Inter-Agency Delivery System:
The Agility of Public Sector Organizations and Ease of Doing Business in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the effect of inter-agency delivery systems on the agility of public sector organizations and ease of doing business. The empirical focus is the Nigerian public sector in relation to the implications of the recent executive order regarding how ministries, agencies, and departments (MDAs) should operate towards improving the ease of doing business .The study finds that poor inter-organizational linkages in terms of information and communication technology (ICT) and poor interagency collaborative structures constitute serious challenges to the realization of organizational agility and ease of doing business. The paper suggests further investment in establishing a comprehensive government database accessible by various government agencies and enhancing social networking among public agencies through strong ICT and e-governance infrastructure development. By implication, the study reveals that the use of executive orders to address fundamental economic and administrative challenges appears perfunctory and superficial without strong ICT support.

KEYWORDS

Agile Public Organisations, Ease of Doing Business, Executive Order, Inter-Agency Delivery System, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The recent concern for ease of doing business in Nigeria has brought to the fore the issue of interagency delivery systems and how this affects organizational agility. The World Bank in accordance with the strategy of various international institutions to establish Global Performance Indicators (GPIs), introduced the ease of doing business (EDB) ranking in 2002 as a 'form of social pressure around the world' (Doshi, Kelley and Simmons, 2019: 2). The rationale behind the ease of doing business ranking hinges on the recognition of the importance of a thriving private sector in promoting high and inclusive growth and development (Mendoza, Canare and Ang, 2015). Beyond this, the ease of doing business ranking is significantly about government, its institutions and processes. This is because EDB ranking is also about the efficiency and resilience of the regulatory environment and

government services. "Institutions (government *mine*) and regulations are considered fundamental causes for economic development shaping the incentives of investors and entrepreneurs to engage in business activities. Moreover, the wealth of a nation has been recognized as being associated with its quality of regulation" (Strobel, 2010:42)

In pursuance of the objective of ease of doing business in Nigeria, Executive Order (EO) No. 001 was issued in 2017, which mandated various principles of actions to the Ministries Departments and Agencies in the following concerns: Transparency in MDAs, Default Approvals, One Government Directive, Entry Experience of Visitors and Travellers, Port Operations, and Registration of Businesses. Pursing these objectives in services that require two or more agencies could be an issue for organizational agility. While the EO is an administrative approach to enhance organizational agility and improve ease of doing business, it is obvious that the challenges are underestimated. This is because of the specific challenges of inter-agency collaboration. It is self-evident that where collaboration and cooperation is not properly designed and coordinated, possible outcomes could be delays, conflicts, ineffective and inefficient service delivery.

This study examines the effect of inter-agency delivery system on the agility of public sector organizations and ease of doing business in Nigeria. It investigates the capacity of Ministries, Agencies and Departments (MDAs) to respond to the ease of doing business order in services involving two or more agencies. The research is further specified with the following research questions: (1) how does inter-agency delivery system affect organizational agility? 2) How does interagency delivery system affect ease of doing business in Nigeria? The study employs the method of documentary analysis of secondary data available in public agency websites, media clips and literature, and, primary data from key informant interviews (KII) conducted with some senior administrative officials in five MDAs. The MDAs surveyed are the Nigerian Immigration Services, the Corporate Affairs Commission, the Nigerian Customs Service, the Council for Regulation of Freight Forwarding in Nigeria (CFFN) (Port operations), and the State (Lagos) Bureau of Lands. The paper is organized in six sections: the introduction, conceptual and theoretical perspectives on ease of doing business, public organizational agility and interagency delivery system, and the social network theory, background information on the use of executive orders in Nigeria, inter-agency delivery system and organizational agility in Nigeria, and the conclusion.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

This section explains the key concepts of this paper and the theoretical framework. The concepts are ease of doing business, organizational agility, and inter-agency delivery system, the social network theory is used as the framework of analysis.

Notion of Ease of Doing Business and Implication For Organizational Agility

A number of global performance ranking of states have been introduced to enable countries aspire to developmental goals. Examples include the Health Access Quality (World Health Organization), the Corruption Index (Transparency International), Terrorism Index (Institute for Economics and Peace), and, the Ease of Doing Business (EDB) Index (World Bank). To some extent, decision-makers have come to view the global performance rankings as a system that compares performance, engages reputations, and incites competition (Kelley, 2017). The EDB ranking was started in 2002 to underscore the importance of a thriving private sector in promoting high and inclusive growth (Mendoza, Canare and Ang, 2015). The rationale is that the easier it is to establish and run a business, the more investors will be encouraged, and, a good business environment promotes competition and encourages innovation and expansion (World Bank 2013). The Bank started the ranking with five business related indicators, namely, starting a business, hiring and firing workers, enforcing a contract, getting credit and closing a business (Strobel, 2010). This has been extended to twelve indicators grouped into five key activities of opening a business, getting a location, accessing finance, dealing

with day to day operation, and accessing and operating in a secure environment. In all these, the importance of government agencies to facilitate activities is not in doubt. The Nigerian government in 2017 issued an Executive Order, EO, to push the MDAs towards pursuing objectives that will enhance the achievement of better EDB ranking that will translate to improved investment. The order requires MDAs to improve transparency, prompt approvals, working with a unity of purpose (one government directive), easy entry experience of visitors and travellers, streamlining port operations by ending touting and shortening the duration of business registration. In a situation that requires two or more agencies to provide services, achieving these objectives could be an issue for organizational agility; hence, the need to examine how interagency delivery system impacts on organizational agility which underlines the realization of the executive order.

Conceptualising Organisational Agility

Agility is a concept that became trendy in leadership, administration, organization, management, and information and technology studies beginning particularly in the manufacturing context in the early 1990s. The concept was popularized by researchers at the Iacocca Institute established by Lehigh University in the United States to provide innovative leadership, applied management and cross-cultural learning experiences in 1988 (Lehigh University Office of International Affairs, nd). The 1991 Iacocca Report recommended adoption of an agile manufacturing paradigm involving competitive foundations and enabling subsystems of agility (Hosapple and Li, 2008). The idea of agile manufacturing was extended into a wider business context (Nagel and Dove, 1991). A number of research domains such as Agile Manufacturing, Agile Software Development, Agile Organization/ Agile Enterprise, and Agile Workforce are popular in literature, and numerous frameworks have also appeared in each domain; but a common understanding of what agility means and what it consists of is missing (Wendler, 2013). Cheng, Harrison and Pan (1998) explain agility simply as the ability to sense change and respond quickly. It is "the result of integrating alertness to changes (recognizing opportunities/challenges) – both internal and environmental – with a capability to use resources in responding (proactive/reactive) to such changes, all in a timely, flexible, affordable, relevant manner" (Holsapple and Li, 2008: 6).

In the public sector particularly, Dahmardeh and Pourshahabi, (2011:97-98) explain agility in terms of "the capacity of a government to understand and meet the public's needs in the short term, adapt to trends and issues in the foreseeable future, and shape public needs over the long term." This translates in practice to capacity in the following four areas:

● Short term responsiveness–responding to the public's day to day needs
● Strategic adaptation–learning from and scaling up innovation to improve public service systems over the long run
● Outcomes focus–focusing on end results to address cross-cutting issues
● Long term shaping–positively intervening in society to affect long term trends, creating new opportunities and preventing or reducing problems before they arise.

In this work, the authors underscore the fundamental dimensions of alertness and responsiveness as the key variables. The capacity of a public agency to realize these in situations that require inter-agency collaboration depends on the social network that exist and the capacity and resources that can be exploited to respond to client demands. We now examine the concept of inter-agency delivery system and how it could constrain on mar agility and ease of doing business order by extension.

Conceptualizing Inter-Agency Delivery System

There are a plethora of terminologies under which research in interagency delivery system has featured: inter-organizational or inter-agency collaboration and cooperation, networks, alliances, inter-departmental or inter-agency committees (Alter, 1990; Lughadha, 2016); joined-up government,

horizontal management/government, integrated government (Halligan, Buick and O'Flynn, 2011), partnerships, multi-agency working, inter-sectoral or inter-professional (Wamington et al, 2004) to mention a few. Inter-agency delivery system refers to various dynamic relationships involving coordinated activity based on mutual goals. Scholars have attempted to distinguish typologies based on the level of integration which it affords the relating agencies. Lughadha (2016) for instance distinguishes the following: co-operation: services work together toward consistent goals and complementary services, while maintaining their independence; c*ollaboration*: services plan together and address issues of overlap, duplication and gaps in service provision towards common outcomes; c*o-ordination*: services work together in a planned and systematic manner towards shared and agreed goals; i*ntegration*: different services become one organisation in order to enhance service delivery.

The categorization above is based on the strength of cooperation that exists between the agencies. However, success in collaborative activities does not really depend on the strength or level of integration (Ikeanyibe, Olise, Abdulrouf and Emeh, 2020). Warmington et al (2004) identify what they call multi-agency working which is a situation where more than one agency work with a client but not necessarily jointly. Thus, services required by a client may require activity of different agencies, which may proceeding concurrently or sequentially and not necessarily jointly. What matters in collaborative activity therefore is unity of purpose rather than unity of action.and strength of cooperation (Ikeanyibe, Olise, Abdulrouf and Emeh, 2020). Beyond the issue of working together in any form, interagency delivery system requires that organizations develop agility to deal with mandates either individually or collaboratively. Within such contexts, inter-agency delivery system includes situations where each agency can provide an aspect of the service/product chain without bothering to work with the other.

Indeed, in some services, a single window service platform becomes necessary. Wang (2018) revealed that the World Customs Organization had long supported a single window platform. According to him, "in seeking to reduce regulatory inefficiencies, Customs and other border agencies have long deliberated on a concept called single window, which means that economic operators would only have to submit border regulatory information once, rather than on several occasions to several agencies." Inter-agency delivery system therefore requires a seamless linkage through which a client/citizen can access the full service/product without personal relationship with all of the agencies involved in a service product or for the agencies to work together. No doubt, effective and efficient ease of doing business environment requires a single window platform to save time and achieve alertness and responsiveness. Autonomous and individualized provision of services requiring inputs from a number of agencies can lead to duplication, increased waiting time, poor responsiveness and adaptability by service provisioning agencies, and the obvious resource wastage in shuttling from one agency to another for the client/citizen

Theoretical Framework of Social Networks

Bardach (1994) revealed that network-related thinking could illuminate phenomena involved in interagency collaboration. Network theories generally explain the importance of interrelationships. Social network theory focuses on the role of social relationships in transmitting information, channeling personal or media influence, and enabling attitudinal or behavioral change (Liu, Sidhu, Beacom and Valente, 2017). The social network theory perceives social relationships in terms of nodes (entities which can be individuals, teams, groups, organizations) and ties (the relationship between or among these) (Biehl, Kim and Wade, 2006). An organization's social networks may be a major driver, and similarly a major barrier, to its adaptability, agility, innovativeness, alertness and responsiveness. The theory was strongly energized with the emergence of computer-mediated communication, which affords explicit social networks as well as the modes of communication that bind them ((Liu, Sidhu, Beacom and Valente, 2017). Bardach (1994:1) averred that "a single "client" may receive service from one or more agencies in a "network of providers," linked by expectations of giving or receiving referrals, joint ventures, professional norms, and the like to produce a service product." In the same vein, it is obvious that the level of response in delivering a product or service by an agency

significantly depends on its relationship with other entities. Scholars of network research have shown that social networks contribute to efficient organizational performance based on network configuration ((Vanhaverbeke & Noorderhaven, 2001; Eckenhofer and Ershova, 2011). Network configuration as captured in the literature include numerous vital enhancers of positive relationships such as trust, strength of relationship, open communication and joint problem solving arrangements, innovative disposition, proximity and reciprocity, social capital, organizational culture, Information and Computer Technology (ICT), etc. The importance of ICT cannot be under-emphasized in building social networks. Information and computer revolution has given birth to new economies structured around dynamic processes and flows of data, information, and knowledge (Caroll, Whelan and Richardson, 2010). One cannot overlook the relevance of ICT in establishing a single window service pool or in facilitating the speed with which organizations could interact in the process of verifying documents, seeking approvals, making referrals, and taking a common decision. Furthermore, the spasm of distance between organizations, for instance federal and local based agencies, could easily be bridged by ICT resources with enahnced responsiveness and alertness. The realization of the executive order on the ease of doing business in Nigeria therefore depends largely on the quality of social network enhancers such as ICT infrastructure.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE USE OF EXECUTIVE ORDERS IN NIGERIA

Executive order (EO) is one of the policy tools employed by the Chief Executive of many presidential states such as the American Presidents to manage some complex legal issues administratively. An EO may set out government policies, issue directives or command action relating to functions of the executive arm. When it purports to make laws, an EO could become controversial because law-making is ordinarily within the remit of the legislature while the chief executive is empowered to execute laws made by the legislature (Okebukola, 2012). Branuum, (2002, p.2) avers that "the Constitution does not give one individual an "executive pen" enabling that individual to single-handedly write his preferred policy into law." Nevertheless, Presidents in many countries have found greater use of this instrument, because it gives them the leeway to act as they wished with some space to act promptly and due diligence in policy areas that require prompt and focused actions without waiting for the complex, politically-fused, elaborate and time wasting procedures of the legislature. Pronouncing an executive order and expecting agencies to achieve the objectives of the order require resources and the enabling environment. Hence issuing orders should take into cognizance the likelihood of compliance and realization of the objectives, otherwise, its use becomes mere administrative rhetoric and deception, giving the wrong impression that government is doing enough.

Nigeria became a presidential state in 1979; but apparently because of the endurance of military regimes and use of decrees to govern for the greater part of the period till 1999, the use of executive order has received little usage and academic discussion. However, since the return to democracy in 1999, each successive administration has signed a number of executive orders and more often than not, the news of the signing is usually greeted with either public outcry at worst or with mass apathy at best ((Ekpo, 2018). The present Buhari administration issued at least nine EOs between 2017 and 2019. These were:

i.   Executive Order (EO1) on the Promotion of Transparency and Efficiency in the Business Environment (Ease of doing business order);
ii. Executive Order EO2 on Budgets (All Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) shall, on or before the end of May every year, prepare and submit to the Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Budget and National Planning, their schedule of revenue and expenditure estimates for the next three financial years;

iii. Executive Order (EO3) on Support for Local Content in Public Procurement by the Federal Government: (All MDAs shall grant preference to local manufacturers of goods and service providers in their procurement of goods and services. Any document issued by any MDA for the solicitation of offers, bids, proposals or quotations for the supply or provision of goods and services shall expressly indicate this preference.

iv. Executive Order (EO4) on the Establishment of the Voluntary Assets and Income Declaration Scheme (VAIDS): (The Constitution imposes a duty on every citizen to declare his/her income fully and honestly to appropriate and lawful agencies and pay taxes promptly. Every taxable person is under obligation to voluntarily declare his/her income from all sources within and outside Nigeria by filing annual tax returns, computing same and paying the tax due to the tax authority);

v. Executive Order (E05) on Planning and Execution of Projects, Promotion of Nigerian Content in Contracts and Science, Engineering and Technology:

vi. Executive Order 6 of 2018 on the Preservation of Assets Connected with Serious Corruption and other Relevant Offences;

vii. Executive Order 007 of 2018 on Road Infrastructure Development and Refurbishment Investiment Tax Scheme Order

viii. Executive Order No. 008 authorizing the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice to set up a Voluntary Offshore Assets Regularization Scheme in Switzerland (VOARS or "the Scheme") in 2018; and

ix. The Open Defecation-Free Nigeria by 2025 and Other Related Matters Order in 2019

There is no doubt that these are important policy issues that should be tackled by any well-meaning government seriously. But the challenge is whether EO has been a virile instrument to make MDAs and citizens to perform effectively, responsively and timely. The EO on the Promotion of Transparency and Efficiency in the Business Environment (Ease of doing business order), which is the focus of this paper, advances twenty five clear orders spread on various areas related to operations of federal MDAs. The orders have to do in the main with transparency, disclosure and timeliness of response to service provision and innovation. Table 1 summarizes the key points of the order.

It is obvious that some of the orders would require the cooperation of different agencies to achieve. For instance, the order on one government directive reveals that an MDA may require input documentation or conditions from another in order to deliver products and services. Again, MDAs at the airports are required to merge their respective departure and arrival interfaces into a single customer interface. Apparently, the requirement of interagency relationship in meeting the orders has thrown up some issues for interagency delivery system and organizational agility.

ORGANIZATIONAL AGILITY AND EASE OF DOING BUSINESS IN NIGERIA: THE EFFECT OF INTER-AGENCY DELIVERY SYSTEM

Achieving the executive order No. 001 of 2017 on the promotion of transparency and efficiency in the business environment in Nigeria requires an optimal level of organizational agility. As revealed in the last section, issues of transparency, disclosure, innovation and timeliness were the hallmarks of the EO. The Nigerian public service has consistently been characterized by gross inflexibility, a tendency to clinging tenaciously to baseless routines and obsolete laws and procedures ((Achimugu, Stephen and Aliyu, 2013) excessive layering and procedural sluggishness and dilatory tactics (Ezeani, 2005). Obasa (2018), noted that the state of public sector in Nigeria is abysmal and in total collapse due to excessive bureaucratization, poor remuneration, and, neglect of competence and merit. Many public organizations have weak public service implementation capacity and poor service orientation strategy (Adamolekun, 2019; Obasa, 2018; Ezeani, 2005). Experts also reveal that challenges on ICT and use of e-governance abound in the country (Omeire and Omeire, 2014; Abah and Nwokwu,

Table 1. Executive Order No. 001 of 2017 on the Promotion of Transparency and Efficiency in the Business *Environment*

Area	Specific orders
Transparency in MDAs	**1 MDAs of the Federal Government of Nigeria to publish a complete list of all requirements or conditions for obtaining products and services within the MDA's scope of responsibility, including permits, licenses, waivers, tax related processes, filings and approvals. Things to be published include fees, timelines for products and services. This should be updated and published on websites from time to time**
Default Approvals	Approvals, registrations, waivers etc. or rejections must be communicated within the stipulated time, failing which they shall be deemed approved and granted
One Government Directive	An MDA that requires input documentation, requirements or conditions from another MDA in order to deliver products and services on applications within the originating MDA's remit or mandate, including permits, licenses, waivers, tax documentation, filings and approvals shall only request a photocopy or other *prima facie* proof from the applicant. It shall be the responsibility of the originating MDA to seek verification or certification directly from the issuing MDA. This requires service level agreements binding on MDAs
Entry Experience of Visitors and Travellers	Ordinary tourist and business entry visas to Nigeria to be issued or rejected with reason by the Consular Office of Nigerian Embassies and High Commissions within 48 hours of receipt of valid application.
Port Operations	No touting whatsoever by official or unofficial persons at any port in Nigeria. On duty staff shall be properly identified by uniform and official cards. Off duty staff shall stay away from the ports except with the express approval of the agency head; MDAs at the airports should merge their respective departure and arrival interfaces into a single customer interface, without prejudice to necessary backend procedures; in some cases 24 hour operations mandated.
Registration of Businesses	The Registrar-General of the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) to ensure all registration processes are fully automated through the CAC website from the start of an application process to completion, including ensuring the availability of an online payment platform where necessary

Source: Extracted from: Executive Order No. 001 of 2017 by the Acting President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on the Promotion of Transparency and Efficiency in the Business Environment

2019). These are critical requirements for organizational agility and interagency delivery success. Awosanya (2019) reports that lack of compatible ICT infrastructure among government MDAs impedes the implementation of e-governance by hindering the sharing of information among MDAs. He also remarks that most government agencies are concerned about access to government information if they put it online. Thus, the federal government agencies have "not been fully able to interact with business, citizens, state and local governments through electronic medium such as websites, emails, voice systems….Other challenges include lack of systems integration within a department, lack of integration across government departments, limited knowledge of using computers at various levels of bureaucracy and deployment of technology without proper process, re-engineering, and lack of constant electricity" (Dibie and Quadri, 2018:90). Many public agencies are still very hesitant to publicize correct or true information in their website. In the face of these challenges, realizing the executive order on promotion of transparency and efficiency in the business environment (ease of doing business order) in the Nigerian administrative environment therefore promises to be herculean.

Efforts have been made by some agencies to comply with the order. A review of the websites of some of the agencies indicates some systematic upgrade. The Corporate Affairs Commission, Nigerian Customs Service, the Council for Regulation of Freight Forwarding in Nigeria (CFFN), the Nigerian Immigration Services, and the State (Lagos) Bureau of Lands that process property registration and certificate of occupancy, have all initiated actions in terms of publication of services, timelines, fees, and required documents for the provision of services, in their websites. These agencies have published on their websites the services they provide, procedures and fees where necessary. They have provided various innovations including online platforms for accessing their services and linking services provided by other agencies. For instance, the Nigerian Immigration Services (NIS) has published

various kinds of information relating to the six major services provided by the agency, namely, passports issue, conventional travel document, visa on arrival, visa, ECOWAS travel certificates and residence permits. For example, the ECOWAS travel certificate issue-able to citizens of ECOWAS countries has 48 hours duration stipulated for obtaining the document. The following documents are required as made avaialbe in the website: duly completed application form, three (3) recent coloured (4×4 cm) passport photographs, evidence of age (birth certificate or statutory declaration of age), letter of Introduction from employer (for salaried workers only), letter of confirmation of Nigerian citizenship from applicant's local government chairman., students and trainee applicants shall obtain letters of introduction from the heads of their institutions accepting Immigration responsibility (IR), any other document which might be required by any locality as evidence of Nigerian Citizenship. The timeline for the issuance of fresh passport is 48 hours after the enrolment of biometric data or ten working days as the processing timeline. Fees range from NGN10, 750 to NGN22, 000 for different categories of persons that range from minor to adults above 60 years. However, the authors found some discrepancies between what is published and what is actually done. Fees are far beyond what is stipulated in the website as a result of touting which ought to have been taken care of by the EO. A key informant[1] in the Nigerian Immigration Service at its Abuja central office remarked that meeting the demands of the EO require effective interagency network and linkages, which often the customers do not meet. Thus, in spite of the order on one government directive, it is still obvious that activities of agencies are delayed by those of other agencies. The interviewee also noted that the NIS faced resource challenge that often hindered timely delivery of services. At the time of the interview, he remarked that NIS was then witnessing lack of passport booklets, which made timely delivery impossible. The passport booklets are security documents; printing and supplies are not controlled by NIS. Authors observed that touting has continued to exist in the agency and others investigated despite the order regarding elimination of official and non-official touting. Official touting was still much in place as agency officials still act as go-between between the client and organization services. Despite the provision for online application, officials still collect money to do the application and other errands needed to complete services on behalf of the customers such as completing the application form, securing guarantors, and making payments to the bank. This is quite expected in a situation where many of the customers do not have sufficient ICT knowledge to maneuver through the process of online filling and application. In some cases, the internet network is down in the offices causing delays in filling the form or data capturing. The authors discovered that most applicants only come to deposit money with a tout who often may be an official and only show up for the biometric enrolment on appointment with the facilitating agent/tout and final correction of the passport when it is ready. The reality on ground is that the published rates do not reflect the actual fees paid for the services. Cost of procuring a passport was actually discovered to be between NGN30, 000 and NGN35, 000 instead of the NGN22, 000 stipulated on the website. It is also observed that the deployment of ICT to process documentation such as payments is not yet in place. Payments are not verified through any electronic method. This is why an officer of the agency is usually involved in the physical payment into a bank as a way to authenticate the receipt. The interviewee[2] explained that the payments are made into the agency's account which is not accessible to different branches but only to those that control the accounts at the head office. Thus even within the agency itself, there is poor network of operations between the headquarters and the branches or different operation units. Similarly, verification of other required documents for the issuance of passport faced similar challenge. Some of the required feeder documents are products/services of other agencies ranging from the National Population Commission, Local Government system, the Court, banks or different employer organizations. It is difficult for the agency to assume default approvals without due diligence to verify these documents especially in situations where federal agencies would need to cooperate with those of other levels of government or the private sector. It is therefore noteworthy that the responsiveness and timeliness of the NIS depended so much on the social network relations with other agency operations.

Like the NIS, the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) has provided in its website a user friendly Company Registration Portal (CRP) meant to afford customers on-line real-time access to the services of the CAC from the comfort of their offices or homes. The Commission has embarked on initiatives like maintaining a One-Stop Investment Centre (OSIC) being hosted by the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC), which is a platform to carter for foreign investors coming to register and do business in Nigeria (Amodu and Bello, 2017). The Commission has introduced some interface in its website with some other agencies that provide complementary services in business registration. There is provision to download the Federal Inland Revenue form for the processing and payment of stamp duty and other required fees using different e-payment platforms such as inter-switch, e-transact, MasterCard, Verve card and Visa card. The CAC has established a 24/7 Call Centre which is domiciled in its Public Affairs Department, with four dedicated telephone lines and an email account for the public to make enquiries and get complaints resolved. The official closing time of CAC has been extended to 7 p.m. daily (Amodu and Bello, 2017).

However, with the poor state of internet services in the country, the Commission continues to face challenge in meeting the stipulations of the EO. The business registration procedure is still tedious and cannot be concluded in the stipulated time. The Commission's publicized investment friendly policies such as a one day company registration or same day incorporation has not been realized. This is because "the preconditions for registration such as reservation of names or payment of stamp duties at the federal Inland revenue are not reckoned within the Commission's 24 hour product" (Olanyinka, 2017:66). This author cited an instance where a mix up did not allow access to the report of a name search until the reservation lapsed and a fresh application had to be made leading to delays. Key challenge here is liaising with other agencies in a social network. Although the Commission has included in its website some linkages to pay stamp duties and other fees, usually these are frustrated by poor internet connection. Indeed, the authors observed that some windows provided on the website do not provide any information as at the time of writitng. The researchers' personal experience to check the fees for the services provided by the Commission by clicking the 'fees' button on the website was met with a 404 error report, showing that the requested URL was not found on the server. Obviously, there were inchoate icons in the websites included to convey the impression of compliance to the EO. There is evidence of disconnect between publication of services and timelines in the websites and their functionality.

More serious challenge to implementation of the EO has to do with complementary services that involve other agencies especially those of the other levels of government - state and local governments. Property registration for instance, is the responsibility of sub-national governments. Section 1 of the Land Use Act 2004 vests all land within the urban territory of each State (with the exception of land vested in the federal government or any agency of the federal government) solely in the governor of the relevant State, Section 2 of the Act vests land within the rural territory of a state in the local governments. Nigeria is a federal state; hence there is no uniformity of practice in the country as states have their respective land registration laws, which, in addition to the Land Use Act, govern the administration of real property transactions (Banwo and Ighodalo, 2016). Although there is broad procedures for property registration that can be gleaned from various state practices, the disparity is huge to guarantee the success of the EO in the shortrun. Banwo and Ighodalo (2016) aver that due to the requirement of obtaining the governor's consent in relation to any alienation of land, registering properties in Nigeria has been cumbersome and lengthy, and obtaining the governor's consent could take between 6 months to several years, depending on the level of bureaucratic procedures in each state. The cost as well is quite huge and diverges from state to state.

Although Lagos state, which is investigated for this study has started some reforms in relations to quick registration of properties in the aftermath of the EO, there is still much to be desired to meet the demands of the EO for the country. The Bureau has effected a transformation of its website which indicates a reduction of timeline for property registration drastically to 30 days.
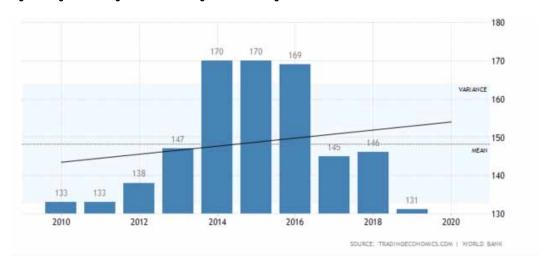
Figure 1. Nigeria's ranking in the ease of doing business ranking 2010 to 2020

The operational units in the Bureau was reduced from eleven to three; the requirements have also been reviewed, removing such less important demands like court affidavit to conduct a search of land encumbrances; there is harmonization of numerous charges (Alao, 2018). However, the timeline indicated in website is hardly met as applications could wait to secure the governor's consent for months. While Lagos Land Bureau is reforming, those of many other states have not. A good number of them do not have a website or functional ICT aided service delvery system.

Despite all odds, it is important to acknowledge Nigeria's improvement in the EDB ranking. In the 2018 ranking, Nigeria moved up 24 points from 169th position in 2016 to 146. As at March 2020 the country stands at the 131st position among about 190 countries surveyed. Indeed Doing Business 2020 report recognizes Nigeria among the 10 economies that improved the most in their ease of doing business score.

Source: Trading Economics, available at: https://tradingeconomics.com/nigeria/ease-of-doing-business

Nonetheless, improvement in the ease of doing business ranking has not equally translated to increased investment as expected in the period. The country has dropped out of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) top five investment destinations (Business Day, 2020). The effects of harsh government regulations, high cost of energy, lack of adequate security for personnel and properties, multiple taxations, and the activities of corrupt and hostile government officials all combine to dissipate the investment prospects for business owners (Olagunju and Ikeolumba, 2019). These scholars describe the marginal improvement in the global ease of doing business as a mere window-dressed reality. There is still poor network of interrelationships among various service delivery agencies that affect organizational agility and the expected alertness and responsiveness in responding to client demands. Reforms have not significantly reflected effective, efficient and quality ICT deployment to facilitate interagency delivery system operations. There is no doubt that effective social network among agencies at various levels of government is required to boost the capacity of agencies to work together in an interagency delivery system. This would affect positively the agility with which services could be provided and thus predispose the capacity of agencies to comply with the ease of doing business order in Nigeria and elsewhere.

CONCLUSION

Achieving organizational agility that would enhance and sustain ease of doing business environment requires effective and efficient network of interrationships in which public organizations interface with other entities to respond to service demand. This substantially requires deployment of ICT infrastructure to enhance the opportunity of single window service delivery platforms. The capacity of a government agency to understand and meet customer needs in the short term, adapt to trends and issues in the foreseeable future, and shape public needs over the long term (Dahmardeh and Pourshahabi, 2011) is the essence of organizational agility. The Executive Order (EO1 2017) on the Promotion of Transparency and Efficiency in the Business Environment (Ease of doing business order) in Nigeria was issued to remove critical bottlenecks and bureaucratic constraints in the manner federal agencies respond and attend to their clients in the critical issues of transparency, disclosure of information about services provided and procedures of accessing such services timely. Although the order has led to focused reforms in some relevant MDAs which have seen appreciable improvement in Nigeria's ranking in the World Bank ease of doing business index since 2017, the sustainability of the progress is threatened by the poor social networks that exist among public organizations at different levels. While the order envisaged the importance of inter-agency delivery system by including the one government directive whereby a service originating MDA has the onus to rely on photocopies or other prima facie proofs, and to seek necessary verification or authentication from other agencies, it is found that the existing communication channels among various agencies is poorly developed to afford prompt response or error free services. Effective and efficient inter-agency delivery system apparently requires a strategy for developing a structure that is more nimble, flexible, responsive and able to create and/or be more responsive to change. Developing e-governance capacities and internet infrastructure have been shown to enhance such nimble, flexible and responsive operations. Unfortunately, Nigeria is still a laggard in such infrastructure and agency networks. Nigerian public organizations are still largely plodding, inefficient, bureaucratic, change-resistant, incompetent, unresponsive, and corrupt (Ademolekun, 2019; Ezeani, 2005).

Pronouncing an executive order and expecting agencies to achieve the objectives of the order require resources and the enabling environment, otherwise, its use becomes mere administrative rhetoric giving the impression that government is doing enough, whereas little is being done. The implication of the finding shows that certain policy issues require significant legislative and administrative consideration to provide a more comprehensive policy solution. In line with the findings of this study, sustainable approach to promoting ease of doing business should include in-depth reforms on e-governance and intergovernmental relationships, and mainstreaming organizational social networking. There is need to establish a pool of government data base on various data regularly required by public agencies to provide services such as identification, evidence of nationality (including state and local government), personal data of citizens such as date of birth and so on. Such one stop pool and of course a robust ICT infrastructure accessible to most public institutions and agencies of government would facilitate document verification and authentication, and speed up agility of organizations and what it could help to achieve such as compliance to the ease of doing business order.

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ENDNOTES

[1]   Key Informant Interview (KII) National Immigration Services, Abuja, 16ᵗʰ April 2019.
[2]   Key Informant Interview (KII) National Immigration Services, Abuja, 16ᵗʰ April 2019.