



# Emergent digital era governance: Enacting the role of the ‘institutional entrepreneur’ in transformational change



Rana Tassabehji<sup>a</sup>, Ray Hackney<sup>b</sup>, Aleš Popovič<sup>c,d,\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of Management, University of Bradford, Emm Lane, Bradford BD9 4JL, UK

<sup>b</sup> Brunel Business School, Brunel University London, Uxbridge UB8 3PH, UK

<sup>c</sup> Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana, Kardeljeva ploščad 17, SI-1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia

<sup>d</sup> NOVA IMS, Campus de Campolide, 1070-312 Lisbon, Portugal

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 18 March 2015

Received in revised form 5 April 2016

Accepted 9 April 2016

Available online 28 April 2016

### Keywords:

Digital governance

Enactment

Institutional entrepreneur

Enterprise

Transformational change

## ABSTRACT

As e-government matures the realisation of its potential to enact organisational change in the public sector remains unclear. This study examines e-government towards digital era governance (DEG) and the actors involved in this transformational change. We draw upon the concept of ‘enactment’ as a lens to provide insights into relevant theoretical issues. These are operationalised through an enhanced Technology Enactment Framework (TEF) to consider reforms to explore the DEG environment and, specifically, the interventions of the CIO on e-government policies. We employed a case analysis approach from public sector authorities in the US States of California and Nevada with data from CIOs and other key informants. Our findings reveal how public sector CIOs adopt the role of an ‘institutional entrepreneur’, who demonstrate a series of initiatives augmented through identified behaviours. These relate to proactive community mobilisation (leadership, member focus) and legitimisation (discourse, success stories). We outline the policy implications of DEG and the risk factors of senior managers who enact these processes towards complex technological change. Furthermore, the characterisation of institutional entrepreneurial enactment appears to be extremely beneficial to the transformation to DEG within any contemporary public sector context.

© 2016 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

The earlier concept of new public management (NPM) reforms were clearly characterised by attention to prevailing efficiency gains adopted and practiced within the private sector (Bekkers & Homburg, 2007). It is recognised that NPM requires an environment for government which captures and perpetuates a culture of enterprise and competitive behaviours (Kim, 2010). Indeed, much of the current information and communication technology (ICT) literature, relating to public sector contexts, draws frequently upon private sector frameworks (Cordella & Bonina, 2012). Extant studies commonly refer to re-engineering approaches (Weerakkody, Janssen, & Dwivedi, 2011), which argue for technology-enabled solutions to service delivery issues. Emerging models of ‘electronic’ government (e-government) are increasingly recognised and represented as ‘digital era governance’ (DEG). Margetts and Dunleavy (2013) characterise one critical theme from this approach, i.e. ‘Digitalization covers the adaptation of the public sector to completely embrace and imbed electronic delivery at the heart of the government business model ...’. The focus is principally around

efficient public information and internal administration of service delivery, essentially enabling online facilities (Dunleavy, Margetts, Bastow, & Tinkler, 2006; Margetts & Dunleavy, 2013). This presents extensive citizen interactivity which fulfils early predictions of digital government evaluations and potential benefits (Bekkers & Homburg, 2007).

Nevertheless, there is significant scepticism about whether DEG is able to evolve through other important phases towards genuine government transformation. Norris (2010), for example, predicts that in 2020 digital government will not be significantly different from today’s e-government, with a similar range of transactions and degree of interactivity that is currently available, and only limited transformation. Moreover, Norris (2010) suggests that technology applications will be largely predetermined, institutionalised and routinized so that it is no longer prefixed with ‘electronic’ but principally just government. Studies of technological innovation and diffusion (e.g. Zhu, Kraemer, & Xu, 2006), further suggest that the needs and characteristics of the organisation dramatically affect the ways in which technologies are implemented and the extent of their impact. The last decades have provided many examples of how attempts to transform the public sector have failed because of embedded norms, jurisdictions, bureaucracy, poor senior leadership and complexity of reforms (Cinite, Duxbury, & Higgins, 2009). IT-enabled changes to public sector organisations are not self-evident, but are inevitably refracted through the formality of existing institutional practices.

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [r.tassabehji@bradford.ac.uk](mailto:r.tassabehji@bradford.ac.uk) (R. Tassabehji), [ray.hackney@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:ray.hackney@brunel.ac.uk) (R. Hackney), [ales.popovic@ef.uni-lj.si](mailto:ales.popovic@ef.uni-lj.si) (A. Popovič).

E-government still remains defined in quite narrow terms – mainly through managerial control and cost reduction (Chadwick, 2006). Researchers have noted that no significant progress has been recently made in the field of e-government, and many programmes have proven to be disappointing (Hardy & Williams, 2011). Luna-Reyes and Gil-Garcia (2011) suggest that where e-government projects fail to deliver on their promises, this largely results from a lack of understanding about the relationships between institutional arrangements, organisational factors, technologies and socio-economic contexts. The main aim of this paper is to generate new insights on the multifaceted relationships between these varied and complex factors and DEG enactment. In order to do so, we must first identify what DEG “looks like” in practice; evaluate whether DEG has been implemented; and then to identify the factors in the process of DEG transformational change.

Here, we extend and apply Fountain's (2005) Technology Enactment Framework (TEF), which draws on actor-centred and institutional theory, governance, and bureaucracy to understand in more depth the relationship between actors, organisational and institutional arrangements on the implementation of ICT in the public sector. We operationalise and apply the extended TEF to eight local government case studies in the US states of California and Nevada. We adopt an interpretive and qualitative approach using multi-case method, to unpack in more depth the complex relationships between the technology enactment factors. We focus in particular on the role of the CIO and IT system decision-makers and we also investigate the impact of e-government policies on DEG enactment. In so doing, our paper illustrates the differences in enacting DEG in each of the cases presented.

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows. The next section includes a brief review of institutional theory, the Technology Enactment Framework and the role of the CIO in the process, and e-government policies. The methods for gathering and analysing the data collected are presented for operationalising the extended TEF. The discussion section collates the findings and presents the final DEG Enactment Framework. Finally, we present the implications of our study and conclusions.

## 2. Literature review

Early e-government literature adopted practitioner-led models largely based on Nolan's (1979) Stage Growth Model hypothesising development from online information → communication → transaction → integration → transformation/participation/digital democracy (Gonzalez-Zapata & Heeks, 2015; Heeks & Bailur, 2007). However, this is misleading as the evolution of technology adoption is neither linear nor sequential but is rather erratic with significant overlaps (Coursey & Norris, 2008; Heeks & Bailur, 2007; Norris, 2010; Yildiz, 2007). Much of this early literature was mainly influenced by practitioners and world organisations, such as the United Nations, with an innate politically or commercially motivated bias towards initiating the utilization of the Internet to improve ‘their’ governing process (Coursey & Norris, 2008). Yet, critics have identified a lack of clarity regarding the definition of fundamental e-government concepts among government, citizens and related stakeholders (Irani, Elliman, & Jackson, 2007). If placed along a continuum, these definitions span from ICT being a means for delivering more efficient and effective government services (Wonglimpiyarat, 2014), to a means for transforming government and governance (Grant & Chau, 2005). What is more, few studies offer explicit theories relative to e-government growth and development, and those that do, have been judged to be largely descriptive, normative and non-predictive (Hardy & Williams, 2011).

Prior research on public sector organisations has focused on organisational behaviour through organisational change, learning, and management activities. Although not specifically related to digital governance, consistently articulated themes stress the importance of the role of ‘leaders’ in any kind of organisational transformation. Public

sector studies have also found that managerial capabilities and commercial attitudes significantly impact public sector management performance (Chen, Pan, Zhang, Huang, & Zhu, 2009; Damanpour & Schneider, 2006). Furthermore, networked governance is seen as an alternative to ‘managerialism’ in public administration, an attempt to move away from the predominant competitive private sector ethos and agendas that has underpinned public sector policy for over a decade.

Margetts and Dunleavy (2013) introduce the concept of digital era governance (DEG), highlighting contemporary technologies as drivers for innovative and competitive government. While acknowledging that any change is fraught with complexities, complications and difficulties, principally the potential for digital technologies is available to transform government to become more agile, less institutionally complex, more administratively simplified and automated, more responsive to citizens, and more capable of social problem-solving (Chadwick, 2006; Fattore, Dubois, & Lapenta, 2012; Fountain, 2001; Rhodes, 2011). The paradigms of public sector management – both traditional and new public management – do not comfortably fit with the emerging DEG, or networked governance. There is, therefore, a need for a ‘new’ paradigm: one that incorporates the nature of emerging systems in the management of public services and programmes, addresses a different way of working for public sector participants, and one that can “steer society in new ways through the development of complex networks and the rise of more bottom-up approaches to decision making” (Stoker, 2006, p. 41). Table 1 summarises the differences between the different paradigms of traditional public administration and NPM, along with the paradigm of DEG (Dunleavy et al., 2006)<sup>1</sup> which will be later developed as an analytical tool in our framework.

### 2.1. Technology Enactment Framework (TEF)

Institutional theory is increasingly being applied in the context of information systems research to study the complex relationships that exist between information technology, and social and organisational factors. Fountain's (2001) TEF is widely recognised as a valuable framework of analysis in this context (Cordella & Iannacci, 2010; Luna-Reyes & Gil-Garcia, 2011). Institutional theory provides a lens through which to investigate the complexities of ‘bureaucratic politics amid network formation and technological change’ (Fountain, 2001). It highlights how political agendas, organisational characteristics (emphasizing the role of bureaucratic organisations in the public sector context) and existing arrangements shape the process of ICT implementation (Cordella & Iannacci, 2010; Wonglimpiyarat, 2014). For example, the characteristics of the Internet are influenced by the context of its use: the given organisational form (bureaucracy and networks) and existing institutional arrangements (cognitive, cultural, socio-cultural and legal) (Cruz-Jesus, Oliveira, & Bacao, 2012). As a result, the enabling technology is transformed into an ‘enacted’ social environment with outcomes that influence the cycle of transformational change. The TEF has been applied by scholars and sheds a powerful light on the various and complex issues of e-government. Most of these studies are informed by, rather than directly apply, Fountain's TEF leading to the emergence of further explanatory models. For instance, evaluating the interplay of different factors in different settings on relative success of state websites in the US (Gil-Garcia, 2006); understanding content creation differences across several public e-service providers in Mexico using dynamic simulation (Luna-Reyes & Gil-Garcia, 2011); uncovering the complexities of knowledge management in the process of public e-service development in Italy (Arduini, Denni, Lucchese, Nurra, & Zanfei, 2013). Fewer studies, have operationalised and applied the original TEF model, which is our objective here. Attempts to apply the original TEF in a DEG context have highlighted the impact of public policies in shaping choices for

<sup>1</sup> While we acknowledge Stoker's (2006) suggestion that the paradigm of public value management as being suited to the emergence of a networked governance, its inclusion here is beyond the scope of this particular paper.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1024249>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1024249>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)