SWOT Analysis of E-government services in Greece

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Abstract

In today's fast changing world, the Information and Communication Technology (IT) revolution and globalization have become powerful forces in upgrading economic growth and competitiveness of several countries. Through the use of technology and Information and Communication Systems, a country has the ability to use the economies of scale in order to cut costs and perform better in terms of productivity and service delivery. By lowering per unit costs of operations, the public sector can produce the same (or higher) output through lower spending and less time. This paper aims to review and evaluate the vision, the objectives and the strategic framework of e-Government services in Greece. Rapidity, Reliability, Efficiency, Cost-effectiveness, Customer-orientation and Accessibility are the main guidelines for the development of egovernment services in Greece in order to provide quality services to users
in the digital economy. A SWOT analysis will take place for the evaluation of the current state of e-government services.

INTRODUCTION

eGovernment is about using the tools and systems offered by Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in order to proffer better and advanced public services to citizens and businesses. ICTs are already widely used by government bodies, but effective eGovernment is related with overall reorganization of businesses and processes in a way that public services will be delivered more efficiently and effectively to the people who need to use them. Proper application of ICTs and of the various tools to functions of egoverment services leads to easier, quicker and cheaper business transactions of all citizens, enterprises and organizations with the government.

People who live in Europe tend to travel inside European Union, either for business or for pleasure, more and more frequently. Consequently the need of European citizens to be able to deal with public services outside their home country is an increasing need. If

eGovernment services are to provide significant added value to citizens and business, then it is crucial that different government bodies, both within a country and in different EU Member States, are able to share information efficiently and co-operate in serving citizens. . In May 2010, the European Commission revealed its Digital Agenda for Europe (DAE), a major roadmap defining the key roles that the use of ICT will have to play if Europe wants to succeed in its ambitions for a flourishing digital economy by 2020.

Like other concepts of contemporary there are multiple definitions of e-government among researchers and specialists, but most of them agreed to define Electronic government as government use of information communication technologies to offer for citizens and businesses the opportunity to interact and conduct business with government by using different electronic media such as telephone touch pad, fax, smart cards, self-service kiosks, e-mail / Internet, and EDI. It is about how government organizes itself: its administration, rules, regulations and frameworks set out to carry out service delivery and to co-ordinate, communicate and integrate processes within itself. Another definition of E-government was presented by United Nation's website to be "Egovernment refers to the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) - such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing - by government agencies". While OECD noted that Electronic government refers to the use of information and communication technologies, and particularly the Internet, as a tool to achieve better government (OECD, 2003).

Having access to egoverment services (gates, websites, smart cards, special planned services etc), through new ICTs, means that there is a plethora of opportunities for transformation of the ways that services are offered to citizens. Egoverment provides the opportunity of developing a new relationship between the government and the citizens, based on trust and participation of the civilians, raising transparency and narrowing corruption. Qualitative education, training and information is the key that allows people to access new technologies and help citizens to participate in the social, political and economic life in national , European and international level.

REFORMATION OF E-GOVERNMENT SERVICES

E-government is mostly concerned to reorganizing public administration in a way that the relationship between the government and the citizen will be more direct and participial. In the concept of government in general, as well as of E-government, we can distinguish between 3 groups': citizens, businesses and services, and governmental departments of the country. And use abbreviations such as G2C refer to the relationship between government and citizen, G2B denote the transaction between the government and businesses and industrial departments, and G2G indicate the relationship between different government units.

According to Deloitte & Touche Consulting 2000, there are six determinative stages, which every government and organizations of local administrations are called to pass, in order to update

themselves and be able to provide services 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, from everywhere. The stages are:

1. Information Publishing/Dissemination

At this stage governmental services and local administrative organizations are called to obtain Internet presence. A stage mainly involved with providing information to e-clients, such as directories of services and people. Here, the main target is the reduction of the time and effort needed from every citizen t track the apposite service, in order to cover a specific need.

2. Official Two-Way Transactions

Citizens provide personal information and perform monetary transactions over the web, requiring a secure website with a guarantee of privacy. This is achieved through the use of digital signatures or certificates. Citizens are offered a wide range of possibilities, from submitting an application for the provision of personal information and the issuance of certificates to the conduction of financial transactions with specific services.

3. Multipurpose Portals

Anti-silo thinking prevails with a citizen being able to enter one portal and complete transactions with many government departments, across governments and even with private businesses. The majority of the practices used concern content management systems.

4. Portal Personalization

Similar to stage three but citizens can customize the portal for features they require. Here, content and offered services of the portals are enriched, making easier the service of the citizens by offering them the opportunity of providing personalized and specialized, depending on their needs, content. Through the Personalized content gates, citizens are serviced based on their personal characteristics and needs, while these data are registered for the conduction of further analysis, developing the base for the application of a Customer Relation Management System – CRM.

5. Clustering of Common Services

At this stage, the distinctions among departments start to blur. Customers use the portals not knowing which departments are providing the services. Governments start to bring services together along common lines irrespective of departmental responsibilities. This premises that both governments and municipalities have reorganized their services per common services. This is supported from the use of workflows so that offered electronic services are efficiently backed up.

6. Full Integration and Enterprise Transformation

The government has a full-service centre customized to the needs of the citizen. Technology is integrated across departments and little distance separates the top from the bottom of the organization.

Implementing E-government is a continuing process, and most often the development is conceptualized in stages. One widely known maturity model is suggested by Layne and Lee (Layne and Lee, 2001), who see e-government as an evolutionary phenomenon, from which e-government initiatives should be derived and implemented. They assume four stages of a growth model for egovernment: (1) Cataloguing, (2)

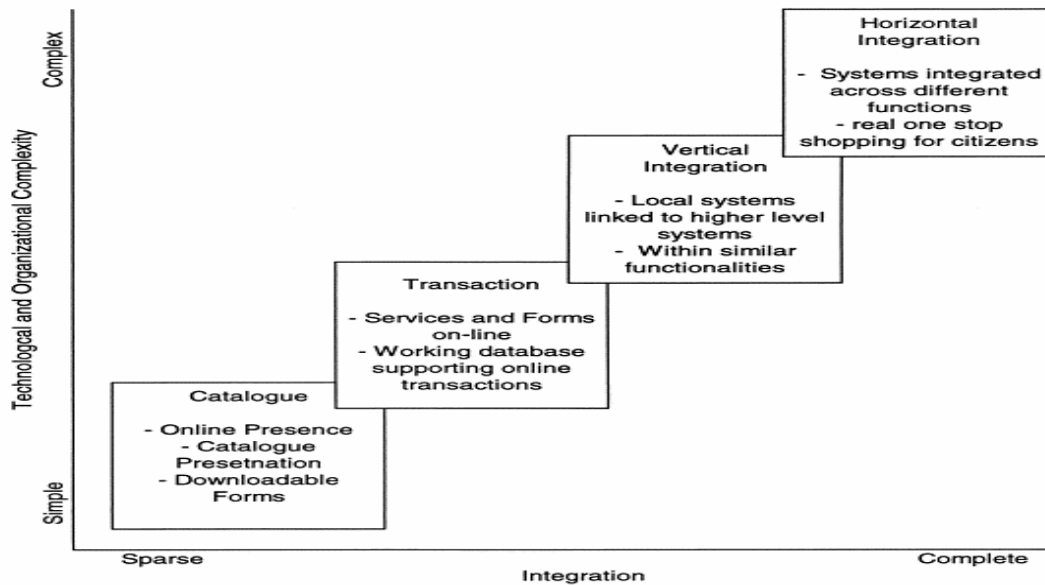Transaction, (3) Vertical integration, and (4) Horizontal integration as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1: The Layne and Lee maturity model

This model is developed by an increasing the level of complexity and integration from (1) to (4). Andersen and Henriksen (Andersen and Henriksen, 2006) complement the maturity model with strategic ambitions of governments' use of IT, and present what they call the PPR (Public Sector Process Rebuilding) model, figure 2. They argue that the Layne and Lee model build on the same rationale that have dominated the traditional motives for IT adoption; increase in information quality, and efficiency and effectiveness. The PPR model expands the E-government focus to include the front-end of government. The major difference between the Layne and Lee model and the PPR model is the activity and customer centric approach rather than the technological capability.
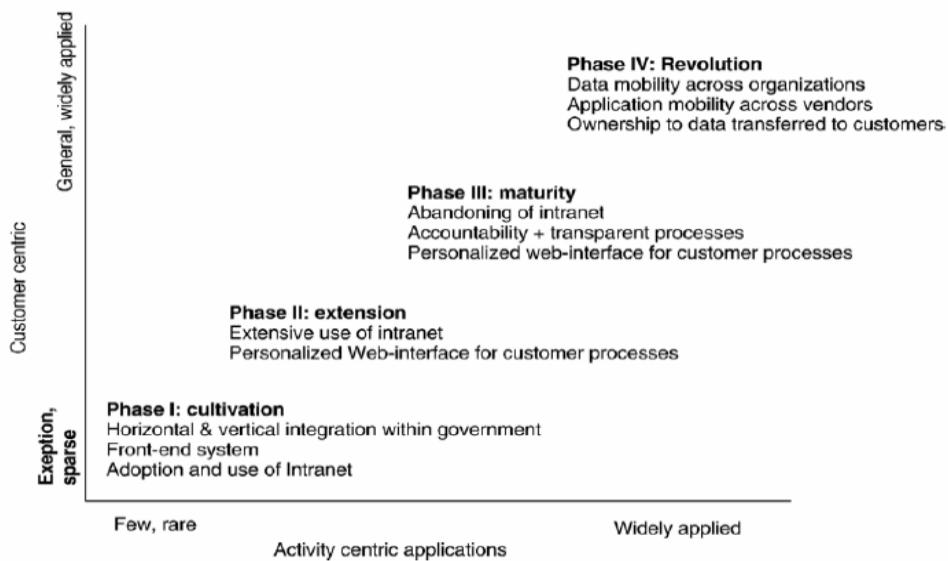
Figure 2: The PPR maturity model

SWOT Analysis

The SWOT Analysis is one of several strategic planning tools that are utilized by businesses and other organizations to ensure that there is a clear objective defined for the project or venture, and that all factors related to the effort, both positive and negative, are identified and addressed. In order to accomplish this task, the process of SWOT involves four areas of consideration: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It should be noted that when identifying and classifying relevant factors, the focus is not just on internal matters, but also external components that could impact the success of the project.

Strengths in the SWOT Analysis are attributes or characteristics within the organization that are considered to be important to the execution and ultimate success of the project. Examples of strengths that are often cited are factors such as experienced management, state of the art manufacturing facilities, and a solid profit line already in place.

Weaknesses in the SWOT Analysis formula have to do with internal factors that could prevent the achievement of a successful result to the project. Factors such as a weak internal communication system, unhealthy levels of rivalry between departments, lack of raw materials, and inadequate funding for the project are often cited as weaknesses that can threaten to derail a project before it even begins.

The third classification of factors in the SWOT analysis is Opportunities. This classification has to do with external elements that will prove helpful in achieving the goals set for the project. Factors of this type could be the positive perception of the company by the general public, a network of vendors who are willing to work with the company to achieve success with the project, and market conditions that will help to make the project desirable to the market at large, or a least a significant segment.

Last, the final essential component for the SWOT Analysis is Threats. Here, external factors that could threaten the success of the business venture or project are listed and addressed. Among the possible threats that will be critical to any SWOT analysis is a negative public image, the lack of vendors who can supply raw materials for the project, and no ready made market for the final product of the project.

Table 1: SWOT Analysis of E-government services in Greece

Internal	
Strengths	Weaknesses
1. Innovation 2. High-tech based economy 3. Saving expensive labour costs 4. Making public administration more transparent 5. Removal of big part of the routine and formal work from civil servants 6. Build "a knowledge society" 7. Borrow solutions from others 8. Reduction of citizen's dependence from civil servants 9. Recruitment of foreign talents 10. Funds for eservices to improve social and physical infrastructure 11. Cooperation between the public and private sectors 12. Simplifying administrative routines 13. Assisting in establishing be-lateral and global relations	1. Unemployment 2. Some government websites are unfriendly-user 3. High illiteracy rates 4. Lack of IT specialized human capital 5. Conservation in trying e-Services 6. Workers and older generation are computer illiterate 7. Over-capacity of the Internet highway due to heavy traffic 8. Poor Telecommunication Infrastructure
External	
Opportunities	Threats
1. Political willingness 2. Broadband facilitates faster connection 3. servicing particular needs of individuals and groups 4. Increase citizen participation thereby induce democratic governance 5. Foster proliferation of other reapplications 6. Reduce opportunities for corruption 7. and promote transparency 8. IT-proficient people can have better opportunity for employment 9. Meet the regular and routine demands of the general public 10. Create a custom-oriented organization 11. Reengineer administration processes thereby improve efficiency 12. Stimulate the use of ICT by the population at large, thereby transform to knowledge based economies	1. Cyber terrorism and cyber crimes 2. Higher cost of living and higher broadband subscription 3. Dependency on IT, i.e. small technical problems will disrupt the entire networks 4. Possible demising of the principle of equality 5. Security breach and copyright issue 6. The rapid development of mobile and SMS technology 7. social and ethical concerns 8. revolution of the public sector

COCLUSIONS

Many strengths and opportunities fuel the development of e-Government in Greece, while at the same time new threats and challenges arise. In general, Greece has successfully developed a strong foundation for e-Government services. Investments have been made to develop adequate resources and to improve the provision of public services online. Sound policies, clear objectives and strategic planning are factors contributing to e-Government success.

The roll out of e-Government services in Greece is currently advancing well, but policies of digital inclusion should play an advanced role in this development, in order to encourage the bridging of the 'digital divide'. There are particular deficits in current policies, which should be taken into consideration, such as the lack of specific programmes for ICT education and the establishing of Centres providing Internet access at no cost for underprivileged citizens. A concise strategy towards digital inclusion should include the adoption of legislative programmes with this objective and also the facilitation of Internet access through its inclusion in the universal service.

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