

Chapter 8

The New Electronic Government:

Are the Federal Authorities Ready to Use E-Government?

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, initiatives are taken and investments are made in supporting e-government across the world. These initiatives should achieve success to fulfill the outcomes that are desired. Efforts are made in capitalizing the technologies that will help the government to provide services to their citizens. The main objective of the paper is to explore the readiness of federal authority employees and their current skills, adoption, and knowledge about e-government. It is also investigates the new technologies and e-technologies in GCC and UAE. Therefore, it discusses and highlights this objective of using e-government by employees under several headings which include the growth of e-government in UAE and advantages of e-government in the society. This paper will also outline the need of e-government by the employees and citizens and how to make them better trust e-government. The researcher distributed 500 surveys and received 407 from most of the federal authorities in the UAE. The research concluded that the employees agree with benefits of e-government, do care about customers, and, together with high cooperation from the private sector, are prepared for adopting e-government. It was also found that the more challenging the e-government's cost and IT skill, the higher the challenges the organization will face in adopting e-government. At the present, one of the biggest challenges is designing solutions for e-government and evaluating initiatives conducted by the government.

INTRODUCTION

Karanasios (2011) argued that Information Communication Technologies (ICT) promised to modernize and revolutionize different organizations of the government on their operations, and focusing on the needs of the citizens. The concept of e-government has been introduced in many countries with the corporation of ICT to transform several systems to make them more reachable, effective, and efficient solutions

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for the government (Garson, 2006). With financial crisis facing many countries, they transformed their agencies and departments using a “CITIZEN-CENTRIC” (Abhichandani, T. (2008, p. 1) model. Garson (2006) stated that it is expected that the quality of citizens’ life would be enhanced and they will avail themselves more of government services. Miller and Walling (2013) added that the government wants to efficiently and effectively improve and deliver services to their citizens.

On the other side, Bertot, Jaegar, and McClure (2008) wrote that evidence shows it is quite difficult to achieve these goals and focusing on the needs of the citizens who are disconnected from the initiatives of the government. In this tough situation, the government needs to take an integrated approach to deliver the needs required by their citizens. Moon (2002) agreed that e-government programs have been conducted around the world and achieved success with them. It is not an easy task to transform the services of the government so the existing systems are completely automated and updated. This study focuses on the growth of e-government and its needed function within the UAE government. In this study, an analysis is also conducted about the current situation of e-government in the UAE and the administration’s objective toward the transformation. It is a detailed approach that will address strategies related to technology and the awareness of the need of transitioning into e-government. It will also discuss why the global government needs e-government at this time in human history.

Smart or electronic government refers to the delivery of national or local authorized information and services via the Internet or other digital means to citizens and businesses or other governmental agencies (Garson, 2006). It facilitates in many ways better service delivery to citizens, empowerment of the people through access to information without the bureaucracy, and improved productivity and cost savings in doing business with suppliers and customers of the government (Al-Khoury, 2012). Radan, (2012) indicated that the smart government refers also to the improvements or streamlining in internal processes through changes to the risk approach taken, underpinning law or regulations, procedures, processes, forms, channels used, and job functions, that, in turn, improve information and service provision.

The UAE is one of the countries planning to embrace the concept of electronic governance. Mohammad Abdullah Al Gergawi, UAE Minister of Cabinet Affairs said: “The UAE government has embraced innovation and set high benchmarks in government efficiency and trust. We are happy that the Government Summit partnership with WEF has led to a tangible and positive outcome as the Smart Toolbox, which takes trust in government as a unifying theme” (Weinzierl, 2014, p. 1). Recently, Vice President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum was briefed about the distinctive features and services in pending in the next period and steps for complementing transformation to the smart government by mid-2015 as per the strategic plan announced during the recent government summit. He said that, “The aim is to make smart services part of the daily life for all populations, and more accessible and direct. The more services that are smart, the happier people become” (Jivani, 2014, p. 2). The UAE has become one of the leading countries in this field and some of its citizens are still not familiar with this term of “smart” governance.

RESEARCH AIMS

This topic was chosen according to its importance in developing the UAE and improving the efficiencies of the employees’ performance in using the new services of e-Government. Furthermore, it is one of the

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