Investigating Factors Limiting E-Governance in Public Sectors in Nigeria

[1]Ogbeide Frederick, Ph.D., [2]Okonoboh Oriabure, W.

[1]Department of Public Administration
School of Business Studies, Edo State Polytechnic, Usen Edo State.
E-mail: ogbeidefred@yahoo.com
08062097093

[2]Department of public Administration
School of Business Studies,
Shaka Polytechnic, Benin City, Edo State.
E-mail: okunsbure2002@yahoo.com
08036210002.

Abstract
This paper tend to investigate factors limiting E-governance in the public sector in Nigeria. The examined E-governance factors include leadership, ill attitude towards ICT and issues of personnel training as they affect E- governance in the public sector. The analysis was based on an in-depth examination of available literatures in public governance. The evidence from this paper revealed that leadership and their ill attitude towards ICT negatively affect E-governance in the public sector. This paper further revealed that ICT facilities combined with the lack of trained personnel hinder the E-governance in the public sector in Nigeria. In view of these observations it was concluded and recommended amongst others that the ill attitude or attitudinal problems of personnel in government establishment should be dealt with by way of encouraging them with incentives so as to become willing or able to adjust to E-governance practices.

Key words: E-governance, Leadership, Ill attitude, ICT, Personnel training, Public sector.

Introduction

E-governance, the adoption of web-based technologies to deliver and conduct government services, has become a global trend in public administration. E-governance often comes with a promise to improve public administration in terms of efficiency, one of the primary values in public administration (Lee and Perry, 2002). However, e-governance has the potential to alter the traditional relationship between government and its institutions by creating a new virtual government work interface. The potential for electronic governance to transform public administration has been heralded at various points throughout the past half century.

The importance and impact of e-governance on public service delivery cannot be over emphasized, nor can it be down played. In fact, the benefit of e-governance to the operation of Nigeria's Public Service is not in doubt. e-governance in Nigeria can be traced to the formulation of the Nigerian National Information Technology (NNIT) policy in the year 2000. Despite the lofty ideas and aims of the policy which were geared towards ensuring that public sector organizations provide an expanded range of services to the public in a manner that is systematic and cost effective leveraging on the adoption of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in its day to day activities.

However, the public sector organizations seem not to fare well in the implementation of e-governance in their services consequent upon some challenges faced by the public sector, which if not tackled will make the adoption of e-governance a mirage. Some of the challenges identified are lack of IT infrastructure; epileptic power/electricity supply; lack of trained and qualified personnel, the resistance to change attitude by most public servants and so on (Gberevbie; Ayo; Iyoha; Duruji & Abasilim, 2015).

The prevalent problem of e-governance in Nigeria

Nigeria is facing a number of challenges in the introduction of e-governance. Challenges to Nigeria's e-governance efforts are well documented. One is the socio-economic inadequacies that exist in countries belonging to the Sub-Sahara region. Other identified challenges include, poor organizational skills, inadequate infrastructural support and poor or limited human capital resources (Iyoha, Duruji, & Abasilim, 2015).

Some leaders still need to understand the relationship between e-governance and effective governance. Despite the myriad of services which are available online, most of the people still prefer to conduct their official matters the old-fashioned way. An example is the online payment facility for police and Road Transport Department (RTD) summonses, which was painstakingly put into place when the concept of electronic government was first launched. Now these poses serious questions such as: What are the major barriers associated with organizational skills needed for E-Governance among public servants? what is the state of Poor I.T infrastructure toward the use of E-Governance in service delivery among public servants? Does funding limit E-Governance in public sector organizations? And what about the limited human capital resources as well as state of epileptic power/electricity supply as they affect E-Governance in public sector.

Conceptual Issues

The concept of e-governance

The concept E-governance has been broadly defined especially as it relates to the public sector. In fact, researchers vary in their definitions of the concept, thereby presenting diverse definitions of what E-governance is all about (Ojo, 2014). According to Shilubane (2011), E-governance is simply the use of information

communication technologies (ICTs) to carry out public services, that is to say, the use of the internet to ensure that services are delivered in a much more convenient, customer oriented and cost effective manner. Budhiraja (2013) defines E-governance as the application of Information Technology to the process of government functioning in order to achieve a Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent (SMART) Governance.

In a similar vein, Ojo (2014) also sees E-governance as "the application of information communication technology (ICT) by the government to enhance accountability, create awareness and ensures transparency in the management of governmental business." He also states that E-governance can be seen as a political strategy of government through which their activities can be showcased to the public. Ayo (2014) defined e-governance as "the governing of a state/country using ICT." Meaning that, E-governance is the application of ICT in executing government businesses. From the definitions so far, it can be deduced that E-governance is simply the use of ICTs in the operations of government businesses, put in another way, it is the shift from the traditional method of carrying out government activities which is mainly hierarchical, linear, and one-way to the use of internet which enables the public seek information at their own convenience and not really having to visit the office in person or when government office is open.

It is worthy of note that E-governance "is not only the computerization of a government system, but a belief in the ability of technology to achieve high levels of improvement in various areas of government, thus transforming the nature of politics and the relations between governments and its parastatals". Ayo (2014) sees E-governance as the application of ICT to transform the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of exchange of information and transaction; with the objective of providing a SMART Government. The acronym SMARRT refers to Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive, Responsible and Transparent government.*"*

Grant & Chau (2016) defines E-government as broad-based initiatives that leverage on the capabilities of ICT to deliver high quality, seamless and integrated public services; enable effective constituent relationship management; and support the economic and social development goals of citizens, business, and civil society at local, state, national and international levels. Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) also stated that, E-governance is a wider concept that defines and accesses the impacts of technologies on the administration and practices of governments. It also looks at the relationships that exist between public servants and the wider society. While E-government deals with the development of online government services to the citizen and businesses such as E-tax, E-transportation, E-procurement, E-participation amongst others and this is termed to be narrow in discipline.

The public service/sector

The concept of public service differs from country to country, but in this case, the concern is what it is in Nigeria. Section 318 of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as

amended defines the public service as "the service of the Federation in any capacity in respect of the Government of the Federation" and includes Service as:

a) clerk or other Staff of the National Assembly or of each House of the National Assembly;

b) member of Staff of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal, the Federal High Court, the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory Abuja, the Sharia Court of Appeal of FCT, the Customary Court of Appeal of FCT or other courts established for the Federation by this Constitution and by Act of the National Assembly;

c) member or Staff of any Commission or authority established for the Federation by this Constitution or by an Act of the National Assembly;

d) staff of any area Council;

e) staff of any Statutory Corporation established by an Act of the National Assembly;

f) staff of any educational institution established or financed principally by the Government of the Federation;

g) staff of any company or enterprises in which the Government of the Federation or its agency owns controlling shares or interest;

Members or officers of the armed forces of the Federation or the Nigeria Police Force or other government security agencies are established by law. According to Adamolekun cited in Ibietan (2013), public service "usually indicates a wider scope than the civil service (and)... means the totality of services that are organized under public (i.e. government) authority." It covers ministries, departments and agencies of the central government, its field administration, local government, the military, other security forces and the judiciary. This is a broader conceptualization and it is in line with the constitutional definition of the terms and the distinction between them. Civil Service refers to "the body of permanent officials appointed to assist the political executive in formulating and implementing government policies" (Ibietan, cited in Adamolekun, 2013). The similarities they both share is that they are machinery of government saddled with the responsibility of implementing governmental policies, that is carrying out the day-to-day duties that public administration demand (Adebayo, 2010). It is imperative to state that public service encompasses the civil service or put differently is broader than civil service. Public service has to do with the totality of services that are organized under government

Problems associated with e-governance in public sector in Nigeria

Heeks (2012) notes that especially, in developing and transitional countries, an estimated 15 percent of E-governance projects are successful, 50 percent are partial failure while the remaining 35 percent are total failure. This may be due to the fact that the theories and policies that are designed in developed countries are being employed in developing countries whose cultural values and social backgrounds are completely different. The main thrust of this section is to discuss the factors limiting E-governance in public sector, they include:

Leadership

The E-governance practice is bound to meet with strong opposition from the bureaucratic quarters of the policy. By this, we mean the over-bloated public service whose members will analyze this practice as a deliberate attempt by the government to throw majority of their members out of their jobs. Majority of the public servants are thus, likely to use their positions to frustrate the effective application of E-governance in Nigeria. They will definitely dislike a system that will reduce to the barest minimum, face to face contact between agencies and government service providers.

Attitude towards ICT

According to Spacey, Goulding and Murray (2013) positive attitudes are fundamental in implementing new technologies. Attitude is the behavior characteristics or individual's disposition towards a subject. People could be positively disposed or negatively disposed to the use of ICT. While a positive attitudinal disposition towards ICT could implies showing interest in using ICT infrastructures for good purpose, a negative attitudinal disposition on the other hand means showing low preference for use of ICT facilities. This negative attitude is often common among public servants and this has hindered E-governance to a large extent.

ICT Facilities

ICT facilities here refers to a wide range of devices relating to information communication technologies, such existence of computers, telephones, projectors, radios and so on in the public sector. Adequate power supply is an important element to be considered for the success of E-governance in the country's public sector. Against the current picture of what exist in most of the public service, most government agencies operate on generators and sometimes the generators lack capacity to power adequately the ICT facilities. Corroborating this view, Gberevbie; Ayo; Iyoha; Duruji & Abasilim (2015) stress that there is need for the government to establish the needed infrastructure in electricity power supply, internet connectivity, telecommunications and computer hardware, optical fiber cables, among others for the E- governance to be successful.

This implies that the success of E-governance in the Nigerian public service is tied to dealing with these current challenges, among others. the digital divide also constitutes a factor limiting the E-governance in public sector and in Nigeria's public service in particular. What this simply means is "the gap between those with regular, effective access to digital and information technology and those without this access". In a clear manner, Keniston (2013) sees digital divide as the level of ICT knowledge between the rich and powerful who he terms as those part of the information age and the poor and powerless who are not. He further notes that digital divide is not only limited to the level of ICT knowledge between the rich and the poor but also that which has to do with linguistic. To him, this divide separates those who can speak English from those who cannot.

Lack of Trained Personnel

The major factor militating against E-governance in the Nigerian public service is lack of trained and qualified personnel to handle and operate its infrastructures. due to the high cost associated with the procurement and training of public servants with ICT skills, government sometimes feel reluctant in its E-governance initiatives in the public service. It has also been observed that the lack of government regulatory policy is a major issue that needs to be addressed if E-governance is to be a reality in government organizations. The effective and success of E-governance requires experts to coordinate and operate the ICT-related infrastructures, because where there are no competent personnel to handle its infrastructure, it will be useless to procure the infrastructures (Ayo & Ekong, 2008). Aside the aforementioned factors hindering E-governance in public sector, there are other factors affecting E-governance in public sectors. These include:

Funding

The importance of funding in providing excellent service cannot be over emphasized. It is the glue that holds the building, collections and staff together and allows attaining goals. Clearly, funding is the factor which promotes the success of E-governance. A study in US reveled that lack of financial resources was a barrier to applying E-governance for over half (57.1%) of city and county governments (ICMA, 2012). Funding was as the greatest obstacle to moving county government services to the online services by 70% of the respondents. So lack of adequate funding in the public sector is actually affecting e-governance in the Nigeria Public sector.

Lack of Awareness

Awareness includes using the mass media to introduce the concept of E-governance system for people in the public sectors, conducting seminars or workshops to encourage the public sectors' work force to apply the concepts as their daily operations. A package of activities could be delivered that includes (Heeks, 2010) seminars and training workshops, web-based documentation, individual meetings, and support for monitoring and project evaluation.

Cultural Barriers:

African setup has diverse cultures. A study conducted in South Africa confirmed that in that country there are 11 official languages. These diverse languages support different cultural practices and thus different approaches in tackling issues. E-governance in such scenarios requires multi-lingual and multi-cultural approach. This also applies to Nigeria with a more diverse ethnic group. This will ensure that all the interests of all these diverse cultures are catered for. Balancing cultural values in E-governance is important but difficult since it involves overcoming the nature of culture of being self-centered where the implementers may feel that their cultures are more superior than others, and thus ignoring

6

others cultural interests. This creates hostilities which slow down E-governance (Maumbe, Owei & Alexander, 2018).

Another cultural factor that affects E-governance is uncertainty avoidance. In culture with higher uncertainty avoidance, there is high esteem of trust and therefore less likelihood of taking risks. While in cultures with low uncertainty avoidance, things are taken easy and people rely less on trust as a method of avoiding risks. Therefore, in cultures that tend to avoid uncertainty, trust is more important as a precondition to any form of interaction. So, higher uncertainty avoidance will enhance the positive effect of citizens' trust on intentions to engage in E-government (Warkentin, Crossler, Johnson, Lowry, Hu & Baskerville, 2012). Others cultures argue that they can use any online service depending on their previous experience on the existing services. If their previous experience was good and a new service is introduced, they will definitely use it. Finally, some cultures view E-government as too complicated and thus isolate themselves from online services. Communities which embrace this ideology seem to have less interest in any online service. And for this reason it is important to have a better understanding of some of these cultural barriers that impede E-government success in the public sector

Conclusion

From this paper, various literatures have been reviewed, and concept of E-governance as it relates to the public sector has been extensively examined. The paper also outlined how certain factors are critical in E-governance in the public sector. The technological factor and Infrastructure were outlined as the channel through which E-governance is propagated, government's policies and standards acts as a framework through which IT activities are carried out. Security is valued much in any online transaction and people feel free to interact with systems that they are sure of in terms of privacy. To this end, scholars agreed that one of the factors limiting E-governance in a country like Nigeria is poor telecommunications and internet facilities. Therefore, it worth emphasizing that the enabling technological frameworks for the adoption and implementation of E-governance are substandard and insufficient. However, the broad issues associated with E-governance which have been pointed out in this paper are: leadership problem, ill attitude towards ICT, inadequate ICT facilities, and lack of trained personnel. Other factors that were noted in the review include: lack of funding, lack of Awareness and cultural barriers

Recommendations

Based on the observations made so far, it is recommended government should ensure that top bureaucrats at the helm of affairs in its parastatals adhered to the best global practices of E-governance in order to enhance operations and ensure effective service delivery.

The ill attitude or attitudinal problems of personnel in government establishment should be dealt with by way of encouraging them with incentives so as to become willing or able to adjust to E-governance practices.

Also, government should ensure that there is ICT infrastructures in place to hasten the E-governance process in its parastatals. This could be done by subsidizing the cost of equipment and ensuring that the ICT facilities are well maintained.

There should be adequate training for personnel in the public sector. Such training should be comprehensive in order to ensure the technical know-how on utilizing new technologies that is associated with E-governance.

References

Ayo, C. K. (2014). Information and Communication Technology as a Lever for Innovation in Leadership. In T. Abioye., C. Awonuga and A. Amuwo. *Leadership and Innovation in Africa's Development Paradigm.* Ota: Covenant University Press.

Budhiraja, R (2013) Electronic Governance: A Key Issue in the 21st Century, *Electronic Governance Division, Ministry of Information Technology,* Government of India. renu@ miti.gov.in.

Gberevbie, D.; Ayo, C.; Iyoha.,Duruji M. &Abasilim, U. (2015). E-governance: Strategy for Militating Non-Inclusion of MSCs in Policy Making in Nigeria. 15th European Conference on E-government, University of Portsmouth, United Kingdom, 18-19 June.

Grant, G. & Chau, D. (2016). *Developing a Generic Framework for E-government* in Felix, B. (ed.) *Advanced Topics in Global Information Management.* Idea Group Inc (IGI).

Heeks, R.B. (2010). Building E-Governance for Development, *Government Paper No.12,* IDPM, University of Manchester.

Heeks, R. (2012), *Reinventing Government in the Information Age: International Practice in IT-enabled Public Sector Reform.* New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203 204962

ICMA (2012), Electronic Government (2002), "International City/County Management Association", Washington, D.C.

Iyoha, F., Duruji, M. &Abasilim, U. (2015). *E-governance: Strategy for Militating Non-Inclusion of Citizens in Policy Making in Nigeria.* 15th European Conference on eGovernment, University of Portsmouth, United Kingdom, 18-19 June.

Keniston, K. (2013). *The Four Digital Divides.* Delhi: Sage Publishers.

Maumbe, B. M., Owei, V., &Alexernder, H. (2018). Technology, Sustainability and Rural Development in Africa. *Scot press,* 6(3), 13-27.

Ojo, J. S. (2014). E-governance: An Imperative for Sustainable Grassroots Development in Nigeria. Journal of Public Administration and Policy Research, vol. 6 (2), pp. 77-89.

Shilubane, S. (2011). P*ublic Administration in Theory and Practice.* New Delhi KitabMahal Publishers.

Spacey, R., Goulding, A., & Murray, I. (2013). ICT and change in UK public libraries: Does training matter? *Library Management 24:1&2,* pp. 61-69.

Warkentin, M., Crossler, R.E., Johnston, A.C., Lowry, P.B., Hu, Q., & Baskerville, R. (2013). Future directions for behavioral information security Research: *computers & security,* 3(2), 90-101.