Digital Literacy and E-Governance Adoption for Service Delivery in Cross River State Civil Service

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ABSTRACT

The study used a case study technique to investigate why the implementation of e-governance and ICT in government service provisioning has not resulted in a commensurate improvement in service delivery in Cross River State, Nigeria. It specifically investigates the effect of in-service training on civil servants’ digital literacy, the consequent impact of e-governance implementation, and service delivery. The study finds that there was inadequate in-service training, which was partly caused by the cognitive disposition of civil servants who did not fully cooperate with the implementation of the e-governance reform. The study aligns with existing theories of institutional and organisational change which requires that organisational change requires realignment of beliefs and behavioral norms of organization members. The study recommends that the implementation of e-governance can only yield better results in effective service delivery if the civil servants are made to accept the reform and their digital literacy levels are significantly enhanced through appropriate in-service training.

KEYWORDS

Cognitive Model of Organizational Change, Digital Literacy, E-Governance, In-Service Training, Service Delivery
1. INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution has had a huge influence on societies, affecting how people work (United Nations, 2021; Nambisan, 2017). Today, organizations, both businesses, and governments, struggling to keep afloat and excel by adopting technologically propelled services; hence, the use of some dictions such as the computer age, digital age, silicon age, and new media age to describe today’s world trend. In public administration and service entities, e-government, e-governance, e-service, and other such ‘Es’ have become buzzwords to depict the new normal. E-governance entails the use of information and communications technologies (ICT) by governments to enhance the range and quality of information and services provided to citizens, businesses, civil society organizations, and other government agencies in an efficient, cost-effective, and convenient manner, to make government processes more transparent and accountable, and to strengthen democracy and service delivery (The World Bank, 2015).

Nigeria’s governments have implemented digital literacy training programs to improve e-governance resources. Cross River State, a sub-national-level government, has implemented initiatives to equip civil servants with digital skills for successful service delivery. In 2007, then-governor Donald Duke launched digitization programs, supported by Global Affairs Canada. Since 2010, in-service training has been provided to enhance digital literacy skills. Despite investments in ICT infrastructure and capacity building, service delivery in the state has not significantly improved. The benefits of digitization and ICT in providing services are not yet felt, leading to dissatisfaction, and increasing operating costs for members of the public as clients. As a result, the government-citizen interface has yet to be bridged, and the gap between service objectives and actual services supplied remains. Yet, some proponents of the adoption of digitization and e-governance often write as if it is a magic wand (Obi, Uzor, Chukwurah, 2020; The Guardian, 2019; Dugbazah, Glover, Mbuli, and Kungade, 2022) that will lead to good governance and effective service delivery once a transition to its deployment is made. Providing insight into the barriers of digitalization has tremendous utility for organizations and policymakers, especially in the digital age where ICT plays a dominant role.

Theoretically, many studies have adduced that administrative reforms are often imitated in developing countries but often fail to achieve their goals (Farazmand, 2002; Ikeanyibe, 2015; Ikeanyibe, 2018). Rodman (1968) and Farazmand (2002) noted that the inadequacy of public administration in these countries is a major obstacle to development, and resistance to reform-induced changes in the bureaucracy likely mounts if fundamental changes are not made in the structure of power perpetuating itself. Despite numerous studies on failed e-governance reforms in developing countries, there is still a gap in understanding why the expected benefits of digitization and e-governance principles have not significantly enhanced service delivery in many countries. Most research on e-governance has focused on establishing the relationship between reforms and corruption reduction in the public sector (Bokhari and Ali, 2022; Alam et al., 2023), predicting digital system acceptance and adoption elements (e.g., perceived ease of use and perceived utility, customers’ attitudes, funding, availability of digital resources, etc.) as predictors and determinants of digital technology use (Alomar, 2023; Sumaya et al., 2023), evaluating the relationship between digital literacy, e-governance, and service delivery (Inakefe et al., 2023), assessing issues impeding public sector digitalization (Abdelazyz, 2020), assessing the role of IT-based technologies in human resources management (Vahdat, 2021), and proposing new intelligence algorithms for cloud users and servers with lower traffic loads (Darbandi, 2017a; Darbandi, 2017b). However, research on bureaucrats’ cognitive disposition towards e-governance reform implementation is limited. While scholars agree that bureaucrats play a significant role in administrative reforms, there is a lack of investigation into their corruptive interests as a motivator for resistance to e-governance reforms. This study aims to fill this gap. Similarly, while employee training and development have significantly permeated subfields of public administration, digital literacy training is an unexplored area in e-governance. Chohan and Hu (2020) note that there is a lack of research on ICT training efforts supporting e-government service adoption. The study fills
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