E-Governance in the Public Sector in Nigeria

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Abstract: *E-governance phenomenon has taken root in the western world and the organized private sector in Nigeria but the same cannot be said about the public sector, especially at the state and local government levels. E-governance practice is premised on the benefits of reduced corruption, increased transparency, convenience and revenue growth. The paper examines the phenomenon of E-governance from the public sector perspective taking Abia State Polytechnic Aba as analytical framework. It highlights the objectives of E-governance and it's cardinal principles of providing SMARRT governance vis-à-vis its stages of application in Public service in Abia state. Ten ways were identified through which e-governance can improve the practice of public administration with emphases on reduction of corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience and revenue growth as measurement indices. Using a simple percent technique to analyze data collected from twenty four (24) persons on a four-point Likert scale it concludes that the paradigm shift from traditional governance to e-governance faces some hiccups in Nigeria with the result that while e-governance has significantly enhanced convenience and transparency it does not have a significant positive effect on reduction of corruption and the growth of revenue.*

Key words: *E-Governance, E – Government, Public Sector*

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INTRODUCTION

Ordinarily administration sets in when two or more persons come together to pursue a goal in a wider scope. Administration refers to the activities of legitimately empowered persons in formulation and implementation of policies and programmes. Keohane and Nye (2000) define governance as "processes and institutions, both formal and informal that guide and restrain the collective activities of a group". Governance involves essentially person-to-person interactions and as such is open to delay, corruption and increased cost in delivery of services. Perhaps in a bid to address these set-backs, the idea of government using information technology to facilitate government operations was muted. Hence the paradigm shift from traditional governance to e-governance.

E-governance is web-based orthodox form of governance which involves the use of

information and communication technology (ICT) at various levels of government including public and private sectors in enhancing governance. E-governance has taken roots in western world and largely in organized private sector in Nigeria especially the banking sector, but the same cannot be said about the public sector. It is against this backdrop that this study examines the concept of e-governance in Abia State Polytechnic Aba with a view to ascertaining to what extent e-governance has been instituted in the institution and to what extent it has improved public administration practice especially form the perspectives of reduction of corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience and revenue growth.

The study is presented in five sections; first is the ongoing section which is introductory, next is definitions and review of literature. The third section discusses the methodology while the subsequent sections centre on reports and finally conclusions.

2.0 DEFINITIONS AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

E-governance and e-government are often assumed to be synonymous but this is misleading. Again, many assume e-government is solely about delivering government service over the internet but it is more than that. In what follows attempt is made to clear the ambiguity by giving1few definitions which are hoped to put the concepts in the proper perspective.

2.1 Definitions

2.1.1 e-government

Simply put, e-government is the use of information and communication technology, such as the internet, in the delivery of information and service to the citizens, businesses and other agencies of government. It is generic term for web-based services from agencies of government. The Global Business Dialogue on Electronic Commerce (GBDe) defines e-government as, "a situation in which administrative, legislative and judicial agencies, digitize their operations and utilize networked system to realize better quality in the provision of public services"(www.bdge.org).The working group on e-government in this developing world sees e-government as, "the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to promote more efficient and effective government, facilitate more accessible government services, allow grater public access to information, and make government more accountable to citizens" (www.pacificcoucil.org).

2.1.2 e-governance

Governance connotes the processes and institutions that guide al restrain collective activities of a group. Government is a subject of governance that acts with authority to create formal obligations. Accordingly e-governance means the use of ICT in the day to day activities of government. Ayo (2014:76) defines c-governance as, "the governing of a state/country using ICT". Ojo (2004:79) sees e-governance as "the application of ICT by the government to enhance accountability, create awareness and ensure transparency in the management of governmental businesses". According to UNESCO, "e-governance is the public sector's use of ICT with the aim of improving information and service delivery, encouraging citizens participation in the decision making process and making government more accountable, transparent and effective" (www.unesco.org). The definitions suggest

that e-governance concerns internally-focused utilization of information and internet technologies to manage organizational resources both for public and private sectors. Our interest in this work is however limited to the public sector.

2.1.3 Public Sector

The public sector generally refers to the totality of agencies that carryout public service. Ezeani (2006), Adamolekun (2002:17-18) define public service as "the totality of services that are organized under government authority". Agba. Ochimana and Abubakar (2013:113) sees public service as, "the activities of government employees and institutions aimed at formulating and implementing governmental policies and programmes for the interest of the public". To Akpan (1982) public sector "comprises all institutions financed and maintained by the tax payer". Amara (2009:43) opines that public sector "refers to all institutions by which government carries out its functions, such as the civil service, parastatals, extra-ministerial departments and public enterprises". In a broader perspective, the public sector comprises the ministries, departments and agencies (MDA's) as well as government based not-for-profit organizations, international governmental organizations, multinational corporations and quasi governmental organizations in government exercises ownership and, or control.

2.2 Classification of e-governance

There are three broad classifications of e-governance: Government to Government (G2G); Government to Business (G2B); and Government to Citizen (G2C) (Mbanefo, 2016). A special type of G2C is e-democracy which occurs when elected representatives and political parties interact with the citizens nationally or in their constituencies.

G2C — Government to Citizen: The essence of government is to cater for citizens and community development. In G2C the government deals with such matters as providing on-line access to information and services to citizens, This may include paying income taxes as in FIRS, processing of drivers licenss, international passport and issuance of visa. A good number of tertiary institutions in Nigeria process their admissions and fees payment online, Abia State Polytechnic Aba, is one of them.

G2B — Government Businesses: Government often deals with businesses using the internet and other ICTs, such as in e-procurement and auctioning. G2B involves two way interactions: G2B and B2G.Payment of royalties to government by MNC's come under G2B classification. Government at various levels in Nigeria use vehicles manufactured by INNOUSIN, IVM brands, through purchases and transactional arrangements reached by the internet. Bids and other transactions for award of contracts for TETFUND intervention projects are often consummated through corn transactions. Regulatory activities of government as in NAFDAC, SON etc, are carried out through ICT. Transactions between EFFC and banks also fall into G2B.

G2G — Government to Government: G2G deals with those activities that take place between different government organizations and agencies with the aim of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of overall government operations. Regulatory activities as in Pencom, EFCC, SERVICOM, Peer Review mechanism in assessing performance of agencies of government, are all typologies of G2C. EFCC helped to expose the financial impropriety of

a former rector at Abia State Polytechnic, Aba (www.abiapolyefcc) which eventually led to his removal. Sharing of revenue between federal, state and local governments come under GZG, relationship and transactions between TETFUND, NBTE, ministry of education and international donor agencies are often consummated through internet. Donations of water facilities by the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International and the Church of Jesus Christ for Later day Saints and regional ICT Centre by the federal ministry of science arid technology to Abia State Polytechnic Abia are worthy of special note here. The ICT centre provides the impetus for further G2G relationship by serving as centre for computer-based UMTE examination.

2.3 Stages of e-governance

Different models have been proposed for the different stages in the evolution of e-governance (Mathias and Gaëlle, 2003; Kaaya, 2004; Okot- Uma and Rogers, 2004; Mbanefo, opacity).The UN e-governance global survey has adopted a five stage e-governance model (UN e-government Survey, 2004, 2005, 2008). These are, in order of activity; emerging presence; enhanced presence; interactive presence; transactional presence; and seamless (or networked) presence.

Stage 1 — Emerging Presence: According to Adeyemo (2010), in this state, an institution commits to becoming a e-government player. A formal but limited web presence is established through a few independent government websites which provide users with static organizational information.

Stage 2 — Enhanced Presence: In this stage an institution's online presence begins to expand as the number of official websites increase, with more dynamic and specialized information content that is frequently updated. According to Adeyemo (ibid), "the interaction is still primarily unidirectional with information flowing essentially from government to the citizen".

Stage 3 — Interactive Presence: In this stage an institution's presence on the internet expands dramatically by entering the interactive mode with access to a wide range of governmental institutions and services.

Stage 4 — Transactional Presence: In this stage two way interactions between the citizen and the government is included. This is the stage at which e-governance in Abia State Polytechnic operates.

Stage 5 — Seamless Stage: This stage presents the most sophisticated level in the online e-government initiative. It is characterized by a full integration of G2G, G2C and C2G, and the reverse interactions. It is also called networked stage (Adeyemo, ibid). Mbanefo, (opcit) describes this stage as, 'the stage of total integration of electronic functions and services across administrative and departmental boundaries.

2.4 Principles/Objectives of c-government

The practice of e-government is premised on the following principles; accessibility, responsiveness, service delivery, efficient management of citizens and promotion of inclusive and participatory governance (Mbanefo, opeit). World Bank (www.worldbank.org) had defined e-government as,

use by government agencies of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the internet, and mobile computing) that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses and other arms of government. It adds, these technologies can serve a variety of the different ends: better delivery of governing services to citizens, improved interaction with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access information, or more efficient management (AOEMA report).

The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth\cost reduction". Ayo (2014: 76-77) 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"

In the light of the foregoing, it is fair to aver that the core objectives of e- governance are:

i.   To make governance more accessible to the citizens

ii.   To make government more responsible by providing information more promptly

iii.   To improve service delivery to citizens through faster identification of community felt needs.

iv.   To ensure efficient citizens' empowerment through access to information or more efficient management.

v.   To promote inclusive and participatory governance

vi.   To improve interactions with business and industry

vii.   To improve transparency in governance

viii.   To reduce corruption

ix.   To increase revenue growth by reducing cost of governance

x.   To increase convenience in governance through digital platform.

3.0 Methodology

The study centres on e-governance and its stage of application in public service in Abia State, using Abia State Polytechnic, Aba as analytical framework. Ten (10) specific ways were identified in the preceding paragraph through which e-governance can improve the practice of public administration but further analyses were based on only four viz:- reductive of corruption; increased transparency; greater convenience and revenue growth.

A combination of systematic, convenience and purposive sampling techniques was used to select twenty four persons from whom data for the study was generated. Amara and Amaechi (2010:64-65) had identified sampling methods to include random, stratified, systematic, quota, cluster, purposive and convenience. Data generated was analyzed using simple percentages.

4.0 Reports

Responses were received from 24 persons. The table below shows the distribution of their responses relative to specific questions.

Respondent	SA	A	D	SD	% in Agreement	% in Disagreement	Total
Reductionin Corruption	17	2	3	2	20.83	79.17	100%
Transparency	1	2	6	15	87.50	12.50	100%
Convenience	2	4	5	13	75.00	25.00	100%
Revenue Growth	6	4	6	8	58.33	41.67	100%

The table shows that 79.2% of the respondents disagree with the proposition that e-governance as practiced in Abia State Polytechnic, Aba has reduced corruption, while 20.8% are in agreement to the proposition. On same proposition about increase in transparency, 87.5% percent are in agreement while 12.5% disagree. Significant 75% agree that e-governance has increased convenience while 25% is in disagreement. This is not so with same proposition on e-governance and growth of revenue in which weak 58.3% responded in affirmative while 4 1.7% feel otherwise.

The disposition of the respondents on the proposition about c-governance leading to reduction in corruption, according to staff respondent who preferred to be anonymous, could be explained against the backdrop of the 8-month arrears of salaries owed some staff, which was believed to be avoidable, but had to be so because of corruption and mismanagement of IGR fund of the polytechnic. This logic seemingly affected the respondents' responses on growth of revenue, since according to some of them, if the revenue grew, it should be seen on staff salaries and welfare, but that was not the case.

5.0 Conclusion

The paradigm shift from traditional governance to c-governance which is permeating public administration practice globally faces some hiccups in Nigeria. As a result or otherwise, some basic ideologies that underlie the introduction of c-governance had continued to elude some public sector organizations. This work examined e-governance practice in Abia State Polytechnic Aba, and found out that while it has significantly enhanced convenience and transparency in administration, it does not have a positive significant effect on reduction of corruption and the growth of revenue.

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