



Research Paper

Application of e-Governance in Service Delivery: Enugu State Ministry of Lands and Urban Development in View

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Abstract

E-governance is an important tool used in the delivery of government services to the citizens by leveraging on Information Communication Technology to achieve that objective, which is premised on the assumption that the appreciable use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) method in the day to day activities of government will bring effective service delivery. Although, there are challenges militating against the effective implementation of e-governance by Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). It is based on this, that this study identifies some of the applications of e-governance with particular reference to Enugu State Ministry of Lands and Urban Development. Its applications include: land management, land allocation, email services, digitalization of survey plan and certificate of occupancy and collection of tax. The challenges militating against the application include: poor land management, lack of qualified ICT staff, lack of ICT infrastructure and attitude or resistance to change: Although, no statistical analysis was done, as the study depended on secondary data. It was concluded that e-governance remain one of the best tools in enthroning transparency and accountability in government. The paper therefore, recommends that, government should be more committed to the implementation of e-governance as well as embarks on adequate enlightenment about the concept.

Keywords: e-Governance, Land Management, Information Communication Technology, Tax, Service delivery, Development.

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I. Introduction

The world today is a global village as one need not to leave the shores of his country before sending or receive information. This is due to advancement in information technology (ICT) including modern telephone communication system (TCS), marines and orbit, which afford for easy collection of data. The advent of e-governance has also contributed to employee delivery on workload, efficiency and effectiveness as they leverage on technology to provide quality services to the end users. E-governance has made the delivery of government services seamless as correspondences are exchanged via email as against the traditional way of handling mails with hands. Also, during the pandemic some of government activities were conducted via zoom. It is against this background that this work seeks to extensively discuss e-governance and it application by Enugu State Ministry of Land and Urban Development. The study will also examine the usefulness of e-governance to the ministry, the challenges faced in it application and to proffer solutions to the identified challenges to conclude the study.

1.1. Concept of e-governance

E-governance has to do with how governance is conducted using electronic. Traditionally, government activities were conducted manually like hardcopy memo, sending hand mail amongst others. E-governance refers to the use of ICT to the process of government, their relationship with citizens and other arms of

government. E-governance started gaining ground in Nigeria in the year 2000, Ugochukwu and Lawrence (2015) noted that, ‘‘e-governance in Nigeria can be traced to the formulation of the Nigeria National Information Technology (NNIT) policy in the year 2000’’. They further postulated that, ‘‘e-governance has become one of the reform tools geared towards effective public service delivery, which is premised on the assumption that the appreciable use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) method in the day to day activities of government will bring effective service delivery’’ this simply entails embracing modern way of public service and moving away from the traditional methods of running government day to day activities to bring about effective service delivery thereby improving employee performance in the organization. According to NNIT (2000) the essence of the policy is to make Nigeria an Information Technology (IT) for education, creation of wealth; poverty eradication, job creation; governance; health; agriculture. Developed countries are brought to limelight today due to their application of technology, as it brings government closer to the people; India and Japan are using technology to lift millions of their citizens out of poverty while Dubai, especially the United Arab Emirate is using technology to drive their tourism sector, especially medical tourism.

Saugata and Masud (2007), ‘‘electronic governance or e-governance is the application of IT for delivering government services, exchange of information, communication transactions, integration of various stand-alone systems between government to citizen (G2C), government-to-business (G2B), government-to-government (G2G), Government-to-employees (G2E) as well as back-office processes and interactions within the entire government framework’’. From the definition above, it is clear that e-governance takes place in three levels: Government to Government, Government to citizen, and Government to business/interest group. According to Shilubane (2001), e-governance is simply the use of information communication technologies (ICTs) to carry out public services, that is to say, the use of the internet to ensure that services are delivered in a much more convenient, customer oriented and cost effective manner.

Budhiraja (2003) defines e-governance as the application of Information Technology to the process of government functioning in order to achieve a Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent (SMART) Governance. From the definition of Budhiraja (2003), the essence of e-governance is to ensure that simplicity and seamless process is enthroned in governance while morality and ethical conduct are upheld to ensure that governance is conducted in an accountable, transparent and responsible way that brings about dividends of government to the citizenry. While Ojo (2014) also sees e-governance as ‘‘the application of information communication technology (ICT) by the government to enhance accountability, create awareness and ensures transparency in the management of governmental business.’’ He also states that e-governance can be seen as a political strategy of government through which their activities can be showcased to the public. In another study by Ayo (2014) as cited in Abioye, Awonuga and Amuwo (2014), he defined e-governance as ‘‘the governing of a state/country using ICT.’’ That is to say that, it is the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in delivering governance.

1.2. Application of e-governance by Enugu State Ministry of Land and Urban Development

The following are the various ways the Enugu State Ministry of Land and Urban Development have applied e-governance in the conduct of their affairs overtime.

i. Land management

E-governance through the application of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in land management can be achieved by harnessing the benefit of land for the good of everyone. According to Kakulu (2003) Land is a natural resource and its potentials may be harnessed effectively where there is proper documentation of title and constant updating of records of ownership and transfers. This afford for real-time ownership records which is available on the ministry registry, since the records are placed on the ministry registry with proper security identification number for property owners to have free access to their records without any compromise with regard to confidentiality of the information and such information is made available to authorize individuals or institutions when such property is under contention.

ii. Allocation

The ministry also employs ICT in the allocation of plots to potential developers, with automatic and automated mutations which significantly reduce the scope of fraudulent property deals. It has also shorten the duration for the allocation of plots which usually takes months or even years to be done, now it is done within a day after payment of development levy.

iii. Email Services

Every staff especially those that attend to citizens have functional official email account that is Checked regularly for vital correspondence from superiors, subordinate and citizens seeking for important information.

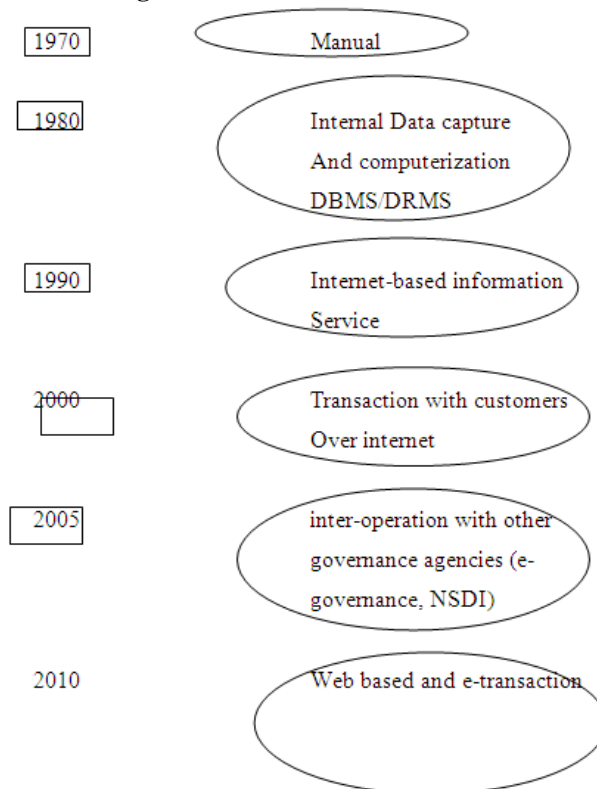
iv. Digitalization of survey plan and certificate of occupancy

Survey plan and certificated of occupancy (C of O) are digitalized and classified today due to the advance of technology for authentication and accessibility.

According to Sampson, Humayun and Amare (2019) use of Computerized mapping technologies known as geographic information systems (GIS) will give Nigeria governments new software tools to support the delivery of services to the public based on geographical location. GIS belongs to a family of ICTs that are specifically designed to link information to a geographic location. GIS will give governments the tools to integrate many layers of independently collected and managed data, such as roads, pipes, surveys, land records, and administrative boundaries

Ibuoye (2007) observed some general advancement in land administration which appeared to be technological in nature. The author noted that Nigeria land registry was initially bogged down with bottle necks but its witnessed technological growth with the introduction of e-registration in 2003. In the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, the technological age commenced with the title recertification exercise under a GIS based system, popularly known as Abuja Geographical Information System (AGIS). Similarly, some states have commenced the use of information system such as Lagos, Kaduna, Niger while at the federal level; we had Federal Land Information System (FELIS). Ukaejiofo (2007) also maintained that if land administration is a vehicle to implement national land policy, it must be tackled from the perspective of system modernization

Figure 1: Evolution of ICT in LAS.



Source: McLaren and Stanley (2017)

v. Collection of tax

The ministry also leverages ICT in the collection of land rate and capital gain tax on disposable assets in the state. According to Enugu state Internal Revenue Service (2021) capital gain tax “is a tax chargeable at the rate of 10% on capital gains arising from the disposal of capital assets. Capital gains mainly represent the excess of disposal proceeds realized over the cost of the particular asset”. Without evident of payment, transfer of ownership or change of title document for lands are not granted by the ministry, this have also contributed greatly to the revenue base of the state

II. Challenges Associated with E-Governance

As good as the benefits of e-governance may seem, they are challenges confronting its smooth application by the Enugu State Ministry of Land and Urban Development. The following are the challenges:

i. Poor land management

Studies have shown that, there are problems associated with poor land management in both developed and developing countries. Odum and Ibem (2011) identified some of the problems to include land accessibility and uneven distribution of land and its resources. The poor or third class citizens have no access to land as the price tag on the property is too high for a commoner to afford, even though government claim none involvement in the sale of land but charges development levy or land use charge on any allocation.

Land management is also beclouded with fraudulent activities especially with allocation and perfecting of land documents as property owners are charged exuberant amount of money just for survey plan and certificate of occupancy (C of O), which in some cases are not issued to private individuals. Some are unlucky as fake title document are issued to them, Faye (2008) observed that the increasing rate of fraud in land transactions, fake titles, land disputes and unhealthy property market conditions also hinder proper land management. Slums and shanties are licker around the state due to poor urban planning and utilization of available land; people are displaced from their lands as land grabbing is the order of the day by successive government. Agreeing to the above assertion, Ademiluyi and Raji (2008) observed that, they are problems of emerging slum and settlement while Djiré (2007) argued that the primary causes of the mayhem in land management system could be attributed to population explosion, instability of land policies and inconsistent land administrative strategies. As the population keeps exploding there is need for proper planning to accommodate the growth rate.

ii. Lack of Qualified ICT Staff

The ministry is grossly understaffed with trained and qualified IT personnel who are grounded in the field of ICT and its applicability to deliver on a task. Some of the staff are not well equipped on the basic of computer applications talk more of using a theodolite.

Sampson, Humayun and Amare (2019:10) observed that lack of trained and qualified personnel to handle and operate its infrastructures in government agencies is another major challenges in implementing e-government and delivering eservices. In some cases, IT manager in government agencies does not have any degree related to IT, or does not have any practical IT skills, and in many cases does not have internet connection at his desk, and official email address. It was observed that over 90% of IT staff in many government offices use their private email address for their work. In addition, many IT staff within government agencies cannot operate the IT equipment in their office due to lack of training and support.

As such land records and other transaction still done manual especially documentation of land title documents and tracing of files which at times administrative errors are committed while filing title document. For examples, names are wrongly spelt, records are not properly filed, inquire takes ages to be answered and some allocation are reallocated without proper investigation. The process of getting Certificate of Occupancy is surrounded with irregularity and extortion by the staff of the ministry as they use this means to enrich themselves.

iii. Lack of ICT Infrastructure

This is another crucial challenge to the implementation of e-governance in Nigeria's public service. As it has been explained in the definition of e-governance above, it is the application of ICTs in the operations of government business. The Nigeria's public service is still lacking in basic ICT infrastructure. For instance, some of the offices still lack common computers let alone the common skills for its operation. What you see in their daily activities is the traditional way of doing things. That is, they are still known for doing a lot of paper work which if e-governance is embraced fully would have reduced. In a better case, you will see the combination of both the traditional way of doing things alongside the digital approach. There is still no access to internet network in most public sector offices, no regular power supply and so on. All these pose challenge to the implementation of e-governance in Nigeria's public service (ITU, 2006; Adeyemo, 2011).

The ministry under review does not have internet connectivity for the entire ministries as some of the principal officers use their personal mobile data to deliver official task. Also, the ministry doesn't have a website for easy information dissemination and feedback from the public domain.

iv. Attitude or Resistance to Change:

The human element of resisting change also militate against the application of e-governance, as they find it difficult to adapt to new changes especially technology as they are used to the old ways of doing things.

They are so engrossed with the traditional ways of disseminating information and the filing system of handling files and other correspondences.

Sampson, Humayun and Amare (2019) noted that many government officials view e-government as a complex system that will make them redundant because they are not expecting adequate training on the use and maintenance of the system if implemented; they oppose the implementation of e-government system within their capacity. Some other reasons observed are lack of computer literacy, unqualified staff, many IT staff with little or no training in the installation, maintenance, designing and implementation of ICT infrastructure

III. Conclusion

E-governance remains the best in encouraging effective service delivery that will lead to transparency and accountability in government operations. But it has to contend with the challenges to the successful implementation of e-governance in the country's public sector as earlier mentioned above. The following are the solutions proffer by this study with regard to the identified challenges, namely:

1. Enugu State Government in collaboration with the Office of the Head of Service, Enugu and the Enugu State Civil Service Commission should make computer literacy a compulsory aspect for every intending or serving public or civil servant both at the local and state levels. The policy should also include creation of ICT awareness with computer literacy programmes among public servants. The civil servants should also try to build their capacity too at individual level, instead of waiting for the Government to push them to be useful.

2. Ministry of lands and urban development and other relevant ministries and agencies of Government must show a high level of e-governance readiness in their operations. All that is needed for smooth execution of task using ICT must be put in place by the government, especially that which is within their capacity. For instance, ensure that all office is equipped with functional computers; employ highly skilled personnel in ICT, provision of continuous training of the personnel to keep them informed on how best to utilize e-governance in engendering effective service delivery among others.

3. The Enugu State Government must provide the necessary infrastructure that will aid the successful implementation of e-governance by Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). For instance, robust broadband services, required internet network and the availability of power supply and an online presence. This means that the success of e-governance implementation by Ministries, Department and Agencies is tight to these ingredients mentioned above. Government offices must also be internet connected with trained and qualified staff

4. Another factor to be considered is the Human element. This is important because no technology can drive itself, it is the human element that will drive the technology so their willingness is critical to whether e-governance implementation in Nigeria's public service will succeed or not, and this is because they have the capacity to truncate whatever innovation and benefits e-governance promises to bring to bear. So on this note, government needs to carefully address the issue of human factor which often manifest in resistance to change, nonchalant attitudes and the likes which is responsible for underutilization of most of the ICT facilities put in place by government especially in offices or departments that tends to embrace e-governance in their operations, thereby sabotaging the good effort of the government. Lastly, there is need for proper land management to avoid land grabbing, displacement of people amongst other things. The process for the perfecting of land documents should be simplified and made public by the ministry to avoid sharp dealings by the workers who are bend on exploiting the general public who try to perfect their title documents.

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