Chapter 11
Emerging and Traditional ICT as Critical Success Factors for Local Governments: A Longitudinal Analysis

Enrique Claver-Cortes
Universidad de Alicante, Spain

Susana de Juana-Espinosa
Universidad de Alicante, Spain

Jorge Valdés-Conca
Universidad de Alicante, Spain

ABSTRACT

It was not long ago when Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) were not ubiquitous and Web 2.0 was the stuff of science fiction. However, these technologies are now here to stay, and local governments should learn how to make the most of them. In this chapter, the situation of emerging ICT in Spain in general and for Spanish e-government in particular is described. Next, the results of an empirical study based on a longitudinal quantitative survey are shown. The survey was carried out in 2005, before the advent of Web 2.0, and again in 2012. In the survey, the Chief Information Officers (CIO) of Spanish municipalities express their opinions on critical success factors that may enhance or hinder the effectiveness, connectivity, and transparency of their strategies for a connected government (c-government). The comparative findings reveal that political issues set off, then and now, local e-government success and failure, whereas ICT-based issues, once very important for these CIOs, have been downgraded in their minds. Therefore, the emergence of social media, mobile technologies, Web 2.0, and connected government has not had a truly significant role in the quest for e-government success on their own, but in combination with other factors. The chapter also discusses the related factors.

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INTRODUCTION

Modern public administrations, especially local governments, need to keep up with the fast changes in demands and behaviors of the society they serve. The increased connectivity of citizens and businesses leads to new expectations in regards to the quality, transparency and efficiency of public services as well as access to public figures and institutions. Public administrations face the challenge of rebuilding their capacity to finance themselves, attracting and retaining a competent labor force, and engaging citizens in designing innovative solutions to address public issues. To do so, they require: a) rethinking local revenue sources, b) renegotiate labor relations and c) rebuild citizens' view of society (Warner, 2010). E-government strategies that help in connecting citizens, public employees and political boards, otherwise known as c-government or connected government, and those aiming to improve public performance, or e-administration, are two ways to address these challenges.

E-government refers to the provision of internal administration services to its external environment, which is related directly to the need for internal transparency of a public organization. The need to implement e-government policies has resulted in the adoption of many visions and strategic agendas. However, each vision is driven by its own unique set of social, political, and economic factors and requirements, which are known as critical success factors (CSF). These visions will be reflected in their use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), applications and mechanisms that governments employ to consider citizens as customers, and thus provide them with best price and quality services (Osborne & Gabler, 1992).

As part of ICT, social networks and other Web 2.0 technologies play a key role in the evolution of e-government, especially in the c-Government dimension which brings in a focus for citizens empowerment (Al-Rababah & Abu-Shanabad, 2010). However, it was not until 2005 that Tim O'Reilly coined the term Web 2.0, and therefore public administrations have not had the chance to employ these tools until recently. It is interesting to see if the advent of such technologies has made a significant impact on how public administrations perceive they should face the development and implementation of their e-government plans.

According to the extant literature, there are many factors that affect the performance of public administrations. These factors might help a public organization to achieve success in designing and implementing an e-government strategy, but they can also create difficulties. ICT is one of these factors, as well as the social aspect of e-services and how governmental and organizational decisions affect on the development of e-government strategies. Public administrations therefore must learn to recognize the effect and inter-effect of such factors in order to provide effective governance, increased transparency, effective processes and efficient services through the use of the Internet and ICT.

Both the European e-government Action Plan (2011-15) and the Malmö Ministerial Declaration on e-government, support the use of ICT in civic life. Furthermore, the Europe for Citizens Program (2007-2013) promotes initiatives that facilitate the active participation in the civic and democratic life of the European Union. In particular, Spain is, generally speaking, a fairly advanced country in the information society, notably in the area of e-government services and availability of broadband networks. Therefore, it is a well-developed country in terms of e-government, and its practitioners have a certain degree of knowledge of the topic.

The majority of the existing research on e-government, particularly local e-government, consists of the description of individual, limited initiatives, and avoiding theoretical frameworks that may provide them with a solid foundation (Becker et al., 2003). It is essential then to contrast what academics and practitioners have to say in the matter of local e-government, in order to