

Towards Good Governance and Sustainable Economic Development in Nigeria: Information Technology as a Platform

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Abstract

The rapid growth of information technology (IT) in recent years has no doubt changed the perception and ways of life of many. This recent technology constituted a great factor in changing particularly the way we work as well as transforming many aspects of social and economic organization in ways we could have hardly imagined less than two decades ago. Government in most developed nations of the world has embraced this inevitable tool for effective governance and sustainable economic development. No wonder such nations have developed this fast both politically and economically. Nigeria as a nation has not fully exploited the potential and power of Information technology in this regards. Information Technology will offer developing countries such as Nigeria remarkable and cost-effective tools for accelerated development both politically and economically. This paper examines the present economic situation in Nigeria, the challenges facing Nigeria economy and governance and present Information technology as the right platform for good governance and sustainable economic development in Nigeria with a proposed model.

Keywords: Information Technology, Government, Governance, sustainable Economic Development, Nigeria.

1.0 Introduction

Information technologies are interrelated components working together to collect, process, store, and disseminate information to support decision making, coordination, control, analysis, and visualization in an organization or a nation. Governance is divided into two parts, the political and the economic aspect. The political aspect is about the way a nation is governed comprising how citizens, organization and businesses communicate their interest, reconcile their differences, exercise their rights and obligations and relate with one another.

In other words, governance is all about how power is exercised, how open the political process is, how decisions are made, and how much of a voice citizens are given in decision-making and in the management of public affairs. The other aspect of governance is economic. This relates how the resources of the society are managed and what role is played by the governments in the process of socioeconomic development. It also provides the circumstance in which corporate governance is practiced by setting the laws under which corporations are established and the regulatory framework for the conduct of corporate affairs (Olugbenga, 2001).

Presently, Information technology is widespread across the African continent far better than in the past. The significance is expected to be a more vibrant, innovative, democratic and well developed continent. Entrepreneurs are embracing this technologies market their goods, students accesses a wealth of online content, and constituents are able to engage their government in more transparent and accessible methods. In this era of globalization and development in information technology, emphasis is on information technology as tools to develop a nation and her citizens. Technology can be an amazing tool for social and economic development. It can help people get a better education, learn new skills to earn a living wage, or start a business. It also can enable organizations to meet community needs by broadening access to healthcare, education, micro-banking and other essential services. One of the most significant advances in information technology (IT) today is the growing connectivity. This paper therefore examines the present economic situation in Nigeria, the state of act of Nigeria governance and present ways in which Information technology can act as a platform for good governance and accelerate economic development in Nigeria.

The paper is divided into five sections. Section one introduces the paper, section two looks into the Nigeria Economic development history. The challenges facing the Nigeria Economy was discussed in section three, section four explores the intervention of Information Technology in the economy development of Nigeria with a proposed model and finally section five concludes the paper.

2.0 History of Nigeria Political and Economic Development

Looking at the Nigerian economy history from the period of 1960-70, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) recorded 3.1 per cent growth annually. During the oil boom era, from 1970-78, quality domestic product (QDP) increased positively by 6.2 per cent annually which was quite a significant growth. However, the 1980s GDP witnessed a negative growth rates. Again in the period 1988-1997 when the structural adjustment and economic liberalization was constituted, the QDP responded to economic adjustment policies and grew at a positive rate of 4.0. In the years after independence, industry and manufacturing sectors had positive growth rates except for the period 1980-1988 where industry and manufacturing grew negatively by 3.2 per cent and 2.9 per cent respectively. The growth of agriculture for the periods 1960-70 and 1970-78 was unsatisfactory (Ekpo and Umoh, 1998).

The oil boom in the 1970s impacted negatively on agriculture. Labours were lured away from rural to urban centres leaving agriculture to suffer which made the contribution of agriculture to GDP, which was 63 percent in 1960, declined to 34 per cent in 1988, not because the industrial sector increased its share but due to neglect of the agricultural sector. It was therefore not surprising that by 1975, the economy had become a net importer of basic food

items. The apparent increase in industry and manufacturing from 1978 to 1988 was due to activities in the mining sub-sector, especially petroleum. Capital formation in the economy has not been satisfactory. (Ekpo and Umoh, 1998). The economy never experienced double-digit inflation during the 1960s. By 1976, however, the inflation rate stood at 23 per cent. It decreased to 11.8 per cent in 1979 and jumped to 41 percent and 72.8 per cent in 1989 and 1995, respectively. By 1998, the inflation rate had, however, reduced to 9.5 per cent from 29.0 per cent in 1996 (Ekpo and Umoh, 1998).

Unemployment rates averaged almost 5 per cent for the period 1976-1998. Immediately after independence and into the oil boom years, it appeared that the economy performed. However, in the 1980s the economy was in a recession. Economic reform programme was an attempt to put the economy on a recovery path with minimal inflation. Figure 2.1 shows a chart of trend of gross domestic product of Nigeria at market prices estimated by the International Monetary Fund with figures in \$USD Billions. Figures before 2000 are backwards projections from the 2000 - 2012 numbers, based on historical growth rates. The figure for 2014 is derived from a rebasing of economic activity earlier in the year (CIA, 2014).

Year	Gross Domestic Product, (PPP, in Billions)	US Dollar Exchange	Inflation Index (2000=100)	Per Capita Income (as % of USA)
1980	*58	1 Naira	1.30	7%
1985	*82	3 Naira	3.20	5%
1990	*118	9 Naira	8.10	2.5%
1995	*155	50 Naira	56	3%
2000	170	100 Naira	100	3.5%
2005	291	130 Naira	207	4%
2010	392	150 Naira	108	5%
2012	451	158 Naira	121	7%
2014	972	180 Naira	(no data)	11%

Figure 2.1: Ranking of Nigeria Economy
Source CIA, 2014

3.0 Challenges facing the Nigerian Economy and Governance

The challenges facing the Nigeria economy preventing its quick development includes;

Human Development Challenges

Human resources contribute a great deal in the success or failure of any organization or nation in terms of capability and strength of character of the workers or leaders. Majority of the problems being faced by Nigeria economy is reflection of the poor quality in relation to human development and management and education which is a major key in human capacity development and economic health of the nation has been neglected for decades (Dike, 2002). According to Lickona (1992), good quality education has a way of promoting societal development and growth. In addition, he added that respect and responsibility are the two foundational moral values that a society should teach its citizens including honesty, fairness, tolerance, prudence, self-discipline, helpfulness, compassion, cooperation, among other democratic values. Also taking responsibility for the things we do wrong as well as the things we do right is important for national development (Lickona, 1992).

Poor Handshake between Educational Institutions and Modern Economy

Part of the problems facing Nigeria is that its educational institutions are not designed for the modern economy. They lack the tools to produce good quality graduates to manage the affairs of the nation. Majority of the workers lack the skills to drive human productivity. No nation would make any meaningful socio-economic and political stride without viable educational institutions. In the 2008 Review of World Development, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) ranked Nigeria 157 out of 177 in Human Development Index; it was also among the Least Liveable nations. For the economy to grow, and businesses to thrive, the institutions

should be responsible for human capital development should be properly funded, equipped and managed to enable them produce advanced skilled manpower to manage the affairs of the nation (Victor, 2010).

Leadership Challenges

Ever since independence, there has always been the problem of leadership in the nation and it is getting worsening by the day. Many of the leaders work for their own personal good without the interest of the masses at heart. Over the years, several reform programs were put in place but the lack of political leadership that are committed to implementing them to address the problems facing the economy. Northouse (2007) defines leadership as a process of getting things done through people which means responsibility, having passion for the purpose and the mission of the organization or society one leads. The Nigeria leaders are good at prescribing solutions to economic problems without providing the institutional framework to make it thrive (Acemoglu, 2003; Dike, 2003; Edison, 2003). And more often than not, their policies are hastily put together and poorly executed. Nigeria's development rests with good leadership and governance.

Bad Governance

Bad governance is another issue related to leadership problem. Governance has been defined as a system of values, policies, and institutions by which a society manages its economic, social, and political affairs through interactions within the state, civil society and private sector (UNDP, 2000). Bad governance in term of political, economic and social governance are the three dimensions of governance, is among the major causes of the problems facing the nation as it is threatening to undermine the nation's democratization process. The people are not allowed equal economic opportunity and freedom to participate in the political process. Freedoms are not only the primary ends of development, they are also among its primary means. Therefore,

development (social, political and economic) requires the removal of major sources of non-freedom (Sen, 1999).

Corruption

Corruption is a greater part of the problems facing Nigeria as it leads to poor governance, and this hinders socio-political and economic development. Although corruption is a global scourge, Nigeria appears to suffer the most from it because the leaders are pathologically corrupt. Everyone appears to believe that the nation has a culture of corruption (Smith, 2008). Over the years, Nigeria has earned huge sum of money from crude oil, which has gone down the sinkhole created by corruption. Top public servants are very rich because they harbour the mentality that public money belongs to no one. National dailies are full of news of how public officials are acquiring million-dollar homes within and outside Nigeria and hoarding stolen public money in financial institutions abroad. Figure 3.1 gives a graphical view of the challenges.

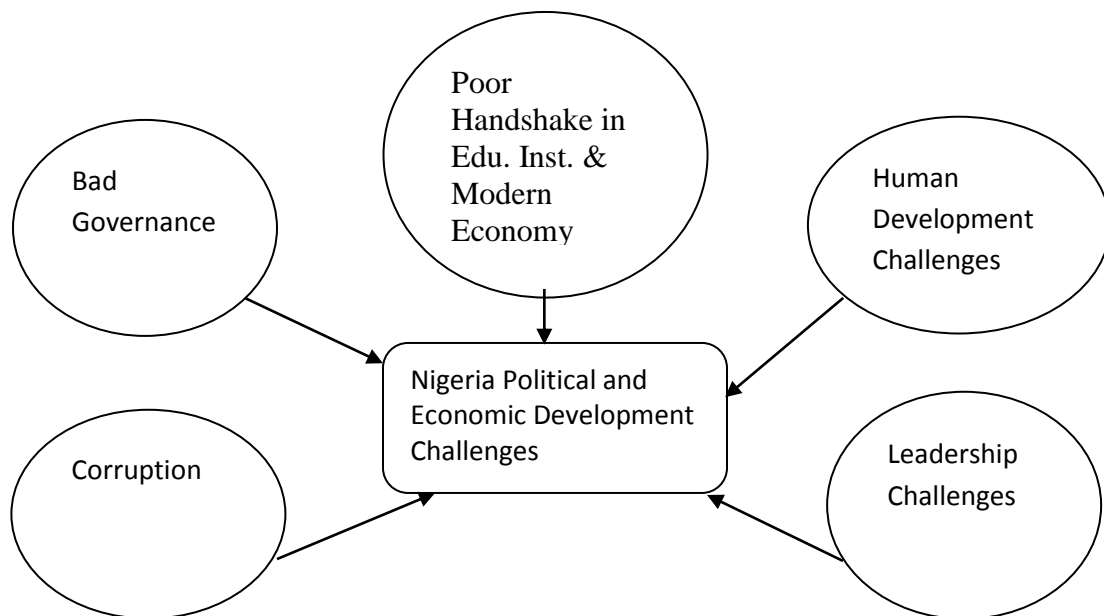


Figure 3.1: Challenges of Political and Economic Development in Nigeria

4.0 Information Technology Platform for Political and Economic Development in Nigeria

The following information technology interventions are presented as a platform to improve the Countries political and economic stability. The IT intervention is captured in a graphical form in figure 4.1.

e- Government

With e-Government, information and services are majorly exchanged with citizens, entrepreneurs and other arms of government activities through information technology. In order words e-Government comprises of government activities aided by the use of digital means over computer network. This enables government to create a comfortable, transparent and cheap interaction between government and citizens, government and business enterprises as well as relationships between governments.

e-Government also support and simplify government for all parties, the process that stimulate good governance which translate to sustainable economic development of a nation. It is imagining a situation in which all interactions with the government can be done through the counter 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, without waiting in a long queue. Although in a developing country like Nigeria, a lot of efforts are required bearing in mind the epileptic power supply, the internet accessibility that is still at the infancy to mention just a few (Soyemi, Sanjay and Omoregbe, 2015). e-government will go a long way to solve the issue of bad governance and reduce corruption to the barest minimum.

e- Voting

Traditional voting environment most often are quite inconvenient as a result of certain voters reluctance to visit polling booths for their votes aside from huge resources both social and human

involved (Shubhangi et al, 2013). The development of computer connected with the internet thus brings the electronic voting into an existence.

e-voting is simply an electronic way of capturing voters' preference. This system promotes accountability, reduces manual error with increased accessibility for potential voters. e-voting will transform the electoral process with the advantages of producing credible, authentic and popular candidates that have the interest of the people at heart. The system is employed by many governments in developed nations to carry out binding public election. Such countries include Switzerland, Finland, Brazil, United States and others.

e-voting will eradicate election malpractice that may allow the citizen to elect whom they want to govern them, which may ensure better governance along with the stable economic and improve the standard of living of citizens.

e- Banking

The e-banking is transforming the banking and financial industry in terms of the nature of core products /services and the way these are packaged, proposed, delivered and consumed. It is an invaluable and powerful tool driving development, supporting growth, promoting innovation and enhancing competitiveness. Banks and other businesses alike are turning to IT to improve business efficiency, service quality and attract new customers (Kannabiran and Narayan, 2005). Information Technological advances are identified as a major contributor to the distribution channels of banks and the electronic delivery means are jointly referred to as electronic banking, (Goi, 2005). The evolution of banking technology has been driven by changes in distribution channels as evidenced by automated teller machine (ATM), Phone-banking, Tele-banking, PC-banking and most recently internet banking (Chang, 2003; Gallup Consulting, 2008). e-banking is the term used for new age banking system.

Without even interacting with the bankers, customers transact from one corner of the country to another corner. Electronic banking has experienced explosive growth and has transformed traditional practices in banking (Gonzalez, 2008). e- banking is leading to a paradigm shift in marketing practices resulting in high performance in the banking industry thus improving both the political stability and economy development of the nation.

e- Commerce

e-commerce is the modern business activities that include the delivery of information, products services and payment using the internet. It helps the customers through online advertising and marketing, online order taking and online customer services. This Information Technology method of doing business offers cost reduction through competitiveness in procurement of products, improved customer relationship through quick dissipation of information to potential customers eliminating the need for whole sellers and retailers by bringing down the product prices. It enhances better business avenues and the organisation product and market analysis as the organization gets faster feedback from the customer. e-commerce is a proof of economy development in any nation (World trade organization, 2013).

Many acknowledged e-commerce as an opportunity for developing countries to gain a stronger position in the many-sided trading system. e-commerce is of the full capacity to play an active role in helping developing economies benefit more from trade. It does not require a physical building, storage space, insurance and infrastructure before establishing a business. All that is required is a well-designed web storefront to reach customers. e-commerce creates a higher profit margins as the cost of running a business is prominently less.

e- Health

e-health which is a field of medical informatics is the delivery of health services and information through the use of internet and other related technologies. Specifically, e-health can be defined according to Radaelli (2003) as the use of ICTs in the health sector for clinical, administrative and educational purposes either at a local site or at a distance. The main application domains of e-health includes: Electronic health records, Decision support tools, Telemedicine and Telecare services. The major goal pursued by e-health policy focuses on the healthcare quality improvement and cost reduction (European Commission, 2010; Radaelli, 2003). Some of its objectives are, in-patient cost reduction and improved health outcome; improvement in prescription adherence through reminders and telemonitoring; reduction in medical errors and drug adverse event using computerized reporting system, e-Prescription of diagnostic procedures, electronic records and so on. e-health promises improvements, accessibility, effectiveness and efficiency of healthcare delivery. This is guaranteed on the basis of compliance with fundamental requirements in term of quality and safety (Soyemi, Mistra and Omoregbe, 2015).

Several developed countries such as United States, United Kingdom, Canada and others have advanced and passed into law policies, guidelines and regulations aim at enticing providers (Physicians and hospitals) to adopt e-Health. Example of such is Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act of 2009 in United States. It therefore means that a nation that must operate a good governance and better economy must not toil with the any strategy that could enhance the health condition of its citizens. Health they say is wealth.

e-learning

e-learning system encompasses the systematic process of planning, design, development, evaluation, and implementation that create an online environment for active fostered and

supported learning. e-learning system according to Fasola (2009) is expected to be meaningful both to learners and also all stakeholders, instructors, support services staff, and institutions at large. An e-learning system is considered meaningful to learners if it is easily accessible, well-designed, learner-centered, affordable, efficient, flexible, and has a facilitated learning environment. When learners display a high level of participation and success in meeting a course's goals and objectives, this can make e-learning meaningful to instructors.

Making education accessible to all through e-learning and also integrating e-learning with conventional classroom learning will boost the educational system to produce work force that are productive and well skilled and hence drive the economy of the nation forward.

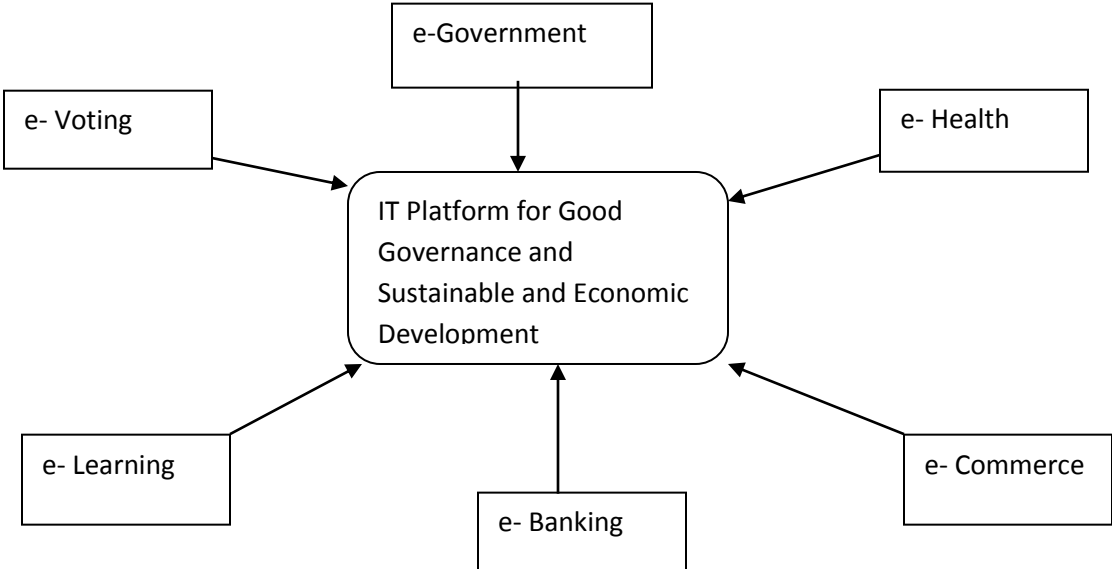


Figure 4.1: Information Technology Platform for Good Governance and Sustainable Economy Development

The Proposed Model

Figure 4.2 depicts a proposed model for Good Governance and Sustainable Economic Development in Nigeria using Information Technology as a tool. The first block represents the present challenges facing the Nation and second block itemised the role of Information Technology intervention in the same and the last block itemised the benefits the nation stands to gain if all the challenges are overcome by IT intervention.

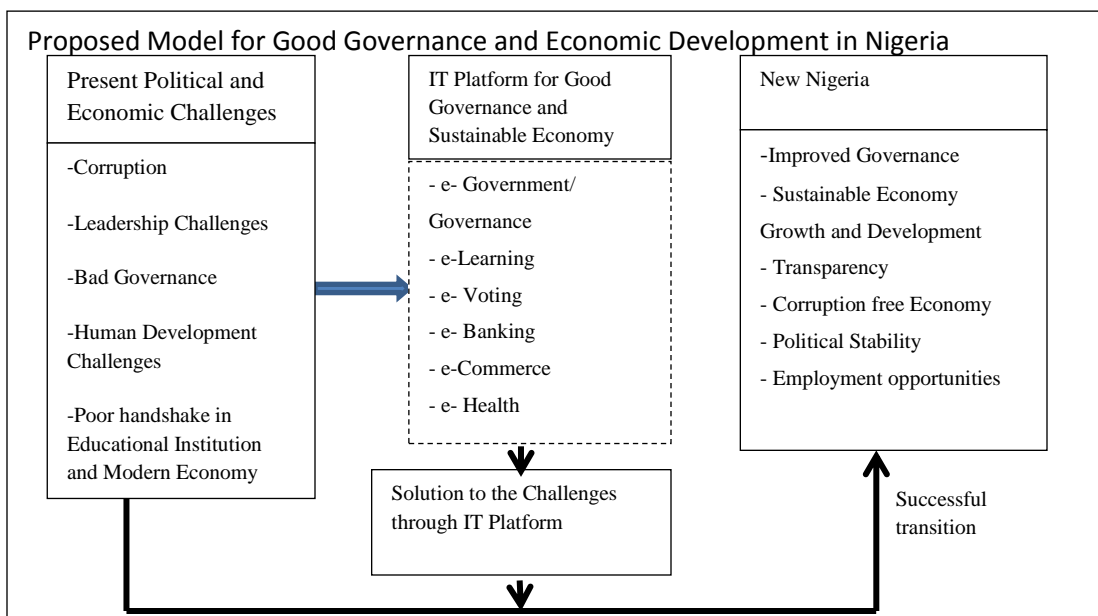


Figure 4.2: Proposed Model for Good Governance and Economic Development in Nigeria

5.0 Conclusion

It has been proven that IT plays a major role in the consolidation of good governance and economy development of a nation. The strategy and model presented in this paper if put to practice and implemented will no doubt transform the Nation from its present predicament to a nation that would be envied all over the world. Nigeria is blessed in every area and we only need to work on this challenging area and in no time join the developed nations of the world.

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