

The Relevance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for National Integration

Johnson Oluwatobi Akanbi¹, Adeoye Azeez² and Odo Ode-Abine Peter³

¹Department of Computer Science, Sikiru Adetona College of Education, Science & Technology, Omu-Ajose, Ogun State, Nigeria. ²Department of Computer Science, Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

³Department of Information Technology, Central Bank of Nigeria, Abuja, Nigeria.

Corresponding author: johnsonoluwatobiakanbi@gmail.com

Abstract

African countries should integrate ICT into their governance structures in order to develop policies to advance national social cohesion. Developing an e-Cultural Synchronize model towards national unity in African nations with the synchronizing of indigenous cultures acting as the fulcrum allows us to offer a heuristic. The argument is based about the need for African states to pay closer attention to the cultural textile of their respective communities in order to show that several aspects of African culture are not incompatible with democratic governance or other forms of government which some African leaders have tried. This will help to ease tensions between different cultures. This article highlighted different e-governance model that have been developed, then the model that is widely adopted with the stages involved. It also discusses how e-cultural synchronization model can be achieved with four stages of development. In this study, e-CS is not portrayed as a magic bullet for solving the problems crucial national integration in African nations, especially those with diverse populations. The e-CS was primarily created to provide data on e-Government portals regarding co-cultural entities in different African countries, and it is thought to be a significant part of national integration procedures. The study also revealed some basic components that e-governance requires to operate effectively and efficiently which are energy; telecommunications and related technologies; and dedicated political leadership. Indigenous cultural synchronization as a means of fostering national cohesiveness has received little attention in comparison to ideological decisions and democratic governance in a number of attempts at national unification.

Keywords: e-Cultural Synchronization, National Integration, ICT, Conflict Resolution, Cultural Synchronization.

Introduction

To get a handle on the case for including cultural synchronization as a crucial component among the constituent aspects at play for the successful usage and deployment of it in e-governance platforms, we examine and analyze the following: (a) the national integration issue in Africa countries in the brightness of the impact of cultural synchronization as an essential component of efforts to achieve national unity; (b) conceptual analysis of e-governance; (c) attempting to create an e-cultural interoperability framework as a constituent element inside e-government channels in African nations as a means of solving the national integration problem; and (d) creating a model for e-cultural synchronization as

a component of African e-government platforms with the goal of fostering social cohesion and acting, among other things, as a conflict resolution tool necessary for national integration efforts by African states. Several African countries, like the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic, to mention a few, have seen protracted ethnic and religious conflicts that have resulted in the loss of lives of millions of Africans. Aside from the deaths, many Africans have been displaced as a result of infrastructural damage and community looting. Refugee camps for fled Africans fleeing intra-African conflict produce dislocated ethnic groupings that group forces to launch attacks on their adversaries. One such example is the protracted struggle between both the Rwandan government and Hutu rebels that fled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and have taken part in violent invasions. The situation in Rwanda is shocking not only because of the horrifying genocide that occurred there in 1996, but also because it lacks the ethnic, language, and religious diversity of places like Nigeria, where Boko Haram is causing mayhem and expanding the front of the war into Cameroon and Niger. In Rwanda, for example, the two primary ethnic groups speak the same language, in contrast to Nigeria, which has over 200 languages and dialects.

Statement of Problem

Understanding the idea of cultural synchronization requires identifying methods and means for gathering, codifying, synchronizing, and distributing data on similarities or differences in cultural traits of warring factions, as well as the public at large, via the use of ICT infrastructure. There seems to be a sizable knowledge gap, or simply a failure to perceive ethnic and other belief system commonalities that should bring people together rather than divide them and differences that point to pressing issues that call for peaceful resolution (Bitzer, 1968).

Objectives

The objective of this study is to evaluate ICT for national integration by examining cultural synchronization construct, e-governance, and e-Cultural Synchronization Model.

Cultural Synchronization Construct

In order to "ethnically integrate Africa and its people," Blake (1988) recommended that African nations use contemporary information and communication technologies (p.17). In order to raise awareness among the general public that co-cultural communities might very well share more in common than they realize and to encourage social cohesion, cultural synchronization is defined as "the process of collecting and formalizing details on similarities that occur among co-cultural groups in different African countries. The emphasis on commonalities does not prohibit data on differences that need to be resolved peacefully.

"Against the backdrop of ethnic and cultural strife in numerous parts of the world," the point was made (p. 17). "As a continent, Africa is striving to grasp the complicated role and place of culture in order to go forward with its many development projects," says the report (p.3, 1989). "Research on software development in particular has resulted in the possibility of miniaturizing knowledge without sacrificing content and substance. Miniaturized knowledge is rapidly disseminated by computer and related technologies with a broader scope than traditional methods, with the possibility of reaching more people simultaneously," he claimed (p. 2). The use of information communication and technology to record fundamental elements, such as customs, beliefs, stereotypes, values, prejudices, worldview, and other characteristics of culture, will improve access to such content. However, it would include the following processes for determining access: strong research initiatives; formulation and processing, followed by research data packaging, storage, and distribution. As a component of the larger e-governance platforms used by African countries, the spread will form the basis of e-cultural synchronization. Access to such content will be facilitated by the use of ICT to document key aspects of culture, including traditions, views, stereotypes, values, prejudices, and other traits. Strong research initiatives, formulation and processing, then package, storage, and distribution of research findings would all be included in the processes for determining accessibility, though. As a component of the larger e-governance platforms used by African countries, the distribution will form the basis of e-cultural synchronization. We start there because efforts in Africa to build a cultural synchronization component into e-governance platforms should take into account the value of miniaturizing insights about similarities and differences in a variety of cultural practices and beliefs between many co-cultural communities in ethnically, linguistically, and religiously diverse countries. In order to develop digestible and practical material within the platform, this should be done in such a way that aids co-cultural groups in maintaining crucial knowledge about common cultural beliefs and practices, perspective, values, and so forth. Citizens having access to knowledge on synchronized cultures bodes well for a better-informed citizenry on topics like as mutually shared ideas, customs, tradition, mores, and so on, as well as differences that need to be resolved peacefully. As will be mentioned later, there are several obstacles to ordinary citizens' access to e-governance platforms in African countries that must be addressed. Meanwhile, recent technological advancements have aided in the creation of a "new culture" (for Africa) in terms of information generation, aggregation, codification, storage, transmission, and retrieval, which is advantageous for cultural synchronization.

When examining the whole African picture, cultural synchronization becomes increasingly important as divisions become more established. Democracy, for example, is fast spreading across Africa, as indicated by the birth and growth of a multi-party system. However, a hefty burden that comes with democracy as an ideology choice, particularly for varied African nations, is an inherent aspect in such an ideological choice. That baggage is ethnic divide, which is typified by democracy's strong adversarial tendency. The division extends beyond ethnic lines. In some African countries, such as Zambia and the Ivory Coast, it causes

xenophobic tensions over problems of citizenship among candidates for national office (Whitaker, 2005; Oduro, 2009).

National Integration

For postcolonial African states, nationwide integration has long been a major focus of attention from academics, policymakers, and the United Nations system (APPER, 1986). Most African countries began their decolonization process, social scientists debated and worried about the necessity for national unity in African communities with different set of people (Binder, 1964; Coleman & Rosberg, 1966; Zolberg, 1967; Davis and Kalu-Nwiwu, 2001). Bandyopadhyay & Green (2009), Onifade & Imhonopi (2013), supporters of national integration as a policy to foster state development in a continent beset by socio-political instability, have re-emphasized this point. Inter- and intra-ethnic conflicts, as well as religious tensions, characterize the socio-political landscape in most African countries. In Nigeria, for example, there are opposing viewpoints on national integration projects. Nigeria is a tremendously varied country (Ihonvbere et.al.,2003; Attah, 2013). Inter- and intra-ethnic conflicts, as well as religious tensions, characterize the socio-political landscape in most African countries. Also, some of the major challenges of national integration in Nigeria includes absence of rule of law, poverty, insecurity and inequality, illiteracy, poor governances, corruption, nepotism, uneven development and many more. Jude & Okoroafor (2018)

Some elements of African national integration historiography reveal a preference for "de-ethnicized" national unity over cultural diversity. Nigeria, for instance, have around 250 ethnic groups (Enegwea & Umoden, 1993). According to this theory, ethnic variety can create centrifugal pressures that drive countries apart. This fact needs the unification of various ethnic groups into a single entity with a common identity and destiny. National integration is, in essence, a process aimed at diminishing the prevalence of micro-nationalities and promoting a sense of nationhood (Alapiki, 2000). There are several strategies to achieve this; including tearing down ethnic boundaries, removing inherited ethnic allegiances, and creating a feeling of shared identity. But at the other side, a functionalist perspective posits that many ethnic groups operate as a network, with each unit contributing to the greater good. Because of this, various ethnic groups are interconnected and reliant sub-units that must work together (Anele, 1999). We define national unity as a process that results in a stable national entity through improved co-cultural group communication and understanding, as well as similar and shared beliefs, practices, traditions, and other nexus elements. Based on culture synchronization as a procedure of enabling national unity admits disparities among co-cultural communities exhibited in unshared values, opinions, customs, traditions, and ways of thinking, but focuses and uplifts comparable and allowed to share components, while studying further about disparities and how to resolve them peacefully. This is necessary for co-cultural communities to work on the basis of peaceful coexistence. Thus, regional and other

requirements that would serve as the framework for national development plans are justified by a nationally synchronized cultural vision. An ICT-based method for obtaining such learning is e-Cultural synchronization.

Information and Communication Technologies within the Context of E-governance for Nigeria

E-government is defined in a variety of ways. E-governance is defined by Olowu (2004) as "all the information and communication technology platforms and applications in use in the public sector for delivering government information and services to citizens via the internet." e-Government is defined as the change of government-to-stakeholder relationships (citizens, businesses, and employees) via the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to promote efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, accountability, responsibility, and service delivery (Kraemer & King, 2003). E-governance is a foregone conclusion when we are talking about national integration. It increases the participation of the citizens in the affairs of the government. With a proper implementation of e-governance application, a government will move closer to true democracy. As a result of this transparency will increase in having access to government daily running, how decisions are made, as well as hold public servant for their actions and inactions (Obodo & Anigbata, 2018).

According to research, e-government has been found to offer people, firms, and governments a number of advantages, including improving service quality, enhanced openness, less bribery, and increased national commerce and competition (Pudjianto and Hangjung, 2009; Srivastava and Teo, 2006; Moynihan, 2004). Hafkin (2009) claims that the implementation of e-Government in Africa involves a variety of strategies, including those that are highly technological and inwardly oriented (integrating ICTs into all aspects of government activity), more external Network public - sector delivery of services, the consumer and advancement method recommended by the United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN), and utilizing technology to transform public administration.

The Internet, which is implemented through Wide Area Networks or mobile computing, is the basic method to e-Government. It can be supplied via internet protocol gadgets like PCs and PDAs, as well as non-internet protocol devices such as phone, fax, PDA etc. (Hafkin, 2009).

There are four different types of e-government facilities: (1) a highly secure intranet for more effective communication between government entities; (2) Web-based service provision; (3) e-Commerce for more efficient public transactions taking place; and (4) multimedia democracy for more open and accountable government (Moon, 2002). There are various sorts of government relations, including govt-to-citizens (G2C), govt-to-business (G2B), govt-to-employee (G2E), and govt-to-govt (G2G) (Graafland-Essers and Etteedgui, 2003; Carrizales, 2008; Ayo, 2009).

Due to the aforementioned, the inclusion of cultural synchronization in African countries' e-government platforms would be advantageous for all tasks aimed at: creating and achieving national identity, consciousness, and integration (G2C); guaranteeing fairness in hiring practices and employee welfare in the public and private sectors (G2B); and creating public affairs and relations strategy and techniques for government.

e-Government Models

There are many models that have been developed to describe the stages of e-government. These models have some things in common, but they also differ in some ways. Examples of such models include the five-stage UN model, the Jayashree and Marthandan Model, the World Bank's three-stage prototype, Gartner's four-stage model, Layne and Lee's four-stage model, and Gartner's four-stage model (Jayashree and Marthandan, 2010; Layne and Lee, 2001; UNASPA, 2001; Baum and Di Maio, 2000). The UN' e-government approach is the most well-known and widely used (Haveez, 2004; Hafeez & Sher, 2006; Unies, 2008). The stages of the model are as follows:

Stage 1 - Emerging presence: A government can create a website with links to numerous ministries and departments as well as an official website to build a presence online. Information is generally passive, and there is little to no engagement with citizens.

Stage 2 - Enhanced visibility: More data on government policy and regulation is made available to the public and is made easily accessible to them. Links are created to previously published materials, including publications like records, reports, and laws. Governments offer online services like downloadable application forms in.

Stage 3 - of the process, an engaging platform with facilities to make it simpler for citizens to use is now being built.

Stage 4 - Transactional presence: 'Citizen and government' now have two-way communication. It provides possibilities for paying taxes, applying for ID cards or passports, and other G2C-like tasks.

Stage 5 - The most advanced degree of e-government implementation is networked (or fully integrated) presence. It integrates all G2G, G2C, and G2B e-government service dimensions. At this point, government becomes proactive in communicating with and responding to citizens' demands using technology.

e-Cultural Synchronization Model

This model goes through four stages of development. As follows: (1). An interpretive methodology is needed for thorough research on the various cultural universes present in the various African countries. (2). Data collection from step one above, organized and prepared. (3). the processing of varying data (4). e-government platform formatting (5). Dissemination launches for G2C, G2B, G2E, and G2G

The first level mentioned above calls for partnership with sociologists and anthropologists, historians, scholars/experts in religious studies, intercultural communication, and

persuasive communication, all of which have study expertise in African communities. Such a project would benefit from an interpretive approach. Information on different value, religious and secular beliefs, customs, behaviors, ways of thinking, ceremonies, philosophies, histories, reasons for actions, as well as other socio-psychological variables would be included in the findings. As a result, the initial step of the research procedure requires a high level of open-mindedness in that researchers should refrain from passing judgment on the beliefs, rituals, rites, etc. of co-cultural groups because doing so could negatively affect the arrangement and formulation of the data.

The organization and formulating of data coming from research initiatives in stage two would be carried by same group of researchers. At this stage, distinct categories are identified and articulated, leading to a decomposition and classification of similarities and differences across different ethnic, language, and religious groups within a given nation. In order to synchronize the varied population, overlapping in differences and similarities are discovered and systematized.

Stages three and four, which deal with processing different types of data and formats for e-governance systems, are managed by ICT specialists. For clarification and to vouch for the validity of the data being prepared electronically for compatibility with e-Government systems, these experts would have accessibility to researchers especially in phases one and two. The process of validating created data is crucial to verify that there is no suspicion of manipulation before the data is synthesize and formatted for uploading to the e-government platform. As was already mentioned, synchronization is not just about similarities. It is also important to group and organize overlaps in differences so that they are seen as challenges to forging a national identity as well as urgent issues that need to be addressed gradually. The last step is to officially launch e-CS on the e-government platform. A well-written manual and explanation of the function and purpose of e-CS would need to be planned in intended to notify general public, companies, government representatives, and employees of government about the abundance and diversity evident in the synchronized content designed to showcase similarities across which a national cultural heritage is seen and celebrated as a means of establishing a collective national consciousness and identity. It would be advantageous to use e-CS data in basic, middle, and tertiary educational institutions. It should be understood, though, that e-CS does not serve as a substitute for textbooks or scholarly reference materials like books or articles that have undergone peer review.

As a result of the foregoing, security considerations must also be taken into account when managing e-CS. Hackers could gain access to it, perhaps distorting content to the point where e-CS contains inaccurate and provocative information about various co-cultural groups, causing conflict. To provide complete protection, no effort should be spared.

Limitations

You should be aware of several limitations. Africa, for instance, continues to have a high literacy rate, especially the ICT facilities like e-CS and e-governance in particular. In addition

to the aforementioned, e-governance requires the following basic components of national, regional, state, and local infrastructure to operate effectively and efficiently: energy; telecommunications and related technologies; and dedicated political leadership, given the recent history of several African countries afflicted by corruption, graft, and nepotism that undermine trust in governments. Access to and use of e-governance platforms will be limited or only beneficial to those in society who can afford to use ICT if the source of e-governance cannot be trusted. There are several human and fiscal resources needed for each of the five steps in the above-mentioned stages.

Conclusion

The current situation in African nations with various situations is unstable in terms of political and socioeconomic circumstances as well as numerous aspects of belief systems, cultural traditions, and worldview. National integration initiatives are under pressure in nations battling insurgencies, such as Nigeria, Mali, Morocco, Republic of the Congo etc. The worst example of a nation that once had strong national integration but is now in utter disarray and on the verge of collapse is Libya.

National integration is complicated when it comes to the issues that must be overcome in order to achieve stability and the development of a national consciousness and identity. In this study, e-CS is not portrayed as a magic bullet for solving the problems crucial national integration in African nations, especially those with diverse populations. The e-CS was primarily created to provide data on e-Government portals regarding co-cultural entities in different African countries, and it is thought to be a significant part of national integration procedures. The information provided would concentrate on the similarities and contrasts in the defining characteristics of co-cultural groupings through the usage of technology and e-government platforms. In spite of these differences, there is a lot of "us" in "them," and the information in e-CS could help co-cultural groups understand, appreciate, and act on such information. Every unique diverse state in Africa's government would need to show that it is willing to spend in e-governance platforms before enhancing the platform with the kind and caliber of data on various industries, such as e-Commerce and the anticipated e-CS. the potential benefit of co-cultural groups realizing how much of "us" is present in "them."

Recommendations

- Government should improve on power supply.
- Government should improve on ICT facilities especially in the rural areas.
- Government should make ICT gadgets to be more affordable for masses.
- Government should improve upon the existing e-governance portal/platform and take into cognizance the key areas of CS-Model and create more awareness programs so as to inform people on how to use their e-governance portal/platforms.

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