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The Role of E-Government as Enabler of Good Governance for Socio-Economic Development in South Africa

Andrew Enaifoghe[1]; Nomaswazi P. Dlamini[2]; Nokukhanya N. Jili[1]; Richards Mthethwa[1]

[1] Department of Public Administration, University of Zululand, South Africa

[2] Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Zululand, South Africa

E-mail: EnaifogheA@unizulu.ac.za

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Abstract

The study explores the role of e-government as an enabler of good governance and socio-economic development in South Africa. The term 'good governance addresses pertinent global issues that confront humanity due to its close relationship with several of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) pertaining to poverty, good health, well-being, inequality, strong institutions, and economic progress. Electronic government, often known as e-Government, is now a widespread phenomenon and is regarded as a tool to improve the efficiency of public service delivery in administration. Studies demonstrated that e-Government is a facilitator and an enabler of Good Governance. This study indicates that if the e-Government concept is properly implemented, South Africa's democracy may leverage its transformative force of it to the advantage of the national government, private sector, and populace. The country requires a competent and efficient state administration for economic and social growth. As a small nation like South Africa faces substantial development issues related to racial, gender, and wealth inequality. However, achieving good governance remains a constant challenge for many nations. The study is qualitative in nature and primarily relies on secondary data that is available in various databases using the advanced search of baseline data.

Keywords: *E-Government; Good Governance; Socio-Economic Development; Corruption*

Introduction

The study looks at the role of electronic government as e-government with the adoption of ICT as an enabler of good governance for socio-economic development in South Africa. The study conceptualized e-government, often known as e-Government, as a widespread phenomenon, that is regarded as a tool to improve the efficiency of public service delivery in administration. Arguably, economic and social growth requires a competent and efficient state administration. This study argues that if the e-Government concept is properly implemented, South Africa as a nation with a young democracy may leverage its transformative force of it to the advantage of the national government, private sector, and

populace. As a small nation, South Africa faces substantial development issues related to racial, gender, and wealth inequality.

In most circumstances, the efficacy of a political party in power affects whether or not a country has an excellent government (Enaifoghe & Maramura, 2019). The political tenacity to rule properly, despite the challenges it faces such as racial, gender, and wealth inequality, is the first step toward good government (Prinsloo, 2013). International governance, corporate governance, national governance, and municipal governance are all examples of governance. Governance is the process of making decisions and implementing or not implementing those decisions (Enaifoghe & Maramura, 2018). No one can deny that there are real concerns about the loss of elements of good governance at the moment.

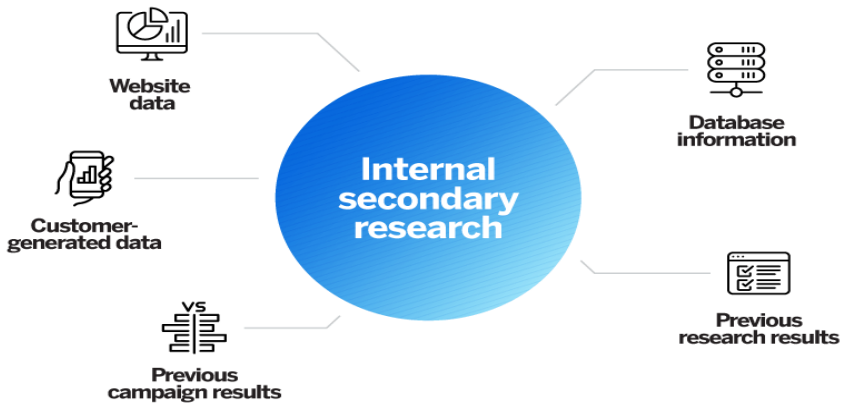
According to a United Nations Development Programme report, these aspects are divided into nine sections: participation, accountability, transparency, rule of law, responsiveness, efficient and effective government, equity, consensus orientation, and strategic vision (Lekala, 2019). Power and authority abuse, dishonesty, fraud, and violations of legal systems are all issues that contribute to the failure of decent governments. The prospects for effective economic engagement and social development are limited by income and information poverty (Maduku & Enaifoghe, 2018), but they can be addressed by governmental policy and other e-development activities through the integration and adoption of ICT.

Research Methodology

The study is qualitative research that primarily relies on secondary sources by extensively reviewing available literature that is relevant to the topic under investigation. Secondary research, often known as desk research, is a study method that makes use of previously collected data. The existing data were summarized and compiled to improve overall research efficacy ((Bouchrika, 2022). There are two types of secondary data; internal and external data sources. In the internal data collection sources, because you may already have relevant information saved in your systems, internal data is a useful first port of call for insights and expertise (Bouchrika, 2022). Previous campaign outcomes. As such that you control this material and other researchers will not have access to it, it can provide you with a competitive advantage.

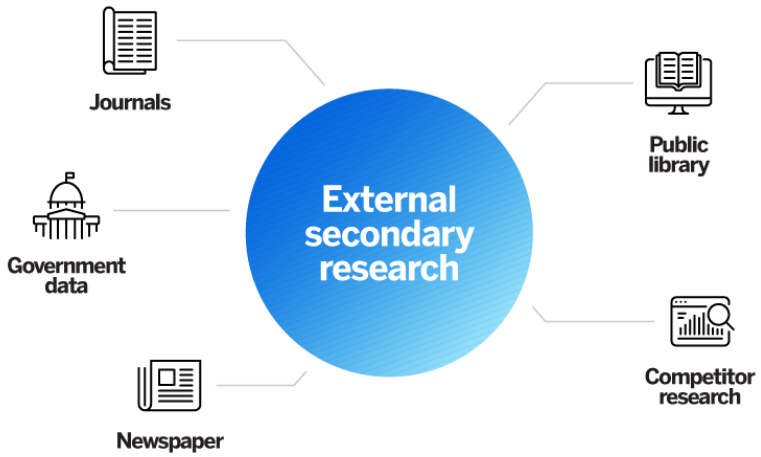
Internal data examples include (Bouchrika, 2022): Sales history and business objective conversions are stored in a database; Data from internet applications and mobile sites; Customer feedback on the effectiveness and utility of products and services. See the figure below;

Figure 1: Internal data sources



The figure show the data collection circle. Previous research findings or further research areas. Secondary research is study material that has been published in research reports and other comparable materials (Green, Tull & Albaum, 1993). These materials can be made available through public libraries, internet, data acquired from previously completed surveys, and so on. Some government and non-government organizations also retain data that can be retrieved and utilized for research purposes.

Figure 2: External data



The figure 2 highlights the external data sources. External data is important when you require information on a new topic, wish to cover knowledge gaps, or want data that breaks down a population or market for trend and pattern analysis (Joselyn, 1977). External data examples include: Statistics from the government, non-governmental organizations, and trade associations; Reports and studies from the company; competitor analysis; Collections of public libraries; Textbooks and scientific journals; Newspaper articles about the media and; Journals and research websites are available online (Dillon, Madden & Firtle, 1994). In this study, secondary data analysis entails the employment of information acquired by someone else for his or her own interests. Secondary data analysis is used by researchers to answer a new research question or to evaluate an alternative perspective on the initial subject of a study. To completely comprehend secondary data analysis, we try to first understand the distinction between primary and secondary data.

Literature Consideration

The South African government has recognized the increasingly critical role that information technology plays as a facilitator of public service delivery. This significance has been emphasized by the King III Study on Corporate Governance, a Presidential Review Commission (PRC) report, and the Auditor General's Findings (AG) (Mudimba, 2021; van Wyk & Deegan, 2010). To enable political and strategic leadership to embrace ICT as a service delivery enabler. South Africa's Department of Public Service and Administration developed the Corporate Governance of ICT Policy Framework in collaboration with the South African Government Information Technology Officers Council (GITOC) and the AG (ICT Governance Policy Framework) (Department of Public Service and Administration [DPSA], 2014). Njenge (2015), indicated that the ICT Governance Policy Framework's goal is to empower political and strategic leadership to embrace ICT as a service delivery enabler.

The historical background of South Africa tells of history, where the citizens come from various cultures and racial groups. It has been difficult for South Africa and other countries to agree on what constitutes good governance (DPSA, 2014). Certain aspects of good governance are subject to different standards. Over a 400-year span, these South African cultures formed themselves and practised primitive subsistence farming with everyone on their own land (Ararat, Black & Yurtoglu, 2017). Conflicts between cultural groups are limited to specific areas or borders as a result of changes to other territories as groups of people known as "Voortrekkers" (Ansell & Torfing, 2016). With the finding of gold and diamonds, there was an immediate common interest in certain land areas and a heightened likelihood of conflict, which therefore require a greater need for formal government.

However, AlQudah, Azzam, Aleqab and Shakhatreh (2019), indicated that the application and impact of ICT in governance systems are termed e-governance. It entails new channels of access to government, new leadership styles, new transaction methods, and new systems for organizing and providing information and services (Al-Najjar, 2014). The emphasis is on processes and interactions in the adoption of ICT as an enabler of good governance for socio-economic development. Social development is defined as increasing an individual's, family's or household's, and community's capacity to engage constructively in society, both socially and economically (Darling-Hammond, Flook, Cook-Harvey, Barron & Osher, 2020).

Local Economic Development is described as creating a favourable atmosphere and implementing economic projects and programs that assure the economy as a whole operates better for all citizens, stimulates growth, and accelerates employment (Enaifoghe, 2021a). The rise of e-governance is expected to necessitate the adoption of a wide range of non-technological initiatives (Enaifoghe, Balogun & Afolabi, 2021), such as public sector reform, good governance, and the use of ICT with an explicit development focus. E-governance, also known as Electronic-government (E-government), refers to the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to facilitate interaction between government institutions and individuals or the business community in various activities to supply government services (Benhamou & Melot, 2018). This kind of distribution provides a possibility for equal public service delivery (Lips, 2010).

To fully realize this promise, e-government services must be made available to remote rural areas, townships, disadvantaged metropolitan areas, and vulnerable sections in society. This is primarily because these groups of citizens are frequently denied full access to public services for a variety of reasons (Benhamou & Melot, 2018). Nonetheless, equitable access to government services is a critical guiding concept for practically all democratic governments around the world (Mphidi, 2011). Everyone in society, including persons with disabilities, the vulnerable, and the destitute, has equal access. According to Durokifa and Enaifoghe (2022); Bencomo (2021), it is reasonable to expect a government to direct efforts that promote e-government services geared to cater to these populations, making e-government services a norm rather than a privilege in their sociocultural circumstances.

Maumbe (2007) believes that some of the concerns that government and civil society should pose in relation to issues of the digital divide include how to promote equitable e-government service delivery to citizens and develop long-term trust and loyalty to this method of delivery. According to the literature (Enaifoghe, Aina & Durokifa, 2021; UN, 2018; UN, 2016; Brynard, Cloete, & de Coning, 2011; Mphidi, 2011; Abuali, Alawneh, & Mohammad, 2010; Hassan, Shehab, & Peppard, 2010; Posfai & Fejer, 2008; Kitaw, 2006), it is a major concern that ICTs are not being introduced, adopted, and used appropriately in African countries. To increase access and utilization, there is a lack of support for appropriate and relevant technologies and delivery channels that regard the user.

Alfano (2011); Almarabeh and AbuAli (2010) Close attention is not paid to the dynamics of e-government implementation between developed and developing countries, particularly to highlight the obstacles that Africa, as a developing continent, faces in implementing e-government. A critical

component would entail the pursuit of methods and policy solutions to bring genuine e-government benefits to the poor. Mobile-government, a prospective and rapidly developing delivery channel that has the ability to ensure the inclusion of the poor in the digital age (Alshawi & Alalwany, 2009), is not being successfully integrated into the delivery stream and governance processes.

Africa in general and of course South Africa has also failed to learn the important lesson of regularly revisiting its priorities and reviewing its unique qualities and circumstances as a developing continent while implementing e-government (Brynard, Cloete & de Coning, 2011). All of these factors appear to be grounds for Africa's delay in implementing or disconnecting from the unavoidable and essential changes or transformations to help the most vulnerable and impoverished in order to reap the benefits of e-government.

Contextualising e-Government in the Global Context for Advance Nations

Looking at global e-government rankings, it is normal to see developed countries at the top of the list, with developing and underdeveloped countries near the bottom. According to the United Nations (2018), the top ten e-government world leaders are Denmark, Australia, the Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Finland, Singapore, New Zealand, France, and Japan (Chatfield & Alhujran, 2009). The African continent, which is mostly made up of developing countries, continues to lag behind in terms of global e-government rankings. In 2016, Africa's average was as low as 0.2882 compared to the global average of 0.4492 and top Europe's average of 0.7241 e-government development index (EGDI) (UN, 2016).

According to the 2018 e-government study, the bulk of nations ranked in the Low-EGDI grouping remain African, accounting for 14 of the 16 countries. Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Mali, Niger, and Somalia are among these countries (UN, 2018). This reflects the ongoing digital divide between Africa as a developing continent and developed continents like Europe. According to Chatfield and Alhujran (2009), e-government leaders have a national e-government portal as one of the identifying success characteristics as compared to laggards. This implies they have a single point of entry (also known as a whole-of-government approach or one-stop-shop) that covers the entire breadth of a country's e-government and includes linkages to individual government departments, agencies, and organizations.

Governments provide advanced e-government services to their citizens, such as electronic money transactions, e-democracy, including e-consultation, e-decision making, and e-information (Cloete, 2012). Because their e-government programs are networked, synchronized, and coordinated, developed countries may implement a one-stop shop. However, this is a requirement that developing countries severely lack and struggle with. Although countries such as South Africa have taken the lead in this regard, through its official one-stop-website known as the Batho Pele Gateway (Department of Telecommunications and Postal Services -DTPS, 2017), which can be accessed at http://www.gov.za, e-government services in this country still lack the required level of interconnectedness, i.e. coordination of such related activities for seamless delivery (Cloete, 2012).

To that end, developing countries must critically consider their specific circumstances, prioritize key challenges, and address them in order to achieve success in e-government adoption. According to Alshawi and Alalwany (2009), the development, implementation, and operation of e-government strategies in poor nations differs from that in wealthy countries. According to Nengomasha, Mchombu, and Ngulube (2010), industrialized countries use sophisticated and integrated e-government programs, whereas most developing countries, according to Bhatnagar (2002), still use a combination of automated and manual methods for service delivery.

However, due to the condition of ICT infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, and literacy levels, transitioning from a combination of e-service delivery approaches to a fully automated self-service

strategy may not be desirable for developing countries. In general, rich countries have very high EGDI, whereas developing countries obtain low EGDI (UN, 2016), which also confronts challenges with system incompatibility. According to Abuali, Alawneh, and Mohammad (2010), developing countries frequently encounter the challenge of system incompatibility between present and future-developed e-government systems.

All the issues mentioned clearly highlight the gap between current and future e-government implementation planning, a lack of a long-term vision for e-government implementation, and exposure to the reality that developing countries should not simply adopt e-government applications from developed countries, but rather adapt them to their specific circumstances.

South African e-Government Policy and the Digital Divide

The debate on South African e-Government Policy and the Digital Divide in the Age of Globalization has a direct impact on the socio-economic development of the South African nation; the government cannot afford to ignore the efficient use of ICT and the benefits available through the implementation of e-Government (de Coning, Cloete & Burger, 2018). This chapter presents a theoretical viewpoint on the South African government's e-Government policy, the parties engaged, and the benefits of e-Government for this country. The perspectives of numerous professionals in their fields are provided in relation to the 'digital gap,' which is particularly prevalent in South African society, as it is in many other developing countries.

The South African Government's E-Government History According to Hassan, Shehab and Peppard (2010); Cloete (2004:5-6), the nineteenth-century mechanisation revolution in agricultural, industrial, and manufacturing sectors in many industrialised countries was aided by the successful implementation of coordinated and synchronised governmental measures. These manufacturers' implementation of these new policies significantly contributed to the efficiency and effectiveness of processes, products, and services at the time (Interchange of Data between Administrations - [IDA], 2004). Ones that did not adopt developing technology at an early stage made significantly slower progress and development than societies that did.

Many cultures and poor countries, in particular, lagged far behind and never caught up with their more modern neighbors in terms of technology adoption (Cloete, 2004:5-6). At the turn of the twenty-first century, the South African government was jolted into new ways of doing things by the problems of an information society brought about by technologically enhanced ICT (Green paper on e-Commerce, 2000:8). The information society arose as a result of significant growth in the use of knowledge and information technology in society. Because the first mass-produced personal computer was developed only in the 1980s, the application of electronic technologies was a relatively new occurrence, but it was evident that electronic technology was the way of the future (Cloete, 2004:7).

Globalisation meant that firms electronically networked with one another at such a rapid pace that government could not keep up with the new trend. The South African government needed to change its approach to providing services to its population. This was accomplished by developing rules and processes with the goal of using ICT and the internet to provide online information and services. Several government agencies and institutions joined forces to launch a broad-based consultative process to gather support for and cooperation on an e-Government policy. Under President Mbeki's leadership, the South African government recognized the potential benefits of harnessing the power of ICT, which could be utilized to generate a workforce to contribute to a dynamic economy and participate in the information society (Bridges.org, 2002a:1).

Stakeholder briefing sessions on the Gateway Project were held by government departments and agencies such as the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) and the State Information Technology Agency (SITA). The project's goal was to provide individuals with government services 24

hours a day, seven days a week, regardless of their geographical location (Bridges.org, 2002b:2). The South African government created an e-Government policy aimed at both citizens and the corporate sector. With 'transformation' being the buzzword on many fronts of society, this practically meant switching from outdated information technology (IT) to modern information and communication technology (ICT) (ICT).

The implementation of the e-Government strategy in South Africa did not work instantly with everyone at the time and had to struggle with a number of challenges (Trusler, 2003). In view of the South African political setup following Apartheid's demise and its legacy to society, the limits on implementing the e-Government strategy included: “A high level of inequality and digital illiteracy; A lack of ICT infrastructure (especially in rural regions). There is a general lack of government ICT preparedness; and other (seemingly) more pressing demands on the public service, which made ICT development a lower budgetary priority (Trusler, 2003).

1 South Africa's Effort and Progress of e-Government Initiative

The democratic republic of South Africa heralded an open and free society, within which the government was required to establish the appropriate legislation to ensure their goal of creating an open and transparent society. The government empowered regular citizens by introducing the electronic governance model, "of the country to share in the principle of an open and free society, as enshrined in the Constitution (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 1996:15). To assure a public service for all in South Africa, the Batho Pele principles, which include e-Government as one of the guiding public service transformational tools, were adopted. The government announced its intention in its IT Policy Framework;

> *“to depart from the traditional, bureaucratic, silo-type processes used by other departments and agencies and to modernize their roles and functions in accordance with the needs and requirements of the country's citizens” (Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), 2001).*

According to Msimang (2004:40-43), the government needed to abandon outdated methods of service delivery and establish innovative tactics to address the country's massive requirements. The government emphasized the transformation process even further by establishing two ICT advisory councils, recognizing that ICT is a critical driver for social change and economic development and is increasingly regarded as an important instrument for developing countries (World Economic Forum, 2002:2; Bridges.org, 2002a:1). As a member of the Southern African Development Council (SADC), the South African government also played an important role in the region by ensuring that e-Readiness was prioritized on regional and national policy agendas (World Economic Forum, 2002:2).

The 2002 Electronic Communications and Transactions Bill (ECT) paved the way for a wide range of public services to become faster, more efficient, and more secure, exposing many South Africans to gain access to ICT. The Centre for Public Service Innovation (CPSI) led the e-Government strategy in collaboration with the DPSA and SITA (Bridges.org, 2002a:2). According to the vision of the South African government, the e-Government strategy should address at least three primary issues: e-Governance, e-Services, and e-Business.

2 E-Governance for Social Services

E-Governance is the application of information technology to intra-governmental functions, such as interactions between central, provincial, and local governments. Paperless messaging and reporting; electronic document management and archiving; integrated systems for finance; asset and human resource management (including training); and systems for real-time collaboration and project management,

conferencing, decision support, and executive information are all examples (DPSA:2001). While e-Services (delivery and feedback) involve the use of IT to convert public service delivery from standing in line' to online: anytime, anywhere, by any means, and in interactive mode.

General information and regulations; education and culture; health consultation and telemedicine; and benefits and taxation are among the services affected. The new delivery vehicles also allow individuals to participate in government by gathering direct and rapid public input on policy concerns, specific projects, service delivery challenges, and cases of corruption (DPSA, 2001). The application of information technology to government activities in the form of business-to-business transactions and other contractual relationships is referred to as e-Business. The government's buying of products and services is an obvious example.

E-procurement encompasses the entire procurement process, from electronic tendering to electronic payment. With the rise of outsourcing and the creation of public-private partnerships, more examples for IT application become available (DPSA, 2001).

3 Governance and the Role of the State in South Africa

In Governance and the Role of the State, the following must build, maintain, refine, and reform an enabling framework for private enterprise and individual initiative in order to redefine the role of the state. Strong institutions of governance and the rule of law; credible and independent judicial institutions; effective legal frameworks for economic activity; an open and competitive economic environment; an equitable tax system; access to information (Enaifoghe, Maramura, Maduku, Ekanade, Muzee & Tait, 2020). Encouraging price stability and fiscal responsibility, and promoting technological and infrastructure development are all hallmarks of an intelligent and democratic state (Rodinelli & Shabbir Cheeman, 2003:22-25).

Improving the efficiency, accountability, and responsiveness of government Controlling corruption and establishing ethical norms; improving public administration responsiveness; building judicial institutions; and decentralizing government are all necessary (Enaifoghe et al., 2020; Rodinelli & Shabbir Cheeman, 2003:46-49). The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) identifies five areas where good governance can be achieved. The first is governmental structures, accompanied by civil society organizations, decentralisation and support for local governance, governance in unusual circumstances, and public and private sector management (Governance for Sustainable Human Development, 2005).

The Challenges of e-Government in South Africa for Socio-Economic Development

There are a number of challenges of e-Government in Africa and South African socio-political and economic development. Despite a rise in understanding and willingness to support and accept e-government by many African governments over the years, the continent with many developing economies confronts a number of problems in implementing e-government. According to UN (2016) data, African countries are severely impacted by global concerns such as food security and climate change, especially very hostile settings, which have hampered development and priorities in e-government. A number of difficulties confronting Africa are mentioned, which help to explain the low-middle EGDI among African countries (UN, 2018). These difficulties are widespread among poor, remote rural, and marginalized communities in African countries.

In the context of South Africa, the country is categorized as an upper-middle income country, although the society suffers from high levels of poverty and inequality (UN, 2018). Poverty affects up to 15% of households in urban areas and up to 50% of households in local municipalities in Gauteng, with a handful of poverty pockets affecting more than 50% of households (Human Sciences Research Council, 2005). South Africans are impoverished in numerous ways, including infrastructure, services, and

information. Information poverty is defined as a lack of access to and use of information and communication technology, as well as the services they provide, such as electronic transactions and Internet banking, online government services, and access to online educational content or entertainment (UN, 2018).

The South African digital gap reveals significant disparities in ICT availability between and within provinces. South Africa has a digital gap, with access to voice and data communications varying from high to low depending on household income (Kachwamba & Hussein, 2009). The majority of the provincial population's communication options are either a call from a nearby public phone or a short call or SMS from your own mobile phone. The rapid growth of the mobile telephone market is a feature of South Africa's ICT landscape. Mobile telephony developed rapidly between 2000 and 2008, with the market offering low-cost communication via SMS, second-hand devices, and pre-paid call packages at a lower cost than landlines. However, low-income people and small enterprises rarely use mobile communications for data communications, whether to obtain or send data, to access social services or to conduct economic activity.

Thus, mobile expansion obscures the "..emergence of a 'data divide' between those who have access to the Internet and the benefits it brings and those who do not" (Gillwald et al (2005: 3). Due to high access fees relative to income, Internet penetration is poor, and broadband Internet is priced out of reach for the great majority of households (Statistics South Africa, 2007). Proposals to establish a municipal broadband market to promote cheap high-speed data access have yet to be realized in South African local municipalities.

South African Public Sector, Good Governance and ICT for Development

Understanding e-Governance requires an institutional environment in which to thrive. An enabling context must include public sector reform to improve service delivery, effective governance, and the use of ICTs for development. From the concepts of 'reinventing government in the United States5 to the 'computerization of the public service' in Malaysia, public sector reform was a key issue in the literature on managing public institutions in the 1990s. (Kaisara & Pather, 2009). These ideas arose from a study and analysis of the numerous changes occurring in public services around the world during the early stages of 'globalisation through technology' (Kitaw, 2006).

The significance of public sector reform remains relevant in South Africa today, which is still burdened by a rule-driven bureaucracy rather than a flexible bureaucracy energized by management excellence. Good governance takes care of the responsibilities of the state, private sector, and civil society's duties for creating an environment in which human endeavour can benefit society It concentrates on the political, economic, and administrative aspects of governance. "Good governance ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of development resources." (United Nations Development Programme, 2006: 7).

ICTs, such as telephony, computing, and broadcasting, can contribute to long-term human development and poverty eradication8 by making social communication easier and more affordable, as well as facilitating quick and safe economic transactions. In the twenty-first century, "as an accelerator, driver, multiplier, and innovator,... ICTs are important, if not crucial, tools in the vast scaling up and interlinking of development interventions and outcomes." (Van Jaarsveldt & Naidoo, 2013). In the context of governance, ICTs may also play an important role in accelerating the flow of information and knowledge between government, citizens, and businesses.

The task for all countries, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is to build a governance structure that promotes, supports, and maintains human development. This presupposes regular engagement and feedback, as required by the local Integrated Development Plans'

community participation standards (South Africa). Many governments throughout the world have made significant investments in ICT to improve governance procedures. e-Governance is defined as the use of ICT in governance processes and decision-making in ways that allow citizens and communities to obtain regular information about government activities and participate in government decision-making at a low cost.

The expected benefits of such public sector reforms include, among other things, increasing the efficiency of government operations (information and communications flows across government institutions), strengthening democracy (via citizen participation in decision-making), increasing transparency (via publication of government information), and providing better services to citizens and businesses - through virtual, but direct interaction.

4 The Role of Mobile Technologies for Internet Access

The issue of mobile technologies for internet access according to de Coning et al. (2018), technology is becoming more inexpensive in underdeveloped countries. In order to achieve the SDGs, UN member states are expected to enhance access to ICTs and encourage inexpensive internet access, particularly in poor countries (UN, 2016). According to the United Nations (2016), mobile cellphones are the primary source of internet access (4G networks) in developing countries. According to the UN (2014), mobile devices are used by 99% of internet users in Kenya (nearly all internet users).

According to DOC (2014), while mobile internet connection is a rapidly expanding trend and undoubtedly an affordable means of accessing the internet, the problems of poor connection due to mobile speed can be problematic. As a result of slow connections owing to mobile speed might irritate consumers, especially the poor, who rely significantly on this platform for connectivity. Nonetheless, this trend should be interpreted as an opportunity to encourage developing countries to move beyond offline services such as SMSs to delivering a variety of public services (including interactive and transactional services) enabled by this platform as the cheapest channel to access the internet.

5 The Role of Mobile Technology and E-Commerce

The digital form of payment, also known as mobile money or e-money, is a rapidly growing commercial trend in Africa that has the potential to reduce poverty by providing flexible financial services (e-banking and e-commerce) to the majority of the rural population, which lacks access to financial services, roads, and ICT infrastructure is still a big challenge. M-government makes it more easier for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in society to obtain financial services than it was before the mobile phone took over the major facilitation function in sending and receiving money.

In Africa, this mobile money project is known as M-pesa and currently supports important services such as salary payments, foreign money transfers, and airtime top-up, among others (UN, 2014). According to DOC (2014), 'mobile money' may also enable lower-income households to obtain micro-loans (services that are otherwise commonly unavailable to them) for socioeconomic upliftment. Furthermore, when compared to conventional financial services, mobile financial services are available to recipients for free (costs are typically borne by the sender) or at minimum expense known as monthly bank account charges.

According to Thakar and Singh (2013), electronic banking facilities (e.g., ATMs) may economically and geographically disadvantage the poor because they tend to make frequent low-value withdrawals (informal sources of income) in distantly accessible ATMs. This means that these facilities must be made more accessible to remote rural regions and urban townships in order for underprivileged groups to see the significance of ICTs in improving their lives.

The banking sector, on the other hand, has begun to take steps to increase its profile in villages and townships. This program can also boost entrepreneurial activity by including informal commercial activities in rural areas and exposing them to national and global e-commerce. This necessitates a more advanced integrated delivery method in which the government collaborates with the private sector (UN: DESA, 2016). Such as "Public-Private Partnerships," which must emerge in these sectors and be strengthened for the benefit of society.

Social Media for Participative and Inclusive Digital Society

Another important instrument utilized by both the government and communities to communicate and provide information services to one another, as well as create dialogue, including increasing awareness on topics that require immediate action, is social media. 'Lungisa' is an example of a social media effort in Cape Town that facilitates the reporting of service delivery issues such as power outages, water shortages, and other public service issues (UN, 2014). According to Van Jaarsveldt and Naidoo (2013), social media is actively utilized in South Africa to discuss urgent societal issues, offer information on governmental actions, and governance processes, and also for entertainment and to encourage public participation in such activities and processes.

The United Nations (2014) advises governments to use this very inexpensive avenue to reach out to disadvantaged and vulnerable constituents in order to discuss and address issues affecting their areas. Through e-participation, e-consultation, e-decision-making, and e-information, social media can play an essential role in social inclusion of previously disadvantaged groups in crucial governance processes (Ramharuk, 2005). The government must therefore establish a suitable climate through policies that raise awareness and teach residents in poor and marginalized communities how to access and use e-government services through technological gadgets (UN, 2016).

According to the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), e-government initiatives aimed at poor communities should be driven by e-government strategies and policy frameworks that support the empowerment of underprivileged communities and should focus on bridging the digital divide (Thakur & Singh, 2013). As a result, society is constantly changing and never static, developing countries cannot fully accomplish their developmental milestones in the absence of ICTs, especially with the fourth industrial revolution underway.

What is critical for these countries is to properly adopt, use, and manage e-government to avoid program failure and issues of misdirected efforts and resources, while also training and encouraging the poor and vulnerable populations to fully embrace and explore ICT potential. Keeping up with new technology breakthroughs through active participation in such processes at the international level by African countries, governments are then put at the center of decision-making, allowing particular country situations to be effectively accommodated for. As a result, Africans will no longer be passive consumers of technology but will play an important role as one of the drivers and innovators of the ICT era, which will be tailored to African demands.

Concluding Remarks

The study investigates the role of e-government as a facilitator of good governance and socio-economic development in South Africa, the results of the study show that there is little correlation between e-governance and social and local economic development, with local governments and provincial governments involved in the delivery of public services acting and spending inefficiently and lacking a shared strategic goal.

Despite differences in e-government between rich and developing countries, e-government has the potential to deliver a plethora of benefits to developing countries if properly designed and managed. It is apparent that South Africa has plenty of opportunities given its current stage of e-government issues, provided it can avoid its e-government maturity levels and obstacles. As a result, it is critical for developing countries, particularly Africa, to prioritize marginalized communities and vulnerable groups in e-government service delivery and e-governance processes.

This may be made possible by specialized legislative frameworks and policies that support e-government programs, with governments taking the lead in promoting digital inclusion of the poor and marginalized communities. South Africa must rethink its thinking and regard current issues as its most valuable future prospects in order to be recognized as critical investment priorities. As a lesson for developing countries, it is critical that they identify metrics and procedures that take into account each country's priorities, capabilities, and developmental needs, and that they implement such practices to best suit their different and distinct socioeconomic conditions.

Special consideration should constantly be given to the needs of the poor and marginalized so that they are rightly placed at the centre of e-government endeavours in order to fully realize its societal value. Furthermore, Africa must be an active participant and developer in the international ICT development community rather than a passive consumer of ICT goods and services.

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