Volume 19 Issue 12
Originally issued as F1



Global Journal of human-social science: F
Political Science
Volume 19 Issue 1 Version 1.0 Year 2019
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

E-Government, A Tool for Service Delivery in Botswana's Local Authorities?

By Thabile A. Samboma

Abstract- The Government of Botswana has spent billions of Pulas since the inception of e-government project in 2012.The country is in pursuit of better service delivery as it owes it to the people. However, just like other countries, New Public Management (NPM) brought in exciting reforms, e-government included. This paper wanted to find out challenges faced by local authorities when delivering services through the Information Communication Technology (ICT). This was a qualitative research which used secondary data sources. The findings of the study showed that it is close to a decade since the inception of e-government yet there are still complaints on service delivery. In this era e-government remains key in ensuring that there is good service delivery however challenges such as poor infrastructure, mishandling of egovernment funds, language barrier, lack of trust, lack of financial autonomy of local authorities continue to limit egovernments effectiveness in the local authorities.

Keywords: *e-government, service delivery, local authority, botswana.*

GJHSS-F Classification: *FOR Code: 160606*



Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:



© 2019. Thabile A. Samboma. This is a research/review paper, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 Unported License http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/), permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

E-Government, A Tool for Service Delivery in Botswana's Local Authorities?

Thabile A. Samboma

Abstract- The Government of Botswana has spent billions of Pulas since the inception of e-government project in 2012.The country is in pursuit of better service delivery as it owes it to the people. However, just like other countries, New Public Management (NPM) brought in exciting reforms, e-government included. This paper wanted to find out challenges faced by local authorities when delivering services through the Information Communication Technology (ICT). This was a qualitative research which used secondary data sources. The findings of the study showed that it is close to a decade since the inception of e-government yet there are still complaints on service delivery. In this era e-government remains key in ensuring that there is good service delivery however challenges such as poor infrastructure, mishandling of e-government funds, language barrier, lack of trust, lack of financial autonomy of local authorities continue to limit e-governments effectiveness in the local authorities.

Keywords: e-government, service delivery, local authority, botswana.

I. Introduction

There is a revolution of new technology across the globe. Technology is fundamentally changing our everyday lives. Nations are demanding good services from their governments. Globally, governments are continuously under pressure to come up with ways of improving services delivery as they owe it to the people, hence the adoption of e-government in developing nations. This term has been in circulation for decades, but it has gained popularity in recent years where, digital and transformative government, it is often used as a substitute or replacement for the term 'e-government'. E-government is defined by the OECD as "the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs), and particularly the Internet, to achieve better government" (OECD, 2003). The World Bank (2001) has defined e-government as "government-owned or operated systems of information and communications technologies (ICTs) that transform relations with citizens, the private sector and other government agencies so as to promote citizen empowerment, improve service delivery, strengthen accountability, increase transparency, or improve government efficiency".

E-Government has gained popularity over the years in some countries especially developing ones. E-government has been widely recognized not only by researchers but, also international organizations like World Bank and UN. The need to adopt a technological approach in service delivery has been widely noted by various authors. In the public sector, ICT investment primarily manifests itself as Electronic Government (e-Government) programs (Heeks, 2002). According to (Irani, Love, & Jones, 2008) the world has witnessed numerous e-Government projects and sub-Saharan Africa is no exception. E-Government projects are a reality for the African continent as seen with the numerous governments that have expressed strategies outlining plans for the implementation of a variety of e-government initiatives. However, even with various strategic plans and policies, the core challenge remains with the minimal successful implementations of e-government projects (Heeks, 2006; Irani et al., 2008).

According to Saugata (2007) international trends indicate that , the use of e- government system in developing countries has not penetrated that much. Matimati state that, local authorities in many developing nations have not yet adapted e-government initiative as compared to those in the developed nations. Local governments in developing countries are encountering multifaceted problems such as lack of infrastructure, lack of skills and finances.

According to Nkwe (2012), Botswana is a developing country with a dedicated agenda towards promoting e-government because the leaders have understood the importance of e-government to an appreciable extent (Nkwe, 2012). The government of Botswana has over the years developed National Development Plans (NDP). NDP are national macroeconomic blue prints that contain government strategies planned to be undertaken over the five years period. The current plan is NDP 11 which stated that emphasises will be placed on the development of e-services broadband connectivity as well as implementation of e-government projects. Local authorities in Botswana have started to show some appreciation towards the e-governance system as an opportunity to provide and transform the relationship between local authorities and citizens. In the context of Government of Botswana (GoB), Local Authorities(LAs) which are commonly known as councils are devolved institution with statutory powers to make the decision at a local level (Madala and Phirinyane, 2016). According

Author: Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis. e-mail: sambomat@bidpa.bw

© 2019 Global Journals

to Saugata (2007), the move toward e-government is a positive one especially that it contributes to the achievement of good governance.

a) Problem statement

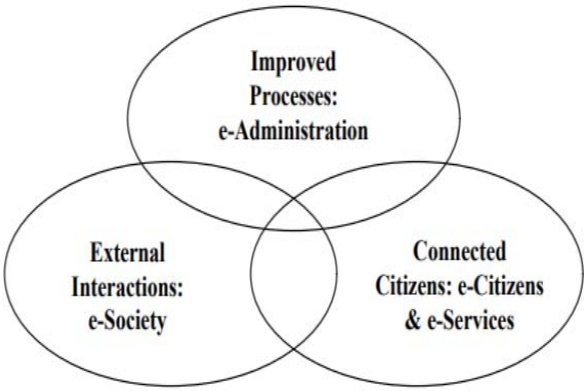
Due to many challenges in service delivery, GoB saw it fit to undertake an e-government programme (GoB, 2012). Currently, e-government is a key policy debate that has attracted the attention of policy-makers and researchers in Botswana. The debates around e-government came as a result of complaints from different stakeholders that e-government is not meeting their expectations, this is despite substantial amount that the government has spent towards the project. According to Mmeso (2018), the government of Botswana has lost over P1 billion since the introduction of e-government programme in 2012. This paper seeks to find out challenges faced by local authorities when delivering services through the Information Communication Technology (ICT). The main aim of this study is

- to find out challenges of e-government at local authorities
- Provide policy implications

b) The arrangement of the paper is as follows

The next section presents, a suggested conceptual e-government adoption model, followed by a methodological approach, then the significance of the local e-government in Botswana. Next section presents benefits and challenges of using e-government in local authorities. Lastly, the paper concludes and makes some recommendations.

II. Overlapping Dominance of E-governance Model



Source: Heeks 2002

Figure 1

Although the above three are described separately, these three domains of e-governance are recognized as overlapping as shown in figure 1.

a) E-Administration

E-administration deals with improving the internal workings of the public sector. E-administration includes cutting process costs, improving the input, managing process performance, planning, monitoring and controlling the performance of process resources (human, financial and other). E-administration improves processes, it connects Citizens Building and promote external Interactions with Citizens Customers Communities, Non-Profits Organisations and Other Agencies. E-administration helps in making strategic connections in government. It connects arms, agencies and data stores of government to strengthen the capacity to investigate, develop and implement the strategy and policy that guides government processes. E-administration empowers as it transfers power, authority and resources for processes from their existing locus to new locations (Heeks, 2006).

b) E-Society

E-Society deals more with ensuring that there is a relationship between public agencies, private sector companies, non-profit and community organizations. As with citizen connections, these initiatives may well incorporate some processes of e administration. E-society is there to improve the interaction between government and business. E-society includes, digitizing procurement from and services to business to improve their quality, convenience, and cost. E-society also ensures that they build the social and economic capacities and capital of local communities and they build partnerships to strengthen institutional relationships (Heeks, 2001).

c) E-Services/E-Citizen

According to Heeks (2002), e-services/e-citizen deals mainly with the relationship between government and citizens either as voters/stakeholders from whom the African public sector should derive its legitimacy. These initiatives they include talking to citizens, giving

© 2019 Global Journals

citizens details of public sector activities. E-service relates to certain types of accountability like making public servants more accountable for their decisions and actions. E-service/ e-citizen is about listening to citizens increasing the input of citizens into public sector decisions and actions. E-service could be flagged as either democratization or participation. E-services improves public services delivered to members of the public along dimensions such as quality, convenience and cost.

III. Methodological Approach

The paper adopted a qualitative research method. Secondary data sources were used. A critical review of a collection of existing literature on e-government was established. There after followed a systematic review of literature. This was with the help of different databases and academic papers, books, newspaper articles, radio, television discussions and government reports.

a) E-government landscape in Botswana

The Government of Botswana (GoB) launched its first-ever E-Government Strategy in 2012.GoB, in 1997 enshrined in the country's vision of 2016 which advocated for a knowledge-based economy to improve the provision of services through technology (GoB, 1997). Currently, there is a new National Vision 2036 which has four pillars. Of interest to the paper is pillar number one of Sustainable Economic Development, under sustainable economic development there is Information and Communications Technology (ICT) which says it will leverage information communication technology (ICT) as the main contributor to economic growth and employment whilst also enabling an efficient private and public sector (GoB, 2016). The development of ICT is in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sees the importance of technological innovation and contains specific references needed for high quality, timely, reliable and disaggregated data, including on Earth observation and geospatial information. Many of the Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals have targets that are directly or indirectly related to e-government assessment indicators, like what makes improvements in local e-government assessment operate as a catalyst for the achievement of the SDGs.

The Botswana government is making significant progress in the development of the e-government. The progress is shown by government initiatives and the development of government documents like the e-government master plan 2015-2021. The master plan seeks to innovate service delivery through seamless connectivity between government agencies (G2G), improve access to information by reducing the digital divide and improving network speed. Before the master plan there was the 2011- 2016 National e-Government Strategy which outlined the processes for the modernization of government, the enhancement of transparency, accountability and good governance; making the government more result oriented, efficient and customer-centric. The expectation is that E-Government should bring huge benefits to the society. The strategy states that e-government will try improve relations between government and the community, as e-government will allow both the citizen and business community to have access to government services and information at their comfort, and this can only be possible through the use of ICT's (GoB, 2012). GoB, has successfully implemented massive projects like the construction of Kgalagadi Optical Fiber Network, full liberation of the telecommunications sector, establish ICT sector regulatory and institutional framework, policy and setting up IT hub. The Government of Botswana is moving with the trends of the 21st century by emphasising Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as vital in ensuring that optimal service delivery is achieved.

In 2013 GoB stated that priority should be placed on some of ongoing e-Government initiatives that directly "touch" citizens and have the potential to provide significant, visible improvements in service delivery. These initiatives included ICT-driven service transformation in the following areas;

The National Identity Card – OMANG, Vital Statistics Registration (birth, marriage, death, etc.), Land and Property Registration Business Registration and Licensing, The Passport Office, Motor Vehicle Registration, National Statistics, Government Core Services (HR, Finance, Procurement, Project Management & Knowledge Management).

Evidently, GoB has the interest of the nation at heart, even though these services are often interrupted by power cuts, system failures, no internet connectivity, etc. Despite the challenges, government and private sector involvement in ICT brought good results in 2016 as Botswana came 5thin Africa according to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), this is ICT Development Index used for measuring the information society across 175 countries in the world (ICT development index, 2017).

IV. Significance of Local Government for E-government in Botswana

According to Madala and Phirinyane (2016), local authorities in Botswana are involved in the rolling out of e-government programme. The updating of the e-government portal is done at the parent ministry, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD). All local authorities forward their information whenever there are updates to MLGRD.

© 2019 Global Journals

Botswana has two spheres of governance, the second being local government which is at the forefront of understanding citizen's needs. Local authorities have a responsibility to ensure that there is an improvement of service delivery in the districts. The MLGRD has a slogan "*batho pele"* which simply means people first, this primarily means local authorities and MLGRD they are at forefront of service provision.

The significance of e-government at local level is crucial even though there are financial challenges. However, despite the challenges one of the local authorities Kweneng District Council in Molepolole, the second largest village in Botswana has built One Stop Service Center. One stop service centers are a necessity in communities as they bring all government services to the people in one place. The development of service halls is a demonstration that local authorities have the potential to provide stability and promote good governance.

Improving the local level of e-government is inseparable from achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The development of electronic services and the increase in the number of people participating in decision-making will drastically lead to the achievement of the Development Goals. It will assist in making cities sustainable, improving local communities, making them inclusive safe and resilient.

V. Benefits of E-government in Local Authorities

a) *Increased transparency and accountability of local authority*

Local authorities as services providers to the people have a mandate to ensure that people get the right services. During the 2016/17 national budget speech, the government of Botswana asked youth to own business so that they can have a partnership with government. The public and private partnership was in a bid to improve service delivery (GoB, 2016). Government displays tenders publicly on the websites, government gazette, and newspapers. Despite these, there are always issues of concern for example, corruption in the tender awarding systems; sometimes others feel same people get tenders etc. The use of ICT can improve transparency levels especially when the names of those who won tenders are publicly displayed together with the amount the bided with. Things like uploading of audited local authorities' financial statements, minutes from important meetings like full council can help in ensuring that communities are well informed. Yong (2005) states e-government has a benefit of enhancing transparency and increasing accountability of local authority. E-government is important as it cuts the middle man therefore little or no corruption.

b) *Empowerment of citizens through greater access to local authority information and the ability to interact and participate*.

In Botswana to some extent members of the community have access to some government documents although it can be very frustrating because not everything is uploaded and sometimes they will be no recent document on the websites. Effective use of e-government system in local authorities and sharing of information with various stakeholders results in citizen empowerment through easy and enhanced access to local authority information and the ability to participate in the process of governance (Matimati, 2015). E-government gives the society an opportunity to express their views like in cases where opinions of the people are needed to rate the services of local authorities. E-government also helps in creating a platform where there can be an interaction of politician and citizens this can allow debates between politicians and citizen despite the distance between the two.

c) *Improved and enhanced service delivery*

According to Bryman (2001), the use of e-government system provides improved service delivery. Bryman stated that, using e-government makes things very fast and convenient hence reduces travelling which can be costly to an ordinary citizen. For instance, development of one-stop service centers at Molepolole is a good example, as it services people from one roof saving peoples time and money from going to different government offices in search for assistance.

VI. Challenges of E-government in Local Authorities

a) *Poor infrastructure*

Botswana is sparsely populated. There are sixteen local authorities across the country. Unfortunately, even though the government is trying to stretch to the communities, some areas are far, and there are no resources like electricity as a result internet is poor which makes even cell phone connectivity impossible. Often people complain of service delivery in government institutions as it has become a common norm that the government systems are down most of the time especially during the days where there are many people. Continuous system failure is a clear indication of poor infrastructure, where there is low network connectivity the internet is poor. Developing countries often have a poor IT infrastructure, which constitutes a further obstacle for the implementation of e-government (Tap scott, 1996). Developing countries may not have consistent and reliable electricity, telecommunications, and Internet access (Jaeger & Thompson, 2004). The Botswana 2018/19 national budget proposed a development budget of P461 million for the ICT sector, IT experts in the telecommunication

© 2019 Global Journals

sector complained of little money allocated to this sector. Arguments were that, money was way too little to do any significant improvements to ICT infrastructure to keep up with the current international pace (Botswana Guardian, 2018).

b) Low internet penetration

According to Internet World Statistics (2015), Botswana's internet penetration as of 2015 stood at 28.40%. A report entitled "The Affordability Report" reveals that Botswana is ranked among the highest on the most expensive basic broadband connection on the African continent (Sunday Standard, 2019). Sunday Standard (2015) stated that, Botswana has one of the lowest average internet connection speeds in the world. Consumers have been promised cheap and affordable internet, but still, things have not changed, despite the fact that there is generally high demand for internet in the country (Sunday Standard, 2015).

c) Mishandling of e-government funds by central government

In April 2008, the Auditor General issued a qualified audit opinion on the government's main bank accounts with the Bank of Botswana, transactions running into billions of pula could not be accounted for. Reports of the missing e-government money add to P600 million to billions that in 2018 were reported to be missing (Sunday standard, 2018). E-government projects in developing countries are usually driven by individual government departments that frequently depend upon central government and aid from donors for funding. Once this financing ceases, there is often insufficient funding to continue the project. (Schware & Deane, 2003). Sometimes government departments misuse money, issues of corruption start arising, in the end, it affects the delivery of service. Corruption affects local authorities as they are highly depended on central government for money.

d) Shortage of finances in local authorities

In Botswana, local authorities are empowered by the Local Government Act of 2012 to come up with ways of generating money rather than just relying on central government. Local authorities in Botswana remain challenged due to lack of finances which have crippled their ability to give better services to the people. According to Hamilton (2000), local authorities greatest challenge is that of shortage of finances. (Shackleton & Dawson, 2007), stated that local authorities often lack independent decision-making powers in the area of e-government and tend to heavily rely on funding from central government to implement new initiatives.

e) Language implications

There is a challenge in ensuring that government caters appropriately to its citizens preferably in a language of their choice for service delivery. For instance, most of the local authorities' website information is only presented in English. Language barrier is problematic especially for those who do not know English. Studies indicate that there are benefits of ensuring that e-government services in the language of citizens' choice.

f) Lack of trust

According to Pheko (2009), it is unfortunate for Botswana that, with so many interventions to encourage e-government there are still issues of lack of trust. People do not trust the government nor anyone with their information. Pheko (2009), said this is as a result of lack of promotional and awareness campaigns of e-government.

g) Lack of e-government policy

Already there is the Maitlamo policy which was created to regulate the ICT industry in general. The policy coordinate e-government from the center within the Maitlamo policy framework. The policy is a general ICT policy which does not adequately presents the framework for e-government at a local level as more emphasis is on the central government.

VII. Conclusions

According to (Shackleton & Dawson, 2007) the implementation of e-government has remained problematic and constrained in developing countries. The significance of the local government sector for e-government in Botswana, undoubtedly faces various challenges in delivering services including poor infrastructure; Botswana is sparsely populated. There are still some areas which do not have electricity hence no internet, this is very challenging for an ordinary citizen who is in need of government services and they are far from resources. Low internet penetration is worrisome in the country; this is despite high usage of mobile phones in Botswana. Internet is also reported to be very expensive in Botswana. Local authorities do not have financial autonomy as a result it is always challenging for them to attend their priorities like local e-government. There are issues of lack of trust which could be attributable to that African culture people tend to be secretive about their personal details especially when they are not informed. However, the research identified a number of areas that needs to be looked into with regard to the use of e-government by local authorities in order to improve service delivery.

VIII. Way Forward

1. There is need to build ICT infrastructure that will allow linkage and use of e-government by all local authorities in order to improve service delivery to the people. Things like electricity and internet should be prioritized so that there can be internet connectivity at local communities.

© 2019 Global Journals

2. There should be provision of funds to support the infrastructure developments such as electricity, internet, service halls and budget should be availed for training of human resource in local authorities to allow smooth daily usage between service providers and service users. Budget should also cater for public education campaigns to make communities informed about e-government as it can help to reduce resistance.
3. There is need to have a standalone policy for e-government.
4. The design of e-government systems should be localized. This will help to avoid a situation where a consultant gets a system from their home country and try make it applicable in a totally different environment.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this paper are solely of the author and do not reflect the views of Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis (BIDPA), where the author is employed. Therefore, all errors and omission remain that of the author.

References Références Referencias

1. Botswana Guardian (2018) Gov't budget on ICT low -Anthony Masunga. [online] Available: http://www.botswanaguardian.co.bw/business/item/3063-gov-t-budget-on-ict-low-anthony-musunga.html.(February 27 2018)
2. Bryman, C. (2001). International Corporate Governance. Juta. New Dehli.
3. Government of Botswana (2012). Ministry of Transport and Communication. Botswana national E governance strategy, 2011-2016
4. Government of Botswana. (1997). *Vision 2016: An educated informed nation*. Gaborone: Lentswe La Lesedi.
5. Government of Botswana. (2016). Budget Speech by the Honourable Minister of Finance to Parliament. February 01, 2016. Gaborone. Government Printer
6. Government of Botswana. (2016). *Vision 2036: Achieving Prosperity for All*. Gaborone: Lentswe La Lesedi.
7. Hamilton, M. (2000). Emarking in business. PrenticeHall. London.
8. Heeks, R. (2002). E government in Africa: Promise and Practice. Information Polity. 7(23) 97-114
9. Heeks, R. (2005). E government as carrier of context. Journal of Public Policy 25(1), 51-74
10. Heeks, R. (2006). E-government for development: Basic definitions Information Services. Ottawa: Public Works and Government Services
11. Internet world statistics (2015). Botswana Internet penetration rate. [online] Available: http://www.economywatch.com/economic-statistics/Botswana/Internet_Penetration_Rate/(March 2015)
12. Irani, Z., Love, P.E & Jones, S. (2008). Learning lessons from evaluating e government: Reflective case experiences that support transformational government. The journal of strategic information systems, 17(2), 155-164
13. Jaeger, P.T. & Thompson, K.M. (2003), "E-government around the world: Lessons, challenges, and future directions", Government Information Quarterly 20, pp. 389–394
14. Nkwe (2012). E-Government: Challenges and Opportunities in Botswana. International Journal of Humanities and Social Science. Vol. 2 No. 17
15. OECD (2003). The e-Government Imperative. [online]. Available https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/the-e-government-imperative_9789264101197-en (July, 2003)
16. Pheko, T. G. (2009). Botswana Telecommunication Authority. Botswana Country Report to Crasa.
17. Saugata, B. (2007). Conceptualizing E governance. A conceptual Introduction, Oxford University Press.
18. Shackleton, P. and Dawson, L. (2007). *Doing it Tough: Factors impacting on local e-Government maturity*, 20th Bled e-Conference e-Mergence: Merging and Emerging Technologies, Processes, and Institutions, June 4 - 6, Bled, Slovenia.
19. Sunday Standard Newspaper. (2015). Why is our internet still expensive and slow? [online]. Available:http://www.sundaystandard.info/why-our-internet-still-expensive-and-slow
20. Sunday Standard Newspaper. (2018). P600 million e-gov money goes missing. [online] Available: http://www.sundaystandard.info/p600-million-e-gov-money-goes-missing (November, 2018).
21. Sunday Standard Newspaper. (2018) Botswana's broadband costs is the highest in africa – report. [online]. Available:http://www.sundaystandard.info/botswana%E2%80%99s-broadband-costs-highest-africa-report
22. Tapscott, D. (1996), "The Digital Economy", McGraw Hill, New York.
23. Mmeso, P. (2018). Dysfunctional e-Gov gobbles P1 billion. The Patriot on Sunday. [online] Available http://www.thepatriot.co.bw/news/item/6217-dysfunctional-egov-gobbles-p1-billion.html (September 23, 2018).
24. World Bank, LAC PREM –"Issues Note: E-Government and The World Bank". November 5, 2001.
25. Yong, A. (2005). Towards excellence in E governance. Times Media Publications. Singapore

© 2019 Global Journals