Chapter IX

Moving Towards E-Government in a Developing Society: Glimpses of the Problems, Progress, and Prospects in Nigeria

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Abstract

The use of information communication technologies (ICT) in governance is growing rapidly in many parts of the world. Developing countries in Africa are also making efforts to harness the new technology. In this chapter, we review the problems, progress, and prospects of e-government in Nigeria, a sub-Saharan African (SSA) country. Governments in the developing countries of SSA can benefit from e-government initiatives, as do their counterparts in advanced nations, when the concept of e-governments in SSA is understood, and concerted efforts are committed towards institutionalizing it in the region. This chapter provided useful insights in this regard. We discussed the contribution of the chapter to information systems (IS) research, and we highlighted the lessons from Nigeria for comparable nations in the SSA region as they prepare for e-government.
Introduction

E-government, as described by the World Bank, is the use of ICT to transform government by making it more accessible, effective, and accountable to its citizenry (InfoDev, 2004). E-government involves the utilization of technologies such as the Internet to improve the services, functions, and processes of governance (Cottrill, 2001; Heeks, 1999, 2001; Moon, 2002; Watson & Mundy, 2001). It involves more than establishing a Web server and hosting government sites (Sanchez, Koh, Kappelman, & Prybutok, 2003). However, the Internet plays a vital role in establishing e-government initiatives (Golden, Hughes, & Scott, 2003; Sharma & Gupta, 2003). The World Bank (InfoDev, 2004) provides a guideline for developing countries regarding e-government initiatives. The body asserts that e-government initiatives should target the following:

- Promote civic engagement by enabling the public to interact with government officials and vice versa
- Promote accountable and transparent governments in which the opportunities for corruption are reduced
- Provide a greater access to government information and activities
- Provide development opportunities, especially the sorts that benefit rural and traditionally underserved communities

Likewise, the United Nations Division for Public Economics and Public Administration and the American Society for Public Administration (UNDPEPA/ASPA, 2003, p. 6) state:

E-government is about opportunity ... to provide cost effective services to the private sector ... to enhance governance through improved access to accurate information and transparent, responsive, and democratic institutions.

Furthermore, e-government can be an emerging model involving both the citizenry and the state, where the importance of citizen input in policy formulation and implementation are recognized and valued (Navarra & Cornford, 2003). Wimmer and Traunmuller (2001) contend that the main objectives of e-government should include the following: (1) re-structuring administrative functions and processes; (2) reducing and overcoming barriers to coordination and cooperation within the public administration; and (3) the monitoring of government performance. Others view e-government as a sort of public service that operates in a “one-stop, non-stop” manner (Lawson, 1998). Heeks (2001) describes e-government as i-governance or integrated governance, which enables the integration of both the processing of information by people and the use of communication technologies in achieving the objectives of governance.

It is important to note that e-government does not create good governance, but that good governments use it to better their governance. E-government has the potential of transforming public services, as well as reengineering the fundamental relationship between government
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