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E-Governance in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract. The basic duty or function of government all over the globe is to akin to the yearnings, aspirations and needs of its citizens. Bureaucratic institutions are used as veritable tools in the administration to establish and implement public policies and programs aimed at serving the demands of the people. It's on this note the study examines the challenges of e-governance in Nigeria. Due to large dependence on secondary sources of data acquired from papers published in respected academic journals, official publications, Conference papers, internet sources and relevant books, the study adopted the use of content analysis techniques. The study discovered, among other issues, that low knowledge of ICT, insufficient legal framework, and inadequate infrastructure are among the challenges that obstruct the efficient adoption of e-governance in Nigeria. The research, on the other hand, the study found out that e-governance has a lot of potential for the country, including giving information on job openings, e-police system, a medium for information transmission, and economic development, among other features. From the issues discovered the study recommended that government should provide ICT infrastructure, ICT legislation should be enacted in the nation, and the government should demonstrate commitment to making e-governance a success in the country, among other issues. The study concluded by noting that e-governance is critical to the country's realization of accountable, responsive, and transparent government in Nigeria.

Keywords: E-governance, information communication technology, challenges, prospects, transparency

Introduction

The basic duty or function of government all over the globe is to akin to the yearnings, aspirations and needs of its citizens. Bureaucratic institutions are used as veritable tools in the administration to establish and implement public policies and programs aimed at serving the demands of the people [1. P. 14].

Traditional administrative methods, such as using paper to process government work, were frequently used to conduct public functions at first. This strategy was found to be slow and non-responsive to the citizens' changing requirements [2. P. 32]. As a result, public administration of the time was seen as inefficient and ineffectual because it took a long time for the government to respond to the people's demands and expectations. Furthermore, people were rarely involved in the management of their own affairs because such a system of government did not provide opportunities for direct participation. As a result of the foregoing, the government of the day suffered a near-universal loss of faith and trust, as it was regarded to be self-serving [3. P. 1; 1. P. 14].

It's crucial to remember that government operates in a context, and changes in that context have a direct impact on its methods, procedures, and operations. As a result of the breakthrough in information and communication technology, substantial changes in the way people and institutions (public and private) carry out their daily obligations have emerged [1]. People increasingly use their mobile phones to make calls; e-mails are now utilized to send and receive messages; mobile communication is expanding at an exponential rate, much like how we surf the Internet [1]. According to Onuigbo & Eme [4. P. 19] "individuals utilize the internet to shop online, conduct financial transactions, book travel tickets and make online payments, check the weather, conduct research, and communicate with people who live outside their countries". The government is not exempted from this. It has been influenced by the technological environment to the point where it now determines how and when it performs its functions. E-governance is the technical term for the use of ICT in the fulfillment of government duties [3]. ICT has long been used in public administration in advanced economies and countries. This is primarily due to the fact that they have the infrastructure, capabilities, competencies, and skills required to drive e-governance, and that the system allows governments to achieve maximum efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, and transparency in their interactions with citizens and other clients [5. P. 12]. As a result, the use of information and communication technology by western governments in the delivery of public services has endeared them to the people/citizens, who regard the governments as responsive and responsible to their changing demands as well as conscious of their mandates. Furthermore, as they have adopted ICT, emerging countries cannot afford to fall behind in improving their means of carrying out public tasks. The adoption of e-governance is expected to aid their governments in making public service delivery more effective, adaptable, lucrative, and competing [5. P. 12; 2. P. 32].

The value of e-governance in the operation of Nigeria's public sector is undeniable. Nigerian e-governance dates back to the year 2000, when the Nigerian National Information Technology (NNIT) strategy was formulated. The policy's goal was to make Nigeria an IT-capable country in Africa and a vital actor in the information society, with IT being used for education, wealth creation, poverty eradication, job creation, governance, health, and agriculture [2. P. 31]. Given the advantages or benefits from the implementation of e-governance by governments

in poor nations, especially in Nigeria, a number of challenges persist, compromising the system's effectiveness. As a result, this study is to assess the challenges and prospects of e-governance in Nigeria.

Concept of E-Governance

The concept of e-governance just like other concepts have been variously conceptualized by different scholars expressing their ideologies, personal idiosyncrasies, and their social environments. At this juncture the concepts of e-governance by notable scholars will be examined. To Obasanjo [6], e-governance, is the use of information and communication technologies to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and accountability of government by implementing a data warehouse and an integrated decision support system to manage the modern economy for the benefit of the governed. Similarly, Ojo [7. P. 79] defines e-governance as "the government's use of information and communication technology (ICT) to improve accountability, raise awareness, and ensure openness in the management of governmental business". He also claims that e-governance can be viewed as a government's political strategy for showcasing its actions to the public. While according to Ayo [8. P. 76] e-governance is defined as "the governing of a state or country using ICT". In other words, e-governance is the use of information and communication technology to carry out government functions. From the foregoing definitions, it can be deduced that e-governance is simply the use of ICTs in the operations of government businesses. To put it in another way, it is the shift from the traditional method of carrying out government activities, which is primarily hierarchical, linear, and one-way, to the use of the internet, which allows the public to seek information at their own leisure and without having to rely on the government. The key goals of e-governance, on the other hand, are to improve government operations (e-administration), connect citizens (e-citizens and e-services), and create external connections (e-society) [2].

Despite these goals, Godse & Garg [9. P. 15] pointed out that "e-governance adoption requires careful consideration of a number of elements. Making and implementing decisions, proper leadership, putting in place organizational arrangements, ensuring resources and funding, establishing accountability and measuring success, telecommunications network, internal agency systems, cross-government systems, service delivery network access points, internet access and skilled staff, better delivery of government services to citizens" are among their priorities. Dada noting that e-governance "is not merely the computerization of a government system, but a belief in the power of technology to reach high levels of improvement in various sectors of government, thus redefining the nature of politics and government-citizen relations". The main goal of e-government is to make citizen interaction with government more convenient and simple. E-government, he claims, makes it easier for citizens to interact with the government. The implementation of e-government imperatives necessitates a shift in how government operates, handles information, views officials' jobs, and interacts with the public [10].

The Role of Information and Communication Technology on Good Governance

The rule of law states that everyone in society is subject to the law and that no one is above it. It also implies that the law must be equitable to all, that everyone should have access to the law, and that no one should be treated unfairly or discriminatorily [11]. ICT has a role to play in this. ICT services will aid in the recording and processing of cases, as well as the faster and more timely exchange of information between the court, prosecutors, and litigants; meeting judgement deadlines; facilitating evidence investigation; improving identification accuracy through the use of digital cameras and video; and tracking the accused's voices and actions, as well as fingerprint identification. As a result, in a world that has been flawlessly transformed into a global village, there will be no ICT and no good governance [12; 14].

ICT has the potential to empower both the government and the general public. ICT can be a source of tax revenue for the government. For example, the Nigerian government received USD 0.78 billion in tax revenue in 2013 and USD 0.85 billion in 2014. [12. P. 268]. While government revenue in Nigeria in the 4th quarter of 2020 was 997.49 Billion Naira [13]. In addition to oil rents, this represents a substantial sum of money. People are empowered by ICT because it creates jobs for them by involving them in importing ICT equipment, distributing, retailing, offering linked services, and selling recharge cards [14]. This is what it means to be empowered! What does this have to do with effective governance? Meeting the needs of the people, which includes employment, is one of the principles of good governance. Another need that effective government should meet is security, and through providing work, social insecurity is addressed. In its job, ICT educates and empowers individuals. To succeed, good governance necessitates the presence of ICT experts [12. P. 267].

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As accountability and transparency are improved, there will be fewer cases of corruption. This is due to the fact that citizens and government service providers have limited physical contact, and their activities can be easily monitored [1]. Through all its database systems, ICT can enable this to happen by allowing the government to make such data available to the public and allowing them to interact with it. All areas of importance should be explained in the reports or data presented. Prompts and notifications that require immediate action should also be planned for. The government must act within a certain amount of time, otherwise the public will believe that the government has failed the

accountability test [12. P. 269]. The government could be impeached or voted out of office as a result of this. The main benefit of an accountable government is that it restores people's faith and confidence. Transparency necessitates that government information be open to the public and freely accessible. The government can achieve this by acquiring and deploying faster and easier methods of public information transmission, such as television, radio, email, open-source data rooms or portals, and the usage of speech channels that provide immediate input. Citizens should have access to government budgets, including actual income and expenditures, via government ICT portal services. Past budgets and reports should be maintained as open data on government e-portals for study, knowledge creation, and policy analysis [12. P. 269]. Through citizen interactive platforms, open data has an enabling effect on e-government, which energizes good governance for efficiency and innovation. It is also simpler to contribute to the government and for the government to receive and respond to such information [12. P. 269]. The democratic space is expanding as a result of more ICT-driven engagement between government and citizens, which is beneficial to effective governance.

Challenges of E-governance in Nigeria

Nigeria's poverty reduction schema envisioned to lift 100 million Nigerians out of poverty has encountered cynical opinions right from the announcement of such intention by the government. For instance, Punch Editorial of March 4th, 2020, argued that "as long as planning… does not tie expenditures to specific, realistic revenue sources, all plans will go the way of the bungled Vision 2020… Likewise, the ambition to free 100 million citizens from poverty over the next decade will be another mirage [5].

With barely six months into the commencement of the 'Decade of Action Plan', the government herself started expressing pessimism about meeting the target. It was evident in the opening address presented by President Muhammadu Buhari during Nigeria's Integration of the SDGs into National Development Planning: A Second Voluntary National Review:

While modest progress has been achieved across the goals and indicators, challenges remain in the achievement of many of the goals. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic and its health and socio-economic impacts will slow down progress on the achievement of the SDGs in Nigeria. Nevertheless, as a government, we are committed to lifting 100 million Nigerians out of poverty by the year 2030 [12].

Judging the statement oozing out of the oasis' mouth, it is unambiguous to decipher that there is no clearer indication of admitting defeat than the foregoing statement which of course was stylishly covered in a hope-assuring comportment to not let the hell loosed totally. All things being equal, some substantive factors may perfectly hinder the realization of the 2030 agenda in a decade. Such factors hang around economic, opacity in governance, the express gaps sandwiched between formulation and implementation and total misplacement of priority.

Gaps Sandwiched between Formulation and Implementation

Much has been written about the advantages of e-governance deployment in Nigeria or what it has to offer. According to scholars, when e-governance is applied, it will provide transparency, awareness, and accountability in the conduct of governmental operations [7. P. 79]. Similarly, Budhiraja [15] believes that adoption will result in SMART governance (Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive, and Transparent). It is also expected to improve the efficiency, speed, and transparency of communicating information to the public and other agencies, as well as the performance of administrative operations both internally and externally, as well as good governance [16]. In Nigeria, however, this is not the case. Therefore, we cannot rule out the possibility of any challenges that are unique to any government program, but we believe that there are some issues that must be addressed before we anticipate too much from the Nigerian public service's e-governance strategy. This is also in agreement with the claim of Dode [17. P. 382] hence: "The practice of e-governance is certain to face severe pushback from the policy's bureaucratic sections. This refers to the overburdened public sector, whose members would see this approach as the government's premeditated endeavour to fire the vast majority of its employees. As a result, the vast majority of public workers are likely to utilize their positions to thwart the efficient implementation of e-governance in Nigeria. They will despise a system that reduces face-to-face interaction between citizens and government service providers to a bare minimum". However, the introduction of e-governance in the Nigerian public sector is accompanied by several hurdles.

One major challenge faced by the implementation of e-governance in Nigeria is corruption. According to Omeire & Omerie [18. P. 485] the "tendrils of the hydra-headed monster known as corruption are not spared in the deployment of e-governance in Nigeria. E-governance, like other government policies in Nigeria, has seen much of its implementation halted due to the pervasiveness of corruption." Because e-governance has the potential to reduce corruption, anti-corruption forces in government institutions would fight it and do everything they can to ensure its failure [18]. Another issue is the country's electricity supply, which is described as being epileptic and inconsistent. These have created a significant obstacle to Nigeria's e-governance goals being realized. According to Okwueze [19], appropriate power supply is a crucial factor to consider for the effective adoption of e-governance in the country's government. In contrast to the existing image of what exists in most of the public sector, most government agencies rely on generators, which can sometimes be insufficient to effectively power ICT equipment. Gberevbie; Ayo; Iyoha; Duruji & Abasilim [20] agree that the government must develop the necessary infrastructure in areas such as energy power supply, internet connectivity, telecommunications and computer hardware, optical fibre cables, and others in order for e-governance to succeed in Nigeria.

The digital divide is the disparity in opportunity between those who have and those who do not have access to the Internet. Those without Internet connectivity will be unable to take use of e-government services [21]. As a result, the digital divide is defined as "the difference between those who have access to computers

and the internet and those who do not [22. P. 50].” As a result, not everyone has appropriate access to computers and the Internet, whether owing to a lack of funds, required skills, or internet connectivity. Making computers available in public places like libraries, post offices, and retail malls, as suggested by Smith [23] might help bridge the digital gap. According to Feng [24. P. 51] the lack of “internet access within society was regarded the most significant hurdle to e-government growth, according to the report.” Another challenge of e-governance in Nigeria is poor knowledge of ICT. For [1. P. 19] “low penetration of ICTs in Nigeria poses a hurdle to e-governance deployment in the country. The majority of Nigerians consider computers and the internet to be extremely difficult to use and try to avoid them whenever possible”. The similar problem may be seen among the educated. In other words, they do not have a high level of ICT usage [1].

Another obstacle to e-government in Nigeria is the lack of law. The following legislation have been identified as necessary for the successful adoption of e-government in Nigeria: Electronic Communications and Authentication, NITDA Act Computer Privacy, Anti-Cyber-Squatting, Computer Evidence, Cyber Crime and Cyber Security, Computer Protection and Anti-Spam, Digital Rights Management. Despite the fact that various laws and policies have been enacted to promote e-governance in the country, their implementation has remained a far-cry. As a result of the preceding, certain government ICT services are not effectively controlled, resulting in the misuse that characterizes the use of ICT in the day-to-day running of operations in the country, whether in the public or private sector [18. P. 485; 1. P. 19].

Another crucial challenge in the implementation of e-governance in Nigeria is lack of ICT Infrastructure. Basic ICT infrastructure is still missing in Nigeria’s public sector. For example, several offices still lack conventional computers, let alone the necessary expertise to use them. The conventional method of doing things is what you observe in their daily routines. That is, they are still notorious for performing a lot of paperwork, which would have been minimized if e-governance had been completely implemented. In a better case scenario, you will see a blend of traditional and digital approaches. In most government offices, there is still no connection to the internet network, and there is no reliable power supply, among other things [5. P. 17; 2. P. 35]. All these factors make e-governance in Nigeria’s public sector difficult to adopt.

Prospects of E-Governance in Nigeria

The benefits of e-governance implementation in Nigeria cannot be overstated. E-government has a number of advantages including:
- Provides information about public and organized private sector employment possibilities to the general audience. That is a free flow of information and knowledge between the government and citizenry, government departments, political process, services, agencies, and tiers of government. ICT platforms might be useful in informing potential employees about

employment openings in the economy. This method is capable of preventing unsolicited applications from being sent to numerous organizations that do not have any openings. The website might also include information on test results, hospitals (such as bed availability and specialty services), airline, train, and road transportation schedules; charity trust information, government announcements, government forms, and government programs [5; 3. P. 15; 1. P. 19].

- Citizens have greater opportunities to contribute directly in policy formulation. Because information collecting and analysis are more rapid and reliable, policy development is greatly enhanced. In other words, internet services make it simple to create accurate and more trustworthy data, which aids in the formulation of governmental policies and programs [3. P. 15].

- It has the potential to boost economic growth; for example, e-governance might help municipal and state governments compete more effectively for local and foreign investment. Local firms will soon be able to compete well with their overseas competitors on a global scale thanks to technological advancements [5].

- The E-security system i.e. e-Police is created to allow citizens to provide tip-offs to the police in a timely and secure manner. Modules for information distribution, stolen/wanted autos, and wanted suspects/criminals should all be included in the e-police system. Dubai, the United Arab Emirates' emirate, is currently using e-police (UAE) Ayo & Ekong [25].

- Citizens might now regard their government as one that does not sleep since public information and services are available online 24 hours a day, seven days a week. To put it another way, e-governance guarantees that the government reacts to the needs and aspirations of the people at all times [1].

- It might be used as a billing and payment system for utilities. It might, for example, be used to produce power, water, and telephone bills, as well as function as payment platforms following usage [3. P. 15; 1. P. 19].

Conclusion and Recommendations

The globe has become a virtual global village as a result of ongoing advances in ICTs. As a result, the globe looks to be a little community where one person at one end of the globe may speak with another at the other end of the globe by just pressing buttons. Because of the rapidity with which such interactions occur, the world of ICT has become an ever-changing environment in which one cannot afford to fall behind by failing to keep up with the newest in ICT developments. E-governance is here to stay, and every government in the world is working hard to integrate it into its public sector. This is because ICT in governance has the capacity to transform the administrative process and manner. It guarantees that the governance process is efficient, effective, accountable, transparent, and simple. Above anything, it has the potential to promote inclusive governance by allowing people/citizens to actively participate in decision-making. The final effect is that it allows the government to be more responsive and

accountable to the people's ever-changing demands. As a result, e-governance has a lot of potential for any government willing to implement it. Nonetheless, several issues have persisted to stymie the use of ICT in Nigerian governance, which explains why the country's e-government has yet to reach its full potential. It's on this note the study recommends the following to advance e-governance in Nigeria:

I. Improvement of electrical power supply is required so that the general populace may readily use the internet. Once the power supply is consistent, the cost of providing internet services will be lower, allowing more people to access the internet, including online services and government involvement.

II. Government should pass Information and Communication Technology (ICT) legislation that makes computer literacy a requirement for all levels of government employees. In our elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions, school curricula should be changed to accommodate computer and ICT related training programs.

III. Corruption is still a major stumbling block to every policy agenda, including ICT programs. As a result, the government must address corruption and demonstrate the political will required to win the war on corruption. To do so, the government must make it obvious to public employees that e-governance is a policy framework for making their jobs easier and, as a result, increasing productivity. This is a certain method to keep public workers on board since, as implementers of any government program, they have the power to make or break the implementation of e-governance.

IV. In carrying out their tasks, government institutions should display a high degree of e-readiness. There should be working computers available, as well as the hiring of highly competent ICT experts and training opportunities to keep staff up to date on current ICT trends. This measure is thought to be crucial in using e-governance to bring about change.

V. All three levels of government (federal, state, and local) should join the movement to electronically connect all of their ministries and create a unified national network. Government information should be made available on the internet in a searchable manner.

VI. The Federal Government should guarantee that residents have access to independent, easily available, secure, and low-cost high-speed Internet.

VII. For e-governance, a trustworthy and strategic framework is required. Government ministries, departments, and agencies should form e-governance implementation committees to develop mechanisms for the project's successful implementation. In addition, performance assessment units should be developed to examine the achievements and failures of its aims on a regular basis, as well as provide comments.

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Электронное управление в Нигерии: вызовы и перспективы

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Аннотация. Основная обязанность или функция правительств во всем мире состоит в том, чтобы соответствовать стремлениям, чаяниям и потребностям своих граждан. Бюрократические институты используются в администрировании как реальные инструменты для разработки и реализации государственной политики и программ, направленных на удовлетворение потребностей людей. Именно на этой препозиции в исследовании рассматриваются проблемы электронного управления в Нигерии. Из-за большой зависимости от вторичных источников данных в исследовании были использованы методы контент-анализа. Исследование выявило, что низкий уровень знаний об ИКТ, недостаточная правовая база и неадекватная инфраструктура относятся к числу проблем, препятствующих эффективному внедрению электронного управления в Нигерии. Исследование, с другой стороны, показало, что электронное управление имеет большой потенциал для страны, включая предоставление информации о вакансиях, систему электронной полиции, передачу информации и поддержку экономического развития. Исходя из выявленных проблем в исследовании была предложена рекомендация правительству страны обеспечить инфраструктуру ИКТ, в стране должно быть принято законодательство в области ИКТ, также правительство должно продемонстрировать приверженность политике электронного управления в стране. В заключении было отмечено, что электронное управление имеет решающее значение для создания в Нигерии подотчетного, отзывчивого и прозрачного правительства.

Ключевые слова: электронное управление, информационно-коммуникационные технологии, вызовы, перспективы, прозрачность

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