

Chapter 4

Organizational Development in Electronic Government Adoption: A Process Development Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The concept of Electronic Government (EG) has evolved significantly during the past few decades. Several development models have been presented in the literature to illustrate the advancement and adoption of EG practices. Recent developments in EG adoption that emphasize the process view call for a new perspective to EG adoption. Based on the review of most cited stage models of EG adoption, a comprehensive stage model is recommended in this paper. Furthermore, this paper utilizes the recommended stage model and proposes a process based framework for analyzing the EG adoption.

1. BACKGROUND

When the military first invented the Internet in the 1960s as a communication network for defense research purposes, it did not envision how the Internet would transform society in just few decades (Ho, 2002). Since the introduction of the

Internet, there has been a rapid growth in its use as a communication tool. The exponential growth in internet usage and the application of e-commerce in the private sector, have been mounting pressure on governments to serve its citizens electronically. These applications are recognized in the form of

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Electronic Government (EG) (Ho, 2002; Holden, Norris & Fletcher, 2003).

The private sector developed the concept of e-commerce, which enables customers to access products and services through a “one stop shop”. While customer convenience is a contributory factor for the private sector to utilize Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), the saving cost helps to motivate companies to invest in e-commerce. The Internet not only changed the way people interact and how information is delivered, but it also pressured governments to revisit its service delivery models and methods to their citizens (Cohen & Eimicke, 2002). The private sector share the same stakeholder as the public sector, and it is the stakeholders that contribute the most in terms of increasing the level of pressure for governments to hasten the adaptation of ICT as well as diffusion of technology in provision of public services (Donaldson, 1995; Geroski, 2000). In this context, ICT diffusion refers to the gradual adoption of the technology by different groups of stakeholders.

The Internet is becoming more important not just in economic development, but also in organizational development. The Internet, like other communication technologies, has wide political impact on organizations, their stakeholders, and the relationship among them (Milner, 2006). Several scholars have called for the need to examine and understand the process of adoption of innovative technologies in governments. The importance of understanding the adoption process, becomes more vital when the context is an exceptionally complex environment, like the government. The velocity of adopting technology is reliant on the political setting in the government, and the inclination of those in power (Milner, 2006). Some institutions would allow governments and ruling elites embrace the adoption of new technologies – if they yearn to do so – while other institutions would enable them to delay or disrupt it entirely. Despite these considerations the governments around the world, especially evident in

the developed countries, have already established ambitious goals for the implementation of EG in the public sector (Aichholzer, 2004). The premise for governments to undertake such transformation in the public sector is: governments understand that quality and the cost of public service will ultimately determine the population’s overall quality of life, the strength of business activities, and political legitimacy of the government (Aichholzer, 2004). Though this article recognizes the implementation of technology involves complex planning and challenging factors, such as fundamentals in public policy, regulations and financial constraints (Jaeger & Thomson, 2003); the position of this article does not advocate for specific implementation measures, but rather, it will provide an analytical overview of the EG adoption process.

The next section of this paper introduces the concept of EG development, and describes the importance of EG development from the public management perspective. Section three, provides evidences for the shift to the process view of EG adoption. In the following section, a comprehensive stage model of EG adoption is recommended. Furthermore, the recommended model is applied in the process view of EG development framework. In section five, the process view of the EG is described explicitly. Finally, the synthesis of the paper is presented in the last section.

2. DEVELOPMENTS IN ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT: PUBLIC MANAGEMENT VIEW

EG has developed significantly in the recent decades; governments started to observe the role of EG in improving the service delivery to citizens (United Nations, 2005). EG has also evolved in parallel with technological advancements. The procedures of entrenching EG in the public sector are lessons taken from the private sector. One of the goals of EG is to ensure that government

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