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The Implementation of Electronic Governance in Nigeria: Implications and Challenges

Solomon Adebayo Adedire

Department of Political Science and International Relations,

Landmark University, Km 4 Ipetu, Omu Aran Road,

P.M.B. 1001, Omu Aran, Kwara State.

e-mail: bayoadedire@yahoo.com.

Phone number: 08023892753

Abstract

The global transformation of administrative process from manual to electronic means has necessitated the emergence of e-government in order to ensure efficient and effective service delivery to all stakeholders. Through e-government, government services will be made available to citizens in a convenient, efficient and transparent manner. The paper examines the implications and challenges of e-government implementation in Nigeria. The paper also reveals that the implementation of e-government has encouraged effective cost-service delivery and facilitates cross collaboration and co-ordination among organs of government at different levels. It argues that e-government implementation is faced with such challenges like poor infrastructure, change management, connectivity problems, unstable power supply, vandalization of cable and facility, lack of accessibility and low consumer purchasing power. The paper therefore recommends that infrastructure in areas of telecommunication network, regular electricity supply; kiosks that will allow citizens to have access to information should be developed. Also, for sustainability of IT initiative, people should be educated at all levels about the benefits of technology and the advantages of e-government should be communicated to all and sundry in order to ensure popular support for greater accomplishment. In addition, the feasibility of e-government project in terms of capacity building, readiness and financial sustainability should be properly evaluated.

Keywords: E-governance; challenges; implications; Nigeria; implementation.

Introduction

The complex and dynamic nature of the society has necessitated the global transformation of administrative process from manual to electronic means, hence, the emergence of e-government in order to ensure efficient and effective service delivery to all the stakeholders. With the idea of replacing paper based application by the electronic means, it provides an

opportunity to improve governance system. According to Williamson (2009), access to information is vital for transparency, accountability and inclusiveness. Through e-governance, government services will be made available to citizens in a convenient, efficient and transparent manner. Saugata and Masud (2007) defined e-governance as the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for delivering government services, exchange of information communication transactions, integration of various stand-alone systems and services between government-to-customer (G2C), government-to-business (G2B), government-to-government (G2G) as well as office processes and interactions within the entire government framework.

E-Government is a fairly recent development in most developing countries and especially in Africa and it has become a fundamental tool for enhancing national development. Therefore, every government has made concerted efforts to include it in its mode of operations. Mohammed, Abubakar and Bashir (2009) stated that like all other Internet-enabled applications, such as e-commerce, electronic government has become a global phenomenon and an essential required feature of all governments in both the developed and developing societies. To this end, all governments have mounted initiatives that seek to strengthen their institutional capacities to take full advantage of the emerging global knowledge economy as well as meet the diverse and varying problems and challenges that it poses to their social and economic developments.

The administration of George Bush in 2001 initiated a program towards effective use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) investment. According to the Federal Architecture Program Management Office of the United State of America FAPM (2003), the US government sets up Federal Enterprise Architecture (FEA) as a business-driven framework for government-wide improvement and provides a common framework for improvement in a variety of key areas such as: Budget allocation, Information sharing, Performance measurement, Cross-agency collaboration, E-Government and Component-based architecture. In this reference model, the information held by one agency, if useful to another agency, will be timely transferred to the other agency.

In Africa, most scholars have argued against the African exception in e-governance. According to them, institutions of governance, including the parliament, the executive and the state bureaucracy should adopt modern

information and communication technology in order to transform their operations and make their work more transparent and people-centered. The fourth African Development Forum held in Addis in October 2004 produced a consensus statement declaring that:

E-governance ... is an important innovation for enhancing good governance and strengthening the democratic process and can also facilitate access to information, freedom of expression, greater equity, efficiency, productivity growth and social inclusion. Successful e-government initiatives can have demonstrable and tangible impact on improving citizen participation and quality of life as a result of effective multi-stakeholder partnerships. African governments need to develop appropriate policy frameworks, supported by legislation for e-governance, that are linked to strategic development objectives; enlist high-ranking political e-government champions; focus awareness, outreach and training efforts on the less privileged segment of targeted users, particularly women and neglected rural communities; and promote local content and supports local language development (ADF, 2004).

In the light of such agreed policy intentions, it would be a major error to regard Africa as an exception to the global transition towards e-governance. There are many examples of successful African e-governance projects, often implemented in isolation from broader strategies for sustainable e-governance. Strategic programmes for e-governance have been established recently in countries like Egypt, Kenya, Senegal, Mozambique and South Africa. These strategic initiatives are welcome indications that African e-governance is moving beyond the stage of novel experimentation. As in Europe and North America, African governments are proceeding pragmatically and incrementally towards e-governance, but they are increasingly doing so within a framework of established good practices and strategically-articulated objectives.

Most African countries are faced with ineffective and inefficient governance due to a haphazard execution of e-governance. According to Heeks (2006), 85% of e-government projects in developing or transitional countries are met with partial or total failures. Berman and Tetley (2001) assert that the success rate of introduced information technology systems in African state agencies has been distressingly low, and the capacity-building objectives remain largely unachieved.

