IT Governance Enabling Long-Term Eletronic Governance Initiatives

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Abstract. IT Governance must be part of e-governance initiatives as a way to promote long-term solutions and increment their effectiveness. We suggest a conceptual model to understand the demands in an integrated way focused on long–term solutions in order to add organicity and transparency throughout the process and to reduce the complexity. The higher the complexity, the higher the transaction costs, which may compromise future investments on new e-government initiatives.

Keywords. IT Governance, e-government, long-term initiatives

1. Introduction

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has made significant advances into diverse aspects of social life in the last decades [2]. The usage of ICT on governments, also known as electronic government (e-gov) has been considered a driver for social, economic and political changes such as government administrative reform, social transformation and organizational change [6]. As a result of this process, new models of the relationship between state and society have been arising, generating opportunities to transform the connection between government and citizens [1].

As the discussion about a new model of relationship between citizens and government evolves, it is possible to observe a gradual change in the government initiatives from tools that improve the services to tools that support the citizen participation [6]. This set of changes – citizen profile, government positioning and openness – generates new demands for data, information and services whose operationalization depends, evolves or is enhanced by ICT solutions. It may be a challenge also because changes related to technology and process are necessary.

However, the demands for fast reliable ICT solutions that could be accessed from highly available platforms are increasing. Considering this scenario, managing Information Technology (IT) is no longer enough; it is necessary to go one step further in a governance process. The differences between management and governance are related to time and business orientation: management involves short term and internal aspects, while governance deals with long term and external aspects [5]. Governing IT, consequently, can assist an organization in meticulous IT decision-making, increasing or maintaining the alignment between IT and stakeholders' expectations.

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Based on that, we consider that e-gov initiatives must encompass IT Governance (ITG) mechanisms as a way to have long-term solutions and increment their effectiveness. Governance can be considered as a set of organizational arrangements and patterns of authority for IT decisions and is characterized as a set of mechanisms that defines the decision-making structure, rights and responsibilities. We suggest a conceptual model (Figure 1) to understand, in an integrated and aligned way, the needs and the options considering a long–term view and the stakeholders' expectations in order to add organicity and transparency throughout the process.
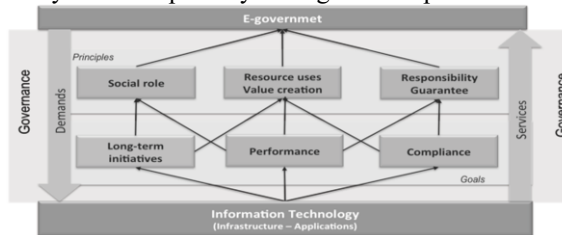

Figure 1. Conceptual model.

Numerous technologies are necessary to implement the diverse e-government initiatives that are in operation or under development. Therefore, it is necessary an formalized process to govern these initiatives in order to avoid the uncontrolled growth technologies. It is also necessary in public organizations to reduce the amount of ad hoc solutions [4]. Without a governance process it is easy to have duplicity of technologies and solutions and an unnecessary increase in complexity. The higher the complexity, the higher the transaction costs. More transaction costs mean more financial costs that may compromise future investments on new e-government initiatives, and also increase difficulties to plan new initiatives when managing the currents ones.

For a public organization, to consider long term and external aspects is mandatory, because an integrated operation of several actors is typically required to have the concretization of a service. A special challenge in public organizations is to turn the IT decisions perennial and related more to the state than to the government. As shown by Meijer and Bolivar [3], the demands of the population need to be thought in the long term. IT decisions that are not changed in every administration are more consistent and their implementation is more likely to be kept over the years within an ITG process.

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