

E-GOVERNMENT

by

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Introduction

In the late twentieth century, the term "e-government" emerged after the massive spread of information and communication technologies (ICTs), especially the Internet, and its ease of access. The term refers to the possibility of using this technology in the public sector to enhance management within the government, enhance transparency by publishing government data on the Internet, and reduce costs by providing public services to citizens through the Internet. The benefits of e-government are many, including: reducing corruption, enhancing citizens' confidence in the state, given that the state provides services quickly to citizens via the Internet, such as paying taxes, renewing official personal papers, or obtaining social services. While the concept of "e-government" refers to a one-way relationship between the state and the citizen, where the state provides services and information via the Internet, the term "digital government", which has become popular since 2010, has taken on a more comprehensive dimension, referring to the use of the latest smart technologies in the public sector in order to make it more effective and responsive to the demands of citizens, thus establishing the bilateral relationship between the citizen and the state. These technologies include cloud computing, social networking sites, applications on smartphones and data analysis (what is known as SMAC technologies, an abbreviation for "Social", "Mobile", "Analytics", "Cloud").

Research Problem: Despite the adoption of E-government by most countries, what are the obstacles facing Lebanon that prevent it from adopting it?

We will deal with this research as follows:

A-What is E-GOVERNMENT

1-DEFINITION

2-CHARACTERISTICS

B-STUDY CASE

1-DENIMARK'S ADOPTION OF E-GOVERNMENT

2-THE EXECUTION STRATEGY

CONCLUSION

A-E-GOVERNMENT

Definition

In the current world, information is possible to obtain in a matter of seconds. It doesn't take long either before we start to enter the world of e-government. The goal of this Research is to provide insight into what e-government really means and how it has progressed over the years.

There are two different kinds of definitions for the term “e-government”: one that focuses on the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in government, and another that focuses on electronic services.

The first definition states that “e-government is the use of ICT to improve the quality, efficiency, cost effectiveness and responsiveness of government services” while the second one states that “e-government refers to an online system where all administrative activities such as issuing licenses and registrations, collecting taxes, providing social benefits, etc. can be performed online”.

So E-government is an online government services that is made To exchange information on services Electronically with citizens, Businesses and other arms of government. Which provides better services, more efficient, transparency and accountability in way that restore the trust of citizens in their government

There is four major categories of e-government:

G2G (Government to Government): Exchange of information and services is internal, meaning that all governmental institutions can interact and communicate between each other using a set of platforms.

G2C (Government to Citizen): Exchange of information and services is between government and general public. An interface developed which enables citizens to get access to wide variety of public services anytime, anywhere.

G2B (Government to Business): Exchange of information and services is between government and businesses. The main purpose is saving time, cost and establish transparency in the business environment, while interacting with government.

G2E (Government to Employees): The government of any country is the biggest employer which deals with employees on a regular basis. Information and communication technology helps in making the interaction between government and employees fast and efficient.

E-governance can only be possible if the government and its citizens are ready for it. It is not a simple task, and so responsible departments within the government should have a clear plan in order to implement it.

The main goals of the E-government to make life easier on individuals, Society and institution and more transparency for both government and citizens, also at the same time create open and transparent market for businesses and companies with public sector in a way that stronger and develop the economy in the country.

Hence, Nowadays companies and people are due to E-government technique, able to get information quicker and at any moment of the day in comparison with the traditional ways, regardless of their place or social level.

Thus, the benefits are as follows:

- Reduced corruption
 - Process do not need the intervention of any individual. Sometimes, people use their post for their personal interest and do illegal things.
- High transparency
 - Citizens have access to information. Processes are documented and information is available online.
- Increased convenience
 - Accessing the services can be done from anywhere. The citizens are not restricted to a specific location or time to apply and get the services they need.
- Reduction in overall cost.
 - It takes less employees, less locations to do the job. The e-governance is an automated technology, which requires minimal intervention.
- Expanded reach of government
 - E-governance technology is not restricted to a specific geographical location. People looking for a governmental service can access the online platform anytime and apply.

Despite all the mentioned above in how E-government considered as an added value and fundamental to every state and its citizens,

But there is some disadvantages that effects it's expansion, such as lack Of equality in public access to computers and Internet since not all have the ability to use Internet or smart phones or laptops and a lot of people with low income or homeless or bad Internet connection in their region will not be able to benefit from the services provided and available to others

Also higher surveillance and monitoring, Since government obliges all citizens to communicate and work in accordance to this system which decreases and lack the privacy of people.

Also, the cost of this process to implement and optimize E-government is huge and requires lots of money.

Thus, The 2020 ranking of the 193 UN Member States in terms of digital government – capturing the scope and quality of online services, status of telecommunication infrastructure and existing human capacity – is led by Denmark, the Republic of Korea, and Estonia, followed by Finland, Australia, Sweden, the United Kingdom, ...

B-STUDY CASE

How Denmark made it to the top in e-Government

Denmark has become the most digitalized country in the world. This achievement is due to a high-level of involvement by the public sector in the lives of citizens. For example, it is mandatory to use digital tools in the communication with the government institution, as well as several digital self-service applications. An additional benefit is that it is much cheaper for taxpayers, since citizens and businesses can operate digitally. In addition, it frees up front line staff.

Internet has become widely accessed by the public, which has furthered the digital transformation of the Danish society. Statistics show that around 94% of Danish citizens have internet at home, 89% of them use the internet on a daily basis, and over a period of 12 months, 88% of them interact digitally with public authorities.

In addition to the above, Denmark has a demographic challenge, which leads to increased demands on the public sector. So by using the ICT platforms the government has extended its reach to all locations, and services providing are not restricted in main cities or inside governmental buildings.

Denmark started its digitalization process by introducing the CPR-register, a central database of every person residing in Denmark. The recent push for digitalization of the public sector started about 20 years ago. Four major stages have been in the period:

In 2001, a digital signature was created; all public sector personnel were obliged to be open to receiving emails, and internal digital communication between authorities is established.

In 2004, “Easy Account” was created, and the public sector required e-Invoicing from their suppliers. Cross-government online platforms were developed for the healthcare sector and for company – public sector interaction.

In 2007, the digital infrastructure was launched with “EasyID”, a cross-government identity verification system. A secure mailbox for every citizen was also launched to be used for communication between the public sector and the citizen.

In 2011, “Digital Post” for citizens and businesses became mandatory. It provides everyone in Denmark with a secure email so all messages from the public institutions are sent digitally. Similarly, online self-service became unavoidable for both citizens and business.

Interestingly, using these services by the public is not only applied to the highly educated, but in Denmark even people with no or low education have a take-up rate of 60%. This compares to a figure of 10% in the UK.

There are a number of statistics on take-up, and notably maternity benefits application has a digital take-up rate of 100%, registration for education of 97%, and application for state pension has a rate of 95%. This proves that not only younger generation is entitled to use digital services.

Government officials estimate that this push for digital in the public sector in the last 20 years has freed up £300m per year in efficiency gains, and reduced cost.

Strategies

The Danish e-government strategy, published in August 2011, is entitled 'Joint Public Digital Strategy: The Digital Road to Future Prosperity 2011-2015'. The target of the strategy is that by 2015 digital self-service platforms will be taken as the normal procedural way for citizens to interact with the public sector. This new strategy focuses on a more rapid use of digital means by the government, municipalities and counties in order to make service providing more efficient within the public sector. The strategy is mainly divided into three main tracks, each of which covers different areas and target groups:

TRACK 1: No more paper forms and post

For citizens, it is mandatory to use online digital platforms in all their communications

with the public sector by 2015, so that all services are offered to citizens online. In other words, people will be serving themselves online.

For businesses, all communication will be digitalized by the end of 2012. Companies will be making all reports to public authorities digitally by the end of the year.

TRACK 2: New digital for welfare sector

Towards 2015, the digitization technology in welfare sector is used consistently to modernize the major areas by, among other actions:

- The use of IT in schools, by making Investments up to DKK 1.5 billion in order to bring schools into the digital world
- Using technology to treat the chronic illnesses from hospitals into private homes.
- Setting targets for the use of health IT, so that daily processes and services in hospitals are facilitated.

TRACK 3: Better digital public cooperation

The digital platforms promoted by the different institutions in the State, regions and municipalities are developed together. These constitute the standard platform for the authorities' digitization efforts.

Each public sector or institution should not develop its own systems. Instead, they adopt softwares in areas where there are available good common solutions.

This is only possible when there is an effective coordination across the state's authorities in four main areas:

- A common secured digital infrastructure, to cover all future citizens and businesses' needs.
- Sharing of reliable baseline data between administrations.
- Takes into consideration opportunities in the digital society, by adopting the correspondent laws.

Services

Denmark offers 12 services for citizens. These services are as follows:

1. Income taxes: Notification, declaration and assessment
2. Job opportunity services
3. Social security benefits
4. Personal documents: driver's license and passport
5. Car registration
6. Building permission
7. Declaration to the police: Theft, emergencies
8. Public libraries: search, e-books
9. Birth and marriage certificates
10. University enrolment for higher education
11. Change of address
12. Health related services: health insurance, availability of specific services in hospitals

Other services are related to businesses. There are 8 available services described as follows:

1. Social contributions for employees
2. Corporate tax: Notification, declaration and assessment
3. VAT: declaration, notification
4. New employees' registration
5. Statistical data submission
6. Customs declarations
7. Permits and reporting for Environment-related subjects
8. Public procurement

CONCLUSION

After what mentioned above and how E-government project spread all over the world, because of all the benefits, modernity and transparency tht guarantee to the government and its people.

It's important to state the case of Lebanon and the obstacles that prevent us from becoming one of the countries that adopt e-government.

The term "e-government" first appeared in 2005 in a ministerial statement, where the new government promised at the time to carry out administrative reforms and implement the latest technologies in the country to improve the performance of the public sector and the services provided to citizens, also In 2003, the Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Development (OMSAR), in cooperation with the United Nations Development Program in Lebanon (UNDP), developed an ambitious national e-strategy, but it was not implemented despite the important financial funding provided by donors.

Lebanon ranks 127 out of 191 countries in the new survey on e-governments conducted by the United Nations. This classification indicates Lebanon's regression in this field over the past years

The obstacles that stand in the way of Lebanon from adopting e-government are

Absence of transparency and culture of information suppression that prevails in public administration at various levels, Corruption in the political system based on clientelism and nepotism is a major obstacle to the consolidation of administrative reforms that may provide the citizen with the simplest requirements for a decent and dignified life. Under such a system, it is not surprising that all initiatives towards administrative reform, including steps towards digital government, are lacking.

Two government initiatives related to digital government have recently been launched, the "IMPACT" platform and the "Donor Coordination Platform", which constitutes a good indication towards digital governance in Lebanon and the potential for various levels of cooperation between the two. The first step in this process, which is certainly not easy, includes the requirement that all official institutions comply with the Right to Information Act, and provide an active website and effective social media platforms. This is followed by the

establishment of a solid cooperation network between the state and civil society to establish a unified platform for open data, which is well managed and updated.

In conclusion, the process of achieving digital government in Lebanon and bringing about any digital transformation in the public sector lies in reconsidering previous strategies as well as in some recommendations that have not been implemented. The urgent need today is for a comprehensive, coherent and systematic government vision towards digitizing the public sector, in contrast to the fragmented, random vision that was presented in the past.

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