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Success in public procurement of IS – myth or utopia?

ABSTRACT

Public procurement of information systems (IS) is gaining academic interest as digitalisation of services and the continuous, rapid development of technology keep the amount of acquired IS ever growing. Public procurement projects may succeed or fail on many levels, but tools to measure or quantify success comprehensively have yet to be developed. In my doctoral dissertation I look for solutions, definitions and answers surrounding public IS procurement and success.

OVERVIEW – MOTIVATION AND RESEARCH GAP

Public procurement refers to purchases where public money is spent to pursue public interest and is carried out by government agencies and procurement units. Public procurement offers a supportive ground for innovation and its impact on economy is significant: in 2020 the share of public procurement of total GDP in Finland was 19 % [1], and in 2023 the total value of ICT acquisitions for all government branches was over €1,217.5 million [2]. In recent years the trend has been increasing.

In many developed countries IS purchases made by the public sector form the majority of total IS acquisition requests. Despite this, public procurement of IS has long been a neglected area of study, though in the past few years academic interest has sparked anew especially in the Nordics. The need and relevance of research on public procurement of IS is recognised both in academic literature as well as on national strategy level [3].

Challenges in public procurement are well recognised in literature and in practice. The definition of success overall is elusive and complex. Despite several efforts in the research fields of project management, IS, and public procurement, there are no standardised models or methods for measuring success or benefits realisation that would consider the views of various stakeholders and be able to adapt to the changing technological environment with sufficient efficiency.

In my research I look for answers and seek to create solutions that take into account the three main stakeholders in public IS procurement: the vendor, the procurement unit, and the end user. The motif and question guiding the research as a whole is stated in the preliminary title of the dissertation: How is success defined and measured in public procurement of information systems?

References

- [1] OECD, 2021, "Government at a Glance 2021," OECD Publishing, Paris, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/1c258f55-en>.
- [2] Tutki hankintoja, [Openprocurement.fi](https://openprocurement.fi), [Online]. Available at <https://tutkihankintoja.fi/procurement-categories?lang=en>.
- [3] Ministry of Finance, 2020, "Kansallinen julkisten hankintojen strategia 2020 [National strategy for public procurement 2020]," Finland, URN: <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe2020090768680>.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND STUDIES OUTLINED

RQ1: What is the current state of research of public procurement of IS?

METHODS AND DATA

- Systematic literature review

GOALS

- Establish the current state of research on public procurement of IS
- Importance of my contribution revealed



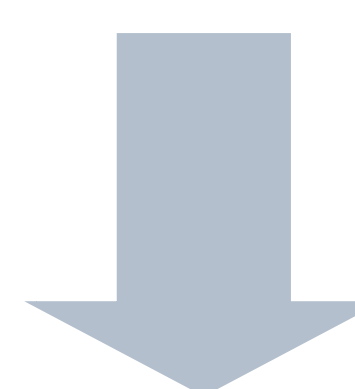
RQ2: What elements or factors define the success of public procurement of IS?

METHODS AND DATA

- Mixed method
- Semi-structured interviews, data analysis (HILMA)
- Dataset allows for multiple case studies

GOALS

- Success defined? (Foolhardy, eh)
- Observe the perception of success in past and ongoing IS procurement by various user groups and stakeholders



RQ3: How can success perceived by various stakeholders and user groups be measured?

METHODS AND DATA

- Design science
- Data and findings of previous studies

GOALS

- Developing and testing a tool for observing success throughout the life cycle of a public IS procurement process
- Quantifying so called softer variables

OBJECTIVES



Examine the state of research in the field.



Consider the concept of perceived success in various user groups of public procurement, and explore the possibilities of defining and measuring success in procurement processes.



Create a conceptual tool to observe, measure and ensure continued success throughout the life cycle of a public IS procurement process.

TIMELINE

The work has begun in August 2024 and is planned to be finished in 2027 as the doctoral pilot ends. The planned schedule is as follows (panic and existential crisis excluded):

2024

Literature haul and SLR, understanding the topic

2025

Data gathering (interviews, HILMA), data analysis, writing, conclusions, publishing attempts, more analysis, developing the tool, more writing, etc.

2026

2027

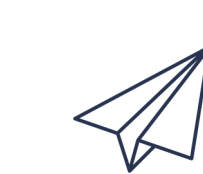
Compiling the dissertation, public examination

EXPECTED CONTRIBUTIONS

- Advance practices of public procurement of IS in academia and other sectors of working life.
- Present new information on a topic that has not been much researched.
- Potential for improving public procurement culture and creating tools for measuring success of the procurement process.
- Connect past research and developments in the field, and display the state of the art of public procurement research concentrating on information systems.

INTERESTED IN COLLABORATION?

Most ideas presented are still on a draft level. I am open to being influenced by conversations sparking new ideas on potential studies and articles, available data sets, unexpected collaborations and new publications. Do get in touch and share your thoughts!



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