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www.msocalsciences.com**Malaysian Government Initiative of Information Communication Technology to Disabled People****Nur Ajrun Khalid¹, Rohana Yusof¹**¹School of Government, College of Law, Government and International Studies,
Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)Correspondence: Nur Ajrun Khalid (nurajrun@uum.edu.my)**Abstract**

Information Communication Technology (ICT) is important to measure the development of the nation and the people. Malaysia as a democratic nation has to deliver equal services to the people without any boundaries and discrimination. Nowadays, knowledge of Information Communication Technology is crucial and become one of the measurement tools to maximize work and task. Failure to catch up ICT movement will cause digital divide, which is the phenomenon of gap exists between people who have access to ICT and who did not have access. This paper aims to determine the government initiative in terms of policy, law and regulations, infrastructure, support organization and training, whether it is appropriate or inappropriate with the needs of disabled people.

Keywords: government initiative, digital divide, disabled people**Introduction**

Malaysian Government is an institution which consist a body of three important actors (executive, legislative, judiciary) these actors are accountable to create public policy or decision-making that shaped society towards better living system. Government is a process which allows order from public through law and regulations, and the government in Malaysia is democratic which put people highest of all in their decision-making. The government refers to institutions that will formulate, expressed and carried out people needs (Noel, 2010). Generally, in a Malaysia, which ruled by democratic thought and principle, people are free to choose their representative, meanwhile citizens have equal opportunities in economic, society, gathering or seeking the information is equal without any boundaries (Alessandro, 2009). As democratic nations people belief their right and values of citizenship are equal in terms of participation or resources and information.

Definition of Disabled

A person in disabilities population is getting higher; it shows almost 15% of world population is disabled people which are approximate to 1 billion people (Meryl & Gerard, 2017 & N.Wedasinghe & R.Wicramaarchchi, 2014). Supported by World Health Organization (WHO) and World Bank in a World Report disclosed, more than 1 billion people experience one or other form of disabilities (Dinesh et al, 2016). There are several definitions about disabled people. In this section, the definition about

disabled people is from the perspective of the organization. The International Encyclopedia of Geography (2017, p.1) defined, disability is impairment of physical or mental that limitation is function involvement in activities not like normal people. According to American with Disability Act (ADA) indicated, disability is an impairment either physical or mental that substantially limits their activities. In this Act it is also emphasizing about disabled people needs such as, transportation, government services, public accommodation and telecommunication, these necessities has to be provided by the government without any discrimination.

On the other hands ADA Act is about a larger group of disabled people accessibility towards work. Disability is about the impairments, limitations of activity and restrictions of participation which brings negative effect in person life, normally disabled people live behind the information age, not recognized, and not accounted for (Lars, 2007). The disabled people not participated in social life as normal people; most of them have few friends, and very hard to involved in society activities, because of their limitations many disabled people is been stigmatized by normal people. Often people with disabilities faces challenges in society, the society will look at them differently and not important to include in the activities, this stereotype behavior of normal people will caused disabled people live in exclusion and isolated (Michael, 2008).

Malaysia Government Initiative

Infrastructure

Disabled people faced many difficulties and barrier that preventing from society and inadequate of infrastructure one of the barriers (Shawn & Beth, 2015). Prior study by Faridah Serajul (2003) found that, less infrastructure for disabled people in Malaysia, the study stated most disabled people faced challenge to adjust the environment in workplace area because of limitations of installation unfriendly infrastructure. Studies by Wole Michael Olatokun (2008), found a significant effect of less accessibility infrastructure of Information Communication Technology (ICT), this limitation of proper infrastructure is because of unaffordable and expensive cost need to carried by the government. However, infrastructure is very important to accessibility of information and fill the gap of digital information between disabled and not disabled (Maria Sourbati, 2012), and ICT with proper infrastructure will be useful for the disabled people (Zillien & Hargittai, 2009). Recent study by Akihiko et al (2011) stated many disabled people stressed about inappropriate infrastructure of ICT.

The lack of infrastructure caused low connectivity of computer networks and telecommunication, the government should emphasize on providing better infrastructure (Wole Michael Olatokun, 2008). Similarly, in term of providing infrastructure of ICT Malaysian government is very weak initiative taken (Osman Mohamed Osman, 2015). Moreover, according to Nurcan Torenli (2006), limited accessibility of technology due to insufficient infrastructure is the problem of ICT gap for disabled people. On the other hand, many governments in industrialized or developed country have been fully concentration to give better ICT infrastructure to all segment of the people including disabled people, just to make sure their people get access to ICT and no people are left (Neil Selwyn, 2004) in this plight, infrastructure is crucial for people to take part in globalization world of information and knowledge (Pradeep & Munir, 2013). Hereby, one of the barrier of accessibility to ICT is infrastructure provided does not met the different types of disabilities (Ruiz & Lara, 2016).

Policy, Law and Regulations

Policy, law and regulations are one of the initiatives provided by Malaysia Government to help disabled people. For example The National Welfare Policy 1990 aims, to create caring culture while creating mutual help among people, equal opportunities, stabilization and secure life among the people. Followed by the National Social Policy 2003 which focusing on disabled people rights of equalization in many field of society lifestyle, this policy emphasized on 15 areas which are social development, human resource, participation, research development, housing, children and women disability and accessibility, advocacy, health, rehabilitation, education, employment, personal safety, social

protection and support services. The proper policies and laws are important to break the barriers of accessibility to ICT (Javed & Dorodi, 2014). Hereby, according to Kathleen & Donna (2016) emphasizing about deciding the suitable policy to fulfill disabled people need is important, and the policy need to be developed at ministerial level to support disabled people right of accessibility of ICT regardless of any type of disabilities. According to John & Fionnuala (2016), ICT has many advantages for disabled people, which is they can involved in society activities, will get employed and might be able to received better education (John & Fionnuala, 2016). Most of the studies has significant stated that government initiative in terms of policy, law and regulations is a good interfere to tackling issues of digital divide among disabled people. The government should offer law which can protect them, or make them able to enjoy their right especially their right to gain accessibility of ICT (Liangzhi, 2006; Britz, 2004; & Hongladarom, 2004). Recent study by Abha Kherapal (2014) reveals, government is fully accountable to make sure people equity including those disabled people and it can be reached by providing better policy of disabilities.

In particular, Malaysians have Person with Disability Act 2008. This is a Law in Malaysia provided to protect disabled people rights. In this Act under Part Four it has stated clearly about ICT accessibilit for disabled. According to this Act indicated; equality of accessibility for disabled people need to recognized as a normal person, meanwhile the responsible bodies of government such as the provider or manufacturer has to give services and provide assistance at the right time and place, for disabled people in terms of ICT accessibility without any extra charges or in other word the charge is affordale by them. In particular, this Act emphasizes about official duties or transactions and communication between disabled people, the government and any institution shall accept and offer facilities which meet disabled people need such as using sign language, braille, and any other accessible method. Article 8 of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia is a law that protects the right of disabled people, rather than accessibility of ICT, there is also protected of accessibility into ICT this Act insurances any discrimination of access to public facilities, amenities, services and buildings, access to public transport, access to education, access to employment, access to cultural life and access to recreation, leisure and sport.

Malaysian Government has launched National Action Plan for Disabled Person 2007-2012. This action plan aims to developed participation of disabled people in society, any cultural activities and able to achieved independent living, it is also emphasizes on several things such as to build awareness and positive attitude among society about the disabled people, to give a user-friendly environment such as transportation, health services, providing better rehabilitation center, equal opportunities of education, employment with upgrading salary, protection from any discrimination, provide training and development, and encourage more capable Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) to help those disabled people (M.Rezaul Islam, 2015). Similarly, the enforcement of policy by the government shall be inclusive access of ICT to make sure advantages of ICT is received equal to all (Robin, 2002). Even though, the policy and law exits to promote inclusion of disabled people, it is still lacking of policy and regulations to promote ICT use such as the universal design policy. According to Theeratorn (2016), government should also scrutiny and monitor provider or manufacturer of ICT tools to ensure better services is meet the need of different types of disabilities.

Support Organization

The Social and Welfare Department Malaysia is one of the departments which responsible for the wellbeing of disabled people. This department will give financial help for the disabled people in order to help them able to live independently. Such as, free wheelchair or any stuff which might help them to be able to walk and engaging with their daily life activities without any barrier like non-disabled people. This department also plays to monitor the number of disabled people; however the registrations of disabled is done based on voluntarily by disabled people itself. Meanwhile, Malaysian government also provided a tax deduction to the family who has disabled members in the family and the tax deduction for employers who use disabled people as a worker in their organization. Thus, the government also announced at least 1% of workers is disabled people in public sector, and private organizations are highly encouraged to follow this approach (Melissa Ng. Lee et.al, 2011).

Furthermore, the transportation, especially the cost of public transport also has 50% deduction cost for disabled people and at the same time government also give low-cost house and flat in Kuala Lumpur with special price to help disabled people able to live independently (Department of Social Welfare, 2005 in Kamarulzaman Kamaruddin, 2007). On the other hand, Malaysian Government had provided proper rehabilitation center placed in Bangi Industrial Training in Selangor, Malaysia. This rehabilitation center aims to offer service for physically disabled people by providing them proper vocational training and medical training, the admission age is 18 until 40 years old and self-independent, among the vocational training provided is about Information Technology (IT) and computer, fashion design and tailoring, electronic computer painting, sewing medical rehabilitation, and rehabilitation ward, however according to Hanimah (2007) in Kamarulzaman Kamaruddin (2007), this is the only one industrial training and rehabilitation center in Malaysia. An establishment of Workshop (Bengkel Daya), this is one of the workshop is giving work with salary for disabled people. In Malaysia, have only two kind of this workshop which in Klang, Selangor and Sungai Petani, Kedah. Meanwhile, Social Welfare Department also provides Job Coach Information Center, aims to assists and supported employment for those working disabled. This information center is new which had been launched by 26 April 2016. However, according to Kamarulzaman Kamaruddin (2007), the Social Welfare Department and Malaysian Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), provide fund to support learning facilities for disabled people, however the rehabilitation center is has a problems of lacking skilled teacher to teach those disabled people.

In particular, the Social Welfare Department is under the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development Malaysia. The Malaysian government has taken many initiatives to help disabled people; however, there is still lacking where some groups of disabled people are left behind especially, those who living in rural area or far away from urban city. Moreover, according to Jenny (2011), Heike et al (2013) & Helen (1988), found rehabilitation center is an important support organization for the disabled people. Addition, in order to developed human right for disabled people it is required support organization such as a systematic rehabilitation center which provide better services and programs to enhancing knowledge among the disabled people (Dimitrios S., & Jerome B., 2015). Families of disabled people also need to play supportive roles to motivate and encourage those disabled people to engaged or used assistive technology to survive in daily life, families is one of the important supportive organization as well to those disabled people (Howard, et al, 2010) Similarly, the internet use is also supported by the family, according to Michael et al, (2012) reveals, although the family members have access to ICT, the disabled people will not used the ICT because of the accessibility and lack of support from their families members. Ongoing support system is very important to make sure accessibility of ICT to end-user is successful (Jayson W. Richardson, 2011). In this plight, accessing to ICT is difficult for disabled people; however it is will done by good support system, right support and helpfulness of guidance (Darren Chadwick et al, 2013). Hereby, to include disabled people it really needs good supportive environments to make sure inclusion (Kathleen & Donna, 2016). Therefore, it is supported by N.Wedasinghe & R.Wicramaarchichi (2014) disclosed, attitude and awareness level of society towards disabled people is lack of encouraging. Meanwhile, Read (2016) stated, negative attitude towards disabled worker, such as lack of supportive system and low level of awareness among normal people has make disabled people felt humiliate.

Training and Skill

The training and skills of using ICT are becoming compulsory skills in life and in order to find the cause of digital divide, researcher have to focused more on training (Ting et al, 2014). Recently, the gap of disabled people and non-disabled has raised much attention from all perspective of government initiative. The gaps, such as lack of information, unfriendly environment, and lack of physical infrastructure to access the ICT have become social stigma among disabled people (Javed Abidi et al., 2014). Prior research, found out most disabled people faced difficulties to communicate and take part online in society or government activities because the lack of training and skills to use the technology tools such as computer and the internet (Maria Sourbati, 2012). Adequate the right training at the right time and user will enhance capabilities of disabled people to use to ICT often. Generally, advancement or fast movement of ICT required more skills (Amy et al 2013).

Significant effect of government initiative on training and skills, according to Wole Michael Olatokun (2008), in this study found it is important to build ICT training and skills for part or any new ICT intervention, because ICT is moving fast and required new skill to run the computer, any devices software or hardware, the training shall also be conducted continuing to keep up with new development of any software or hardware of ICT. Recent study indicated, very few initiatives provided about training on ICT skills, compared with the large number of disabled people wanted to acquire the skills (Osman Mohamed Osman, 2015). Different disabilities required the skills should be provided by the government, because when the skills are unequally distributed among population, and directly exacerbate (Alexander and Jan, 2010).

Conclusion

Appropriate infrastructure is very important to make sure disabled people can access the ICT. Malaysia government need to emphasize on delivers good services to the people especially for disabled people, because most of disabled people are also can play role as contributors to economic achievement, if they know how to use ICT, they will received benefits from it and will be able to apply for job. On the other hand, providing good infrastructure will also one of the benchmark to measure the development of the nations and the wellbeing of the people.

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