

ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT INFORMATION: A GLOBAL PHENOMENON BUT WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

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Abstract

This article aims to discuss access to government information developments and challenges. Access to information is a human right endowed upon global citizens through article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. There are several initiatives, laws and directives that are promoting information access. For it is believed, that information is the oxygen of democracy and hence a promoter of good governance. Information enables citizens to enjoy their fundamental rights such as; the right to life, health and education. In the information society that we are all part of today, information is considered a driver of economic, cultural and political achievements, enhanced by information technology. There are however significant barriers to information access. To meaningfully explore government information, one needs to be in possession of the requisite skills that can turn the accessed information into a useful product/service and must be able to use it to one's own advantage. Issues of the digital divide, underdeveloped information management infrastructures, lack of political will, illiteracy, poorly implemented information access laws, education, lack of information management skills are among the parameters that should be addressed before citizens can fully access government information. Currently, most government ministries operate in a digital environment. Existing research shows that the management of digital information requires enormous investments and is still a challenge where information must be maintained for long term. In societies where information management infrastructures are poor and corruption is rampant, there is very little political will to address these issues. Therefore, if the barriers to information access are not addressed, certain sections of citizens will continue to suffer from information poverty where others are suffering from information overload. Through the secondary data research method and hence the analysis of existing research, the author will access scientific articles relevant to the issue to be researched.

Keywords: Information Access, Government Information, Information Society and Human Rights.

Introduction

This article discusses the developments and challenges of access to government information. Technology is transforming the way governments operate today and factors such as; an increasing digital population, demands by political leaders and citizens for greater transparency and accountability, demands for the free flow of government information, the need to reform government administrations to improve efficiency, growing data volumes and increased security threats have put information at the center of all government operations (Iron Mountain, 2015). It is presumed that access to government information promotes good governance and strengthens democracy (Fesmedia, 2009). Freedom of information laws are globally being enacted because they promote human rights and economic development (Mutula, 2006,

Mendel, 2008). According to the global network of freedom of information advocates, 115 countries have freedom of information (FOI) legislation (Freedominfo.org, 2016). Freedom of information legislation aims to create more inclusive governments in addition to promoting accountability and transparency (Lemieux and Trapnell, 2016). Shepherd (2015) posited that freedom to access government information is sometimes linked to government reforms and this is manifested in initiatives such as; e-Government development which aims to create more efficient public service delivery and to increase accountability and transparency in government institutions.

Government information facilitates for the electorates to participate in the various democratic processes such as; the fight against corruption, governance issues, access to social and economic rights, access to education and self-development through information and knowledge. It is an informed populace that can meaningfully participate in nation development and actively participate in political institutions (The African Freedom of Information Centre, 2014). The free flow of government information strengthens global justice (Article 19, 2006). To promote information access, several instruments have been created to guarantee global citizens access to government information. This article does not claim to offer an exhaustive list of all the instruments that exist but has accessed a few of them that are presented here below. Access to government information is a fundamental human right guaranteed by Article 19 of the Universal Human Rights Declaration since 1946 and it states that:

“Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice” (O’Flaherty, 2012 p.633, Africa Freedom of Information Centre, 2014).

In Europe the European Union through the Public Sector Information (PSI) Directive enacted in 2003, requires all European governments to make their information flows available to the public (European Union, 2003). Several international bodies such as; the United Nations, regional human rights organizations, the Commonwealth, the Council of Europe and the African Union all recognize the fundamental right to access government information and the need for effective legislation to promote this right (Mendel, 2008). It is argued that all government information is subject to maximum disclosure except where Secrecy Acts apply. Mendel stated that:

“The right to access information held by public authorities is a fundamental human right which should be given effect at the national level through comprehensive legislation (for example Freedom of Information Acts) based on the principle of maximum disclosure, establishing a presumption that all information is accessible subject only to a narrow system of exceptions” (Mendel 2008, p. 9).

The UNESCO Maputo declaration of 2008 called upon member states to foster the free flow of information based on principles of inclusive knowledge societies such as; freedom of expression, equal access of quality education and the universal access to information. The UNESCO Brisbane Declaration of 2010 reaffirmed that the right to access information is an integral part of the right to freedom of expression. It defined the right to access information as “the right of everyone to access information held by public bodies at all levels” (UNESCO,

2010 p.1). With the aim to promote universal access to information UNESCO at its the 38th General Conference adopted a resolution to declare the 28th of September the International Day for Universal Access to Information. It was hoped that creating such a platform will promote national discussions on the adoption and implementation of Freedom of Information laws (Sendigwa, 2015). The open government data (OGD) movement pushes the release of government data and has established both conceptual and technical principles to facilitate the publication of government data using the Internet (Corrêa, Couto de Paula, Pizzigatti Corrêa Corrêa da Silva, 2017). Open data is what promotes open governments. The Open Governance Partnership (OGP) that was established in 2011 constitutes a coalition of governments, civil society and private sector actors who focus on open government around the world. Member states of the OGP commit to the promotion of transparency, empowerment of citizens, fight against corruption and the use of information and communication technologies to strengthen governance (Manole and Cretu 2013).

The Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) was established by congress in 1813 to provide government information free of charge to the US public. The Gov Doc Kids Group was formed to promote information access to children through learning about history, culture, science, government and through gamification and other interactive activities. This promotes the children and young people's understanding of the world (Johnson, Childers, Davis, Faria and Satterfied, 2012). The United Nations Sustainable Goal 16.10 is meant to, "Ensure public access to information and to protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements" (Global Forum For Media Development, 2015, p.1). The UN's understanding of public access to information goes beyond the conventional access to public information such as government records of different kinds to include all information that are relevant to all the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The SDGs are: 1. No Poverty, 2. Zero hunger, 3. Good health and well-being, 4. Quality education, 5. Gender equality, 6. Clean water and sanitation, 7. Affordable and clean energy, 8. Decent work and economic growth, 9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure, 10. Reduced inequalities, 11. Sustainable cities and communities, 12. Responsible consumption and production, 13. Climate action, 14. Life below water, 15. Life on land, 16, Peace, justice and strong institutions and 17. Partnerships for the goals. This clearly demonstrates that all aspects of life are underpinned by access to information.

The UNESCO Dakar Declaration of 2005, urged member states to; "provide for comprehensive legal guarantees for the right to access information recognizing the right to access information held by all public bodies, and requiring them to publish key categories of information and to introduce effective systems of record management, and to ensure proper implementation in practice of these guarantees" (UNESCO, 2005 p.1). Mendel (2008) argued that an aspect of the government information that is often forgotten is its use for business purposes. The European Union's Public Sector Information (PSI) directive 2003/98/EC on the re - use of government information (enacted in 2003 and revised in 2013 to include PSI from cultural institutions such as museums, libraries, and archives) is an instrument that allows for the use of public sector information for commercial purposes and it also aims to foster increased transparency and accountability of government institutions. The directive sets out the rules governing the re-use of PSI (European Union, 2003; Janssen, 2011). The African Development Bank (ADB) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD). The AntiCorruption Initiative for Asia and the Pacific was signed by 31 jurisdictions. It defines the participating countries' objectives to build legal and institutional frameworks to fight against corruption. The

initiatives plan has a specific provision on access to information and it calls upon states to ensure that the public and the media have freedom to receive and impart public information (Article 19, 2015).

Mendel (2008) and Coronel (2002) attributed the current FOI developments to paradigmatic changes such as; transitions to democratic rule, collapse of socialism, and progress in information and communication technology which has facilitated information management, dissemination and communication among citizens and their participation in decision-making processes. Shepherd (2013) attributed the same developments to a cultural and societal shift from secretive and closed society to more open societies. Xiao (2013) also posited that FOI legislation is meant to solve the accountability deficit which has been caused by the expansion of the bureaucratic power and to promote liberal democracy. Despite the international engagement to promote the right to access government information there are several challenges that need to be globally addressed before government information/data can be genuinely accessed by the electorates. Though the push to open government data has heightened and advancements in technology that facilitate information sharing continue to be made, there are sections of global citizens whose constitutional right to access government information has not yet been realized because, there is lack of political will to do so and some do not have the requisite skills to use the availed information effectively. Even in established democracies, we currently witness a development within the open data initiatives that will lead to the creation of a digital and data divide. The paper presents an introduction which gives a background of the research problem, a statement of the problem, objective of the study, the research method and the findings, discussion and recommendations.

Statement of the Problem

The push for governments to open their information resources to the public in form of records/information and data has become a global phenomenon. Different instruments and initiatives have been created to promote open governments through information access and open data. While these are commendable efforts there are a couple of parameters that need to be addressed before genuine information access can be globally achieved. 115 countries have enacted freedom of information (FOI) legislation (Freedominfo.org, 2015). However, the implementation challenges are ubiquitous and access to information is still hampered by lack of political will to make information accessible to the citizens, underdeveloped information management infrastructures, lack of information processing skills, lack of public awareness of the FOI legislation and Public Sector Information (PSI) directives, illiteracy, lack of access to an IT-infrastructure that can facilitate the processing of open data and the digital and data divide. As the advocacy for more countries to enact FOI legislation continues, governments that have already enacted freedom of information laws should create conducive environments to effectively promote information access. In societies with developed information management infrastructures for example within the European Union and where open data is being made available to the citizens, there is another set of challenges arising. To reap the advantages of open data, a citizen needs to have computer skills, data processing skills and must have an IT-infrastructure that can facilitate the exploitation of the data into a meaningful product or service. All citizens do not have these skills and however open data maybe they cannot use it to their own advantage. This data therefore can only be used by a section of citizens with the prerequisite skills. This is likely to create a data divide (Shepherd 2015). Integrating global citizens in the information society requires citizens that can act on the information that is made

available to them and make use of it to their own advantage and development. For countries with high illiteracy levels, this is even a bigger challenge. Certain sections of the world are therefore, still struggling with information access issues and hence even though I an individual living in the West might be experiencing an information overload, they are people who still suffer from information poverty. It is against this backdrop this research will discuss access to government information developments and challenges.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to discuss the information developments and challenges hence highlighting that more efforts need to be invested in promotion of access to information. There are several initiatives that are pushing governments to open their information/data. However, parameters such as; illiteracy, poor information management infrastructures, lack of the political will and lack of Internet access need to be addressed before genuine information access can be achieved. These parameters need to be addressed parallel with the adoption of the various initiatives and in line with the sustainable development goals that highlight the importance of access to government information.

Research Method

A research method constitutes of processes of collecting, analyzing and interpreting data that is relevant to a research investigation. The researcher employed a secondary data research method which entails the analysis of data collected by someone else for another primary purpose. Johnston (2014) emphasizes that like any other research method, secondary research method must follow research principles as studies that use primary data. The method entails the development of a research question, the identification of a dataset and a thorough evaluation of the dataset (Johnston, 2014). A researcher should carry out an investigation to learn what is already known and what remains to be learned about a research phenomenon. Stewart and Kamin (1993) posit that secondary information/data offers quick and inexpensive answers to many questions and is always a starting point when conducting primary research. This is done through the review of secondary sources. Secondary data is in many forms such as; official statistical studies (usually conducted by governments), scholarly journals and technical reports. The explosion of information and the lack of guidelines in the use of secondary sources has meant that many individuals and organizations do not use secondary information. Both Johnston (2014) and Stewart and Kamin (1993) encouraged the use of the secondary data method due to abundance of information sources, my search in the databases stated below gave only their articles. This also highlights Johnston's (2014) argument that this is a method that needs further exploration and use.

Johnston (2014) confirmed that what is key to secondary data analysis is the application of theoretical knowledge and conceptual skills to utilize existing data to address a research question. For the purposes of this study, the researcher identified a research problem worth investigating with the objective to identify and highlight parameters that need to be addressed if the objectives of FOI legislation, open data and open governments are to be achieved. A search was done in databases such as; Google Scholar, SöderScholar, Emerald and ScienceDirect using the keywords as criteria for identification of the relevant articles. This has allowed the researcher to access scientific articles relevant to the research problem and hence the literature review section which discusses the different aspects of the problem. The last step has involved the analysis and evaluation of the secondary data. Stewart and Kamin (1993) contend that the evaluation process should follow the following steps:

(a) what was the purpose of this study; (b) who was responsible for collecting the information; (c) what information was actually collected; (d) when was the information collected; (e) how was the information obtained; and (f) how consistent is the information obtained from one source with information available from other sources (Stewart & Kamins, 1993).

The researcher has also followed the stipulated steps during the analysis of the literature relevant to the study.

Findings

Information Access and Open Government Data

Mutula (2006) examined the state of information access in Sub-Saharan Africa and concluded that Africa in general has a poor history in promoting information access. A report entitled “State of Right to Information in Africa” that was written by the Africa Freedom of Information Centre¹² years later also confirmed that the culture of information access in Sub-Saharan Africa is still limited (Africa Freedom of Information Centre, 2014). According to UNESCO (n.d.) FOI legislation has made less progress in the Arab States compared to the rest of the world even though advocacy is growing in various countries. Khan (2014) argued that the struggle to adopt freedom of information laws in Southeast Asia took 20 years and though there are discernible developments such as the use of the Internet to disseminate information about government services, information is still selectively disseminated. Jamaluddin (2015) confirmed that there are still restrictions on Internet access, freedom of expression, freedom of information Acts and open government policies in Southeast Asia. He listed the following constraints as hindrances to open data:

- Lack of capacity for governments to maintain infrastructure and websites; incomplete and inaccessible published official information.
- Limited open data knowledge from the respective government officials.
- Limited capacity and open data knowledge.

In Europe, the Public Sector Directive (PSI) requires all European member states to make public information available to the public. The Directive focuses on the economic aspects of public information re-use (European Union, 2003). Though governments are publishing open data, there are concerns that arise from lack of data quality, incompatible formats, access methods and lack of user experience and technical knowledge (Algemili, 2016). Governments’ immaturity levels of adhering to the Open Government Data requirements regarding the release of data causes challenges. This is because for example local administrations build their data repositories without observing the OGD requirements (Svärd, 2017).

Lemieux (2014) confirmed that the exploitation of government data is being undertaken by different stakeholders through meetups, hackathons and data dives. However, governments still face the challenge of poor quality data. When data is of poor quality, its exploitation requires advanced computer skills. She contended that research confirms that poor quality data is omnipresent and endemic and that 80 per cent of the time and cost of a data analytics project is attributable to the need to clean up data to useable levels. For the users of government data to be able to trust it, they need to know its provenance and Lemieux argues that data provenance which is metadata is of paramount importance. Additionally, data preservation and stewardship and information governance models are needed to promote good quality open data. Lemieux’s observation is also affirmed by Shepherd (2015) who a year later argued that to publish good

quality data, resources need to be invested to avoid data redundancy, inconsistency, to deal with data integrity and interoperability problems. She further argued that linked data might compromise privacy. Additionally, Dander (2013) argued that before non-experts and the broader community can start exploring open data governments need to address a couple of issues that include;

- Internet access sufficient to support making the data available; barrier-free;
- Computers and software sufficiently powerful, having sufficient time;
- Computer/software skills to use the soft- and hardware;
- Content and formatting – having the data available in a format such as to allow for effective use at a variety of levels of linguistic and computer literacy;
- Interpretation/Sense making sufficient knowledge and skill to see what data uses make sense (and which don't) and to add local value;
- Advocacy – having supportive individual or community resources sufficient for translating data into activities for local benefit;
- Governance – the required financing, legal, regulatory or policy regime, required to enable the use to which the data would be put.

Trust Issues Regarding the Freedom of Information Laws

Camaj (2015) tested the normative assumptions on the empowerment effects of freedom of information (FOI) legislation on the press-government relationship of new democracies such as Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro. She concluded that despite the normative assumptions, FOI legislation is counterproductive for journalists in the region who engage in investigative journalists and reveal stories that do not align with the official version. In the Asian region, many of the laws still demand information requesters to state the purpose for which the information is needed and in certain instances, using the information for other purposes other than that stated is punishable (Article 19, 2015).

Gunnlaugsdottir (2016) argued that though it is believed that the increased provision of government information leads to greater trust, there is another school of thought that on the contrary believes that it instead leads to lack of confidence where cheating, deception, inability and mistakes re not uncovered. She confirmed this view by referring to Icelandic research on corruption in local government. She further posited that doubts have merged about the value of access to information legislation and the provision of information since it sometimes leads to the undesired effect of increased secrecy and suppression of information. Shepherd (2015) also contended that FOI legislation has a chilling effect which is demonstrated by the unwillingness of public officials to document their decision-making processes. She therefore wonders whether this will leave government archives empty.

Omotayo (2015) and Shepherd (2015) argued that some jurisdictions exclude the private sector organizations which puts the information that they generate out of reach for the public and yet where they carry out government functions. Roberts (2000) examined the public-sector reforms in Canada and argued that they affect information access. When the Canadian federal and provincial governments restrained non-essential spending within the institutions, compliance to FOI legislation deteriorated because there were no resources to honor all the requests for information. He was therefore of the view that the New Public Management (NPM) that has

been embraced by governments in the restructuring effort has undermined the legal framework that gives citizens access government information. This is because of the quasi-private special purpose bodies that deliver public services on behalf of the government do not manage the information that accrues in the same manner government institutions do, to promote its access. The same observation was made by Iron Mountain (2005) in its report which the UK government continues to commit to the reduction of costs many workplaces have been closed down or relocated and this has been done without establishing how the records are supposed to be relocated which often leads to their abandonment (Iron Mountain, 2015).

Implementation Challenges

Lemieux and Trapnell (2016) also acknowledged that though many countries have enacted FOI legislation, the implementation is still a challenge. They argued that the dividends of the FOI legislation can only be reaped where there is effective implementation. Though countries such as India, Mexico, the United Kingdom and the United States have robust FOI legislation, they still face challenges. Lemieux and Trapnell (2016) were of the view that the robustness of India's FOI system is due to its vibrant civil society that engages regardless of the challenges while for Mexico, it is the well-funded information commission which has facilitated the implementation process. In the United Kingdom, it is the implementation of FOI throughout the public bodies using professionalized personnel, monitoring and the enforcement capabilities of an independent information commission that has contributed to the robustness of the FOI system while in the US, the system is still characterized by processing delays.

In a report entitled "Asia Disclosed: A Review of the Right to Information across Asia" published by Article 19 in 2015, it is argued that Asian countries' FOI legislation quality varies from the best to the worst of cases and that the implementation also varies from country to country (Article 19, 2015). Bhatta (2016) was of the view that mere enactment of FOI legislation is not enough but that it is critical that the law is operationalized. He highlighted several FOI legislation challenges in countries such as India and Bangladesh. These included; inadequate information management required to facilitate the generation, storage and retrieval of information, recordkeeping procedures that need to be improved to better serve information requests, an enabling infrastructure such as computers, scanners and Internet connectivity, the need to create long-term awareness especially among the marginalized groups, women, the rural population, the need to address the many exemptions to the law and the harassment of information seekers. He concluded that even though FOI legislation has been enacted in many countries, more needs to be done and it may require the building of a strong civil society that will create effective demand for information.

Yu, Shengcui, Bin and Qiuyan (2014) contended that though Chinese authorities are committed to the disclosure of administrative information, they are still unable to meet the growing expectations of the citizens' right to know and to participate in governance issues. Information access is hindered by delays in the disclosure of information, sketchy information, contradictory information and inconvenient access regimes. They were of the view that the Chinese authorities only commit to open disclosure of administrative information and yet the public is yearning for democratic rights which are had to archive even where there is transparency. Ojo (n.d.) therefore recommended continued advocacy for the adoption of FOI legislation in countries where it has not been embraced. He attributed its slow adoption in Africa to; lack of political will on the part of the leaders who are supposed to pass such laws, the culture of secrecy

in government. He argued that in many African countries especially in the former British colonies, governments have official secrets laws which prevent government officials from freely revealing government information, lack of resources due to competing priorities and low levels of awareness among the members of the public. Blanton (2002) was of the view that the ultimate challenge of freedom of information movement is the cultural and psychological change that must occur in both government administrations and the citizens.

Information Overload and Poverty

Hoq (2014) defined information overload as an abundance of information. He argued that one of the strategies to fight it is information literacy which is defined as, ‘a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information’ (Hoq, 2014, pp. 59-60). This is because an information literate person can:

- Determine the extent of information needed
- Access the needed information effectively and efficiently
- Evaluate information and its sources critically
- Incorporate selected information into one’s knowledge base
- Use information effectively to accomplish a specific Purpose
- Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally (Hoq, 2014).

Additionally, information overload could be solved by ensuring that information being made accessible is of high quality and can be delivered in convenient formats. It should be visualized, compressed and aggregated (Hoq, 2014). He highlighted that in organizations, information overload is caused by poor information processing of the data and information that is created and received.

Goswami, De and Datta (2009) investigated whether linguistic diversity posed challenges to information access to the populace of South Asia (SA) and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Their research established linkages between linguistic diversity, economic backwardness and levels of Internet penetration. By the time of their research the two regions had the lowest access to information and communication technologies. They confirmed that the digital divide reinforces existing inequality and poverty patterns. They argued that though the Internet and information communication technologies have offered many leapfrogging opportunities to the developing world and that there is a lot of information being produced in the world today, however, people need the requisite skills to navigate the current sea of information. Information can only be relevant and useful if it is effectively used by many people. Effective access to on-line information requires proficiency in a foreign language that are rich in on-line content. They were however optimistic that the Internet has the potential to resolve some of the linguistic and information access issues since the number of people that have access to it is growing fast. Additionally, more content producers are promoting open access policies. There are increasing amounts of information on local and global issues. The issue is whether the enormous amounts of information that are globally available can be meaningfully explored to promote socio-economic and education developments. Guizhen, Shuanjun, Yaqing and Huijun (2010) researched information poverty in the Chinese Hebei Province. They argued that information poverty which is a new form of poverty around the world is a global problem. It is enhanced by the growing information gap between urban and rural areas. In China, it is restricting the harmonious development of villages and towns. They attributed information poverty to the

existing digital divide and that is the information haves and have nots. To solve the challenge posed by the imbalance of information access the Chinese government adopted several policies to promote rural informatization.

Discussion and Conclusion

The reviewed literature confirms that a lot of work has been done to create instruments aimed at the promotion of the free flow of government information. The right to know is a universal right guaranteed by Article 19 of the Universal Human Rights Declaration of 1946. Access to government information is expected to enhance democratic rule and hence good governance. The push for transparent, accountable and inclusive government institutions has put information at the core of democratic processes. Global governments are encouraged to open their information flows to the public and hence the increasing adoption of Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation and the Open Data initiatives. These developments are expected to empower individual citizens to participate in governance issues and to enable them make informed choices regarding their own personal development. The UN sustainable development goals further emphasize the importance of quality information in all aspects of life. Access to information however goes hand in hand with information literacy. Without information processing skills, access to information does not deliver the required results. Therefore, even though positive developments have taken place through the adoption of FOI legislation and open data, more needs to be do address parameters such as; lack of information literacy, information management infrastructures (includes; information systems, standards, guidelines, information management processes and regulations) and the lack of political will and culture that promotes genuine access to information access. Even in countries where FOI legislation has been adopted, the literature confirms that implementation challenges are omnipresent.

In countries where access to government information is a given, open data developments are raising new research questions and concerns as to how genuinely open and accessible the raw data made available is to the public. If citizens are to make use of open data, they need skills in data mining, processing and must have access to soft and hard ware appropriate for the exploitation of the data. Additionally, they must have an IT infrastructure that can handle the big chunks of raw data. The data and digital divide is discernable here since all global citizens are not blessed with such skills neither do they have the IT infrastructure to meaningfully utilize open data. This means that despite the availability of the open data, it is only a small section of society, mostly people with computer and data processing skills that are benefiting from the publication of open data. The challenges of the data and digital divide will have to be solved through training at local community levels and conducting projects that will both equip citizens the citizens with necessary skills. Governments also need to create IT infrastructures that will facilitate training in data processing. Data management needs to be integrated in the school curricula if young generations are to reap the benefits of open data.

For governments with poor information management infrastructures and lack of information access culture, their citizens will continue to suffer from information poverty while those suffering from information overload, governments will have to promote information literacy and systems that can deliver quality information. The reviewed literature confirms that a lot of work still needs to be done since enacting freedom of information laws without proper implementation is like to shake the citizens' trust in government administrations that they aim to re-establish.

Recommendations

- If information is to be genuinely open to global citizens, more works needs to be done and advocacy in countries that have not yet adopted FOI legislation and open data policies needs to continue.
- Data processing and mining skills need to be introduced in the school curricula to equip young generations with the skills that will enable them to exploit the availed data for innovative purposes.
- Community Projects should be created to promote awareness of open data that is generated in the local government administrations and to promote its use.
- Governments should invest in training courses aimed at promoting information literacy.
- Governments should also invest in the education of their citizens. Effective information use of information requires and educated mass.
- Investments should be made in information management infrastructure to promote information access.
- Governments need to invest in the proper and effective implementation of FOI legislation.
- Governments needs to display the political will required for the effective functioning of the FOI legislation.

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