Challenges and Success Factors of Implementation of Electronic Prescription Service: A Comparative Study of England and Sweden

Melis Kupeli

Ayse Dilan Eken

Tommy K.H. Chan

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Completed Research Paper

Melis Kupeli
Alliance Manchester Business School,
The University of Manchester
Manchester, UK
melis.kupeli@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

Ayse Dilan Eken
PE-GU Maritime UK
Manchester, UK
aysedilaneken@gmail.com

Tommy K.H. Chan
Alliance Manchester Business School, The University of Manchester
Manchester, UK
tommy.chan@manchester.ac.uk

Abstract

Although the benefits of Electronic Prescription Service (EPS) have already been advocated, only a small number of countries achieved high adoption rates upon introduction of the systems; many countries failed at the implementation stage. Currently there is no sufficient knowledge as to why EPS implementation succeed in some countries and fail in others. This research aims to fill this gap through a comparative case-study approach. The study compared the EPS implementation approaches in England and Sweden, two countries that has eventually achieved high adoption rates – despite the delays in England – to identify challenges and success factors for introduction of EPS and inform policymaking in other countries. We conducted two exploratory case studies and analyzed the data using vivo coding.

The English case presents how centralization may prevent regional/local engagement and thus, may fail to attract stakeholders. Although implementation has been delayed several times, through evaluation and improvement of the system and transformation of their approach to implementation, England has successfully deployed EPS in their healthcare settings. The Swedish case shows how engagement with end-users and encouraging collaboration has the potential to facilitate development of a user-friendly system and facilitate adoption.

Our findings highlight some similarity, but also several differences in the way the two countries handled the implementation process. For successful implementation of EPS, it is fundamental to encourage co-operation of stakeholders both during development of the software and during the planning stage of implementation, because centralization prevents local engagement. Still, central guidance and specifications are needed to prevent integration issues. Implications for research and practice are discussed.

Keywords: Health information systems, eHealth, electronic prescriptions, England, Sweden, case study