

Chapter 2

Enhancing Information Services through Public–Private Partnerships: Information Technology Knowledge Transfer Underlying Structures to Develop Shared Services in the U.S. and Korea

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ABSTRACT

What are e-government success factors for using public-private partnerships to enhance learning and capacity development? To examine this question, the authors developed a comparative case analysis of the development of the Business Reference Model (BRM), a national-level e-government initiative to promote shared information services, in the U.S. federal government and the Korean central government. The results indicate institutional arrangements deeply affect the outcomes of knowledge transfer. The study shows that private sector partners in both countries played various roles as “brokers” of information technology (IT) knowledge between government and the private sector by: raising awareness of the necessity of the BRM; providing best practices; developing pilot projects; and developing implementation strategies. However, the study finds that the two countries took entirely different approaches to working with non-governmental organizations in BRM development with implications for project success and lessons for e-government success. The study is meant to deepen understanding of the embeddedness of public-private partnerships in institutional contexts and the implications of such institutional arrangements for knowledge sharing on e-government success. The study examines knowledge transfer in the context of similarities and differences in partnership structures across two advanced industrialized countries with leading roles in e-governance.

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INTRODUCTION

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are a vital driver of e-government success. Practitioners require knowledge concerning how to develop and sustain successful PPPs to develop e-government. Researchers require knowledge about the underlying characteristics that lead to success or failure of PPPs in e-government development. Thus, this chapter examines the following types of questions: How do government agencies learn from non-governmental organizations in their quest for e-government success?¹ More specifically, how do governments adopt and adapt policies, practices and knowledge from non-governmental sectors? How do federal governments develop inter-organizational relationships across sectors (public, private and non-profit) to enhance and speed learning and development of new e-government capacity? How do countries differ in their approaches to these challenges?

As an effective way of developing government IT capacity with relationship to private actors, public-private partnerships (PPPs) have been paid attention to not only by government practitioners but also by academic researchers. In e-government developments, PPPs have become an accepted management practice as a large percentage of IS/IT projects have been outsourced (Swar et al., 2012; Currie, 1996). Therefore, various PPP measures of effectiveness such as active communication with e-government users, strategic IS/IT partnerships with various IS/IT experts, and effective outsourcing management have been recommended as key success factors for e-government building by IS/IT project management tools for public agencies (Gil-Garcia & Pardo, 2005). With these trends in practice, recent research has enhanced our understanding of the activities of private firms in providing information services and building e-government (Fountain, 2007; 2001; Dunleavy et al., 2006; Yildiz, 2004; Margetts, 1999). More specifically, a stream of research has developed

on the key dimensions of IS/IT outsourcing and the determinants of effective relationships for IS/IT outsourcing success in the public sector (Swar et al., 2012; Moon et al., 2007; Van Der Wal et al., 2006).

However, we argue that research on PPPs in public sector, and specifically for e-government, remains under produced. It is difficult to find prescriptive recommendations for e-government practitioners on IS/IT outsourcing (Lin et al., 2007; Moon et al., 2007). Moreover, close analysis of the concrete activities of private partners and their interactions with government organizations over time remains insufficiently examined. In spite of the prevalence of such practices across governments, little cross-national comparative research on these questions has been undertaken in spite of the fact that different central governments have institutionalized different types of public-private partnerships.

In order to shed light on these issues and to overcome some of the limitations of previous research, the authors developed two detailed case studies to examine inter-organizational developments across sectors, including and moving beyond PPPs. The empirical setting for the two case studies includes the agencies and other organizations central to the development of the Business Reference Model (BRM) in the federal government of the U.S. and the central government of Korea. The BRM, one of the national e-government initiatives in both countries, is a means to develop shared definitions of data across government programs and agencies. A “dictionary” of sorts is created that can then serve the needs of different agencies thereby making shared data and shared, interactive services for civic engagement possible. Private firms spent about a decade developing BRMs for use in the private sector. The U.S. and Korean governments sought to learn from these firms in order to move quickly to develop core capacity to support new shared services for civil society. The BRM is “invisible” to most citizens and clients of

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