



Managing IT-enabled transformation in the public sector: A case study on e-government in South Korea

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Abstract

The implementation of e-government is a burgeoning phenomenon across the globe. It improves and enhances the infrastructures and services provided to the citizens. However, a review of the IS literature reveals that research on the implementation of e-government is rather limited, which could be due to the general misconception of the public sectors as rigid and risk-averse establishments. The shortage of studies on e-government's implementation presents a knowledge gap that needs to be plugged. This gap is significantly amplified by the increasing number of e-government initiatives being implemented by governments in recent years. This paper describes and analyzes South Korea's Supreme Court Registry Office, which has implemented e-government. The case study discusses practical implications and suggests future research areas. Findings of the study include the alignment of technology and business processes, integration of resources into core business activities, integrating stakeholders' trust and commitment, and better understanding of the role of organizational learning, which can enhance the adoption and institutionalization of e-government initiatives.

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1. Introduction

Electronic government (e-government) is the term for the technology-enabled transformation of governments: for the reduction of costs, for the increase of transparency, and for the improvement on service delivery and public administration (Irani, Love, & Montazemi, 2006). E-government encompasses three modalities: (1) government to citizen, whereby the citizens access government information and services online; (2) government to business, which allows online interaction between government and the private sector; and (3) government to government, depending on various levels of governmental agencies, to deliver services and allocate responsibilities (Moon, 2002). According to the Accenture (2004) report, the adoption of e-government can bring economic benefits by improving the business environment of the private sector and attracting direct foreign investment. Such potential benefits have led many countries to initiate e-government projects in recent years (World Bank, 2006). As a result, the implementation of e-government burgeons across the globe, with substantial investment made to give enhancement to infrastructures as well as services to citizens (Ebrahim & Irani, 2005). Despite their tremendous potential, e-government projects carry considerable risks of implementation failure (Kawalek & Wastell, 2005). For example, overly ambitious project scale and scope (Beynon-Davies, 1995), lack of political will to transform government functioning, and inadequate capacity to design and implement solutions are possible reasons for implementation failure (Pan, Pan, Newman, & Flynn, 2006). Therefore, the conceptualization of the underlying dynamics and processes of e-government implementations is clearly desired. This paper describes an in-depth case research that analyses the implementation process of the e-government project at Supreme Court Registry Office (SCRO) in South Korea. The study examines the major events and actions taken to facilitate the e-government implementation process.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: we first review past research on managing information technology (IT)-enabled organizational transformation and e-government initiatives, present Cooper and Zmud's (1990) Technology Diffusion Model, which was used as an analytical framework for this study, and describe and analyze the SCRO case. We conclude by highlighting the implications of our study for both research and practice and by suggesting future research.

2. Theoretical foundation

The rapid development of technology is contributing to the growth of interest in the use of technology as a powerful tool to enable and aid transformation in organizations (Orlikowski & Robey, 1991). A review of the existing IS literature reveals a wide range of fundamental factors that may affect IT-enabled organizational transformation that includes a shared vision for change (Doz & Prahalad, 1987) to project management practices (Prahalad & Oosterveld, 1999). Besides these factors, prior research has also exhibited several difficulties associated with IT-enabled organizational transformation (e.g., Child, 1987; Orlikowski, 1993). Despite

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