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RESEARCH ARTICLE

PROMOTING INCLUSIVENESS AND PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE: THE DIRECTIONS OF ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT IN GHANA.

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Abstract

In Ghana, there are more mobile phones than people; as a result people who are connected to the internet are more than those in schools. In spite of this, ICT tools have not been optimized to contribute to development. E-Government as a tool for ensuring inclusiveness and participation in governance in Ghana is characterized with challenges such as inability to fulfill the basic prerequisite for e-government development which includes minimum technological infrastructure, conducive environment and human capital. This paper attempts to assess the e-Government initiatives of Ghana; e-Government projects in Ghana, success stories and failures, IT visions of administration and the future directions of e-Government in Ghana. The emergence of the concept: e-Government in Ghana can be linked to the effort of the Ghana government to ratify and adopt an ICT policy in 2003- Informations and Communication Technology for Accelerated Development (ICT4AD). A cursory look at the Ghana e-Government initiatives reveals that Ghana is making considerable strides in allowing citizens and businesses to access and pay for services through an online network infrastructure. Renewal of driving licenses, clearing of goods at the port, business registrations, paying of taxes, public procurement and NABCO applications has been made possible through Government of Ghana electronic portal. This study dwelled on mainly secondary sources of data from peer reviewed journal articles, government policy documents and web sources. The study found that, Government of Ghana has exhibited commitment with her attempt to digitalize governance in Ghana. However, this paper also acknowledges the fact that the attempt by the Government of Ghana to digitalize the public sector of Ghana has not been rosy. Improved network and ICT infrastructural facilities should be extended to rural communities as a foundation for e-governance accessibility, awareness, education and proper training session should be held to educate personnel of public sectors about benefit of e-governance, installation and maintenance of ICT gadgets in public sectors in Ghana to facilitate smooth implementation of e-governance services, proper security checks must be improved upon to restore peoples' confidence in transacting or dealings through e-governance, extensive advertisements and publication of e-governance must be embarked upon to create awareness of the e-governance services available in Ghana.

Introduction:-

Good governance is promoted and consolidated through easy access to information which informs decision making at the various levels of government. Barriers to the easy flow of information to the various levels of government create avenues for its manipulation and for selfish gains. To prevent these bottlenecks to the easy flow of information within government circles; government to citizens and government to businesses, the government of Ghana e-government implementation strategy was developed to promote electronic means of sharing information. According to Yildiz, E-government is simply the application of Information and Communication Technology in the management of the affairs of the state¹. In so doing, E-government brings improvement in government administration and service delivery by providing a common platform for the exchange of information, better interaction and coordination of activities among Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), citizens and businesses. Further, the development of a robust e-Government system should be guided by an efficient Information Communication Technology related projects of Government. Inasmuch as there is a slow growth of e-government among government institutions in developing countries, the government of Ghana has made headway in Information and Communication Technology since the early 2000's². Ghana's drive to digitalize the country can be linked to the development and release of Ghana National ICT Development Policy (ICT4AD) in 2003³. This was followed by the e-government strategy in 2005 and the GeGov project in 2008⁴. These policies were aimed at realizing the vision of putting Ghana on the map of information-rich knowledge-based society through the tapping of ICT in the country. These initiatives received international recognition and support from intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the World Bank. In 2006, the World Bank contributed US\$40 million credit facility to support the e-Ghana project⁵. Mensah noted that, the e-Ghana project came in three forms: Enabling environment, Support to local ICT Businesses and ITEs and e-Government Applications and communications of which a large chunk of the credit facility was invested in the e-Government Applications and communications having the following components; Enterprise Architecture, Government Wide Area Network, ICT Training and Capacity Building, Government Portal/Gateway, National Data Centre and Government Interoperability Framework⁶.

In addition, internet penetration is a critical component and a driver of e-government. It provides the platform for dialogue and engagement among citizens, government and citizens, government and businesses. It also affords citizens the opportunity to participate in governance and demand for accountability. In 2014, the World Bank indicated that the internet users in Ghana were 19.56%⁷. Graphic Online Report (2018) indicates that, an improvement to 35% of a total population of about 29 million is connected to the internet. Much of the growth in internet penetration can be attributed to more affordable smartphones and mobile data plans⁸ and thus, a robust e-government system is dependent on a sound ICT infrastructure. The Government of Ghana through National Information Technology Agency (NITA) pursued the e-government network project to create a platform for the use of shared services among Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) nationwide to facilitate and coordinate communication within government. Since then, Ghana has recorded a considerable growth in Information and Communication Technology penetration in various aspects of the economy including business, education, governance, agriculture, health, sports among others.

The e-Ghana project has been piloted in some key public agencies including Ghana Immigration Service, the parliament, Registrar General's Department, Birth and Death Registry, Driving and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA), the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA), Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA), Ghana Tourism Authority,

¹Yildiz (2007)

²Davison et al, (2000)

³Odongo, (2012)

⁴Osei-Kojo, (2017)

⁵Owusu, (2015)

⁶Mensah (2015)

⁷The World Bank, (2014)

⁸<https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/over-10-million-ghanaians-using-the-internet-report.html>
accessed on 08/06/2018

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Minerals Commissions, Ghana Police Service and the Judicial Service. Due to this piloted program, Ghana was ranked third in the e-Government Readiness Survey for the West African sub-region by the United Nations in 2008, after Nigeria and Carpe Verde⁹ which is indicative of Ghana's preparedness to harvest efficiencies and effectiveness gained from ICT-enabled public administration. Ghana surpassed Nigeria and Carpe Verde in the United Nations E-government Survey in 2014, an improvement in the E-Government Development Index (EGDI) of Ghana, an attestation to the commitment of the government by allocating budget to devise and implement e-government to fine-tune the public sector for efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery. This paper critically assesses the directions of e-Government in Ghana in promoting inclusiveness and participation in governance. The next section of the paper will look at IT visions of administration, some e-Government projects in Ghana, success stories and failures and future directions of e-Government in Ghana.

IT visions of Administration:-

The Ghanaian government has recognized the crucial role that ICTs can play in the institutional renewal, re-engineering and the modernization of the public sector. The deployment and exploitation of ICTs to deliver an improved and efficient public service operations and activities to bring information and services closer to the doorstep of businesses and all citizens. The increasing drive of citizens to participate in government and demand for effective service delivery has characterized the impetus to deploy e-government to bring government closer to the people. The use of ICTs within the public sector and business entities reinforced by organizational and procedural improvement, changes in attitude to work will contribute to reducing operational, administrative and transaction cost of service delivery. Ghana recognizes the role of ICT in facilitating a government-wide communication and linking up all major public sectors such as towns and cities, Ministries, Departments and Agencies. It is worthwhile to note that the National Information Technology Agency (NITA) is the government institution responsible for implementing Ghana's IT policies. NITA is responsible for providing the needed leadership in the deployment of ICTs in the transformation of Government of Ghana's administration, providing the platform for the sharing and delivering of information within the public sector for national development.¹⁰NITA was established by an Act of parliament (NITA Act771, 2008) and has spearheaded the disbursement of credit facilities secured for the e-Ghana projects. The credit facilities include the \$30 million concessionary loan from the Danish Government, the \$40 million from the World Bank, and \$150 million Chinese EXIM Bank loan among others¹¹. Further, NITA exploited its 30% share in Vodafone and used the National Fiber Optics to build a network to link up all MDAs at the national and regional levels¹². The network could reach other public institutions in districts and remote communities that are within the catchment areas.

E-Government Projects in Ghana:-

The government of Ghana has recognized the potential of using the internet as a conduit for delivering public services. In order to promote all-inclusive information society while supporting local government administration, the Government of Ghana developed the Community Information Centre Initiative and ICT infrastructure and services to remote areas of the country. As part of efforts to create awareness and participation in the e-governance process, several e-government forums were launched. These forums were to help enhance citizens' knowledge of ICT. NITA has initiated several projects which will automate processes and streamline the use of ICT for citizens' transformation. Below is a critical assessment of the several manifestations of e-government in Ghana.

The Eastern Corridor Fiber Optic Backbone Project:-

The Ghana Government launched the Eastern Corridor Fiber Optic Project in 2012 to support the e-government network infrastructure. This network infrastructure was an addition to the existing network in other parts of the country. The project spans from Ho in the Volta Region to Bawku in the Upper East Region in about 600 kilometers. It had the potential of facilitating network access to 27 Districts and Municipal Assemblies and other catchment areas. This network and data centers had the potential of streamlining and enhancing delivery of government processes between central and rural divisions. This Project was jointly facilitated by the Danish International Development Agency and Alcatel-Lucent.¹³It must be noted that the move to establish the Eastern

⁹United Nations E-Government Survey, (2018)

¹⁰www.eservices.gov.gh accessed on the 13/06/2018

¹¹Mensah, (2015)

¹²William & Botwe, (2010)

¹³<http://www.biztechafrika.com/article/ghana-e-gov-project-launched/4311/>

Corridor Fiber Optic was initiated in 2008 as part of Ministry of Communication's effort to provide national data hubs and coordinates shared communications and network infrastructure among all public institutions.

Ghana Open Data Initiative (GODI):-

This project was initiated in January 2012 under the auspices of National Information Technology Agency (NITA) in collaboration with the World Foundation (WF) with the aim of making available Government of Ghana data to the general public for reuse. The Government of Ghana had the vision of developing an information free society where there are open discussions and interactions involving industries, the mass media, academia, civil society groups, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), local government units and the citizenry. The project was as a result of the government drive to operate in a gold fish bowl where citizens' quest for accountability and efficiency is assured. This open data portal will be repositories of several data sets categorized into political, organizational, legal, technical, social or economic. The development of GODI was as a result of a global initiative started by the United States of America, which sought to demand governments to be committed to the promotion of accountability, fighting corruption, empowering citizens, transparency, making use of modern technologies in the bid to promote good governance¹⁴

Ghana Community Networks (GCNET):-

With the framework of the Ghana's development agenda to provide better support to government applications and to facilitate resilient and advanced technology platforms, the Ghana Communities Network was awarded a contract for the automation of revenue generation agencies including the Registrar General's Department, the Ghana Revenue Authority and Ghana Port Authorities among others.¹⁵ GCNet is responsible for providing ICT-based solutions to trade activities and ensuring an effective collection of trade-related revenues. GCNet provides solutions that are sought by the government and statutory agencies to promote faster processing and facilitations of all customs clearance documentations online and clearance of goods through the ports¹⁶. The Ghana Communities Network Services Ltd provides single window opportunities for its shareholders, businesses, governments, and individuals in the promotion of trade, perfect competition and improved revenue mobilization.

Other manifestations of E-government Projects in Ghana:-

Apart from the above major e-government projects in Ghana, there are several other projects the government had embarked on to automate government services. Some of these services to be discussed may overlap with other projects. The Ghana National Data Centre was established to develop several portals to make known to the general public the day to day activities of the central government, MDAs, MMDAs and several other public organizations. Key among these portals is electronic services, government e-workspace, e-payment and one stop shop Centre amongst others.

Electronic services (eServices):-

The Government of Ghana initiated the eServices portal to provide one-stop window opportunities with information and services offered by MDAs and other public agencies to interested users. These services includes applying for birth certificates, police finger print check report, passport, marriage certificate registrations, Renewal of driving licenses, clearing of goods at the port, business registrations, paying of taxes, public procurement and NABCO applications. The government envisaged that this online platform will put a stop to long queues at these agencies and frequent trips to offices to receive services which can be attended to in the comfort of homes. In addition, it affords individuals, the opportunity to book appointments dates to provide personal bio data in due time and subsequently notified for collection of items. This online service portal seeks to provide access to government services in an effective and timely manner to the doorstep of the general public, thereby ensuring their participation in governance.

Electronic payment (e-payment):-

This is an initiative of government of Ghana to afford citizens, businesses, industries among others the opportunity to effect payment of government of Ghana services. It is envisaged that e-payment portal will do away with long queues, widen payment for government transactions, enhance and increase the ease of doing business with the

¹⁴ Ohemeng and Ofosu-Adarkwa (2015)

¹⁵ <http://www.eservices.gov.gh/NITA/Lists/Announcements/Announcement.aspx?ID=20&RootFolder=%2FNITA%2FLists%2FAnnouncements&Source=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Eeservices%2Egov%2Egh%2FNITA%2FSitePages%2FNITA%2DHome%2Easpx>

¹⁶ Asuliwonno (2011)

government. It is also envisaged that the e-payment portal will bring about improvement, efficiency and effectiveness in the discharge of day to day activities by all government Ministries, Departments and Agencies. It offers payment of fixed fees and charges, taxes, fines, bills, tangible commodities and several services. All payments for government eServices discussed above are effected through this platform. This payment platform presents clients with several means of payment. Payments could be made locally or internationally using banking cards, bank transfers, mobile wallet payments, point of sale devices and other means of payment such as paypal and expresspay.

One stop-Service Centre:-

This is an initiative by the government of Ghana as part of the e-government phase 2 projects to ensure reachability of services provided by public agencies to the doorstep of interested users. This portal facilitates the provision of the platform for integrated services and delivering information within the public sector for easy access by citizens in order to ease the stress and burden of patronizing public and social services for the betterment of citizens' life. The one stop-shop center was launched by the Ghana government as part of efforts to provide timely, effective and efficient services to whip up citizens' participation in government¹⁷. This portal will serve as the fulcrum around which government eServices and e-payments revolve in enhancing timely and professional delivery of business operations of Ministries, Departments, and Agencies and other public agencies to serve automated services such as applying for business registration and payment for services rendered. This project has been piloted at the nation's capital, Accra and the government intends to set up regional one stop-shop centres after a successful pilot implementation period.

Success stories and Failures:-

The Government of Ghana has chalked considerable strides in her efforts to digitize and automate services in the public sector in the bid to bring public services to the doorstep of citizens and to enhance and encourage citizens' participation in governance. ICT has been integrated virtually into every sector of the economy including health, education, agriculture, defense etc. It is worthwhile to note that ICT plays a pivotal role in creating wealth in every economy and this has been the drive of the government of Ghana to leverage electronic technologies and techniques in the provision of shared information and public services to better the life of citizens. However, the government of Ghana has been challenged by some stumbling blocks in her efforts to fully utilize the potentials of ICT in managing information. Below is a thorough assessment of some success stories and failures vis-a-vis the country's journey in digitalizing and automating public services in Ghana.

Computerized School Selection and Placement System:-

Fast forward to 2005, the government introduced the computerized school selection and placement system to place Junior High School (JHS) graduates into selected schools on the basis of the result obtained. This system came as a relief to many parents who hitherto have to go through the burden of looking for admission for their JHS graduates. This is an e-government initiative by the government aimed at providing parents with quicker and better access to schools in a more personal and cost effective manner. The system is in position to detect vacancies in schools and allot students to fill those vacancies and this helped prevent situations where some schools were overpopulated and others underpopulated. The CSSP is also able to prevent the situation where parents and students have to throng the premises of schools in the bid to secure placement. This system allows students while they wait for school placement, to have a glance of their result online and make decisions on the next move before receiving result slips from their schools. However, the implementation of the CSSP has not been rosy. There have been instances where students who qualify for certain schools have been placed in schools below their expectations. Despite the introduction of the CSSP, some students cannot be placed by the system and these students resort to fair or foul means to get placements in schools.

Online Application and Admission Systems:-

This is another area e-government can be seen to be taking center stage. Considerable success has been recorded in applying for tertiary institutions in Ghana through an online platform. Here, the burden of going through a lot of paper work to apply for institutions of choice is removed. The various tertiary institutions in Ghana, prominent among them University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, University of Mines and Technology, University of Cape Coast, University of Education, Winneba etc. have all introduced online application and admission system where students are required to purchase e-vouchers from banks and fill their details through an online portal. These institutions request for results from examination bodies to check and verify

¹⁷<http://www.eservices.gov.gh/News/Government%20One%20Stop%20Service%20Center%20Launched.aspx>

against those provided by prospective students on the portal. Students who provide correct information and meet admission requirements are deemed qualified, selected and offered admission. However, there are institutions which for several reasons run the online application and admission system alongside a manual application system. This could stem from inadequate technological infrastructure to fully run an online admission system. There have also been instances where applicants have forged documents for the online applications. This compels the institutions not to fully trust the online applications but rather rely on manual form of application.

Paperless System:-

The Government of Ghana has launched several portals for keeping information on a digital filing system. It is the expectation of government that the paperless system will contribute to reducing manual paperwork processes and procedures and expedite public services to citizens in a timely and efficient manner. In other words, services can now be automated through the portals devoid of any paper application procedures. Services currently automated online includes the following; online renewal of licenses and change of vehicle ownership provided by the Driver Vehicle and Licensing Authority (LDVLA), clearing of goods at the port, online registration of businesses, renewal of business licenses provided by Registrar General's Department (RGD), online passport application, marriage certificate registration among others. Despite the successes chalked with the paperless system, most of the paperless portals appear to be at the interactive levels. In other words, it allows citizens to perform part of the transactions online and complete the final part by walking to the premise of a service access point. For instance, online passport application allows an individual to purchase a bank voucher and fill one's details online, pick an appointment date and walk to the premises of the passport office to provide personal bio data and other personal details. Because of these challenges and frustrations that characterized the initial stages to automate services in Ghana, citizens tend to be unaware of the availability of several online services provided by the public sector of Ghana.

Ghana Community Networks (GCNet):-

Ghana has chalked considerable strides as regards the GCNet initiative. This project has made it possible the clearing of goods from the port and harbor. The result from Schuppan's research on e-government in Africa including Ghana revealed that GCNet has the potential to accelerate the flow of goods at the port and harbor because human interactions has been reduced to the barest minimum. Thus, traders can perform the function of clearing goods at the port and harbor with ease in the comfort of their bedroom. Goods at the harbor are dispatched within three days whereas that from the airport dispatched in a day. Verification of documentations and payment of import and export duties and bank confirmations are done in few minutes leading to better customer satisfaction in clearing goods. However, Schuppan's research revealed that there were attempts by some public sector workers to oppose the GCNet initiative because it was going to bring transparency in the operations of the organization¹⁸. There was the likelihood of reduction in the expected additional incomes generated from their corrupt activities.

Significant Challenges:-

The successful implementation of e-Government in Ghana has been bedeviled by a number of obstacles. These obstacles come in the form of Technical Challenges, Organizational Challenges, Social Challenges and Economic Challenges. These challenges are explained below:

Technical Challenges:-

People doubt the Security of privacy: essential obstacle in implementing e-Governance is provision of assurance for the privacy and security of the information that a person provides to access government services. Effective implementation of e-government requires that, some security measures should be taken to protect sensitive personal information of individuals. Lack of security for personal information abounds in Ghana and this has militated against the successful extraction of information from citizens. The files that contain personal information, financial services, and medical services are to be protected in a safer manner, and then only, people will have assurance of trust in the e-Government projects. Therefore, implementation of e-governance projects coupled with security standards and protocols for safeguarding the interest of all end-users will lead to citizens' trust and confidentiality in the e-governance projects in Ghana.

¹⁸Schuppan, T. 2009. E-Government in Developing Countries: Experiences from Sub-Saharan Africa. Government Information Quarterly, 26(1): 118-127

Trust: Assurance of trust can be outlined on two dimensions: as an associate degree assessment of a current state of affairs, or as an innate personality trait or predisposition¹⁹. The performance of public administration functions via e-government has to be backed two levels of trust. The first is that the user should be assured, snug, trusting of the tool or technology with which they will interact. The second dimension of trust relates to trust of the government²⁰. There should be a balance between making certain that a system prevents fraudulent transactions and also the burden that intensive checks will manifest itself on people place the square measure honest²¹. Recently, hints on military veterans were compromised once a desktop computer containing their personal information was lost in India. This kind of incident will erode trust and user confidence in public service delivery. There have been several instances in Ghana where important private information of persons has been leaked. Trust and security for financial transactions are the two crucial factors militating against the adoption of e-government services²².

Inadequate ICT Infrastructure: Facilities for effective automation of services is needed for implementation of e-governance to the maximum as attainable in Ghana. The Ghana's public service is still challenged with inadequate basic ICT tools. For example, most offices do not have computer installations neither the personnel with common skillsets for its operation. What is seen in their daily routine operations is the old ways of doing things. In most cases, there is no access to internet in most public sector offices; fluctuations in regular power supply which militates against the progress of e-governance. There ought to be enough basic facilities in order to give impetus to e-governance in Ghana.

Organizational challenges:-

Resistance to change to electronic ways: This is a major stumbling block in Ghana's public sector. Most public sector workers are still used to the traditional ways of performing daily routines. The resistance to attempts to change these phenomena explains much of the hesitation on the part of government in moving from a paper-based to a web-based system in the provision of better and timely services to the citizenry. That is, public sector workers are still used to working with a lot of papers, carrying of files from one desk to the other or from one office to the other. Their resistance to e-governance implementation in the provision of services is a testament to the poor rating of the level of e-governance in the public service. In a nutshell, most of the public servants are not computer literate, not qualified, have little or no training in the installation, maintenance, designing and implementation of ICT infrastructure.

Lack of integrated services: There is lack of coordination and integration in e-governance services which are rendered by various MDA's and public sector organizations. Absence of communication between different departments of government may be its major cause. The information needed by other department for the efficient performance of daily routines is lacking and sometimes the information from one departments has no or very little meaning to some other departments of the government.

Social Challenges:-

Inadequate education or low awareness of individuals: Most Ghanaians do not seem to be responsive to the advantages of e-Governance services. The unawareness on the part of citizens to make use of e-Government services could also be due to the initial frustrations that has become part and parcel of every e-Government initiatives by the government of Ghana. Besides, the government does not pay a lot of attention on creating citizens' awareness of e-Governance services. Lack of education could be a major stumbling block in the implementation of e-Governance projects.

Accessibility: In the age of technology, a large number of individuals are using the internet via computers and mobile phones. There exist a wide gap between users and nonusers of the internet; due to inadequate internet infrastructure and poor internet access in rural areas, etc.

Acceptance: E-governance requires reconfiguration of internal and external structure of public sectors. The goal is to boost the system expeditiously and to provide better services to the people. E-governance is for national

¹⁹Driscoll (1978)

²⁰Joseph, R. C., & Kitlan, D. P, (2008).

²¹Chandrashekhar, (2008)

²²Gilbert, D., Balestrini, P., & Littleboy, D.(2004)

convenience, rather than convenience of privileged few. The ability to successfully manage and resolve conflicts over the division and useful boundaries become distinguished in integration method.

Economic Challenges:-

Cost: In most developing countries such as Ghana, cost is a major stumbling block to implementation of e-Governance where most of the populace finds it difficult to make ends meet. A chunk of resources is required in implementation, operational and evolutionary maintenance tasks. This makes politicians lose interest in implementing e-Governance projects. The costs of running and maintaining e-Government must be low enough so as to guarantee a good cost/benefit ratio. Carvin et al stated that because of the high cost of implementation and maintenance of the computer systems, many countries are in dilemma as to the funding e-government programs, although the government agency has a vision for effective and accessible e-government²³.

Maintainability: Maintenance of ICT is of utmost importance and as such IT ministries have been continuously developing new software to meet the current needs of citizens. Maintenance of electronic device is necessary because, Information Technology keeps changing rapidly and it is very difficult for government to update existing systems accordingly. Regulations of different devices and their different characteristics may be complex and vary and the system in use must outline an enabling environment to handle all emerging needs. Thus maintenance of ICT is crucial for systems in a rapidly changing complex environment.

Limited financial resources: A chunk of a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a measure of national income and a country's economy has to be invested in e-Government projects. GDP can be explained as the total market value of all finished goods and services produced within the country for a specific period of time. A country's GDP is the measure of its financial strength. Ghana has inadequate financial resources as regards to the implementation and maintenance of the e-Government projects.

Future directions of e-Government in Ghana:-

Various research projects and thorough analysis of e-Government initiatives of Ghana revealed that Ghana stands to reap plethora of benefits from myriads of projects it is undertaking to digitalize and automate services in Ghana. It will be a mistake to reiterate the catchphrase that e-Government is in its infancy in Ghana because its inception dates back to 2003 when the Ghana ICT for Accelerated Development (ICT4AD) was first outdoored as a masterplan to digitalize the country. However, the momentum to propel the economy to a fully-fledged digital economy has assumed a slower pace. Many scholars and researchers have reasons to opionate and christen current stage of digitalization as still infancy. In spite of this, Ghana has showed some level of commitment to use e-Government as a tool to effectively inject efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of government businesses and services rendered by MDAs and other public sector organizations to the citizenry. There is and has been increasing demands from the citizenry for government services and information to be made readily available. These demands from the citizenry have been the springboard for various e-Government initiatives of successive governments in Ghana.

Heeks suggested that there is slightly over 85% failure rate (35% total failures, 50% partial failures) of e-Government initiatives in developing countries such as Ghana, even though there has been lot of investments commitment in these initiatives. This wobbling figure indicates that the future of e-Government especially in developing countries like Ghana is unpredictable, if concrete measures are not put in place to safeguard these initiatives²⁴. It seemed that research on the future directions of e-Government projects in most developing countries has not engaged the attention of researchers and this has been corroborated by opinions of Dzhusupova et al. They argued that "Unfortunately, few studies focus on the challenges affecting sustainable implementation of EGOV initiatives and how these challenges could be addressed"²⁵.

²³Carvin et al., (2004)

²⁴Heeks, R. (2003). 'Success and failure rates of E-Government in developing/transitional countries: Overview'. Available at www.egov4dev.org/sfoverview.htm (Accessed on 11/10/2018)

²⁵Dzhusupova, Z., Janowski, T., Ojo, A and Estevez, E. (2011). 'Sustaining Electronic Governance programs in Developing Countries'. Proceedings of the 14th Annual International Conference on Digital Government Research.

Heeks attributed the wobbling effort of developing countries to sustain e-Government projects largely on the foreign ownership of the projects and inability of state institutions to balance the interests of donor agencies and the general interest of the citizenry. He made the case that projects fail to meet the local context because they are donor-driven and there is deliberate effort not to rope in key stakeholder who matter in planning. In light of this, Dzhusupova et al argued that “strong political leadership, clear vision, early involvement of stakeholders, regular feedback and partnership” are essential ingredients in sustaining the success of e-Government projects vis a vis inadequate resource availability bedeviling developing countries such as Ghana. Heeks also recognized the role of political leadership, devotion of public officials and the availability of strong institutions in the quest to digitalize and automate government projects.

The role of the private sector in the bid to realizing digitalization of the economy of Ghana has been crucial to the whole process. Governments in developing countries have recognized the need to involve the private sector in the sustenance of e-Government projects. To set up a digital economy, there is the need for a functioning telecoms network and the penetration in mobile phone networks in Ghana to be a massive game changer. The considerable success in the digitalization of Ghana has largely been driven by telecom service providers, mostly private operators such as MTN, Vodafone, Airtel-Tigo among others. These private network operators have provided the foundation to complement the effort of the government of Ghana. Dr. Edward Omane-Boamah when he took his turn in a regular ‘meet the press series underscored the need for coordination between public and private sector in achieving long-term success of e-Government²⁶.

Conclusion:-

A significant attempt has been made in this paper to examine the adoption and implementation of e-Government in Ghana. The paper focused on the journey of Ghana from 2003 when the ICT for Accelerated development (ICT4AD) was launched, examination of various e-Government initiatives and the way forward. This paper recognizes the fact that e-Government is a tool for ensuring inclusiveness and participation in governance, promotion of the sustainable development goals in an attempt to make it part and parcel of Ghana’s longstanding tradition and heritage. In spite of the challenges confronting the public sector of Ghana, the state stands to reap lots of benefits from e-Government projects if the right political leadership, devotion of public officials, early involvement of stakeholders, regular feedback and partnership becomes the prevailing hallmark of government projects. There is also the need to inject capital investment on the part of government in ICT related projects. This will enable government agencies not only to transform the economy but to modernize business processes and services rendered by public sector organizations. It also enables government to ensure inclusion, better public service and quality of life. More importantly citizens can have access to public services at times and locations of their convenience. There is a wobbling prospect for e-governance projects in developing countries such as Ghana since there is little effort made by researchers to do further studies on the future directions of e-Government in Ghana.

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²⁶ The information is available at www.graphic.com/gh/news/20117-e-gov-project-makes-headway.html Accessed on 11/10/2018.

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