



Potential dimensions for a local e-Government services quality model



Filipe Sá^{a,b}, Álvaro Rocha^{c,*}, Manuel Pérez Cota^a

^a Universidad de Vigo, Vigo, Spain

^b Câmara Municipal de Penacova, Penacova, Portugal

^c Departamento de Engenharia Informática, Universidade de Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal

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ABSTRACT

One of the main challenges underlying different Electronic Government forms is the provision of a quality public service. In the Local Government context, local authorities allow for an adjustment between the characteristics of public services and the specificities of local communities, letting populations define their own priorities, which vary from community to community based on objective elements but also subjective by nature. The quality of these services in their electronic format should be analyzed and taken into account to potentiate and elaborate a strategy capable of improving offered services, increasing the satisfaction of the recipients. In the present paper we set forth a preliminary list, comprised by thirty dimensions for an Electronic Local Government Quality Model based on a literature review, where we analyzed seventeen approaches for electronic and e-Government service quality, as well as an empirical study involving a group of experts and users of Local Government services.

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1. Introduction

Faced with the growing technological evolution and daily access to public services by populations, governments all over the world are constantly challenged to transform and reinvent themselves, in order to provide efficient, effective and

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: filipe@cm-penacova.pt (F. Sá), amrocha@dei.uc.pt (Á. Rocha), mpcota@uvigo.es (M.P. Cota).

economic services. According to [Kunstelj and Dečman \(2005\)](#) these services represent a connection between citizens, companies and other public service organs. Citizens, users who evaluate the provision of these services, are increasingly well-informed, on the one hand, and demanding, on the other hand. [Lee and Kim \(2014\)](#) contend that the ability to measure the quality of a service is a prerequisite to obtain a high quality level. In their study, [Khawaja and Bokhar \(2010\)](#), reveal that organizations struggle to evaluate the quality of the services they provide to clients, that is, they find it difficult to evaluate if, in the context of a service, there are any faults or if the delivery takes place within the stipulated time.

In the context of Electronic Government services, this concern is more and more observable. It is important to note that [Maurel \(1993\)](#) identified as the main goals of local public services modernization an improved responsiveness to the daily needs of populations and the promotion and support to local economic development projects. Local Public Services are thus facing the challenge of administrative modernization, trying to bring the residents closer to their services and, simultaneously, dematerializing their processes ([Rocha and Sá, 2014; Sá and Rocha, 2012](#)). In a press release by the University of Waseda ([Waseda, 2014](#)) “E-local Government and Smart Cities” are highlighted among the next trends of e-Government development.

Based on these assumptions, concepts, models, frameworks and methodologies need to be developed to evaluate, in the specific context of local authorities, the quality of Electronic Government services, in order to improve the level of satisfaction attached to these services.

This paper is part of an investigation process for the creation and/or adaptation of an approach to evaluate the quality of Electronic Local Government Services, and reflects upon a list of potential quality dimensions to be submitted to a Delphi Method process, in a next stage to be carried out with the purpose of achieving a final list.

2. Methodology

In a first stage, we carried out a literature review, analyzing a carefully selected sample of books, dissertations, theses and papers in this area, which allowed us to identify quality evaluation approaches for traditional, electronic and e-Government services. Concomitantly, this literature review enabled the development of a list of potential dimensions for local contexts.

With a view to complete this list, an empirical study was also carried out based on a series of interviews to Local Government experts, technicians and users. This universe of respondents was selected through a convenience sampling. Despite the limitations attached to this type of sampling, to the extent that the results and conclusions are representative of the respondents only, we adopted this strategy because this is a preliminary and pilot study subject to subsequent validation by the Delphi process. A significantly advantageous aspect of the convenience sampling is the obtainment of a greater number of answers.

Based on the collected and analyzed elements, we prepared a preliminary list comprised by thirty dimensions, divided into four domains.

3. e-Government and local e-Government

At first glance, the definition of e-Government seems clear and unequivocal, but when compared with other investigation fields of Information Systems and Information Technologies, it reveals a terminological and conceptual multiplicity. It is thus necessary to clarify and unify fundamental concepts. To [Rocha et al. \(2005\)](#), e-Government, following an encompassing perspective, involves the adequate and advantageous adoption of information and communication technologies by government agencies – central, regional or local – both in their internal and external relations, and particularly in their relationship with citizens. From the point of view of [Jinmei \(2011\)](#) e-Government means the online supply of government information and services through the internet or other digital media. [Santos et al. \(2013\)](#) refer that the function of an Electronic Government is to restructure the organization of public services, adopting mechanisms that promote communication among different entities, thus simplifying processes.

Although Local e-Government services may be perceived as an extension of central government services, the former have a number of specificities that need to be stressed. In this sense, in the local public services context, the Government provides electronic services that are heavily influenced by their powers, typology, different territorial and local distribution, disparate levels of literacy and age among populations, different organizational structures, a strong proximity with citizens and local companies, different IT maturity levels, disparate channels for the provision of services and, last but not least, their strong influencing role over local and national legislation policies ([Sá et al., 2015](#)). For [Nabafu and Maiga \(2012\)](#), Local e-Government lets citizens of all levels interact with public services, easily and electronically. In their turn, [Shackleton and Dawson \(2007\)](#) refer that Local e-Government is more than an electronic replication of existing information and services, as this new means offers new and improved services to the public, with a view to increase the involvement of communities when preparing policies and to provide better services. According to [Dias and Gomes \(2014\)](#), the definition of e-Government, consisting of “using information technologies to support government operations, involve citizens and provide public services”, remains valid for the Local Government context.

In the e-Government domain, [Al-Jaghoub et al. \(2010\)](#) mention the following types of activities and relationships: Government-to-Citizens or Government-to-Clients, Government-to-Businesses/Companies, Government-to-Employees, Government-to-Government and Citizen-to-Citizen. [Zaidi and Qteishat \(2012\)](#) define only three: Government-to-Citizen,

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