

## Electronic Governance and the Challenges of its Implementation in the Nigeria's Public Sector: An Assessment

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The advent of internets and other electronics related devices have become a veritable means through which an individual or organization can reach out to one person, or a group of persons, or the entire globe, just by a tap of a button. Many government organizations have since keyed into this phenomena. This give rise to the use of such prefix as E which implies Electronic, to carry out governmental functions in organizations, this has given prominent place for its adoption and its use. This paper work is tailored towards examining issues in electronic governance implementation in Nigeria public sectors. The summary of our findings suggests intermittent power supply and lack of committed and dedicated management are the major issues confronting Electronic-governance implementation in virtually all Nigeria public sectors. Hence, it is recommended that an improved stable power supply with dedicated and committed management can help to achieve the goals of electronic governance implementation in Public sectors.*

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**KEYWORDS:** *Electronic Governance, Implementation, ICTs, Adoption, Nigeria, Public sectors*

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## INTRODUCTION

The primary function of any Government establishment all over the world is to provide efficient and effective welfare services and to protect the lives of its citizens. These significant functions are carried out using various institutions or machineries of the state. In other to achieve this feat, Nigeria Government has introduced many reforms in line with current realities to the public sectors of our national life. Akpan-Obong (2015) emphasized the Nigeria of today that there is practically no public sector organizations that have not undergone one form of reforms or the other. With the advent of modern technology worldwide, there is obviously no sector or segment of the society where the influence of information and communication technology ICTs has not penetrated.

Most of the reforms that have swept through the public sectors in Nigeria include deregulation, liberalization, downsizing, commercialization, monetization, privatization and most recently the ICTs. These reforms are geared towards making public service delivery look more businesslike. One of such reforms is the introduction of Electronic-governance; Electronic governance refers to the use of information and communication technologies ICTs to transform and support the processes and structures of a governmental system. In the new age, popularly called information age, where plethora of transactions are completed with utmost efficiency brought about by the use of the internet or the worldwide web, no organization can afford to be left behinds in upgrading its mode of conducting business without delving into the use of ICTs. argued that any organization that intends to continue keeping afloat and progress in its operations must join the bandwagon in the New Age of ICT. (Estevez and Janawski , 2013)

The primary aim of this ICTs revolution is to make the public service delivery more transparent, accountable, efficient, flexible, profitable and competitive; many countries have embraced Electronic-Governance in their operations and activities. Electronic governance by various sources may vary widely, there is a common theme. Electronic governance involves using information technology, and especially the internet, to improve the quality of service delivery to citizens, enthrone accountability and efficiency in government agencies. Electronic governance enables citizens to interact and receive services from the federal, state or local government twenty four hours a day, seven days in a week. However, despite the huge prospects inherent in the use of Electronic-governance in quality service delivery and accountability, most Nigeria public sectors are still lagging behind in ICTs implementation. What we currently have on ground is a far cry for what is expected. Many factors have been attributed for these challenges. (Ogbomo, Ainabor, 2009, Ambali,2010).

Despite the investment of intellectual energies, time and resources to address Electronic Governance, adequate and rigorous attention has not been invested in exploring the challenges of implementation in Nigeria's Public Sectors and Assessment. This paper attempts to fill in this knowledge gap.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **ELECTRONIC GOVERNANCE: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.**

The information revolution and the extraordinary increase in the spread of knowledge has given birth to a new era, one of knowledge and information which affects directly economic, social, cultural and political activities of all regions of the world, including Africa. Governments worldwide have recognized the role that electronic governance could play in socio-economic development.

A number of countries especially those in the developed world and some in developing countries are putting in place policies and plans designed to transform their economies into an information and knowledge economy. Countries like USA, Canada, and a number of European countries, as well as Asian countries like India, Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, Japan, and South American countries like Brazil Chile, and Mexico among others, and Australia and Mauritius either already have in place comprehensible Electronic-governance policies and plans or are at an advanced stage of implementing these program across their economic and societies, (Owusu-Ansah 2011) some of these countries see Electronic-governance and their deployment for socio-economic development as one area where they can quickly establish global dominance and reap tremendous payoff in terms of wealth creation and generation of high quality employment. On the other hand, some other countries regard the development and utilization of e-governance within their economy and society as a key component of their national vision to improve the quality of life, knowledge and international competitiveness Ibrahim and Jibrin(2002).

African countries, especially Nigeria are at risk of being further marginalized if they fail to embrace these technologies to transform their economies and this has led scholars like Faye (2000) to point out that, e-governance is (offering even less developed countries a window of opportunities to leapfrog the industrialization stage and transform their economies into high value-added information economies that can compete with the advanced economics on the global market. Technological innovation has contributed to globalization by supplying infrastructure for trans-world connections. According to Ajayi (2000), the revolution taking place in information and communication technologies have been the central and driving force for the globalization process. Both developed and less-developed countries cannot afford to miss out on the opportunities these technologies are creating

### **ELECTRONIC GOVERNANCE. RATIONAL FOR ITS ADOPTION**

The rational for its adoption simply means the reason for the adoption of Electronic-governance. It is the provision and delivery of public goods and services in an effective and efficient manner. Though governments, the world over, adopt Electronic Governance for various reasons, the general conception in the private and public sectors is to ensure that utmost efficiency, effectiveness; accountability and transparency are achieved in the interactions between government and its employees, the citizens or its other clients. As today's world has become a flux, a continuously changing environment, government agencies cannot afford to lag behind in the old ways on communicating and interacting. Therefore, continuous reforms, especially in

improving the information management system in government becomes a necessity for making the process achieve a higher degree of transparency and accountability (Gant, 2008). The need to keep abreast with the every-dynamic environment of communications and information systems is the sole reason why government agencies, at all levels, integrate various modes of ICTs in activities. The essence of the continuous improvement in ICTs is to come up with more cost-effective and efficient ways of transmitting and disseminating information. Adopting Electronic governance provides the framework for cost reduction in the provision of services to the public (Gant, 2008).

### **ELECTRONIC GOVERNANCE: A NEW DAWN IN SERVICES' DELIVERY**

The dawn of the digital age on the global space which brought about radical movements towards the increased use of ICTs in the business World as well as the personal lives of people necessitated world governments to join the bandwagon. The digital era, which dominated 90s, saw the heavy reliance on the World Wide Web and the internet by private sector businesses in their daily businesses transactions. The rate of efficiency and accountability which the use of ICTs brought into private sector became a ray of hope for the public sector to redeem their tainted image of inefficiency, lack of transparency and accountability. Thus the adoption of e-governance became an inevitable reform that was bound to be implemented in the provision of public goods and services. Ojo (2014) opined that the concept of Electronic-governance originated from India in the 70s. He argues that the idea was born out of the intention of the Indian government to establish internal government applications in sector such as defence, economic planning and supervision and information management system relating to elections, census, tax administration, etc. Davies (2008) points out that the Electronic governance drive was given a big boost in the early 90s following the “reinventing government” movement in America. This movement advocated for a paradigm shift from a government dogged with red-tape to a more innovative government that was “enterprising, catalytic, mission and customer driven and result-oriented. Thus, the digitalization of governance received rapid acceptance worldwide in the 90s. Electronic-governance, which stands for electronic governance became the new focus of modern day governments which is all about using ICTs to support and enhance the delivery of public goods and services.

### **STAGES OF ELECTRONIC GOVERNANCE IMPLEMENTATION.**

When it comes to the phases of electronic-Governance, the step-by-step approach towards the adoptions and application of ICTs in governance, there are no universally applicable sequences or steps. In other words, the phases of Electronic governance range and differed from the author to another. However, a detailed, streamlined classification of the phase's governance is provided here by combining the views of various authors. They include information phase, interaction phase, transaction phase, and transportation phase (Backus, 001, Savic, 2006; and Gant, 2008).

## **STAGE ONE: PRESENCE.**

Presence is the first stage of development and is the establishment of a place holder for delivering information in the future. It represents the simplest and least expensive entrance into e-government, but it also offers the fewest options for citizens. A typical example is a basic Web site that lists cursory information about an agency, such as hours of operation, mailing address, and/or phone numbers, but has no interactive capabilities. It is a passive presentation of general information. Some observers refer to these types of sites as ‘brochure ware,’ suggesting they are the electronic equivalent of a paper brochure. This is the beginning stage of Electronic governance which simply entails making the presence of the government felt on the World Wide Web through the creation of websites and posting of information on the net for public consumption and use (Backus, 2001). This stage is very crucial in the development of Electronic governance because it creates public awareness that the government organization or agency involved has gone digital and could be easily reached through the click of a button. Thus, this phase brings to the forefront the goals and aspirations of the government in electronic form.

The format of such government websites should be user-friendly to the public. It should be identical to that of a government leaflet or a brochure and must not be complex with too much links so that it can easily be accessed (Savic 2006). As mentioned earlier the whole essence of this phase is to make information available to the public.

## **STAGE TWO: INTERACTION**

This phase is the transaction phase. Government has put its information on the web, interactions have taken place between the government and its customers, and hence, the next phase in the process of e-governance is to conduct or carry out business efficiently and effectively. This is what the transaction phase is all about. With the use of ICTs in governance, customers do not need to be physically present in any government establishment to conduct any business or transaction with the government. With just a click of the mouse button, customers can carry out businesses with the government such as filling income tax, filling property tax, extending or renewal of licenses, visa and passport and online voting” among others (Savic, 2006). In this phase, the real action of e-governance takes place. The government employs ICT in the process from providing a vast range of goods and services to its customers. The second stage is interaction. Although interactive Web-based initiatives offer enhanced capabilities, efforts in this group are still limited in their ability to streamline and automate government functions. Interactions are relatively simple and generally revolve around information provision. These types of initiatives are designed to help the customer avoid a trip to an office or make a phone call by making commonly requested information and forms available around the clock. These resources may include instructions for obtaining services, downloadable forms to be printed and mailed back to an agency, or perhaps e-mail contact to respond to simple questions.

### **STAGE THREE: TRANSACTION**

Once activities are being carried out via the internet and transactions are made, there is the likelihood to experience some problems or setbacks along the process. This might draw some negative feedbacks and complaints from the customers over issues bordering on payments, services, delivery dates, etc.

The third stage in the evolution of e-governance initiatives is transaction. These initiatives are more complex than simple information provision and embody the types of activities popularly associated with e-government. They enable clients to complete entire tasks electronically at any time of the day or night. These initiatives effectively create self-service operations for tasks such as license renewals, paying taxes and fees, and submitting bids for procurement contracts. Although the level of interactivity is of a higher magnitude than second stage initiatives, the activities still involve a flow of information that is primarily one-way (either to government or to the client, depending on the activity).

The transaction phase ensures that these problems are brought to the forefront and treated. This phase would guarantee major cultural change, re-engineering of processes and redefinition of responsibilities within the government institutions (Savic, 2006). The transformation phase also ensures that all data are integrated into a large database by which the public or other clients can easily gain access through a single portal. Backus (2001) notes that the primary objective of electronic-governance at this level is to create a single portal for all government services by synchronizing all databases.

### **STAGE FOUR: TRANSFORMATION.**

The highest order of evolution for e-governance initiatives is transformation. Initiatives at this level utilize the full capabilities of the technology to transform how government functions are conceived, organized, and executed. Such initiatives would have the robust customer relationship management capabilities required to handle a full range of questions, problems, and needs. Currently, there are very few examples of this type of initiative, in part due to administrative, technical, and fiscal constraints. One of the distinctions of these initiatives is that they facilitate the seamless flow of information and collaborative decision making between federal, state, local, public, and private partners. In other words, transformative e-government initiatives often seek to remove the organizational barriers that promote agency-centric solutions and, instead, promote customer-centric solutions. Some advocates suggest that, at its most advanced level, e-government could potentially re-organize, combine, and/or eliminate existing agencies and replace them with virtual organizations

### **THE ADOPTION OF ELECTRONIC GOVERNANCE IN THE NIGERIA PUBLIC SECTOR.**

Institutions are central to the developmental process of any Nation. The civil service, as an institution at the heart of government policy formulation and implementation, influences in no small ways, the success or failure of governments. Ezeani (2006) refers to public sector as the

administrative machinery within which the work of government is carried out and this according to Oyeyinka (2006) is why the civil service of any nation is generally regarded as the pivot that will promote socio-economic and political development. It is in recognition of this fact that Santoy, argued as captured by Nwachukwu et al (2015) With the increasing use of technology world over e-governances has become a major tool for internal operational efficiency and effectiveness in the public sector. The extant literature is indeed replete with the great potentials of electronic governance tools for operational efficiency, cost reduction, improved quality of services, convenience, innovation and learning in the public sector. Erne et al (2007) argued that Electronic Governance is believed to offer considerable potential for sustainable service delivery. This is why Josep-maria .B (2003) argued that the Electronic governance is no longer seen as an option but as a necessity for all countries aiming at having better and efficient governance. This shows that there is a strong linkage between e-governance and internal operational efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, transparency, low cost of administrative services internally and externally with respect to service delivery to the public of citizen.

Digitalized services deliver, though practice in Nigeria, is essentially and imported concept based on imported designs. An electronic delivery strategy in the civil service is not only about the automation of the current way of delivering /business. It is about carrying out government responsibility by using collaborative transactions and processes required by the government departments to function effectively and economically, promoting innovation and competition in a bid to improve government employees' participation in decision making and the quality of services to the citizens (Nwachukwu el al 2015).

Over the years, the federal government of Nigeria has initiated and adopted several related policies and laws aimed at guiding the development of e- governance and harnessing is huge potential for national development. Though there have been significant gains over the last decade, especially with regards to mobile telephony, the lack of industry convergence in the Nigerian ICT sector has resulted in fragmentation and inefficient management of resources (NITDA: June (2012)). While there is no doubt that the government is fully committed to the development of E-governance and the telecommunication industry especially in its public sector, there is still a lot to be done.

### **ELECTRONIC GOVERNANCE: AN ASSESSMENT OF NIGERIA PROGRESS.**

Though Electronic governance implementation in Nigeria varies from one level of operations to another in government agencies and departments, there was actually an attempt at providing a unified, national framework of ICT adoption in governance. According to Olatokun and Adebayo (2012), the Federal Government of Nigeria, in 2001, announced ICT as a policy of national importance. This further culminated in the creation of a policy on information technology in the same year. The need for adopting ICT in governance, that is, Electronic governance, came as an awareness that no country or its government can function properly in the information or digital age without the use of the web and other mobile internet technologies. Seeing the importance of ICT in governance, the Nigerian Federal Government deemed it necessary for the country to have a national policy on ICT. Hence, in 2007, the enabling Act — the National Information Technology Development Act - was enacted by the National Assembly with an Agency established along with

the act, which was empowered to “plan, develop and promote the use of information technology in Nigeria” (Olatokun and Adebayo, 2012).

With the enabling act, various government agencies embarked on the implementation of ICTs in their operations. However, in 2011, the Federal Government created a new Ministry called the Ministry of Communications Technology which was saddled with the mandate of streamlining ICT development and progress in line with the nation’s plan for e- governance (Omerie and Omerie, 2014). In 2012, a National ICT draft policy was presented by the Ministerial committee on ICT policy harmonization which included several policy recommendations and reports.

The Following are the policy thrust of the National ICT draft policy of 2012, as it pertains to e-governance.

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To facilitate the implementation of e-governance initiatives

To develop frameworks and guidelines, including interoperability and Electronic governance framework for the enhanced development and use of ICT in the government.

To develop and implement ICT training program for public sector employees, in connection with introduction of e-governance and other digital functions within government offices;

To coordinate the integration of national e-governance network infrastructure and services; and

To promote Electronic governance and other e-services that would foster broadband usages (National ICT Policy, 2012).

The Nigerian legal framework covering the use of ICT in governance is not based on an integrated system but on various policies. They include: the information policy, which is supervised by the National media Commission); the Telecommunications Policy, which is regulated by the National Communications Commission (NCC); and the ICT policy which is overseen by NITDA which stands for the National Information Technology Development Agency (Fraser-Moleketi, G., and Senghor, D, 2011).

## **ELECTRONIC GOVERNANCE AND THE CHALLENGES IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA’S PUBLIC SECTOR.**

The challenges of Electronic Governance implementations in Nigeria public sector organizations are the same as with many other developing countries public sector. 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. Falike (2012) aptly captures the situation when he said that the enabling technological frameworks of electronic -governance for instance telecommunications facilities are still insufficient substandard as Internet Service and Telecommunications structure are still in their embryonic state in Nigeria public sector organizations. In addition, internet and telecommunication services are very expensive, thus, a large section of Nigerians who cannot afford senders are alienated from participating in Electronic governance. Omerie and Omerie (2014) gave a detailed analysis of the challenges of Electronic governance implementation in Nigeria. They include:



**LOW ICT LITERACY RATE:** The low usage of ICTs by the Nigerian public sector as an impediment to the implementation of Electronic -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 FRAMWORK:** 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 OR LACK OF ICT INFRASTRUCTURES:** Internet service and telecommunications structure are still in their embryonic state in Nigeria. In addition, internet and telecommunication services are very expensive to the effect that they are not sufficiently or not even provided for public sector organizations, thus, a large section of Nigerians and government employees who cannot afford these services are alienated from being involved in decision making or participating in electronic governance.

**CORRUPTION:** The implementation of Electronic 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, Electronic governance has had most of its execution stalled because of the pervasiveness of corruption. Since electronic 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 AND DEDICATED LEADERSHIP:** Since the idea of Electronic Government implementation and the national ICT policy was conceived in 2011, 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.

## **COMPUTER SECURITY**

Perhaps one of the most significant challenges for implementing e-government initiatives is computer security. In a series of evaluations published since July 1999, the General Accounting Office (GAO) has repeatedly reported that the largest federal agencies “were not adequately protecting critical federal operations and assets from computer-based attacks.”<sup>35</sup> Specifically, GAO has identified six areas of weakness: security program management, access controls, software development and change controls, segregation of duties, operating systems controls, and service continuity.<sup>36</sup> For e-government activities, service continuity is critical not only for the availability and delivery of services, but also to build citizen confidence and trust. However, the risks of fraud and misuse of sensitive data are concerns as well.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This study made use of deliberate selection gathering technique in other to cover those facts that could be seen from public organization in this study. Additional research method such as personal observation and the use of certain files were used. This source is used because of the unreliability of only one technique, since it has been found not to be totally adequate in gathering information. These additional methods thus served to compensate the inherent weakness of the primary data gathering methods, thus minimizing error and enhancing research results. This shows that the research made use of secondary data.

## **CONCLUSION**

With dynamism in ICTs innovations, the world has virtually become a global village. The implication of this is that, the globe appears to be a small community where one person from one end of the world can communicate with another person at the other end of the world by simply clicking buttons. The speed at which such interactions take place has made the world of ICT an ever-changing world in which one cannot afford to lag behind by failing to be in constant touch with the latest in ICT innovations. Governments across the globe have realized that ICT is a necessity in the art of public service delivery in the sense that it has the potentials for eradicating the perennial complaints of inefficiency and ineffectiveness, unmitigated corruption, lack of accountability, non- transparency and high cost of administrative services that has become associated with government agencies. The Nigerian government should not be left out; towards putting in place various policies and measures to see that government and public receives the benefits of implementing e-governance in Nigerian public on organizations.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the findings and analysis of this study the following recommendations are necessary for the implementation of electronic-governance in Nigeria public sector.

There should be purposeful and committed management for e-governance to excel. Management should demonstrate enough commitment to the course of upgrading facilities to meet with the demands of the time through the adoption of ICTs in government business. Regardless of management changes, the ICT policy should be constant and must not change along with the management.

Additionally, there should be readily available high ICT infrastructures in place towards improving internal operations and cost effectiveness. It is through the instrumentality of these ICT Infrastructure such as CD's, Flash Drives, computers, laptops internet and mobile communications, that information regarding all kinds of data submission attendance record and employees record, documentations of complaints and dissatisfaction, rules, regulations about work, payment time table, word records and working forms can be shared. In addition internet and telecommunication services should be provided in Nigeria public sectors so that government employees can adequately be involved in decision making thereby contributing to policy implementation in the public sectors.

There should be training programs put in place to train government employees even before ICT is implemented in government agencies. This will ensure that they get equipped in terms of

knowledge, skills and efficiency. It is of paramount importance that human resources are first developed before applying ICTs on the organizations

Finally, electronic-governance projects should not be seen as an end but a means to an end which is to make governance more efficient, effective, transparent, accountable, responsive and inclusive. The processes do not matter more than arriving at the end result. A policy, no matter how much effort and resources were put into it or how painstakingly it was formulated, if it does not meet its desired objective, that the policy is a failure. Therefore, policy makers as well as implementers should not lose sight of the ultimate aim of drafting ICT policies for e-governance in Nigeria which is to ensure employee effective participation in decision making and overall governance structure for efficiency, effectiveness, low cost of administrative services, transparency, accountability and qualitative public goods and services delivery to the public.

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