

## **E-Government Reforms and Its Implications on Public Administration in Nigeria: A Case Study of the Fourth Republic**

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### **Abstract**

There is no doubt that Nigeria has found herself in the community where information and communication technology drives almost all governmental activities and for this reason, the regime under former president Olusegun Obasanjo has adopted e-government reforms to enable all information about government be accessed, downloaded, and informed to various citizens through the selective ministries and agencies of government. The method of data collection used in this study was the use of both primary and secondary source of data, including the researchers' participatory observations. The paper discover the impact derived from the use of information in passing notifications on health, employment, record keeping, agendas, policy formulations and conferences/workshops attendance.

**Keywords:** impact, e-governance, administration,

### **Introduction**

Over the previous years, the internet has brought numerous possibilities that have had a fundamental impact on human society and how they relate. This is why scholars believed that there has not been any other technology in the history of mankind which changed and touched so many lives in a short time other than technology existing now. ICT constitute one of the major inventions in the history of human existence and has informed the continuous drive to improve information processing and communication with no distance barrier (Ndukwe, 2002). It is on this note that initial attempts over the years with the associated business models and democratization of the technology during the internet period provides a rich knowledge base on leveraging the internet for the greater number of citizens who are basically living in the Nigeria's cities.

E-government represents the introduction of a great wave of technological innovations as well as government reinvention. E-government's importance in Public Administration stands from the fact that it is a way for government to use the most innovative information and communication technologies, particularly web-based Internet applications to provide citizens and businesses with more convenient access to government information and services, and improve the quality of the services and to provide greater opportunities to participate in democratic institutions and processes. These include transactions between government and business, government and citizen, government and employee, and among different units and levels of government. E-government presents a tremendous impetus to move forward in the 21st century with higher quality, cost-effective, government services and a better relationship between citizens and government Kaaya J (2004).

The government also exercises its decision making powers in certain matters such as appointments to senior civil service posts, exemptions from statutory provisions and rulings on clemency. Government servants are politically impartial officials who retain their posts, regardless of the political orientation of the government that is in power.

### **Literature Review**

The concept of e-governance became prominent in the early 21st century when scholar's attention was driven towards exploring gains of the internet in public administration and management. (Fatile, 2012). The United Nations (UN), 2005 sees it as "the utilization of information technologies (including the internet, World Wide Web, computers and mobile phones for the delivering of information from government to citizens" (Drucker, 2001). Governments all over the world move towards, and own ICTs in order to transform its relationship with citizens, the private sectors and other arms of government.

E-Government: The Organization for European Cooperation and Development defines e-government as the use of information and computer technologies to ensure transparency of government actions, the accessibility of government services and information, and the responsiveness of government to new ideas, demands and rules. The World Bank sees e-government as the use by government agencies of information technologies that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government (Kramer, Jenkins and Katz, 2007).

The use of Web technologies, both internally (intranet) and externally (internet), to increase collaboration, transparency and efficiency between government and citizens is eventually the acceptable and simplified path to which citizens get access to vital information from the government achieve. Intranet means a computer network-based TCP/IP protocols belonging to an organization, usually a corporation, accessible only by the organization's members, employees or others with authorization while internet is a global system of interconnected computer networks that use standard protocol suite (TCP/IP) to link several billions devices worldwide. As Internet usage grows, and the use of technology in general grows, so too does the use of technology and Internet by government. E-governance is the general term used to describe the government's use of technology in performing its multiple responsibilities (Holzer and Schwester, 2011).

By and large, internet is a network that consists of millions of private, public, academic, business and government networks of local to global scope, linked by a broad array of electronic and optical networking technologies. In order to ensure proper implementation of e-government platform in an organization, both intranet and internet technologies are expected to be installed and properly managed in the environment. The implication of e-government stems from the ability of individuals and group to obtain government services through non-traditional electronic means, enabling access to government information and to completion of government transaction anywhere, in any time basis and in conformance with equal access requirement. This thus, offers potential to reshape the public sector and build relationships between citizens and the government (Kaaya, 2004).

### **Challenges on the Effective Implementation of E-Government Reforms in Nigeria**

It is necessary to know that the process involved in the implementation of e-government in all countries, and Nigeria is the need for proper provision of information and communication

technology facilities to run both the service delivery and the maintaining of the equipment's of the e-services by government. One of the bedeviling problems confronting the e-government by public administration in the fourth republic in Nigeria is the stable power supply across the nation. This problem resulted from the poor and inadequate supply of electricity by government to run all the established centers of ICT to adequately and effectively communicate vital events of public administration to business and citizens. If equipment's are not powered, there is no way they can work and sent information concerning notice of government, seminar attendance, employment, registration of elections.

Another factor militating against the successful operation of e-government was the transformation equipments used by public administration, which was seen as the outdated and cannot sent millions of information unless it is attached with the private database providers. It is complicating to allow private bodies sometimes to have certain access to store part or whole of public information service delivery because database are not to be made so open for hackers to create the same database and divert applicants to their site. It is pertinent to have an independent and reliable service delivery route that can handle public information without interference from external control, just like what really happened recently in June, 2021 where Twitter was blocked in the country for disseminating information on President's page that they consider offensive. This means that if the service is provided by government and the information is sent officially by government, then the control cannot be absolutely from outside and this tries to show that if there is information expected to reach some agencies or organizations, it can either be delayed or reverted for the process that it was controlled using the inferior equipment. The participation information system (PIS) from the citizens view regarding government activities in democratic settings should be adequately applied (Dada, 2006; Charney, 2009).

Digital divide is the dichotomy between the developed countries and less developed countries, which created the gap on the willingness of people to adopt and see the importance of ICT and e-governance which helped in bridging the wider gap between traditional methods of public administration (keeping files and executing projects using paper) and the modern application of e-government reforms and how it simplify working activities in the fourth republic in Nigeria. This model is the transformation of government actions easily by creating web pages to dispose messages either between government to government or government to citizen orientation of the e-government among the levels of government had become another factor and it challenged the transformation process of implementing e-government to reach people in the rural areas and inform them about the ideas, opportunities and programmes of government which do not require each one to seek knowledge and information on what government does or ought to do (InfoDev, 2002)

If we look at this aspect of the scenario, we will understand that there is a gap left by government which do not give people in the typical rural areas to be able to logged in to the government's web pages to benefit from agricultural training and extension, while they keep hoping that with the introduction of e-government, things will come tangibly to their doorstep. it is the responsibility of government through e-government policies to enable rural dwellers to have affordable service delivery with low charges so that it will encourage farmers to be updated on various provision of farm implements without travelling to urban areas for requesting to have

fertilizers and equipment provided by government on Ancho-borrowers scheme and so on (Kaaya, 2004).

The acceptability of citizen's in the service delivery of e-government is another area of concern as many Nigerian are not willing to visit government's websites to know what is made for them. This puts unaware to some graduates who are ready to apply in the short term poverty eradication programme designed to encourage graduates with knowledge of entrepreneurship, and many of these graduates are located in the remote areas where network is either not available or is not adequate to explore the web pages that carries those volume of information. If citizens are willing to join and participate in the training and training the young skilled Nigerians and sponsored by federal, state and local government, will reduce the number of people seeking for urban jobs in industries, where machines have taken the jobs of middle class workers either in the banks, processing industries, packaging, information ministries, transport, and so on.

In a nutshell, all the aforementioned challenges cannot be separated from one another because if e-government reforms in Nigeria is not adequately expanded to cover both rural and urban areas where demand of agricultural goods are needed, while urban areas content most population of skilled personnel, the link between the two target areas must be digitalized to reduce the risk of financial and material flow is significantly maintained. The implementation of e-government should adequately provide that vital information and all the government web pages should be registered and be accessed easily to all Nigerians so that it will attract more and more interested participants in the utilization of such services for nation's growth and development.

### **Solutions to the Problems of Implementing E-Government on Public Administration in Nigeria's Fourth Republic**

In most of the activities of government in Nigeria in the fourth republic, things have changed and continue to do so because of the advantage of the equipment's used to transform and communicate information across the nation, and this use of technology varies from government to government, government to businesses as well as government to citizens. The major areas which the reform has adequately changed and has impact were:

- **Dissemination of information:** before 1999 when Olusegun Obasanjo took over civilian power, there was nothing like GSM in Nigeria and most African countries. This is because of the slow adoption of modernization in the culture of African and prefers the status quo ideas of doing things. Nigerians especially in the rural areas hardly leave the old system in dissemination of information to the people and how long it takes to deliver message from one ministry to another. All it takes for e-government now is to type address of the organization and sent the information required for action. Before some minutes, all messages are sent and received by the respected organization, and this can only be possible through the use of e-government reforms implemented in Nigeria
- **Easy Communication:** the use of e-government reform has tremendously changed and simplifies how information is sourced, analyzed and even pass to citizens through the media and the use of internet facilities. To communicate to the head office before the computer and e-government era, messengers were sent with information to travel away before messages can be communicated to various places in the nation, but now meetings with government officials, seminars, conferences, workshops, trainings of civil service

are done through the connection of the e-government facilities, especially during the pandemic period.

- **Reduction of Cost:** the e-government has also reduced the cost of information service delivery where huge amount of money used to be spent before notifying agencies of government on any new development of policies to be adopted from time to time. All it takes is the subscription of the device to use for the information to be made available to people or organizations. Reaching public administration may not be necessary through contact but sending information using Google mails, twitter, and social media helped to cut the cost of travelling which was the only way of informing government bureaucrats.
- **Time saving:** e-government saves time in the schedules of its activities through establishing government sites designed to periodically sent a notice of any updated actions by government. The time that takes government officials to process information during paper days was cut to 50% comparing with digital transformation in the activities using e-government.
- **Encouraging investors:** when service providers started operating in Nigeria during the fourth republic, a lot of Nigerians invested their wealth in the development of ICT process and the ICT equipment. Today, over 50 different companies are operating independently with little intervention of government in their e-businesses. Some businesses advertise products through connection with NITDA, NCC, and Ministry of Communication on policies that will not violate the conditions provided for them. Warnings to defaulters are also made available by investors especially on the Covid-19 pandemic protocols all over the country and how to avoid the diseases. This attracts many shop sellers to join the e-government provision of services as it is reaching number of customers in every corner of the country, while ensuring the safety and secret of registered industries. Also the payment of civil service salaries and other contracts which was on table before the digital era came and simplify all the problems of payment errors. People apply jobs online and attend interviews through logging video chats with the interviewers till they receive their appointment letters online. It is also noted that universities ran their academic activities through e-boards, e-library, e-laboratory where students are taught all the laboratory practical and many other programmes to include the election process, registration of voters, releasing of results, checking account balances of banks,

Okot-Uma and Rogers (2004) suggested that while NITDA has established the platform for ICT development, significant G2G awareness and set up a basis for e-government initiatives in Nigeria the government also adopted a private-public partnership of a tripartite joint venture registered as National E-Government Strategies Limited (NeGST), comprising government (5%), consortium of banks (15%) and a strategic partner (80%). The joint venture has a mandate “to create a practical strategy and a single architecture to guide the evolution of digital government solutions with consistent standards, operating platforms and applications across agencies and government systems”. The launching of the e-registration of teachers in Nigeria project in May, 2006 was the first rollout of NeGST services.

The Nigerian government, recognizing the need to review the national information technology policy in the light of global changes in the IT sector internationally and in Nigeria, set up the

“ICT for development” strategic action plan committee to develop a new ICT plan. NITDA in 2008 announced that the committee had finished its work and the country’s new “ICT for development” tagged ICT4D was now ready. The national ICT4D plan is targeted at using ICT to achieve the government's seven-point agenda and 'Vision 2020', thereby deploying ICT to achieve Nigeria's Millennial Development Goals, NEPAD development initiatives and the world summit on information society's plan of action. It contains actionable programs for short, medium and long term implementation by identified stakeholders (in conjunction with local and/or international private organizations).

While the government continues to improve upon the existing ICT Infrastructure through the activities of NITDA, NCC and other state owned and private organizations, and has taken the initiative to invite all stakeholders to formulate an ICT Master plan for the country, Nigeria should have an e-government leader (or change manager) responsible for implementing the national e-government policy and ensuring that all the national government websites and e-government policies are integrated and coherent. This responsibility could be assigned to any of the two governments sponsored agencies responsible for charting a course for Nigeria’s ICT and e-government services projects (or any other agency that the government wants to put in charge). The e-government leader (or agency) will be responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of an integrated and coherent national e-government portal which will serve as a gateway for the provision of e-governance services by the government. ICT today has become necessary to all citizens, and this is so because in participating the JAMB examination which we already know how it was carried out in the past years, it has become database exams with computers on each students’ table, and students and teachers must be trained on how to use the e-government facilities to ease work and bring out results in time and accurate. (NITDA, 2011)

## **Conclusion**

This paper concludes with the following that will help in strengthening the implementation of the e-government reforms in the country. That government should ensure that those who are managing the ICT facilities must go on adequate training, as government also provide all the necessary tools and devices for the ICT. Managers and administrators should ensure the maximum adoption of e-government reforms in their various ministries. Provision of electricity power is necessary to enable the system work well. The digital divide is another factor that needs to be addressed in conferences so that third world can be able to be equipped with ICT new facilities like internet robots, new fast processing computers and detective appliances.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made to strategized and improve the process of transforming the administrative aspect of government in Nigeria with the aim to encourage e-government adherence:

- i. Federal government should introduce workable policies that will guide the conduct and manner in which both businesses and individuals can properly use e-resources.
- ii. There should be adequate power supply to function the e-facilities so that people and businesses can access any vital information that is available for reach
- iii. Government should also provide the new model e-equipment’s to fasten the process of government information process. This will benefit examinations, recruitment process in security and paramilitary in Nigeria and areas of finance.

- iv. There should also be training and development of staff if ICT to enable them acquire more new skills that can compute with their counterparts across Africa and the globe at large. With training of staff the adequate understanding of ICT cannot be fulfilled as new gadgets are produced on daily basis.
- v. Security terminals must be properly restricted to avoid encroachment of fraudsters who bypass government officials to default the process by creating their personal route to violate e-policies for their personal gains

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