

E-Government definitions: A discussion about different point of views and its impact

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Abstract

E-Government is becoming one of the most valuable and required approaches worldwide and every government is seeking to provide the best services to its country to achieve efficiency and accepted performance. This goal could be achieved by improving the service performance of the entire sectors in society. Billions of dollars was invested by governments in order to undertake their first step towards implementing the e-Government project and specially implementing the best methodology of all attached and correlated electronic-based services to it. However, there is a big aspect regarding the variation of the definition of it due to many aspects like: different scholars' background, major and point of view, fast technology innovations, different culture of different regions and countries. Hence, there is a need to further study in order to be able to obtain better understanding of the complete picture and to have a balanced view and concepts all under one e-Government umbrella. This paper will discuss the different definitions illustrated by different scholars and their point of view in their definitions. After discussing these definitions and the nature of them they will be categorized upon to their point of view. Finally the writer will give the suggestion about the definition that should be applied.

Keywords: e-Government, ICT, IT, G2C, G2G, G2B, G2E

1. Introduction

Definitions of e-government differs from scholar to another because they represent different perspective namely government point of view (Rachel Silcock, 2001), Service style (Fang, 2002) citizen's point of view (Leitold *et al.*, 2002), business point of view (Al Zahrani, 2011). While other definitions take information technology (IT) as the platform of it (Dpepa, U.N, 2001; Moon, 2002; Sharon, 2002). This variation in e-government definition is affecting its models and classifications as well. Moreover, due to the very fast innovations and inventions especially in the IT and ICT technologies, there are variations appeared between old and new models and classifications in terms of conducted models, types, classifications, technology, behavior along with the definition. These variations differ in its nature due to many aspects like: different scholars' background, major and point of view, fast technology innovations, different culture of different regions and countries. Hence, there is a need to further study in order to be able to obtain better understanding of the complete picture and to have a balanced view and concepts all under one e-government umbrella.

2. Discussion

Electronic Government or in short e-government can be defined as set of processes and government supporting and interaction systems which allow and activate citizen interaction to access to the available offered services. The extra-ordinary speed of development of ICT and great efficient and business effectiveness exhibited a strong impact in variety of day to day work and interaction between citizens, companies and economic activities. However, considering technology as a way to reduce cost and increase efficiency is not a good practice since it should interact and respond to client's needs (Deloitte Research, 2000). Gene, Bruce and Karin (2005, p.1) stated that "The role of government has changed from leading innovation to regulating corporations that often have better equipment and

more technical expertise. The Internet and related technologies have contributed to globalization by increasing both the amount of information present in the environment and the speed of information flow". Many definitions of the e-Government has been illustrated and furnished by many scholars in order for them to give the best definition where some of them defined it as the service supplied by government to citizens using internet while others identify it as service with paperless and environment friendly methodologies. In addition to these definitions, some scholars defined it as easiest and fastest service ever using technologies. These definitions are all correct since they are defines e-government from different prospective and different angle. Due to the complication of e-government, it will give different researcher a different focus and interest view to the project. Chadwick and May (2003) attribute this issue to the complexities in the public sector e-government confusion and multiple interpretations. Therefore, Marche and McNiven (2003) concluded that there are no definition enjoys broad acceptance. Some researchers gave a definition upon to the government style of service while other may take the IT and communication methodology as a core of the definition. Another scholar could take the interaction between authority and society as the main point in the definition. Gil-Garcia and Pardo (2005) argued that different definition may introduce and describe e-government in broad-band manner but it will fail in deeper considerations (Al-Zahrani, 2011). For example, Rachel Silcock (2001, p.88) gave it a very simple definition

It is the way that the government decides to serve public

In this definition, it is completely focused in service style from government prospective without interfere with other category or side. However, Fang (2002, p.2) gave it more deep definition and illustrated some reasons for the government to decide such decision.

“A way for governments to use most initiative information and communication technology, particularly web-based internet applications, to provide citizens and businesses with more convenient access to government information and services, to improve the quality of the services and to provide greater opportunities to participate in democratic institution processes” Fang (2002, p.2)

Although this definition is still taken from government point of view but other categories like G2C and G2B are included along with the communication methodology platform. Fang focuses on employing and using web-based internet application to deliver better services and open new opportunities to improve participations between public and decision makers. John et.al (2008, p.1) and Carter and Belanger (2004, p.1) suggested that:

“Governments will provide services and resources tailored to the actual service and resource needs of users, including citizens, residents, government employees, and others” (John et.al, 2008, p.1)

“The use of information technology, especially telecommunications, to enable and improve the efficiency with which government services and information are provided to citizens, employees, business and government agencies” (Carter and Belanger 2004, p.1)

This definition includes three dimensions definition which focuses on citizens, employees, business and their connection to the government. Information technology (IT) got its importance in the definition as a communication platform G2E as other category along with previous two categories G2C and G2B. Moreover, they suggested that government will tolerate and modify its service and style of service upon to the needs and requirements from all corresponding category (G2C, G2B and G2E). Others gave e-government a different definition like The United Nations Division for Public Economics and Public Administration (UNDPEPA), Moon (2002) (Al-adawi, Yousafzai and Pallister, 2005, p.1) and Sharon (2002, p.1) defines it as

“Utilizing the Internet and the World Wide Web for delivering government information and services to citizens” (Dpepa, U.N, 2001) (Al-adawi, Yousafzai and Pallister, 2005, p.1)

“The use of all information and communication technologies, from fax machines to wireless palm pilots, to facilitate the daily administration of government...” (Moon 2002) (Al-adawi, Yousafzai and Pallister, 2005, p.1)

“E-government is the use of information technology to support government operations, engage citizens, and provide government services” (Sharon 2002, p.1)

These definitions focused in communication platform point of view like web-based internet applications to serve citizens. Leitold et al. (2002, p.1) defines it as

“The interaction between state authority and society with help of information and communication technology (ICT) promises to improve the services for the citizen and at the same time tremendously reduces retention periods and costs, such as, by providing costly media transactions” (Leitold et al. 2002, p.1)

In this definition, the main focus is G2C category without interfere with other categories. This two dimensions interaction (authority and society) is further discussed with the benefits of e-government like saving citizen’s time and improving country economic.

The following characteristics are included in this definition: Broader view of information technology since it does not mention web-based, website, internet or internet application. It mentioned only that the communication should be wirelessly which will allow citizens to interact with employees without direct interaction It includes all categories of the e-government (G2G, G2C, G2B and G2E) It does not stop in the internal communication within government departments or sectors but it includes also the communication between government which is the decision maker and service provider with citizens who are the society and public. Along with that, businesses are interfering with their services

Table 1: below is furnishing all mentioned definitions from different scholars above and categorize them with their point of view.

No.	Definition	Feature	Author
1	It is the way that the government decides to serve public “A way for governments to use most initiative information and communication technology, particularly web-based internet applications, to provide citizens and businesses with more convenient access to government information and services, to improve the quality of the services and to provide greater opportunities to participate in democratic institution processes”	Focus in service style from government prospective. It takes the definition from government point of view alone or towards the other categories	Rachel Silcock (2001, p.88) Fang (2002, p.2)
2	“Governments will provide services and resources tailored to the actual service and resource needs of users, including citizens, residents, government employees, and others” “The use of information technology, especially telecommunications, to enable and improve the efficiency with which government services and information are provided to citizens, employees, business and government agencies”	It includes all categories involved in e-government along with the communication strategy	John et.al (2008) Carter and Belanger (2004, p.1)
3	“Utilizing the Internet and the World Wide Web for delivering government information and services to citizens” “The use of all information and communication technologies, from fax machines to wireless palm pilots, to facilitate the daily administration of government...” “E-government is the use of information technology to support government operations, engage citizens, and provide government services”	Taking the definition from information technology (IT) point of view	Dpepa, U.N (2001) Moon (2002) (Al-adawi, Yousafzai and Pallister, 2005, p.1) Sharon

			(2002, p.1)
4	“The interaction between state authority and society with help of information and communication technology (ICT) promises to improve the services for the citizen and at the same time tremendously reduces retention periods and costs, such as, by providing costly media transactions”	Focuses mainly in G2C without interacting with the other categories	Leitold <i>et al.</i> (2002, p.1)

Table 1 Summary of e-government definitions

3. Recommendations and Conclusions

Although all previous definitions are correct and they illustrate e-government in specified way but they become old definitions and they should be modified to serve our new technologies also there were no general agreement on the e-government definition. The reason could be due to the complicated and e-government contains many categories under it like G2C, G2B and G2E. In addition to that, it involves many issues like economics, information technology, social, politics and services. These different categories and issues are giving a red tag for different scholars and researchers from different disciplines and knowledge to contribute and engage in this project to enhance and improve the world’s knowledge in it. Although this phenomenon will enrich options, interests and discussions in e-government but it will create a lot of conflicts and different outcome information due to the different interests and backgrounds of different scholars and researchers. Definitions are defined from different point of views while they should consider the full picture of the system. E-government in general is containing many categories and points of interests like: government, citizens, employees and business. All of these categories are connected and mounted together using proper technology and communication media. For the purpose of this research, the author suggests a definition of:

It is a service provided by a government to serve citizens remotely without direct interaction with employees, long travel or waiting procedure. This service will be intersected with some businesses and new technology communication to enhance internal and external data transfer and business services

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