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Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Local Government Administration: The Case of Oshimili North Local Government Area of Delta State

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Introduction

The Universal Declaration Human Right (UDHR) states that everyone has the right to take part in the government of his or her country. The role of ICT in facilitating (political) information exchange is manifested in the way information flows faster, more generously, and less expensively throughout the planet for decision-making and for development (Ahmed, et al, 2006). Gurumurthy (2004) defined e-governance as the use of ICTs to improve government interaction with citizens. ICTs facilitate the sharing of information or ideas by different nations of the world. They can improve government and strengthen democracy and citizen empowerment, and can help foster most transparent governance by enhancing interaction between government and citizens (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2000). It can be particularly powerful in providing a voice to people who have been isolated and invisible.

Electronic Administration and Technology Acceptance

E-administration is the conversion of paper processes to electronic processes. Its objective is to transparency and accountability, leading to better governance (Bagozzi, et al., 1992). Local government administrators must understand the power of technology and acquire the necessary knowledge and skills (Davis, 1992).

Role of ICT in Local Government

Moemeka (1994), Shepherd (1998), the United Nations (2005) and Nassanga (2001) explore the power of ICT in development and empowerment. Information leads to self-actualization, especially when combined with other resources (Castels, 2003). ICT speeds up the flow of information and its use in decision-making (Ahmed et al, 2006). Idowu (2003) identifies ICT facilities that we commonly have at our disposal. These include computers, telecommunication, and tools for banking.

Benefits and Problems of ICT for Local Government

According to Bagozzi, et al. (1992), the benefits of ICT include accuracy, speed, enhanced communication, increased productivity, and acquisition of skills and knowledge. There are also problems, including illiteracy, which is a serious problem in Africa, especially in rural areas. According to Hafkin (2002), ICT requires various kinds of literacy and the inability to read and write is a major barrier to local government administration. Idowu, et al. (2006) note the importance of funding for ICT implementation. Other challenges include unreliable Internet access and power supply, and rapidly-growing populations.

Methodology

This study used a survey. The population of the study consists of all dwellers of Akwukwu-igbo and Ibusa in Oshimili North local government area. The total population is 4,016. From the population, a sample of 200 respondents, representing 5 percent of the population was used for the study. A questionnaire was the instrument for data collection and the data were analyzed through simple percentages.

Findings and Discussion

Section A: Respondents

Table I: Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
15-25	20	10
26-35	60	30
36-45	96	48
46-56	24	12
Total	200	100

Table II: Gender

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	79	39
Female	121	62
Total	200	100

Table III: Marital status

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Married	120	60
Single	80	40
Total	200	100

Table IV: Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Student	35	17.5
Civil servant	24	12
Farmer	71	35.5
Traders	70	35
Total	200	100

Section B: The effect of ICT

Table V: ICTs available in the local government area

ICTs	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Radio	22	11
Computer	60	30
Mobile phone	36	18
Telephone(landline)	48	24
Television	21	10.5
Internet	13	6.5
Others	-	-
Total	200	100

Table VI: Benefit of ICTs for local government administration

Benefits	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Participation in governance	18	9
E-governance	16	8
Accuracy	41	20.5
Enhances communication	62	31
Increases productivity	63	31.5
Others	-	-
Total	200	100

Table VII: The problems of ICTs in local government administration

Problems	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Power supply	41	20.5
Illiteracy/ICTs illiteracy	50	25
Lack of ICT skills	35	17.5
High cost of ICTs	55	27.5
Absence of cyber café	19	9.5
Others	-	-
Total	200	100

The results of the study confirm previous findings about e-government and the role of ICT in development. Those surveyed pointed out problems of ICT in local government, including power supply, illiteracy/ICTs illiteracy, lack of ICT skills, the high cost of ICTs, and lack of facilities such as cybercafés. This support the work of Idowu (2003) and Hafkin (2002). Computers and telephones are the ICTs most often available in the local government area. This supports the work of Ahiakwo (2002) who described the role of computers in storing administrative, budget, and other information. Study participants believe that ICT increases the speed of information services. This is in line with the work of Ahmed, et al. (2006). It was also observed that the benefits of ICTs towards local government administration are enhancement of communication and increased productivity. This is in line with Bagozzi (2006) who noted that ICT helps to enhance communication among administrators and staff and also increases productivity.

Conclusion

The use of ICT in government has set the stage for greater transparency and the possibility for greater citizen participation. In spite of the advantages, certain problems were identified. These problems represent barriers to progress. ICTs such as Internet, GSM system, computer, and online tools for effective information and communication service delivery should be made available in the local government area.

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