

Chapter 19

Egyptian Electronic Government: The Citizen Relationship Management (CRM) Case Study

H. S. Hassan

Cranfield University, UK

A. A. M. Abdelkader

Damietta University, Egypt

ABSTRACT

Many developing countries' governments have invested heavily in increasing the number of e-government projects. However, there is a lack of clear case material, which describes the potentialities and consequence experienced by governments trying to manage with this change. The Ministry of State for Administrative Development (MSAD) is the organization responsible for the e-Government program in Egypt since early 2004. This paper presents the findings of the CRM case study, one of the e-service projects led by MSAD. Semi-structured interviews have been used as primary data collection techniques. The findings of the study reveal that the main driver to the success of the project is changing the organisational culture and thinking. It is noticed there is an influence of the project on citizens' encouragement for public participation as it was able to increase their satisfaction levels. Also, the findings emphasised the problems that face the overall e-government program in Egypt. They also explain the relationships among those identified problems of governmental e-service development.

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INTRODUCTION

E-Government has become a universal trend. Developing countries have been initiating E-Government strategies and projects, as a way to promote development and reduce poverty (Schuppan, 2009). These projects can strengthen the performance of government and public administration; and for economic and social development as well (Hassan, Shehab, & Peppard, 2011). E-Government projects can contribute to solving administrative problems in developing countries whose public administration is characterized by inefficiency, limited capacity, and poorly-trained personnel (Abanumy, Al-Badi, & Mayhew, 2005). Electronic or “online” channels can facilitate government communication functions more rapidly, efficiently and cheaply than offline channels (Heeks, 2001; Lau, Aboulhosen, Lin, & Atkin, 2008).

Yet, given the e-government requirements of very complex socio-technical system, highly dependent upon overall institutional maturity, regulatory/policy frameworks, and socio-cultural considerations, the level of e-government implementation is lower than planned or expected in the developing countries (Hassan, Shehab, & Peppard, 2008). The gap between developed and developing countries in Internet technological infrastructures, practices, and usage has been wider rather than narrower over recent years (AlShihi, 2006). Besides the lack of sufficient capital to build up an expensive national information infrastructure (NII) on which electronic service is based, developing countries also lack the sufficient knowledge and skill to develop suitable and effective strategies for establishing and promoting electronic government (Chen, Chen, Ching, & Huang, 2007).

The project of electronic government is one of the strategic projects for building information base in Egypt. The Egyptian Government set up a secure hub for e-government based on the UK’s Gateway system. Egypt had a deal with Microsoft to be in

charge of the e-government implementation and the Government Gateway (MCIT, 2010). The launch of the system for the secure e-government transactions was in 2004. Egypt initially expressed an interest in the UK Gateway technology at a meeting with UK officials two months before the licensing deal. The first services offered through Egypt’s Gateway was electricity and telephone billing and payment of traffic fines. MSAD moved on many fields for speedy implementation and launch of this strategic project. This includes setting up required infrastructure, i.e., laws and regulations, technological frameworks, government’s website, rules and specifications. This axis included issuance of four documents concerning government networks, security systems, safety, application exchange documents’ archiving. This is in addition to putting license contracts of PC programs into effect in cooperation with Microsoft. The other axis includes services such as electronic payment of telephone and electricity invoices and the like. The third axis focuses on mechanization of ministries’ cabinets and affiliated authorities. Contracts have been concluded for the implementation of related applications on resource planning and management, including inventory, purchases, budget accounts, and personnel affairs. MSAD has taken great strides in the implementation of e-government. Similar strides are needed for qualifying the Egyptian society for benefiting from the services offered by the project.

The questions this paper addresses can be divided into two parts. The first question focuses on the types of e-government initiatives that are being undertaken in governmental organizations in Egypt. The second question focuses on the barriers and challenges that face the Egyptian government as it tries to implement an e-government program. The paper hence focuses on one application of electronic government in Egypt and examines how this initiative can be successfully implemented. This is done by investigating the factors that impeded the development and/or the

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