

T-GOVERNMENT FOR BENEFIT REALISATION

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Abstract

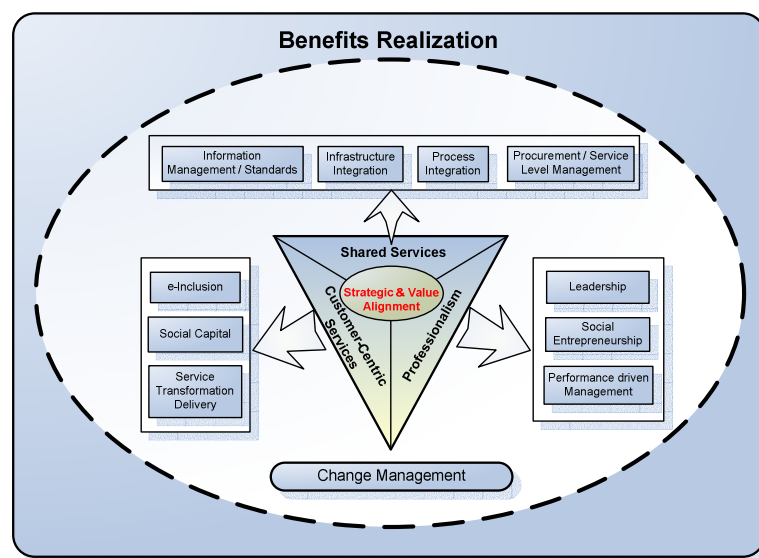
This paper proposes a model for t-Government and highlights the research agenda needed to increase understanding of transformational government and the processes involved in furthering the agenda of the t-Government. In particular, both an operational and a conceptual model for the effective involvement of citizens and businesses in government functioning have been proposed. This will help to define an agenda for t-Government research that emerges from national UK strategy and policy for e-Government. The main threads of t-Government encompass: (1) A citizen-centric delivery of public services or e-inclusion, (2) A shared services culture to maximize value added to clients, (3) The effective delivery and management of resources and skills within government or professionalism. All three threads should be addressed principally from the perspectives of delivery, evaluation and participation in view of benefit realisation as envisioned by Government strategic planning and policy directives (CabinetOffice, 2005). The management of change dimension of these phenomena have been included in the research agenda. In particular, research is needed to reshape the discourse towards emphasising a citizen centric approach that defines, develops, and benefits from public service. Decision makers in Government will need models of Governance that fulfil transformational objectives. They will also need models of benefits realisation within a strategic Governance framework. It has been argued that t-Government research should be addressing these relative voids.

Keywords: e-Government, t-Government, benefit realisation.

1 THE CASE FOR T-GOVERNMENT

Electronic Government often referred to as e-Government has reached a stage of maturity in that mandates set by Central Government have been achieved, at a cost of £184 per household, over a 7 year period from 2001-2008. This equates to a total e-Government expenditure of £3.9 billion between 2001-2008 (Kable, 2003). In context, UK local authorities are expected to deliver a total of £1.2 billion in accumulated efficiency savings by 2007-2008 through realizing the benefits of e-Government (IDABC, 2005). Gershon (2004) calls in his report for £21.5 billion in annual efficiency improvements across Government by 2007-2008. The exploitation of e-Government such that benefits can be realized is the rationale being used to define transformational Government, within referred to as t-Government.

The 2006 Transformational Government Annual Report (Cabinet Office, 2007) identifies three distinctive themes integral to t-Government. These are presented in Figure 1 and include, Customer-Centric Services; Shared Services; and, Professionalism. Customer-Centric Services are explained in the 2005 Transformational Government-Enabled by Technology Strategy document (Cabinet Office, 2005) as being the transformation of public services for the benefit of citizens, businesses, taxpayers and frontline staff. The second dimension of t-Government is identified as Shared Services. These include the efficiency of the Corporate Services and infrastructure of Government organizations thus, supporting the freeing of resources for frontline delivery. The third dimension of transformational Government is Professionalism, which includes the steps necessary to achieve the effective delivery of technology for Government and nurturing capacity and skills in public administration. This area includes Planning, Delivery, Management, Skills and Governance. Figure 1 extracts a number of dimensions integral to the three themes of t-Government, when set against a



backdrop of change management for benefits realisation.

Figure 1. Tri-Dimensional t-Government

2 FROM E-GOVERNMENT TO T-GOVERNMENT

The shift in focus from 'e' to 't'-Government is the result of a logical realisation that the IT trajectory of legacy e-Government systems and programs will not solve the lingering problems with public service delivery. The UK Government seems to have realized that such a technology trajectory will not fulfil the transcendental objectives of transforming Government Services, and has opted for a strategic governance model based on the three axes presented in Figure 1.

“The challenge ahead is not just to “do IT better” in the context of the past models for delivery of public services. It is also about “doing IT differently” to support the next phase of public service reform” (CabinetOffice, 2005, p.6).

Only the creation of a transformational dynamic within Government will ensure that public service is systematically redesigned to fulfil client requirements, empower citizens and other clients through the development of a culture of shared service. Professionalism needs to be fostered as a system of management to ensure the sustainability of the transformational drive. By 2011, t-Government should be in place and the process made irreversible, such that a sustainable culture of change management has been created (CabinetOffice, 2005, p18). This will require that technology investments and service transformation must be directed towards a shifting of Government and public service from the back office towards the front-line and unto the citizen and businesses, within a shared service framework. Current and planned investments will be evaluated from the standpoint of financial and service benefit realisation.

Change models will depend on the legacy e-Government systems and cultures in place. For some the transition will be almost an automatic growth from the transactional stage they are at now but for others, they will have to come out of their hibernation behind hollow front-ends, no matter how well designed they are. The key potential for innovation lies in addressing the reality that Government is not a business. Although it depends on the same resources – finance, staff and plant – the principle objective of its business processes is not the creation of a revenue stream and commercial notions of “value”, “good” or “effective” systems may have only superficial relevance. This itself is a thought-provoking proposition that is expected to raise much debate within the research community.

Beyond the rhetoric of the UK government to put an end to e-government and to shift to a t-Government strategy (EasyGov, 2005), local authorities are left with a practical problem of analyzing their e-government standing and deciding on a migration strategy. In extrapolating from the normative literature from e-Government it is evident that no clear models for t-Government benefit realisation have yet emerged, let alone a strategy for migration. Based on the vision for t-Government in the UK, an attempt is made below to outline an operational model that synthesizes the major drives and stakeholders of the transformation process.

T-Government can be construed as the enactment of three perspectives: Citizen Centricity, Shared Service Culture, and Professionalism, in unison seeking to use Information Society Technologies (IST) to integrate citizen-customer feedback into the initial stages of policy development and the process of reengineering public services. For a local or regional authority this covers a wide range of different interfaces that will be channelled through GovConnect.uk for citizens or, businesslink.gov.uk for commercial organizations. By November 2006, each department was required to have reviewed its websites in accordance with the Transformational Government strategy and its own overall communication strategy, and produce proposed trajectories for reducing its number of websites overall and converging on DirectGov and BusinessLink for the stated services (CabinetOffice, 2006). The website rationalisation policy as it is known in government quarters (CabinetOffice, 2007) requested both rationalisation of content and migration to either site¹.

Figure 2 presents an operationalized process view of t-Government in terms of *Delivery*, *Participation* and *Evaluation* such that an integrated perspective of Central-and-Local Government through a common portal can be achieved. In terms of t-Government Delivery, Government services will become transparent to those that interact with it, as horizontal and

¹ “Thus far, 951 websites have been considered and, of these, 90 have already closed and a further 461 are planned to be closed. 374 of the remaining sites will be reviewed by June 2007, with a view to encouraging further rationalisation” (CabinetOffice, 2007)

vertical services will be integrated to develop and deliver better improved public value. Indeed Central-Government will support local authorities in the successful delivery of services through an implementation plan and a set of targets that have been developed by appropriate stakeholder groups (CabinetOffice, 2006). As t-Government implies, active participation when seen in the context of Figure 2 provides the impetus for the development and delivery of integrated services where the client engages through a *pull* process (Irani *et al.*, 2004). The process of operationalizing t-Government Evaluation is both front office and back office. In the former it involves the benefits, costs and risks associated with service provision whereas in the latter Evaluation is often external and conducted for example by the National Audit Office, to explore efficiency gains and benefit realisation.

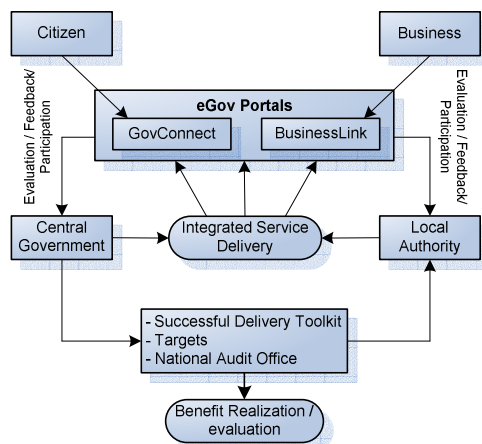


Figure 2. Operationalized t-Government

Based on the operational view of t-Government as depicted in figure 2, we have drawn a list of the critical variables differentiating e from t-Government and the consequent actions needed for an effective migration process.

	<i>e-Gov</i>	<i>t-Gov</i>	<i>Migration from e-Gov to t-Gov</i>
<i>Focus</i>	Putting government services on-line	Making the government transformational through IT	Transformational leadership
<i>Citizen involvement</i>	Access & Accessibility	Build Social capital	Citizen focus
<i>Business involvement</i>	On-line transacting	Supply chain integration	Transformational business
<i>Service delivery</i>	Push-model	Pull-model	
<i>Evaluation</i>	Stage model growth	Benefit realisation	
<i>Resource management</i>	Resource allocation	Professionalism	
<i>Integration</i>	Shared service platform	Shared service culture	
<i>Business model</i>	Technological capability	Strategic governance	
<i>IT role</i>	Enabling on-line delivery	Enabling the transformation of the business of government	Transformational IT

Table 1. Differentiation between e-Gov and t-Gov and migration strategy

3 MODEL OF T-GOVERNMENT

Several models for e-Government maturity exist (Layne and Lee, 2001; UN, 2003; The World Bank, 2003). These models have several stages associated with them. However, as Anderson and Henriksen (2006) claim, such models remain essentially focused around the technological capability. This allegedly applies more so in the trenches of e-Government practice where one would expect a wider gap in the paradigms held by e-Government providers on one hand, namely the public administrators and the technologists in charge of channelling the delivery of their services, and the e-Government clients be they citizens or businesses, on the other hand. Thus, to become a meaningful agent of transformation for public service delivery and modern governance, t-Government providers must abandon their technological bias and focus on socio-cultural transformations yielding the desired inclusion (Leitner, 2003).

The model of figure 3 below illustrates how t-Government integrates citizens and businesses into its inner-workings. Hence they are not anymore at the margins of an e-government model that dealt with clients like external entities. Rather, clients, both citizens and corporate, are bracketed within the value chain of t-Government which is premised on transformation and yielding benefit realisation. Though public service is different and is deeply entrenched into a culture of one-way service provision, sophistication of clients and especially citizenry, is accentuating the pressure on government to deliver on demand and as per the exact requirements of clients:

“Of course public services are different. Their values are different. But today people won’t accept a service handed down from on high. They want to shape it to their needs, and the reality of their lives...” (Blair, 2006)

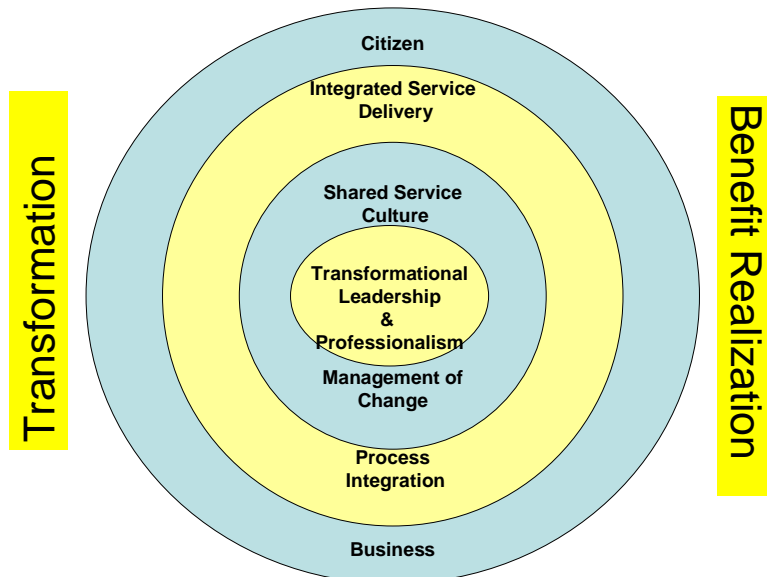


Figure 3: Conceptual Model of t-Government

As the operational model of figure 2 shows, clients play a role throughout the t-Government business cycle, first participating in the planning and implementation of e-government services; secondly and through a pull-model of service delivery, clients manage the delivery process to fit their peculiar requirements, and lastly they are at the centre of the evaluation of benefit realisation through providing feedback and taking up services that benefit them the most. This is echoed in the original t-Government strategy document as bringing a “strong and reliable customer voice into the design of individual services; and (at a more general level) to get a better understanding of the service expectations of citizens, businesses and public servants.” (CabinetOffice, 2005, p. 8) and further emphasized in the first annual review through evaluating the impact of IT-enabled services on people’s daily lives and not merely the take up of these services (CabinetOffice, 2007).

Given the central role of clients for benefit realisation, resources are shifted to the frontline to ensure a sustained integration of clients into t-Government. This shifting of resources, for it not to be dispersed, requires the concentration of the delivery process into very few front-ends and ‘the number of operational centres of shared services should be measured in tens rather than hundreds’ (CabinetOffice, 2006). However contrary to e-government, the concentration of shared services is not an artefact of web design but built on a genuine ontology of integration or semantic web that derives from the integration of business processes which in turn derive from a shared services culture (Sabol and Mach, 2006). Shared services are developed within an organizational culture premised on capacity building and professional networks where public service can foster skill and career building among its employees (Easygov, 2005). Human resource management in t-Government becomes a shared function rather than the prerogative of distinct administrations (CabinetOffice, 2006). This assuredly

represents a major cultural shift for the wider public sector and underlies the drive for professionalism, wherein back-office administrative processes are transformed into front-office pull-based value-added services. The whole edifice is made possible through transformational leadership and management of change as the inner-core of the strategic governance model.

“Transformational leadership and investment in effective communication and change management will be essential, particularly when staff involved in delivering legacy back office services sense a threat of redundancy or a transfer to front office work” (Smith, 2006).

4 E-GOVERNMENT RESEARCH

Despite the prominence of the official discourse on t-Government, academic and practitioner based research is still struggling with coming to grips with e-Government, let alone t-Government. However the issue has not been completely evaded. It was rather approached with different denominations. If we refer to the three axes of the Government’s transformational strategy, we can find some research support in current literature, namely e-citizen and e-inclusion for the citizen-centric axis (UN, 2005); automation vs. transformation (Heeks, 2003), and efficiency vs. effectiveness (O’Hara & Stevens, 2006) for the process reengineering aspect, but much less has been written about the professionalism aspect that is integral to t-Government. Another key aspect that has been only tangentially dealt with is the fostering of a shared services culture. It was mostly approached from a common service platform perspective mainly technological rather than social or cultural. Andersen and Henriksen (2006) notice that the e-Government wave was not accompanied with fundamental new research perspectives and that predominantly it continued along the investigative lines of IT in Government that has been around since the 1970s. They go on to suggest new research aimed at “more dimensions than simply integration issues and supportive functions of formal Government primarily provided by technology.... After more than thirty years of use of IT in the public sector, these benefits are, however, self-evident and Government should move beyond these benefits focusing more on *streamlining core processes* and *reaching customers in a more efficient manner.*” (p.237)

The real challenge comes not from the latest developments in technology but the paradigm shift away from push-based to pull-based public services (Irani et al., 2004). t-Government is the central phenomenon engendered by that paradigm shift and local agencies need ‘flag pole’ research to understand the change models that they need to put in place to integrate their citizenry in the work of Government. It is here that research is needed to support local authorities in the ‘carving’ out of study and evaluation areas and bringing together appropriate expertise to frame sound research proposals.

e-Government research continues to privilege the technology and transactional side of e-Government at the expense of transformation and social inclusion. Rose and van Rossum (2005) in their review of European e-Government research assert that researchers either focused on the technology model or the governance model, but seldom were they able to integrate the two. They also pinpoint a clear bias and prioritization of technology-driven research over governance-driven research, yielding technology systems that are not very reflective of underlying social models or how communities learn and create knowledge. They propose as a result that co-operation platforms be developed between technology and governance style researchers, software developers, industry, regional and national

Government. The authors further assert that “technology and community models of learning and knowledge creation are hard to reconcile, and co-ordinating the efforts of researchers working in the two paradigms is a significant European challenge.” (p.13).

5 A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR T-GOVERNMENT

There is a clear need for a novel approach to the development and delivery of public services within a new paradigm of Government functioning, namely transformational Government or t-Government. The speedy planning and implementation of t-Government in the UK makes it all the more urgent that the system of innovation in the country rides the bandwagon to help achieve the Government objectives. In particular, the background above identifies the development of models for **e-citizen**, service reengineering with the accompanying institution of a **shared services culture**, and building capacity and skills as part of the **professionalism** drive as key areas where research is needed. A t-Government research drive or agenda is further justified as follows:

t-Government is a new phenomenon, and thus an exploratory approach – discussion – is needed. Although the problems of transformational cultures have been around with the e-business phenomenon, Government works under different constraints and looks at value beyond its instrumental aspects of revenue streams. As Watmore says (EzGov, 2005), “t-Government is an end in itself and not a means to an end” as is the case with e-business. Likewise, local agencies work under distinctive constraints and need to use distinctive notions of value such as social capital. The e-business client does not nearly hold the same esteem by its provider even within the most integrated of supply chains. No models come to mind to depict the new ‘business model’ of Government. This alone mandates a focussed approach.

The issues are complex, and need to address social and organisational factors as well as technology itself as enablers of t-Government. Research efforts must be moved away from the classical IT trajectory of public service delivery. Cross-disciplinary expertise, with access to a wide range of empirical data from individual organisations and projects, is needed.

Although the vision and strategy are nationally driven, no research framework has been proposed to accompany the implementation of the t-Government strategy. The CIO council has pledged to work with the academic sector “to help implement the strategy and deliver innovative solutions” (CabinetOffice, 2005, p.30). Academics should help define a joint research and evaluation framework for t-Government.

Research should examine the emerging paradigms in mobile and communication technologies in improving citizen involvement in the working of Government. Case studies of innovative uses of citizen access technologies within the t-Government framework are particularly needed.

Major research areas that can be delimited with respect to the t-Government agenda are introduced below. Rather than an arbitrary list of issues, the model of figure 3 is used to derive such a list, hence laying the ground for a further analysis of each major area into a multitude of research issues and questions.

- Models for building social capital among citizens
- IT-enabled social capital
- The customer is citizen vs. the citizen is customer
- Models for the participation of clients in the development of e-services
- Models for the integration of business clients into the government supply chain

- Pull-based e-government services
- Managing change towards a shared services culture across public service
- Reengineering for process integration across the silos of public administration
- Organizational and technological models of integrated service delivery
- Ontology and semantic web for t-Government
- Models for building capacity through professionalism
- Government supply chain management
- Quality assurance in government supplier management
- Transformational leadership for transformational government
- Comprehensive models of benefit realisation
- Multi-dimensional models of t-Government
- Case studies of local authorities
- Strategic governance models
- Ethics and privacy in government information systems

5.1 Methodological Considerations

While the above research areas necessitate a wide of variety of research methods and techniques, key methodologies are recommended during the early stages of t-Government deployment, until that time where the research agenda acquires the status of an epistemology, thus becoming widely shared among the research community with differential interests being treated by different research threads and sub-communities, both academic and practitioners. Three key research aspects that relate to key aspects of t-Government implementation are evoked below with appropriate methodological considerations.

Implementation Model: t-Government is primarily centrally led by the UK government and largely imposed as a normative model for e-service delivery. While this creates an appropriate framework for implementation studies driven by the normative framework of t-Government implementation, the adjustment process to this normative model both at the level of central government and local authorities will inevitably deviate from the planned framework. This should not be perceived negatively and rather studied inductively to feedback into the normative model of implementation. The use of *grounded research methodologies* is essential so not to assume reality at the expense of what it really is. Once successful experiences have been documented, they should be erected as case study benchmarks but there should be no rush to do so unless benefit realisation from such experiences has been ascertained.

Transformational leadership and Cultural Change: The whole t-Government endeavour relies on a critical assumption about public service; that it is willing to shift to a shared services culture. The culture of sharing is as alien to public administration as accountability is to academe for instance. The government strategy is not very explicit about how cultural interventions will be done to bring public administration in line with the requirements of a shared services culture. This will not be achieved by technological integration alone as e-government has worked on that premise. ‘Interventionist’ research as in action research for instance will be a prime channel to bring about cultural change. Transformational leadership at the top, whenever it exists, will not suffice to push down the changes. Long serving public administrators in charge of relaying change within their departments will be very likely so marked by the local culture and its embedded practices that they will fail to create the

necessary dynamic for change. Recourse to external consultants alone will not be effective either. Internal consultants or action researchers will be a key ingredient for a successful steering of cultural changes. The corporate culture literature is replete with models for effective cultural change through transformational leadership (Kilmann, 1989; Schein, 2004).

Benefit Realisation: One key distinction of t-Government from e-government is how it is evaluated. Benefit realisation is a multi-stakeholder approach to measuring the effectiveness and efficiency of t-Government. While for efficiency, government seems to be at ease to determine efficiency gains through standard quantitative methods, effectiveness measurement on the other hand is more problematic as it entails measuring not only customer satisfaction as with e-government but more nebulous constructs such as enhanced social capital and public value, enhanced skills and capacity among public service personnel, etc. Traditional accounting methods are not suitable for measurement here. More complex research designs based on focus groups, qualitative investigation and the like are required for measuring t-Government effectiveness. The objective is not only to gather data about whether t-Government is effective or not on different counts but foremost to understand the intervening processes in ensuring such effectiveness.

6 CONCLUSION

Other than developing a t-Government epistemology, the principle beneficiaries of a t-Government research agenda will be the Government itself and especially local Government agencies. Research findings will help the public sector better utilise resources and improve their position vis-à-vis central Government targets. Likewise, the academic community would benefit from a coherent framework for t-Government research and the establishment of a clear focus for t-Government IST within the research funding agencies.

Though practitioners can turn to a variety of independent organisations and business-support groups for guidance, no critical stock of best practices in t-Government has yet been developed. Local Government Associations which have much wider ranging research portfolios do not muster the necessary visibility to establish, exploit and disseminate best-practice throughout the UK. Specialists such as the Society for IT Managers (SOCITM), with its Information Age Government Group together with CIPFA and its e-Government Forum Group, both offer specialist training/consultancy services and, have accumulated a significant amount of literature over the past few years but with the change of paradigm from e-Government to t-Government, it will take them time to adjust to the new reality of things and develop appropriate models and benchmarks. In meshing with the new social and cultural orientation of the t-Government drive, a thorough review of work undertaken by public administration scholars, public policy analysts, political scientists, and democracy theorists holds a large promise to infuse much needed value-added to the narrower IT rationalist perspective that has so far predominated in the e-Government discourse. Research can significantly reshape the area of t-Government through building bridges between the disciplines and harnessing a variety of tools and methods that could be adopted in the t-Government context.

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