

Electronic Governance: A Growing Trend in Governing Processes

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Abstract

E-Governance been the utilization of information and communication technologies to improve information and service delivery to the citizen and every other stakeholders has been on the rise in so many countries, the important of e-governance cannot be overemphasize and sideline, it has been a growing trend. Internally, it has been helpful in keeping records, eliminating bureaucracy and increasing government efficiency. For the sake of this paper, we would be considering what good governance is, the growing trend of e-governance and why it is vital in governing processes. Although the application of information and communication technology in most African countries have not been promoted due to so many reasons. E-Governance has been a growing trend which in years to come will dominate every government operations. Related journals, textbooks, publications and other reference materials were used in the course of this research work.

Keywords: E-governance • Good governance • ICT • Evolution

Introduction

The importance of E-governance in this contemporary time cannot be overemphasized, it has been an instrument for transparency, accountability, effective and efficient service delivery from the part of government and it has successfully engaged the citizens and every other stakeholders the opportunity to participate in decision making or governing processes, government-citizen interaction, and with the motives building an information based society. Electronic governance has been playing a vital role also in modern day democracy due to numerous advancement in technology; every government of the world over the past years has recognized the essence of information and communication technologies in ensuring the standard of quality service and improving the government efficiencies. With no gain saying, E-governance has become so popular and a means of cost reduction for the government, time saving, Internet has made an essential change in the

whole society structure, values, culture and the ways of conducting business by utilizing the potential of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as a tool in the daily work.

I won't say e-governance is entirely new but it has been in circulation for some period and has relentlessly gained recognition over the years in many countries. Oakley sees e-governance as a technology mediated service that facilitates a transformation in the relationship between the government and the citizen. We can arguable assume that e-governance includes e-government because if e-government is the ability to use digital technologies to deliver government information and services to the citizen, e-governance is the process. It is a governing process that is based on the use of electronics; the main focus is the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) because Sheridan and Riley suggest that e-governance deals with the whole spectrum of the relationship and networks within government regarding the usage and application of information and communication technologies. Naturally, it can be deduced that information and communication technology is the sole core to support public services, administration of the government, democratic processes and ensuring improved relationships among the citizen, between the citizen,

the civil society, business or private sector and the state. So, e-governance is rather an old reformed wine (methods) and not entirely a new wine (methods) in governing processes.

Materials and Methods

The concept of governance and good governance

Governance: The concept of "governance" is as old as human civilization itself. But in recent time, the scope and the meaning of the term have been outstretched. Because of no consensus on the definition and the scope of the term of governance. There is no oneness among the scholars who have defined the concept of governance. The World Bank offers two definitions to the term governance, the first definition is exclusively related to the exercise of political power to deal with the nation's affairs and the second definition is the use of power in the management of a state's social and economic resources for development and to cap it all, governance is the process of decision making and the procedures by which decisions are implemented or not implemented.

The Oxford dictionary defines governance as the act or method of governing, of exercising control or authority over the actions of subjects, a system of regulation. At the same time the governments is one of the actors in governance. Governance is a system of institutions, laws, policies and processes that ensure transparency, accountability, popular participation and the adherence to the rule of law in society at all levels by all. Governance is not the same as government. Governance is the system, and government is one of the institutions of the governance system. Other governance institutions and organizations include the civil society organizations, private sector institutions, political parties, professional bodies, trade unions and faith-based organizations, as well as media organizations. In general term, it is the processes of governing by the government of an organized society. It is the way rules, norms and actions are structured, sustained, regulated and held accountable.

Good governance: The concept of good governance involves the overall approaches to the reform and improvement of government system

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in the society. Just like every other concept, good governance has many definitions in explain the concept behind it. It is an approach to government that is committed to creating a system founded by justice and peace that protect and uphold the fundamental human rights of the citizens and civil liberties. Landell Mills defines it as the use of political authority and exercise of control over the society and the management of its resources for socio-economic development. Usaid sees it as the issues pertain to the ability of government to develop an efficient and effective, accountable public management process that is open to citizens participation that strengthen rather than weaken the democratic system of government. It is merely the means to produce positive result that meets the demands of the citizen or the stakeholders while judiciously utilizing the available resources. In the words of Cida, it is an efficient predictable public sector incorporating participatory, that is a government that is transparent and allows citizen to participate in governing processes. Kettani, defines it as the means to ensure that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account, and the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society. Form the above definition we can clearly draw out that good governance is when the government perform their functions and utilizing the available resources for the development of the society effectively and efficiently and the absence of all these is bad governance.

The United Nation sees good governance as encompassing a specific range of attributes and it can be measured by some eight factors which includes participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency and lastly accountability (Figure 1).

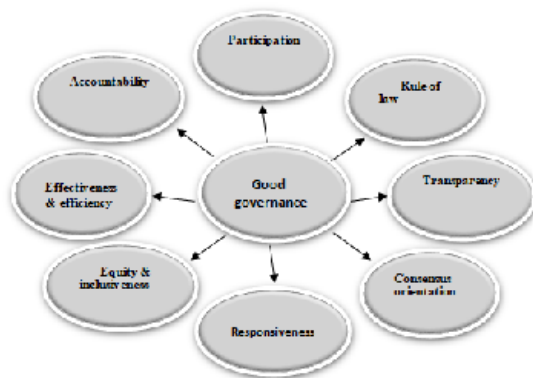


Figure 1. They are the features and indicators of good governance which will be explained.

Participation: Every member of the society either the male or female citizen, young and adult, vulnerable and invulnerable must have direct or representative access to the system of government. Participation by both the male and female citizen of the society is a key cornerstone of good governance. It is a means of freedom of association and expression.

Rule of law: There must be impartial legal system that protects the fundamental human rights and civil liberties of all the citizens either the privileged or the less privileged particularly the minorities. It requires fair frame works that are enforced impartially, impartial judicial processes and the supremacy of the law over everybody.

Transparency: The entire citizen must have access to the means and manner in which decisions are made and information should be freely available and directly accessible to those who will be affected by such decisions and their enforcement. It involves the clear explanation of legal constitution, governance and funding arrangement, open and clear policies making, and clear criteria for decision-making.

Responsiveness: The government must be able to respond or give feedback to their citizen within a reasonable time frame. It is the government's immediate response and solution to problems faced by the public.

Consensus orientation: Government decision must be able to meet the different need and expectations of the citizen. The government must have strategic vision and have deep understanding of what the citizen need, this can only be done when the government have the full knowledge of the historical, cultural and social context of the society.

Equity and inclusiveness: It must be ensure that all the members of the society must be included and there must be fairness in the way they are treated.

The society must not be excluded from the mainstream of the society, there must be fairness and the citizen must not be left out in decision making processes.

Effectiveness and efficiency: The government must ensure that the resource available which is needed for development of the society must be well utilized and sustained to meet the need of the society. The resources must be used in a best way.

Accountability: The government must be answerable to the people and one another. This include the government agencies, civil society and the private sector and all must of them must be accountable to one another and accountability cannot be enforced without transparency from the government and rule of law.

Results

The evolution of e-governance

It is not a new discourse in the governing processes but rather an old concept with a new idea and methods. Over the past 20 years, the constant advancement of technologies and emergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has spread through every aspect of the government as a whole, business and daily operation but the history of computing in government organizations can be traced back to the beginnings of computer history far as back as the 20th century but the first wave of information and communication technology started in 1843 with the invention of telegraph and grew with the successive inventions of the telephone, radio, television, computers and culminated with the invention of the internet, originally known as the World Wide Web. Shortly after the industrial revolution in 1913, global inequalities grew. This growth further increased with the Information Technology revolution in 1950, and finally augmented with globalization by 1973 and the internet revolution by 1992. The use of digital information has exploded like a grenade in large volume and in diversity. An important role of the government business is information, whether in health sector records management, in education through availability of curriculum content for schools, birth registrations or procurement and other service delivery. Each of these complex sets of activities have suffered in the past from inaccurate and loss of data, limited availability of vital and required information, lack of accountability and transparency from the government. However, the government adopted electronic information systems as a means to addressing these highlighted and other failures. From the internet boom form years back, electronic governance came and it is not just limited to the use of internet alone, it has also become a practitioner field.

E-Governance is the utilization of information and communication technologies and it is also beyond digitalizing of government administration activities and to provide basic information to the citizens and business owners but also includes the ideas of using information and communication technologies to address developmental challenges. Although, the government had their own methods of keeping information and data before the advent of government to government communication fostered by email and the internet. With massive advancement in technologies, e-governance as matured over the years, it offers the citizens a choice of channels and means for creating interaction with the government, including information kiosks and so-called one-stop centers, but most popularly the internet-based information (website) and services. The government services website

has become a central characteristic of e-governance across the world, as information can be easily updated and new services added, citizens can also communicate with government online as regards the efficiency and effectiveness of services. There have been advancement in internet because of its greater use to provide and assess information, e-governance has strengthening the interaction between the government and the citizen through the posting of government information online by building information society and inviting input from the public through citizen participation means like, comment, suggestions and feedback, information and communication technology has also helped to improve social and economic conditions, and reducing the reaction time of the government and cost reduction. It is a revolution of government that implies the use of new channels of interacting with the government, new styles of leadership, new ways of transacting and a new system of rendering and delivering information and services to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

Most government organizations have now based their operations on information processing and began record digitization with the advent of Information and Communication Technology. Accordingly, industrialized countries, such as the United States, Canada, Australia and Britain, France, Germany among others have designed and carried out programs of record computerization and automation as early as the 1980s. Subsequently, developing countries in Latin America like Argentina, Chile and Mexico and countries in Asia continent like Malaysia, India and China integrated programs of record automation and keeping into their public reforms to ensure efficiency but most African countries are lagging far behind because the Africans perceived it as an imported concept or tool due to the lack of readiness, not being aware of the importance and the adoption by the decision makers and the public. From the below statistics, we can see how far behind Africa is in terms of Information and Communication Technology (Figure 2).

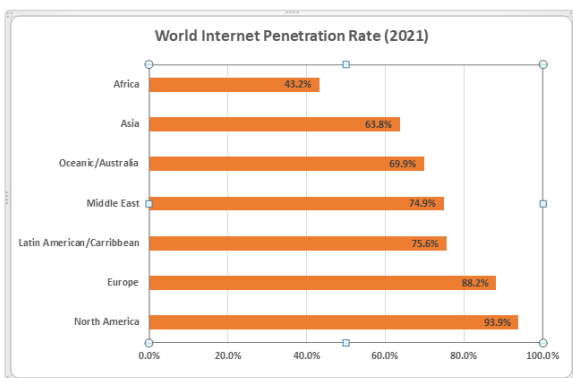


Figure 2. Internet world stats (2021).

The concept of e-governance

Generally, e-governance is the application of information and communication technology by the government to provide services to the citizens in a suitable, efficient and transparent ways. It has become a useful tool or instrument in giving better access, ensuring accountability and enhancing efficiency, it has been viewed as the most modern initiatives to establishing good governance. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), it is the public sector use of information and communication technologies with the aim of improving information and service delivery, encouraging citizens' participation in the decision making processes and making more accountable, transparent and effective. It also involves a new styles of leadership, new ways of debating and deciding policy and investment, new ways of accessing education, new ways of listening to citizens and new ways of organizing and delivering information and services, it is very essential because it can bring about change in the manner in which the citizens relate to their governments and to each other, it promotes interactions between the two parties and automatically eliminate the middlemen. Coleman (2008) defines it as the

digitized coding, processing, storage and distribution of data relating to three key aspects of governing societies: the representation and regulation of social actors; the delivery of public services; and the generation and circulation of official information. It can also be defined as an accepted methodology involving the use of information and communication technology in improving transparency, providing information speedily to the citizens, improving the administration efficiency, improving public services such as transportation, power, health, water, security and essential local services.

Backus (2001) sees e-governance as the application of electronic means to:

1. Promote the interactions between government and citizens and government and businesses; and
2. Enhance the internal government operations to simplify and improve the democratic, government and business aspects of governance.

Just like every other concept, there are a lot of definition to clarify the meaning of e-governance, it is simply the government or the public sector, using the information and communication technologies (website, mail, search engine, social media platform, among others) to provide credible information to the citizen, to make the citizen participate in decision making processes and to make the government more transparent in their dealings and accountable for their actions. It is merely to build an effective and efficient information society that will enhance and promotes government and citizen's interactions and probably reduce the cost of governance (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Domains of e-governance.

Components/domains of e-governance

E-Governance consists of three (3) components of domains according to Heeks and they are as follows:

1. E-Administration: This involves the means of improving government processes and operations to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of available resources.
2. E-Citizen and E-Service: The means of connecting the citizens with the government to promote transparency in service delivery.
3. E-Society: The means to build interaction with and within the civil society and to make the government more accountable to the society.

Types of e-governance

1. Government to Citizen (G2C): This is means to facilitates, promotes citizen's interactions with the government as the consumer of the public goods and services. The citizen should be well informed and participate in decision making processes.
2. Government to Business (G2B): The means of facilitating and enhancing business transaction between the government and the private firm or sector by improving good communication between and connectivity between the two parties. This transaction might be in form of tax or getting license from the government.
3. Government to Government (G2G): The means by which government facilitates and enhances communication and effectiveness of service between the levels of government, and to improve the federal, state and local government daily administration operations.

4. Government to Employee (G2E)/Intra-government: The means to facilitates and improve the quality of administration and management with the various government organization, agencies, ministries and department.

There are some principles of E-governance as highlighted by Holzer and Schwester, they are very important for effective governance. The principles are as follows.

1. To build services with citizen choices in mind, the government must be consensus oriented to know the demand of the people and to analyze their demand, come up with a reasonable ways to satisfy those demand.

2. Increased government accessibility. The government information must be made available easily to the citizen, the people must be able to access the information at will and at any time.

3. Information must be passed in a responsible fashion, there must be a system, method of passing information to member of the public, and it must be a viable way of disseminating information.

4. The tax payers money must be effectively and efficiently use, the citizen are the tax payers and their money must be able to work for them (Figure 4).

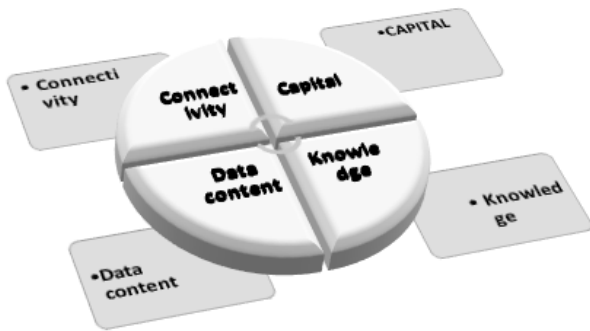


Figure 4. The pillars of electronic governance.

Connectivity: There should be a connection between the government and its citizens, the government must be able to carry its citizens along with any government programs or activities.

Data content: In every organization, database is very important, the database is where information are arranged and stored so that it can be automatically retrieved when needed. The government must have good database and should be made easy for the citizens to access.

Capital: This is the investment part of it; this is the required funding of the government to implement essential services in electronic governance. It can be through the public investment or from the private organizations.

Knowledge: Knowledge is light and so does understanding; the personnel in charge should have adequate skills and must be a professional. Must be aware of how the system works, what it takes to make it work and how to maintain the flow.

Information and communication technology for enhancing governing process

Information and communication technology has therefore proved to be among the most innovative tools for realizing improved capabilities. Used in support of good governance, e-government has tremendous transformative potential, information and communication technology has been used to provide e-government services. Information and communication technology offer concrete opportunities for the governments to improve their performance in terms of transparency, participation and decentralization. It provides new possibilities for important governance efficiency, new ways of citizens' engagements and their more proactive participation in policymaking, rebuilding trust and transforming the relationship between

government and citizens and instrumental in improving governance. The application of it serves and helpful to connect important stakeholders of government to provide better governance.

The application of information and communication technology differs from country to country but it has not been effectively utilized well in African countries. The experience of application of information and communication technology for good governance in developed countries such as Singapore, United States of America (USA), Australia, India, England and Malaysia shows that the application of information and communication technology could be helpful in providing good governance in developing countries too. The applications of information and communication technology to existing organizations will by themselves not only modernize government, information and communication technology can be used to improve government structures and processes and change how the culture of public administration can be renewed in order to make the most of these changes [1-11] (Figure 5).

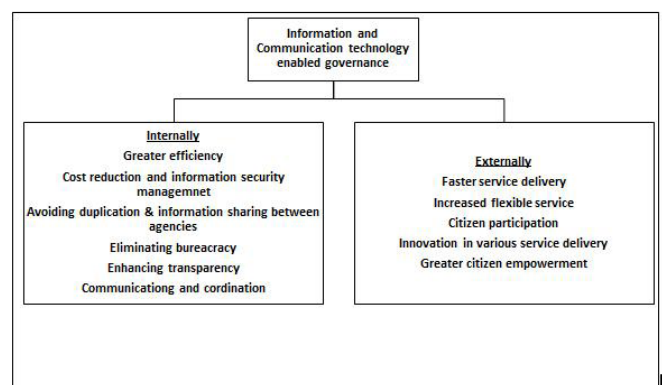


Figure 5. Gains generated by using e-governance according to the United Nation (2008).

Applying information and communication and technology or digitalizing the governance processes will enhance transparency, eliminates what we know has bureaucracy and help the government in term of managing and storing information for futuristic purposes, it is also a factor for promoting fast service delivery to the populace, citizen involvement in decision making and accountability from the government side.

Why electronic governance is essential and a tool for promoting good governance in modern day societies

Information and communication technology as played a vital role not only as a tool for improving governance through accountability, transparency and creating more jobs, but also more importantly as a means to enhance the standard of living of the people, it has also been helpful in the means of providing essential services to the citizen, the citizen will be well informed and can make input to governing processes and issues that affect them.

Information and communication technology is generally accepted to mean all devices, networking components, applications and systems that combined and allowed people and organizations to interact in the digital world. It covers both the internet-enabled sphere as well as the mobile one powered by wireless networks. When government information are shared on the internet, the citizen becomes aware of the ongoing projects, policies and programmers of the government, they can as well respond, comment and make suggestion, it is not just a way one way system, it gives the citizen the access to respond.

It leads to efficiency, when the government utilize information and communication technologies, it will by all means minimize transaction costs of the government and restructuring the bureaucratic procedures of the government which is very common, making their administrative and other operations more efficient, freeing up resources and enabling the government to deliver services in a better-organized and economical

manner to the citizen. The government activities are sometime slow and the old ways of doing things become expensive but with the advent of information and communication technology, there is restructuring and it has gradually eliminated bureaucracy, the cost of running daily activities will also become cheaper and more efficient.

Leading to effectiveness of service delivery, governments can achieve better results and meet developmental objectives by using information and communication technologies to increase the essentiality of the policy formulation process by the government through citizen participation in decision making, improving the process involve in resource allocation, responsiveness to the citizens' demands and increase the scope and quality of the government services to the citizen other stakeholders.

Information and communication technology will also be instrumental keeping records and maintaining information security, unlike the old or traditional means of keeping records through files and folders, this system is more reliable in keeping records and accessing it and on the other aspect, it promote transparency within the organization.

It increases government and citizens interaction, through information and communication technologies, the relationship between the government and the people can be strengthen, it support increased interaction between citizens and the governments, it provided a platform for them to relate and exchange ideas inform of feedback, it make the citizens to participate in the decision making process and to become more aware of their personal and community development.

Promoting economic and social development through creation of new businesses, attract investments and generate employment.

Discussion and Conclusion

To me, it is realistic to say that e-governance is a growing trend in governance processes and that will keep growing, it can help in achieving citizen participation in decision making, a tool that can help protect the fundamental human right and civil liberty of the citizen, a system that can be helpful when it comes to government being held accountable to the citizen, responsiveness can also be accomplished. It has been in existence in developed world back as 1843 through the invention of information and communication technology to aid several processes including governing. But through the means to develop more effective and efficient ways of performing the government functions, e-governance has become popular, although, it is still in its growing face in most part of African countries. The government adopted electronic information systems as a means to addressing several problems and other failures. From the internet boom form years back, electronic governance came and it is not just limited to the use of internet alone. Although, the government had their own methods of keeping information and data before the advent of government to government communication fostered by email and the internet. With massive advancement in technologies, e-governance as matured over the years, it offers the citizens a choice of channels and means for creating interaction with the government, including information kiosks and so-called one-stop centers, but most popularly the internet- based information (website) and services.

For easy and effective governing processes, it is advisable that the government ministries, department, agencies should embrace e-governance especially in the African countries, those already using it should improve it the more to enhance progression, various models are used to assess the progress governments make toward achieving e-governance. The first phase which is presence entails Information dissemination, usually government-to-citizen, publishing policy or tender documents, regulations, promoting transparent government. The second phase is interaction which entails interaction with citizens and businesses, enabling communication and feedback and processing of forms. The third is transaction through offering of services and financial transactions capabilities, such as license renewals, payment of fines. Features include electronic filing, digital signature, and information security. The fourth being the integration phase entails, integrating services across the several department and levels of government for easy service delivery, enabling greater responsiveness. The last which is political participation phase include promotion of several channels for citizen participation it can be through voting online, public forums and opinion.

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