

E-GOVERNANCE: A VERITABLE TOOL IN ENHANCING GOOD
GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to examine the challenges and way forward of e-governance as a veritable tool in enhancing good governance in Nigeria. It employed literature review to gather data on the challenges and way forward of e-governance as a vehicle for promoting good governance in Nigeria. The study use New Public Management as a framework for this study. Despite various efforts by international communities to improve e-governance, Nigeria is still ranked among those countries with low e-governance level as a result of epileptic power supply, corruption, bureaucratic bottleneck, lack of committed leadership, lack of necessary regulatory / law framework, poor ICT infrastructure and low ICT literacy rate. To overcome the challenges of e-governance in enhancing good governance in Nigeria, the study recommends among other that government must support the technological creativities and support the necessary capacity to promote e-governance so as to guarantee good governance in Nigeria. Also, there should be purposeful leadership for e-governance to excel. Strong, high-level leadership typically at the level of the head of state is needed to supply the vision, establishes a national e-strategy and ICT task force and policy and really support from public and private sectors.

Keywords: E-governance, Good governance, Challenges, Way Forward and Nigeria.

Introduction

The recent advancement of information and communication technology provides the opportunities to transform the relationship between governments and citizens in a new way, thus contributing to the achievement of good governance goals. In recent years, the concept of e-governance has flourished rapidly with advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Governments all over the world are now introducing e-government as a strategic option to fine-tune the service delivery in different government sectors (Gottschalk and Solli-Saether, 2009). Moreover, E governance is one of the most important tools in enhancing good governance in Nigeria. Its evolution has dramatically changed how government interact with their citizens, creating an important development in their expectations. The Information and Communication Technology is making its in-road and impact on every activity like, commerce, health, agriculture and even in governance. Communication is now nearly instantaneous. These changes are causing staggering upheaval in the familiar systems including governance (Sardana and Sharma, 2007). E governance is the ICT-enabled route to achieving good governance. Good Governance is generally characterized by participation, transparency, and accountability (UNESCO, 2011).

The purpose of implementing e governance strategies is to enhance good governance. Good governance is generally characterized by participation, transparency and accountability. Adeyemo (2013) observed that the primary aim of ensuring the application of e-governance in the affairs of the state is to promote good governance which is characterized by equality, partaking in the democratic process, transparency, and accountability in the various sector of the nations' economy. The advantage for the government involvement is that government may provide better services in terms of time, making government more efficient and more effective (Ojo, 2014).

E-governance came as a result of revolution of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) which find expression in the digital services like personal computers, the internet, mobile telephony and different electronic applications. A confluence of these technologies eased flow of information, its accessibility and delivery (Danfulani, 2013). This came with numerous advantages because citizens were connected with government; government became more efficient and robust, cost of governance and transaction were scaled down, and transparency was enhanced (Henry, 2007).

However, Nigeria boarded ship of e governance like any other developing nation in the middle of last decade, and since then, virtually all facets of life have experienced unprecedented transformation. At the initial stage of e-activities in Africa, Nigeria was assessed low compared to countries like Kenya, South Africa, Egypt and the rest. With the deregulation of the sub-sector and direct capital investment by foreign firms, the country experienced a quantum leap and overtook all other countries in the continent principally because of the largeness of the population which is roughly put at about 180 million people and the share wealth of the nation which gave a sizable number of the citizens and

governments at the three tiers of authorizes the capacity to buy Personal Computers Smartphone's, and other internet related appliances and run internet programmes that integrated governmental ministries and departments (Akunyili, 2010). The pattern of e-governance aims for easy dissemination of government information between government-to-citizens (G2C), government-to-business (G2B) and government-to-government (G2G)) which consequently helps in improving the quality of government services and promotes good governance as well.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria is a country with weak or diffuse political consensus. Therefore, governments must play an important role in reaching the public through on-line dissemination of information and use of other ICT tools in reaching the public. (Abdullahi, 2008). Nigeria has the fastest growing information and communication technology market in Africa, yet in spite of this, the country is still ranked low in the provision of e-government services to its citizens. Some scholars argued that In spite of the various legislations and policies put forward to promote e governance in Nigeria, the implementation has always been below expectations. For example, the work of Adeyemo (2013) and Adah (2014) and others found that despite the various strategies which the global community has adopted in fostering the growth of ICT connectivity and projecting the importance of adopting e-governance for service delivery purposes, there remains a fundamentally different dispersion of e-government services in Nigeria. Despite various attempts to improve its e-governance status and nature, the international system still ranks the Nigeria among those countries with low e-governance level.

Therefore, the need for the present research is to establish what are the challenges and way forward of e-governance in enhancing good governance in Nigeria?

Objective of the Study

1. To examine the challenges of e-governance in enhancing good governance in Nigeria.
2. To ascertain the way forward e-governance in enhancing good governance in Nigeria

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The Concept of E-Governance

The term governance needs to be understood before we move on to e-governance. The concept of "governance is conventionally conceptualized, as the process by which a political system achieves such values as accountability, participation, openness (or transparency) and respect for the rule of law and due bureaucratic process".

E-governance also refers to the delivery of information and services on-line through the internet or other digital means. "It is not only the computerization of a government system, but a belief in the ability of technology to achieve high levels of improvement in various areas of government, thus transforming the nature of politics and the relations between governments and citizens" (Dada 2006:1). Shilubane (2001) also views e governance as the use of information technology, in particular the internet, to deliver public services in a much more convenient-customer oriented and cost effective way. E-governance can be referred to as the application of information communication technology by the government to enhance accountability, create awareness and ensure transparency in the management of government business. It is a political strategy through which the activities of government are made known through the adoption of modern communication technology (Ojo, 2014). According to Estevez and Janowski (2013), Electronic Governance is the application of technology by government to transform itself and its interactions with customers, in order to create an impact on the society. Fatile (2012) defines E-governance as the use of information technologies (such as the internet, the World Wide Web, and mobile computing) by government agencies that can transform their relationship with citizens, business, different areas of government, and other government. UNESCO in Hassan and Siyanbola (2010) defines E-governance as "the public sector's use of information and communication technologies with the aim of improving information and service delivery, encouraging citizen participation in the decision making process and making government more accountable, transparent and effective.

The Concept of Good Governance

Good governance is among other things participatory, transparent, and accountable. It is also effective and equitable, and it promotes the rule of law, ensuring that political, economic, and social priorities are based on broad consensus in the society. Moreover, good governance enables an organization to do its work and fulfill its mission (Subramanian, 2012). According to (WB, 2004), Good governance is epitomized by predictable, open, and enlightened policy, making a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos. Good governance is also an executive arm of the government accountable for its actions which are strong civil society participation in public affairs, and all behaviors under the rule of law.

Richard Heeks (2001) studied the effect of new information and communication technologies and how it can make a significant contribution to the achievement of good governance goals. He outlined the three main contributions of e-governance: improving government processes (e-administration); connecting citizens (e-citizens and e-services); and building external interactions (e-society). Case studies are used to show that e-governance is a current, not just future, reality for developing countries. However, most e-governance initiatives fail. Countries therefore face two challenges. First, the strategic challenge of e-readiness: preparing six identified pre-conditions for e-governance i.e.

Data Systems Infrastructure, Legal Infrastructure, Institutional Infrastructure Ready, Human Infrastructure, Technological Infrastructure, and Leadership and Strategic Thinking. Second, the tactical challenge of closing design-reality gaps: adopting best practice in e-governance projects in order to avoid failure and to achieve success.

Roumeen, Islam (2003) explored the link between information flows and governance. He looked at (a) how the availability of basic economic data affects governance and (b) how the legal framework governing access to information might affect the quality of governance. Empirical analysis showed that countries which have better information flows as measured by both indicators have better quality governance. Regions where the media have a greater reach were also the areas where voters were more informed about political choices and able to cast votes accordingly. They need timely information on decisions related to various aspects of government activity, on how these decisions will be implemented, information on the consequences of these decisions and the process through which they are reached.

Ibikunle and Sarumi (2012). Examine on Electronic-Governance for Nigeria: Opportunities and Challenges in the Digital Era. This paper is aim at identifying and analyzing the primary issues, opportunities and challenges that e-government initiatives present for Nigeria. it was concluded that in the new economy, underpinned by revolutionary changes in science and technology, information and knowledge has become a key factor in economic competitiveness. Nigeria must pursue a more active role in the formulation of national policies and strategies to promote the information economy, to real huge benefits in terms of economic and social development.

Ugochukwu and Lawrence (2015) investigate on E-Governance and its Implementation Challenges in the Nigerian Public Service. , there are lots of challenges that hamper the effective implementation of e-governance in Nigerian public service. It is based on this, that this article identifies some of the challenges to e-governance implementation in Nigerian public service. Although, no robust statistical analysis was done, as the article relied on archival analysis of relevant literature on the subject matter and inferences drawn from it. Based on its findings, it was concluded that e-governance remain the best in encouraging transparency and accountability in government business. The study therefore, recommends that, government should be more committed to the implementation e-governance as well as embark on adequate enlightenment about the concept.

In the study of Richard and Eme (2015), Studied on Electronic Governance and Administration in Nigeria: Prospects and Challenges. The Nigerian government liberation of the telecommunication sector and proliferation of smart-phones have deepened internet penetration in the polity. Added to the new impetus is the proliferation of social media sites, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Google Plus, Tumblr, Instagram and Twitter among others. These platforms have their pros and cons such as using information shared on these sites to la spear phishing attacks for access to people's online banking

details with a view to fleecing them. Like every new policy, there are skepticisms about its workability. Banks have therefore taken the responsibility to enlighten their customers about the policy to achieve a seamless result. The paper highlights key-points in Electronic governance and administration. The paper goes on to explore and highlight the benefits and challenges facing the new payment system and concludes by positing that the new platforms have so far streamlined the operations of both users and government in Nigeria.

Emma *et al* (2017), Effect of E-Government on Service Delivery in Federal University Ndufualike Ikwo, Eboyin State. The study adopted descriptive research design was adopted to guide the study; two hypotheses were formulated and tested. Chi square non-parametric statistics was used to test the hypotheses. The study revealed among other things that e-government has strong positive effect on service delivery by enhancing the performance of workers. This is because the use of ICT in work-related activities reduces waste of time, delays and mistakes on the part of workers in the discharge of their duties. However, the recommendations were made major among them is that the Institution should improve on the current ICT infrastructure and strategy and continue to improve on the internet access and digital divide among staff in order to continue achieving their organizational goals.

Adah (2018), studies on the Status and Nature of E-Governance in Nigeria. the study argued that Nigeria has the fastest growing information and communication technology market in Africa, yet in spite of this, the country is still ranked low in the provision of e-government services to its citizens. Data were analysed qualitatively through content analysis. The paper argues that the emerging growth of ICT in Nigeria has not effectively influenced the development of its e-governance status due to numerous challenges such as the unwillingness on the part of the government to ensure a two way communication pattern in the governing process. One of the suggestions proffered by the paper is that Nigeria and other Sub-Saharan countries should endeavour to keep abreast of new innovations which would aid in the speedy growth of e-governance in the region.

Dhruba and Nischal (2020), E-Governance: A Study Of The Concept and Implementation in The Emerging Economy. The adopted descriptive and correlational research designs were deployed while undertaking the study to explain the position of variables in the national context and examine the relationship between economic governance and e-governance. The bureaucrats, academicians and business professionals are the respondents of the study. Purposive sampling methods were deployed. The study findings show the government should develop a strategic framework for the effective implementation of e-governance. Government tends to focus on infrastructure, and qualified manpower development and increase computer literacy on the public to effective implementation of e-governance in Nepal.

Theoretical Framework

New Public Management theory is adopted as a framework of analysis in this study. "New Public Management (NPM) is an incarnation of a new model of public sector management in response to the challenges of liberalization, international competitiveness and technological changes" The model is an attempt to implement the 3Es of Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness. It refers to the adoption of new values of governance to establish greater accountability, legitimacy and credibility of the system. However, NPM provides a major set of ideas on which so much of current e-government initiatives are based. This means that e-governance can enhance public administration reforms by achieving some of the core values of the NPM agenda which is good governance (Heeks, 1999).

Research Method

This study employed literature review as a research method to gather data on the challenges and way forward of e-governance as a veritable tool in enhancing good governance in Nigeria. Secondary data was also sourced from relevant literature.

The Challenges of E-governance in enhancing Good governance in Nigeria

The challenges of e-governance in Nigeria are the same as with many other developing countries of the world. There appears to be a consensus among authors that the number one problem of e-governance implementation in Nigeria is poor internet and telecommunications infrastructures. Fatile (2012) aptly capture the situation when he said that the enabling technological frameworks of e-governance, for instance telecommunications facilities are still insufficient or substandard. Contrary to Olufemi (2012) is of the view that one of the major setbacks in e-governance implementation in enhancing good government in Nigeria is the absence of team work among government agencies. According to him, every ministry has its own web page but there is no inter-connection or linkage between them, therefore the system is not interactive.

However, Omeire and Omeire (2014) gave a detailed analysis of the challenges of e-governance in enhancing good governance in Nigeria. They include:

- Low ICT literacy rate: The low usage of ICTs by the Nigerian public serves as an impediment to the implementation of e-governance in Nigeria. Most Nigerians see the use of computers and the internet as very complex for them. Even among the educated class, ICT compliance is not high.
- Lack of necessary regulatory/ legal framework: In spite of the various legislations and policies put forward to promote e-governance in Nigeria, the implementation has always been below expectations. Some of the ICT services from the government are not properly regulated, for instance, sending and receiving e-mails.
- Poor ICT infrastructure: Internet service and telecommunications structure are still in their embryonic state in Nigeria. In addition, internet and telecommunication services are

very expensive, thus, a large section of Nigerians who cannot afford these services are alienated from participating in e-governance.

- Corruption: The implementation of e-governance in Nigeria is not spared from the tentacles of the hydra-headed monster called corruption. Just as it is with a typical government policy in Nigeria, e-governance has had most of its execution stalled because of the pervasiveness of corruption. Since e-governance has the capability of reducing corruption, the forces of corruption in government establishments will oppose and do everything they can to ensure its failure.

- Lack of committed leadership: Since the idea of e-governance implementation and the national ICT policy was conceived in 2001, neither the previous and present governments have demonstrated the strong political will and commitment to see to its success. The interests of the leadership over the time have been anything but passive. The policy is not given the adequate attention it requires for its success.

- Epileptic power supply: The perennial problem of unstable electricity has further compounded the accessibility of the web in Nigeria by the public. Likewise, the situation has made internet services costly because of the use of "generators" to power cyber cafes.

- Bureaucratic Bottlenecks: Red-tape is a huge impediment to the flexibility which e-governance proposes. With the insistence on adhering to unneeded due processes, rules and regulations, most of which are duplicated, the purpose for e-governance is defeated. This is because e-governance, when implemented, ensures a very speedy, flexible system that gets rid of time wasting and all forms inefficiency. Thus, the continued practice of bureaucratic bottlenecks becomes counter-productive to e-governance.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper examine the challenges and way forward of e-governance in enhancing good governance in Nigeria. It is clear from the analysis that e-governance is not enhance good governance in Nigeria because of epileptic power supply, corruption, bureaucratic bottleneck, lack of committed leadership, lack of necessary regulatory/ law framework, poor ICT infrastructure and low ICT literacy rate. It is recommended that to enhance good governance in Nigeria, there should be purposeful leadership for e-governance to excel. Strong, high-level leadership typically at the level of the head of state is needed to supply the vision, establish a national e-strategy and ICT task force and policy and really support from public and private sectors.

The Way forwards of E-governance in Enhancing Good Governance in Nigeria

To overcome the challenges of e-governance in enhancing good governance in Nigeria, government must support the creation and support the necessary capacity to promote e-governance by:

- Integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in curriculum at all levels of educations (Primary, Secondary and tertiary) and ensure that teachers/trainers possess requisite skills since ICT education is a foundation for any nation to achieve a high, acceptable rate of computer literacy.
- There should be establishing educational networks for sharing education resources and promoting e-learning at all levels.
- There should be in place for e-governance laws that will enable government in conduct its functions in electronic/digital form, data protection law dealing with the protection and privacy of personal information, freedom of information law, allowing wide access to public information.
- There should be provision and support for decision makers, community and civil society leaders to undertake Information Technology (IT) training.
- There is the need to improve on electrical power supply so that the public can easily access the web. Once power supply becomes stable, the cost of providing internet services would become cheaper, thereby allowing more accessibility to the internet, including online services and interaction with the government.
- There should be purposeful leadership for e-governance to excel. Strong, high-level leadership typically at the level of the head of state is needed to supply the vision, establish a national e-strategy and ICT task force and policy and really support from public and private sectors.

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