Factors Impacting the Success of Electronic Government: A Micro Level and a Back Office View

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ABSTRACT

The author’s goal in this study is to investigate factors that impact the success of electronic government. The focus in this study is on several organizational and personal characteristics, including age, tenure, information system (IS) experiences, gender, education level, nationality, training in information system (IS), position, and experience in current job. The study is then applied to Kuwait, and electronic government success is measured using information system usage. The findings indicate that four out of the nine factors impact electronic government success. These four factors are age, IS experiences, education level, and training in IS. The author then examines several research and practical implications.

Keywords: Electronic Government Success, Information System Usage, Kuwait, Organizational and Personal Characteristics, Public Sector

INTRODUCTION

E-government is not just about putting forms and services online. It provides the opportunity to rethink how the government provides services and links them in a way that is tailored to the user’s needs. Burns and Robines (2003: 26)

The above definition of electronic government (egov) clearly indicates that egov represents a great opportunity for governments to enhance their operational transparency, which is an important issue, especially given the current economic downturn and increasing public pressure for internal accountability (Davison et al., 2005). The root of the egov phenomena springs from the increasing role of information system (IS) plays in public organizations. Nowadays, IS is considered an important enabler of efficiency and effectiveness in many aspects of public organizations such as customer service, creating new products and services, and improving decision making (Almutairi, 2008; Cater-Steel, 2009). This vital role of IS is mainly due to the great enhancement in the abilities of these systems which caused a paradigm shift in the practice and management of these systems (Conger, 2009).

Egov has become, therefore, a must for any nation that aims for better government (Gupta & Jana, 2003). This essential role that egov could play in national governance has made egov a global phenomenon that is attracting the atten-
tion of politicians and ordinary citizens (Grand & Chau, 2006) which triggered countries around the world to invest massive public resources in order to establish egov projects (Petricek et al., 2006).

The great interest in egov has been echoed in the research area through the emergence of a new line of research that mainly focus on issues related to egov. Studies in this line of research could be classified into three broad areas: egov development and evaluation, egov adoption and implementation, and the impact of egov on citizens and businesses (Srivastava & Teo, 2007). However, there are still vast research areas that need to be explored in this line of research (Bannister, 2007). One of such area is that related to factors impacting egov success.

The importance of egov success factors springs from the high failure rate of egov project implementation in developing countries, which is 85% (Heeks, 2003). The high failure rate needs to be decreased by understanding and controlling factors that impact egov success. Reviewing egov literature to find studies on this issue, however, revealed a serious shortage.

Based on the preceding discussion, this study attempts to enhance the knowledge about factors influencing egov success. Jansen (2005) argued:

Rather than regarding e-government as a separate research area, one should see it as a vast area of variety of empirical studies, in which, one should apply existing scientific knowledge, theories and methodologies from as well IS research as from e.g. organizational studies, political sciences, etc. (p.2)

Following the above suggestion, empirical studies found in both egov literature and information system (IS) literature are used to pinpoint a set of factors that are investigated in this study.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Several researchers have investigated factors that could influence the success and failure of egov. Table 1 presents a sample of these studies. Studies in Table 1 provide a good indication of the growing interest in looking for egov success factors, the variety of success measures and factors used in these studies, and the variety of success factors found significant in these studies.

However, studies in Table 1 also presents a challenge to anyone interested in finding a gap in literature that dealt with egov success factors. A major source of this challenge is the variety of egov success factors used in these studies which put, in the forefront, the issue of putting order in these studies in the form of categorizing them into specific categories which would facilitate, then, the identification of gaps and shortcomings.

In the context of this study, this categorization was provided by positioning egov success factors, which are found significant in studies in Table 1, in an egov evaluation model. To shade more light on this effort, the discussion moves to another line of research in egov literature that is egov evaluation literature.

Egov evaluation literature is closely related to egov success factors literature. Egov success factors literature is the other side of the coin of egov evaluation literature. In the egov evaluation literature, when pinpointing to egov aspects that need to be taken into account in the egov evaluation and how each aspect should be measured, these egov aspects become egov success factors when discussed in egov success factors literature.

Therefore, egov models developed in the egov evaluation literature can be used to assist in pinpointing and categorizing egov success factors. This categorization, in turn, would help in determining whether there is a gap in egov success factors literature.

In this study, among the available egov theoretical models in egov evaluation literature