

# Chapter 86

## Government Process Reengineering: What We Know and What We Need to Know

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### ABSTRACT

*Despite differences between public and private sectors, business process reengineering (BPR) principles have been widely used in reengineering government processes. This has led to a growing body of literature on government process reengineering (GPR). This chapter presents synthesis and analysis of the literature on government process reengineering from 1997 to 2009. It reviews normative studies that examine the nature and characteristics of government process reengineering, challenges and problems of undertaking government process reengineering, and relationships between government process reengineering and IT-especially enterprise resource planning (ERP)-based E-Government. The review also encompasses the methods, techniques and tools for undertaking GPR; analytical and conceptual GPR models and frameworks; and empirical studies that evaluate GPR implementation outcomes and identify the critical success or failure factors. The chapter summarizes the selected articles in terms of research types, methods, theories, and contexts. Based on the review, areas for future research are defined.*

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-1740-7.ch086

## **INTRODUCTION**

Governments of both developed and developing economies are reforming the public sector to promote good governance (Linden, 1994). Process reengineering together with appropriate information and communications technology (ICT) implementation are recognized as key reform tools. Consequently, there are now several cases of government process reengineering (GPR) implementations that exploit the enabling and transforming power of ICT including strategic enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems for realizing E-Government. As government process reengineering is characteristically different from private sector process reengineering, several researchers have been contributing to the cumulative body of knowledge on the subject. Therefore, there is a need for synthesizing and analyzing the literature on GPR.

The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to examine the literature on GPR from 1997 to 2009. The aim is to (a) appraise what is known about GPR, (b) identify gaps in the literature, and (c) highlight and suggest areas future research shall be heading to. To achieve these aims, we first analyze the GPR literature by research methods (case study or survey), informing theories, study contexts (developed economy or developing), and journals outlet. Second, we synthesize the research articles in terms of (a) normative studies focusing on distinguishing characteristics of GPR, unique challenges and problems of GPR, relationship of GPR and ICT such as ERP system enabled E-Government, (b) approaches and methodologies for undertaking GPR, (c) theoretical/conceptual models of GPR, and (d) GPR adoption and implementation and evaluation. Third, we define a research agenda for future GPR research.

The rest of the chapter is organized into five sections. The second section offers a brief background discussion of public organisations and business process reengineering. Section three discusses the methodology used for selecting and classifying

the relevant articles used in this review. Section four presents results of the literature review and its discussion. The fifth section discusses the areas identified for future research. Finally section six presents the summary and conclusion.

## **BACKGROUND**

Public organizations across developed and developing economies are experiencing challenges to meet the ever increasing demands for efficient public service delivery, more transparent and accountable governance system, and better performance by citizens, businesses, and Governments (Thong, Yap, and Seah, 2000; Linden, 1994). The adoption and implementation of ICT such as ERP-enabled E-Government systems could help to improve operational efficiencies of public sectors. However, addressing effectively all the above demands calls for undertaking a more radical transformation of the organizational model and accompanying business processes. Business process reengineering (BPR) is one of the principal practices for radical transformation of organizations. Public sector organizations have embraced the practice of BPR under the banner of GPR as an instrumental reform tool to transform the public sector from its traditional hierarchical bureaucratic model to customer-oriented horizontal/process model (Sia and Neo, 2008; Anderson, 1999; 2006).

Although the academic interest for BPR in the private sector appears to have saturated, BPR in the public sector (i.e. GPR) is an active area of research (MacIntosh, 2003). The principles of BPR such as fundamental rethinking, radical process redesign, and technology enablement remain appealing and powerful transformative ideas for the public sector (Sia and Neo, 2008). Previous reviews of the literature on process reengineering are predominantly in the context of private sector (see O'Neill and Sohal, 1999; Motwani, Kumar, and Jiang, 1998; Al-Mashari, Irani, et

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