



IMPACT OF ICTS ON POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: THE CHALLENGES AND IMPLICATION FOR EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY.

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Abstract

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become within a very short time, one of the basic building blocks of modern society. Many countries of the world today now regard understanding of ICT and mastering the basic skills, and concepts as part of the core of education technology. The infusion of technology in education especially in politics is seen as a means to enhance and extend not only reading and writing methods but also politics and governance in the 21st century. This paper examines the impact of ICTs on politics and governance, promotion of good governance with the ICTs. The implication of these challenges for education technology were highlighted such as rapid innovations in the Education Technology sector as future defining parameters in political mobilization, participation and good governance in Nigeria. Finally, pertinent recommendations were proffered.

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Introduction

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are potent tools capable of transforming politics and governance in Africa in the 21st Century. This can be traced back when the Nigeria-Biafra war broke out in 1967, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) fired Fredrick Forsyth who was assigned to report on the war could not but rather gave a report that portrayed the British government in bad light. However, Forsyth immediately returned to Biafra and stayed till the end of the war. But with a single telex-line at his disposal, he literally brought the blood-bath and carnage in Biafra to the doorsteps of the international community (Udoka, 2006).

The abolition of regional governments following the Nigerian independence in 1960 shifted regional and state growth as pressure from the central government continued to dictate both political actions and the pace of economic and political development in Nigeria (Nwafor, 2001). The power of ICTs is influencing public opinion, successive Nigerian governments, monopolized and controlled many organs and very often clamped down on those who dared to challenge them. Before now, television channels and radio stations including telecommunications were owned by government until recently, successful, journalists were murdered and some imprisoned for daring to bring to the notice of the general public what was going on in the nation's political arena. In doing so, the majority of Nigerians were deprived of participation in the running of the government.

Although, the internet was invented in the late 1960s, its use was limited to only a few segment of society until in the early 1980s when the internet protocol suite was standardized. By mid-1990s, the internet became a revolution that impacted tremendously on culture, commerce, politics, connecting people in far distance via instant messaging thereby making the world a

global village in a world-wide web. Information that was laboriously transmitted through paper work could now be effortlessly sent through new and classical methods.

Furthermore, in no delay volumes of information hitherto transported physically can now pass through the internet almost instantly. These new technologies are not only efficient, but also easier and handy. According to Jacob (2010), mobile phones came into existence in Nigeria about decades ago which has drastically reduced the volume of letter writing passing through the post offices as text messages could be used to pass information instantly.

Impact of ICTs on Politics and Government

The impact of ICTs on politics and government is already being felt in Nigeria, but the question is, in what ways can ICTs facilitate political change in Nigeria and Africa in general and bridge the ever increasing gap between communication and governance on the one hand, and between the citizens themselves on the other hand (Umeh, 2010).

The answer is not farfetched, since the breaking of government's monopoly on Telecommunication and Television; more and more Nigerians have suddenly found a voice not only in their personal communication but also have acquired a powerful tool to network and access information on socio-political issues. Radio and television call-in programmes are already putting enormous pressure on government to perform. We have a lot of radio stations in Abuja that runs programmes on political issues. For instance, Ray Power FM, Silverbird Rhythm, 94.7 FM, etc. Most of these aspects of ICTs, radio and television stations are very effective especially in the aspect of election monitoring and publication of results. In 1993 general election, it may be recalled that it was wire-less walkie-talkie that revealed the overwhelming victory of MKO Abiola even before the result was truncated by the Military administration (Okechukwu, 2000). He went further to say that ICT is a veritable tool in the formation of citizens network which



connects poor, rich, educated and non-educated and people in an inter and intra-flow of information. This is a potential tool for political mobilization.

In Nigerian government, ICTs is a wonderful opportunity to be in direct contact with the masses through what is referred to as e-government (Augustine, 2003). Augustine maintained that e-government is the application of information and communication technology by government, public sector and agencies to change the means by which government relates and interacts with its citizens. E-government uses promises to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of government and radically alters its relationship with the public.

According to Abel (2005), improvements in communication and technology are playing a vital role in raising the living standards and empowering people to understand and gain access to all the initiatives and support system that are available to them. Abel maintained that innovations in ICT offer a platform to exchange information and provide services.

ICTs can also be potent tools for political mobilization such as in political campaigns and elections. It is with this new innovation that President Barack Obama had an edge over his challengers during his presidential campaign. Obama's campaign team used social media to rally a huge number of Americans to vote for him. He also raided a lot of his campaign money through the social media. The question is, how possible will that be in Nigeria come 2015 presidential election?

Promotion of good Governance through the ICTs

Good governance is among other things, participatory, transparent and accountable, effective and equitable and it promotes the rule of law. It ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest

and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of development resources.

Ajuru (2010) conceived good governance as an organization or the government that should be able to provide the basic needs of the society and when the government is able to provide these basic needs for its citizenry, it promotes mutual understanding between the leaders and the led. This shows that the people will be satisfied with the government in place. Good governance is not just about government, it is also about political parties, parliament, the judiciary, the media and civil society. It is also about how citizens, leaders, and public institutions relate to each other in order to make change happen.

Democratic governance is about how citizens and state relate to each other. Sustainable and successful democracies require more than elections, the existence of an independent judiciary and other democratic institutions and even a free press. They require the existence of established legitimate relationships between the state and citizens. Promotion of good governance through the ICTs is already being felt in Nigeria, since the breaking of government's monopoly on the Tele-communication and television, more and more Nigerians have suddenly found a voice not only in their inter-personal communication but also have acquired a powerful tool to network and access information on socio-political issues. Radio and television call in programmes are already putting enormous pressure on government to perform.

Challenges and Implication for Education Technology

In light of what has been happening in the Nigerian politics since the return of civilian rule with regard to the use of technological equipment in politics and governance, it is safe to conclude that the march to educational technology in Nigeria and e-government has begun. It is a gradual process but the tempo is increasing as more and more technological equipment are

springing up and offer the disenfranchised Nigerians a platform to voice out their discontent with an insensitive and corrupt government. The impact is already being felt as could be seen in the mournful tone with which the Nigerian publics are out in anger in radio and television, phone-in programmes and even through the social media. The ominous sign is gathering momentum and one only hopes that it will not result into a violent political crisis with unpredictable consequences. Moreover, that is still a snobbish unwillingness on the part of government for effective and transparent service delivery (Elvis, 2012).

The enactment of the Freedom of Information Bill does not automatically translate into easy access to information by Nigerian citizens. In fact, there is a possibility of government shutting down media technologies perceived to be hostile to it as has happened in not too distant past. There is also the danger that politicians may play ethnic card to becloud and hijack the impact of educational technologies and turn the people against each other and thereby slow down the pace of political emancipation of Nigerians.

Consequently, there is an urgent need to formulate policies to guide the use of education technological equipment in Nigeria (Jodak, 2013). This implies that in order to prevent the enormous traffic of educational technologies falling into the hands of terrorist and criminals, effective regulation must also be put in place. Similarly, steps must be taken to fix the epileptic power supply as many of the new educational technologies innovations require electricity to power them. There is also the issue of quality of educational technological gadgets.

The interesting thing about the emerging rapid innovations in educational technologies is their dynamism and adaptability. For instance, who would have predicted that the hitherto docile people of the Arab world would ever raise their voices against their despotic and domi-god rulers? The speed with which the social media has impacted on politics and governance in

Nigeria in the last few years enables us to conclude that it is only a matter of time before a substantial change begins to appear in the way in which government carries out its business.

Conclusion and Recommendations

New innovation in educational technologies offers a platform to exchange information and provide services. For instance, educational technologies will certainly increase the internal efficiency of the National and State Assemblies as well as the judicial system of government. This can be seen in the proceedings and judgements previously hand-written in courts can now be done in a few hours with the aids of educational technologies such as computer system. This will certainly decongest the court so that justice can quickly be dispensed.

There are certainly many obstacles on the way but there seems to be a bright prospect that will transform and enhance political participation in Nigeria. For this to happen, all hands must be on deck to move our country (Nigeria) forward in order to achieve the good governance.

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