

Chapter 61

Institutionalisation, Framing, and Diffusion: The Logic of Openness in eGovernment and Implementation Decisions – A Lesson for Developing Countries

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ABSTRACT

In this research, the premise is that sharing data according to the guidelines for publishing open government data ensures greater transparency, delivers more efficient public services, and encourages greater public and commercial use and re-use of government information. This logic, drawn from previous literature and past studies, is extended by examining the interplay between economic benefits of e-Government and social considerations in adoption of e-Government models decisions. Drawing on organizational decision-making research, this research argues that, both early and late adopters respond to framing and interpreting adoption decision situations as opportunities, instead of threats, to enhance transparency and accountability. Following interpretivist research conventions methodology, the sampling plan was purposeful and included a total of 39 interviews. It is found that the social, political, and economic context of developing countries may not readily accommodate current models of openness in e-Government. The conclusion drawn in this research is that motivations for the openness in e-Government to appear legitimate coexist with motivations to realize transparency and accountability. These findings prompt rethinking of the classic institutional, framing, and diffusion model, to suggest openness in e-Government model that developing countries could adopt to suit their social and economic context, as a contribution to the body of knowledge.

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INTRODUCTION

E-Government is about using the tools and systems made possible by Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to provide better public services to citizens and business. ICTs are already widely used by government bodies, just as in enterprises, but e-Government involves much more than just the tools. Effective e-Government also involves rethinking organizations and processes, and changing behaviour so that public services are delivered more efficiently to the people who need to use them. Implemented well, e-Government enables all citizens, enterprises and organizations to carry out their business with government more easily, more quickly and at lower cost (Reding, 2006). “We are starting to see benefits from e-Government...but we need to be more active in learning lessons from each other and getting benefits of scale”(Reding, 2006, p.1). Carter (2008) states that e-Government refers to the use of Internet to facilitate governmental activities and to provide public services over the web. E-Government involves the use of online information technologies by government agencies to provide services (World Bank 2005). E-government services are essentially concerned with the delivery of public services to citizens, employees, businesses, and government organizations through the use of ICTs.

Quoting the words of His Excellency, Honorable Mwai Kibaki, and President of Kenya on e-Government-KENYA, 2009, “The achievement of e-Government is one of the main priorities of the Government towards realization of national development goals and objectives for wealth and employment creation. Effective and operational e-Government will facilitate better and efficient delivery of information and services to the citizens, promote productivity among public servants, encourage participation of citizens in Government and empower all Kenyans” (Kibaki, 2009). By using ICT and the Internet, Kenya’s e-Government is improving efficiency in mass processing tasks, data collection and transmission, communication

with customers, greater sharing of data within and between governments; improving government services that is, online services are built with understanding of user requirements, seamless services for one-government interface, and multi-channel service delivery; helping achieve specific policy outcomes to enhance more sharing of information to improve collection of taxes, better use of health services, better matching of unemployed and vacancies, contributing to Vision 2030, ‘economic policy objectives’ that is, to ensure that there are improvements in business productivity, effective government programmes, promoting e-Commerce, government consumption of ICT goods, contributing to the reform by enabling public reformation through transparency, simplification, information sharing, enabling seamless government, and; helping build trust between government and citizens by enabling citizen engagement in the policy process, preventing corruption, promoting accountability and openness (Kibaki, 2009).

The purpose or objective of this chapter is, however not to define the emerging concept of e-Government, but to generate a discussion and interest about the e-Government models and modalities that may be feasible in the developing world that is, the models that will take into account the social and economic context of developing countries. The research also extends the institutional theory’s account of diffusion by examining the interplay between economic and social considerations in adoption decisions. Drawing on organizational decision-making research, in this chapter it is argued that both early and late adopters respond to framing and interpreting adoption decision situations as opportunities versus threats. Thus the rationale and motivation for undertaking this research and contributing to the body of knowledge is the rethinking of the classic institutional, framing and diffusion model, to suggest openness in e-Government model that developing countries could adopt to suit their social and economic context.

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