INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION IN NIGERIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION; PERSPECTIVES CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT
The paper reveals the sustainable transformation of Local Government Administration in the contemporary digital age. The previous related studies merely focused on local government reforms. Therefore, this paper is to fill the literature gap by finding how local government administration will be computerized to conform with the global system and challenges of digitalization for effective service delivery, efficient administration and development. Virtually, it is discovered that local governments are in dearth of computer literate staff, computer application in operations, adequate financial resources and self-autonomy. The paper adopted the qualitative / secondary method of data collection and analysis. It used theoretical perspectives of the democratic participation, globalization, development school and localist. The study highlights the procedure, how local government evolution and reforms will culminate to digital era. Local government administration in Nigeria today is faced with problems of digitalization to cope with modern challenges of the use of computer and other electronic gadgets for effective record keeping, data processing, storage and retrieval of information. The objective of the paper focused on how local government administration will be adapted to meet the global trends of information age to attain much needed development at the grass root level. Based on these findings, the paper recommends that relative autonomy and direct funding from the federal government be guaranteed to the local governments to facilitate the adaptation and application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the stream of local government administration to stimulate development at the grass root level. The paper also envisages the prospects of managing potentially millions of records which every year poses constraints to proper record keeping in Nigerian local government administrations. It is however concluded that digitalized local government

administration system in Nigeria will bring rapid grass root development, efficient discharge of community services, welfare and professionalism within the milieu of local government services.

Introduction

Local government administration in Nigeria faces unending demand and complex community expectations amidst global challenges of digitalization for effective service delivery. Strategic efforts by the federal and state governments such as direct funding and computerizing local government system to explore the potential of capturing and sharing global innovations to meet post-modern standards and develop up to date local government platform is highly solicited.

The Nigerian local government administration can be digitalized at helm of information age through strategic planning, dynamism, openness, funding, optimum utilization of resources and globalized communication that connects local government with modern information technology to maximize service delivery opportunities to reduce costs through elimination of duplications, access economies of scale, develop effective local platform to compete and work with other levels of governments to achieve better outcomes for the community.

Digitalization efforts provide means to assist local governments with techniques of making important decisions and policies about financial and administrative operations through computer framework. For long in Nigeria, local governments remained conservative, static and unsung tier of government which sprung from the British colonial administration and maintains its status quo. And despite the subsequent several reforms, local government in Nigeria are yet to conform to global standards of British "shires" or Canadian "cantons" or American "counties" in the era of millennium development goals (MDG). The objective (s) of this paper is to; enlighten the importance of digital servicing of local government administration in Nigeria, enable local government administration tackle and reduce the problem of corruption through the use of computer, recommend for improving local government efficient service through computer application, modernize local government administration by exposing it to the phenomenon of globalization, galvanize local government employees go for computer training and attain computer literacy and, finally promote and shade more light on the paramount importance of using computer for local government administration so that all benefits will be achieved and the system be transformed from the manual to digital for development. Why some previous literature said nothing on digitalizing local government system? The problem of investigation of this paper includes finding the knowhow for computer application in Nigerian local government administration. Since previous literature on local government studies left the gap of information technology adoption which this paper seeks to fill in relation to local government administration for relevance to digital age. The first local government reform in 1976, local governments in Nigeria have been operating and rendering their administrative, societal and clerical services to communities manually. The conservatives or static tradition of local governments had delayed development to the grass root communities. Moreover, local governments are personalized, jaundiced, paralyzed and battered to such an extent that they are forgotten and submerged in the lowest depths of political bureaucracy. And with current challenges of information technology, local governments are losing relevance in Nigerian civil service.

The hypothesis is that the more local government administration is digitalized, the more efficient and effective will be its service and bureaucratic procedures vis-à-vis the entire civil service of the state government as local government is linked to the three tiers of government in Nigeria. Last, digitalizing the local government administration will enable the system meet the post-modern challenges of globalization, sustain transparency, accountability, information management and truncate the cankerworm of corruption to make distinction in the life and modus operandi of the 774 local governments across the country. Although the use of electronic computer in the developing country like Nigeria may result in substantial reduction in the growth rate of clerical jobs thereby creating unemployment. The fact still remains that the use of computer has also created new and more remunerative jobs in Nigeria. The research problem of this paper is to fill the literature gap by finding how local government administration will be digitalized through the adoption of information technology in Nigeria and this will ensure relevance of local government system in globalizing information age.

Literature Review

Many related literature abounds in conception of local government. Mawhood, (1993) defines local government as a body separated by the law which has local representative, formal power and have right to make decision on a range of public matters. Agbakoba and Ogbonna (2004) conceived local government from legal perspective as political administrative unit empowered by law to administer specific locality. Local government is also seen as an entity which is elected to locally oversee affairs (olisa cited in Awofeso, 2005). Akpan, (1967) said that local government implies the breaking down of a country into smaller units / localities for the purpose of administration in which elected representatives exercise power to undertake functions under the general authority of the national government. Local government is the legal corporate body (Campbell, 1965). The International Unit of Local Government Administration (IULA), the world wide association of local government during the 26th world congress in 1985 defined local government as:

"That level of government with constitutionally defined rights and duties to regulate and manage public affairs which are also constitutionally defined for the exclusive interest of local population. These rights and duties shall be exercised by individuals that are freely elected on periodic basis by equal, universal suffrage while its chief executive shall be elected with full participation of the elected."

According to Gaffoor (2008: 37) knowledge management can improve local government performance by means of innovation, quality enhancement and increased productivity and effectiveness. Local government administration should be able to manage the transformation of data into information (Gaffor and Cloete, 2010: 2). Data are objective facts that describe a phenomenon without any judgement, perspective or context, and it becomes information when meaning is added to it (Mohammed, 2014: 48). Information is the result of processed and structured data which is anchored in the beliefs, views and obligations of its holders, the local government employees (Ramdhania, 2012: 3). There is also an opportunity for the development of local government administration if connected to internet. Averweg (2012: 5) argues that internet technology plays key role in local government administration by supporting the effective acquisition, presentation and dissemination of knowledge and information. A study conducted by Gaffoor and Cloete (2010: 2) on Stellenbosch municipality in South Africa surveyed how local government administrations were capable of successfully implementing information technology as tactical tool to achieve operational goals and enabled service delivery. The local government administration has one ability to provide users with access to any information anywhere and anytime through groupware, web-based access to data bases and repositories that include best practices databases and lessons learned systems. But due to the lack of installing digital system and access to information resources, the local government administration is not all effective and functional. In Nigeria, the ICT policy component domestication capacity at local government is state based for the E-payment of staff salaries, retrieval staff list and bio-data information. This is to some extent the response of local government administration to information technology.

The internet infrastructure must be connected to the local government administration to modernize it and offer basic functionality for communication, exchange, storage, searching, calculating, as well as retrieval of data and documents. Local government administration in Nigeria should invest in comprehensive technological infrastructure such as communication systems and information technologies such as chart rooms, telephones, computer and video conferences for development, standardization and adaptability to digital age (Sedighi and Zand, 2012: 14). The key for local government administration is to understand how technology is developed and how it is aligned to organizational strategy and information processing (Margilaj and Bello, 2015: 19).

There are empirical studies and recent researches related to the local government administration though did not suggests information technology adoption in the local government system the gap of literature which this paper intends to fill. The most recent proponent of this theory is Robert Dahl (Ezeanu, 2004). The theory argued that local government is the superior to other levels of government at municipality level. The reason being that local government affords the citizens opportunities for education, economy and grass root political participation. The theory argues that local government is a nursery that prepares legislature i.e. is a good recruiting ground for the upper levels of government (Mackenzie, 1961 in Ezeanu, 2004). Thus it is necessary for local government administration to carry along with all changes of community as digital age has taken over the era of globalization.

Another theory related to local government is the development theory which placed much emphasis on how local government in developing

countries can be effective agent of political integration, nation-building, social and economic development (Ezeani, 2004). Again, the proponents of this model contend that far more than in developed countries, local government in developing nations can be and should have the function of helping to reduce the congestion at the centre. Thus, local government is seen as an arena of implementing socio-economic programmes by providing communication infrastructure necessary for an improved way of life i.e information technology (Ola in Ezeani, 1984). This could be likened to the modernization theory of Rostow, (1969) which centred on developmental stage of the society. However, this paper also extends two theories namely; the localist and globalization theories which supports introduction of information technology in Nigeria local government administration. This paper further contributes that there must be prospects of information technology in local government such as safe storage and faster retrieval system, improved reporting, electronic data processing, error reduction and automatic production of documents and reports.

The localist perspective was also proposed by Jones and Stewart (Stroken, 1992) which maintains the effectiveness of local authorities for being autonomous. They believed that there is value in spread of power and the involvement of many decision makers in many different localities. Again they contended that local government as local is accessible and responsible to the development of local needs therefore must modernize its administration by embracing all changes introduced by globalization. This is because it is through introducing information technology at the local level that development could be attained for the transformation to be total has to stem from the local people.

The last not the least is the theory of globalization. Globalization here is the movement of information technology across global frontiers. It emerges form the global mechanisms of greater integration of communication worldwide. There is increasing flexibility of technology to connect people and governments around the world. Thus the global communication system is gaining an increasing importance every day and is operating to link local, national and international spheres of the globe to extend the horizon of global context using the new technology, the digital technology. The modern communication system implies structural modifications in social, economic, political and cultural patterns of nations. Thus the new technological advances in communication are becoming more accessible even to local entities. The theory of globalization coincides with several elements of modernization theory which is a transformative process that a society must move to modernity and its traditional structures and values must be totally absorbed and replaced by a set of modern values. This paper has opted the localist theory as priority theory though differently as it advocates the adoption of information technology at grassroot level of administration in order to cope with contemporary trends and changes brought by globalization in our information age, so that local governments will be modernized functionally, systematically and structurally. This will fill the information technology infrastructure gap to achieve transformation and development of local communities.

Evolution of Local Government Administration and Reforms in Nigeria

The origin of local government administration in Nigeria is deeply embedded in the colonial period. The British administration established native authorities supervised by British resident officers (Ayoade, 1995 in Aborisade and Moudnt (ed) 1995). In this system, Obikeze and Anthony (2004: 129) concluded that local government administration was purely an instrument for colonial exploitation of the Anglo-African colonies.

i. The 1976 Reform.

This era was a watershed in the historical evolution of modern Nigerian local government administration that came with the following objectives:

i. To bring rapid and even development in the country.

ii. To facilitate development of local wishes by delegating local representative bodies.

iii. Mobilize local human and natural resources for development.

iv. To develop democratic self-government at grass root levels to encourage the initiatives of leadership potentials.

v. To provide channels of communication networks between local communities and the government (Obi and Obikeze, 2004).

The Murtala / Obasanjo regime created 301 local government administrations between 1976 – 1979 which increased to 774 in 1998 (Aiyedun, 2001) and each received grants from the federal government (Ayodele, 1995).

ii. Second Republic Reform, 1979.

Under this era, local government administration was abused, politicized and marginalized as an avenue for rewarding political allies. Thus (Obikeze and Anthony, 2004) concluded that this era marked anti-climax in the evolution of local government in Nigeria.

iii. The Dasuki Reform, 1984.

The Buhari administration in 1984 inaugurated the Dasuki's panel to look into the affairs of local government in which their recommendations were:

i. Direct funding of local government as an effective third tier of government.

ii. Abolishment of local government ministries.

iii. A non-party tier election into the council.

iv. The Babangida's Reform 1988.

It was a ten men committee which produced a national scheme of service for all cadres of local government employees which tried to bring a complete autonomy to the local government within the framework of the following recommendations:

i. Termination of state government joint account within local government.

ii. Local government chairmen to appoint their secretaries.

iii. Created local government legislative councils.

iv. Remitting to states of annual local government grants was stopped.

v. It scrapped the local government service commissions in January, 1992.

v. The 2004 Reforms.

In 2004, Alhaji Sanda, Ndayako the Etsu of Nupe Technical Committee was set by the then president Olusegun Obasanjo but unfornately, the Etsu died in duty but was replaced by Mallam Liman Ciroma who also died and his deputy Prof. Akin Mabogunje brought the recommendations, viz;

i. The retention of 774 local governments.

ii. The abolishing of the state joint local government account.

iii. The need to grant the local government third tier status.

iv. A shift from presidential to parliamentary system at the local government level.

Methodology

This paper adopts the documentary method with secondary source of data collection which obtains information from textbooks, journals, articles, periodicals, newspapers, magazines and bulk of library works. Normatively, it traces the history of local government administration in Nigeria from colonial native authorities to the era of local government reforms from 1976 - 2004. This expounds the development of local government administration during both military and civil rules of Nigeria. The method qualitatively explores the process of post-modernization i.e digital era and applies it to the local government system to conform to global trends of computer application in civil service.

The research chooses secondary source of data collection because of its simplicity, objectivity, reliability and validity. The choice tallies with the nature of local government and the dynamics of information age which makes it difficult to obtain through primary source hence reliance on secondary data. The qualitative method records the past, explains the present and predicts the future (prospects) of local government administration. In doing so, descriptive and explanatory means of data gathering is required which does not involve statistical techniques such as graphs, numerical tables and charts, nor does it choose instruments of data collection like sampling of population because that does not fit this type of research.

Discussion of Results/Findings

The discussion of result is based on the literature reviewed above. It is pertinent to remark from the fact that the world society is now undergoing a transition from what has been referred to as industrial society to the current information society. And due to the lack of adequate integrated information technology infrastructure, Nigerian local government administration remains quite poor, inefficient in consistent, static and unproductive in its services. The information

revolution has drawn a demarcation between the countries of the South and those of the North as the entire international system of stratification has come to be based on "who knows what", as information technology has taken over everything economy, politics, culture, research, trade, entrepreneurship etc. Thus the need for the use of computer is imperative for the local government administration in order to cope with the rapid expansion and growth in size of intelligence, business, terrorism and complexity of internal and external threat to the national security. The use of electronic computer will revolutionalize the system from the traditional / manual mode of data processing to much faster and modern one, the computer as a wonderful "mind tool" in all aspects of administration which excel in accuracy, timeliness and quality of output and will solve entire problems associated in local government administration, via;

i. Electronic Data Processing: Computer can process many thousands of transactions at incredible speeds, and high speed printers enable output to be produced at thousands lines per minute.

ii. Error Reduction: Once Programmed: The computer is virtually error-free in both processing and performing mathematical calculations. Manual systems are much more prone to human error.

iii. Automatic Production of Documents and Reports: The computer can be programmed to produce automatic up to date reports on request and accounting documents such as invoices, cheques and statements of account.

iv. Improved Reporting: The computerized system can be used to generate a wide range of reports such as analyses of salaries by grade, nominal and payrolls, payments made on projects, strategic managerial and operational planning, purchases, contracts, recruitment / employment record, staff training / development, policy standardization and bank transactions.

v. Safe Storage and Faster Retrieval System: Almost all computers use a variety of memory organize in a storage hierarchy around the Central Processing Unit (CPU). The purpose of storage is to help, keep files and inform servers which in turn transfer data between computers in a network. There are different types of storage such as primary storage, secondary storage, tertiary storage and off line or disconnected storage. Records can be searched and retrieved on the basis of document – retrieval systems and reference – retrieval systems from the database systems.

General Challenges of Local Government Administration

1. Lack of computer literacy: Almost two-third of local government employees could not operate computer machine in their respective places of work.

2. Lack of adequate training: Most local government employees does not undergo training and as such lacks sufficient manpower skills.

3. Lack of financial resources: Due to joint account with the state government, local government is pauperized and has shortage of fund which jeopardize its projects.

4. Staticity of local government. The service and administration of local government is retrogressive as there is no dynamism.

5. Prevalence of corruption: Covers all facets of corruption in local government administration which include bribery, extortion, gratification, abuse of office, renewal of contracts and payment vouchers, falsification of records, nepotism, favouritism, fraudulent submissions, back dating records, impersonation, bloating financial figures, embezzlement, extravagance, swindling and looting of public treasury.

6. Lack of Autonomy: Local Government lacks independent financial status due to joint account with the state government and economic autonomy is inadequate without political autonomy.

7. Desolation: The Local Government system all over the nation is deteriorative and decadent to such an extent that local government secretariats are "desolated buildings" without employees. Local government therefore appears as "dead end or organization without responsibility.

8. Overstaffing: Local Government accommodates large number of staff due to random recruitment of staff (fresh and replaced staffing).

9. Redundancy: Redundancy is common in Nigerian local government administration for unavailability of schedule of duties.

10. Political Subjugation of State Government: Local Government administration is politicized, paralyzed, jaundiced, battered and hijacked as an avenue for rewarding political allies (partisan veterans) e.g through selfish appointments not based on merit (no meritocracy in local government bureaucracy).

11. Administrative / Civil Hitches: This encapsulates lack of prompt promotion and inclusion into the payroll of employees.

12. Absence of Proper Remuneration: Most Local Government employees end up their service without gratuities / retirement benefits or stipulated pensions. This destroys the morale of local government workers.

Conclusion

The paper is to be concluded by way of highlighting its major findings on the foregoing. This include the discovery of the paper that local government administration. Similarly, local government administration in Nigeria is found to be corrupt, unproductive, retrogressive and inefficient in service delivery. However, it can be reformed through the adoption of information technology to bring rapid grassroots development, efficient discharge of community services, welfare and professionalism within the milieu of Nigerian local government services. Nigerian local government administration is pauperized of financial resources and in dearth of self-autonomy because of economic monopoly by the state government and cannot provide development projects at the grass root level. The computer literacy is absent in the local government system as file and record keepings are manually operated. Formerly, local government was a beehive of grass root activities but today turns as a desolated grave yard. Redundancy is now a common feature of the Nigerian local government administrations. The local government administration lacks well-trained or professional employees to tackle its average manpower need. The development quagmire exists in local government because it is politicized and marginalized by the political stakeholders of the state government and is used as an extended unit of state administration.

Recommendations

Based on its findings, this paper proposes the following recommendations for adoption of information technology in Nigerian local government administration/system.

i. Digitalization of local government to revolutionalize its mode of operation from manual to digital as digitalization will speed up service delivery and overcome the problem of red-tapism in local government bureaucracy.

ii. General adoption and use of computer. Computer literacy programme must be made mandatory for the local government staff to enable them operate computer machinery.

iii. Digitalization is essential to make local government administration dynamic, up to date, efficient, productive and developmental.

iv. Computerization of local government system for security / safety of information (data, reports and records).

v. Establish connection / linkage of local government with the new world system of global administration in digital era.

vi. Installation of information technology infrastructure in 774 local government administrations in Nigeria for efficiency, productivity and development.

vii. Minimization of corruption in local government administration can be effectualized via digitalization of the system.

viii. Provision of adequate computerlaboratory or training ground for local government employees to acquire required manpower skills for good administration.

ix. Digital attendance of local government staff will reduce the problem of absenteeism and desolation.

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