

Periscoping E-Governance in Nigeria: Matters Arising

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09032710340

Abstract	<i>NG-Journal of Social Development</i>
<p><i>.The technological trends of our changing world, has changed the world into a global village where every nation including Nigeria is striving to attain a high level of electronic governance, which revolves around the use of information and communication technology to deliver 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. The paper is adopted content analysis technique. The study also evaluated the parameter of E-governance-based on the laid down guidelines by the United Nations Global E-government Readiness Report. The paper identified and addressed the obstacles and benefit of e-governance. The paper therefore recommends that Nigeria government should create enabling environment where maintenance culture will be an accepted ethic or norm in public life; there should be effective implementation of ICT at all levels of education in both urban and rural areas and Principle of the rule of law must be upheld to promote equality before the law.</i></p>	<p><i>Vol. 13 Issue 1 (2024)</i> <i>ISSN(p) 0189-5958</i> <i>ISSN (e) 2814-1105</i> <i>Home page</i> <i>https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ngjsd</i></p> <p>ARTICLE INFO: Keyword: <i>Electronic-governance, E-government, Information Communication Technology</i></p> <p>Article History <i>Received 10th January 2024</i> <i>Accepted: 27th February 2024</i> <i>DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ngjsd.v13i1.3</i></p>

1. Introduction

The increasing upshot of sophisticated Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) across all private and public organizations in Nigeria became wide-spread during the 1980s and 1990s. In twenty-first century, “the use of the internet to enhance interaction with citizens became increasingly widespread and has become a new channel of communication” (Eneanya, 2015). The business of governance has continued to be challenging in recent times owing to technological development. These challenges occasioned by the increasing demand for accountability, transparency and in recent times the global economic issues are putting pressure on the government to embrace digital innovation to enhance good governance.

Nigeria, however is striving to attain a high level of electronic governance, which revolves around the use of information and communication technology to deliver government services. Though, Nigeria has been recognized as one of the fastest growing information and communication technology market in Africa, yet the country is still ranked low in the provision of e-governance and e-government services to its citizens.

E-governance is a two way communication process which deals with the use of information and communication technology to deliver government services and ensuring the availability of such services to citizens. Its application has become a crucial mechanism in enhancing citizen’s participation, monitoring and evaluating government projects, ensuring government accountability and transparency as well as transferring information from one sector to another, Palvia and Sharma, (2007).

It has become a persuasive and indispensable political mechanism in evaluating government performances in many developed nations of the world, (Sunday, 2014). Heeks (2002) stated that the use of information and communication technology in government businesses through promoting government’s role in delivering services, public administration and promoting active participatory democracy has been gaining an impelling force in the global community. Governments all over the world are determined to identify ways to deliver public services more effectively through strategic objective of supporting and abridging the governing processes for government, citizens, and businesses. Thus, this necessitates the need to embrace e-government through the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance good governance and effective public service delivery to its citizenry. According to UNESCO (2005) e- governance deals with the adoption of new leadership style, of leadership, new methods of making decision on policies and investment, new ways of making education available to citizens, new ways of listening and attending to citizens as well as new ways of organizing and delivering information and services.

e-governance is 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. It also purports to ensure the

efficiency, accountability and transparency in the functioning of government and show the way of good governance.

2. Conceptual Review

Electronic Governance

Electronic governance, in this context, therefore, means using electronic tools to implement government activities for the benefits of the citizens. Generally, the concept e-government brings about a change in the way citizens relate to governments and to each other. It is a new concept of citizenship, both in terms of citizen needs and responsibilities. Its objective is to engage, enable and empower the citizen.

In a broad definition, Electronic governance encompasses the utilization of information and communication technology in government businesses with the primary aim of encouraging greater participation in the state as well as enhancing the relationship between the government and citizens.

Various authors have provided definitions of e- governance. According to United Nation (2006), e-governance is a deployment of internet for delivery of government information, and services to the citizens. World Bank Report (2006), Electronic-governance involves the use of information and communications technologies (ICT) by governments to enhance the range and quality of information and services provided to citizens, businesses, civil society organizations, and other government agencies in an efficient, cost-effective and convenient manner, making government processes more transparent and accountable and strengthening democracy.

Bannister and Walsh (2002), e-governance is a concept that involves the deployment of information and communication technology by various government agencies and civil society in promoting the frequent participation of citizens in the governing and administrative process of political institutions. Sunday (2014) asserted the electronic governance is a broad concept which analysis and accesses the effect of technologies on the administration of government, and the inter-relation which exist between the public servants and the larger society.

Adeyemo (2013) opines that the primary aim of ensuring e-governance in the affairs of the state is to promote good governance which is characterized by equality, participating in democratic process, transparency and accountability in the various sector of the nations' economy.

The e-governance demonstrates applications of ICT to facilitate the operation and the disbursement of government information and service delivery. It therefore, rely heavily on the internetwork of ICT infrastructures, internet and non-internet applications to aid the operations of government, (Jeong, 2007).It entails the digitized coding, processing, storage and distribution of data relating to three key aspects of governing societies: the representation and regulation of social actors; the delivery of public services; and the generation and circulation of official information (Coleman, 2008).

Domain of Electronic Governance

E-governance facilitated by the creative use of ICT has the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses and various arms of government. Heek (2001) identified three main domains of e-governance

- E- administration: improving government processes
- E-service: connecting individual citizen with their government
- E-society: building interaction with and within the civil society.

The main purpose of the e-administration is to improve the internal workings of the public sector by cutting, managing process performance, creating strategic connection within the government bodied. E-service initiatives focus mainly on improving the relationship between the government and its citizen by increasing the information flow and improving the service level of government toward its citizens. E-society initiatives extend the pervious e-service domain by focusing on stakeholders such as private sector service providers, other public agencies and nonprofit and community organizations. The three domain of e-governance are seldom separate in their implementations rather they involve overlapping activities as part of the same initiative.

Interaction in Electronic Governance

Backus (2001) pointed out that electronic governance aim to enable the interaction between main groups in electronic group. These groups are; government, citizens, and business/interest groups. These groups constitute of major models in e-governance which are; Government to Government (G2G), Government to Citizens (G2C), and; Government to Business (G2B). Subsequently, these Modes of e-governance operations and delivery are also inherent in Nigeria practices are as follows;

- Government to Citizens (G2C)), means government interaction with citizens to access quality government services, resolve social issues, access information, track complaints and participate in decision-making. e.g. Nigerian Immigration Portal
- Government to Business (G2B) means government leverage with business for supplies, procurement, proposals and contract biddings and using electronic devices to manage mutually beneficial information.
- Government – to – Government (G2G) -Government relates with states and localities in data-sharing, planning, reporting mutual requirements and participates as full partners to render welfare services to citizen.
- Government-to-Employee (G2E)- means government using electronic tools engage employees for resource planning logistics, information system and customer relations management to promote internal efficiency and effectiveness of employees.

In furtherance, Palvia and Sharma (2007) asserted that the primary focus of government to government (G2G) model is to analyses concretely the pattern of relationship which exist between government organizations and agencies. This model ensures that there is a high level of co-operation among governments, while also emphasizing on the need of being efficient in providing adequate internet services for government transactions.

Government to Citizens (G2C) revolves around the roles which governments can play in providing the citizens with the opportunity to obtain information and services online. In Government to Citizens (G2C) model, citizens of a nation are given the opportunity to inquire about issues relating to government institutions, keep records of income taxes, pay tickets, renew driver's license etc. In addition, the government can also aid in giving out information on web, provide downloadable forms online, assist citizens in finding employment and providing information about health and safety issues.

Government to Business (G2B) model of e-governance revolves around a two way interaction and transaction between government and businesses (Palvia & Sharma, 2007). Sunday (2014) observed that government to business model is an online interaction between the various levels of government with the commercial business sector. The specific aim of government to business model of e-governance is to create a conducive environment for business transactions, ensure the provision of vital information that will aid the growth of businesses and enable an internet-based communication by electronic-business (Sunday, 2014).

Moon (2002) is of the view that there are basically four aspects of government to government model of e-governance. These include:

- Establishing a safe and institutionalized interaction between government agencies
- Delivering government services through an interconnected network
- Adopting e-commerce in government transactions to ensure efficiency at all levels
- Ensuring an electronic transfer of information among democratic government.

The principles of e-governance are to:

- Build services with citizen choices in mind; Increase government accessibility;
- Foster social inclusion;
- Disseminate information in a responsible fashion; and
- Use taxpayers resources effectively and efficiently (Holzer and Schwester, 2011)

Stages of e-governance Palvia and Sharma (2007) asserted the stages as the following; The Emerging stage is a stage where the presence of basic government information is small in scope and pertains to only specific issues. Under this stage, the e-governance online presence consists of an official website which links to ministries, departments, parastatals, and regional/local governments. Some important documents such as the constitution and certain policy statements are also uploaded online in this stage. The enhanced stage, the government at this stage ensures that certain selected public policy documents such as an e-government policy statements, specific education and health policy statements, as well as government sources of current and anchored information are made available to the citizens. The interactive stage ensures that government's internet services are capable of influencing and acting on each other, while providing services that will be suitable for each citizen. Such downloadable documents as forms for payment of taxes, license renewal, and bills payment are found in this site. Transactional stage allows a dual interaction between government and citizens. This stage creates avenue for the citizens to pay for important government

services online, while those who are responsible for providing goods and services are given the opportunity to bid their goods online through links that are adequately secured. The internet stage, this is the final stage of e-governance development. At this stage, the government and its agencies provide citizens, businesses and other civil organizations the opportunity to participate, deliberate and make important decisions, and at the same time, the government is ready to involve every sector of the society in a dual discussion with the aim of promoting unity amongst members of the society.

Parameters for Measuring the Nature and Status of E-Governance

In recent times, the applicability of ICTs has offered many opportunities for economic and human development within various nations in the global community. Since the establishment of the United Nations e-government survey, the programme has taken up a comprehensive method of analyzing e-governance status based on three components of the e-government development index (EGDI), firstly, extent which online service delivery are made available in a nation, secondly, the level of telecommunication infrastructure and lastly, the state of human capital index of a nation (Backus, 2001).

E-governance development index is based on a comprehensive survey of the online presence of all 193 united nation member states which assesses national website and how e-government policies and strategies are applied in general and in specific sectors for delivery of essential services. The assessment rates of e-government performance of countries are relative to one another as opposed to being an absolute measurement. Within 0 to 1 range of e-government development index (EGDI) values countries are grouped into four levels, mathematically defined as follows: very high EGDI value range from 0.75 to 1.00 inclusive; high EGDI group value range from 0.50 to 0.7499 inclusive; middle EGDI value range 0.25 to 0.4999 inclusive and low EGDI values 0.0 to 0.2499 inclusive, in all references to these ranges in text and graphic elements.

However the most comprehensive update to the e-government survey assessment in 2022 comes in the form of a refine formula for generating the online service index. The new approach introduce a standardization and normalization regimen to further align the online service index(SOI) with local online service index(LOSI) by categorizing the assessment questions into five discrete thematic areas forming five sub-indices: institutional framework(IF); service provision(SP); content provision(CP); technology(TEC); and e-participation(EPI)

According to the United Nations global e-government readiness report (2022), the assessment of the status of e-governance in member countries of the United Nations have been taking various dimensions or online service delivery index. Based on the three components of e-government analysis; the online service index, telecommunication infrastructure index and human capital index. Denmark was ranked first with a near –perfect e-government index rating of 0.9717, Finland ranked second with 0.8399 and republic of Korea ranked third with 0.6499

The United Nations e-government report (2022) stated that the progress in Africa is relatively slow and uneven. Nigeria is ranked as number 14th among the top 20 countries in Africa in the E-Government Development Index Ranking.

The Nature, Status and Initiative of Electronic -Governance in Nigeria

Nigeria, like every other nation in the global community is striving to achieve a standard where e-governance becomes the order of the day. It has set for itself the goal of developing its ICT structure to a level where ICT becomes an avenue for sending and receiving information from one sector of the society to the other. Between 2011 and 2013, Nigerian government had adopted various online procedures such as mobile apps and mobile portals to directly support poverty eradication, gender equality, social inclusion and the promotion of economic development, environmental protection and disaster management (Adeyemo, 2013).

Nigerian government through e-government initiative has introduced programmes such as the Treasury Single Account (TSA) and the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information (IPPIS) to promote accountability and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of payroll administration for its Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). Other initiatives which have been adopted in virtually every sector be it in health, industry, bank, education, oil and gas, politics and governance. This is evidenced in such advances as e-passport biometric, driving license, Bank Verification Number (BVN), Permanent Voter Card, Card Reader, e-recruitment portals and so on. Indeed, using ICTs for governance in Nigeria has facilitated cross-industry linkages, efficiency and productivity, making the banking, oil and gas and manufacturing industries so reliant on it for growth. Thus, various attempts to improve the status and nature of e-governance in Nigeria, the international system still rank the Nigeria among those countries with low e-governance level. According to the United Nations E-Governance Survey Report (2022) Nigeria ranks 140 positions out of 193 countries in terms of its e-governance status, value (0.4525) in 2022 but was ranked 141 in 2020 and 117 of 193 in terms of E-participation, value(0.3068) in 2022 but was ranked 114 in 2020; online service index value (0.5250) in 2022 and (0.5176) in 2020; telecommunication index value (0.3886) in 2022 and (0.3534) in 2020; human capital index value (0.4439) in 2022 and (0.4507)in 2020.

The survey also revealed that Nigeria is among those countries with lower middle income and it had 0.4525 as its e-governance development index figure. Reasons for these low ranking by the international community can only be understood if the various parameters of assessing the status and nature of e-governance are analysed in the Nigerian context. These indices includes; online service delivery, telecommunication infrastructure and human capacity development. The United Nations e-governance survey reveals that Nigeria basically delivers e-governance services and online services through mobile apps.

Adeyemo (2013) is of the views that despite the low rankings accorded to Nigeria by the international community, government at various levels are still putting more effort to encourage the growth of e-governance. A State of e-government readiness based website assessment, telecommunication infrastructure and human development and Extent of e-participation. Nigeria's culture, transparency and accountability status can be improved if e-governance is properly implemented. In addition, the adoption of electronic systems in all sphere of administration would reduce the heavy need of man power.

Nigeria, like other countries in the Sub Saharan region are experiencing certain setback in their course of introducing e-governance model in the governing process. Majority of Nigerians still have no access to affordable broadband internet connectivity. The dearth of requisite internet infrastructure, including long distance transmission fiber, metropolitan networks and connectivity necessary for bandwidth distribution means that Nigerians pay more for broadband internet services when compared with their counterparts in other African countries. And economies of Broadband remain out of reach for average Nigerian because the fiber needed to move the bandwidth around is limited and mainly found in some cities and urban centers. Besides, there are challenges of lack of skilled professionals desired to support massive infrastructural deployment. Other challenges for using ICTs for governance include: lack of legal framework, lack of universal access and usage, high operating costs and lack of local content. Irrespective of these challenges, using ICTs for governance holds a lot of promise in Nigeria. With the right environment and better skills sets, broadband infrastructure access and usage, using ICTs for governance has tremendous opportunities for Nigeria in terms of participating meaningfully in good governance and promoting socio-economic development.

Benefits /Obstacles of Electronic Governance in Nigeria

The changing trend in the international system has prompted many developing countries to realize the need for e-governance in its administrative processes. Most beneficial prospects of e-governance in countries, which are undergoing development processes, are increasing efficiency, enhancing transparency, and facilitating the reforms of public service.

According to Kama and Ongo'ndo (2007), the proposed benefits can only be achieved if the following are put in place:

- i. Government should create a conducive atmosphere where the citizens can have an easy access to the government via electronic means of communication. This will promote a two-way flow of information and public service efficiency.
- ii. Capable institutions should be established to curb corruption at all levels of government. The institutions should also have a primary responsibility of promoting accountability among public office holders.
- iii. The principle of the rule of law should be respected irrespective of status, age, qualification or gender. As such, each individual should be given an equal opportunity to obtain information when the need arises.
- iv. Bureaucratic bottle-neck should be reduced to a minimal level and there should be inter-departmental exchange of information, while related services should be merged so as to reduce costs, time, space, and man power.

Karma and Ongo'ndo (2007) asserted maintain that the major reasons which hinder the growth of e-governance in developing countries. They include:

- A certain degree of unwillingness on the part of the government to share vital information to the public. This has consequently resulted in the implementation of policies that are not advantageous to the masses and the establishment of government websites with little or no information.

- Literacy rate of Information and Communication is low. Thus, it is quite difficult to have access and manipulate through government websites to obtain information.
- There is an unequal dispersion of internet services/facilities. a relatively exorbitant cost of connecting to the internet and in some cases, the speed connectivity to the internet is quite slow because of low penetration rate.
- The principle of the rule of law should be respected irrespective of status, age, qualification or gender. As such, each individual should be given an equal opportunity to obtain information when the need arises.
- Bureaucratic bottle-neck should be reduced to a minimal level and there should be inter-departmental exchange of information, while related services should be merged so as to reduce costs, time, space, and man power.

Despite these obstacles, Nigerian government is still putting various strategies in place to foster the growth of e-governance in the nation. From online registration and record management of citizen and business to online passport application are providing services to the citizen at their door step, (this reduces the length of time that might have been spend to process the license). The use of Integrated Public Payroll system (IPPIS) and use of the Treasury Single account (TSA) that serves as a custodian of all government funds that is domiciled in the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

3. Conclusion

E-governance seen as a global phenomenon is an institutional mechanism for driving efficiency in the public sector to achieve good governance and to improve the quality of public service delivery. This is because efficiency and effectiveness are key success criteria of government involvements and ICTs increases the efficiency of government administration (this is a direct result of the replacement of street level bureaucrats by electronic information devices. Global assessment therefore shows that despite the growth of ICT in Nigeria, there are still certain challenges which have hindered the development of e-governance status to an international standard. The major setback which is experienced in the process of implementing e-governance in Nigeria is the fact that the primary objective of making it citizen-centered approach usually becomes a displaced priority. Thus the global surveys made by international community clearly reveal the fact that the status and nature of Nigeria's e-governance is at the rudimentary stage.

4. Policy Recommendations

With the changing trend and methodologies adopted by the international community to assess the state of preparedness among nations. It is imperative that nations should strive to keep abreast of new innovations in the international community so as to meet up with standards. However the following as recommended

1. Government should put in place an enabling environment where maintenance culture will be an accepted ethic or norm in public life. This can be achieved through making available to every departments or institutions the required funds and infrastructures for maintenance purposes.

2. There should be effective implementation of ICT at all levels of education in both urban and rural areas. A followed up strategy must set up as special monitoring and evaluation unit with a feedback mechanism to ensure that policies concerning the provision of ICT infrastructures are effectively implemented
3. Principle of the rule of law must be upheld to promote equality before the law. every individual should be treated equally and given fair hearing irrespective of age, gender, status, religion or educational qualification.

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