E- ADMINISTRATION IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract  
With the intervention of ICT, possibilities are endless. The global world is changing by heaps and bounds with no chance of a stopping point in the near future. E-administration is gradually getting its roots in the administration of Nigerian Universities. Hence, the Nigerian universities are moving towards embracing e-administrative system which is an approach of e-governance in the educational sector. Many challenges faced by the country such as student admissions and tracking, financial management, data distribution, teaching, learning and research, staff appraisals, general administration, security, etc. are expected to be addressed by e-administration. Simply puts, e-administration (Electronic Administration) system is the transition of university routine from paper based to electronic based system. Therefore, to create awareness on all the present trends and reforms that would make e-administration the culture of the Nigerian University, this paper adopts analytical appraisal approach hence, reviews the development so far.

INTRODUCTION  
Information and Communication Technology (ICT) have always influenced the evolution of the society and has a consequence on the nature of administration. Historically, they have enhanced existing social, economic and political interactions and even introduced new forms of interactivity (Sharma, 2010). This interactivity is in both a social and technical sense, is the channel that allows information dissemination amongst administrator and sharing between management and administrators. Access to information is both a consequence and a driver of the digital revolution. Efficient and effective administration, rest on the pillars of knowledge and recognition of this set of knowledge by the decision makers. Digitization of this entire set of knowledge within a network which links every individual including the decision makers gives freedom to everyone to access and make use of this knowledge paving the way for digital governance. ICT-enabled administrators, therefore includes ICT induced changes in the running and management of the university and more importantly changed induced in the way staff interact and participate in the administration of the university.

E-administration is changing the power of equation based on access and control to information and knowledge. A more informed administration is in a better position to understand and exercise its rights and e-administration will lead to reduction in knowledge gap on issues bordering on administration. Digital administration will ensure that staff are no longer passive in
the discharge of their duties instead would have a potential to play a decisive role in deciding the kind of services they want and structure which could best provide the same (Sharma, 2010).

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been conceptualized by many scholars from different perceptive.

According to Mureen Raed & Jamshed (2013) ICT includes electronic network–embodying complex hardware and software linked by a vast array of technical protocol. In the words of Ufuophu & Ayobami (2012) ICT include internet, satellite, cable data transmission and computer assisted equipment. ICT in other words are facilities, tools or resources that could be used to process, store, preserve, access, retrieve and disseminate information with ease. Hence, it is an engine for growth and tool for empowerment, with profound implications for education, change and socio-economic development.

At this juncture (E) which stands for Electronic emanated from ICT and as such is the engine that propels change and development. Since the university system is an umbrella that propagates learning and research, e-administration is the right answer. Administration is an authoritatively coordinated process for the achievement of group objectives (Obasi Igwe, 2007). Authoritative, because there must be some form of legal or social parameters indicating the structural and other relationship of persons engaged in administration. In the vain, Hornby (2012) is perceived administration, as activity done in order to plan, organize and successfully run a business, school/or other institution, a process or act of organizing the way that something is done. On the part of Edem, (2006) administration involves planning activities which aim at the fulfillment of the goals of a particular organization or institution. It calls for the ability of the administrator s to make the right decisions to fulfill the required goals in the university system or setting therefore, administration has been extended as a service activity or tool through which the fundamental objectives of the institutional process may be more optimized efficiently when allocating human and material resources as well as to make the best use of existing resources (Liverpool & Jacinta, 2013).

However, the integration of ICT into administration equals e-administration, hence, the need for incorporation of e-administration into the university system will enhance quality assurance and transformational development.

**PROSPECTS**

E-administration is the practice of e-governance improvement in the university management system. There are numerous components of the electronic administrative formular, which has not been incorporated into the emerging e-administration of university management system. Such components can immensely improve the e-administration practices in the university management system. Services are key issues in every university management, where you think of the turnaround time, efficient and effective service delivery. Memos/mails are therefore expected to be distributed on-line instead of dispatch to the university community in a whisker. Transcripts, verification, confirmation is expected to be done on-line and not manually. School fees payment via e-transact, course registration and to a large extent exams is administered online by (CBT) Computer Base Test. This will enable parents to assess their wards performance in school. On management staffing, from recruitment exercise to appraisal, electronic assessment is the ideal thing, makes it more transparent, result oriented and faster. Laxity and truancy, is also checkmated electronically using (BVM) Biometric Verification Machine. Installation of CCTV to check and control crime in the university community is key.
In teaching, learning and research e-platform has the answer, in other words electronic system has a lavishing package in the administration of university system. Projectors are used in teaching and learning while search engines like Amazon, yahoo, google etc are used in research. E-libraries are also in place to make research meaningful and useful. Data base are created in all units and departments of the University for banking vital information, so as eliminate the idea of sorting files and searching for a particular float to eternity without success. Till date it is a surprising thing that about 70% of our Nigerian universities still operate analogue even in the administration of post university Jamb exams.

CHALLENGES
A major challenge of e-administration is cyber security and data protection. At the moment there is lack of appropriate legal framework to provide comprehensive cyber security and data protection in Nigeria (Arowosaye, 2006). Though some bills are pending before the National Assembly, on this issue, such bills as the computer security and critical information infrastructure protection Bill 2005, cyber security and information Agency Bill 2008, Interception and monitoring Bill 2009, and the Telecommunication Bill 2010. (Bannisar & Davies 1999).
To tackle the security challenges in the administration of university in the country the ICT units has to be conscious of their web site and web masters, issue e-mail address and password to staff of the university. But in, all quick passage of the above Bills by the National Assembly will go a long way in providing adequate/legal framework for data protection in Nigerian university system.
Meanwhile, low level of IT complaint among stakeholders in the University system, is not just possible challenge but a debilitating factor to the implementation of electronic administration in Nigerian University system and their willingness to embrace the change. This is unconnected with the fact that academic is a very conservative profession. There is therefore, need for training and evolvement of key players in the University system in the phase of e-administration implementation. Thus, more collaboration between NITDA and Universities in coordinating the necessary training in the Nigerian Universities is recommended.
There is also a growing concern that e-administration is dependent on IT vendor as most of the e-administration projects in most universities are out sourced to the IT vendor. This option is tasted on most universities either because, lack of ICT development skills within the university community or outsourcing is felt to be more cost efficient. Some of the e-administration scholars’ choice which may likely affect the management of the university by making it too dependent on vendors for the design and technical assistance including the implementation of changes after the system come into operation (Fabri, 2009). To this extent the establishment of ICT unit is a common trend curbing the problem of over dependent on the external IT vendor in e-administration project implementation. Cost is another challenge to the introduction or adoption of electronic administration in the university system. A complete shift from (PB) paper base (analogue) to (CB) computer base or electronic administration is very expenses. The university management must purchase and upgrade to proper and modern trend computer hardware and software, install new technology, train and retrain personnel on the use of new technology and provide continued financial support for maintaining the systems.
In the physical world, the government, public and institutions hardly interact, the amount of feedback from and to the citizens is very poor. Invariably there should be synergy between the university management, ICT unit, Registry, council and senate. E-administration aims at bridging the gap and creating a feedback platform.
Organogram of a Conventional University in Nigeria

Source; Field data, 2015

The above diagram shows the communication flow in the University community. Information and Communication technology is the heartbeat of every institution, just as the communication link found in the diagram above. At this point, dissemination of information and feedback to all nook and cranny of the university can be achieve with just a click or tab.
Invariably with e-administration one can assess the university community in five (5) seconds with a feedback, hence it is result oriented.

According to Shante (2001), ICT reduces spending and increases interest earning, reduction in costs incurred by providing services can be reduced by use of internet. It is unusual and sounds archaic, for staff or student to carry files around. All these are uncalled for, with just a click, you have communicated to the whole university community and the world at large. While Adeyemo (2013) posits that the primary aim of ensuring the application of e-administration in the affairs of the University management is to promote decent, efficient and effective service delivery which is characterized by transparency and accountability in the various units and departments of the Institution. It evolved on the basis of the revolution in ICT which finds expression in digital technologies such as, personal computers, internet, mobile phones, tablets and different electronic applications. To this extent e-administration is key. Not only for effective and efficient service delivery, it stands to check crime wave, admission racketeering, extortion, student result upgrade or mutilation, transcripts, certificate, forgery of all kind, staff personal files, promotions, regularizations, confirmations, retirements, checks on fund, IGR, school fees and other levies. Even award of contracts should be on-line to promote transparency.

United Nations e-government report (2014) pointed out that joint service delivery is now spreading throughout the global community creating an avenue for government agencies, citizens, civil society and private sector to partner together in creating new technologies that will foster the growth of e-government. Therefore, there is need for university staff to key in, into this emerging development or rather embraces the new trend.

From the foregoing e-administration in a university community is more of a tripod, where we have general administration, staff administration and student administration, Alayande (2014). General administration overseas scores and exams, fee payment, internal and external communication, and other resources. Hence, with the adoption e-administration or Information and Communication Technology in place there will be increase in service delivery and optimal resource utilization. According to Ohakwe and Okwuanaso (2006) knowledge of computer application software’s like spread sheets, excel, computer aided design and database are important skills which enables university administrators in processing relevant data for management and the governing bodies, agencies for decision making towards quality assurance and transformational development.

Staff administration, ranging from recruitment exercise to retirement has a better and a more efficient way of doing it, through the use ICT. In the university portal, career should be created for prospective applicants to always check when the need arises for recruitment. Likewise when an applicant gains employment, every documentation has to be done on-line, such as acceptance of offer of appointment, assumption of duties etc. down the line, appraisal issues is also done on-line. It is called e-appraisal system, When a staff is due for appraisal, let staff assess the university portal click appraisal, fill in your data, and personnel or establishment division will receive your appraisal form on-line and do justice to it. Unlike the analogue type, where you fill in a form submit, unit/department committee will seat for it, before it will proceed for (CAC) central appraisal committee, then finally to (A&PC) Appointment and Promotion Committee. The e-appraisal saves time, stress and cost, leave applications should be done on-line, such as sabbatical leave, study leave, annual leave, sick leave, leave of absence etc. While retirement goes through the same channel instead of an old man carrying files to eternity. There was a case of a man who fell down in one of the stair cases of a higher institution, thank God he did not die; but we all know what this means.
Last on the tripod is students administration. This involves various activities starting from the release of result, admission process to learning activities till processing of results and performance analysis. ICT at this level enhances the overall admission process in the university system; by making it more accessible (Thomas, 2004). The automation of admission process is likened to admission enquiry, registration, course allotment, lecture time table and attendance. All these are done electronically and checks fraud or truancy. Hostel accommodation and parents having access to check their wards performance in school is enabled as a result of electronic device. Just as I have mentioned before ICT is also used in teaching learning and research. In teaching and learning the universities should adopt e-learning platform while in research the use of internet service will enhance productivity.

Networking is key in university management in other words a good communication system must be in place for the overall efficient and effective university administration. Electronic administration (ICT) helps in producing a good communication system in the university community and beyond (Magui, 2009). It provides timely information to all concerned staff and student. This could be for internal purposes or external purposes. Just as the diagram above posit communication between stakeholders/management, and ICT. As well as feedback mechanism from either side back to management or management back to ICT and vice versa.

CONCLUSION

The advent of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has provided a platform for effective and efficient service delivery electronically. E-administration is being embraced as a means of better service delivery to both the university community and the general public. The Nigerian Universities are yet to be equip with ICT as a platform in equitable service delivery, it is apparent that e-administration practice in the Nigerian Universities therefore is imperative. From the forgoing, the present reflection of e-administration in the Nigerian University reveals an uncoordinated public project implementation, hence as a research institution more work on ICT should be done to improve teaching, learning and research. To this end this paper has provoked consciousness on prospective actions to be ensured in the bid to make the Nigerian University meet up with international global standard.

REFERENCES


