

Chapter 2

Evaluating Public Organizations Using Open Data: An Assessment Tool and Ecosystems Approach

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ABSTRACT

Information openness and stakeholder involvement through ICT become the driving factors of public organization change. In this article, an ecosystem approach is embraced to study the social sphere organizations (SSOs), such as hospitals, schools, and libraries. SSOs report on their activities by publishing information on the Web which can be used to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of these organizations by the public. The opening of data transforms the relationship between SSOs and other stakeholders. In this article, the institutionalization of SSO evaluation system in Russia is studied. The critical role of open data is demonstrated and the inclusion of stakeholders was found to be a key factor to make the evaluation system truly effective. Their study reveals that an ecosystem approach ensures that stakeholder demands are included in SSO evaluation and assessment process. Finally, by summarizing Russian experiences, the authors conclude with problem-oriented recommendations for open government tool application to institutionalize government practices targeted at open government principle implementation.

INTRODUCTION

In the article, we use open government conceptions, ecosystem approach and Open Government Partnership (OGP) ideology and principles (transparency, participation and collaboration) as the foundations for open government tools development and application to independent assessment of *Social Sphere Organizations* (SSO) in Russia.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-9860-2.ch002

We want to emphasize the growing role of open data and official government information as an efficiency source for SSO assessment. We aim to explore how to include official information and data about SSO into social policy provision, stakeholders' involvement and data management issues by using ecosystem approach to information and data management (Ding, 2011). Below by the example of independent SSO quality assessment we explore interrelation between social policy transformation and open data ecosystem development. We also studied the issue of SSO independent assessment system transformation by means of open government mechanisms application.

Though it is difficult to define information policy as a separate body it is possible to view it "... comprised of laws, regulations, and doctrinal positions – and other decision making and practices with society-wide constitutive effects – involving information creation, processing, flows, access, and use..." (Braman, 1989).

New ways of information policy implementation stop being a barrier to further development of SSO independent assessment system in spite of public authorities' resource shortages (people, budgets, knowledge). Platform based governance has sufficient potential to attract stakeholders to provide and further use necessary data to implement specific solutions or tasks in SSO assessment process (Janssen, Chun, & Gil-Garcia, 2009).

The platform becomes the catalyst of new open government tools designed over use of open government data. In SSO independent assessment system this could be a portal integrating information and assessment tools collected both by government agencies and NGOs. We continue with the analysis of open data application in order to implement SSO independent assessment mechanism in practice.

PREREQUISITES FOR THE FORMATION OF OPEN GOVERNMENT

Theorists and practitioners continue to search for new concepts and models that allow effective technological achievements adoption to public administration systems functioning. The most important international studies are the doctrine of "lean government" formulated by Janssen and Estevez (2013) and the model of "networked government" proposed by Goldsmith and Eggers (2004).

The doctrine of "networked government" proposes to concentrate the efforts of government managers not on administering the existing resources and processes but on changing the problem-solving principle – by creating a network of involved partners, namely nonprofit organizations, businesses, experts, and enthusiastic citizens. The end result responsibility, however, remains with government.

The "lean government" doctrine implements the ideas of "networked government" on the grounds of e-government technologies. While simplifying internal administrative processes and incentivizing innovative approaches to problem-solving, government bodies introduce crowd- sourcing, wiki, and mobile technologies that are designed not only to obtain information on society's problems and needs more quickly, but also to adopt decisions online while factoring in the views of all stakeholders. The "lean government" doctrine calls for the creation of platform-based solutions that allow both governmental and nongovernmental services to be set up on a common platform, according to common standards. The technological platform practices the principle of competition, whereby any supplier of services will be able, in case it meets the prescribed requirements and standards of platform compatibility, to develop and sell varied services to solve common problems.

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