

Chapter 13

E–Government Adoption and Implementation in Oman: A Government Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This chapter reports a description and analysis of the factors that influenced the process of adoption and implementation of the e-Government initiative in Oman over the period 2000 – 2013. This research provides an explanation of why government organisations in Oman developed and then adopted e-Government projects, and how that affected their success as an example of what might also be the case in many developing countries. Using the concept of institutional decoupling, this research presents a framework that offers a new understanding of the observed high failure rate of e-Government implementation in many developing countries. In terms of practical contributions, this research concludes important lessons with regard to synchronising motivating factors with institutional, technological and organisational prerequisites, and expected outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a study of the e-Government project in Oman during the period from 2000 to 2013. The initial focus of the study was on the specific events that occurred during the pre-implementation phase and led to the decision by the Omani

Government to adopt e-Government across the public sector, followed by a study of what drove the implementation process. This study sheds light on the importance of understanding implementation motives of e-Government projects and how that is important for the success of such projects. The desired end of this study is to produce both

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a holistic and heuristic framework that enables a theoretical-based description and analysis of the gap that exists between the institutional and technical environments of e-Government implementation to which e-Government failure can be attributed.

For this study, the primary data was collected through formal semi-structured interviews, telephone conversations, email correspondence and informal dialogues with participants from 9 different government departments during the period from November 2010 to August 2012. The sources for secondary data included: policy documents, scientific research artefacts, press releases, news clippings, and debate programs broadcasted on Oman national television.

A review of the extant literature is an imperative step in any research effort. It provides the researcher with better understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and informs the decision of theoretical and methodological selections based on wisdom from previous research. It is also helpful in identifying gaps in the research body. The e-Government literature posits that the main focus of current e-Government research is on descriptive case studies (Norris & Lloyd 2006) where success/motivating factors of adoption and implementation are identified, but structured theoretical models are missing (Coursey & Norris 2008; Grönlund 2010). It was also found, within this literature review, that there is a predominant focus on the technology aspect (rationalistic and deterministic roles of technology) (Yildiz 2007; Heinze & Hu 2005), however, the government aspect of e-Government is overlooked (Heeks & Bailur 2007; Scholl 2009, Grönlund 2010). Therefore, this study is positioned within the Government-to-Government literature strand of e-Government with the objective to create a framework for the adoption and implementation of e-Government in developing countries using Oman as the exemplar case.

The literature review, within this study, concluded that governments in the developing world

were motivated by coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures to conform to world standards in implementing e-Government. Similarly, they were motivated to improve the effectiveness, fairness, and efficiency of the governing system through the improvement of public service delivery, the enhancement of citizen participatory channels and the increase of integration between government departments.

It is essential to illustrate the meaning of the term e-Government in the context of Oman. Similarly, the events associated with the adoption of e-Government in Oman are presented in the next section. Statements made by policy-level as well as implementation-level officials, who participated in crafting and implementing the e-Government policy in Oman, are replicated to give meaning to the term e-Government in Oman and to related events that led to the adoption. These statements are corroborated with secondary data from policy and research documents pertinent to the e-Government adoption process.

THE E-GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE IN OMAN

The e-Government initiative in Oman was originally launched in May 2003. However, it was essential for this study to explore how e-Government originated in order to discover the motives that led to its adoption. Extending Foucault's views, Ball (1990, p. 23) argued that '[origins] provide a basis from which causality and narrative can be deployed. Origins, once found, are often taken to constitute an explanation of things; they are also commonly the starting point for the evolution or development of things'. Since this study is concerned with tracing the origins of the motives that drove the adoption of e-Government and relating those motives to the extent of its implementation, policy-level respondents were prompted to comment on the initiation phase of the policy. A time map of the e-Government adoption and

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