

Best-practice framework for developing and implementing e-government

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Abstract

Governments struggle to implement electronic government (e-government) seeking out some potential values. Such values have internal as well as external benefits. On the internal level, e-government promises better, faster and more convenient internal operation. Better management of resources is likely to reduce costs and bureaucratic burden causing a boost to internal efficiency. Citizens and businesses, as a result, will receive better and faster response from the government. Service delivery is believed to become more agile. Cost and time savings would also be felt by citizens and businesses. The internal and external efficiencies would reflect on the society at large. Transparency, accountability, social inclusion and political participation are highly likely to be enhanced. Furthermore, the established technological infrastructure might accelerate the general development within a country. Without legal, organisational and operational reforms e-government is not likely to function properly to its full potential. This reform will surely result in better overall governance and healthier society. On the global level, e-government can provide cooperative tools to fight cybercrime and terrorism that know no national borders. Cross-national electronic exchange of information assures better response to pressing issues and global challenges.

The quest for e-government realisation is not all honey and roses. Major political, social, legal, organisational, economic and technical challenges have to be overcome throughout the process. Besides, e-government is still a work in progress. Governments worldwide are piloting e-government initiatives. There is no common approach to tackle e-government. Many countries have developed their own ways in developing and implementing e-government. Aims, contents, focus...etc. can vary even for the same domain. In this study, I have analysed the experiences of e-government implementation across (22) countries. The intention was to see if there was a global convergence in basic concepts of e-government. I sought to measure to what degree there was a consensus on every concept. I started from no presumed conclusion about the existence or otherwise of such a global convergence. The structured case approach and comparison analysis has let evidence immerge. In fact, the findings tell us that there is much in common. The differences mentioned above do not dismiss the fact that governments, worldwide, face similar challenges and that they tend to implement comparable solutions. Concepts regarding service delivery, internal and external efficiency and government networking were found to be very much in common across sample governments.

The convergence of evidence has gradually originated a *best practice strategic framework of e-government*. This framework represents a missing link in all national strategies of e-government. It is advocated to form the core of any national e-government strategy. Besides, the analysis that led to the formulation of the framework has revealed a lack in literature of this very important domain of e-government. The presence of such a

framework is shown to introduce a great value to e-government programmes. The proposed framework incorporates very important elements and principles. It has desirable characteristics and features that can add value to the e-government strategy. Unlike previous studies, the proposed framework defines strategic building blocks of e-government based on real-life implementations of e-government of the countries reviewed. This strategic framework possesses modular design. It is flexible, customisable and extensible. In putting this framework together, I took into consideration commonalities, trends, best practices in addition to relevant work of other scholars.

That framework was built for the top strategic level of e-government. Nonetheless, it did not answer many of the pressing questions of how to develop a sustainable e-government that is flexible, interoperable and manageable. The next step on the agenda of my research was to figure out a proper technical model that can underpin the framework. The dissertation originates the *federated model of e-government*. This model was designed from the start to achieve better manageability, flexibility, sustainability, cost reduction, and security of e-government. Many studies have responded to technology platform integration and standardization. In my view, this is most rewarding for governments that do not have yet an IT infrastructure and are only planning to establish one. Most governments, however, have already disparate systems in place. Each of these systems is usually built to serve a particular department that has predefined requirements. In most cases, there is a lack of vision of integration as decisions upon technologies are taken by the Local Governments (LGs). In firms, though, the decision is mostly central and any new system or platform with typical size is normally planned to be interoperable. In democracies, LGs have autonomous status. Resistance to change can be more evident than in businesses. There is also a tendency to keep information private. This hinders much of the integration efforts. Also the cost for integration and rebuilding the IT infrastructure with the new standards can be awfully far above the ground. That said; it could be better and cheaper to adopt a different approach. “Encapsulation” of eGovernment can face far less resistance and demand much lower costs. This idea has a lot in common with Object-Oriented methodologies that are already applied in some businesses. The objective was to introduce a model that materializes this idea of encapsulation. It would only touch on the technical aspects of the model, but at large the model would remain conceptual.

This dissertation does not end without the introduction of some opportunities for the Less Developing Countries (LDCs). Such opportunities can be considered in order to cause some efficiencies in their e-government programmes. The dissertation shows that a learning and a considerate government should be motivated enough to spearhead the ICT development through its e-government programme. Towards the end of the dissertation, particular benefits of e-government for LDCs are highlighted. It clarifies how LDCs in particular can utilise the developed strategic framework of e-government. It has also introduced some simple and cheap yet sufficiently effective technologies that can potentially enhance e-government in LDCs. Although many of the presented technologies were not originally built for e-government, they can still be utilised to achieve more for quite less. Governments in LDCs are urged to adopt and promote the use of these technologies for more efficient governance. This part is not directly related to the major

contributions of this dissertation. Its presence, however, will add even more value to the dissertation.