Chapter 5
An Integrated Strategic Framework for E-Government Initiatives

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ABSTRACT

The widespread applications of information and communication technologies have attracted many countries to e-government. Nonetheless, setting appropriate goals for e-government initiatives is an important factor for the success of these projects. This study provides a context-based framework for understanding e-government initiatives in different countries, including degree of e-government readiness, degree of transparency, and level of democratization. According to these determinants, 141 countries are categorized using Parson’s generic strategy of IT. Classification of countries in this framework shows significant correlations between these determinants and GDP index, which is an important outcome for country performance. This framework provides a roadmap for policymakers to formulate goals for their e-government initiatives commensurate with their respective environments.

INTRODUCTION

E-government is becoming an important public service concept for many countries in order to adapt with the modern environment. E-government has contributed to a great number of opportunities enhancing the government performance. It affects all of the government functions and private sectors and leads to new ways of interaction between citizens and government (Zarei, Ghapanchi, & Sattary, 2008). Numerous advantages have been reported for the e-government. For instance, it contributes to a more intelligent and agile government, with improved provision of services and a new instrument for the interaction between citizens and government (Sarantis, Charalabidis, & Askounis, 2008).
Greater transparency, equality of access and confidence are some additional advantages of the e-government (Abbasi Shahkooh, Abbasi Shahkooh, & Abdollahi, 2008; Turban, King, Lee, Warkentin, & Chang, 2002). E-government can be considered as a revolution based on the communion and partnership among all government stakeholders (Rowley, 2011) in which information and communications flow in a cyber space and increase the networking opportunities and organizational performance (Lowry, Albrecht, & Nunamaker, 2003). In fact, information technology based networks, transform the relations between people and government. Deployment of e-government enables the citizens, businesses, employees and other government agencies to access the government services and networks through a single portal and exchange information without time and space limitations (Institute for Trade Studies and Research, 2004).

Governments all around the world, continuously put efforts to improve the customer services. Each country implements e-government for specific reasons which are different from other countries (Strejcek & Theil, 2004). Nevertheless, most governments face problems and difficulties in their legacy systems such as bureaucracy tendencies in administration and governance systems, centralized decision making schemes, complexity of reworks in public sector, lack of information sharing among the public agencies, and lack of efficient information and communications technology infrastructures (Altameem, Zairi, & Alshawi, 2006). With the huge investigations in e-government initiatives (Peters, Jansen, & Engers, 2004) governments are trying to attain this goal.

Governments all around the world compete to deploy and implement the e-government concept (theory) in their countries, however, studies show a great number of failures (Braa & Hedberg, 2000; Kitiyadisai, 2000). According to Heeks (2004), in developed countries, 35% of the e-government initiatives have completely failed, 50% have partially failed and only 15% were successful. The main reasons for these failures are the lack of an explicit strategy and inconsistency among the selected strategies.

One strand deals with the values to be achieved through the e-government initiatives. In the values strand context, e-government could be considered as an instrument that enhances the ability and capacity of the government in order to achieve the established values that constitute the fundamental and principal goals of the government. For instance, a goal of an e-government project is to realize a Web-enabled policy discourse. We would not expect this initiative to succeed in an environment where both the technology infrastructure and democratization levels are low. By the same token, an initiative that aims to achieve transactional transparency may not be successful in an environment with a low level of e-government readiness. Those values encompass, interalignment, efficiency (Holliday & Kwok, 2004), economy, accountability, effectiveness, transparency, service quality (Hazlett & Hill, 2003), integrity, democratic responsiveness (Kossick, 2002), continuous change in democratic paradigms (Ho & Ni, 2002), rule of law, citizen participation (Netchaeva, 2002) and empowerment (Wong & Welch, 2004). Principal goals for every e-government project must be related to the value system. Notable issues identified in this strand are related to the unintended results and outcomes of e-government project, enablers or obstacles in adopting the e-government and its technical dimensions. These issues are interrelated and should be considered holistically. The effectiveness of e-government initiatives achieving their goals (economic or political) may hinge crucially on the congruence among the goals these initiatives seek to achieve and the underlying contextual environment (setting) within which these initiatives are undertaken.