A Framework to Analyze the Alignment of E-Government Projects

Fatma Bouaziz, University of Sfax, Tunisia
Jamil Chaabouni, University of Sfax, Tunisia

ABSTRACT

Alignment is perceived as a key factor for profiting from the implementation of information system and technology (IS/IT). However, studies in the domain of e-government and alignment, particularly in developing countries are scarce. In this research, the authors examine the significant impact that IS/IT alignment can have on e-government project implementation success. Through inspecting e-government projects, the authors capture the role of alignment in e-government and discuss strategies that can be adopted to improve implementation success. An empirical enquiry based on case studies of e-government projects by Tunisian public administration reveals that a dynamic approach to alignment can be adopted and consequently supported through partial alignment of horizontal integration. This empirical enquiry also reveals that political support can be seen as a key influencing factor that impacted success. Finally, the findings are used to propose a framework to analyze the alignment of e-government projects.

Keywords: Alignment, E-Government, E-Government Project, Information Systems and Technology, Island of Alignment

INTRODUCTION

E-government has been implemented by the public administration (PA) almost everywhere in the world. The United Nations’ reports (2002-2008) show a rising number of countries where the PA has adopted technologies and information systems (IS/IT) to get online. The presence on the Web passes from the creation of informational and/or transactional web sites to vertical and/or horizontal integration of PA.

OECD (2003) noted that “e-government is more about government than about e.” In fact, introducing the IS/ITin bureaucratic structures without making organizational changes seems insufficient if the PA wants to take advantage from e-government. The implementation of e-government strategy which is in harmony with the strategies of the PA and the needs of socio-economic actors and the PA is more promising. So, PA must deploy alignment capability (St Amant, 2005) for a successful implementation of e-government projects. St Amant and Renard (2003-2006) and St Amant and Ben Dhaou (2009) emphasized the fact of building
the needed capabilities at adequate maturity level. They added that the lack of required organizational capabilities or their inadequate level of maturity may cause e-government projects failure. On the one hand, transforming PA via e-government projects is risky (St Amant & Renard, 2004). The risk increases when multiple stakeholders are involved (Fedorowicz et al., 2009). Fedorowicz et al. (2009) argued that the strategic alignment of stakeholders’ expectations is a success factor of e-government projects. On the other hand, e-government must be included in an overall policy to achieve the objectives of service delivery and to modernize PA (OECD, 2003). Moreover, the e-government requires a shared understanding of goals and plans between various administrative agencies (OECD, 2003; Lam, 2005; Fedorowicz et al., 2009). Fedorowicz et al. (2009) highlighted the fact that the challenge of aligning participant goals remains a critical issue for e-government (G2G and G2B) projects leaders. They added that careful attention to participants’ motivation will lead to a better acceptance by stakeholders and a reduction of the risk of project failure. These authors conducted an empirical research based on a single case by examining a pilot test of the United States Treasury’s Internet Payment Platform (IPP). But, to our knowledge, excepting this research, studies focusing on the relationship between the e-government projects alignment, their risk of failure and the mechanisms allowing alignment, in particular in the context of developing countries such as Tunisia, seem to be scarce. Thus, in this research, the authors investigate the existence of a relationship between the alignment of e-government projects and project outcomes (failure/success) and the solutions to be adopted to obtain this alignment. The objectives are to demonstrate that misalignment participates to reduce the success chances of e-government projects and to propose mechanisms to enhance the alignment of e-government projects.

Conducting this research may be justified by two reasons. Firstly, alignment is perceived as a key for profiting from implementation of IS/ IT. Some authors (Lam, 2005; Fedorowicz et al., 2009) have highlighted its importance in the case of e-government projects, especially those including several stakeholders in different public agencies. Secondly, we have noticed that studies in the domain of e-government and alignment particularly in developing countries are rare. So, by this research we hope to stress the role of alignment as a key factor for more successful e-government experiences. Also, we hope to contribute to reduce scarcity of studies in the domain.

Four parts are successively developed in the following. The first part deals with the alignment of e-government projects. The methodology is presented in the second part. The third part is devoted to presenting the results of the investigation and their discussion. Finally, in the fourth part the authors, based on the obtained results, suggest a framework to analyze and enhance the alignment of e-government projects.

THE ALIGNMENT OF E-GOVERNMENT PROJECTS

This section deals with the alignment of e-government projects. The e-government and e-government projects’ definitions are firstly proposed. Then, a literature review will be made to highlight the importance of the alignment of e-government projects and to discuss the management of alignment of e-government projects.

The Concepts of E-Government and E-Government Projects

The term e-government admits two visions. The first vision limits its scope to services provision and information dissemination through information technologies by PA, to other PA, citizens and businesses (Reddick, 2004; West, 2004). The second vision sees e-government as a continuous optimization of services delivery, political participation and governance by transforming internal and external relationships through the Internet (Fang, 2002; Moon, 2002). This second vision includes activities related
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