Chapter 4

Web 2.0, ICT Infrastructure, and Training Provision for E–Government Readiness in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents a discussion on e-readiness, Web 2.0, social media, mobile/wireless technologies, and other Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) that can help to facilitate the attainment and sustenance of an e-ready environment necessary to enhance e-governance in Nigeria. The chapter aims to clearly articulate the necessary steps to be taken to provide all stakeholders with a blueprint of areas and factors on which to focus. An assessment of how e-ready the Nigerian government and its citizens currently are and the requirements necessary for further steps to be taken (such as policies, programmes, and processes to be put in place, infrastructures to be acquired, and training provisions to equip Nigerian citizens and government officials with the capacity to benefit from and sustain the use of acquired e-technologies) are also presented. Specific ways by which Nigeria can harness the various emerging technologies (social media, Web 2.0, and mobile/wireless technologies) are highlighted. If employed appropriately, these technologies can help to provide improved processes, increased efficiency, improved transparency, and citizen's effective participation and involvement in governance to further improve the lives of Nigerian citizens.

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, we cannot overemphasize the need to pass on relevant information (in a timely and accurate manner irrespective of distance) from those who have it to those who need it. This

could be between members of legislative, judicial and executive arms of government, government to government, government and their citizens, patients and their doctors, business executives and their labour force, parents and their children, religious leaders and their followers, salespersons

and buyers, students and their teachers, etc. The numerous e-application platforms have the potential to readily and efficiently facilitate the process of information transfer among these groups if underlying technologies are properly harnessed and employed. It is therefore necessary that nations take pragmatic steps towards achieving an e-ready feat if they wish to be well positioned to benefit from the e-platform and relevant emerging technologies including the social media and mobile technologies.

According to Oghogho and Ezomo (2013), the emergence of several e-application platforms such as e-governance, e-business, e-science and engineering, e-health, e-learning, e-agricultural, e-procurement, e-banking, e-justice, etc. has changed the way communication activities is being carried out around the word. These digital platforms use digital technologies to deliver several e-services by making it easy and possible for those who have information to pass them on to those who need them. The result is that decisions are made quickly and efficiently based on up-to-date information, business deals are quickly concluded, learning from home is easier, etc. Every aspect of our modern day life has been influenced by several emerging e-technological applications. Improved productivity and efficiency can now be delivered by using these e-platforms as tools or means to achieve the desired end. The emergence and growth of the various e-technologies and their applications is leading the world towards a global society were physical land boundaries are no longer sufficient to separate people who are from different societies with different cultures, ideologies and beliefs.

Sharma and Vaisla (2011) did a review of e-governance applications in public health care (a vital responsibility of the government) for rural areas of Uttarakhand province in India through ICT applications at National levels. They presented facts on tele-medicine, tele-referal services and health information dissemination using videoconferencing, mobile phones and other ICTs. Oghogho

and Ezomo (2013) presented specific examples of the use of ICTs in health, governance, business and education stating their potential to enhance national development when properly harnessed.

Newer emerging e-technologies are now presenting the world with better ways of harnessing ICTs. The World Wide Web (WWW) has entered a new era called Web 2.0 with features such as social media or networks, blogs, wikis, etc. which allow people to effectively connect, create and share live streaming or recorded audio, video, text, pictures, etc. information or knowledge. The emergence of several mobile/wireless technologies is presently at the fore front in providing and enhancing the enabling environment for harnessing Web 2.0 features. Today we have several widespread emerging mobile and wireless devices such as Laptops, Notebooks, Ipods, Ipads, Iphones, Palmtops, PDAs, etc. equipped with numerous features and specifications necessary for accessing the WWW for information transfer (Carmel & Gabriela, 2011). These enhanced features range from touch and sliding screen, video capturing, recording, editing and sharing, bluetooth, 3G and 4G capabilities, radio FM and AM, Music player/MP3, e-mail applications, HTML browsers, Internet connections, etc. These enhanced features enable users to access (download or view online) other's information and send (upload or comment online) their own information thus enhancing the information sharing and the diffusion process.

As our world becomes increasingly digital or electronic, all organs of government cannot continue to resist the adoption and sustained use of electronic technologies to deliver government information and services to citizens. This is evident from the experiences of countries like Republic of Korea, Seychelles and Kenya where, e-governance has made governance processes and service delivery faster, cheaper, more effective, transparent and accountable (UNDESA, 2012; Nigeria Intel, 2013). E-governance refers to the provision of public services to the citizens via electronic platforms (especially the worldwide

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