Grounded Theory Analysis of Successful Implementation of E-Government Projects:
Exploring Perceptions of E-Government Authorities

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the perceptions of senior managers about the successful implementations of e-government projects in their agencies, identifying what problems they have encountered and how they have addressed these problems better. 17 e-government projects were interviewed to reveal their underlying perceptions on the successful implementation of e-government projects in their agencies. After analyzing their interview transcripts, forty-nine constructs were revealed, refined, and categorized. The findings indicate that there is a lack of consensus among project managers about what constitutes e-Government project success, there was agreement across all levels of management that project success needs to be measured through a set of quantitative measures such as the number of transactions submitted through the e-government system, number of users using the system, and total time required to complete a process. Drawing from the empirical findings, this article presents a conceptual framework for change management in e-government projects together with a set of recommendations.

1. INTRODUCTION

E-government involves the delivery of information and transactions by public sector organisations via internet to stakeholders including citizens, businesses, other government agencies and employees (Kurfalı, Arifoglu, Tokdemir and Paçin, 2017). Whereas, E-government projects are intrinsically embedded in combinations of organizational changes and political reforms designed to enact, support and drive a profound transformation in the public sector organisations (Cordella and Iannacci, 2010). Over the last decade there has been a lot of discussion in the e-government literature about the management and improvement of e-government systems (Fakhoury and Aubert, 2017; Larsson and Gronlund, 2014; Valdés et al., 2011). As a result, large number of frameworks have been developed and studied for managing transformation and change in e-government from different perspectives. Zhang et al (2005), Norris and Moon (2005) Coursey and Norris (2008) focused on the perceptions of providers of e-service, their adoption of these services and the hurdles that might face the implementation. Mohamed et al (2009), Al-Shafi and Weerakkody (2008 and 2009), Carter and Weerakkody (2008) focused on users' perceptions and considered alternative options to increase the usage of e-government systems. Moon, Lee and Roh (2012), Zhao (2010) focused on the evaluation of e-government websites. In addition, United Nations (UNDESA, 2005, 2008) used a web measurement model for assessing

the performances of e-government of its member countries, whereas, Torres et al. (2005) focused on the quality and usage of e-government systems. Meanwhile, recently, Lee et al. (2008) reported that e-government has been delivered at a high cost with many successes and failures cases. The major problem behind e-government project failure is the gap between the e-government systems design and the reality (Anthopoulos et al., 2016), which embraces a variety of factors including process objectives and values, staffing and skills, management systems and structures (Heeks, 2003; Kumar and Best, 2006; Udo, Bagchi, and Kirs, 2010). Thus, to increase the success rate of e-government projects necessitates many changes in processes, structure of government (Rose and Grant, 2010), motivation, commitment and good management of bridging the gap between ICT and the organization (Welch and Feeny, 2014). Further, while previous research has noted the importance of considering people e.g., public administrators (Anthopoulos et al., 2007) in improving the provision of e-government service, research has indicated that a vast majority of government agencies have an inadequate working knowledge of what drives citizen adoption of e-government services (Norris et al., 2001). Therefore, despite the advances made in the field of e-government at both practical and research levels, what constitutes success in e-government as a whole remain unclear.

Therefore, e-government is not just about technology, it involves many stakeholders who have different objectives and involves several factors related to human and communication system that can have an impact on its success. The previously proposed models failed to consider the performance of e-government from other perspective such as providers or citizens (Zhao, 2010). Likewise, not enough attention has been paid to change management in terms of processes, policies, organization culture, laws, and regulations (Rose and Grant, 2010; Welch and Feeney, 2014; Esteves and Joseph, 2008). What is lacking in e-government assessment is a more in-depth analysis of the political nature of the e-government development processes, and a deeper recognition of complex political and institutional environments (Yildiz, 2007). Thus, understanding the political processes behind e-government development is vital for overcoming both definitional and analytical limitations (Yildiz, 2007).

This paper focuses on the e-service providers, and on setting the ground for identifying the key performance indicators (KPIs) that enable the successful implementation of e-government projects from the perspective of government agencies who are implementing the projects. It therefore adopts a multi-level perspective in the analysis as a means of understanding the success of e-government initiatives from the provider perspective. Rooted in the General Systems Theory (von Bertalanffy, 1972), this perspective recognizes that micro level phenomena are embedded in macro contexts, and therefore provides a holistic view that can yield more accurate practical and theoretical implications. The resultant analysis led to the development of a holistic framework encompassing findings in the literature together with empirical findings from 17 government agencies in the State of Qatar that illustrate the multi-level factors, which contribute to managing change in e-government implementation projects. The state of Qatar was selected for the empirical study due to its high level of emphasis on being 'digital' in government and the resulting multiple ongoing e-government projects implementations. Qatar like other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states relatively have same GDP growth rate, population size, high literacy rates, and their main goal is to offer their citizens advanced e-services. These countries has same international rank (UN report, 2014) and their online portals are linked to one another. In addition, it is like other developing countries were government IT projects face a number of unique challenges (Zhu, and Kindarto, 2016).

To complement the literature, we explored the perceptions of senior managers in several government agencies in order to identify what problems they face in implementing e-government projects and how they are approaching these problems. In particular, the empirical research aimed to:

1. Identify the barriers government officials are faced with when implementing e-government initiatives;
2. Explore potential solutions that they are employing to tackle these;

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