

E-GOVERNANCE: AN IMPERATIVE FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The achievement of good governance in these times needs a functional e-governance. This is because adequate use of ICT serves as a catalyst to an effective and efficient service delivery, quick response, accountability and transparency. Therefore, this paper is set to look at e-governance and good governance in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to show the relevance of e-governance to the actualization of good governance by looking at the link between them and to identify suitable strategies for an effective application of e-governance for realization of good governance in Nigeria. The theory of technological determinism was adopted as framework for analysis. The methodology of this paper is qualitative in nature. Data were collected through secondary sources and the analysis was also done qualitatively with case study and logical reasoning. Based on this, this paper argued that that e-governance is very essential for realization of good governance in Nigeria because e-governance ensures accountability; effective and efficient service delivery; reduces corruption; fights against security threat. This paper further maintained that to achieve good governance through e-governance, there is need for the government to ensure adequate provision of funds and infrastructure; ensure effective and high level of online services; reduction of the level of digital gap by increasing the access to internet; political will or leadership commitment on improving e-governance or ICT application etc.

Keywords: E-governance, E-government, Good Governance, ICT, Sustainable development

Introduction

The realization or actualization of sustainable development cannot be possible without good governance. Therefore, the manner that a country is governed determines the level of development. The United Nations has set up sustainable development with 17 goals and for any country to achieve these goals it requires good governance.

The increase in globalization and information and communication technology has made governments to embark on e-government or e-governance initiative to ensure effective and efficient service delivery, increase citizens' participation in decision making process, promote democracy, ensure accountability and transparency. Government cannot achieve its goals in this present time without

effective use of ICT for delivery of services and exercise of its authority. This is because “the evolution and diffusion of technology has brought about a revolution in the way people live, work, care for others, and interact and information and communication technologies (ICTs) in particular, have become a part of everyday life” (United Nations E-Government Survey, 2016). In addition, there have been increasing evidence through public policy formulation and implementation that e-government among others has played an enabling role in advancing national development (United Nations E-Government Survey, 2014). This shows that the 21st century is the world of information technology that affects the activities of the world.

In Nigeria, the application of e-governance initiative can be traced to the formulation of Nigeria National Policy for Information Technology in 2001 (Oni, Okunoye & Mbarika, 2016; Abasilim, Gbereubie & Ifaloye, 2017). This policy has the cardinal objectives to: Ensure that the IT resources are readily available for promotion of efficient national development; empowerment of Nigeria citizens in participating in software and IT development; improve accessibility to public administration for citizens; ensuring transparency to government processes, develop IT into the mainstream of education and training; enhance national security and law enforcement; develop human capital etc (Nigerian National Policy for Information Technology, n.d). To achieve the following objectives, the Nigerian government established the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) under the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) in April 2001 in order to promote the advancement of the innovative technology in Nigeria and implement the national IT policy (Ibrahim, Taib & Shahzad, 2016). The enactment of the National Information Technology Development Act 2007 formally empowered the National Information Technology Development Agency with the aim to ensure or create a “framework for the planning, research, development, standardization, application, coordination, monitoring, evaluation and regulation of IT practices, activities and systems in Nigeria” (National Information Technology Development Act 2007 as cited in Abasilim *et al*, 2017).

Even though the Nigerian government has made efforts in the application of ICT for effective governance, Nigeria is still faced with the problem of improving on ICT or e-government development initiatives, which has adversely affected good governance. This can be seen on the current global ranking, where Nigeria is ranked 143 position in e-government readiness or development at middle or medium level of e-government development with 0.3291 e-government development index (EGDI) (United Nations E-government Survey, 2016). Since 2001 United Nations E-government Survey, Nigeria has been unable to move to the high level of e-government development (Nosiri & Oloto, 2017). In addition, Nigeria has been faced with the challenges of achieving good governance, which has undermined sustainable development. This is manifest on the increase in corruption, low accountability and transparency, low level of citizens’ participation, poor service delivery or ineffective and inefficient service delivery.

This paper is set to examine e-governance and good governance in Nigeria. The specific objectives are: to justify the necessity of effective e-governance for

realization of good governance in Nigeria and make appropriate suggestions for enhancing e-governance towards the achievement of good governance in Nigeria

Conceptual Clarification

Governance

Issa and Sunday (as cited in Elike, Nwoke & Okede, 2014) defined governance as the manner in which power is exercised by governments in managing a country's social and economic resources. Governance "involves exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage the affairs in and the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development" (Fatile, 2012)

E-governance

Electronic governance or e-governance means "the application of information and communication technology (ICT) for delivering government services, exchange of information, communication on transaction, integration of various stand alone systems and services between government to customer (G2C), government-to-business (G2B), government-to-government (G2G) as well as back office processes and interactions within the entire government framework" (Saugata & Masud, 2007 as cited in E-governance, 2017). Drucker (cited in Visser and Twinomurinzi, 2009) define e-governance as "the use of emerging information and communication technologies to facilitate the processes of government and public administration."

E-governance is different from e-government because e-governance goes beyond use of ICT for service delivery and access to government rather it gives information, room for direct participation of constituents in government activities. It changes how citizens relate to government as well as how citizens relate to each other. In other words, it encourages citizens to communicate with government, participate in the government policy-making and citizens to communicate each other (Subramanlan, 2012). According to UNESCO "e-governance may be understood as the performance of this governance via the electronic medium in order to facilitate an efficient, speedy and transparent process of disseminating information to the public and other agencies and for performing government administration activities" (Concept of E-governance, n.d). UNESCO (2003, cited in Okwueze, 2010, p. 496) gave another definition of e-governance as "the public sector's use of information & 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."

We can see e-governance as the use of ICT to exercise political, economic and administrative authority towards managing the affairs of the state, which involves citizens' rights and interest and participation. The e-governance involves four models or focus, namely:

- i. G2C- Government to citizens: This means offering a variety of ICT services to citizens effectively and efficiently and also to strengthen the relationship

- between government and citizens using technology (E-governance, 2017). This is the interaction between government and citizens with the use of ICT.
- ii. G2B- Government to Business: This is the interaction between the government and commercial business sector with the use of ICT or internet.
 - iii. G2G- Government to Government: This is the use of ICT in communicating and interacting with one level of government to another or governments at the same levels and its agencies with the use of ICT.
 - iv. G2E- Government to Employees: This is the interaction between government or its agencies and its employees and among employees in government with the use of ICT.

Good Governance

According to Odo (2015, p. 2) “governance can be regarded as good when it has the basic elements of what makes a system acceptable to the generality of the people. These elements include freedom, accountability and popular participation.” While Okpaga (2009 as cited in Odo, 2015, p. 2) sees good governance as “the process through which a state’s affairs are managed effectively in the area of public accountability, responsiveness and transparency.” Good governance is the effective and efficient exercise of authority and management of resources for the development of the state.

Good governance is related to aspect like providing public services in an efficient manner; giving higher participation to certain groups in the population like the poor and the minorities; making sure that citizens have the opportunity to checks and balances on the government; establishing and enforcing the norms for the protection of the citizens and their property and existence of independent of judiciary systems (Good governance, 2017). In this paper, good governance will involve the following indices:

1. Accountability
2. Transparency
3. Reduction of Corruption
4. Citizen’s participation
5. Responsiveness
6. Effective and efficient service delivery
7. Control of security threat

Theoretical Framework

This work used the technological determinism theory as a framework of analysis. The term technological determinism (TD) was coined by the American sociologist and Economist Thorstein Veblen and later followed by Clarence Ayres, William Ogburn (Technological Determinism, 2016). This theory posits that the level of technology of any society affects how the society operates. It sees technological advancement as a factor that determines human activity and societal progress. Therefore, social progress is determined by technological innovation. It sees the media technology as a force that shapes how we as individuals in a society think, feel,

act, and how society operates (Technological Determinism, 2015; Technological Determinism Theory, 2001; Chandler, 2014; Adler, 2006). Therefore, this theory holds that the level of a country's technological developments affect the level of improvement of any society or state. According to Chandler (2014):

Technological determinists interpret technology in general and communication technologies in particular as the basis of society in the past, present and even the future.... Technologies such as writing or print or television or the computer changed society.... New technologies transform society at every level, including institutions, social interaction and individuals.

This implies that any institution that fails to properly adopt the current communication technologies cannot function well or effectively. For a state or government to progress, it needs a functional modern information technology for delivery of services. The technological determinism is characterized by soft and hard technological determinism. The soft technological determinism viewed that technology is one of the important factors that affect societal progress and human activity while the hard technological determinism argues that technology is the main or the only significant driver affecting society and human activity (Adler, 2006).

This theory is based on the following points/assumptions:

- i. Technologies have an overwhelming power to drive human interaction and social change
- ii. Science is the driver of technological innovation resulting in improvements in the society and progress
- iii. ICTs bring transformative shifts in society
- iv. New world is being forced upon societies by advances in ICT
- v. ICTs have effect on users, organization and societies
- vi. Technology is seen as an independent casual factor
- vii. Technological advances happen automatically and have a life of their own
- viii. There is a logic to technological advances, which is outside our control (Technological Determinism, n.d).

The relevance of this theory is that it will help us to show if the problem of governance is associated with level of e-government development or ICT application in Nigeria. Therefore, in this age of globalization, good governance would be difficult if Nigerian government fails to implement e-governance effectively. As the world has become digital, government, private sectors and individuals now see and rely on ICT in their everyday activities for easy and faster information and communication, participation in decision making, effective and efficient service delivery, accountability etc.

Currently, Nigeria has been facing crisis of governance. This is because the way of governing the affairs of the people has been characterized by corruption, inefficiency and ineffectiveness in service delivery, low citizens' participation, poor

financial management, insecurity or instability etc. In this digital age, good governance cannot be achieved if there is low utilization of ICT for governing the affairs of the people. Nigeria cannot develop or achieve high rate of good governance if its e-governance initiative is poorly implemented. The low performance or development of e-governance readiness in Nigeria contributes to low progress because it has undermined Nigerian national security, retards service delivery, promote corruption, reduced the rate of accountability and transparency and frustrate citizens involvement/participation and government and citizens interaction.

Methodology

As a qualitative research work, this study adopted documentary method of data collection that rely on secondary sources like journals, government publications, textbooks and other official documents. This was adopted because it will enable the researcher to gain adequate access to facts or data that are difficult or impossible to get through primary sources and gain access to information or data that have existed in the past. In the analysis, the researchers made use of case studies analysis and logical reasoning or analysis. This is because the researchers relied on several cases, data, examples and quotations that relates to issues of e-governance and good governance, and based on the evidence provided, the researchers analyzed the data and logically draw conclusion.

E-governance as a Necessity for Good Governance in Nigeria

In this digital age, e-governance is very imperative or necessary for achievement of good governance in Nigeria. There is a close link between e-governance and good governance. This is justified by the goals or aims of e-governance. So, for Nigeria as a country with low level of good governance, need effective application of ICT for good governance. Siahaan (2016, p. 2) posits, “e-government does not only aim at efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery but also serves as the strategy in achieving good governance.” The assessment on 12 e-government projects in developing countries demonstrate the achievement of e-government towards realizing concrete benefits like enhancement of transparency, reduction of corruption, improvement of service delivery and empowerment of people (Siahaan, 2016).

To justify why e-governance is an effective tool for achievement of good governance, we have to show certain benefits of e-governance that are associated with realization of good governance.

1. Effective and Efficient Service Delivery: Studies have shown that e-governance can promote effective and efficient service delivery (Gurung, Dangol & Bhatta, 2015; Muganibi, 2013; Makene, 2009). This is because with the effective adoption of e-governance, delivery of public service by the public sector will be done on appropriate and quicker time and with minimum use of resources. This is in line with the study of Mugambi (2013) in government ministries in Kenya and observed that implementation of e-government enabled database sharing, lowered the costs of

delivering services and improved staff productivity. The study of Brynard (2002 as cited in Makene, 2009) posits that for an e-government framework creates a huge potential for improving the quality of service, stimulating trade and industry and cutting costs internally.” E-government or e-governance is an enabler towards service delivery. E-government could help to enable success in various programmes but itself cannot stand as solution towards success. In a more clearer term, Mohammed et al (2010 as cited in Abdulkareem, 2015) show the essence of the use of ICT by comparing the manual and electronic model of government service delivery in Nigeria. This comparison can be seen in the table below:

Table 1: Comparison between manual and electronic mode of government service delivery

S/N	Government Service	Manually	Electronically
1	International passport application	Minimum processing time is 90 days and maximum of 9 months	Minimum processing is 1 day and maximum of 3 days
2	Trade clearance	7 working days to clear	1 day required
3	National Exam Registration (WAEC, NECO & JAMB)	Minimum of 7 days	Minimum of 1 hour
4	Job Recruitment	2 months	1 hour of online form completion & instant acknowledgement
5	Land allocation	3 to 4 months	1 day with GIS
6	Tax Remittance	7 working days	Minimum of 20 minutes
7	Voters Registration	5 days to register & get voters card	5 minutes and instant voters card
8	National Identity Registration	Minimum of 13 to 14 months	Minimum of 90 days

Source: Mohammed *et al* (2010 as cited in Abdulkareem, 2015).

The above table shows that e-governance enables effective and efficient service delivery and it implies that if all public sectors and other private sectors adopt appropriate e-governance initiatives, it would further increase the rate of service delivery in effective and efficient manner.

2. Reduction of Corruption or Fight against Corruption: E-governance serves as essential tool for reducing corruption. For Nigerian government to end the issue of corruption, e-government or e-governance is very essential. E-governance can reduce corruption by reducing interactions with officials, speeding up decision and reducing human errors (Mistry & Jalal, 2012). Bhatnager and Apikul (2006, p. 1) argued that

“while e-governance is not a panacea for the complex and deep-rooted problems of corruption, it cannot be ignored that ICTs possess the ability to contribute effectively towards any anti-corruption efforts.”

Mistry and Jalal (2012) made an empirical study of the relationship between e-government and corruption in developed and developing countries; they argued that the impact of e-government is higher in developing countries than in developed countries and the use of ICT increases, corruption decreases. They observed that (based on their models) that a 1% increase in e-government index may have resulted in a 1.7% decrease in corruption. Furthermore, Lup and Lazar (2015) studied the influence of e-governance on the level of corruption in some EU and non-EU states, and discovered that the increasing use of e-government will reduce corruption because a 1% increase in the index of e-government can result in a decrease in corruption by 6.7% for countries entering the EU and 6.3% for non-EU member. This means that the more a country adopts e-government, the higher tendency of reducing corruption in the system.

Enofe, Ogbaisi and Mbotto (2015) appraised e-governance and corruption in Nigeria, they revealed that “the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) have significant effect in reducing the incidence of ghost workers in the public sector and e-payment have significant effect in scaling down the level of corrupt practices in the public sector.” In the same vein, Danfulani (2013) asserts that the adoption of ICT curtailed the incidence of double payment of contracts and crowding of pay vouchers with ghost workers and many resources have been saved. This is also in line with the adoption of Treasury Single Account which for now has to some extent been reducing the rate of corruption by blocking leakages and waste of resources and ensuring accountability (Odewole, 2016; Oyedokun, 2016; Bashir, 2016; Igbokwe-Ibeto, Nkomah, Osakede & Kinge, 2016). That was why Usman argued that “Nigerians are excited at the directive by the president, Buhari as this will mean that some government agencies that have been known to be withholding funds from the Federal governments are now under compulsion to remit monies to federal treasuries” (Igbokwe-Ibeto et al, 2016).

3. Effective Financial Management: Effective e-governance implementation is necessary for Nigerian government to save high amount of resources thereby reducing waste of resources. The adoption of e-government initiatives has saved a lot of resources to government in Nigeria. For example, the introduction of TSA has saved over N4billion per month for the federal government. (Onuba, 2016). Another reports indicated that Federal Government saves ₦3 trillion from the implementation of TSA (Odeyemi, 2016). Therefore, TSA as a form of e-government initiatives is very essential for effective financial management because this will block leakages wastages and save a lot of resources or funds (Odewole, 2016; Bashir, 2016).

4. Accountability and Transparency: The effective use of ICT by the government has helped to ensure high rate of accountability and transparency in any state. This is because e-governance helps to make citizens have access to government information

and how the operations of governments are done. Also, it encourages government through its institutions to be able to account or explain on how resources are utilized (Ojeka, Bisi, Iyoha, & Ayo, 2016; Madzova, et al, 2013). In other words, e-governance will go a long way to discourage much secrecy in the operations of government mainly in financial aspect. The study of Bashir (2016) Odewole, (2016), Igbokwe-ibeto et al (2016) and Ojeka et al (2016) indicates that effective use of TSA through e-governance initiatives will go a long way to ensure accountability and transparency in Nigeria. In addition, Benerjee, Duflo, Imbert, Mathew and Pande (2016) assert that the e-government has promoted accountability and controlled leakages of resources in India.

5. Citizenship Partnership or Civic Engagement: Effective implementation of e-governance can easily make citizenship participation in decision making very easy. E-government does not only enable citizens to have access or be knowledgeable about government or public affairs but encourages citizens involvement in influencing government decision making process. Through e-government with the use of internet, the citizens can be able to have access to information about government policies and give suggestions or feedback on the policies or operations of government and its institutions. So, to increase citizens awareness on government policies and programmes and create adequate interaction between citizens and government, Nigerian government must have functional e-government. The studies of Ojeka et al (2017) and Gberevbie, Ayo, Iyoha, Ojeka and Abasilim (2016) show that e-governance initiative in Nigeria has not enhanced citizens participation because most of the government parastatals and ministries websites did not give room for suggestion and feedback on government policies. This affects the poor functioning of government agencies or public sectors in Nigeria. If the citizens are encouraged to access government information and give feedback through the internet, it can increase the level of trust and collaboration and cooperation from the citizens in any government programmes and policies.

6. Promotion of National Security: The fight against any crimes like cybercrimes, militancy, terrorism, armed robbery, cross border crimes (arm trafficking, drug trafficking) etc requires adequate use of ICT. Studies have shown that one of the problems of Nigerian government in combating Boko Haram terrorism is poor utilization of ICT or technological gadgets while the terrorist continues to launch attacks effectively by making use of ICT in every of its operations (Nosiri & Ibekwe, 2016; Oluwafemi, Adesuyi & Abdulhamid, 2013). In addition, the poor use of ICT or technological gadgets has made the effort of combating trans-border activities along Nigeria borders very difficult. With ICT, the security agencies can be able to track any trans border criminal activities (Ogbonnaya et al, 2014; Nwaenyi & Orji, 2015). In addition, the study of Ugwueze, Onuoha and Nwagwu (2016) shows that the use of ICTs in security administration in Nigeria has not enhanced the protection of lives and property because of the under exploitation and sabotage against the available security gadgets. They concluded that increase in insecurity would persist if the

Nigerian government fails to adequately exploit e-governance through effective installation, utilization and maintenance of ICT gadgets in the management of national security.

The works of Ibikunle and Adefihan (2009) found out that the use of ICT and other technologies enhances the performances and effectiveness of the police. This means that the e-governance (or use of ICT) will enable the Nigerian state to identify potential security threats, share information effectively, develop response capabilities, and provide mechanism to protect its activities. The use of GPS enabled devices, social networking tools, intelligent monitoring systems, data mining, database tracking will improve the ability of the security agencies to tackle security challenges in Nigeria (Ogedebe & Jacob, 2012). That is why Ogu and Oyerinde (2014) argued that for national security to be restored; Nigerian government must rise to their responsibilities and take back control of cyberspaces and the transmissions that go on therein, before they are completely lost to resolute subversives.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Even though there are other factors that can bring good governance, but in this contemporary time, achievement of good governance and sustainable development also needs workable or functional electronic governance. This is because this 21st century has turned digital and affects the changes of society. Therefore, any state or society that refuses to fully embrace e-governance cannot function effectively in governing the affairs of the citizens. This paper has taken time to make the case for effective e-governance in order to achieve good governance in Nigeria. It argued that there is a link between e-governance and good governance because effective application of e-governance initiatives in Nigeria would ensure effective and efficient service delivery, control of corruption, promotion of accountability and transparencies, effective financial management, increase in citizens' participation, enhancement of political stability or national security etc. For Nigerian government to be as one of the leading or top countries in e-government development and use e-governance as a catalyst for good governance, the following measures much be taken.

1. Adequate finance or fund must be provided and utilized in procurement of ICT or modern technological facilities for effective operations of the public sectors in Nigeria.
2. The personnel in the Nigerian public institution must as a matter of fact be trained regularly on the use of modern ICT. If there is high rate of poor skilled staff in the operation of ICT, in the public sector, the e-governance initiative will suffer.
3. There is need to ensure that the ministries departments and agencies of Nigeria in both federal or central, state and local government levels maintain functional websites that will accommodate or give the citizens easy access to make their inputs and give feedback concerning the services rendered to them.

4. The Nigerian leaders must of necessity show the political will and leadership commitment in the utilization of e-governance for actualization of good governance. Poor concern or political will on the initiation e-governance will make the growth of e-governance impossible.
5. There is an urgent need to develop the rural areas and provide infrastructure like steady power supply for e-government to be functional. This will help to make people have more access to internet.
6. The Nigerian government must collaborate with private sector most especially the internet services providers in the design and implementation of e-governance initiative.
7. There is need to ensure that ICT tools are affordable to citizens. This will go a long way to reduce the digital divide because it will make poor citizens to have access to ICT.
8. The Nigerian government must take adequate steps to enlighten the citizen on the need to embrace e-governance. This can also be done by bringing the study of ICT or e-governance in the curriculum of secondary schools and tertiary institutions.
9. The government must adopt adequate measures to protect its website or portal from any security threat (cyber threat), that can undermine the effective functioning of the websites. The government portal can be protected through security technology like one-time passwords, cryptography, operational technology, monitoring tools etc.

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