Administrative Innovation in Human Resource Information Systems: Exploring Post-Adoption Usage in Kuwait’s Public Sector

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Abstract. Human resource information systems (HRIS) have a prominent role in organizational success and have been used to support various HR goals. Previous research on HRIS focuses on its adoption as a form of innovation per se, and limited studies examine innovation emerging in the context of HRIS post-adoption usage. This study will focus on post-adoption usage from the perspective of administrative innovation, which is related to improvements in work processes and tasks following the adoption of HRIS. Although innovation has gained more interest in the public sector as a way to improve efficiency, there is a lack of studies regarding HRIS and administrative innovation in this sector. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the development of administrative innovation in the public sector of Kuwait where HRIS has been adopted and integrated into various HR practices. This poster presents the preliminary findings of the research in progress.

Keywords: Administrative Innovation, Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS), Post-Adoption.

1 Introduction

Innovation is a term used extensively in our daily lives with different meanings attached to it. The field of innovation has been widely studied and linked to different academic fields such as information systems (IS), economics and management. In IS research, innovation is often linked to the introduction of information systems as technological innovation [1]. This study goes beyond the focus on technological innovation and emphasizes the non-technological side of information systems.

Non-technological innovation is related to the improvement of organizational processes and structures [2]. It refers to various types of innovation including organizational, management, and administrative innovations. Given the focus on human resource information systems (HRIS), which is acknowledged to enhance administrative efficiencies [3], this study will concentrate on administrative innovation.
1.1 Literature review

Administrative innovation is broadly linked to changes in the procedures, rules, tasks, social structures and information systems [4]. In the organizational management literature, administrative innovation is an organizational innovation that can particularly refer to changes around HR processes [5]. In the IS literature, administrative innovation is linked to information system usage and considered as a type of IS innovation [6]. Therefore, administrative innovation involves social and technological changes [7]. Instances of administrative innovation in previous studies include Total Quality Management (TQM), and Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) [1,7].

Since information systems can sometimes be underutilized or used in narrow functions [8], it is essential to look beyond adoption and examine innovation that develops after the system is adopted, accepted and employed in organizations [9]. Innovation could result from the learning and experience generated after the extensive use of the system that enables employees to expand the current use of the system and modify tasks and work procedures [8]. Therefore, in this research, administrative innovation refers to creating knowledge and developing ideas to improve internal organizational HR processes and tasks following the adoption of HRIS.

There is a lack of studies regarding innovation in the public sector compared to other sectors [10]. It is argued that the bureaucratic regimes traditionally associated with the public sector are inimical to innovation [11]. In addition, there is a major assumption that innovation in the public sector is a top-down process mainly introduced by the management [12]. Hence, there is a need to understand how innovation is initiated [12].

This research seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by enriching the understanding of the development of administrative innovation in relation to post-adoption usage of HRIS in the context of public sector organizations.

1.2 Research Questions

After identifying the gaps in the literature, the following research question was formulated: How does administrative innovation develop following the adoption of HRIS in the context of public sector organizations?

In order to answer the main research question, this study will address the subsequent sub-questions, in the context of public sector organizations:

1. What are the manifestations of administrative innovation related to the use of HRIS?
2. Who initiates administrative innovation following the adoption of HRIS and what are the motivations and perceived obstacles?
3. How do initiators of administrative innovation related to HRIS interact with stakeholders?
4. How do these motivations, perceived obstacles and interactions influence the development of administrative innovation?
2 Methodology

Grounded theory is the methodology applied for data collection and analysis. It involves a systematic approach for developing a theory from the obtained data [13]. Grounded theory was chosen as it is well suited to investigate experiences and interactions and to generate in-depth understanding of processes that are less understood [13].

The research context was selected based on the following criteria: (a) it is a public sector organization; (b) it has self-governing HR practices; (c) it has successfully adopted HRIS. The face-to-face semi-structured interview is the main data collection instrument for this study. Participants are selected on the basis of theoretical sampling, which is based on concepts derived from the analysis in order to enrich the developing theory [14]. Document analysis is also utilized to support data collection.

According to the principles of grounded theory, data collection and analysis form an iterative process [14]. The analysis process involves constant comparison, memo writing and coding. The coding procedure is divided into three phases: open, axial and selective coding [15].

The initial data collection and analysis have commenced. A total of 32 semi-structured interviews have been conducted in a public sector organization, in the banking and finance sector, in which HRIS has been implemented since 2009. Participants include HRIS users from different organizational levels, ranging from management to HR employees who use HRIS to perform their work.

3 Preliminary findings

The preliminary results from the initial data collection and analysis demonstrated that employees had the agency to initiate and participate in administrative innovation, which implies that administrative innovation is not always a top-down process in the public sector but is often employee-driven. In the context of post-adoption, employees use their knowledge of HRIS to come up with new ideas to modify or improve current processes and tasks.

The initial results also revealed that employees have different attitudes towards administrative innovation: some are motivated, others are indifferent, and still others are resistant. Motivated employees are enthusiastic about volunteering ideas, and they often do not expect recompense. Indifferent employees only want to perform their tasks and nothing more. They are not willing to speak up and volunteer ideas. The third type is resistant; they are unmotivated and do not want to change.

In addition, there are some challenges pertaining to administrative innovation. Firstly, some employees are secretive about their innovative ideas. They tend not to share their ideas with the managers or even with their coworkers. They intentionally decide to remain silent, or they feel that their idea is “too simple to be shared.” Secondly, there is a lack of clarity in the process of sharing ideas and suggestions related to the administrative work. Even when ideas are suggested, they may move up the organizational hierarchy but stop at a certain level. In this case, the ideas are neither accepted nor rejected and the employees do not receive any feedback.
4 Future work and conclusion

This poster demonstrates the preliminary findings of the study. The iterative process between data collection and analysis will continue to further explore the phenomenon until data are saturated. Theoretical saturation occurs when data analysis does not reveal new additional information and when all categories are developed with their properties and linked to the core phenomenon [13, 14]. Subsequently, theoretical propositions will be integrated to explain the development process of administrative innovation in relation to HRIS post-adoption. The findings of the study may be applicable to similar organizational contexts in the Gulf region.

References