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IMPLICATIONS OF ADOPTION OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN LAGOS STATE PARASTATALS: A CASE STUDY OF LAGOS STATE SIGNAGE AND ADVERTISEMENT AGENCY

By

ESSE, UGWUNWA CHINYERE

Pleasant-ug@yahoo.com
Centre for Learning Resources
Covenant University
Ota, Ogun State

Abstract:

This study has been able to carry out a research work on the implications of adoption of Information Technology on Public Administration in Lagos State Parastatals using Lagos State Signage and Advertisement Agency (LASSA) as case study. To achieve the aim of the study, the following objectives were crafted: to find out the role of information technology in Public Administration globally, to find out if information technology is used in Public Administration by Lagos State parastatals, to find out the aspect of information technology that is applied in the process of Public Administration in Lagos State parastatals and to find out the benefits of application of information technology in Public Administration process in Lagos State parastatals. Quantitative and qualitative research methods were applied during the course of the study and a questionnaire survey using convenience sampling method was used. It was found out that information technology is essential in Public Administration process in Lagos State parastatals, application of information technology affects the process of Public Administration in Lagos State parastatal positively, application of information technology in process of public administration is a global phenomenon, non-application of information technology in government processes hinders accountability and performance in public administration, all public servants must be information technology compliant, internet services is not always available for public servants to use within Lagos State parastatals, application of information technology affects individual performance within the public service, information technology systems installed in civil service are most times camouflage, application of information technology is a career booster for civil servants. It was recommended that Government should embark on nationwide training on information technology of all civil servants at local, state and national levels. Government must invest practically in information technology initiatives in order to increase performance in governance

Key words: Public Administration, information technology, computer, public organization/parastatal

Introduction:

Application of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in recent times has transformed the process of public administration by governments all over the world and this is geared to improve over the coming years (Caudle, 1990). The author also stressed that the adoption of information technology platforms in government processes makes the process of public administration to be less bureaucratic, effective and efficient in decision making and result oriented in outlook.

With the return to democratic system of government in Nigeria in 1999, the Federal Government of Nigeria according to Makinde (2003) came up with a policy of reengineering the Nigerian public service at the Federal, State and Local Government levels using information technology platforms. According to Makinde, with the application of information technology, the Nigerian civil service would become 'a competent, professional, development oriented, public spirited and customer friendly public service capable of responding effectively and speedily to the need of the society'. Invariably, application of information technology in the business of government is critical to the effective operation and service delivery to the citizenry. In a bid to serve the citizenry better, State Governments in Nigeria have in recent times established public enterprises/parastatals with corporate organization status though under the control of a State Ministry. Lagos State has been at the forefront of this initiative and through the various parastatal of government, it has achieved tremendous success within the past 12 years of return to the democratic system of government in Nigeria.

Given the foregoing, the following issue prompts this study at this time.

1. Absence of application of information technology in public administration in government parastatals in Nigeria, especially Lagos State.
2. Current innovations in information technology in recent times that affects operations of government positively which the government has been ignorant of.
3. Need of government to apply information technology in the process of governance.

Aim and Objectives of the Study:

The aim of this study is to examine the implications of Information Technology on Public Administration in Lagos State Parastatals using Lagos State Signage and Advertisement Agency (LASSA) as case study. In order to give focus to the study, the following objectives will be considered:

- i. To find out the role of information technology in Public Administration in Lagos State parastatals with respect to Lagos State Signage and Advertisement Agency (LASSA)
- ii. To find out if information technology is used in Public Administration by Lagos State parastatals
- iii. To find out the benefits of application of information technology in Public Administration process in Lagos State parastatals

Review of Related Literature:

In recent times, telecommunication and different aspects of information communication technology has dynamic impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of governments. The application of information technology models allows for smooth operation of the various departments and operations within the civil service.

Bureaucratic bottlenecks witnessed within government are reduced to the minimum through application of information technology by public servants. The use of computers and internet access makes it easy for public servants to make fast and result oriented decisions that will affect the citizenry positively. The existence of a robust government website also gives citizens opportunity to access information on the workings of the government, the policies and programs of the government to the community. The internet platform also gives citizens opportunity to partake in government and in the process of decision making.

In Nigeria today, state governments and their various ministries and parastatals communicate with their community through the application of information technology platforms such as the internet via the use the internet, sending and receiving mails through the email and feedback mechanisms and telecommunication through Short Message System (SMS) and voice calls, etc. Invariably, the citizenry have an insight into the operations of government and key decisions made through the aforementioned platforms without necessarily visiting government ministries and parastatals. In Lagos State for example, citizens can view, download and read all recent laws, policies and decision of government within all spheres of activities within the state from the state's website or websites of ministries and parastatals. Application of information technology gadgets and platforms is visible in all departments within the Lagos State Civil Service under the supervision of the Ministry of Information Communication Technology. Same is the case at different locations within Lagos Metropolis, as Information Communication Technology Centres are being created to cater for the information and communication technology needs of the people living in the state.

Hammer (1993) stressed that information technology is critical to decision making in government because it aids and simplifies the smooth process of making decision and also communicate same to the various interest groups with the government arena and the society at large. The authors also found out that the impact of computers on decision making was more impressive at the operational level than at the management and planning levels. They concluded that the government use information technology through application of computers to generate different types of information for the running of day to day activities of government as well as crafting policies and courses of action that will be of immense benefit to the citizenry. According to the authors, information technology in government sets the stage for decision making and communication of the same to relevant parties and interest group in government and in the society.

According to Caudle (1990) "strategies for facilitating information technologies in the public sector is saddled with middle management officials, rather than top management officials who most times are political appointees of the people". The author stressed that middle

level managers are the ones that understand the challenges of the organization and are also saddled with the responsibility of effective and efficient operation of the organization. Same also goes to public organizations especially as it relates to driving the application of information technology for smooth operation of the organization and satisfactions of the needs of the society.

Kraemer and King (1986) carried out a research on computing and public organization. The authors found out that the use of computers in government to tackle issues in the area of decision making is growing in the public organizations that were surveyed but limited in some areas that involves more complex decision making needs of the government. In a similar work carried out by same authors in 1993, on the issues of application of information technology by public organizations and decision making; the authors found out that 'decision making support models do not provide the answers to complex decision making issues, but the system processes used by the model can aid the process of decision making by clarifying and simplifying the decision making issues, thereby making decision makers to make compromises where need be'. The authors stressed that with application of information technology through the use of computers will assist the government in determining tax rate, administer such and make decision on how the revenue generated can be applied to benefit the society. Furthermore, application of project management and investment software can be used by government to appraise different investment options that state's funds can be channeled into for provision of social amenities and welfare of the people.

Kenneth (1990) opined that understanding of the fit in of information technology within government's bureaucratic system, the better for government officials to be innovative and creative in decision making process and rendering effective and efficient services to the people. The author argued that understanding and application of information technology models will make government departments functional and operate like a department within a corporate organization. The author also found out that application of information technology in the business of governance will make government parastatals and ministries to be more accountable to the people because the society has the privilege to different information of the operations and decisions of such ministries or parastatals. The author concluded that innovation brought about by the application of information technology to the business of governance which facilitates innovation, will lead to trust in the government by the society and generation of more revenue in the short and long run. Such is the case of Governor Fashola Administration in Lagos State, revenue from taxes, foreign and local donors and other forms of internally generated funds has been on the increase since 2007 and can be traceable to transparency in governance aided by application of information technology platforms.

Study Area:

The Lagos State Signage and Advertisement Agency (LASSA) came into operation through the Lagos State Structures for Signage and Advertisement Agency Law 2006. On establishment, the organization was saddled with the responsibility of 'regulating and controlling outdoor

advertising and signage displays as well as promote civic beautification through “Streetscape Optimization Process and System” (SOPS) for all facets of the Lagos streetscape' (Lagos State Structures for Signage and Advertisement Agency Law, 2006).

Aside the issuance and regulation of signage and advertising permits to organizations within the Lagos metropolis, LASSA currently embarks on street lighting, house numbering and street directional sign projects across Lagos State.

LASSA though a government parastatal, operates a robust organization structure as found in corporate organizations. It operates from its headquarters in Ikeja, Lagos and serves the Lagos citizenry through 10 branch offices within strategic locations in the state

Methodology:

Quantitative and qualitative research methods were adopted during the course of the study. Quantitative method was used to elicit empirical data from respondents of the study through the adoption of questionnaire survey. Qualitative method was used to compliment the findings of the questionnaire survey through the use of inference, deductive and inductive methods to arrive at valid conclusion on the issues surrounding the subject matter of the study.

Primary and secondary sources of data were used as sources of data during the course of the study. Primary data was obtained through personal observation and usage of survey questionnaire. Secondary data was sources through academic journals, publications and other relevant materials related to the subject matter of the study.

Sampling method adopted during the course of questionnaire survey was convenience sampling. This method was adopted in such a way that only participants/respondents of the study that were available at the time of questionnaire survey at the office of the case study were administered questionnaires.

The sample frame of the study was 100 staff and management of Lagos State Signage and Advertisement Agency from the headquarters and branch offices of the organization.

Data analysis was carried out through the use of quantitative and descriptive statistics, which includes the use of simple percentage to analyze the data / responses collected through the questionnaire. Constructive conclusions of each matter tested are made through inferential statistics.

Findings and Discussion:

This section gives an in depth analysis of the findings of the author during the questionnaire survey of the study. The author administered 100 questionnaires but could only retrieve 94 back for the purpose of analysis. This situation was due to circumstance s beyond the author's control.

Table 1 Sex of Respondents :

Reponses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	56	60
Female	38	40
Total	94	100

Source: Field Survey by Author (2013).

Table 1 show the sex distribution of respondents that participated in the field survey. 60% of the respondents are male, while 40% are female. Invariably, more men participated in the field survey.

Table 2: Issues on Information technology and Public Administration :

Assertions raised by the author on Information Technology and public administration in Lagos, where N=94	No %	SA/A	U	D/SD	Total
Information Technology is essential in Public Administration process in Lagos Parastatals	No %	94 100%	0 0%	0 0%	94 100%
Application of Information Technology affects the process of Public Administration in Lagos Parastatals positively	No %	85 90%	9 10%	0 0%	94 100%
Application of Information Technology in process of public administration is a global phenomenon	No %	94 100%	0 0%	0 0%	94 100%
Non-application of Information Technology in government processes hinders accountability and performance in public administration	No %	47 50%	28 30%	19 20%	94 100%
Information Technology is new in Nigeria public administration	No %	66 70%	0 0%	28 30%	94 100%
All public servants must be information technology compliant	No %	94 100%	0 0%	0 0%	94 100%

Source: Field Survey by Author (2013).

Table 2 shows respondents' opinion to sundry issues on information technology as it affects public administration in Lagos State parastatals. A close observation of the table reveals that all respondents agree that information technology is essential in the Nigeria public administration processes. In the same vein, 90% of the respondents opine that application of information technology has positive impact on the processes of public administration in Nigeria, though 10% of the respondents are of the opinion that usage of information technology

affects Lagos parastatals negatively. All respondents agreed with the fact that application of information technology in public administration processes is a global phenomenon. On the issue of application of information technology and accountability within parastatals, 50% of the respondents agree that non-application of information technology in government processes hinders accountability and performance in public administration, while 20% have contrary opinion on the issues and 30% will refuse to comment on the issue. Though 70% of the respondents agree that Information Technology is new in the Nigerian public administration, 30% disagree maintaining that the application of information technology has been long in the Nigerian public administration. Lastly, all respondents agree that all public servants must be information-technology compliant.

Table 3: Individual Information Technology compliant

Reponses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	56	70
No	38	30
Total	94	100

Source: Field Survey by Researcher (2013).

The author sought to find out if each respondent was information-technology compliant. Table 3 shows that 70% of the respondents are information-technology complaint and 30% are not. Invariably, a high percentage of public servants in Lagos State are information technology compliant.

Table 4 Accessibility to computer for day -to-day operations:

Reponses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	28	30
No	66	70
Total	94	100

Source: Field Survey by Author (2013).

The author sought to find out if respondents have access to the use of computer for their day to day activities. Table 4 shows that 70% of the respondents do not have access to the use of computer while 30% indicated that they have the opportunity of using computer for their day to day activities. It can be inferred that majority of staff within Lagos State parastatals especially LASSA do not have access to the use of computers. On further investigation by the author, the situation is so because, staff of most of the parastatals are field officers and do less of office work.

Table 5 Availability of internet service in departments/unit:

Reponses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	28	30
No	66	70
Total	94	100

Source: Field Survey by Author (2013).

Table 5 reveals that only 30% of the departments/units in LASAA have access to internet service.

Table 6: Assessment of Information Technology configurations in departments

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Active	37	40
Camouflage	57	60
Total	94	100

Source: Field Survey by Author (2013).

The author sought to access the strength of the information technology configurations in LASSA. Table 5 shows that 60% of the respondents are of the opinion that the information technology configurations in departments within LASSA are a camouflage, though 40% indicated that their information technology configurations are active. It can be inferred that though there are information technology gadgets and configurations in LASSA, majority of them are not in active operation.

Table 7: Performance and Information Technology

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Positively	57	60
Negatively	0	0
No effect	37	40
Total	94	100

Source: Field Survey by Author (2013).

The author sought to find out if the application of information technology has affected the individual performance of respondents positively, negatively or no effects at all. Table 7 shows that 50% of the respondents indicated that usage of information technology affected their performance positively while 50% are of the opinion that application of information technology has no effect on their overall performance. Invariably, application of information technology in day to day duties of staff within Lagos State parastatals has positive effect on their performance.

Table 8: Impact of Information Technology on career

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Career booster	57	60
Career drawback	0	0
Not sure	37	40
Total	94	100

Source: Field Survey by Author (2013).

The author sought to find out the impact of Information Technology application on the career of respondents. Table 8 shows that 60% of the respondents indicated that application of

information technology has boosted their career. None of the respondent has witnessed career setback since the application of information and 40% are of the opinion that they are not sure if application of information technology has impacted their career.

Interview Results

The author carried out an on the spot interview with the Head of Information Technology of Lagos State Signage and Advertisement Agency (LASSA) on issues raised in the study objectives. Below are excerpts of the interview:

What is the role of Information Technology in Public Administration in Lagos State Parastatals with respect to Lagos State Signage and Advertisement Agency (LASSA)?

Information Technology Application is key to the present administration in Lagos State and the government invests so much in information technology gadgets and apparatus to aid in the effective and efficient delivery of good governance in the state. The same also goes to all the parastatals under the Lagos State Civil Service such as Lagos State Signage and Advertisement Agency (LASSA).

Lagos State Signage and Advertisement Agency (LASSA) are equipped with state of the art information technology gadgets and platforms through which it carries out its day to day operation. All the processes within all departments of LASSA in terms of intranet and communication with the general public extranet are achieved through a robust and dedicated internet facility. There is also a Management Information System that aid the process of decision making, strategy and policy formulation and flow of information within all functions of the organization. In essence, LASSA runs an effective and efficient organization through the application of information technology.

What are the benefits of application of information technology in public administration process in Lagos State parastatals?

LASSA has all the benefits an organization enjoys for using information technology in its operations. Some of the benefits includes: ease in process of transaction, quality and efficient service delivery to our customers and business organizations, saving of time and reduction in expenses. It also aids swift decision making, makes us a sustainable organization and positively affects our performance.

Conclusion

This study concludes that information technology application in the day to day operation of government and its parastatals through public administration is critical to the good governance and development of the society. Application of information technology in public administration has now become essential in governance because it reduces bureaucracy, eases process of transaction, boosts quality and efficient service delivery, saves time and reduces expenses. It

also aids swift decision making, makes government sustainable and positively affects performance.

Lagos State government and its parastatals invest much in information technology knowing its role in good governance. Though some civil servants have apathy to the use of information technology because they are used to the manual and bureaucratic system of carrying out their activities, public servants must be inspired to become information technology compliant and use the same in their day to day operations.

Recommendations:

The study recommends that:

- i. Lagos state government should embark on practical and result oriented training on information technology of all the civil servants in its employee at local and state levels
- ii. heads of parastatals must inspire their employees to get information compliant and make use of all the opportunities application of information technology has on the job and career at large.

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Abuja-Ibadan-Kaduna-Lagos-Makurdi
Km2 Gboko Road,

P.O Box 2123, Makurdi, Benue State-Nigeria.

e-mail: livingemerald@yahoo.com

08053398895,07037976537

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