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Organisational Determinants Influencing Citizen Relationship Management (CiRM) Implementation in the British Local Governments

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory paper presents two British local governments in-depth case studies on the organisational determinants influencing the Citizenship Relationship Management (CiRM). Eight main organisational determinants have emerged as a result of the cross-case analysis. The determinants influencing the CiRM implementation might be on the surface look similar to the common CRM determinants but they are fundamentally not. This might be explained by the overwhelming impact of the interpersonal dynamics of the implementation process generated by the public. It can also be concluded that there are enormous amounts of successful CiRM implementation determinants available in the literature. These determinants will always be subjected to where and how CiRM has been implemented and it varies according to what organisation.

Keywords

Citizen Relationship Management (CiRM), implementation; implementation process; local government; phenomenology.

INTRODUCTION

Many local governments throughout the globe have implemented Citizen Relationship Management (CiRM) systems to support their day-to-day G2C activities (United Nations, 2008). This implementation initiative is becoming increasingly important due to the public demand for improvement in the services offered by government (King, 2007; Schellong, 2005). Some initial studies in the field (for instance, Beynon-Davies and Martin, 2004; King, 2007) have indicated that CiRM implementation have delivered some impressive benefits of G2C.

In the UK local government sector, the CiRM system can be considered as one of the crucial logistical requirements that should be implemented to ensure the success of the nation e-government initiative. The system is considered as an enabler for the local governments to improve its efficiency with the public, i.e., seen as a facilitator to promote the intimacy between government and citizens (Batista and Kawalek, 2004; Ritcher, Conford and McLoughlin, 2004).

Since 2004, many local governments were involved in implementing the CiRM projects (ODPM, 2004). For instance, a simple CiRM system with no integration with its back office operations (a single Contact Centre or a website) supported by standardised forms and documentation or a complex CiRM systems with an integrated customer database, content management tools, document management system that are integrated and redesigned with back office systems. The primary driver for these initiatives was to improve its services to the public. This improvement can range from a rapid and focused response to enquiries to proactive contacts with the public (ODPM, 2004).

On the other hand, the UK government has set a target that, by 2005, all local governments must be able to deliver all government services online. However, by that year, King and Cotterill (2007) reported that only about 60 percent of local governments have implemented CiRM, 35 percent are in the process of implementing the system while the rest have yet to start. King (2007) argued that British local governments are unlikely to achieve the radical target envisaged by central government. As a result, successful of CiRM implementation has become a great challenge to the British local governments. The initiative can be time consuming and expensive for local governments, can take many years to complete and can cost millions of pounds (Beynon-Davies and Martin, 2004). Hence, CiRM implementation in local government is still falling short of its true potential.

The purpose of this study is to explore the determinants influencing successful CiRM implementation in the British local governments. The paper is structured as follows: the following section presents the present state of CiRM implementation literature; the third section describes the research methodology employed by this study; the fourth section describes the in-depth case studies of two local governments in the UK (with a cross-case analysis). The final section concludes the study and provides some possible future research directions.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The concept of customer relationship management (CRM) has started to develop since early 1960’s as a one-to-one relationship marketing. It was later developed as micro marketing in mid 1980s and later become relationship marketing which was considered an enabler in intimacy relationship between organisation and customer (Ling and Yen, 2001).

CRM can be briefly defined as an organisation’s holistic management approach which is enabled by information systems (IS) with a wide customer focus to fully optimise relationship by making customers a lot more loyal (Schellong, 2005). On the hand, citizen relationship management (CiRM) draws from the concept of CRM and should be defined as an IS-enabled strategy with strong focus on citizens/public. CiRM does offer many new possibilities for local government in improving the way they work for their citizens (Silva and Batista, 2007). Its main purpose is to encourage, maintain and optimise relationships with the public. Another purpose of CiRM is to enhance accountability while improving citizens’ orientation towards the government (Schellong and Langenberg, 2007). The most common forms of local government CiRM can be seen through those web-based government portals. With the rise of citizen expectations, many local governments are now still trying to improve their relationships with citizens by adopting latest CiRM technologies to answer as many queries as possible in one visit or one call. Unfortunately, to date, only a few local government studies on CiRM implementation process has been reported. Empirical analyses have not focused on this level of specific issues or types of activities occurring within and perhaps across, stages, i.e., issues which arise recurrently CiRM implementation process. The primary focus of these studies has long been on establishing the citizens-centric approach (Batista and Kawalek, 2004; Richter, Cornford, and McLoughlin, 2004).

Another development in the area is concentrated towards the benefits and adoption of the system (King, 2007). However, the findings reported by these studies have been somewhat limited. Nonetheless, even in part, are helpful in giving the appropriate route to depict some representations of implementation initiatives in local governments. As CiRM has the capacity to collect, store, process raw data into information, and disseminate that information to some interested parties, the technology itself can be considered as information systems (IS) in its own right. As a result, the literature on IS implementation has inevitably been referred to.

Traditionally, IS implementation has been viewed as a process of change (Ginzberg, 1981; Lucas, 1981) and technological diffusion (Kwon and Zmud, 1987). The implementation process fundamentally states the model of organisational change (Zand and Sorensen, 1975) which consists of three basic stages; unfreezing, moving and refreezing. Unfreezing prepares the system for change; moving learns new behaviour patterns and assimilates the ramification of change. Refreezing refers to making these patterns of behaviour a permanent part of the system. The proposed theoretical framework was developed to encapsulate the understanding of the CiRM implementation initiative.

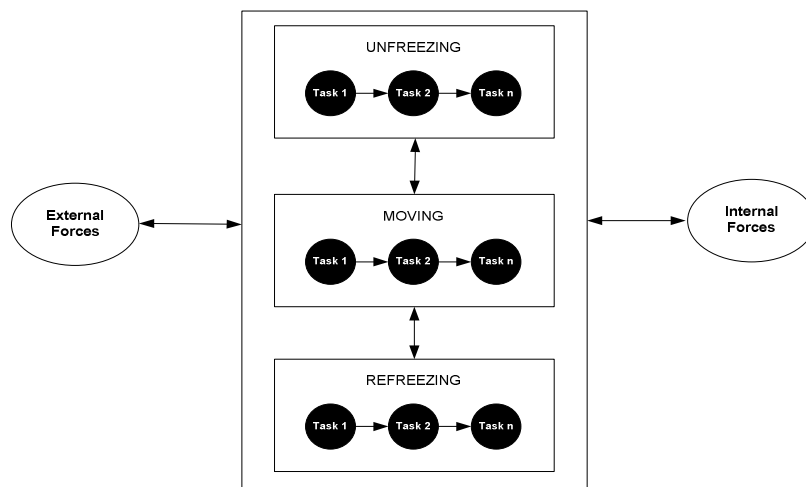


Figure 1. Proposed Theoretical Framework (adapted from Zand and Sorensen, 1975).

Criticisms of the Proposed Theoretical Framework

Despite the simplicity and practicality of the Lewin’s model, it has received some criticisms. First, the model was argued for being too prescriptive and simplistic in analysing and conceptualising organisational change (Pettigrew, 1990). He further argued that Lewin’s conceptualisation of change lacked context and process required to truly understand organisational change. Second, the model was also argued for equating an organisation to an ice cube that can simply be frozen and

unfrozen to achieve change (Kanter, Stein, Jick, 1992). Kanter et al, (1992) further argued that the model was based on the traditional top-down, command-and-control style of management that was too bureaucratic, inflexible, and slow to change. Third, the model was criticised as an ordered and linear process that ignored culture, power and politics (Dawson, 1994). He further argued that the model is more useful for small and isolated change initiatives and less useful for turbulent business environment where change is a dynamic process. Fourth, according to Dent and Goldberg (1999), the model was argued as fundamentally flawed in addressing many change initiatives as those loss of status, loss of pay, or loss of comfort are not necessarily equivalent to resisting change.

Nonetheless, Burnes (2004) has dismissed these arguments against Lewin's model. On the argument that the Lewin's model was simplistic, Burnes argued that Lewin recognised the unpredictable (non-linear) nature of change (adopting the learning approach favoured by his critics). On the argument that Lewin's model is a top-down, management-driven approach, Burnes asserted that the model recognised that for a change effort to succeed, willing and equal participations of all involved are required. On the criticism that Lewin's work is only relevant to incremental and isolated change projects, Burnes argued that Lewin's incremental change can lead to radical transformation at both the individual and society levels. Lewin's work has also addressed both racism and religious intolerance. This dismissed the criticisms that the model has ignored the role of power and politics. The criticisms on Lewin's work did not discourage the authors from employing the model to frame the boundary of this study. The work model is stable to frame the implementation process throughout the lifecycle of the implementation initiative. In addition, the results of this review have strengthened the contention that it is valuable to view CiRM implementation as a process. The environment around the organisational/technical elements influences the use of CiRM in many ways. People vary not only in technical skill but also in their attitudes and beliefs about computing and use of information.

RESEARCH APPROACH

Case 1 (SDC)

The first site, SDC, is located in Southeast England and covers an area of approximately 140 square miles. The CiRM system was developed and implemented to support the citizens' interaction, as well as its strategic plan to expand the range of services it currently provides. The system went live in January 2007 with some help from a vendor. The implementation of CiRM system has significantly raised the number of public enquiries that were resolved on the first point of contact, and Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) of the council are now able to deal with enquiries more efficiently through the contact centre.

Case 2 (HCC)

The second site was located in South England and served more than a million populations. The CiRM system implementation went live in July 2007. HCC has already introduced a contact centre, called Hantsdirect, to improve citizens' experience when contacting the council prior to the implementation of the CiRM system. The CiRM system was merged with the Hantsdirect's contact centre to handle day-to-day based queries (through telephones and electronic mails). A phased implementation of the CiRM system has allowed HCC to test the new system and processes to ensure that the council deals with enquiries in the most efficient way.

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

The analysis started by determining the internal and external forces towards CiRM implementation for both local governments (see Table 3). The main internal force was disordered systems in handling public's enquiries. In addition, the internal pressure from senior management was another internal force to HCC in delivering the targeted citizen-centric approach. On the other hand, there were also some external forces that shaped CiRM implementation process, particularly the pressure from the public.

At both SDC and HCC, the external forces are: (1) increasing amount of citizen needs and requirements towards better services, (2) the availability of direction and funding from central government, and (3) vendor pressures.

<i>Type of forces</i>	<i>Category for SDC</i>	<i>Category for HCC</i>
Internal forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disordered systems in handling citizens' interaction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disordered systems in handling citizens' interaction ▪ Internal pressure in delivering citizens-centric approach.
External forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Citizen needs towards better services ▪ Central government direction and funding ▪ CiRM vendors had facilitated the evolution of the system in local government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Citizen needs towards better services ▪ Central government direction and funding ▪ CiRM vendors had facilitated the evolution of CiRM in local government.

Table 2. The Forces toward CiRM Implementation in British Local Governments

Implementation Planning

It appeared that both local governments realised that the previous system they employed was not optimum in handling public interaction. At SDC, the CiRM Services Manager noted,

"I was saying to my management, I think we have been got not the correct technology and infect the consultants [customer services in the contact centre] were using three to four different systems to handle one interaction. So it can be talk to the citizens and asking three different times to the named address putting it into different systems. So clearly not CiRM technology, but the previous management had been let put it was going to solve all the problems"

The new CiRM system was aimed to improve the single view of public services. The implementation of CiRM was planned to be "evolutionary" (establishing citizens' interaction through telephone and e-mail to contact centre as well as face-to-face interaction at the remote offices). These tasks were carried out by developing a project team (cross-functional) comprising of members from the contact centre, IT, legal, and users in the beginning of the project.

At HCC, the previous CiRM technologies have failed to fully support the public enquiries through telephone calls. Whilst the current levels of public satisfaction are reasonable, the council believed that they were not as good as it can be in keeping the public to be well-informed.

Nonetheless, the introduction of CiRM system has enabled the council to manage many complaints from the public more efficiently. The new system was able to log, monitor and respond to complaints at all stages of the process, promptly highlighting those problem areas. The CiRM system was implemented through a phased implementation basis (i.e., libraries, planning, recycling, transport, waste, and general information).

Management Awareness and Support

Senior management awareness of the CiRM system benefits was one of the positive forces at HCC. They played an important role in facilitating the initiative and were also supportive throughout the process. As the Operation Manager described,

"There will be engagement with top-level management in term of support and funding approval. Of course our top executive very supportive and they have made decision to implement the CiRM system in delivering our services to the citizens. They play a role towards of CiRM initiative because they can see the benefits of using CiRM"

In contrast, at SDC, the CiRM Services Manager himself led the implementation initiative by convincing the senior management to invest the technology. Both local governments have extensively communicated with their stakeholders through electronic mail, meetings, and bulletins from the contact centre in updating on the progress of the implementation. Such communications help users within the local governments to further understand the CiRM technology.

CiRM Champions

At SDC, the CiRM Services Manager himself acted as the key person in persuading other senior managers to accept the CiRM system. He worked together with the director from the contact centre, convincing other senior managers in the entire

organisation for the implementation plan. He led the project as a true champion in the early stage of the implementation process (i.e., organise the tender, find a proper CiRM system and purchase the system).

In contrast, at HCC, the chief executive of council was the champion for the system implementation. His vision has enabled the implementation project to be developed and institutionalised throughout organisation. As the operational manager at HCC noted,

“The chief executive of the organisation was a champion. He was a man of the top, made the ultimate decision with degree of the politicians that Hampshire will deal with. Therefore, it is an interest to make sure things got done. He will then be delegating some of the lot of responsibilities to other directors, to do thing and to manage thing to get things done”.

These champions worked closely together and were responsible for the implementation initiative. Their commitments were strong throughout the project.

User Need Analysis

At SDC, prior to the purchase of the system, a public panel as well as a customer service auditor from central government were asked to help in identifying needs of the public. Once the understanding of the needs were in hand, the managers and developers moved forward by searching for CiRM software, which was available in the market that can fulfil the identified needs. The recommendation was also used to make a structure of CiRM design more practical.

Whilst at HCC, the requirements for the CiRM were collected from customer surveys and focus groups. These two approaches were combined in encapsulating the diverse requirements of the public. As the Operation Manager at HCC explained,

“... it is something around to take answer majority of citizens’ enquiries or request the service at speedily, efficiency and effectively. And also to build for customer requirement, then you can get go back to think about saying. If let say Hantsdirect soon discover that libraries actually only booked 10 phone calls a year while than homing 1,000 phone calls a year, you will be asking a question that actually will say the most efficient and effective way to deliver the service to customers than the user expecting”

The data from the surveys has allowed the project team to devise a clearer CiRM strategies and a new CiRM process for the Hantsdirect’s contact centre. Prior to the implementation of the system, there was no work flow supporting the citizen-centric model. The contact centre published over 200 telephone numbers which somehow has aroused public confusion.

Resistance to Change

At SDC, resistance to change was strong during the initial stage of the implementation process. It was basically due to the unfamiliarity faced by both the senior managers and end-users on the system. A few senior managers who needs the funding for their departments were reluctant to plan for the of implementation process. However, when the implementation activities approved by the SDC’s chief executive, resistance was slowly defeated by senior managers themselves. They eventually realised the benefits from implementing the CiRM system.

Nevertheless, both at SDC and HCC, resistance to change occur to the users in the introduction phase of the implementation. The users did not have any idea on the concept of CiRM and the process being followed by the new CiRM system. As the Operation Manager at HCC described this,

“If people in the service area don’t much actually understand what inside of the new system [CiRM], then they can get very upset because they don’t actually understand the new process being followed, because they used to have doing in their own way and having things in a new way subsequently”

To overcome this situation, both local governments used and utilised the communication channels within the organisations to spread the news about the system’s benefits. In addition, resistance to change also occurred during the transitional period when the new CiRM system being implemented at the SDC and HCC. This was the most difficult time for both local governments as many aspects (e.g., developers had to make sure that the new CiRM system was tested and configured in the right manner and the end-users were fully trained). The role played by CiRM champions during this period has reduced the level of user resistance. The training provided helped the users to be more confident and familiar to all processes contained in the new CiRM system.

System Procurement

Both local governments have employed their prior experience gained through disordered technology handling as a guideline for the procurement of a better CiRM system. The procurement tasks (e.g., evaluating the vendors) were conducted by senior managers and developers in searching for the appropriate system. However, at SDC, they were restricted to the direction and funding available to them from the central government (i.e., 'national pressure' for them to buy the same technology with the neighbouring local governments. At that time, two vendors were available for consideration had facilitated the evolution of CiRM technology in local government market. As the CiRM Services Manager at SDC described,

“We did a tender and have an evaluation criterion. So, it was done very scientifically and it was the best product, it met what we needed. It was makes through things about does it meet the needs for the end-user and for the customer [citizen], but also for the configuration aspect that we feel it was easy for non IT person to configure the scripting. I involved my team in the evaluation. So, the people who going to be use the product had to grade which was easier to use either Northgate or the vendor. All that data was then integrated to a final decision. Have to say we are very happy with the decision”

The vendors were enrolled to the standard tender process and were asked to present their proposals. After an evaluation criterion (i.e., based on system's features and flexibility) was outlined, CiRM from the vendor was chosen to be the most suitable to both local governments in achieving their specification. Having thoroughly conducting the reviews, a recommendation to purchase the vendor's CiRM was made to the top executive of the council.

System Training

In both case studies, system training was mentioned in the contract. A structured training program was developed not only to help the users to understand the goal of CiRM implementation, but also help the users to fully appreciate and apply the system in their day-to-day tasks. At SDC, training strategies were determined by the IT project manager as well as the operational manager. Their tasks were to ensure that anyone involved in the CiRM system was properly trained.

On the other hand, at HCC, CiRM training was decided mostly by the project team (i.e., developers and managers) for all the end-users involved in the project. On-site training was conducted by some trainers from the vendor whilst off-site training mode was not practised by the council. The training courses at HCC were organised according to the various roles of users. For instances, technical training sessions were designed for developers. Some members from the project team were also assigned to attend some classes that focused on the end-users.

In addition, continuous informal training was also given to the end-users at SDC and HCC. In both cases, the training was conducted in the training room. The sessions were conducted by the trainer from the team members (i.e., they received training from the vendor's trainer), which include the organisation context and hands-on training in using the CiRM system. Both operational managers realised the importance of well-prepared training materials for the end-user. Therefore, proper compilation of training materials (i.e., based on the vendor's training materials) was organised for future user references in order to facilitate the implementation process.

Vendor Support

At both the councils, strong collaborations were set out in terms of consultation, training and support with the vendors. Both local governments were supplied with product consultation (i.e., once the tender was awarded to them). There was a need for full consensus and confirmation between the local government and the vendor in establishing the requirements for the new CiRM system. These approaches have enabled the vendor to customise a suitable CiRM package that will fit the council's business processes. As the Operation Manager (at HCC) noted,

“Sometimes Lagan will say “we can't do that, it doesn't work”. It might work to do some of thing, 'bell whistle' but you can't get that 'bell whistle'. Therefore, they [Lagan] have that sort of consultation role “if you want do like this, it is possible Lagan will go it and think about it and come back to give you then”

As the implementation process carried on, the vendor provided one off-site training (SDC only) and a series of on-site training (both SDC and HCC) courses. The courses were conducted by certified trainer with high-quality materials (e.g., system administration for developers and system documentation for the end-users).

On the other hand, the CiRM Services Manager at SDC experiences indicated that the idea of establishing a good relationship with the vendor was to have a good system support. As he noted,

“You are dependent on it [the vendor] because you buying the product and license. You can't use it without

licences and that's the way system work on it. All the operational system you buying on going license, they [the vendor] give you maintenance, upgrade to technical upgrade, support it [CiRM system] if it fault. Afterwards, we are very happy with the vendor's support. Vendor didn't have major issue and in fact we have very good relationship with the vendor"

SDC proactively built this approach due to the lack of IT support from the team who unconsciously did not take part after the CiRM system went live. Even though the support from the vendor may be costly, this enables a substantial cost reduction in the system implementation process (i.e., in maintenance part) as the vendor has had expertise in such particular innovation.

On the contrary, at HCC, the vendor provided system support upon request. HCC was confident and employed the needed technical staffs for conducting in-house CiRM system's maintenance. Those technical people were hired and they have strong IT skills, thus can adapt with the technical part in CiRM system's environment easily. The support from the vendor was only needed when HCC faced hard problems and the IT people can not solve them. As the Operation Manager noted,

"If something happen and it's doesn't work quit rightly, so in a first place, my team [operational people] will look at it. There will some initial investigation or but if come to the bottom of it, then within the County Council we hand it off to IT support. They [IT support] will then do a next layer of analysis and we will try to fix the problems. If they [IT support] can't fix that problem, then a call goes into the vendor's support team who will then directly will look at the problem and then come back to the IT support people and say "we have look at it, we think it's this problem, you try this to fix it". So, they [IT support] will fix it. If they [IT support] don't fix it then actually in the extreme circumstances, the vendor will send somebody over to work with the IT support people. So, it is layer by layer going on to try and solve the problem as quickly as possible"

THE EMERGING FRAMEWORK OF CiRM IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The successful operations of CiRM do heavily rely upon how the implementation of the system was managed. An emerging framework of CiRM implementation in the British local government was proposed based upon the cross-case studies (see Figure 2). It was recursive (rather than linear), incorporating eight key concepts that appeared from the analysis. . However, some of them will need to be managed concurrently and depend very much on how well senior managers and system developers work together.

Stage (1) involves the CiRM champions who can help to increase the level of implementation success through the implementation tasks that they will endure. It can be argued that the councils shall have more than one champion in-charge of the implementation project.

When management realised the benefits of implementing the CiRM system (2), the project will be given the top priority. This is due to the fact that their support can provide a long-term strategic vision and commitment to create a positive environment for the CiRM initiative.

In terms of implementation planning (3), the possibility of CiRM implementation success in local governments can be extended through a formal agreement of proper planning. There should be a clear plan to steer the direction of the CiRM project. The formal implementation planning means that there is a need to develop a solid business case in support of the implementation.

Stage (4) involves user needs analysis which can be a significant determinant of CiRM implementation. Knowing the users and tasks they perform are imperative if local governments wanted to implement a CiRM system that is usable and useful. Spending time to learn about public's requirements is the key to understanding their demand. This can be done by using different approaches (e.g., surveys) in identifying the needs and interests in terms of which services will be most desirable.

Resistance to change (5) may happen at any stages of the CiRM implementation life cycle. The studies has indicated that resistance to change mostly occurred during the initial and transitional stages of the life cycle as most of the users are still unfamiliar with the new CiRM technology. In this regard, it is essential to ensure that those affected by the new system are made aware of the benefits that the system may offer. Senior managers and system developers should establish strong communication channels to keep the stakeholders informed and be really familiar with the system.

The choice for the right package of CiRM system during user needs analysis involves important decisions regarding system budgets, objectives and deliverables that will shape the entire implementation project. The framework indicates that selection of CiRM system are driven by the relevance of the application's features to the local government's current and future needs as well as the system flexibility to accommodate for the operational use. Senior managers, system developers and users need to work together in analysing the potential system that need to be purchased. The greater the effort they put into the

procurement tasks, the greater the chance of the success.

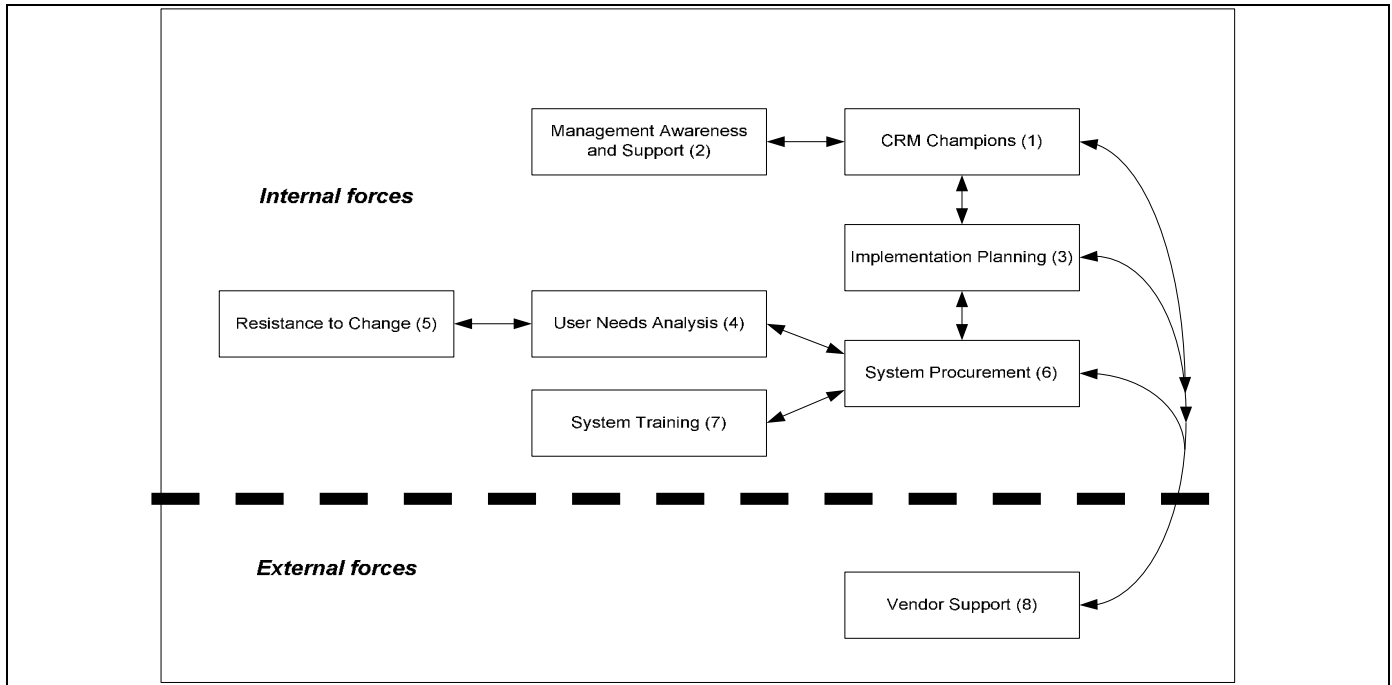


Figure 2. The Emerging Framework of the CiRM Implementation Process

A key part of the CiRM implementation process is system training (7). An effort to invest in a training program for anyone whose work will have an effect on CiRM system is one of the determinants influencing implementation success. For most people, new technologies represent a daunting learning curve and possible downsizing of their jobs. Senior managers have to ensure that a proper training process should be in place. This refers to specific knowledge that encompasses a level of training for the user and system developer. A series of well structured training which includes customer care capability will help the users to understand how the system will change the business process. Thus, they can apply the system’s objective to their operational activities.

Stage (8) in the framework involves the support provided by the vendors. Implementing CiRM system in local governments is likely to involve additional external assistance. This usually refers to three types of vendor assistance; consultancy, training and support. In addition, system support is also critical to meet users’ needs after CiRM systems go live. Strong reinforcement from vendor may be costly, but with the implementation expertise that they have on particular innovation may enable a cost reduction to the whole process of CiRM system implementation especially in maintenance part, unless the local governments are confident that they can employ a needed technical staff and staffing resources.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to explore the determinants influencing successful CiRM implementation in the British local governments. With the proposed framework, one should be able to encapsulate the phenomenon of CiRM implementation process in the British local government. This framework should also be able to set boundary for similar CiRM implementation studies. The primary strength of this framework is that it encapsulates the whole life cycle of them implementation process. It can be of value to recognise that the proposed framework is useful for senior managers in charged of the CiRM implementation process in the public sector. However, this was confined to two in-depth case studies. The number of informants in both cases was limited, due to the restriction in the field access. It is also significant to recognise that this study involved just the British local governments. Therefore, it is valuable to consider other geographical areas to obtain a more detailed picture of the implementation process. This exploratory work has contributed to the present body of CiRM implementation knowledge by confirming that CiRM implementation initiative is contextually dependent. The determinants influencing the CiRM implementation might be on the surface look similar to the common CRM determinants but they are fundamentally not. This might be explained by the overwhelming impact of the interpersonal dynamics of the

implementation process generated by the public. It can also be concluded that there are enormous amounts of successful CiRM implementation determinants available in the literature. These determinants are always subject to where and how CiRM has been implemented and it varies according to what organisation (e.g., size of the project, size or the organisation and sector it belongs to, number of personnel involved as well as the nature of CiRM applications).

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