

Chapter 6

The Demand Side for Development of E-Government Services and Gateway in Turkey: Taking Citizen Perceptions and Suggestions into Account

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ABSTRACT

Representing the co-authors' academic and practitioner background, this chapter provides the most-up-to-date information for an ongoing work on citizen-oriented e-government initiatives. The purpose of this work follows the importance, priority, and necessity of paying attention to citizen side, and aims to improve understanding and better address the citizen demands and expectations towards e-government public transformation. The research aims to question and understand better what citizens think regarding the currently available e-government services in Turkey. In response to this purpose and question, this work-in-progress chapter presents secondary information from literature review and context of the ongoing practical and academic works, and primary findings from both a preliminary and a recent study. These presented information and findings mostly represent practitioners' viewpoint that is mostly based on the authors' professional, academic, and personal involvement in the various aspects of the Turkey case, and in return are expected to provide certain input for the on-going practical affairs. As the research is a work-in-progress that traces long-lasting development and ongoing operations of e-

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government in practice, at this point, providing some suggestions and directions rather than concrete practical and theoretical implications is considered to have the most value. As a result, security, trust, ease of use, service, and information quality are determined to be significant for citizens' perceptions and suggestions as factors that affect their usage of e-government services in Turkey. The resulting chapter first provides a relevant literature review then information about the history and latest developments in e-government from the perspective of citizen side. Following this background information, the preliminary descriptive study on citizen perceptions of demands and expectations conducted last year is reminded. Build upon these ongoing researches on the academic and practical side, latest research findings as a result of analysing citizens suggestions for E-Government Gateway (EGG) in Turkey are also shared. Finally, suggestions for future based on latest work are given.

1. INTRODUCTION

To understand the e-Government phenomenon and development from an evolutionary point of view, there are commonly accepted and applied maturity models that apply a staged approach by dividing the e-Government development process of progressive steps in a continuous process (for a summary of these models, see, for instance, Coursey & Norris 2008). Here the development starts from the 'immature' and moves to the 'mature' (Irani, Al-Sebie & Elliman, 2006; Anderson and Henriksen, 2006 in C.E.E.S., 2009). As Flak, Furuli, Kongsrud and Sæbø (2010) suggest, these widely used stage models alone can form the prescriptive basis for changing the way governments utilize ICT.

The practice and theory of e-Government studies, nevertheless, mainly have been taking two different approaches: while the first one focuses on the supply side, government perspective; the second one gives more attention to demand side, citizen perspective. According to Arif (2008), nevertheless, "e-Government applications need to be citizen-oriented for the government agencies and the end users". This orientation could mean "an effective mechanism in order to ensure that development processes incorporate customer needs, an emphasis on usability, the incorporation of accessibility, the effective use of cultural markers", each of which, according to him, could require separate research.

In practice, however, governments spend an important amount of money to put into place e-Government systems without giving significant attention to the citizens side. They consider that if they make use of a good working e-Government system, citizens will immediately start using and get benefit of the system. On the contrary, as Norris (2010) discusses, many of the early predictions about e-Government, especially of claims for e-democracy and e-transformation, were, at best, pure, optimistic speculation without basis whatsoever in the prior relevant literature. In fact, ICT has not reformed or transformed governmental administration. Also, predicted results about e-transformation and e-democracy have largely not materialized from e-Government. Surely over time the relationships between citizens of nations and their governments will change nevertheless, technology will not cause the transformations in the relations between citizens and their governments.

To understand and improve these relations, then paying particular attention to citizen perceptions and demands becomes one of the most important issues. Practitioners and academicians need to know more about citizens so that they can develop more sophisticated services, better methodologies and frameworks respectfully. The starting point for service delivery is then the citizens' needs and preferences, instead of those of bureaucracy (Bekkers and Zouridis, 1999). In order to give the citizens first priority, it is a necessity to assess the needs and expectations of

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