

Chapter 54

Developing a Citizen–Centric eGovernment Model for Developing Countries: Case of Kurdistan Region of Iraq

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents an enhanced eGovernment stage model based on citizens' participation for improvements in the delivery of governmental services by putting citizens' insights and their requirements in the context of e-government development and the potential use of a multi-channel delivery of services for regional governments in developing countries. The model proposed is based on research done in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. This research identified missing elements in traditional eGovernment models that would prove essential for implementation in developing countries. These models usually propose five stages of development spanning from emergence to integration. The proposal here considers most of the limitations in two stages, namely initial and an enhancement stage with the advantage of decreasing the uncertainty of e-government implementation in the public sector by recognising the consequence of the institutional readiness, adoption processes, the needs of ICT tools, and the factors that influence the implementation process.

INTRODUCTION

eGovernment is a dynamic continuous service provision process which makes availability of services to the society via technology along with the potential of multi-channel delivery of services;

such as internet, telephone, wireless devices, and other communication media, along with an effective management process (Shareef et al, 2011). As the range of eGovernment potential has grown and developed, the definition of eGovernment has developed with it.

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The extant literature offers a number of different definitions about eGovernment. For instance, e-Government is defined as the use of information and communications technology (ICT) to transform government by making it more accessible, result-oriented, efficient, effective, and accountable (OECD, 2003). Such an implementation includes a range of activities from providing greater access to government information to promoting civic engagement in providing development opportunities. Gulick & Urwick (1937) defined eGovernment as the process of making activities and functions effectively and efficiently with and through other people.

Gil-Garcia & Martinez (2005) defined e-Government as the intensive use of IT for service provision to their citizens, and the enhancement of managerial efficiency and the encouragement of democratic values and mechanisms. This definition argues that the provision of services is not only through the use of technology, but also enhancing the management process in order to be more transparent and more efficient (Tan, 2006; Heeks, 2001). Holzer & Tae Kim (2005) identified that digital government provides services to citizens and digital democracy is the citizen's contributions to the government. EGovernment in broadest term involves offering better access to government information and encouraging civic engagement to provide development opportunities. Consequently, citizens, business, and government institutions are all benefiting from the electronic government system (World Bank Group, 2009). The important factors are related to citizens' demands and their perception to participate and utilise eGovernment services. It is essential to promote and allow citizens to communicate and participate in e-government. In this regard, Fang (2002) defined e-Governance as the direct contribution of the people in decision making and participating in political activities such as e-democracy, and e-voting. In a broader definition eGovernance will cover parliament, Judiciary

functions, government, citizens' contribution, political parties, and organizations.

Therefore, eGovernment is no longer seen as the simple provision of information and services through the Internet, but as a way of stakeholders interaction with government. eGovernment is also seen as a way to modernise and enhance the economical, political, and social relationship between government and stakeholders, (Apostolou et al, 2011). However, this interaction faces various technological, cultural, and economical obstacles, (Rose & Gant, 2010, Gupta et al, 2008, Sahraoui, 2005), with each state facing different hurdles such as; resistance to change, digital divide, privacy and security, (Conklin, 2007, Coursey et al, 2007, Ebrahim & Irani, 2005).

Most of the eGovernment initiatives across the globe focus on the organisation of the front office, and on the communication between governmental departments and citizens. In order to make government successful, back-office functions have to be taken into account. In reality, back-office functions are the significant part of any eGovernment system, and they quite often require information exchange and knowledge sharing between different department, and institutions. In order to achieve seamless operations at the back-office, the institutional structure for managing these operations is crucial.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq focuses on the role of new technology to promote and develop public administration, and at the same time to improve the government's capability in supervising key activities in the reconstruction of Kurdish social life, infrastructure, services, increased political freedom and tangible improvements in the people's daily lives.

An Overview of the Iraqi Kurdistan

Kurdistan is a federal region of Iraq. It is a secular and democratic region with a parliamentary system of government. It comprises of three cities, namely;

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