

## **Emerging Trends in ICT, E-Democracy and E-Governance**

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### **Abstract**

*The advancement in ICT has expanded opportunities for citizens to participate in development processes including governance. ICT speeds up the flow of information and knowledge between the government and citizens and transforming the way in which government and citizens interact. As a result of these emerging trends, citizens are now also able to participate in processes such as national and local budget preparation and even demand for accountability on resource utilization. The e-governance systems provide the government with increased insight into complex issues and offers opportunities to re-structure existing decision-making processes. This paper outlines how emerging trends in ICT, e-democracy and e-governance have made it possible to attain inclusive, transparent, effective and efficient governance through reviewing Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) in government ministries in Kenya. It further discusses how the country can utilize the existing ICT avenues and analyses how effective they are in promoting inclusive and smart growth.*

**Keywords:** E-democracy, E-governance, Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

## **Introduction**

The revolutionary growth of e-governance in the recent past has resulted in efficiency, accountability, transparency and enhanced citizen engagement in the governments' strategic decision-making processes. E-governance involves the application of ICT for delivering government services, exchange of information communication transactions, services between government to customer, government to business, government to government and interactions within the entire government. E-governance aims at building an informed society.

An informed society is an empowered society. Emerging trends in ICT in e-governance provides the choice of place from where they want to avail government services. With the existence of e-governance, some government departments have automated the application processes for several purposes. Application for passports is among them, as application is now done online. This has in turn enhanced transparency because it saves a record of every transaction and it is easier to trace the documents. A tracking number is provided while applying for the passport which makes the record available to review the processes.

E-democracy makes for greater individual and group participation, allows those voices are heard less to express their views and fosters participation on an equal footing. Democracy is improved through citizen participation in the government processes and overall participation of the citizens in the decision making. By providing a means of reducing exclusion, e-democracy can foster social integration and social cohesion and thus contribute to social stability. It also brings together policy makers and citizens in new forms of engagement and policy making. By doing so there is a better understanding of public opinion and people's needs by policy makers. The adoption and implementation of e-democracy methods require democratic control by legitimate actors. E-democracy requires education, training and measures to ensure inclusion.

Many government ministries are now adopting Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS). It helps to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of state financial management and helps the adoption of modern public expenditure practices in keeping with international standards and benchmarking.

An IFMIS is a fiscal tool for government that bundles all financial management functions into one suite of applications. It is an Information Technology (IT) based budgeting and accounting system designed to assist the government entities on how to plan budget requests, spend their budgets, manage and report on their financial activities, and deliver services to the public more efficiently, effectively and economically. IFMIS operates on a common structure and platform that will enable 3 improved compatibility and consistency of fiscal and financial information, reduces governments overall investment in the development of expensive accounting systems in each government entity (Diamond & Khemani, 2005).

Stakeholders should encourage the use of emerging ICT trends by politicians, citizens, civil society and its organizations for the purposes of democratic debates, e-activism so that they can be able to voice their concerns, ideas and promote dialogue. In Kenya e-governance has been one of the major priorities of the government outlines by the vision 2030. The overall impact of e-governance and e-democracy is highly significant though there are some challenges that come with it.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of this paper are:

- i. To determine the influence of internet access on e-government service utilization through reviewing Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) in government ministries in Kenya.
- ii. To examine the benefits of ICT literacy on e-governance and e-democracy.
- iii. To examine the challenges of ICT literacy on e-governance and e-democracy.

## **Literature Review**

The Commission of the European Communities (2003) terms the process of using ICTs to automate both internal operations within the government and the external service provisions to the citizens and stakeholders as e-government. Further, such ICT usage reduces the overall operating costs, optimizes resource utilization, improves the response times, and propagates government processes effectively to become much elaborate to citizens and stake holders. This ensures a framework for developing mechanisms to promptly identifying public service delivery deficiencies. E-government therefore is the use of ICTs to bring about organizational change. This includes the use of new skills in public administration to improve services and the democratic processes that strengthen public service delivery policies, Commission of the European Communities (2003). UNPAN (2001) survey, lists 133 countries as having adopted e-government

while World Market Research Center (2001) lists 196 countries globally. However, in spite of these trends and initiatives on e-government, the benefits are still outweighed by technological and government organizational challenges. Opportunities created by e-government to enhance service delivery in governance include efficient management of resources, creation of avenues for new services, increased citizen participation in governance matters and generally building on the global information infrastructure. Exploring of these opportunities realizes better decisions by government, increased trust by citizens in government and governance strictures, transparency and accountability in government undertakings, trust and participation in governance matters by stakeholders and creation of avenues to meeting new public challenges, Clift (2003). In total sum e-government is the use of ICTs to better governance. It is about focusing on the utilization of ICTs to transform the culture of governance, OECD (2003).

Keohane and Nye (2000) term government as the corporate entity or institution that functions with authority generating formal obligations whereas governance is the broader concept that describes the forms of governing or the procedures, systems and processes that nature the collective activities of an institution. Sen (1999) alludes to the fact that private entities, associations and non-government organizations practice governance and therefore it is not exclusively for government. Kettl (2000) notes that, politics, policies, and programs result into governance with long term concerns and therefore very distinct from the government whose concern is immediate decisions. E-government or electronic government is described by Fraga (2002) as the utilization of ICTs by the government to electronically and optimally manage its internal operations. E-governance is therefore the extension of e-government processes to service the public with no distinct boundaries. It is indeed the use of technologies to provide government 14 services to the public. Whilst e-government is centered on the operations of government, e-governance extends the scope to include citizen participation in governance. Osborne and Gaebler (1992) however argue that what is important in the perspective of governance is the objective with the bottom-line being outcomes rather than the outputs as in government. Some reason as to why the public at times is impatient with the government is that service outcomes are sometimes unacceptable even though much effort is expended. Osborne and Gaebler (1992) look at e-governance as the course for those wanting to re-invent government hoping that outputs are replaced by new focus on outcomes as those in government continue confusing how they govern with why they govern.

E-governance as described by Okot-Uma (2001) has emerged as an information technology model of governance with structures and processes that integrate ICTs into all levels of government, the public sector and beyond. E-government uses the appropriate technologies in order to enhance relationships within government functions at internal and external levels, to support economic development, to support

democratization, to promote human rights issues and to improve efficiency in service delivery. E-government in this case includes e-governance and e-democracy. E-democracy meaning, the structures and processes that pertains to electronic communication between government and other stake holders or the public and that may include voting, discussions and any other form of interaction that leads to and maintains a legitimate government.

### **Methodology**

The researcher used a descriptive research design. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a descriptive research approach is a systematic, empirical inquiring where a researcher has no direct control of the independent variable. Consequently, descriptive researches are concerned with the where, what, and how of an event thus more relevant to build a profile on that event (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). They bring out clearly the cause and effect of a phenomenon.

The study adopted a descriptive research approach in this study with a targeted population of 3 National Government Ministries in Kenya. The primary data was collected using a questionnaire that relates to specific objectives of the study. A comprehensive literature review of secondary data involved past reports such as annual budget data, progress reports and internal audits reports.

The study also involved an analysis of secondary data derived from the literature and policy review, academic journals, articles, books, reports, and materials available on the Internet. The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis.

**Table 1: Respondents of the interview**

Ministry	ICT Officer	IFMS Officer
Public Service Commission (Kenya)	2	3
Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA)	2	3
Teachers Service Commission (TSC)	2	3
TOTAL	6	9

Cadre Interviewed

### **4.0 Results**

Benefits of E-Government: There are many benefits to all stakeholders including the government to be leveraged from an e-government environment.

E-government enables a cost effective way of running businesses as it offers fast access to most current information. The amount of information is also adequate to make business or personal decisions on economic, development and demography. The government on its part will benefit on decreased costs of engaging and providing services to the public. There is improved efficiency and generally effectiveness in public programs management. Further e-government environment generates increased esteem as Government becomes more responsive to stakeholders needs. This helps the stakeholders to view the government in a positive perspective on matters affecting them.

The Kenya e-government on its website <http://www.e-government.go.ke> [ accessed 12th October 2022] proclaims such benefits from e-government as;

- a) Simplified delivery of services to citizens;
- b) Minimized government bureaucracy; improved interactions among government units and with business, industry and citizens;
- c) Increased empowerment of citizens and businesses through access to information, knowledge and services;
- d) Efficient government management; improved productivity of government agencies;
- e) Cost effective and convenient delivery of information, knowledge and services;
- f) Possibility of stakeholders finding information and therefore getting services from the government and its agencies; g) strengthened legal systems and law enforcement and;
- h) Improved quality of life for disadvantaged communities and broadened public participation.

Indeed as per the Kenya e-government website, one of the benefits of e-government is to help build trust between government and citizens through prevention of corruption. Processes are therefore simplified within an e-government setup making it easy to access government information and enabling greater citizen participation in public affairs management. The benefits being more transparency, improved services, accessibility of public services, efficiency and accountability and in general democratization. E-government technologies further allow for online services that lessen the need for hard paper forms and copies therefore reducing paper use and helping conserve the environment. The overall potential benefits of e-government

are many and include enhanced government to citizen, government to government and citizen to government transactions, efficiency and cost effectiveness in public services delivery and enhanced communication between government and stakeholders. The Commission of the European Communities (2003) indicates that such results will generally be reflected in the transparency and accountability of government business; improved and coordinated inter-government information sharing and dissemination; improved resource planning and utilization.

### **Challenges of E-Government**

In a report by the World Bank (2003) basing its study on India, some of the challenges cited and that would largely affect developing countries include: Absence of demonstration projects therefore limiting information available to assess and to advocate the impact of ICTs on development; the cost of computers, related accessories and other enabling infrastructure that enable engagement of ICTs largely still beyond the purchasing power of the publics; lack of access models to address some challenging factors; minimal awareness of the benefits of ICTs and therefore the publics lagging behind on e-government initiatives; limited access to the Internet for citizens and most public service institutions; language barriers in using the Internet as most content is in international languages like English; high illiteracy levels; lack of information products suitable and tailored to fit the assimilation capacities and needs of the public; lack of motivation by citizens to use and seek for information and dynamics and advancements in technology that comes along with great uncertainty.

### **5.0 Conclusion**

The study sought to determine the influence of internet access on e-government service utilization through reviewing Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) in government ministries in Kenya. The study population involved 3 Government Ministries based in Nairobi. Further studies could be undertaken by involving other regions and more ministries in the country. The researcher obtained a sample composed of three officers directly involved in the use of IFMIS in each ministry and two ICT officers. A more expanded scope whereby all cadre of staff are involved could form a basis for further research.

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