E-GOVERNANCE AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIA

Akinola Adeyemi Adewale
Nigerian Institute of International Affairs ((NIIA), Lagos, Nigeria.
akinolaadeyemi@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This paper examines e-governance and citizens participation in Nigeria. The concept of E-governance is the relationships between the citizens most especially the government, employees, organizations both public and private. It also identifies the use of technology by government to provide services for the citizens, business and private sectors and other stakeholders. Through the use of ICTs, the citizens havebeen able to participate in government. Thus, the paper looks at the e-governance, e-government, e-participation, how e-governance was implemented in Nigeria, the benefit and their challenges in Nigeria.

Keywords: E-governance, E-government, E-participation, ICT.

INTRODUCTION

E-governance is a construct that establishedinteractions between the government and citizens of a country. It could also be described as the use of computers by thegovernmentand other bodies functioning under the parameters of government to provide enabling services to the citizenry. Heeks (2003) explained that e-governance goes beyond providing services and establishing communications with various stakeholders of government. It includesan intimate relationship among all functions of government, citizens, private institutions and the external bodies to achieve their intending objectives. Wikipedia defines E-governance as the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) toprovide government services and transactions to the citizens, business organizations and government at adifferent level.According to Fatile (2012), he was of the opinion that the use of information communication technologies by government transforms the relationship between the citizens, business organizations, and international bodies. However, the use of ICT by government goes beyond the provision of services to the citizens. It is also an avenue used by thegovernmentto inform the citizens about their level of performance through transparency and accountability.

E-governance is comprised ofthree key activities. These include government to government (G2G), government to citizens (G2C), and government to business (G2B). Each of these activities classifies government at different levels. Government makes use of thisbroad range of services to attaincommon goals and objectives which includes, improving efficiency, reliability, and quality of services.

However, this paper examines e-governance and citizens participation in Nigeria. The paper, therefore, provides a thorough review on e-governance and the participation of the citizens in government through the use of information and communication technology in Nigeria.

It also identifies the implementations of e-governance in Nigeria, the benefits, and challenges of e-governance.

Domains of E-governance

The domains of e-governance areestablished on three primaryobjectives.They includee-administration, e-services, and e-society (Heeks, 2001).

E-administration: This is a process that improves the activities of government through the public sectors by minimizing costs, planning and initiating strategies within thegovernment.

E-service: It establishedthe relationship between the government and its citizens by increasing the flow of information through the government to the citizens.

E-society: This brings a lasting relationship between the Government and the Citizen, Government and Business organizations, Government and the government, and Government to Employees.

However, the three primary objectives of e-governance can be subdivided into four pillars; theyinclude Connectivity, knowledge, data content, and capital.

1. **Connectivity:** This requires connecting the citizens to the services of the government through the use of ICTs. Therefore, the government through the ministry of information and communication technology and other agencies are expected to provide affordable and reliable information accessto the citizens.
2. **Knowledge:** The government should create awareness on the use ICTs to its citizenry. Also, there is a need for government to employ trainedsoftware engineers and computer scientist to facilitate and manage government database.
3. **Data Content:** Government needs to have a database for storing information gathered from the citizen and the ones disseminated by the government to the citizens. This database should have the data content which is related to government services. However, the database should carry only the content of the government of the country alone where it resides.
4. **Capital:** The government should budget enough capital to cater for and maintain the use of ICT tools. This will provide continuity in thegovernmentprocess, and also, it will boost the economy through providing enabling services to the citizens.

Types of Services Delivered by Government through E-governance

The need to improve service delivery through the use of ICTs in governments focuses on four mainaspects. These are Government to citizens (G2C); Government to thegovernment (G2G); Government to employees (G2E); Government to business (G2B).

1. Government to citizens (G2C)

Government to citizens are activities of the government that providesonline access to information and services to citizens. Government to citizen aims at establishing productiveinteractions between the government and the citizens which is the essence of adopting e-governance (Nkwe, 2012).

Government to citizen's approach enable citizens to ask questions with the aim of receiving the right answers. This interactioncould also be a platform for accountability and transparency in service provision and service delivery by the government. It could also be a medium forobtaining information, filing or making payment and a host of other activities viathe use of ICTs (Sharma, 2007).

2. Government to government (G2G)

Government to government are activities of government at different levelsby providing internet services to thegovernmentthrough the use of information and communication technology. These activitiesare aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of overall government operations (Gant, 2008).

3. Government to business (G2B)

Government to business refers to thegovernment at different level using information communication technology as a platform to communicate with organizations and business entities. Through this interactions,governmentenlightens them on some vitalinformation that may bring growth to our economysuch as, acollection of taxes, payment of all kind of bills and penalty, sharing of all kind of information.

4. Government to employees (G2E)

This increases the transparency between government and its employees. Here, the employee can keep a check on the functioning of government and government can keep on its employees.

E-GOVERNANCE IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA

E-governance implementation in Nigeria cut across all levels of government as well as all agencies, parastatals, and institutions. According to Olatokun and Adebayo (2012), the federal government of Nigeria, in 2001, proclaimed ICT as a policy of national importance. This further brought into existence and the creation of a policy on information and communication technology in the same year.

However, identifying the importance of ICTs in governance, the Nigerian Federal Government make it necessary for the country to have a national policy on ICT. In 2007, the enabling National Information Technology Development Act was enacted by the National Assembly with an Agency established along with the Act, which was empowered to "plan, develop and promote the use of information technology in Nigeria" (Olatokun and Adebayo, 2012).

With this act and the formulation of policies, various government agencies started implementing ICTs in their operations. However, in 2011, the Federal Government created a new Ministry called the Ministry of Communications Technology which was saddled with the mandate of streamlining ICT development and progress in line with the nation's plan for e-governance (Omerie and Omeire, 2014).

In 2012, a National ICT draft policy was presented by the ministerial committee on ICT policy harmonization which included several policy recommendations and reports. The

following are the policy thrust of the National ICT draft policy of 2012, as it pertains to e-governance:

- To facilitate the implementation of e-government initiatives;
- To develop frameworks and guidelines, including interoperability and e-government framework for the enhanced development and use of ICT in the government;
- To develop and implement ICT training programs for public sector employees, in connection with introduction of e-government and other digital functions within government offices;
- To coordinate the integration of national e-government network infrastructure and services; and
- To promote e-government and other e-services that would foster broadband usages (National ICT Policy, 2012).

However, the Nigerian legal framework covering the use of ICT in governance is not based on an integrated system but various policies. They include: the Information Policy, which is supervised by the National Media Commission; the Telecommunications Policy, which is regulated by the National Communications Commission (NCC); and the ICT policy which is overseen by NITDA which stands for the National Information Technology Development Agency (Fraser-Moleketi, G., and Senghor, D, 2011).

The private sector was not left out of the drive for implementing ICTs in the business of governance in Nigeria. In 2007, the National Information Technology Development Act also provided for the avenue of public-private partnership in the adoption and management of ICTs in Nigeria by establishing the National e-Government Strategies limited (NeGST) (Fatile, 2012).

The NeGST was more or less a tripartite joint venture, that is, a platform involving three parties, namely the government (which is represented by NITDA), private and financial investors, and technology partners, for which their share ownership in the joint venture is 5%, 15%, and 80% respectively (Omeire and Omeire, 2014).

Following the creation of the NeGST in 2007, there was an initiative to establish an online database for teachers in Nigeria via e-registration (Omeire and Omerie, 2014).

Also, the NeGST instituted and projected other e-governance initiative in Nigeria such as:

- **E–readiness:** A programme designed to prepare the Nigeria civil service for e-governance;
- **E-parliament:** This is an initiative to bridge the gap between the citizens and lawmakers via web, and mobile telecommunication channels;
- **E-passport:** This ensures that the process for the preparation and issuance of international passports is done electronically;
- **E-NYSC:** This is involved with the administration and the management of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) through the use of ICTs.

- **E–LGA**: This is in line with making local government areas (LGA) live up to their responsibility of being closest to the people via the application of ICTs (Fraser-Moleketi &Senghor, 2011).

E-participation in Nigeria

Nigerian governments are tapping into the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to transform it public sectors, private sectors and the citizens at large. The advent of ICTs in Nigeria, government at all level are expected to improve the efficiency of their service delivery and also provide citizens with reliable and up-to-date information. This could be through subsidizing or bring private investors to provide the services. Furthermore, the increasing interest in e-governance indicates a sense of belonging by the citizens to have access to information of the government.In the 2000s the European Commission (EC) funded some e-participation projects under the e-participation preparatory action, the deploying of ICT, its maturity, and the newest trends in an online interaction were the typical features of the most successful projects (Lacigova, Maizite, and Cave 2012).

E-Participation initiatives can serve numerous purposes such as educating citizens on the need to contribute their quota to thedevelopment of the country, supporting government agenda,and participate in decision making. However, ICT tools have been employed to fast-track the implementation and access to government information on different social networks platforms such as online discussion forums, e-mail, online surveys, online chat, and group support systems. Maciel, Roque, and Garcia (2010) declared the importance of social networks and virtual communities in citizen's participation process as a foundation for implementing e-democracy.

However, Machintosh (2004) presented a new schema for e-participation efforts to characterize the initiatives of e-democracy; the following are descriptions of proposed levels.

E-enabling: Means using technology to enable participation and supporting those who rarely access the Internet, and so they do not take benefit from the information available. The role of technology here is to provide relevant information in an accessible and understandable format (Said, 2011).

E-engaging: Means using technology to engage the citizens and enable more in-depth contributions and support deliberative debate on policy issues through consulting a wider audience. Using the term "to engage" in this context refers to the top-down consultation of citizens by thegovernment, where citizens are considered as consumers of policy (Said, 2011).

E-empowering: Means using technology to empower citizens and support active participation and facilitate bottom-up ideas to influence the political agenda. Citizens are considered as producers of policies rather than just consumers as in the previous level (e-engaging).

Benefit of E-governance in Nigeria

Main benefits of E-government as identified by Ndou (2004) are:

1. Cost reduction and efficiency gains (Malhotra, 2001)
2. Quality of service delivery to businesses and customers

3. Transparency, anticorruption, accountability
4. Increase the capacity of government
5. Network and community creation
6. Improve the quality of decision making
7. Promote use of ICT in other sectors of the society

Challenges of E-Governance in Nigeria

The disadvantage of e-governance in Nigeria could be similar to some developing countries in the world. As agreed by many authors that the number one problem of e-governance implementation in Nigeria is poor internet and telecommunications infrastructures. Fatile (2012) aptly captures the situation when he said that the enabling technological frameworks of e-governance, for instance, telecommunications facilities are still insufficient or substandard.

However, Coleman (2005) identifies the three major barriers which African countries like Nigeria must avoid or overcome in adopting e-governance so that the exercise does not end up in failure. They include:

- Adopting technologies without developing human skills and capacities to manage, integrate and sustain them;
- Centralizing the use of technologies by national government departments, without devolving the benefits of technology to intermediary institutions such as local government, parliament, parties, civil society organization and the independent media;
- Failing to link better governance to broader and more inclusive democracy which gives voice to those who cannot afford technologies but have needs and ideas to express.

Omeire and Omeire (2014) also gave a detailed analysis of the challenges of e-governance implementation in Nigeria. They include: low ICT literacy rate, Lack of necessary regulatory/ legal framework, poor ICT infrastructure: corruption, lack of committed leadership, epileptic power supply, and bureaucratic Bottlenecks

CONCLUSION

The emergency of ICTs has made the world a global village, ICTs has created a platform for people around the world to communicate with each other for business transactions and citizens participation in the economic growth of their countries. Most importantly, governments at all levels and also across the globe have discovered the need for ICTs in the delivery of public services to its citizens. However, the emergence of ICTs into government has efficientlyeradicated lack of information and government participation. Also, it has addressed the perennial complaints of inefficiency and ineffectiveness that has become associated with government agencies most especially in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made to tackle the challenges of e-governance and citizen participation in Nigeria.

- The Nigeria Government should ensure that ICTs skills are being introduced and taught in schools. This will bring to the knowledge of the student and their communities the importance of ICT.
- Government at all levels and private organizations should enlighten their employees and members of the public on the need to interact with government using ICT.
- The provision of avoidable electricity power supply by the company in charge will ensure full participation of the citizens on e-governance.
- Since the idea and initiative of e-governance, the government has not demonstrated the strong political will and commitment to see to its success. However, e-governance should be given the adequate attention it requires at all levels for its success and;
- Some of the ICT services from the government must adequatelyregulate, for instance, sending and receiving e-mails.

REFERENCES

Coleman, S., & Gøtze, J. (2001). *Bowling Together: Online Public Engagement in Policy Deliberation*. Hansard Society, London, UK (Eds.)

Coleman, S. (2005). *African E-Governance Opportunities and Challenges*. Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford.

Fraser-Moleketi, G., &Senghor, D. (2011).*E-governance and Citizen Participation in West Africa: Challenges and Opportunities.*Panos Institute West Africa (PIWA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Fatile, J. O. (2012). Electronic Governance: Myth or Opportunity for Nigerian Public Administration? *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, *2*(9), 122 – 140.

Gant, J. P. (2008). The Electronic Government for Developing Countries. Policies and Strategies, International Telecommunication Union, August 2008 DRAFT, Geneva.

Heeks, R. (2003). *Achieving Success/Avoiding Failure in E-government Projects,* Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester. Retrieved from http://www.sed.manchester.ac.uk/idpm/research/publications/wp/igovernment/index.htm

Heeks, R. (2001). Understanding e-governance for development, E-Government working paper series, Paper no. 11, Manchester: Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester. Retrieved from http://www.sed.manchester.ac.uk/idpm/research/publications/wp/igovernment/index.htm

Holzer, M., & Schwester, R. W. (2011).*Public Administration: An Introduction*. New York. M.E. Sharpe, Inc.

Lacigova, O., Maizite, A., & Cave.B. (2012). E-Participation and Social Media: a Symbiotic Relationship? *European Journal of e-practice*, *16*, 71-76.

Machintosh, A. (2004). Characterizing E-Participation in Policy-Making. *In the Proceedings of the Thirty-Seventh Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS- 37),* January 5 – 8, 2004.

Maciel, C., Roque, L., & Garcia, A. C. (2010). Interaction and communication resources in collaborative e-democratic environments: The democratic citizenship community. *Information Polity: The International Journal of Government & Democracy in the Information Age, 15*(1/2), 73-88.

Maduabum, C. (2008). *The Mechanics of Public Administration in Nigeria. Lagos*. Concept Publications are limited.

Moon, M. J. (2002). The evolution of e-government among municipalities: rhetoric or reality? *Public Administration Review 62*, 424-433. 10. Poland, P. *Online Consultation in GOL Countries*

National ICT Policy. (2012). National ICT Draft Policy. Presented by The Ministerial Committee On ICT Policy Harmonization.January 9, 2012.

Nkwe, N. (2012). E-Government: Challenges and Opportunities in Botswana. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science. 2*(17), 39 – 48.

Ojo, J. S. (2014). E-Governance: An Imperative for Sustainable Grass Root Development in Nigeria. *Journal of Public Administration and Policy Research. 6*(4), 77 – 89.

Olatokun, W. M., &Adebayo, B. M. (2012). Assessing E-Government Implementation in Ekiti State, Nigeria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Computing and Information   Sciences. 3*(4), 497 – 505.

Omeire, E., & Omerie, C. (2014). New Wine in Old Wine Skin: An Exploration of Major Constraints to E-Government Implementation in Nigeria.*European Scientific Journal 10*(14), 481 – 487.

Said, W. (2011). Government Resources Planning as Government to Government e-participation platform within the integrated government model. Retrieved November 2011 from http://crossroad.epu.ntua.gr/files/2010/04/20.

Schwester, R. (2009). Examining the Barriers to e-governance Adoption.*Electronic Journal of e-Government, 7*(1), 113-122.

Singh, S. (2010). Promoting e-Governance through Right to Information: A case-Study of India.*International Journal of Scientific and Engineering Research*, *1*(2), 1-9.