

FACTORS THAT HAMPER THE ADOPTION OF E-GOVERNMENT

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Abstract:

In order to study the impact of public officials on the adoption of eGovernment, a quantitative research, based on survey, has been carried out on the employees of four public institutions. The results highlighted behavioral aspects that can prevent or at least aggravate the assimilation of eGovernment. Data security, the endowment of the population with computer systems or the reduction of the number of employees are the prime factors that can affect the implementation of electronic mediation between public administration and citizens.

Keywords: eGovernment, public employees, information and communication technologies, efficiency

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1. INTRODUCTION AND THEORY:

As argued by the United Nations, information and communication technology (ICT) allows a government's internal and external communication to gain speed, precision, simplicity, outreach and networking capacity. This can be transformed into cost reductions, increased effectiveness, 24/7 usefulness, transparency and accountability (U.N., 2010).

A very important dimension of eGovernment implementation effects is referring to the manner in which the beneficiaries of the services perceive the change. Thus, any project must be focused on consumer satisfaction. Also, any discussion on consumer satisfaction should start by accepting the key role played by employees, especially those from the front row serving the client (Kotler, Lee, 2008). Given the importance of positive thinking of the employees, the companies rendering services are turning their attention and resources to attract top employees, to develop efficient professional training programs, to ensure the necessary support and recognition of their merits in case of special results. This condition is generally available for companies from real economy. In the public sector, the proceedings are most often unwieldy, they involve a too big of a number of actors and some of the activities are redundant. (Dorobat et al., 2012, p. 88).

Enyon and Dutton (2007) considered that there are more categories of barriers against adopting eGov. The most important ones concern the technical know how, proper hardware and software and staff resistance. The last category is about the perception according to which the need for human resources is replaced by technology. Thereby, the electronic mediation between administration and consumers, once implemented, will diminish the number of workplaces. An example in this matter is the one in Japan, when the National Tax Agency significantly reduced the number of employees during 2004-2006, as an outcome of the implementation of the strategy that was adopted in 2001 regarding eGov (National Tax Agency 2007). However, the research conducted by Schwester (2009), realized on the cities of the United States of America with a population over 100.000 people, indicates that the adoption of eGov is not influenced by the staff's reluctance, engaged in public service, to use IT systems.

Many people believe that a proper functioning of systems is the key to serving clients, considering that when things don't work as they should, it is just as likely or even more likely to be a system problem and not a human one (Kotler, Lee, 2008). Whether or not systems are more important than a tradition based on customer service, we consider that they are as important for consumer satisfaction as the ability of a well-intentioned employee to serve the client. Thus, the

main objective is to perceive the extent of the client satisfaction and to help identifying contact points and transforming procedures which may contribute to improve satisfaction.

In attempting to lead the public administration's attention, focused on legal, executory, bureaucratic procedures, over to approaching the citizens which it serves, over the last two decades, the Portuguese government has permanently stated its commitment about investing in the quality of public services by introducing training and educational programs for the employees (Moura 2011, p. 61). Furthermore, the in-depth analysis revealed that the cities which adopted the principles of TQM are the tip of the spear in terms of delivering eServices and using the specific tools of eDemocracy.

This article studies the opinions of public sector employees with regards to the effects of eGovernment implementation on their activity as well as the obstacles to implementation or the general negative effects.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY:

A quantitative analysis was performed in December 2011, in order to test the hypotheses advanced for this study. A questionnaire was drafted in order to gather the necessary information. Questions were attributed to every relevant aspect. 342 valid questionnaires were corroborated from as many public sector employees, working in four public intitutions: 3rd district City Hall, Bucharest, Pension House Bucharest, Managing Authority for Operational Programme for Fisheries and Agency of State Domains.

3. RESULTS:

In the institutions that where analised, one can see the preponderance of female personnel. The majority of those who were interviewed is situated around at least 31 years old (approximately 85%). 45% of the interviewed subjects declared that they acquired an accumulated professional experience in the public sector activity of 3 to 10 years. This group of subjects is followed by the one having a professional experience of 11-20 years in a percentage of

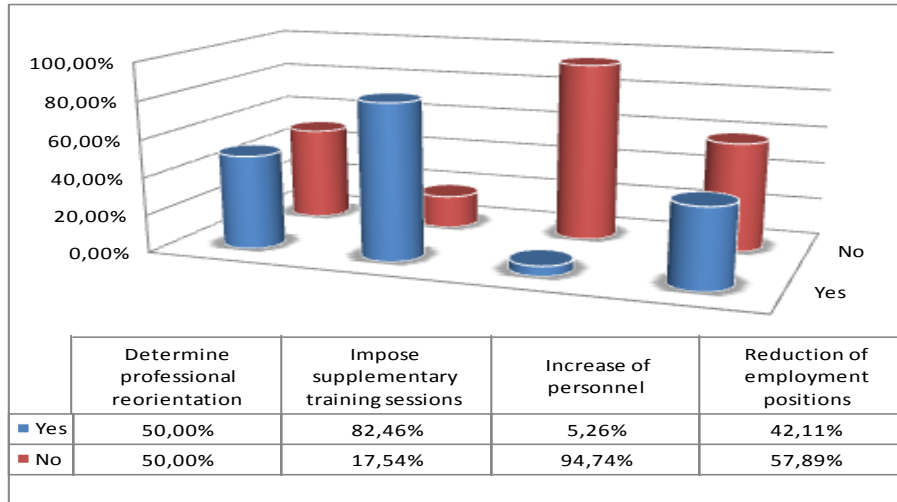
29%, fact which reflects a tendency of the employees towards a career in the public sector activity. 88% of employees surveyed have university education.

Table no. 1 - Demographic profile

Measure	Item	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	111	32,46%
	Female	231	67,54%
Age	18-30	12	14,91%
	31-45	51	42,11%
	46-60	144	39,47%
	>60	135	3,51%
Education	High School	27	7,89%
	Vocational School	12	3,51%
	University	189	55,26%
	Postgraduate	114	33,33%
Years of public service	<3	18	5,26%
	3-10	153	44,74%
	11-20	99	28,95%
	21-30	45	13,16%
	>30	27	7,89%

In order to determine the opinions of the employees engaged in the public sector, we started from the considerations of the persons responding questions with regards to the consequences of ICT adoption for public services rendering and the answers were grouped according to the following chart:

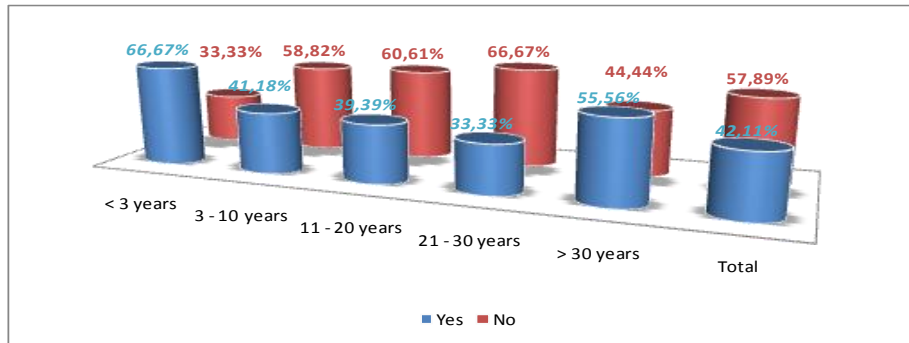
Figure no. 1



It can be observed that the opinions are equally divided between the need for professional reorientation and its absence. On the other hand, the great majority (87,46%) appreciates that supplementary training sessions are necessary. At the same time, the quasi-unanimity can be found referring to the fact that adoption of these services will not lead to an increase of personnel, while the percentage of those who consider that the number of personnel will decrease is of 42,11%. These results show an increased fear with regards to the possibility of reduction of employment positions.

It is interesting to observe that upon the last criterion, regarding the reduction of number of the personnel, the answers arranged depending on the total length of service of employees, reveals the fact that there is a strong relation in this respect for those from the category of under 3 years of service (over 66%) and of those having over 30 years of service (over 55%). The extent of those between 3 and 30 years of service, which is the majority of employees is found under the percentage of 50% (between 41,18% and 33,33%) with regards to the reduction of employment positions as an effect of eGov implementation.

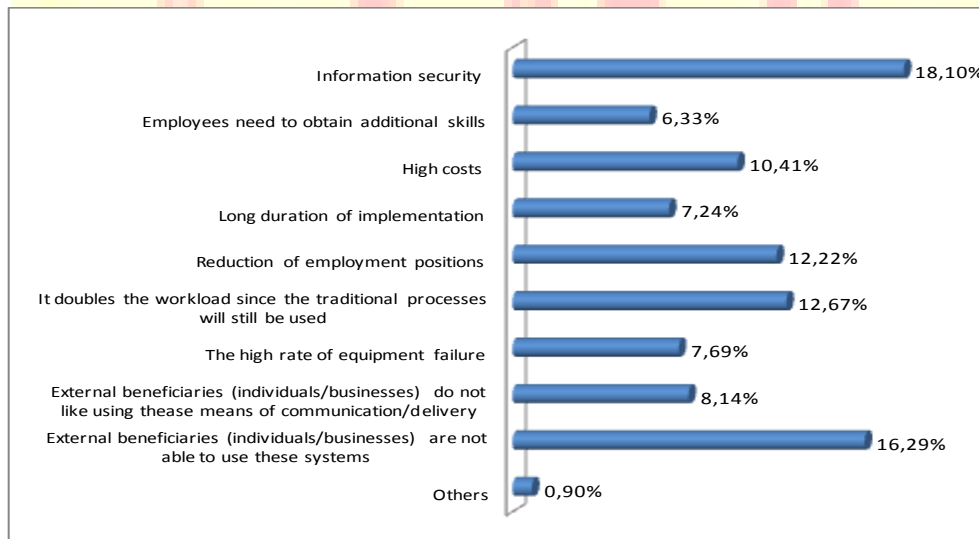
Figure no. 2



One can conclude that, from the perspective of the public sector employees, eGuv implementation imposes supplementary training sessions, but it cannot be certainly asserted that it also implies personnel reduction, although there are serious fears in this respect.

We considered useful the formulation of a negative question referring to the criteria for which an electronic solution for official communication should not be implemented, and the answers are emphasized in Figure no. 3.

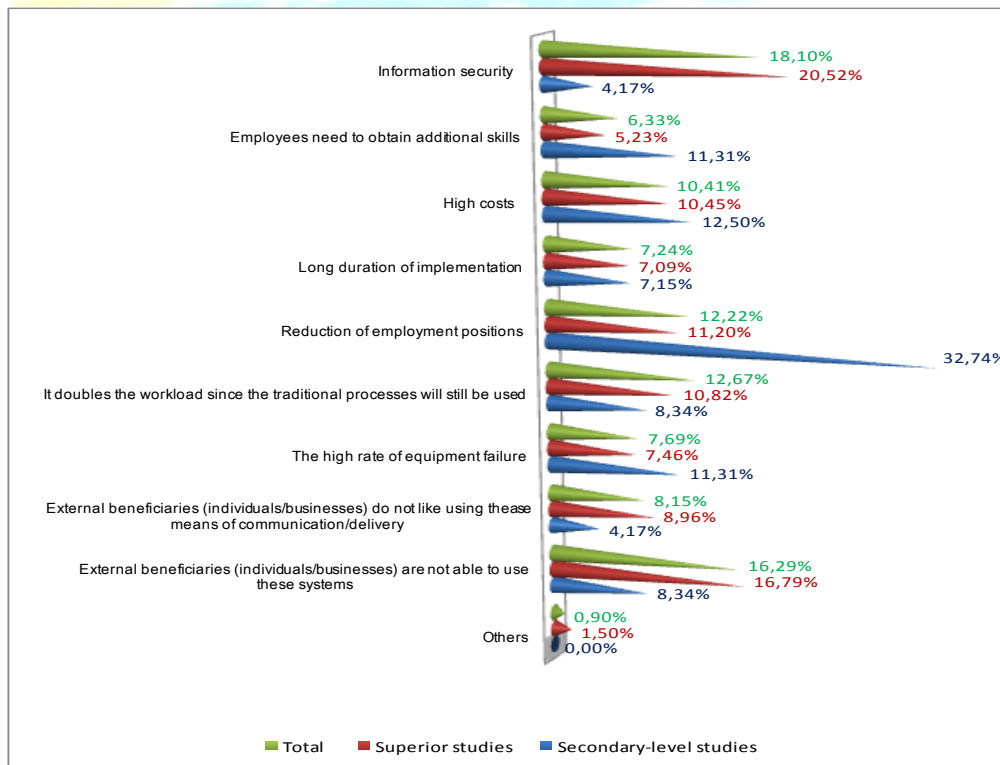
Figure no. 3



Relevant is the fact that the highest percentage is given by the lack of trust in the possibility to ensure information security (18,10%), on the second position (16,29%) is the appraisal according to which the external beneficiaries would not have the possibility to use informatic systems. 12,67% consider that by eGov implementation, nothing is accomplished, but a doubling of the working volume as the parallel use of traditional communication systems will not be waived. Personnel reduction was emphasized by 12,22% of the persons answering questions.

Next we assessed the answers to this question depending on the study criteria, grouped by secondary-level studies and superior studies. The chart presented in Figure no. 4 shows significant differences.

Figure no. 4



Thus, in case of personnel having secondary-level studies, we find the main reason for which an electronic solution for official communication should not be implemented (the question makes no difference between official and inter-institutional communication or between official

communication having external beneficiaries or both), is the personnel reduction, as the percentage is high, respectively 32,74%. The cost for the necessary equipment and technology (12,5%), and on equal rates, the high percentage of equipment failure and the need for training in order to acquire supplementary abilities (11,31%). On the other hand, in case of personnel having superior studies, the main reason which could determine waiving the implementation of such a solution is ensuring information security (20,52%), followed by the absence of the possibility or the capacity of external beneficiaries regarding the use of these systems (16,79%) and only on third place the personnel reduction (11,20%), doubling the working volume because of the old systems inertia (10,82%) and high costs of technology and necessary equipments (10,45%). The personnel opinion on eGov specific solutions implementation and its availability to develop specific training programs registers significant variations as compared to the accumulated level of knowledge.

4. CONCLUSIONS:

This research had as objective establishing motivational factors which could determine the human resource from the public administration to accept and use mostly eGov specific services or, on the contrary, to reject this implementation.

The services having a high degree of sophistication, involving official transfer of confidential information need performance security systems. In fact, ensuring information security represents the defining aspect which will make the difference between accepting the electronic means between citizens and public administration and the refusal to use such systems.

It is also remarked the opinion according to which the beneficiaries of the public services have no possibility to use these systems. It is true that our country is found on the last place in Europe in what technical equipment is concerned in terms of computer use and internet access. However, such deviations can be reduced by allocating capital resources. Moreover, in case of a reduced internet access, devices such as mobile phones or personal digital assistants may play a very important role in case the public administration is able to adapt and innovate starting from a way of thinking focused on the citizen needs.

Obtaining supplementary competences represent no significant negative criterion. At the same time, taking into consideration that it was emphasized as an eGov implementation result, one can underline the awareness of the necessity and quasi-unanimous acceptance from the human resource to participate in specific training programs. A strategy in the field of eGov specific abilities development should be initiated. Partnerships with educational institutions represent the first step. Taking into consideration the behavior of the engaged human resources, implemented training sessions may have a significant impact.

Although the number of employees having secondary-level studies is of approximately 11% from the total of interviewed persons, still significant variations are observed, even opposite opinions, with regards to the aspects that have been researched as compared to the personnel having superior studies. This category is generally threatened by the implementation of eGov specific solutions. Moreover, it is also observed the loss of appetite for the accumulation of supplementary competences. To counter this attitude, the administration has the possibility to develop an online learning infrastructure, which may be easily accessed by means of informatic networks within each institution. At the same time, the employees may be encouraged to define and maintain a personal development plan.

The resistance met by reformers the moment they are confronting a rigid public sector will most likely affect the adoption of eGov. Thus, identifying punctual factors that determine the behavior of public employees becomes a priority. This is important considering the context in which certain practices are deeply rooted, in case information exchange is an exception rather than a rule and in case the technological capacity of the public sector administration is limited. For our country to excel on eGov, political representatives will have to unite their forces and change mentalities and behaviors while offering to public sector employees the possibility to acquire the necessary abilities required in a modern organization.

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