Chapter 7
Assessing Electronic Government Readiness in Egypt: Comparison between Two Public Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Electronic Government (e-Government) has rapidly become a political imperative at local, national and international level. The drive to implement e-government has become of critical importance globally. The e-government revolution offers the potential to reshape the public sector and remake the relationship between citizens and government. Several developing nations, including Egypt, having witnessed the benefits realized by e-Government in developed countries, took e-Government initiatives and achieved different success rates. It is frequently claimed that proving an effective e-government assessment framework is a necessary condition for advancing e-Government. The objective of this chapter is to present a framework that assesses e-Government readiness (EGR) in Egypt, focusing on electronic administration (e-Administration) within a public organization through obtaining its employees’ feedback. The suggested framework investigates the internal factors affecting e-Government readiness which are: strategy, processes, people, and technology. The chapter applies this framework on 2 public organizations in Egypt to test it and to set a comparison between both organizations in terms of the internal factors effect on e-Government readiness.

INTRODUCTION

Increasing awareness and interest in e-Government drive governments to implement e-Government initiatives worldwide (Nour et al., 2008) at local, national, regional and global levels, and gaining further support from different stakeholders in each community (Salem, 2007). The transition from conventional government to e-Government provides an opportunity for the government to improve its services and reduce, or even eliminate expenditure and ineffectiveness that may exist in its traditional services (Bakry, 2004). e-Government can also have a great effect on
modernizing governments through restructuring of public organizations, re-engineering of business processes, and fostering communication between government and citizens over time and distances (Krishnaswamy, 2005).

Although most e-Government research express optimistic views regarding the impact of e-Government (Heeks and Bailur, 2007), e-Government benefits are still difficult to reap. This is attributed to the absence of a clear roadmap to be followed to realize success because e-Government is still in an early stage (Moon, 2002). This highlights the importance of defining measures of success (Stowers, 2004) to raise awareness, elucidate e-Government development environment, and to confirm the feasibility of selected e-Government approaches (UNDESA, 2003).

Available benchmarking e-Government initiatives do not provide a comprehensive framework for assessing, classifying and comparing different e-Government programs (Hu et al., 2005; Grant and Chau, 2005). Most appraisal models are more suitable for the appraisal of the overall development of e-Government in each country; they are not directly focusing on the problems that exist in individual e-Government projects or on the internal factors affecting transformation of a government organization due to information and communication technology (ICT) adoption. In addition, the majority of such appraisals address the electronic service (eService) view of e-Government ignoring its electronic administration (eAdministration) aspect despite its importance on e-Government success (Dawes, 2002). Moreover, most of these approaches ignore the view of civil servants, even though they constitute the cornerstone in the success of any e-Government project as the direct users.

This chapter suggests an electronic government readiness (EGR) framework of e-Government project assessment focusing on eAdministration. The suggested framework encompasses all internal factors affecting a public organization categorized into four main dimensions: strategy, processes, technology, and people. All measuring constructs under each dimension are derived from available literature on the assessment of eReadiness and EGR, as well as on information systems (IS) and eCommerce success.

The suggested EGR framework is evaluated against feedback of employees working in two public sector organizations in Egypt. Comparison of findings reveals the relationship between these four dimensions, and the weight of each dimension in affecting EGR in both organizations.

The chapter starts first by an introduction of the research philosophy selected, followed by an explanation of the framework suggested for assessing EGR, describing its different four dimensions: strategy, processes, technology, and people. Next, an overview of the Egypt’s overall e-government strategy is presented, highlighting the link between the national e-government strategy and e-government readiness study, which is the main focus of the chapter. The two public organizations used as case studies for assessing EGR in Egypt are then described, followed by an explanation of the methodology used, and an analysis of the data collected from the empirical research. Finally findings are discussed along with the research limitations, leading to the conclusion derived from the study.

RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

The focus of the study is on the internal factors affecting EGR in a public organization. Following an in-depth review of different research philosophies, positivist was the most appropriate approach that serves in reaching the research aim. Since the research addresses the factors affecting EGR, the weight of each factor as well as the relation that exists between them, there was a need to develop a framework to: i) conceptualize the suggested ideas, ii) identify variables, iii) set hypothesis, iv) focus on observable aspects, and v) adopt a testability principle. This is completely compatible with the