living in, among those who are either unable to access information or can access the Internet and the World Wide Web through the ICT applications. This disparity was echoed to be more apparent among the Basotho nation.

The participants attributed digital divide to many factors. Uneven distribution of power supply in the country was identified as one major factor. P6 captured that:

All the devices that support e-government, whether is desktop computers, laptops or even smart phones need power supply to function... While we

acknowledge the endless efforts of the Government of Lesotho to ensure that all the Basotho are connected to electricity in the near future, we cannot deny that those communities that are not connected to electricity are constantly without access to information and e-government services whereas their counterparts, mostly in the Lowlands do have.

P5 added that rolling out electricity across the country would not solve the challenge towards e-government service delivery or address digital divide if there was no IT infrastructure and Internet connection. Evidence from the data indicated that Lesotho like many other African countries had low ICT and Internet penetration, especially in the Highlands and rural areas where the majority of the population is located. As demonstrated by ITU (2017), just about 35% of the Basotho nation had and used the Internet as of March 2017. Thus e-government becomes a problem if only a small percentage of the population has access to Internet connection or ICT infrastructure to access government services and information.

The results further indicated that the main driver for the contemporary digital divide was lack of ICT infrastructure including websites. As Abu-Shanab and Khasawneh (2015) stated, e-government generally refers to the web-based technologies that encourage more inclusive, effective and efficient government, cultivate all-encompassing access to government information and services, enable greater participation of citizens in the decision-making and make government more accountable to all citizens. However, the findings indicated that the Government of Lesotho had not convincingly opened up access to these opportunities to be exploited by all the citizens, creating a digital divide which directly affected government-wide online service delivery. Most of the victims were those in the remote areas and deep terrains of the Mountain Kingdom.

The participants reinforced the results of the websites' observation and evaluation conducted by this study. It was found that most of the government ministries neither established websites nor started providing e-government web-based services. The few that had established websites either provided static or not up-to-date information. This was seen by the participants as not only depriving the citizens from benefiting from government information and services – a benefit that no citizen certainly in the 21st century should be without – but most importantly excluding them from the information society (IS) and global economy. By isolating the Basotho nation from the knowledge-based society created a digital divide, which is anti-inclusive in nature, weakening the fundamental principles of IS and e-government.

Although the issue of digital divide may have not been as emphasised as the other hindrances to e-government, it rose naturally during the group interview. Applying the simplistic definition of digital divide, G2 pointed to the separation that existed between individuals, businesses and communities whose access to IT is enabled and those whose access is not. Considering new developments that integrate ICTs with the whole notion of transformation and social inclusion, G5 contended that the digital divide that existed among the Basotho nation, significant for the execution of e-government services was not so much about physical availability or lack of computers and the Internet, but rather people's ability to engage in meaningful social practices. He cautioned that *'...the main challenge is that even if government would like to get people's views on the current electoral system via online survey, only few people would be able to participate ... for various reasons including those we have already shared'* (ibid.). This implied that while attesting to the issue of digital divide, G5 reckoned that inclusive e-government would be successful if the digital divide was conceptualised beyond the deployment of infrastructural technologies. The analysis suggested that the contemporary digital divide was and should be credited to the inability of government to build an enabling environment, with specific focus on building and strengthening institutional capacity, increasing online presence, and continuous review of legal and regulatory frameworks, resulting in some citizens and business organisations refraining from accepting e-government and utilising e-government services.

Lack of institutional framework supporting e-government is another issue identified to exacerbate digital divide and seriously hampering e-government service delivery. The findings revealed that lack of championing power, M&E activities, sound vision and regulatory laws were potential contributors to digital divide. The findings suggested that without all these, trust in government functions and operations is lost. These findings affirmed the results of Alawadhi and Morris (2009) indicating that trust in government and government transactions that occur online or over the Internet is expected to affect e-government service implementation. Evidence from the data showed that in the absence of privacy and security statements on the government website and nonexistence of the e-commerce and e-transaction Act, some citizens were unlikely to interact and transact with government online. Put by one of the participants, *'if individuals feel that e-government services are not secure; their private data would be under threat, altered or hacked, they may come to a decision not to use government websites'* (P3). This corroborates Zafiropoulos *et al's* (2012) findings suggesting that only individuals with positive perceptions of the

trustworthiness of the websites are likely to take risks whereas those who have negative trust are unlikely to do so.

In general, while this study found that digital divide is an important factor affecting e-government, various reasons explained why digital divide occurs. Evidence from the data suggested that the context within which e-government projects are implemented better explain the reasons behind factors affecting digital divide. Mphidi (2009), OECD (2019) and Sipior and Ward (2005) observed that access to e-government services is embedded in a complex range of factors including geographic location, gender, class, age, culture, language, literacy, disability and many other factors. However, empirical evidence from this study suggested that the digital divide in Lesotho appeared to have developed strategically, creating gaps that were more within government control. For example, evident from the data is the issue of poor electricity rollout in the rural areas, which made the infrastructure needed for supporting digital technologies and applications largely deficient in such places. In addition, it was found that in places where there may be electricity and technology infrastructure, some people may seem reluctant to communicate and transact with government online because of what has been coined by some of the participants as lack of political will to protect cyber activities through legislative Acts. The inability of government to adopt policy and legal frameworks to lay enabling foundations for the usage of ICTs exacerbates the digital divide; only those who are ready to deal with the consequences of cyber obstacles are prone to participate in e-government.

4.9.7. Policy monitoring and evaluation

Policy monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is one broad crucial component which emerged from the data that has a considerable impact on the direction of e-government development. As overly emphasised in the previous sections and chapters, e-government includes government use of ICTs, particularly web-based Internet applications, to improve the access and provision to government services and information to all citizen communities irrespective of their demographic segmentations. It is based on this philosophy that in the current dispensation of service delivery (Brynard, 2005) and the 4th Industrial Revolution, the intrinsic responsibility of the Government of Lesotho is a panacea in ensuring that all government ministries and departments have websites. As indicated by Henriksson *et al* (2006), the purpose of websites' development is to enhance quick access to government services and harness processes of democracy. M&E is therefore seen by the participants as an essential prerequisite for determining progress towards the achievement of these goals.

Policy monitoring defines the development and carrying out of policies, identifies possible gaps in the process, suggests areas for improvement, and facilitates accountability by key implementing agencies (Karen *et al*, 2012:131). Policy evaluation describes a function for assessing the merit, performance, efficacy, worthiness, or value of programme or policy intervention to improve the planning and implementation process (Khan and Rahman, 2017). This means that M&E is vital to monitor the implementation process by gathering information about the contemporary state of e-government, keeping track of the time-frame, the spending and capacity, evaluating the degree at which objectives within several strategic plans are being met, establishing weaknesses and strengths, framing new guidelines, learning from examples of best practice and finally comparing e-government implementation in different government departments. This kind of assessment largely pays attention to effectiveness, efficiency and levels of stakeholder engagement in the implementation process.

It is important to recognise that political support is necessary for policy monitoring and evaluation, as it is not likely to be a spontaneous uptake by individuals or institutions simply because it has a rational and persuasive appeal. Although it may also be argued that it could not be difficult for any department to monitor policies and programmes related to their own interests, the capability to monitor or trace policy across ministries is either absent or limited (Crosby, 1996). In addressing this problem, the Government of Lesotho has strengthened its capacity by establishing an M&E Department within the MDP. While the role of the M&E department is to monitor and evaluate national policies and strategic plans, some powers are decentralised to the designated ministries. Since the ICT policy is housed within the MCST, this ministry is naturally obliged to perform an overall responsibility to coordinate, monitor and evaluate the implementation of ICT policy and its frameworks, projects and programmes including e-government. Even in this case, the MDP through its PSP Department remains pre-eminent and highly visible, as prime advisor and as a participant in establishing the policy reform agenda.

Despite these efforts, evidence from the data exposed the gap between government intentions and what actually happens on the ground. It was found that there was lack of M&E to help in achieving broad democratic goals of enhancing access to public services. The participants indicated that neither the departments of M&E nor ICT assumed overall responsibility of monitoring and evaluating e-government initiatives. P6 explained that:

No one assumes overall coordination responsibility to ensure existence of government-websites and their updates. At present, each ministry and/or department manages its own affairs and so is their websites. However, it remains our oversight role as the MCST to monitor and evaluate ICT policy... and the implementation of e-government in particular. The only challenge we are faced with is that our ICT Department and the ministry itself does not have website. So, where can we get audacity to encourage other ministries to put information and services online for public consumption while we have not done so?

The explanation above reveals that M&E can be done for an oversight coordination. Nevertheless, the kind of coordination that the MCST assumed is what Scharpf (1994) coined “negative coordination” – whereby coordination decisions made in an accounting department consider decisions and actions made in others and attempt to avoid conflicts. Positive coordination, however, would demand the ministry to go beyond simply avoiding conflicts and try to find ways to work together on solutions that can benefit all the ministries and other government institutions to produce better services and for the betterment of the Basotho nation in general. In this fashion, e-government implementation means linking together a chain, combination or converging network of departments to assemble an ample number of work operations in a requisite arrangement for the accumulated or final output desired. This was emphasised by G2 when suggesting that they – the ICT Department within the MCST – should work together with the MDP through its M&E and PSP departments to ensure oversight of all the ministries.

What G2 suggested indicated a fragmentation in monitoring and evaluation for accountability. As indicated above, recognition of the importance of M&E is obviously accepted through the establishment of an M&E department. Increasing the effectiveness of e-government implementation, particularly web-based service delivery, virtually becomes a shared goal among funders, government agencies and citizen users in order to maximise the support. At the same time, while ministries are constitutionally bound to account to the parliament, funders require government (grantee) to collect data on the quantity and quality of the inputs, processes and outputs to monitor the usage of funds received. However, participants were of the view that more work needs to be done on the ground to systematically collect data that is necessary for accountability and advocacy for effective implementation of e-government initiatives. They believed that adequate M&E could help in

providing such information, in a structured and formalised manner, which would not only provide evidence of what has been done but also allow scrutiny of government service activities.

Notwithstanding, while M&E for accountability is generally considered important in itself, the findings showed that it needs to be horizontal across all governance borders. The participants were of the impression that inasmuch as M&E is done for the purpose of providing feedback, in the case of Lesotho it was often done under the auspices of policing invested funds. As a matter of that, participants strongly cautioned against “donor-required” M&E. It becomes self-explanatory from a public governance point of view that government institutions should use M&E for the purpose of responding and accounting to the needs of the people, who would not be able to serve themselves. As Lincoln (1989) stated, the findings suggested that M&E should be done for the benefit of the community of people who would have done whatever they need to have done but cannot do in their separate and individual capacities. Because the purpose of M&E is for social betterment (Mark *et al*, 2000), it became apparent that the participants view an ideal e-government in the case of Lesotho as the one that would benefit all the Basotho nation, thus improving their living standards.

Whereas the implementation of e-government is widely recognised as complex and faced with many challenges (Abdulbaqi, 2016), the analysis revealed that these challenges may not even be barriers should monitoring and evaluation be performed. All these other factors that hinder effective implementation of e-government in Lesotho were linked to the lack of M&E. Evident from the data is that multiple departments and ministries were involved and affected by the e-government implementation. What emerged from the analysis is that the question of who is in charge and/or who is charged with overall responsibility is rarely obvious. This has significant repercussions on the implementation. Therefore, the participants were firm that systematic M&E would help in identifying who has to do what, when, how and with what resources.

The results further indicated that M&E was a necessary tool to be used for lobbying political support and funding for e-government. The participants showed that M&E was required to assess new demands, costs, benefits and impacts, and to justify which current projects need to be continued and thus a need to be refunded. The lack of crosscutting analytical capacity for implementing and monitoring ICT policy by the MDP and MCST was considered to be a direct setback for e-government financial assistance. Thus participants reckoned that

strategies must be developed or redeveloped to ensure the systematic gathering and assessment of evidence on the outcomes of projects and to evaluate their performance, relevance and innovative ways to deliver them or to accomplish the same results. Such information, as they put it, was necessary towards influencing support for e-government development.

While evidence from the data has shown that e-government support was not adequate, mainly because there was lack of political will to implement and promote e-government, participants anticipated that systematic M&E could help in constituency-building. In this case, constituents are all potential stakeholders who could make the attainment of fully fledged online service delivery possible. The analysis suggested that if the Lesotho's public service truly wanted to improve service delivery through the help of web-based applications, they would not only have to reflect on what they were doing, what they were achieving against what they set to achieve, why there were delays and deviations, but it also had to identify relevant stakeholders who could assist in strengthening government capacity. Constituency-building complements and intensifies the legitimization process. In essence, the findings suggested that M&E would help the MCST and MDP to have other ministries buy-in. Once these ministries had a stake, it was anticipated that it would be easier for them to mobilise support necessary for their relevant ministries, and that would ultimately advance government-wide e-government services.

The participants acknowledged, however, that programmes that were structured so that they must be implemented through the joint action of two or more bureaus were particularly prone to problems in the carrying out stage. The problem they put forward related to lack of coordination, monitoring and evaluation. This problem is not merely a technical one or a manifestation of other government departments unwilling to cooperate. It was established that the difficulty emerges primarily because departments had different interests, objectives and clienteles; they viewed the issue of e-government from different perspectives. The results suggested moving towards one direction may mean a solution that was nothing but reinstating the broad problem e-government intends to solve.

To be precise, the analysis suggested that M&E, which was lacking and ultimately hindering e-government success, could help the Government of Lesotho to understand whether the problem intended to be solved by the deployment of ICT systems and applications in the public service was adequately understood. As observed by Wolman (1981), the way in which

a problem is conceptualised, whether explicitly or implicitly, affects programme objectives and the nature and design of programmes intended to cope with the problem. The participants demonstrated that too often rhetoric becomes a substitute for adequate conceptualisation. As indicated previously, ministers seemingly supported almost anything if it was said to “deliver services to the people”, resulting in vagueness and lack of direction throughout the implementation stage. The end result of policy initiatives based on political rhetoric rather than rationale is characterised by policy programmes that have failed to achieve their objectives. The results hinted that even in the case of programme failure, ministers in charge would still be not quite certain what the problem the intervention sought to solve was. From this analysis, it is apparent that policy agendas often reflected the mobilisation of political demands instead of a rational process of evaluating values and aspirations. Thus policy problems usually appear on the government agenda without having been sufficiently conceptualised or having been thought out thoroughly.

As was alluded to by the participants, issues relating to information technology are complex, hence clear objectives can help in mobilising and getting stakeholder support. The findings suggested that vague or unclear national vision, strategies and programme objectives, as demonstrated in Lesotho’s e-government case, makes it difficult to administer implementation and to assess its performance.

From the views of the participants, it could be concluded that M&E of e-government must include regular assessment of government websites. At the same time, while government should continue to lobby for funding for websites-building, it should equally be ready to monitor and evaluate such websites. This assertion is premised on the participants’ observation that some departments have already made concerted efforts (time and public funds) in setting up government websites, which act as a front-end for accessing online services, without an equal effort to look after them. According to the participants, technicians within each department should be assessing and updating websites on regular basis. They reckoned that website evaluation must focus on, *inter alia*, content (information and services), transparency, accessibility, reliability, usability and interactivity. It is understood that the failure to monitor and evaluate websites and act accordingly towards achievement of the aforementioned parameters forfeits the whole purpose of e-government principles.

In general, evidence emerging from the data analysis suggested that innovative technologies have an ability to change the traditional ways government does its business to improve the

well-being of its citizens. The findings suggested, however, that the speed at which the Government of Lesotho responds to the ever-changing world is surpassed by mounting obstacles, ironically under the government's watch and control. Digital transformation and transformation in the digital age not only rest on technology alone, but also need a comprehensive approach that is cognisant of other barriers that are non-technological. Therefore, the Government of Lesotho must seriously reflect and address the unique factors that makes it seem ill-prepared to provide e-government services.

4.10. CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the analysis of the empirical data obtained with the general view to examine the current status of the Lesotho's e-government and the context within which it is implemented. It typically provided an analytical explanation of the current situation of the websites of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho in relation to their maturity level to deliver e-government services in Section A. In section B, this chapter offered an analysis of the data gathered from government officials in an attempt to capture organisational perspectives on the issues affecting e-government implementation in Lesotho. Without user perspectives, the investigations undertaken in this study may not have been entirely exhaustive in evaluating implementation of e-government in the country but have assisted to characterise the overall state of e-government in Lesotho.

Generally, evident from the data is that while initiatives had been made to bring services closer to the people, more efforts were still needed to improve the state of government websites for better online service delivery. There was an array of challenges which had been identified to influence e-government implementation, particularly web-based service delivery. It was discovered that if these obstacles were not considered carefully, they would manifest into barriers, subsequently preventing citizens from benefiting from the information and communication technologies. Thus, systematic M&E of e-government systems was recommended as an important instrument to offer feedback for improvement.

Specifically, content analysis of government websites was conducted using visibility and availability, accessibility, transparency and openness, usability, interactivity, transactional services and connected government tests. All the 26 government ministries, as captured in Table 4.2, were listed in the Lesotho Government National Portal. However, the majority of the ministries were not assessed for their services since they could not be accessed. This is not a good performance by a country which envisions well-established technology

applications in all spheres of the Basotho nation by 2020, thereby contributing to the reduction of poverty through the provision of better services. These ministries, constituting 84.6% of the total number of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho, either had no website addresses or if website addresses existed, they were unclickable. Only four ministries were accessed and formed the basis for this analysis. As shown in Table 4.3, the analysed ministries with functional websites included the MoF, MFRSC, MTEC and MDP. The attributes used to assess accessibility were language used in delivering content, the availability of the “language change option menu” and the presence of different medium (multimedia). The findings suggested that these ministerial websites were unlikely to be accessed by the majority of the Basotho nation and the diverse citizen populace.

Attributes used to measure transparency and openness were contact information, organisational introductory information, publications as well as privacy and security statements. The results suggested that the ministries under study were doing quite well in relation to openness and transparency but with the exception of the privacy and security dimension, which had become an area of serious concern. Usability attributes comprised navigation tools and “freshness” of the websites. The analysis suggested that not only did all the websites have to be timeously updated but also to have necessary navigation tools such as search function, FAQs and sitemap for easy navigation. In as far as interactivity is concerned, evidence from the data showed that ministries vary in this aspect. Some ministries fared well in some dimensions while performing badly in others. Hence, a positive trend was recommended across the ministries. Attributes used to measure interactivity, which is extremely useful in determining the relationship between service provider (government) and customers (citizens) included quick links, interactive features, downloadable materials and online registrations.

The websites were also examined as to whether or not they provided any transactional services. It was found that no ministry had reached this complex stage. This was evident by the non-provision of transactional e-government services that would require security features including any form of authentication such as digital signatures and passwords. Similarly, the analysis indicated that the Government of Lesotho did not have horizontal interaction and information sharing across the ministries or any other government agencies. This situation underlined serious implications for e-government development in the country.

It was discovered in this chapter that to respond to the demanding needs of an ever-changing world which has become characteristic of our age, those that are involved in designing, implementing and evaluating e-government systems should strengthen their capacity to attend to the specific contextual setting. There is convincing evidence that the Government of Lesotho is aware of the significance of e-government, but the benefits associated with it have not been fully realised. Data from the semi-structured in-depth interviews with government officials revealed a set of factors influencing e-government development in the Lesotho context. The analysis of the data identified several concerns about e-government success as well as the strategies to be adopted to ensure effective e-government service implementation countrywide. While discussing factors for failure and success, it was deemed important to clarify the opposite effect of most, if not all factors (Gichoya, 2005). It emerged from the analysis that the presence of a factor encouraged success of e-government service provision whereas the lack of it encouraged failure. The converse appeared true in such that if absence of a factor would cause failure, the presence of it would cause success. In this chapter, Section B identified vision; policy and regulatory laws; political uncertainty; political will, top leadership support and resource mobilisation; resistance to change; digital divide; and policy monitoring and evaluation as such unique issues for e-government development in the context of Lesotho's public sector. Implementation of e-government is not an easy mission, but rather a complex and long process in which the whole government requires to change the way it conducts its daily business. As a result, there is an urgent need for the Government of Lesotho to reengineer all its activities accordingly.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0. INTRODUCTION

Governments, citizens, and business communities around the world are increasingly recognising the value that ICTs can bring to their operations, relationships and outcomes. In the context of government, this has been described as electronic government or e-government as it is commonly known. Effective e-government can contribute to the attainment of national goals. This study of e-government in Lesotho consisted of five chapters in total. Chapter 1 introduced the study, presenting the background to the study and outlining the research problem, stating research objectives and key research questions, and presenting the Lesotho context within which the study is undertaken. Chapter 2 dealt with literature underpinning the study area. Chapter 3 described the research design and methodology. Chapter 4 analysed the data. This final chapter concludes the dissertation by providing a brief review of the study, summarising and discussing main findings, presenting limitations and making suggestions for future research as well as discussing policy and practical implications. It finally gives general conclusions and makes recommendations for a successful e-government implementation in Lesotho.

5.1. REVIEW OF THE STUDY

This study assessed the current status of e-government in Lesotho and the context within which it is implemented. The world has witnessed several government initiatives to intervene in the prevailing social and economic challenges by adopting and utilising ICT strategies, e-government in particular (Mawela, 2017), and Lesotho is no exception. Public service is among the major aspects that the Government of Lesotho has intended to transform through e-government. The purpose of this study was to reflect on the development and progress made by the government towards the delivery of public services through electronic means since formulation of the ICT policy of 2005, which laid the foundation for e-government. Evident from Fang (2012) and Schelin (2007) is that e-government enhances efficiency and effectiveness of the public administration thereby improving the delivery of government services.

Since e-government is often confused with e-governance (Godse and Garg, 2000; Maina, 2006; Palvia and Sharma, 2007; Singh and Sharma, 2009), the scope of this study was limited to the government actions or inactions, and interactions with relevant stakeholders including citizens (G2C), business sector (G2B), government employees (G2E) and government entities

(G2G) towards improving access and quality of government services as in the studies of Al-rawahna *et al* (2018), Alshehri and Drew (2010), Basu (2004) Moon (2002) and Seifert (2003). This study therefore sought to understand what the government has actually done by evaluating the current status of the websites of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho in relation to their level of maturity to deliver e-government services.

Public policy implementation is *sine qua non* of steering government intentions to deliver better government services. Previous research in the same field has provided evidence that the majority of the developing countries suffer from maintaining an efficient implementation process of policies to improve the living standard of the citizenry (Brynard, 2005; Hogwood and Gunn, 1987). Recognising that the execution of government initiatives and strategies is not a linear process but unpredictable and often fragmented (Anderson, 1997; Crosby, 1996), this study explored the organisational perspective in respect of factors that affect the implementation of e-government services. This facilitated in identifying the main issues that aid and hinder the successful implementation of e-government, specifically in the Lesotho context.

As emerged from Chapters 1 and 2, there have been numerous studies to investigate e-government implementation and maturity level in the African region of which Lesotho is a part. Several studies (Heeks, 2002; Mimbi and Lehong, 2017; Nkohkwo and Islam, 2013; Rajah and Lekorwe, 2017; Schuppan, 2009) suggested that, compared with other continents, Africa is lagging behind in e-government development. The use of ICTs such as those necessary to provide e-government services is said to be minimal. In particular, Lupilya and Jung (2015), Magayane *et al* (2016), Malanga (2016), Saebo (2017) and Verkijika and de Wet (2018) have demonstrated that most e-government websites in the African region are neither developed nor updated, and as a result, provided services of poor quality, static information or only downloadable material while the majority of other important services such as online registrations and complete online transactions are not available. Despite this reported deficit, it was also found that over the last decade, African countries have made progress in terms of designing policies to create an enabling environment, building technology infrastructure, as well as developing and implementing electronic services (e-services) through e-government websites (Rorissa and Demissie, 2010).

A thorough review of the previous research on e-government in Africa revealed a number of gaps and shortcomings in the existing literature. First, it was found that Lesotho is among

many other countries which their e-government efforts have not received considerable attention among scholars. In particular, it was discovered that only a few studies have focused on the developmental progress of government websites in Lesotho. Little research that was conducted on e-government websites either had focus on the Government National Portal (www.gov.ls), used different models for benchmarking, or conducted desktop research (i.e. Maphephe, 2013; Mathaha, 2015; Mutula, 2008). As such, this study of e-government in Lesotho set out to conduct a comprehensive analysis of contents of the websites of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho. In order to fully understand the contents of these ministerial websites, a five-stage of the UN e-government model was used because of its less complex nature and the fact that it is based on objective measures of features and online executable services provided through e-government websites. This study specifically observed and evaluated the websites of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho to determine which stage each one of the ministerial websites is currently at with reference to the delivery of e-government services.

Second, this study noted that many, if not most, studies have treated Africa as a single, homogeneous and monolithic society. As also argued by Verkijika and De Wet (2018), the homogeneous treatment of different African countries without a detailed account of their disparities in their cultural, political and economic setting was found worrisome. This approach, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, has potential to mislead and misrepresent the accurate status of e-government in Africa because most countries – especially in the SSA, and Lesotho in particular – are hardly covered in literature (Mutula, 2008). Although African or SSA countries have some shared qualities, there are crucial differences especially in factors that affect e-government development such as political, social and financial factors (Rorissa and Demissie, 2010; Schuppan, 2009). Furthermore, while the little literature available for Lesotho has largely focused on the national government portal, it emerged that most of it is implicit about how data were collected. Too often, this literature has consistently failed to address the unique strengths, challenges and opportunities facing the implementation of e-government in the Lesotho context. Heeks (2002) advised that research on e-government development should be context and content specific. Hence, this study attempted to bridge the knowledge and methodological gap. This qualitative study used content and thematic analysis to analyse data that were collected with the view to answer the research objectives and key research questions stated in Chapter 1, Section 1.3.

In contrast to most research in e-government about Lesotho such as Mathaha (2015), Mutula (2008) and UN (2008) and (2016), this study used empirical methods to gather information. Data were collected from government officials and the websites of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho. The collected data was then matched with the 2001 UN five-stage model of e-government assessment to analyse progress made in relation to the delivery of public services through digital means. It was learned from the previous chapters that e-government is the future of public governance and that governments that do not exploit the full potential of it undermine chances of developing their societies in the age of the Information Society (IS) (Capano and Pavan, 2018; Weerakkody *et al*, 2009). The summary of the findings regarding the above key questions is provided in the next section. While there might be a correlation between the current status of the websites of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho and the factors affecting the implementation of e-government services in this country, further studies are suggested to compile a detailed account of this relationship.

It was noted in this research that we are living in the information age. As observed by Accenture (2017) and Palvia and Sharma (2007), this is a period of change driven by information technologies. New technological breakthroughs make significant contributions to the transformation of individuals, organisations and communities at large. ICT applications, e-government in particular, offer innovative solutions to nagging social and economic problems (i.e. inefficiency, inequality, and inaccessibility to information, resources and services) (Anderson *et al*, 2015; OECD, 2017; Proskuryakova *et al*, 2013). The radical influence of e-government has intensified government efforts to increase efficiency of public services. Although e-government promises many benefits to support delivery of services to the public, it became clear from the analysis of the previous research that e-government success or failure is faced with political, technical, economic, social and cultural factors.

5.2. DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY OF THE MAIN RESULTS

5.2.1. The state of e-government services in Lesotho

Guo (2010) and Sodhi and Singh (2014) indicated that e-government offers a number of benefits to both the developing and developed nations to support public service delivery through the web-based technologies. Evident from Lofgren (2007) is that e-government implementation entails stages that may be utilised to assess growth. Benchmarking is an important and valuable practice since it allows researchers and policy makers to assess a specific policy's progress, success and failure over a given period of time. Emphasising the

importance and advantages, Mukherjee (2019) and Twizeyimana (2019) suggested that assessing e-government provides policy makers with critical information to ensure mid-course adjustments enhance efficiency and make sure that ordinary people are benefiting from the returns of their funds.

This study's first objective was to evaluate the status of the websites of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho in relation to their maturity level to deliver e-government services. Foregoing research on African governments with a similar focus to this study (Ginindza, 2008; Kaaya, 2004; Magayane *et al* 2016, Makoza, 2013; Oni, 2016) utilised several and overlapping indicators. Their findings suggested that in spite of radical advancements made by ICT, transforming government will ever be a difficult and continuous process. Continents, regions and countries differ drastically in their level of development, overall commitment and strategies to e-government. It was evident that websites of African governments have largely provided online services that are below stakeholders' expectations. The current study used visibility and availability, accessibility, transparency and openness, usability, interactivity and transactional services and seamless services as a rubric to assess the contents and features of the government websites to examine their maturity to deliver e-government services. The 2001 UN stage model of e-government was applied as an assessment tool and analytical framework. The results corroborated the findings of prior studies (Kaaya, 2004; Magayane *et al*, 2016; Makoza, 2013; Oni *et al*, 2016) suggesting that most government websites in Africa are currently at the early phases of e-government development when using the UN's e-government stage. Table 4.14 gave a summary of observations on the stages of e-government implementation.

Section 4.1 indicated that all the 26 government ministries were regularly visited but not all were analysed. As done by Asogwa (2011), only ministries with functional websites were analysed. The data showed that these ministries merely constitute 15.4% of the total number of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho, whereas the majority (84.6%) either have no Uniform Resource Locators (URL) or functional websites. The ministries with functional websites providing e-government services are the Ministry of Finance (MoF), Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation (MFRSC), Ministry of Development Planning (MDP) and Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture (MTEC) while the other 22 ministries have no functional websites. This does not only show a negative trend towards government service delivery in the digital era of the 2000s but, as stated earlier, also a huge disparity in e-government implementation efforts among the ministries. Being successful in e-government

needs a government-wide approach across public agencies and ministries and between government spheres at national, district and local levels (Mawela, 2017; Joseph and Olugbara, 2018; Oliver, 2017). As Fang (2012) argued, government organisations that are not computer-generated, digital and electronic in the 21st century miss an important opportunity to bring business entities and citizens closer to their government, an aspect of most importance in customised service delivery and good governance.

Some of the ministries that do not provide e-government services are the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHa) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS). As stated on the National Government Portal, MoHa is an essential ministry that benefits both the residents and citizens of Lesotho and the international communities and tourists. Stated in Section 1.5 of Chapter 1 is the reality that the majority of the Basotho nation depends on subsistence farming. Evident from Jere's (2015) study is that the deployment of ICT tools in agriculture reduces food insecurity, thus to achieve the National Vision 2020 goal of eradicating poverty, the MAFS should be taking this opportunity to incorporate ICTs in farming practices.

It is clear from the analysis that some ministries of the Government of Lesotho, albeit few, have progressively developed and advanced their websites to improve the delivery of e-government services. These ministries are the MoF, MTEC, MFRSC and MDP. However, the websites of these ministries still need to offer more comprehensive e-government services which can sufficiently serve the businesses, citizens and residents. As Welch and Pandey (2007) observed in their study, the current study also found that providing services that would cut red tape and reinforce the concept of public value among society are examples of needed services. Providing e-government services for applying for student bursary loans via the MDP's National Manpower Development Secretariat (NMDS) or application for passports and identity documents (IDs) via the MoHA are such services. Because the majority of the ministerial websites require such services that would enhance public value, the Government of Lesotho should closely focus on unsatisfactory progress of its government websites and take necessary steps towards remedying this development without delay where applicable. This is particularly important as all the analysed websites in this study are not integrated in vertical and horizontal dimensions, providing neither transactional nor seamless services.

Looking at the stages that the websites of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho have reached with reference to the delivery of services they are rendering; we can realise that the progress of ICT strategies to achieving the national goals is steadily slow. The results affirm

the findings of the previous research about situation of e-government websites and services in Africa (Makoza, 2013; Mutula, 2010; Oni *et al*, 2016). Specifically, although the ministerial websites of the Government of Lesotho have made significant strides towards shifting from being static information providers (Stage I), their interactivity appears to be elementary since users cannot make complete transactions online, download forms, modify their content and submit them digitally. It becomes even clearer when looking at Table 4.14 that the analysed websites have not progressed beyond interactive web presence, meaning their highest level generally ranges between enhanced web presence (stage II) and interactive web presence (stage III) of the e-government development model.

As demonstrated in Table 4.14, the web presence of the ministries continues to diminish as they move upward towards sophisticated stages of e-government development. The results show that neither of the analysed ministerial websites is at stage IV and V. The low pace of e-government development should be addressed to improve the quality of services provided by government online. Drew and Alghamdi (2011) reckoned that it may be challenging to attain transactional and seamless services, but it is not impossible. E-government services will be effectively implemented and have optimal impact in Lesotho only if all government ministries can digitise their current service delivery structures and mechanisms. As Ke and Wei (2004) established, when governments invest more efforts towards the use of ICTs, their success increases significantly.

Alsaif (2013) indicated that ICT-supported provision of public services is mainly intended to make sure of the universality and wide coverage of basic services to the people, especially the most vulnerable. The UN (2018) demonstrated that in many parts of the world, government organisations have started embracing provision of public services through digital means. However, large disparities remain among government ministries of Lesotho on how web-based technologies are being harnessed to deliver public services. It becomes more important to overemphasise that only 15.4% of the total number of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho are exploiting innovative technologies to provide public services. If the government wishes to widen access to public services, then it is in its best interest to promote and implement electronic models of service delivery.

In summary, this study establishes that while 84.6% of the total number of the ministries of the Government of Lesotho have demonstrated their unwillingness to apply ICTs in their public administration, the MoF, MFRSC, MTEC and MDP have tried to instil public value

through implementing e-government services. The study recognises that these four ministries that have implemented e-government, however, require to work more on their websites to enhance access to service delivery since their websites are still at the infancy stages of e-government development, providing weak interactive features and neither transactional nor seamless services. A very serious obstruction which characterises e-government development in Lesotho is critical issues, whose implications facilitate the widening of the access divide especially between those who can master the art of English and those who cannot.

5.2.2. Factors important for the implementation of e-government in Lesotho

The results from the data which were collected from the interviews with government officials identified numerous issues that need to be addressed for successful implementation of e-government in Lesotho. This was in relation to the broad objective of the study, which sought to investigate organisational perspectives in respect of the factors affecting the implementation of e-government services in the country. Previous research on policy change (Brynard, 2005; Crosby, 1996; Matland, 1995; McConnell, 2010; Wolman, 1981) provided evidence that policy reform initiatives suffer from challenges, obstacles and barriers affecting their successful implementation. As indicated by Grindle and Thomas (1990), while there may be common issues across governments around the world, Warwick (1982) argued that these issues should be discussed in the context of a particular setting.

Commenting on e-government as a policy change, Bwalya (2017), Al-Shafi (2009) and Gichoya (2005) pointed out that e-government can be largely affected by several important factors. These factors play a massive role in improving e-government performance both in the developing and developed countries. Nawafleh *et al* (2012) reckoned that each country has to take into consideration these factors and analyse them thoroughly for efficient and successful implementation of e-government services. The results from the current study identified seven factors directly associated with the Lesotho context and they were depicted in Figure 3.1. These factors whose presence encourages success and their absence encourages failure include vision; policy and regulatory laws; political uncertainty; political will, leadership support and resource mobilisation; resistance to change; digital divide; and policy monitoring and evaluation.

5.2.2.1. Vision

Previous research on public administration has provided evidence on the importance of strategic planning before launch and implementation of policy programmes and projects.

Rabaiah and Vandijck (2009) observed that vision – as it is set right at the beginning – is *sine qua non* of e-government implementation. Heeks (2006) demonstrated that vision is absolutely necessary because it constantly remains the driving force for the implementing agency, which is usually duty bound to plan and champion implementation. As put by Mkude and Wimmer (2013), from this vision, the agency is held accountable to establish the mission statement, which is often more expressive than the vision and contains further details. Likewise, strategy that describes a set of statements pledging to execute actions to realise the vision statement must be laid out. A failure to describe and firmly stick to a set of commitments has serious implications for the delivery of services that directly address the demands of the citizens and residents.

The findings of the current study suggest that e-government in Lesotho is not built on strong vision. In the absence of or weak e-government vision, the Government of Lesotho has been found not only to lack political direction but also its independent decision-making power is severely compromised, which seriously impacts negatively on the implementation of e-government services. The data from the interviews suggested that external funders rather point to the direction which e-government takes while the government enjoys minimal control over the kind of e-government projects and services to be implemented. Clearly, this anomalous practice is a serious sabotage to the fundamentals of e-government.

Ndou (2004) averred that victorious e-government is service orientated, customer-driven and context based. As Zafiropoulos *et al* (2012) maintained, understanding context and designing online services that are demanded by citizens is a panacea for e-government implementation. For this reason, the government, as the authority closer to the citizens than international donors, has to play a central role since it has better understanding of what the Basotho nation need.

The findings further showed that in the absence of strong vision, the Government of Lesotho appeared to lose coordinated focus, which is a vital facet of whole-of-government service provision. As Nurdin *et al* (2014) observed, the implementation process of e-government often comprises a broad range of actors and agencies. Their different characteristics and the need to collaborate makes the relationships between them complex and difficult. Evidence from the data indicated that this created a vacuum, resulting in inconsistencies and lack of a sense of purpose in e-government service delivery and a failure to endorse inter- and intra-ministerial co-ordination. In order to realise the true potential of e-government, government

needs to ensure that clear strategies are put in place. Cooperation and coordination become significant issues in harmonising the many actors that support e-government systems implementation.

With sound e-government vision, government and its departments will be able to engage in in-depth evaluation of the contemporary situation, the reality on the ground and the inventory of projects, articulate costs, impacts and benefits of programme as well as constantly monitor and evaluate the project development. This means government and its agencies will be resolute in implementing e-government initiatives as per the e-government implementation plan with clearly outlined actors and timeframes. The role of funders will be none other than supporting and not determining initiatives.

Strategic planning will consistently help government to pursue customer-driven and services orientated delivery, hence meeting individual needs and enhancing quality of life. Equally so, evident from the data is that not only unclear plans and a lack of clear objectives thereafter will discourage development and direction of e-government in the country, absence of legal laws and policy frameworks will also set e-government for failure. Being a policy change programme, e-government requires more attention in terms of vision, policy and regulatory laws to gain maximum benefit out of it.

5.2.2.2. Policy and regulatory laws

Naidoo (2012) theorised that policy and regulatory laws are a panacea for e-government development. Likewise, this study's findings established that lack of e-government policy frameworks and legal laws is a major hindrance for an effective implementation of e-government in Lesotho. Evidence from the data indicated that currently there is neither a clear policy framework to guide procedures and actions involved in e-government implementation nor legal laws and regulations for e-government operation, defining jurisdictional responsibilities with issues relating to electronic information (e-information) collaboration and sharing, electronic transactions (e-transactions) and related functionality including electronic crimes (e-crimes) and copyright rules. This constraint has proved to have worked against the progress of e-government in the country. As Shrestha and Devkota (2015) observed, lack of policy and regulatory laws is likely to discourage a lot of people from using government websites meant to enhance the delivery and access to e-government services. Since e-government is a reform matter, it needs more attention in respect of policy and law regulations to gain maximum benefits.

The success of any reform policy or national development plan is dependent upon the ability to implement it, namely capacity building that enables the delivery of stated commitments. For example, when analysing the role of science and technology in Africa, Jugessur (1994) clearly stated that capacity building incorporates institutional, financial, human, infrastructure and legal capacities. With similar emphasis, the analysis of the current study suggests that a successful e-government implementation in Lesotho rests on the envisaged electronic transactions and electronic commerce (e-transaction and e-commerce) Act. Upon its enactment, this Act is said to support the use of government e-services by providing for protection of users, providing for service providers' limitation of liability, facilitating and regulating online transactions and communications and other related concerns (GoL, 2013). Evident from the data is that this law will come into effect once the stagnant e-transaction and e-commerce bill of 2013 has been passed by the legislature. However, it was discovered that there is static progress of this bill mainly because of the political reasons including frequent change in political administration – as will be demonstrated in the next section – and lack of political will to enhance openness, transparency and accountability through digital means. Without regulatory laws and policy framework, a successful e-government implementation and acceptance will remain a declaration of intent that will never happen.

However, it is important to highlight that an overemphasis on the e-commerce and e-transactions bill does not ignore other policy and regulatory laws that the Government of Lesotho has put in place. As stated in Chapter 1, Lesotho, in line with world trends, recognised, over the last decade, the importance of e-government and ICT in general in enhancing access to the quality of public service delivery and increasing the overall performance of government. Not only do ICTs have the potential to strengthen democratic institutions (Boyong, 2001; Fleming, 2002), they are also crucial in fighting poverty and improving people's lives (Naidoo, 2012; Taylor and Packham, 2016). As indicated earlier, for any country to benefit from the advances of ITs, policies and laws should be adopted and implemented. Indeed, the Government of Lesotho is implementing e-government with a number of poverty reduction programmes to better the lives of the Basotho nation such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy and Vision 2020.

In general, it could be concluded that implementing e-government requires a set of new rules, policies and laws to attend to online activities including but not limited to data protection and freedom of information, copyright and intellectual property rights, computer crime as well as sharing of information between a range of government agencies that compose the governance

system. Building a positive perception about the deployment of e-government tools should be regarded as a priority in order to create the broader value of ICTs within government and society at large. A formal legal route is a necessary requirement for the legitimacy of online processes. However, the contemporary political climate in Lesotho has negative implications on the policy making, subsequently influencing the implementation of e-government services.

5.2.2.3. Political uncertainty

Evidence emerging from the review of the literature indicated that many governments directed their efforts towards enhancing access to the delivery of public services by directly influencing how the public sector organisations perform. In the proposition of an inevitable relationship between excellence in service delivery and organisational performance, Ndubai *et al* (2017) stated that improvement in organisational efficacy and the subsequent improvement in the delivery of services is positively or adversely affected and influenced by numerous determinants, both external and internal. As demonstrated by Maslow (1943) and Taylor (2011), internal factors which are often controllable generally include the motivation of workers. While Dunn (2009), Paudel (2009) and Smith (2007) argued that external factors which are mainly not under the control of the public sector organisations occur from events that are remote to the span of control of the public sector managers, such as terrorism and global competitiveness of countries goods and services, the results of this study established that political uncertainty is one of the self-explained external factors that have an adverse effect on the implementation of e-government services and adoption of e-government systems in general in Lesotho.

As stated by Gupta and Arora (2015), political uncertainty, which is a serious malaise harmful for policy and programme implementation, refers to the proclivity of a change in the executive power, either by unconstitutional or constitutional means. In Lesotho, as found by this study, political uncertainty is more inherent to democratic processes, free national general elections in particular. This revelation resonates with the research about elections and democracy in Lesotho (Likoti, 2008; Matlosa, 2008; Shale 2008). While elections are a fact of life and cannot be wished away in democratic countries such as Lesotho, this study has found them to create uncertainty over the electoral outcome on the basis of which party or coalition of parties will assume power. However, it has to be clearly stated that uncertainty over the coming incumbent is not a problem in itself; the problem is the policy decisions that may be advanced.

The findings of the researcher's study establish that often successors in Lesotho either go slow or discontinue with the programmes already started by the predecessors. Kaye-Essien (2019) showed that the normative view of public sector reform indicates that a policy initiative is as good as the people it is intended for. Considering that, it could be anticipated that the incumbent government with the citizens at heart would always strive to continue the programmes which were left unfinished by their predecessors. If that were so, any new government in Lesotho – coalition of parties or single-party government – would inherit uncompleted projects from previous governments, carry on without interrupting and achieve optimal results and outcomes.

Unfortunately, just like in many other countries, continuation of policy making from a past government with a new administration has emerged as not a smooth task in Lesotho. Often there is discontinuation of policies and programmes or even zero probability of continuation. With emphasis on e-government, the participants gave reference to the e-transactions and e-commerce Bill of 2013 which is still “stuck”. Evidence from the data suggests that the recent regimes appear not to consider ICT issues as of utmost national importance. This makes it easy to see why an enactment of the envisaged e-transactions and e-commerce Act is so difficult. It has been noticed, however, that for incoming governments to make a name for themselves, it is deemed important for them to abandon existing initiatives to start the new ones, surprisingly with the same or similar objectives. This anomalous practice must be discouraged.

Not only does evidence point to the stagnant pace of e-transactions and e-commerce bill, also evident from the website survey is that many functional and well-designed e-government websites are abandoned once a new government comes into power. The abandoned websites belonging to the Ministry of Education and Training are evident in this unprecedented tendency. This is so worrying in the country where within a period of 5 years (2012-2017), three successive free general elections were held, worst of all resulting in three different coalition governments. As Browne and Dreijmanis (1982) argued, coalition governments in contemporary parliamentary democracies are quite impressive as they provide a particularly appropriate focus for inquiring into the most important problem of who governs. Unlike in single-party governments, governing through coalition, especially in the contemporary proportional law where multiple parties are keen for bargains, represents a challenge full of risks.

Prior research indicated that single-party governments, at least in theory, are those making the political process more effective and straightforward. Citing Conti and Maragoni (2014:1) in length:

‘Single-party governments keep the executive (or better, the party controlling the executive) fully accountable to voters: the sole incumbent governing party does not share responsibilities with any partner for its own decisions and cannot blame any other political counterpart for any eventual poor performance. At the same time, single-party governments are relatively homogeneous for the simple reason that no interparty divisions characterise these executives’.

Evidence from the quotation above suggests that decision-making in a single-party government is potentially rapid and smooth, with no compromises or interparty confrontations. Multi-party governments contemporary to Lesotho’s parliamentary system, on the contrary, are frustrating. Evidence from Conti and Maragoni (2014) further shows that multi-party governments involve shared responsibilities and require some form of compromise from parties in coalition that is often not easy to reach and maintain. At the same time, coalition partners are keen for bargains, frustrating policy and administrative processes, and this is so true about the situation in Lesotho. The internal divisions inherent from coalition governments not only hamper the stability of government decision-making but also have severe implications to the programmes’ implementation and outcomes.

The results from this study demonstrated that uncertainty of the democratic and political process threatens e-government service implementation in Lesotho. It is evident from the findings that more often when a new government – leave alone coalition government – assumes power, programmes planned by predecessors are deserted or completely replaced, at times without proper consideration of the broader implications. Asogwa (2011) re-established this finding in his submission that a critical impediment that characterises e-government readiness in Africa is lack of continuity resulting in poor delivery of public services and underutilisation of ITs. The administrative and organisational effects of those policy changes whilst not being considerate of broader implications have been detrimental to the implementation of e-government in Lesotho.

In many respects, change in the political regime has failed to produce a more responsive and efficient government. Clearly, a go slow and discontinuity culture have surfaced not to work

in favour of the Basotho nation who are in high demand for uninterrupted service delivery. Therefore, it is important for politicians not to see change in political administration as an opportunity for political scores but rather an important political transition period where new programmes and predecessors' initiatives could be run concurrently to maintain national policy direction.

5.2.2.4. Political will, top leadership support and resource mobilisation

It could be noticed from the analysis of previous research presented in Chapter 2 that policies do not fail or succeed on their own virtues; instead their success or failure depends on how they are executed. Furthermore, the review of the literature presented without any contestation that there is constant growing disappointment for most people around the world today with inefficiency of their governments to solve the present-day challenges including poor service delivery. While Hudson *et al* (2019) alleged that within multifaceted chaotic systems, it is imprecise how best to ascertain successful policy formulation and implementation, Ugoani (2016) made it quite clear that competency and political will are inextricably linked.

The results of this study echo a similar sentiment that to intervene in the increasing challenges facing societies and communities, governments must first show a will to address contemporary issues, translate such a will into a programme and support the programme's implementation. According to Alshehri and Drew (2011), Basu (2004) and Sabatier (1980), legitimacy of government will, commitment and actions should be in a form of statutes. However, the results of this study did show that there is no clear set of action statements explaining government intentions and commitment to support e-government's adoption and implementation. These results provide an insight into the reasons for poor implementation of e-government in Lesotho. For successful inclusive public services, the Government of Lesotho must demonstrate their will and support its implementation.

Evidence from the analysis suggested that the will of government could have been expressed in the e-government policy, if it existed, and in the envisaged e-transaction and e-commerce Act. The absence of willingness that was supposed to be expressed in the statutory laws insinuates the political leadership's lack of readiness to provide transactional and seamless services, which is a challenge to e-government development in itself. Concluding from the above, commitment and will from political leadership will enhance acceptance and implementation of e-services, especially complex e-government services.

As Fang (2012) observed, a failure of the implementation of any policy initiative is not only encouraged by policy makers' inability to demonstrate willingness. Lack of support by top management within government organisations also plays a major role for policy and programmes failure. This suggests that successful implementation of e-government in Lesotho would not be exclusive to the dialogues and decisions by the legislature – Parliament and Senate. As Pinto (2000) argued, effective project management is also associated with the project managers' ability to play their politics right. According to him, successful managers are ordinarily those who are willing and able to apply proper political tactics to engineer the achievement of the policy goals.

However, this study has established that e-government progress and development in Lesotho suffer from top management support, which is not only needed to motivate staff but also to influence support from elected politicians and lobby for funding. The results have revealed that one major cause for lack of commitment and support from political leadership is because ICT projects are too technical and complex to be easily understood by some politicians. Therefore, top management leadership is necessary at this stage to explain e-government concept and model and persuade support. As Pinto (2000) theorised, top managers have all sorts of power to ensure that policy achieves its goals. Based on the insights shared by the participants, if top managers really had political will to support e-government systems, it would not be difficult for them to enforce their power of authority, status and influence for lobbying support from those who have potential to make e-government fail or succeed. There is strong evidence from the data that if Principal Secretaries and Directors had political will and hunger for e-government success, all stakeholders, including politicians who are easy to manipulate, could have done all their potential best to give necessary support. It is a pity that e-government, at the present moment, suffers under managers who have exorbitant power but fail to use it for supporting e-government for better delivery of public services.

It would be logical from project management's point of view to think that lack of financial muscle would have been central to the sluggish pace of e-government development. However, the reality has suggested that the bureaucratic heads of government departments are not acknowledging and cultivating their political ties, both within and outside government, especially with the business sector, to gain necessary resource support. These findings provide insights for the reason why the participants pointed to a lack of local businesses buy-in. As Pinto (2000) argued, the findings of this study establish that should managers seriously rally behind e-government, they would have used their influence

optimally, by working behind the scenes, negotiating and cutting deals. Top management support before, during and after an e-government project is implemented is critical to overcome complex challenges.

This study, however, expresses that the central involvement of politicians, both elected and unelected, at both administration and political levels do not support e-government development but also impedes it. The findings have indicated that e-government is technical, complex, risky and expensive and politicians seldom commit to invest their support in programmes of that nature, which may cost political capital in case of programme failure or public scrutiny. Until heads of bureaucratic structures are not politically inclined or deployed, e-government will continue to suffer from top management involvement. In one way or another, leadership commitment and support play an essential role in e-government's development.

Political will and management support and, to a larger extent, financial muscle is critical for e-government development. The endpoint of e-government is a networked and connected society, where all the actors are able to exploit, harness and access information and services from anywhere at any time. For government leadership, this may be confrontational to the normal way of doing business. Thus, leadership from the top of government and management structures need to be champions of change, be visibly engaging, informing and persuading execution of e-government initiatives. The involvement of Principal Secretaries of the ministries and Directors of the departments, as agents of change, is mandatory at all stages of e-government development, but critical at the beginning, especially for resource mobilisation.

5.2.2.5. Resistance to change

In one study, Belgimals (2009) argued that integrating ICT into government functions and operations is a complex process and one that often encounters many difficulties. Al-Rashidi (2009) indicated that one such challenge facing ICT systems is resistance to change. In line with these previous studies, the current study has established that resistance to embrace digital means is an important barrier for transforming the public service in Lesotho. The results suggest that persistence towards traditional means of public service provision negatively affects implementation of e-government services. The analysis indicates that resistance to e-government – which is a reactive policy change to the pressing demands of the information and technology age – is institutional. These findings were also mirrored in other studies in this area, which suggested that resistance to e-government occurs at various levels

within the organisation. Alsassim *et al* (2017) observed that resistance to e-government exists at three levels: operational level; top management; and middle management level. It would be helpful therefore to manage resistance at all these levels in order to have a smooth execution of e-government services.

Evident from the data is that there are beliefs, ideas, assumptions, values and behaviour patterns held by government officials in the workplace within government departments that are resistant to e-government service delivery. These cultural traits have manifested themselves among personnel both at managerial and street-level bureaucracy. The results reveal that there is resistance to the digital way of doing government business by government employees at the front line: top managers such as Principal Secretaries and Directors. However, resistance by politically elected officials was considered in this study as lack of support rather than it being resistance. This is because politicians to some extent were considered to be external from the daily running and operations of the government ministries and departments. Based on Bingimlas (2009), while intrinsic barriers include beliefs, attitudes and practices of individuals within the organisation directly affecting implementation, extrinsic barriers encompass support and resources, hence politicians' support was not examined under resistance to change.

On one hand, evident from the data is that there is fear among some top government officials that obstruct them from deploying ICTs in public administration. As ITU (2014) observed, the results of this study also found that the integration of ICTs in government administration was perceived by some top officials as a dangerous move towards their viability and their hierarchical power. Perhaps this may be due to the fact that ICTs blur the traditional demarcation lines between senior managers and employees. As put by Pinto (2000), effective line managers usually give doubts to a new policy initiative because of its ability to upset the power balance and weaken the amount of authority a front manager has with her or his staff. Clearly, e-government champions (MCST) need to sensitise all the ministries management to institute and support e-government initiatives.

On the other hand, Basyal and Seo (2017) suggested that the mindset change of top government officials towards e-government would not really help should street-level bureaucrats not change as well. They argued that when changes are instigated, the front-line employees get affected and, for these employees, resistance to change is a normal phenomenon. As a result, these staff who are on the ground dealing directly with citizens

inevitably are required to play a crucial role in understanding what the government's clients need and in addressing the real challenges that need government's quick attention.

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, previous research demonstrated that many employees – and Al-Khafaji and Shittuline (2012) emphasised on the older employees in particular – do not view the revolution of ICT as an opportunity, instead they see it as a threat to their future. For Alassim *et al* (2017), employees in general resist change for various reasons including workload, gaps of skills, previous bad experiences and that fear that ICT machinery is going to take over their jobs. Like a number of prior researchers (Bhatnagar, 2002; Ndou, 2004) have mentioned, the resistance of street-level bureaucracy is among the most fundamental impediment for the implementation of change programmes. Such resistance has a high risk of collapsing e-government systems, which is evident in Lesotho's public sector context.

Evident from the data is the rejection of e-government by technocratic staff. Suggested by the analysis, some staff feel entitlement of not sharing the information, apparently belonging to the public. Free access to public information is viewed by these staff as a benefit not to be deserved by the rightful owners, the citizens. To address this misconception and ensure that information is shared to enhance e-government, there has to be new patterns of instruction and radical shifts in rules and structures in the public service as an implementing agency for e-government. As argued by InfoDev (2009), e-government is not easy. It is more about government and governance, and can require substantial changes not only on authority, roles, processes and structures, but also mindset change.

Furthermore, it was found that autonomy and independence of government ministries, and obviously of departments and other agencies, exacerbate the issue of resistance to change, consequently affecting e-government service provision. Evidence has pointed to a persistent *silo* culture that empowers government organisations to be dominantly inwardly focused, which is contrary to the fundamentals of e-government where information sharing is a prerequisite. It was understood, however, that lack of Internet connection and intranets may have escalated this situation. The study established that when calls are made to remove obstacles for G2C service delivery, G2G interaction must not be ignored since it lays the foundation for G2C service provision. As proponents of policy change (Ayee, 1994; Crosby, 1996; Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1989; White, 1990) stated, policy implementation is not essentially a linear and on-going process, in most cases it is usually interrupted and

fragmented, hence a need for management and mindset change to adopt e-government services.

An increase in citizens' expectations for effective, equitable and customised public services, demands a sober mindset to highly collaborate for seamless delivery of e-government services.

An increasing demand for enhanced, customised and equitable public services, requires a sober mindset to highly collaborate for integrated government e-services. Inasmuch as the Government of Lesotho attempts to provide services to the Basotho nation in the simplest ways and cost-effectively to reach Vision 2020 goals to eradicate poverty and achieve stability, it is deemed important that their employees at all organisational levels rethink of changing their mindset towards the deployment of ICTs, especially e-government. Resistance to change may further cause not only a slow pace towards e-government service implementation but also a massive divide between regions and individuals.

5.2.2.6. Digital divide

Earlier studies such as Belanger and Cater (2006), Hall and Owens (2011) and Hoffman *et al* (2000) acknowledged that despite a constant increase in the number of people utilising e-government services, the digital divide is still an obstacle to adoption for many. The results of this study are no different. The findings of this study establish that digital divide is one of the serious problems encountering e-government in Lesotho, which should be resolved in order to roll-out e-government-wide service delivery. One would assume that introducing ICTs in the public sector would be the solution to fill the gap between those with regular, effective access to government services and those without. However, the reality suggests that even in the digital age, some individuals benefit from government services while others still do not.

Interestingly, the findings have established that there is a strategically developed gap that allowed some individuals and communities to exploit the full potential of ITs while others were not. This is contrary to e-government objectives of seeking to enable all citizens to access, process and create information and enable them to participate in economic and democratic processes through the use of ITs (Furuholt and Wahid 2008; Rahman and Galbreath, 2012). The realisation of these objectives requires that digital divide is addressed.

Drawing from the results presented in Chapter 4, the digital divide that cripples Lesotho's public service delivery can best be summarised and categorised as access divide and innovative divide. Concerning access divide, evident from the data is that access to e-

government services is a problem, particularly for the Basotho nation living in the remote areas and deep terrains of the Mountain Kingdom, which is not the case for those who live in the lowlands.

However, all these are things that are under control of government. If the government were serious about e-government-wide service delivery, it would ensure that the required amenities were in place. Providing e-government services to a select segment of the society, government misses out on the chance to interact with and solicit feedback from a larger portion of the population. Therefore, it is important for government, especially through the MCST and Energy Ministry, to identify communities that are excluded from this innovative reform and take necessary precautions to bridge the digital gap and encourage inclusion.

Furthermore, the results have also pointed to the gap among individuals and communities who already have access to information technologies and connection. This gap which is coined innovativeness divide (Agarwal *et al*, 2005; Hurt *et al*, 1977; Rogers, 1995), is created by “unwillingness” or “willingness” to change to try to use new information and communication technologies. According to Zafiroopoulos *et al* (2012), individuals who have negative perceptions of the trustworthiness of the government websites are unlikely to take risks whereas those who have trust are likely to do so. This resonates well with the findings of this study. Evidence from the data suggests that since there were no laws regulating online activities and transactions, some people, as it was revealed, may seem reluctant to take risks in utilising e-government websites and services while others may be willing to cope with high levels of risk and uncertainty. Rolling out “e-government-for-all” will require the Government of Lesotho to step up and ensure that a widening gap in opportunity, which is brought about by government’s disproportional deployment of ICTs in public administration, is bridged. Building trust for successful e-government is another fundamental step towards achieving substantial e-government service delivery. Only feedback from monitoring and evaluation (M&E) can enable government to keep track of whether or not they are performing according to the set standards.

5.2.2.7. Policy monitoring and evaluation

Lesotho, like many countries in the developing regions, faces challenges in fulfilling citizens’ expectations to receive high quality and sustainable services. As Kariuki and Reddy (2017) stated, citizens want their governments not only to be responsive to their needs but also to ensure the delivery of optimal and improved services equitably across the citizenry populace

irrespective of their social and economic status. Therefore, governments have an onus to develop and implement systems that would help them to improve and measure performance. Sadly, practice on the ground shows the opposite. Analysis of the previous research projects suggested that basic service delivery has been on a downward spiral in the African region, demonstrating a lack of M&E systems (Mackay, 2007). M&E is the cornerstone for sound governance arrangements.

Similarly, the findings of this study establish that M&E is inevitable for the achievement of evidence-based policy making, budgetary decisions, management and accountability. What these findings suggest is that sufficient M&E encourages success whereas its lack encourages failure. As Bakunzibake *et al* (2019) observed, one of the reasons for effective and successful implementation of e-government is the presence of adequate M&E practices. Hatsu and Ngassam (2016) and Mtshali (2015) reported that such effectiveness and success can result from an ongoing tracking of progress and closely checking whether e-government initiatives conform to the initial plans and the quality of services delivered. However, as evident from the results, there is insufficient M&E for e-government initiatives in Lesotho. The data showed that there is no designated authority actually monitoring and evaluating e-government systems including e-government websites.

Inability to monitor and evaluate government performance defeats the whole purpose of the establishment and existence of the M&E Department whose role is to oversee M&E of the national policies and strategic frameworks. Effective M&E by the M&E Department would provide both the MDP and MCST, public service officials, government and other relevant stakeholders with better means for learning from e-government implementation, improving government service delivery, planning and allocating human, technology and financial resources and demonstrating results as part of accountability to citizens and stakeholders. As the World Bank (2004) theorised, M&E should satisfy three dimensions. The first dimension is an internal M&E role, which is related to project initiative and programmatic quality assurance and improvement. Second, an external impact assessment role associated with providing relevant stakeholders with evidence of outcomes and impacts, both potential and achieved. Lastly, a commitment to ensuring accountability to citizens and other stakeholders.

The fragmentation in M&E has not only restricted the E-government Infrastructure Project to lobby for political support and funding. Without doubt, this fragmentation has become a necessary obstacle to e-government service delivery in many ways. The evidence has

demonstrated that the lack of M&E is the most important ingredient for the failure of the majority of the government ministries to implement government plans; the cause for the discontinuity in e-government projects and programmes including abandoning of government websites; and a source for the poor standard of services and information provided by functional websites due to irregular assessment and updating of these websites. Thus, it is upon the concerned ministries and departments to assume M&E roles and learn from the feedback. This will assist in promoting transparency and openness in government intentions and actions, advocate for uninterrupted interaction with government, and encourage wider access to service delivery via government websites. Without proper M&E, government-wide e-government service delivery will forever be fictitious.

In general, evidence shows that proper implementation of e-government can promote equity in service delivery and improve government's ability to reach previously isolated communities. To fulfil this far-reaching potential for public sector transformation, the Government of Lesotho will have to rethink its strategies. The impetus of focusing on policy, on what government intends to do, what it actually does, why and how is of utmost importance at this stage. It goes without saying that it is not difficult for the Basotho and other nations in the developing regions to envision a situation where their government interacts with them 24/7, without waiting in lines. Therefore, for it to be judged administratively competent, the Government of Lesotho must show evidence of bridging the gap between the intention of the 2005 ICT Policy and the actual accomplishment of this policy. This cannot be done without creating a conducive environment and also by taking into consideration comprehensive social, economic and political conditions that are related to policy and policymaking, where conditions are continuously changing.

5.3. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study is not free from limitations. It has three fundamental limits. Firstly, this study was exclusive to the views from government officials. These included experiences, knowledge, expectations, opinions and perceptions of public service officials with significant experience with e-government practice and policy making. While perspective from an organisational context is important for e-government evaluation (Farbey *et al*, 1993), a more complete picture of e-government in the country requires involvement of all round stakeholders (Alshwai and Alalwany, 2009). Therefore, the shortfall of this study lies in the user experience absence. User perspective was shut out from this study because it needs a different inquiry that gathers information from e-government beneficiaries, citizens in

particular, on their actual utilisation and experience with the e-government websites. Dialogue and citizen participation are of utmost importance particularly because researchers such as Cordella and Bonina (2012), Karkin and Janssen (2014) and Scott *et al* (2015) openly argued for inclusion of citizens as users and demanders of government services to be the people deciding on the services they needed. Needless to say, it has been noticed that often citizens are either clueless of e-government services already provided in government websites or understand those that needed to be included into the websites (Sufna and Fernando, 2016; Verkijika and de Wet, 2018). Thus, given the limited literature about e-government in Lesotho, a logical first step is always to get views from experts and observe and assess the current websites for the availability and quality of e-government services (Karkin and Janssen, 2014) which became the case with this study. Hence further studies can utilise the findings of this study as a point of departure for crafting user-centric studies to assess first-hand experiences and interaction of citizens with government websites. This will assist in providing feedback that is useful for designing and updating e-government websites and discover other online services which could be integrated into the government websites.

Secondly, this research was limited to the government ministries in its scope. In order to have broader coverage and to capture a general view of e-government systems in Lesotho, more government agencies need to be investigated. For example, future studies can include other government bodies such as the parliament of the Government of Lesotho, which consists of two Houses – Senate and the National Assembly. Parliament has a significant responsibility in making laws, overseeing the executive and representing the citizens' needs (Tyumre, 2012). It has a large role in ensuring that citizens contribute to the decision making that shapes their lives. Hence, evaluation of how the parliament has tapped into new technologies to improve interaction between legislature and citizens is vital. While ICTs have become an important tool in supporting the work of legislative bodies (UN, 2008), the outcome of future studies with focus on the government use of ICTs in parliament cannot only help citizens to understand the work of the legislature but will also assist parliament to become more transparent, effective, accessible and accountable in their many functions. In turn, this will strengthen democratic practices and contribute to the enhanced relationships between representatives and constituents.

The other limitation of this study is owed to the philosophical understanding explaining that any analysis of e-government services built on a single run of the websites such as this work, is just a snapshot of what is unlikely to be valid for long periods of time (de Juana-Espinosa

et al, 2014) since the websites evolve in relation to their level of e-government development and other essential features (Rorissa and Demissie, 2010). However, this study has helped to capture the overall e-government status in Lesotho. Thus, an accurate picture would only be captured if systematic analyses are performed over a reasonably longer period. Therefore, it is suggested that future researchers carry out longitudinal studies of the government websites, similar to the ones conducted by the UN (2003, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2014, 2016 and 2018).

5.4. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study bears serious implications for the further improvement of e-government services in Lesotho. It provides substantial contributions to e-government practice, policy development and to the rising knowledge all-round the topic area. Understanding the current situation of e-government in Lesotho can be of assistance to legislature in the country by improving public sector organisations. The study may act as a blueprint for strengthening the e-government initiatives and the delivery of web-based services. On one hand, similar studies can easily use the contents and features used to evaluate websites in this study. For this reason, this study contributes towards a more standardised method of evaluating government agencies' websites and consequently avoiding contradicting conclusions. Furthermore, the attributes used in this study to evaluate e-government websites can serve as indicators for governments to strive towards more sophisticated stages of e-government implementation.

On the other hand, this study can further assist developing countries like Lesotho to take advantage of the prospective benefits of e-government to reform public service delivery. Although it has been overstated in this study that every country may have their own peculiar and distinctive issues and obstacles to e-government, the successful implementation of the recommendations made will, however, make Lesotho a source of reference by other governments with similar government projects to the one which forms the subject of the present study. Most importantly, this study can help the Government of Lesotho to overcome challenges to the implementation of e-government thereby providing services that respond to the demanding needs of the communities living in the 21st century.

5.5. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Adoption of e-government as a strategy for public service reform and an instrument for transforming government is epoch-making and sets the stage for the information age society. E-government has led a radical revolution in the quality of service provision to citizens. The

majority of public services come under G2C, *en route* for equipping citizens with wide-ranging resources to tackle today's ever-changing needs and individual routine concerns (Gundi *et al*, 2015; Ndou, 2004). Therefore, adopting and properly implementing e-government will improve service delivery effectiveness and efficiency. Successful e-government will help government to accomplish specific policy outcomes, assisting in building trust between citizens and government by making government and governance processes transparent, reducing corruption, saving costs and time for both the government and the citizens, simplifying bureaucratic procedures and enhancing citizen participation in political and democratic processes (Monga, 2008; Nkwe, 2012).

However, in the light of knowledge acquired from this study and the main results discussed previously, it can be concluded that Lesotho has not fully transformed itself into a digital establishment that meets the needs of its people and interacts with its citizens with ease and convenience. This does not however devalue progress made, albeit little. Few ministries have developed websites to better the delivery of government services. However, these websites as an interface between public institutions and users of their services are still largely stuck at the infancy levels of e-government development. These present websites still require offering more inclusive e-government services which can effectively serve a wide-range of the citizen populace. Providing online services for car disc renewal through the Ministry of Public Works and Transport's Traffic Department or an online alternative for hand delivery of applications for government jobs are examples of needed e-government services. Focusing on the slow development of the websites of government and taking decisive steps to remedy this problem instantly will reinforce the concept of e-government among the Basotho nation.

If the Government of Lesotho would go by the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), it would reap tremendous benefits that ICT applications offer to governments. In particular, e-government is an effective resource and strategy to serve citizens and other stakeholders in very exciting ways (ITU, 2008). The WSIS declared in the Geneva 2003 Plan of Action that all nations must ensure that all their government departments and agencies at all spheres of government have established websites and email addresses and are networked together (WSIS, 2005). This can help the government to integrate technologies into the centrefold of government reforms to digitise the provision of public services and the political and democratic processes. Clearly, this makes e-government more than building websites or putting in new computer systems (Pardo, 2000). Rather, effective e-government can be complementary to the achievement of many government policies and priorities.

Based on the findings, it becomes modest at this stage that the government will have achieved even its own national goals. As enshrined in the ICT policy of 2005, the vision of the country is to have fully fledged e-government implementation by 2020, seizing and reaping maximum benefits from the opportunities brought by the deployment of ICTs in government. Evident from this study is that effective implementation of e-government has been difficult in Lesotho. This corroborates research on e-government in African countries, which confirmed challenges in the implementation of e-government applications and systems (Bwalya, 2009; Gunda *et al*, 2015; Makoza 2013). It therefore goes without saying that for it to advance its e-government and thrive in the implementation of seamless online services, the Government of Lesotho must urgently address both technical and social obstacles impeding e-government development in the country.

Although it may not be a walkover exercise, there is no reason and none whatsoever that the government will remain defeated in its efforts to conquer these challenges. This is so true because the findings have suggested that most of these challenges, if not all, are self-created or under the control of government. This places government central to the practice of e-government (Keohane, 2002; Warf, 2017). In addition, when governments champion the successful e-government, the benefits are ultimately reaped (Practchett *et al*, 2006). Thus, the following recommendations are a panacea for better e-government implementation in Lesotho:

1. It is of utmost importance to create a conducive environment and start embracing the full potential of ICTs as an instrument for transformation and a tool for reform. The deployment of ICT strategies, e-government in particular, can help improve efficiency, increase citizens' access to public information and services and encourage greater e-participation of the citizenry in policy processes. The success of e-government initiatives and processes is embedded in government actions to establish policy frameworks and legal and regulatory laws for their operation, thus the following is recommended for the Government of Lesotho:
 - a) Make earnest efforts to adopt a stagnant electronic transactions and electronic commerce (e-transaction and e-commerce) bill of 2013.
 - b) Design a national e-government policy, strategy and plan of action.
2. The Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology (MCST), in consultation with the Ministry of Development Planning (MDP)'s Department of Monitoring and

Evaluation (M&E) and Department of Policy and Strategic Planning (PSP) should establish an e-government task team. Unlike the E-government Infrastructure Project, which only focuses on infrastructure development, an e-government task team or unit will play a leading role in all e-government plans and activities. It will act as a catalyst in speeding up organisational change. Among other tasks, this team will ensure that:

- a) E-government acquires legitimacy from all relevant stakeholders (including citizens, politicians, legislature, lobby groups, business sector, government ministries and departments) by convincing them that e-government as a policy reform is absolutely necessary and should be implemented and supported in any way even though it may present serious implications.
 - b) Actions and resources are mobilised. In this case, mobilisation defines a set of action statements describing what, when, by whom, where, and how resources will be utilised.
 - c) E-government initiatives are well managed, monitored and evaluated. It is of utmost importance to determine what consequences the policy programme brings, and thus be able to adjust or correct the policy in case it happens to yield unsatisfactory or negative results.
3. There should be policy dialogues sensitising the legislature and implementers (public service officials). These negotiations of reform will reduce the amount of resistance and erroneous assumption that implementation is part of a coherent and linear process where policy results are directly controlled first by summits resolutions to the policy maker and then the implementer.
 4. There must be a continuity culture to ensure sustainability of e-government in Lesotho. It is deemed unfitting for the government in succession to abandon its predecessor's projects just to start new projects with similar or the same strategic policy objectives. Existing projects and programmes must be maintained or slightly amended to achieve the original policy goals. The persistent discontinuity of policy initiatives further places the country at risk of not achieving the national vision of being a strong economy and a prosperous nation.
 5. It is recommended that all government agencies create official websites to accelerate speedy access to government services and information. The bottlenecks, devastating delays and inefficiencies that public sector organisations face in their day-to-day

business processes would be minimised. This would also make government more transparent, responsive, interactive and closer to the people.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: ETHICS/RESEARCH PROTOCOL



05 December 2017

Mr Molefe Matsieli 208524249
School of Social Sciences
Howard College Campus

Dear Mr Matsieli

Protocol reference number: HSS/1544/017D

Project title: E-Government in Lesotho: A policy analysis of the Government Websites with special reference to service delivery.

Expedited Approval

In response to your application dated 28 August 2017, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully


Dr Shamila Naidoo (Deputy Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Prof Radhamany Sooramoorthy
cc Academic Leader Research: Prof Maheshvari Naidu
cc School Administrator: Mr Ngobizwe Memela

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Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

APPENDIX 2

INFORMED CONSENT FORM



Dear Participant,

My name is **Molefi Matsieli** (208524249). I am a PhD candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus. I humbly request that you participate in my study titled *E-Government in Lesotho: A Policy Analysis of the Government Websites with Special Reference to Service Delivery*. The aim of the study is to evaluate the current status of the Government websites and the context within which they are implemented. This is done to determine the websites' level of maturity and ability to allow government-citizen interaction in the process of delivering e-government services. You are chosen to share your experiences and observations on the subject matter.

Please note that:

- The information that you provide will be used for scholarly research only.
- Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have a choice to participate, not to participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action
- Your views in this interview will be presented anonymously. Neither your name nor identity will be disclosed in any form in the study.
- The interview will take about 60 minutes.
- The record as well as other items associated with the interview will be held in a password-protected file accessible only to myself and my supervisors. After a period of 5 years, in line with the rules of the university, it will be disposed by shredding and burning.
- If you agree to participate please sign the declaration attached to this statement (a separate sheet will be provided for signatures)

I can be contacted at: School of Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus, Durban. Email: molefimatsieli@gmail.com; My supervisor is Professor Radhamany Sooryamoorthy who is located at the School of Social Sciences, Howard College Campus, Durban of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details: email sooryamorthyr@ukzn.ac.za Phone number: 031 260 2120.

The Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee contact details are as follows: Ms. Phumelele Ximba, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Research Office, Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za, Phone number +27312603587.

Thank you for your contribution to this research

DECLARATION

I..... (*full names of participant*) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT DATE

.....

APPENDIX 3

GATEKEEPER'S APPROVAL: MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY)



**DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

P. O. BOX 36
MASERU 100
LESOTHO

TEL: (+266) 2232 3063
FAX: (+266) 2232 3460
lebusa.letlotlo@gov.ls

CM/TRN/1

5 May 2017

Mr Molefi Matsieli
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Howard College
Durban, 4000
South Africa

Dear Mr Matsieli

**YOUR REQUEST TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS IN THE MINISTRY OF
COMMUNICATIONS, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

Your request to interview Department of Information and Communications Technology [ICT] officials for E-Government in Lesotho: A Policy Analysis of the Government Websites with Special Reference to Service Delivery study is granted.

The Department is responsible for ICT in the Government of Lesotho. The office of the Director General - ICT is adamant the interviews will add value to your studies.

Wishing you all the best.

Yours Sincerely

L. LETLOTLO
DG – ICT



APPENDIX 4

GATEKEEPER'S APPROVAL: MINISTRY OF DEVELOPMENT PLANNING (POLICY AND STRATEGIC PLANNING)

Telephone: (+266) 22311100
Fax: (+266) 22310281

In reply please quote:
Your Reference:



Ministry of Development Planning
P.O. Box 630
Maseru 100
Lesotho

REF: MDP/106/01/7/2

05 JULY 2017

Mr. Molefi Matsieli
University of Kwazulu-Natal
Howard College
Durban, 4000
South Africa

Dear Mr Matsieli,

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS.

Reference is made to your letter dated 02 May 2017 regarding the above-mentioned subject matter. After consideration of your request, the Ministry has agreed to grant you permission to carry out interviews with the Department of Policy and Strategic Planning as per your request.

Yours Sincerely,



Mahlape Ramoseme (Ms)
Director – Policy and Strategic Planning
Ministry of Development Planning

APPENDIX 5
WEBSITE EVALUATION GUIDE

Government Agency Name:.....

1. Does the agency have web address?
Y [] N []
2. If there is agency web address, what the website's URL?
.....
3. If there is presence of URL, is it clickable?
Y [] N []
4. Is there organisational information such as management official(s) or person(s) in charge, and their credentials including names, photo, position, duty, contact details?
Y [] N []
.....
5. Does the site contain contact information such as email address, telephone and fax number, postal and physical address?
Y [] N []
.....
6. Is there information relating to working hours?
Y [] N []
.....
7. Does the site have publications such as bills, reports, latest news, calendar of events, tenders, vacancies, official statements, circulars?
Y [] N []
.....
8. Is information current and frequently updated?
Y [] N []
.....
9. Does the website content include privacy and security policy?
Y [] N []
.....
10. Does the website have the following features; FAQs, Search tool, contact us and site map?
Y [] N []
.....
11. Is there presence of the following statements: mission; vision; values and objectives?
Y [] N []
.....
12. Does the site offer access to specialized database?
Y [] N []
.....
13. Does the website content provide in different format such as audio clips, pictures, tables, audio clips and textual information?
Y [] N []
.....

14. Does the website offer streaming of events like live videos or audio of events?
Y ☐ N ☐
.....
15. Is there link to social media?
Y ☐ N ☐
.....
16. Is there link to NGOs, private sector and other government agencies?
Y ☐ N ☐
.....
17. Is the website content in both the official languages (Sesotho and English)?
Y ☐ N ☐
.....
18. Is there language change option?
Y ☐ N ☐
.....
19. Does the website allow downloading and printing of forms?
Y ☐ N ☐
.....
20. Does the website allow submission of forms?
Y ☐ N ☐
.....
21. Does the website allow online applications or registration?
Y ☐ N ☐
.....
22. What type of online services does the website provide (i.e. grants, e-learning, e-filing, e-registration and e-visa)?
.....
23. Does the site provide introduction about online transactions?
Y ☐ N ☐
.....
24. Does the site offer direct link to specialized or customised individual services?
Y ☐ N ☐
.....
25. Mention any customised services, which the site offers.
.....
26. Does the site offer any transactional services?
Y ☐ N ☐
.....
27. Does the site allow users to subscribe and request specific information to be e-mailed to them on regular basis (information may include tender bulletin alert email, newsletter about speeches and statements, statistics news feeds or supreme court appeals feeds)?
Y ☐ N ☐
.....
28. What forms of authentication is allowed (password, digital signature)?
.....

29. What form of online payment is used for online transactions (i.e. credit card, bank or debit card)?

.....

30. Is there feedback feature (for either comments, suggestions, complaints or queries)?

Y [] N []

.....

31. Does the website offer any form of public consultation?

Y [] N []

.....

APPENDIX 6

INTERVIEW GUIDE I

1. Why was there a need to establish E-government Infrastructure Department?
2. Is e-government integrated into broader national reforms?
3. Is there an e-government framework?
4. Is there necessary leadership and commitment at political level to develop e-government vision?
5. Is there strategic plan for e-government implementation?
6. To what extent do you think Government considers e-government as a priority?
7. Is there a degree of certainty of future funding in order to provide sustainability to e-government projects?
8. How does external funding influence Lesotho's e-government vision?
9. How does change in political administration affect implementation of e-government or e-government projects?
10. How does the Department encourage and ensure that all Government ministries and departments provide information and services online (via websites)?
11. Do we have necessary human resource capacity to implement e-government?
12. How does the department ensure that there is seamless online service delivery across all sectors?
13. Who is charged with overall responsibility to ensure that there is existence and frequent update of ministerial websites?
14. What other challenges have potential to hinder the implementation of e-government in Lesotho?

APPENDIX 7

INTERVIEW GUIDE II

1. Why should government agency have website?
2. Why other government agencies in Lesotho have websites while others do not have?
3. Is there political will to provide services via government websites?
4. Is there any funding for design and development of ministerial websites?
5. Does E-government Infrastructure Project prioritise website development?
6. Is there strategic plan to develop/implement ministerial websites?
7. By when will all government agencies have functional websites?
8. Is there any legal framework that forces government agencies to provide electronic services through websites?
9. By when should we expect the government websites to have interactive and transactional online services?
10. Who is charged with overall responsibility to ensure that there is existence and frequent update of ministerial websites?
11. Who coordinates implementation of government websites?
12. How regularly should government website be updated?
13. How do we ensure that there is trust in government website?
14. Is there necessary human resource capacity to provide online services?
15. How does change in political administration affect development of government websites?
16. What other factors hinder development of government websites and online service delivery?