

Chapter 15

A Review of eGovernment Services in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Government managers worldwide have, within the last decade, come to the realization that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a viable tool that can help them achieve their aims: to deliver efficient and cost effective services to its citizenry, et cetera. To this end governments in most developed and developing countries of the world are at different stages of adoption and implementation of their chosen eGovernment policies and initiatives as is the case with Nigeria. The chapter examines a national discussion by reviewing literature on eGovernment services and applications available to the public in Nigeria. Adoption of eGovernment applications and services has transformed traditional government services' delivery in many countries with attendant implications for governments and citizens. The methodology will be a review of related literature and will draw up conclusions from the literature to propose a plan for eGovernment services in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

There has suddenly been an escalation of eGovernment initiatives across sub-Saharan Africa as has been the case in other parts of the world even much earlier. The success of these initiatives in Africa and Nigeria in particular is another issue. Emergence of eGovernment was signaled by the

initial part of implementation of e-governance known as “computerization” of public offices enabling them by building their capacity for better service delivery and brining in good governance using technology as a catalyst and the second part was provision of citizen centred services through digital media like developing interactive government portals. The aim of eGovernment, therefore, is to provide efficient government management of information to the citizen; better service delivery to

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citizens; and empowerment of the people through access to information and participation in public policy decision-making. This review will highlight problems and challenges of e-governance in Nigeria and will be useful for researchers, philosophers, governments and policy makers in the area of e-governance.

The countries with remarkable e-governance initiatives are New Zealand, Canada and Singapore. The evolution of this concept of eGovernment is traceable to the United States which was especially driven by the 1998 Government Paperwork Elimination Act and by President Clinton's December 17, 1999, Memorandum on eGovernment, which ordered the top 500 forms used by citizens to be placed online by December 2000. The memorandum also directed agencies to construct a secure eGovernment infrastructure (Wikipedia).

The aim of eGovernment and its spin-offs of E-Democracy, E-Participation, E-Procurement, E-Health, E-Learning, E-Transportation, E-tax and a range of other "E-'s" according to Bertot, Jaeger and McClure³ (2008) is basically to engage citizenry in government in a user-centred manner, but also to develop quality government services and delivery systems that are efficient and effective. The authors also suggest that the concept can be user-centred, citizen centred. For the Southern African case, countries such as Mauritius, South Africa, Mozambique, Botswana and Namibia have started putting in place institutional and regulatory frameworks solely dedicated for the advancement of eGovernment adoption (UN e-govt. report, 2008). According to Hecks (2008) benefits of eGovernment include: improving government processes: eAdministration, connecting Citizens: eCitizens and eServices, building external interactions: eSociety. Efficient and effective EGovernment suggests that governments will gain economies of scale, reduce costs, and provide technology-enabled user services

From the aforementioned, e-governance in the developed world has been used to cut bureaucracy

in government and improve on participation of the public in the issues of state. This review intends to identify any such user-centred benefits of e-governance in Nigeria as found in studies from other developed countries. This study is being undertaken because there is concern in literature about eGovernment and whether it matches citizen expectations and requirements. There is minimal literature reviewing eGovernment in Nigeria. There is also concern that the provision of eGovernment services will have clear cultural biases and what is right for developed countries may not necessarily be appropriate for developing countries such as Nigeria. According to Carter & Belanger (2003) there have been a lot of studies carried out to identify user adoption of services provided online by businesses via e-commerce but none to identify factors that would make citizens use eGovernment services. This could be as a result of not having been consulted on the types of services they would like to see (Mundy & Musa, 2010). This is evident from the results of a survey carried out on government agencies by Carter and Belanger (2003) which revealed that of the 74.2% of government agencies which had websites, 90.5% of them did not conduct a survey to find out what citizens and businesses wanted on the websites. According to Carter and Belanger (2005); Yonazi et al, (2008), Cook (2000), the success of eGovernment initiatives depends on bringing the citizens, businesses and all stakeholders onboard from the outset, understanding what they require and ensuring that these requirements are met.

The scope of eGovernment service delivery is wide and ever growing to include web-based information dissemination and service delivery applications. Some of the most fundamental developments include posting policy or regulatory information online in the federal and state civil services, immigration service, motor vehicle licensing, aviation – ticketing, civil service payroll, e-payments, etc which presently run in Nigeria as well as other countries of the world. Presently,

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