February 11 – 13, 2013 - Innsbruck, Austria

Editors: E.P. Klement, W. Borutzky, T. Fahringer, M.H. Hamza, V. Uskov

Rates (USD): $430.00 (Hardcopy) ; $360.00 (Online) ; $400.00 (CD)

Completed list of the authors, abstracts and contributions:

http://www.actapress.com/Content_of_Proceeding.aspx?proceedingid=749

Paper: Casalino N., Buonocore F., Rossignoli C., Ricciardi F. (2013), "Transparency, Openness and Knowledge Sharing for Rebuilding and Strengthening Government Institutions", IASTED Multiconferences - Proceedings of the IASTED International Conference on Web-based Education, WBE 2013, February 11 - 13, Innsbruck, Austria, pp. 223-228, DOI 10.2316/P.2013.792-044, ISBN 978-0-88986-943-1.

Scopus ID: 2-s2.0-84875509914

TRASPARENCY, OPENNESS AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING FOR REBUILDING AND STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT
The developing of the Open Government Model is allowing an organizational revolution for public administrations, providing to citizens and entrepreneurs a better access to information and public services. It also can allow the increasing of transparency in public agencies and citizen participation, indirectly enhancing collaboration and facilitating democratic processes. Transparency and open data can be powerful tools to stimulate and support public services' improvements, faster innovation and empower citizens' rights. So actually many governmental organizations are reviewing and rearranging their processes, information and data to improve policies, enhance legitimacy and openness toward outside parties and citizens. An "open" public knowledge may contribute to establish a collaboration and participation culture among the main stakeholders. In this paper authors focus on a new organizational model to deliver transparent services and to improve an effective collaboration between the public administrations. The research methodology adopted is based on a theoretical-deductive approach. The study describes general principles to come, through the case strategy, to the empirical analysis of an innovative national government portal called "Transparency Compass Portal". It tries also to identify the distinctive aspects of some administrative services offered by several public organizations.

KEY WORDS
Open government, transparency, public administrations, knowledge sharing, openness, e-government, public services.

1. Introduction

In the current recessionary world economy, citizens require strategic national planning to ensure efficacy, transparency, responsiveness, participation and inclusion in the delivery of public services and manage. A relevant role is played by the public policies on transparency. The trend towards enhanced transparency is only one of the key changes of future government. Transparency in public administrations can be achieved by the disclosing information about their operations, decisions, outcome and performances in forms that the public can easily find and use. Public administration has actively engaged in pursuing three important objectives (1): be more accountable to citizens, be more efficient and cost-effective, provide greater public access to information. Presenting open public administration, often, comes up against a range of problems, such as poorly designed consultation processes, which can cause additional costs, without improving the quality of decisions. The importance of proactive disclosure is involving four

primary reasons. The first is the need to inform the public about laws and decisions and the public's right to be informed, to know their rights and obligations.

The second is the public's demand for the information needed to ex ante political control and for ex post monitoring and evaluation of the public sector (Sorrentino, 2010).

The third is the demand of information in order to participate actively in decision-making processes. The fourth is the provision of information needed to access government services, based on electronic access to services or "e-government".

For these reasons, new stimulus have been given to the development of the so called Open Government Model, because an open public knowledge may contribute to establish a real collaborative and a participative culture. Internet has a relevant role in the Open Government Model, resulting into three broad applications: access to information, transaction services and citizen participation. Studies consider another relevant application of IT to government services, related to the education and training field for its employees/citizens.

In the present study we describe the characteristics of Open Government and Government 2.0, the relevance of knowledge sharing and e-service integration in the Public Administration and, at last, we illustrate the methodology of the analysis.

2. From the E-government Approach to the Open Government and Government 2.0

A government may gain considerable popular support from the public by introducing to citizens new objectives and channels for the existing e-government. The well-known evolution of the role of the State, from the New Public Management until the Governance approach, in its diverse interpretations, has been translated in a series of new principles and tools that characterize the Open Government Model.

Open Government has been historically used in various contexts including freedom of information, anti-corruption, and transparency [2, 3, 4, 5], so the concept cannot be considered recent. The basic idea of Open Government is to establish a modern cooperation among politicians, public administration, industry and private citizens by enabling more transparency, participation and collaboration.

Open Government is an interoperable government model in which people and systems can communicate easily. The role of ICT is central for opening government, though technology cannot explain all recent changes. Open Government Implementation Model (OGIM) is based on four specific implementation stages: increasing data transparency, improving open participation, enhancing open collaboration, realizing ubiquitous engagement (as shown in Fig. 1).

The main characteristic point of OGIM is that public authorities should advance their open government initiatives gradually, focusing on implementation stage at a time. In fact, the increasing of data transparency [7] is a required to enable implementing earlier phases [8].
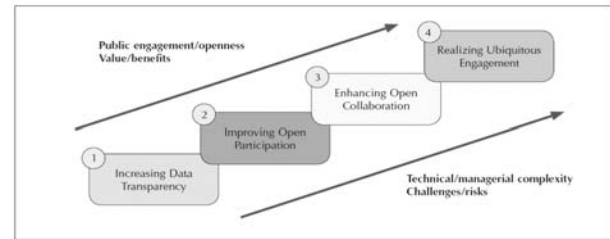

Figure 1. The Open Government Implementation Model

After all, without an accurate information management, it is not possible to establish a participation culture among the relevant stakeholders.

Transparency helps communities to enhance their governments by positive contributions, also helping to resolve concrete problems inherent specific government activities. Therefore, accessible information and Open Government Data (OGD) can be seen as crucial aspects of OGIM.

3. Knowledge Sharing and E-services Integration

When new goals and means of e-government reach citizens, a set of conventional determinants, such as perceived value of government services and general trust in government, shapes the collective attitude toward new modes of e-government. Several governments around the world are adopting massively information and communication technologies (ICT) to increase efficiency and improve public sector services [9].

Increasingly powerful and user-friendly technologies are creating serious opportunities for governments to offer new ways to interact with citizens in order to respond to their needs more effectively and with their integral participation.

On the course of e-government development, Open Government Model and Government 2.0 seem to be, respectively, the new ends and new means of e-government.

The current platforms and interoperability of technology-enabled public administrations, are moving from a traditional e-government approach (Government 1.0) to Open Government and Government 2.0 approach. This shift transparency has been increasingly emphasized as a fundamental driver for e-government.

The development of online services has been studied at different stages: (1) presence, (2) integration, (3) transaction and (4) seamless, that describe the new patterns of interactions of digital governments.

These four stages are explained in terms of complexity involved and different levels of integration (Fig. 2).
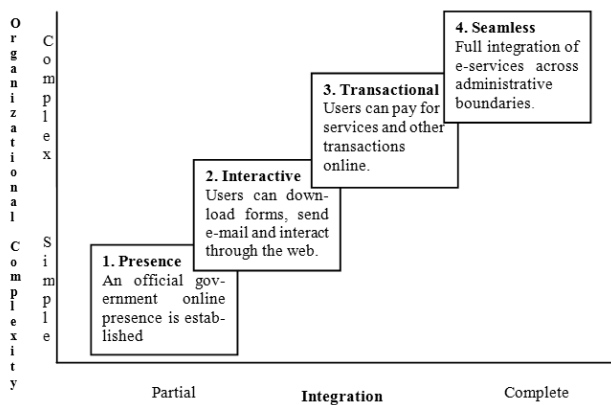
Figure 2. The stages of e-services development

The last stage is reached when the government promotes shared governance to transform how it operates, in terms of seamless information flow and collaborative decision making.

This is the most sophisticated level of online e-government initiatives and is characterized by:

- horizontal connections (among government agencies);
- vertical connections (central and local government agencies);
- infrastructure connections (interoperability issues);
- continuous connections between governments and citizens;
- connections among stakeholders (government, private sector, academic institutions, NGOs and civil society).

This last stage has not yet been fully achieved, since the transformation of government requires a meaningful negotiation between public administrations and citizens as well as among citizens themselves. Information should flow not only between public organizations and from the government to the citizens but also from citizens to the government and to citizens as a network. An extensive technology support is necessary in order to promote citizen participation.

In addition, the government needs to make sure to release information and to make it available to the public for informed discussions and participation. This will promote a collaborative decision making process by including citizens in the inception of new government policies called "Open Government Model" [10]. The Open Government initiative endorses transparency, participation, and collaboration that may offer new means for an electronically-mediated governance [11], sewing the gap between the actual status of e-government (use of e-government chiefly for cataloguing information on governmental webpages, web-based interaction and on-line transactional services) and the "seamless" stage of e-government.

Consequently Open Government Model is the new goal and Government 2.0 is new tool of e-government.

4. Methodology Adopted

The three principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration form the cornerstone of a tangible open government.

In our case transparency promotes accountability by providing the public with information about what the Government is doing; participation allows members of the public to contribute ideas and expertise so that their government can make policies with the benefit of information that is widely dispersed in society; collaboration improves the effectiveness by encouraging partnerships and cooperation.

The goals of Open Government Model require that public administrations have to become more proactive and transparent. More information are expected to increase the transparency of government and empower citizens to monitor constantly government performance more closely.

Therefore e-government is viewed as a constructive channel for enhancing trust toward public administration through the government accountability and the empowerment of its citizens. Therefore, Open Government Data is an essential aspect of Open Government Model.

For this reason the public administration must plan architecture of transparency on which to expose and exchange information freely. Aspects as timely, accuracy, and completeness are the gold standards for transparent and accessible data. The Open Government Data sets out principles that describe the "openness" in public knowledge.

This is a progress to open up government/public administration data, information and content to both human and machine-readable non-proprietary formats for re-use by citizens, private companies, media companies and academic organizations as well as by politicians and public administrators.

They would apply only to data and information produced or commissioned by government or government-controlled entities and is not related to data on individuals. Internet has changed the face of the lives of people, turning them completely into the latest practices with their developments.

The need to advertise the PA services is no more a major problem, as the companies can develop their websites regarding the products to convince the customers with their products or services. The main role of Internet in making large-scale proactive disclosure possible has resulted in a strong emphasis on government websites usage for publishing updated information. For that reason it is crucial to develop an online one-stop government portal to check directly the public transparency service delivering.

From comparing the national and international provisions it is possible to identify a set of 14 core classes of information for proactive disclosure, as shown in Tab. 1 [12].

Classes of information	Types of information
Institutional information	Legal basis of the institution, internal regulations, functions and powers.
Organizational information	Organizational structure including information on personnel, the names and contact information of public officials and salary details.
Operational information	Strategy and plans, policies, activities, procedures, reports, and evaluations including the facts and other documents and data being used as a basis for formulating them.
Decisions and acts	Decisions and formal acts, particularly those that directly affect the public including the data and documents used as the basis for these decisions and acts.
Public services information	Descriptions of services offered to the public, guidance, booklets and leaflets, copies of forms, information on fees and deadlines.
Budget information	Projected budget, actual income and expenditure (including salary information) and other financial information and audit reports.
Open meetings information	Information on meetings, including which are open meetings and how to attend these meetings.
Decision-making & public participation	Information on decision-making procedures including mechanisms for consultations and public participation in decision-making.
Subsidies information	Information on the beneficiaries of subsidies, the objectives, amounts, and implementation.
Public procurement information	Detailed information on public procurement processes, criteria, and outcomes of decision-making on tender applications; copies of contracts, and reports on completion of contracts.
Lists, registers, databases	Information on lists, registers, and databases held by the public body. Information about whether these lists, registers and databases are available online and/or for on-site access by members.
Information about information held	An index or register of documents including details of information held in databases.
Publications information	Information on publications issued, including whether publications are free of charge or the price if they must be purchased.
Information about the right to information	Information on the right of access to information and how to request information, including contact information for the responsible person in each public body.

Table 1. The fourteen core classes of information for a proactive disclosure [12].

5. The Transparency Compass Portal: A Strategic View

In those countries where Internet is a primary vehicle for a proactive disclosure, the challenge is how to organize it so that information can easily be found.

The most common solutions are either to publish information on the websites of each public administration subject or to gather it in a central transparency portal [13]. The second solution has the benefit of providing the public with a one-stop shop all information on transparency. An alternative method proposed in the last months aims at highlighting the numerous public administrations success stories, rewarding and publicizing them through a series of measures, namely:

- the disclosure of public administrations good practices on the Ministry for Public Administration and Innovation website;
- a "competition" to identify and reward the best achievements that public administrations have accomplished;
- a through diffusion of the best results achieved to the benefit of administrations.

This new framework provides a relevant innovation to the Italian administration, that shifts the focus from retrospective and individualized accessibility to real-time total transparency. Each administration, from 2011, has to draw a Multi-annual Transparency Plan in order to guarantee total online access to the administration performance planning and results, individual rewards schemes, as well as to all other aspects of the administration's business. The plan will also list all proactive activities in order to support citizen participation.

A "National Commission for Evaluation, Transparency and Integrity" will provide technical support to the Plan and be the whistle-blower. It will also gather all data on a Transparency Portal, that will promote Open Government. Sanctions are foreseen for civil servants in case of non-compliance or implementation failures. The Italian initiative "Transparency Compass Portal" can be classified as a project for the management of big unstructured information.

It can be part of the wider program e-Gov 2012 as one of the initiatives to simplify the interactions of the Citizens with the Digital administration.

The main objectives of "Transparency Compass Portal" will be:

1) enable the access to the plans and the performance relations of the public administrations, and to the sections "Transparency, evaluations and merit" published on the websites;

2) simplify the governance of the compliance process to laws on the transparency thanks to monitoring systems and dashboards;

3) search, find and collect also unstructured data published on the websites of the P.A. related to transparency aspects using "Italia.gov.it – Motore dell'Amministrazione Digitale", that allows the on time and continuous up-dating of the information;

4) encourage "widespread forms of compliance monitoring of the principles of impartiality and fairness", as stated in the "art.11, comma 1 D.Lgs. n.150/2009".

The additional publishing approach of data concerns:

- leaves of absence;
- consultants and freelancers;
- contracts awarded to civil servants;
- union permissions;

- time off work for unions activities or for elected public office;
- salaries, curricula, assignments, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of civil servants;
- public administration success stories.

Figure 3. The "Transparency Compass Portal" case study available on http://www.magellanopa.it/bussola

Realizing the single window concept brings an important organizational shift: from public services structured around the fragmentation of public administration towards a citizen-oriented structure of effective public services [14].

The number of public administrations websites covers over 45,000 units.

The complexity of this domain, to regulate access to administrative documents and personal data, combined with the dynamism of the information objects of interest, makes the realization of the portal challenger [15]. To meet this challenge, the portal will be supported by systems that can search, retrieve and organize information in an automatic or partially assisted.

It requires all public authorities to be interconnected and that the customer (a citizen, a company or another public administration) is able to access public services by a single point even if these services are provided by different public authorities or private online service providers.
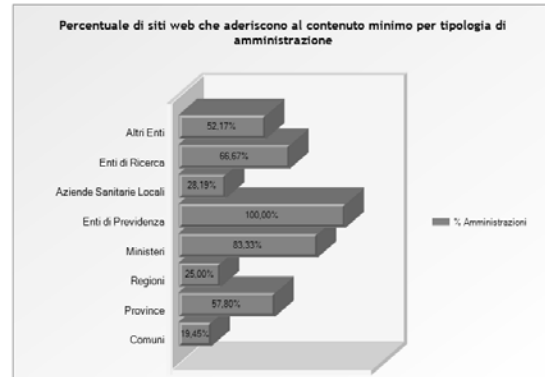

Figure 4. A check of the PA websites on transparency situation and rules adoptions

6. Conclusion and next steps

Transparency means knowing the reasons, facts, logics and basis of the decision taken by the public administrations. Transparency in public administration in legal terms means that a citizen has a right (legal or fundamental) to have access to the information about government's actions [16].

Transparency means to highlight both aspects so as to prevent inefficiency and reward merit. It aims at guaranteeing citizens and enterprises a more efficient public service, better quality of services and strengthen citizens' trust in public institutions [17].

The project "Transparency Compass Portal" can be inserted in the context of already started initiatives for the openness and modernization of the Italian Public Administration:

- "PERLA PA" is an integrated system that supports the functions of management and monitoring of data and information in charge to the "Dipartimento della Funzione Pubblica";
- "MagellanoPA" is an online platform for the knowledge management and sharing of the Public Administrations. It also provides official guidelines and allows to improve quality and usability of public websites;
- "Italia.gov.it", as said, is the main Italian search engine for digital administrations that includes a considerable knowledge base of all online public services; it automatically provides search results on the public specific field;

- "Dati.gov.it - I dati aperti della P.A." is a centralized catalogue of dataset provided by the public administrations in opened-mode.

All of them can represent essential lines of intervention upon which the services of the Italian Public Administrations have to be based in the next months.

As mentioned, we are just joining a period of real sustained implementation of many anti-corruption and transparency measures to validate people activities [18]. Within this context, we haven't lose sight of the real investment needed in rebuilding and strengthening government institutions [19] at both the political and public administration levels.

The next step will be to describe a framework that supports knowledge modeling and sharing [20] within public administrations, and a prototype of such portal as a typical knowledge-sharing system.

At the same time, it is important to continue to implement more initiatives, including creating greater opportunities for participation in agency rulemaking, and greater transparency of regulatory compliance and enforcement activities. Not least of all, the government could also promote open government at EU (European Union) level.

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