

**GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP IN E-GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES IN FEDERAL
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION ABUJA, NIGERIA**

BY

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to determine government partnership in e-government initiatives of Federal Ministry of Education Abuja, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was used to conduct the study. The population for the study consisted of 43 staff of ICT Department of Federal Ministry of Education directly involved in e-government implementation. A structured questionnaire consisting of 18 items was used to elicit information from the respondents on a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was validated by experts from Vocational Teacher Education Department of University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Federal Ministry of Education respectively. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was ascertained using Cronbach alpha (α) reliability formula and it yielded a value of 0.89 based on standardized items. The research question was answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypothesis was tested using ANOVA at 0.05 level of significance. The finding revealed 13 items as government responsiveness on the roles of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) on e-government initiatives in Federal Ministry of Education. Also, five items was revealed as somewhat responsive. However, an F-ratio of 0.118 with associated probability value of 0.95 was obtained. Since the probability of 0.95 is greater than 0.05 set as level of significance for testing the hypothesis, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the mean response of Education officers, Programme Analysts, Computer Engineers and General ICT Officers on the roles of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) on e-government initiatives in Federal Ministry of Education was accepted. The implication was that staff of ICT Department of Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja, Nigeria had the same views on government responsiveness on the roles of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) on e-government initiatives. It was recommended among others that government should create an enabling environment for public-private partnership for e-government initiatives for national development in Nigeria.

Key Words: Government Partnership, E-Government, Federal Ministry of Education

Introduction

The global digital divide is one of the impediments to economic and national development. All over the world, people with easy access to computers and Internet

services are better able to compete in today's information-savvy economy, take advantage of government services online, and communicate with networks of family and employees. The growth in e-

government along with the outlays of computing hardware, Internet access, and the skills needed for various kinds of citizen-government transactions has evolved fully in most developed nations. In a country like Nigeria where computer and Internet use are maturing, many facets of economic, political, and national development are effectively facilitated by information technologies. Bennett and Howard (2008) stated that a rating of 198 nations and more than 1,700 government Web sites showed that the top nations offering e-government services are South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, the United States, Canada, and Great Britain. The authors further stated that 71 percent of North American government sites offer online services. By comparison, West,(2006) added that citizens can conduct government business online from just 30 to 50 percent of the sites surveyed in Asia, the Middle East, South America, and Western Europe. United Nations (2010) further stated that the proportion of government sites offering online services is less than 15 percent in Eastern Europe, Russia/Central Asia, and Africa including Nigeria.

Conceptualizing e-government initiatives globally, Tolbert and Mossberger, (2006) and Welch, Hinnant, & Moon, (2005) stated that e-government has been achieved through conventional mechanisms such as consumer demand for technologies, corporate products that respond to that demand, and government sponsorship of access programmes, computer purchases,

and various online public services. However, many IT access programmes are costly (Agunloye, 2008). Different strategies based on coordinated public-private-partnership (PPP) are required to address the challenges in nations where government resources and IT capacities are weak.

In Nigeria, e-Government initiatives involves the identification of key business processes in government Ministerial Departments and Agencies (MDA's) which provide service delivery to the general public through government portal. This, according to Federal Ministry of Communication Technology (FMCT) (2014), enhances the level of productivity as well as efficiency in government processes. Some MDAs are currently implementing e-government initiatives. There are Federal Ministry of Communication Technology (e-government), Federal Ministry of Health (e-health), Federal Ministry of Education (e-education), Federal Ministry of Agriculture (e-agriculture), and Federal Ministry of Trade and Investment (e-trade).Therefore, this research work is based on government responsiveness and partnership in e-government initiatives in Federal Ministry of Education Abuja, Nigeria.

The concept of government responsiveness or performance refers to the quality of public service provision. It focuses on the performance of various types of formal organizations like Federal Ministry of

Education that formulate, implement, or regulate public-sector activities. In order to facilitate e-government initiatives in Federal Ministry of Education (FME), the Information and Communication Technology, (ICT) department is responsible for e-government initiatives in order to create visibility for the education sector through development and maintenance of websites and e-government portals.

The increasing emphasis on e-government is directly attributed to the fact that the use and application of ICT are accepted as powerful engines for economic growth and national development. As governments embrace ICT as a means to accelerate national development processed-government has become foremost in the reforms agenda, and delivery of services to citizens, businesses, civil society organizations, and other government agencies in Nigeria. The Institute for Public-Private Partnerships, (2009) stated that Public-private partnership in e-government is a legally enforceable contract between a private sector entity and a government body that requires the private partner to deliver a desired electronic public service.

In Nigeria, some components of e-government services have already commenced. These according to FGN (2013) include issuance of national identity card, travelling documents (passport, yellow card, etc.), driver's license, tax clearance, vehicle number plate, Certificate

of Occupancy, and issuance of industry licence, permit, and authorizations. Others are the issuance of birth certificate, marriage certificate, death certificate; payment of tax, import duty, government fines and sanction; registration of land acquisition, vehicle ownership, companies, registration of cooperatives, associations, town unions, other legal entities, registration of voters; delivery of education services, health services, security and protection services, essential amenities, justice administration, law and order, as well as delivery of fundamental human rights. Other e-government services include the Nigerian customs programme, the computerization resident permit by the Nigerian immigration service, computerization of land and certificate of occupancy in the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA). The Integrated Personnel Payroll Information System (IPPIS) for the payment of salaries in government establishments, Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS) which according to Agomuo and Enang (2013) refers to the computerization of public financial management processes from budget preparation and execution to accounting and reporting.

In the education sector, e-government initiatives include NOUN I-LEARN e-learning portal of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), e-Registration in the various tertiary Institution of learning, wide Messaging and Collaborations (e-mail), Nigerian

Universities Electronics Teaching and Learning (NUTAL) Platform for e-learning, Universities Inter-Campus Connectivity (UNICC) to enable collaboration, Nigeria Research and Education Network to enhance research work, E-Library in tertiary Institution and Federal Unity Colleges, Nigeria Research and Education Network (NgREN), broadband connectivity infrastructure to enable video-conferencing, ICT Centres, School Portals in 104 Federal Unity Colleges, Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) Computer Based Test (CBT) for the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), online registration and checking of results by West Africa Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO), National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB) and other examinations bodies as well as National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) where postings and cost effective services are made as part of e-government services.

Globally, Akitoby, Hemming and Schwartz, (2007) stated that infrastructure development and maintenance has been the domain of the government. However, there has been a worldwide decline in government spending in most conventional infrastructure projects. Consequently, in infrastructure investment, government alone cannot address the infrastructure gap related to the digital divide. It is based on this assertion that this paper addressed the issues of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) in e-government initiatives and the role of

PPP in e-government initiatives in Federal Ministry of Education.

Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) is conceptually the collaboration between public and private sector organizations in public service delivery. In their individual studies, Hodge and Greve (2009); Langford and Roy (2006); and Marschollek (2011) opined that, the term partnership is seen in other similar forms like cooperation. Also, Skelcher (2007) described it as joint venture, while Gómez-Barroso and Feijóo (2010) viewed it as interplay. Furthermore, Wettenhall (2003) explained it as mix while Hancox and Hackney (1999) illustrated it as strategic alliance and Donahue (2010) stated that it is seen as collaboration. Commonwealth, (2003) identified four groups of actors relevant in partnerships which include Government, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs), and the private sector. Also Egbewole, (2011) stated that PPPs management systems and techniques are of different varieties and these include contracting out, franchising/concession, leasing, privatization, management contract, Build Own and Operate (BOO), Build Operate and Transfer (BOT), Management Buyout (MBO), and Co-operatives.

The Institute for Public-Private Partnerships, (2009) stated that in some PPPs, governments may be responsible for financing and owning the project's underlying electronic network infrastructure and equipment facilities, while the operation of a new e-government

service that uses this network becomes the contractual responsibility of the private partner. E-Government PPPs may even include joint venture contracts, by which a new company is created by a combination of a private investor(s) and a government body(s), which then signs a contract to deliver a specific e-government service. For example, in Nigeria, Galaxy backbone is responsible for enterprise network project for the purpose of enabling e-Government and is designed to deliver a state-of-the-art data centre facilities to support e-government platforms and tele-presence in government establishment. To justify PPP, Agunloye (2008) stated that the process of e-government implementation in Nigeria started with the establishment of the National IT Policy in March 2001, establishment of National Information Technology Development Agency, NITDA in March 2003 and establishment of National e-government strategies, NeGSt in March 2004 as SPV (special purpose vehicle) of PPP and the establishment of Federal Ministry of Communication Technology (FMCT) to facilitate e-government implementation in Nigeria.

The objective of partnerships is to enhance the prosperity and success of an organisation through engagement of all stakeholders' ideas, abilities and commitment. Partnership in e-Government according to UN (2008) involves the identification of the principal stakeholders involved in e-government and the accompanying transformation process of the government system. It is the

fundamental understanding, interaction, roles, responsibilities and capacity that each partner contributes in different ways to support, or hinder, the process and influence the outcome of e-government in an organisation. By implementing e-government, Gottschalk (2009) and Mosse and Whitley (2009) stated that public agencies can realize cost reductions and improved efficiency, while citizens, business, and employees receive faster and more convenient services.

Government agencies facing budget constraints according to Claps (2012) can show increased interest towards alternative partnership. Thus, Langford and Roy (2006) argued that the level of political support and political engagement can shape a more partnership-intensive approach for successful implementation of e-government. Public-private partnerships can be adapted to provide creative financing mechanisms for variety of projects.

For successful partnership in e-Government, the UN (2008) highlighted stakeholders and role players for e-government which include legislative body, office of the presidency and/or cabinet cluster on e-government, government agencies, special public-private sector support units and agencies, political parties, unions, traditional leaders, non-governmental organizations and community based organizations, communities, citizens, private sector, research institutions, international agencies, bilateral agencies, states and local government, among others. Private sector

participation in providing e-government services can help in promoting better governance since they are better organized and better managed, more customers focused, entrepreneurial and innovative, more efficient and effective, better in financial management possess and better corporate governance practices. As governments seek to utilize e-Government effectively, Grasman et al. (2008) stressed that one growing trend is for public agencies to strategically engage in partnership with other stakeholders to bring in best practices and contribute to e-government initiatives.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of the study was to identify government partnership in e-government initiatives in Federal Ministry of Education Abuja, Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined:

1. The role of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) on e-government initiatives in Federal Ministry of Education

Research Questions

1. What are the roles of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) on e-government initiatives in Federal Ministry of Education?

Hypothesis

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of Education officers,

Programme Analysts, Computer Engineers and General ICT Officers on the roles of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) on e-government initiatives in Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja.

Research Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was used to conduct the study. The population for the study consisted of 43 staff of ICT Department of Federal Ministry of Education directly involve in e-government implementation. A structured questionnaire consisting of 18 items was used to elicit information from the respondents on a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was validated by Experts from Vocational Teacher Education Department of University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Federal Ministry of Education respectively. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was ascertained using Cronbach alpha (α) reliability formula and it yielded a value of 0.89 based on standardized items. The research question was answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypothesis was tested using ANOVA at 0.05 level of significance. The data for the study was analyzed using the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 20.0 Version. The cut-off point of 3.0 on a 5-point rating scale was used as decision point.

Table 1: Mean Rating and Standard Deviation of the responses of Education officers, Programme Analysts, Computer Engineers and General ICT Officers on the roles of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) on e-government initiatives in Federal Ministry of Education

S/N	How responsive is Government to ensure that	\bar{X}	SD	REMARKS
1	E-government is used as an engines for economic growth and national development	4.14	.52	Responsive

2	e-government is foremost in the reforms agenda	4.28	.59	Responsive
3	E-government is used for delivery of services to citizens, businesses, civil society organizations, and other government agencies in Nigeria	4.14	.68	Responsive
4	E-government is used to facilitate educational delivery	4.09	.61	Responsive
5	Public-Private-Partnerships (PPPs) offers a means to share risks and reduced costs of implementing e-government	3.84	.75	Responsive
6	E-government bring citizens into contact with government in more effective and satisfying ways	4.14	.71	Responsive
7	PPP is used to enhance the success of government services through engagement of all stakeholders' ideas, abilities and commitment	4.02	.71	Responsive
8	an enabling policy and legislative framework is provided for public-private-partnership on e-government development	3.91	.53	Responsive
9	a framework for intergovernmental co-ordination is provided for public-private-partnership on e-government	3.88	.63	Responsive
10	public-private partnership exist to support funding of e-government implementation	3.49	.51	Somewhat Responsive
11	political parties are supportive of e-government process through public-private-partnership	3.68	.64	Responsive
12	Unions as representatives of organized labour are supportive of e-government for development process through public-private-partnership	3.42	.50	Somewhat Responsive
13	Traditional Leaders have key role to play in the e-government transformation process as leaders in their communities	3.67	.47	Responsive
14	Non-governmental organizations and Community based organizations play a role in e-Government partnership	3.49	.51	Somewhat Responsive
15	Bilateral agencies provide funds and technical assistance for e-government development	3.68	.46	Responsive
16	States Governments provide fora to consider issues of e-Government integration through public-private-partnership initiatives	3.30	.46	Somewhat responsive
17	exchange of information and cooperation exist between agencies for e-government implementations through public-private partnership	3.47	.50	Somewhat responsive

18	PPP exist between Nigeria and other international organizations like South Korea, DFID on e-government	3.53	.50	Responsive
	Cluster Mean	3.79	.17	Responsive

Table 1 presents the mean ratings of the opinion of respondents on the roles of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) on e-government initiatives in Federal Ministry of Education. Thirteen items recorded mean ratings of 3.53 to 4.28 which indicated responsive. Also, five items recorded mean ratings of 3.30 to 3.49 which indicated somewhat responsive. The standard deviation values of the 18 items ranged between 0.46 to 0.75 which showed that the responses of the respondent were close to one another and to the mean. However, the overall cluster mean of 3.79 indicated relevant and is above the cut-off point of 3.0

on a five point rating scale which means that government is responsive on the roles of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) on e-government initiatives in Federal Ministry of Education.

Null hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the mean response of Education officers, Programme Analysts, Computer Engineers and General ICT Officers on the roles of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) on e-government initiatives in Federal Ministry of Education

Table 2: Summary of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of the mean ratings of the responses of Education officers, Programme Analysts, Computer Engineers and General ICT Officers on the roles of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) on e-government initiatives in Federal Ministry of Education

Sources of Difference	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	.0113	004	118.949			
Within Groups	1.21539	031				
Total	1.22642	NS				

Table 2 shows the ANOVA result of the significant difference in the mean rating of respondents with different cadres on the roles of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) on e-government initiatives in Federal Ministry of Education. Result shows that an f-ratio of 0.118 with associated

probability value of 0.95 was obtained. Since the probability of 0.95 is greater than 0.05 set as level of significance for testing the hypothesis, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the mean response of Education officers, Programme Analysts, Computer

Engineers and General ICT Officers on the roles of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) on e-government initiatives in Federal Ministry of Education is accepted. Inference drawn is that Education officers, Programme Analysts, Computer Engineers and General ICT Officers had the same view on the roles of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) on e-government initiatives in Federal Ministry of Education.

Discussion of the Findings

The finding revealed thirteen items as government responsiveness on the roles of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) on e-government initiatives in Federal Ministry of Education. Also, five items were revealed as somewhat responsive. However, an f -ratio of 0.118 with associated probability value of 0.95 was obtained. Since the probability of 0.95 is greater than 0.05 set as level of significance for testing the hypothesis, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the mean response of Education officers, Programme Analysts, Computer Engineers and General ICT Officers on the roles of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) on e-government initiatives in Federal Ministry of Education is accepted. The findings are in line with Gottschalk (2009), and Mosse and Whitley (2009) who in their studies stated that by implementing e-government, public agencies can realize cost reductions and improved efficiency, while citizens, business, and employees receive faster and more convenient services. The findings are also in agreement with Claps (2012) that government

agencies facing budget constraints can show increased interest towards alternative public-private partnership. The findings further corroborates that of Langford and Roy (2006) who argued that the level of political support and political engagement can shape a more partnership-intensive approach for successful implementation of e-government initiatives.

Conclusion

The increasing emphasis on e-government is directly attributed to the fact that the use and application of ICT are accepted as powerful engines for economic growth and national development. As governments embrace ICT as a means to accelerate national development process, e-government has become foremost in the reforms agenda, and delivery of services to citizens, businesses, civil society organizations, and other government agencies in Nigeria. Most e-government initiatives have been achieved through conventional mechanisms such as consumer demand for technologies, corporate products that respond to that demand, and government sponsorship of access programmes, computer purchases, and various online public services. However, many IT access programmes are costly. Different strategies based on coordinated public-private-partnership (PPP) are required to address the challenges in nations where government resources and IT capacities are weak. Therefore, this study was carried out to determine the public-private-partnership responsiveness

in e-government initiatives in Federal Ministry of Education Abuja, Nigeria.

Recommendation

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should create better enabling environment for public-private partnership for e-government initiatives for national development in Nigeria.
2. E-government initiatives are multidimensional, the public sector must partner with the private sector in a creative and mutually beneficial manner.
3. Sustainable and national development is achieved when stakeholders share a common vision and agree on the same national interest towards e-government initiatives. This can be achieved through stakeholders' meetings on e-government initiatives.
4. From a national perspective, e-education is an important strategy for adapting the workforce to the technological revolution. It is also a tradable service with no boundaries.
5. PPPs have the potential to make a significant contribution to delivering this reality by its role to e-government initiatives in the education sector.

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