

Proceedings of The 15th European Conference on eGovernment (ECEG 2015)

University of Portsmouth

UK

18 - 19 June, 2015

Edited by

Dr Carl Adams

University of Portsmouth

UK

Electronic Enabled Citizens-Parliament Interaction: Imperative for Democratic Governance in African States

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Abstract: Pivotal to democratic governance is the legislature which provides a veritable interactive, participatory and consultative platform for citizens' input in the decision-making process. In an era of public disenchantment on democratic institutions, modern democratic parliaments utilize Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) to enhance their accessibility and interaction with citizens for inclusive decision making process. In spite of the unprecedented diffusion, acceptance and usage of ICTs in Africa, legislative assemblies of most African countries are inaccessible and lack adequate meeting facilities to regularly interact meaningfully with the public. This research paper therefore employs a combination of descriptive statistics of website survey and updated literature search to evaluate the extents of the capacity of African parliamentary websites to engage citizens in legislative decision-making process. The research findings reveal the extent of the usefulness of African parliamentary websites, in view of the potentials that the unprecedented growth and diffusion of Internet and mobile technologies acceptance and usage in Africa present, for democratic governance such as required by modern democratic parliaments

Keywords: parliament, legislative assembly, decision-making, democratic governance, Africa, citizens interaction.

Citation: Samuel Oni, Charles K. Ayo, Aderonke A. Oni and Moses Duruji (2015) Electronic Enabled Citizens-Parliament Interaction: Imperative for Democratic Governance in African States. *The Proceeding of 14th European Conference on E-Government*, University of Portsmouth UK, June 18-19

1. Introduction

Citizens involvement in the legislative decision making process is a central component and process of democratic governance (Johansen, 2003; Saliu & Muhammad, 2010). This is because the fulcrum of legislative activity is expected to be the articulation and aggregation of diverse interests of the represented constituencies into the policy process. The representation function of the legislature provides citizens the opportunity to have a say in governance. Different groups in a society are represented in the legislature which gives those groups the opportunity of articulating and advancing their interests and concerns (Simmons, 2002). The representation function of the legislature thus enhances the legitimacy of public policy, reduces alienation, reduces estrangement between the government and the governed as well as enhances the stability of the system (Edosa & Azelama, 1995). Legislators, as noted by Roberts (2002), play dual representational roles. First, they represent their people to government, and second, they represent government in their constituency. This indispensable responsibility creates a two way communication and relationship between parliaments and the public. In an era of public disenchantment on democratic institutions, modern democratic parliaments utilize Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) to enhance their accessibility and interaction with citizens for inclusive decision making process (Leston-Bandeira, 2007; Papaloi and Gouscos, 2011). All

over the world, Information and communication technologies (ICT) have been found to be essential in supporting and enhancing legislative capacities to communicate and interact with the public for an inclusive decision (Inter-parliamentary Union, 2007). It is worth mentioning that there has been unprecedented diffusion, sporadic and exponential growth of Internet and mobile technology acceptance and usage in Africa over the last decades (IPU, 2009; Oni and Oni, 2014). Paradoxically however, the legislative assemblies of most African countries are inaccessible and lack adequate meeting facilities to regularly interact meaningfully with the public resulting to a disconnect between the legislature and their constituents with a concomitant public apathy and cynicism towards their representatives (Oni & Oni, 2014). The question of the extent to which parliamentary institutions in Africa have utilized ICT to enhance their accessibility and interaction with the citizens for inclusive decision making process is, thus, the concern of this research paper.

2. Theoretical Analysis and Literature Review of the Legislature and Democratic Governance

The idea of democratic governance lacks has been interpreted in different ways not only because it is packed with different variables and dimension, but also because the quality of democratic governance is a politically, culturally and ideologically charged determination (Nahem and Wilde, 2012; Papaioannou, 2012). It is however indubitable that democratic governance is central to peace and development (OECD, 2008; Oyeshile, 2009). According to the UNDP (2010), democratic governance connotes that people have a say in the decisions that affect their lives and that they can hold decision-makers accountable. It involves citizens' access and participation in development (Rondinelli, 2007), and requires a set of political institutions and processes based on the principles of popular control over public decisions and decision makers, and equality of respect and voice between citizens in the exercise of that control (Tommasoli, 2007). It involves civil engagement and opportunities to participate in decision making (Santiso, 2002). Fundamental to democratic governance is people's involvement in political decision making process of issues that relate to the totality of their well being. One cannot talk of democratic governance if the decision making process excludes the masses (Martinussen, 1996). In this respect, the quality of democratic governance is determined by the extent to which these institutions give room for citizens' inclusive participation or representation and the extent of their accountability, transparency and responsiveness to the citizens (Tommasoli, 2007:52; UNDP, 2010).

The success of democratic governance is dependent on having strong effective and efficient legislative institution (NDI, 2006). This is because the legislature is the assembly of lay politicians who represent the people and invested with formal law making power for the advancement and wellbeing of the citizenry (UNDP, 2010). The legislature is seen as occupying fundamental place in democratic governance with the singular purpose of articulating and expressing the collective will, views and wishes of the citizens in decision making processes (Heywood, 2007; Bernick & Bernick, 2008). As a foundational pillar of democratic government, the legislature serves as a link between government and the people and provides a channel of communication that can build public support for the government, thus help sustain the regime and also force government to respond to the demands and aspiration of the public demands (Carey, 2006). Legislators, in this regards play dual representational roles. First, they represent their people to government, and second, they represent government in their constituency (Roberts, 2002). In this regards, the legislature is responsible for representing the differences (geography, ethnicity, religion, political identification, gender, or other characteristics) in society, and for bringing these differences into the policy-making arena (Johnson, 2005). The legislature is thus a mechanism through which the population, its special interests and diverse territory are represented (Bernick & Bernick, 2008; Petersmann, 2013). The representation function of the legislature provides citizens the opportunity to have a say in governance thereby enhances the legitimacy of public policy, reduces political alienation and estrangement between the government and the governed as well as enhances the stability of the system (Edosa & Azelama, 1995, Simmons, 2002). It is on this note that

Poteete (2010) argued that the strength, composition and the state of the legislature is one of the strongest measures and predictors of a country's democratic development and survival. Representative liberal democracy cannot exist without a healthy, lively and credible legislature. This is because the establishment of the legislature rests on the assumption that in the final analysis, political power still resides in the people and that the people can, if they choose, delegate the exercise of their sovereignty to elected representatives (Loewenberg, 1995). Perhaps, it is in the light of this, that Smith (1980) sees the legislature as the symbol of power and legitimacy.

3. Electronic Parliament imperatives for Democratic Governance in African States

The quality of democratic institutions and processes is pivotal to democratic governance and is, among others, a requisite to reducing poverty and promoting human development (UNO, 2000). This makes the quality of African parliaments a critical issue in Africa. Following the recognition of the imperative of democratic governance to development, there has been continuing efforts at building and sustaining democracy across Africa in the past decade (ECA, 2012). Despite the progress recorded, the contemporary Africa is beset with poverty, debt, problems of armed conflict, national security crises, elections electoral irregularities and malpractices and institutionalized corruption (Duruji, 2010; Oni, Chidozie and Agbude, 2013). In spite of efforts undertaken by most African countries in promoting people's participation in decision making processes, a number of them still lack appropriate laws, technical capacity, policies and mechanisms towards enhancing citizens' participation in economic, social and political decision-making (Azevedo-Harman, 2011). Democratic governance revolves around accountability, legitimacy and responsiveness, among others, however political life in many African States is characterized by weak and underdeveloped democratic institutions which, often, are lacking in accountability, transparency and responsiveness (Adetula, 2011; Gberevbie, 2014). The political reality in most African countries with respect to civic participation is that African parliamentarians only engage the public during election campaign, and once elected, they lose contact with the interest of the electorates (ECA, 2012). Africa's legislature has been depicted as mere institution for legitimizing government policies, recruiting and socializing new elites, and mobilizing public support for political regimes (Thomas & Sissokho, 2005; Oni & Oni, 2014). The concomitance is a disconnect between the legislators and their constituents with the attendant public apathy and cynicism towards African institutions of governance (ECA (2012; Gberevbie, 2014).

The capacity of the legislature to efficiently and effectively perform its representation role continues to be a major concern in many African countries (Nijzink, Mozaffar and Azevedo, 2006; ECA, 2012; Oni and Oni, 2014). There is urgent need for African democratic parliaments to be more visible to and reachable by their communities. African legislatures need to create more open, responsive and effective channels for enhancing citizens' participation and involvement in policy making (Sellers, 2002; Schneider, 2003; Azevedo-Harman, 2011). This will yield citizens trust in government and deepen a peace process by incorporating a wider array of interests and individuals at various levels (Tommasoli, 2007:52).

Access to both the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) networks (not only internet based) and public information via ICTs are fundamental underpinnings to accomplish the goalsof providing access to information, making parliaments visible and reachable and at same time, enhancing citizen and stakeholder participation in the political process (UNDP, 2010). Modern democratic parliaments have found ICT to be essential in supporting and enhancing their accessibility and capacities to communicate and interact with the public for an inclusive decision making process (Inter-parliamentary Union, 2007; Leston-Bandeira, 2007; Papaloi and Gouscos, 2011). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) submitted that citizens' democratic political participation must involve the means to be informed, the mechanisms to take part in the decision-making and the ability to contribute and influence the policy agenda (OECD, 2001). Level of participation considers the extent (what level and how far) to which citizens are actively engaged in politics using ICT

(Macintosh, 2004). According to the OECD (2001), government and citizens interaction using ICT is made of three distinct stages:

- Information: This describes a one-way relationship in which the government produces, provides and delivers information for the citizens. Examples include government websites, access to public records and official gazettes.
- Consultation: This describes a two-way relationship that creates an avenue for citizens to provide feedback on issues to the government. The process starts with government pre-defining information and issues for consultation. This is followed by preparing questions and managing the process. Thereafter, the views and contributions of citizens are welcomed. Examples include opinion survey and comment on draft legislation.
- Active Participation: This describes a partnership relation between the government and its citizens. The citizens are actively involved in the policy making process, its process and content. It acknowledges equal standing for citizens in setting the agenda, however, the government is responsible for making the final decisions. Examples include citizen juries and consensus conference.

The implementation of ICT in parliament provides opportunities for wider involvement in decision making. It enables citizens to convey their views to their legislators and the legislature will in turn be empowered to make better decisions based on wider consultation with their constituents. With citizens increased knowledge of the government's activities made possible by ICT they are, through the legislature, able to hold government accountable, responsible and responsive (Kingham, 2001).

The ICT growth, diffusion, penetration and acceptance which has continued unabated particularly, in the continent of Africa portends a great potential to revitalize governance and renew democratic culture in the continent (Leston-Bandeira, 2007; Xiudian and Norton, 2007; Word e-Parliament Report , 2012). ICT can therefore, help African parliaments to be more transparent and responsive to the concerns of the citizens and improve their capacity to effectively represent the variety and diverse interests and views of the people and as well provide easy, convenient and wider opportunity for citizen engagement in parliamentary decision making process which are recognize as essential for democratic governance (Bishop, 2002; United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2014).

4. Methodology and Data Presentation

A mixed methodology was employed for this research – descriptive statistics of legislative website evaluation, case studies and literature search. Parliamentary websites of nineteen (19) selected African countries are studied in terms of their usefulness in achieving the goals of parliamentary website and the extent to which they are able to achieve democratic participation. Fise, Hrvatin, Vercic and Canik (2012) identified usefulness as one of the key determinants of website performance. Usefulness, according to Kragelj (2003) and Fise, et al., (2012), is the extent to which a web page satisfies all the planned and wanted goals for all parties involved. IPU (2009) on the other hand, identifies the goals of parliamentary websites to include not just providing basic information about the history, functions, membership and documentary of the legislature, but also providing interactive web or tools that encourage two-way communication between members and citizens and inviting them to share their views and possibly engaging them in the policy process. This is encapsulated in the three distinct stages of using parliamentary website for democratic participation - information provision, ii) consultation, and iii) active participation, prescribed by OECD (2001). The evaluation of the selected cases in terms of their usefulness in achieving the goals of parliamentary websites is carried out using these three stages.

Though a study of all African parliamentary websites would have been the ideal but that would simply not be manageable through our research project. The complementary usage of these designs however helps in the acquisition of comprehensive data and detailed study about the variables under investigation obviously yields added advantage to the reliability of the findings relative to using a single research design.

A substantial number of studies has also been conducted on the implication of these new technologies for governance by scholars, academic institutes and regional and global organizations such as the United Nations Agencies. Unfortunately, the results of research output have not adequately impacted democratic governance in Africa as far as building the capacity of African legislators to effectively and meaningfully engage citizens in decision process is concerned (Bwalya, Plessis, and Reinsleigh, 2012; Maphephe, Balkaran and Thakur, 2014; Oni & Oni, 2014).

Most parliaments in Africa have websites (Leston-Bandeira, 2012; World e-parliament Report, 2012; Oni & Oni, 2014). Findings of this study in terms of the extent of the usefulness of these websites reveal the following:

Information provision: Analysis of the Usefulness of Parliamentary Websites in African Countries for providing information according to IPU and OECD revealed that legislative bodies in African are open to providing information to citizens on their websites. Table 1 and 2 give a summary of content of information available on seventeen (17) parliament websites in Africa based on IPU (2009) guideline for general information about parliament, legislation, budget and oversight.

According to IPU (2009) recommendations, general information to be provided about parliament on the websites span eleven categories as indicated in Table 1.

1. Access to parliament: South Africa, Zambia, Rwanda and Zimbabwe provide information on access to the parliament including access to the parliamentary building, educational visits and access to plenary sessions. None provided information on seating arrangement in the plenary, virtual 'guided tour' and organization of website.
2. History and Role: History of the parliament was available in twelve of the sampled countries. Relevant information on theme is also available in Nigerian, Angola and Lesotho Parliamentary website. While Nigeria only provides history of the parliament the Angola and Lesotho provide only text of constitution on their websites.

Table 1: General Information about Parliament

Country	Access to Parliament	History and Role	Functions, Composition and Activities	Elected Leaders	Committees and commissions	MP	Political Parties	Electoral Systems	Administration	Parliamentary Documents	General Links to websites
Nigeria	-	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ethiopia	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-
South Africa	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-
Tanzania	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Kenya	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-
Morocco	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ghana		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-
Angola	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-
Madagascar		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	-	-
Burkina Faso	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-
Malawi	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						
Zambia	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Senegal	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-
Zimbabwe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Rwanda	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Somali		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-
Lesotho	-	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Source: Authors Compilation

3. Functions, Composition and Activities: Ten countries provides information relating to this theme on websites but information on budget and staffing of the parliament, list of international and regional parliamentary assemblies of which any of the parliaments belongs, and statistics on the activities of the current and previous parliaments are not available in any case in line with IPU (2009) recommendations.
4. Elected leaders: The ten parliamentary websites that provide information on elected leaders only do so for the current parliamentary chamber.
5. Parliamentary committees, commissions, and other non-plenary bodies: Seventeen of the countries' parliaments sampled, only Rwanda, Somalia and Lesotho do not publicized the composition of the committee members. However, Lesotho and Somalia published the jurisdiction of activities of the committees. Links to relevant documents of the activities of the committee are also available in most cases. Morocco provides only names of committees, their committee leader (called president), parliamentary group of the leader and his/her photo and information on the members of the committees and general parliamentary list is not available. Burkina Faso provides agenda for sessions
6. Members of parliament: Up-to-date list of all legislative members was available in all sampled cases except Morocco. None was observed to link the MPs' information on the parliamentary to personal websites. It was a general practice not to include descriptive function of members, trail of legislative activities and status of members. Contacts information such as phone number and email address of MPs can only be found in South Africa, Tanzania, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Rwanda.
7. Political parties in parliament: Only parliament of South Africa provided information on the political parties with contact information, links to the parties' official websites and state of parties in the National Assembly including the number of seats occupied. Malawi provided a list of the parties represented in the parliament with a links but the links were not functional. Senegal gave a list of the parties with respect to legislative elections and Rwanda provided a list of political parties admitted in the Republic of Rwanda.
8. Elections and electoral systems: information on these items was practically missing in the parliaments' websites except in Angola, Malawi and Senegal. Malawi and Senegal provided information on electoral procedures and previous parliamentary election results by seats while Angola published only electoral procedures. Non provided link to the electoral commission website or publish current composition of party groups and coalitions
9. Administration of parliament: information relating to parliament administration can only be found in Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Malawi. Zimbabwe and Malawi provided detailed information of the administrative offices and Tanzania provided just basic information and contacts of staff in administrative offices. However, South Africa, Malawi, Zambia, Rwanda, Madagascar and Lesotho make provision for vacancies advertisement on their websites. All provide contact information to the clerk of the house.
10. Publications, documents, and information services: parliamentary publications and document were available for download in all the sampled cases except Morocco, Madagascar and Rwanda. Generally, there was no description of the types and purposes of parliamentary documents and publication in the sampled cases. Information on parliamentary library with electronic access is available in Nigeria, Zambia, South Africa, Ghana and Zimbabwe also published information on information services.

11. General links to websites: Zambia provided links to its Electoral commission, links to eleven SADC parliament websites and links to eleven Commonwealth Parliament Websites. Lesotho, provided links to Commonwealth Hansard Editors and Parliamentary Associations, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Pan-African parliament and SADC Parliamentary Forum. Tanzania provided links to the country's website and profile pages of Ministers and deputy ministers.

The second category on the information content of parliament websites deals with information on legislation, budget and oversight (IPU, 2009). The analysis revealed that information on budget and public financing is most missing in the parliamentary websites (Table 2). Only South Africa and Tanzania publish information relating to budget on their websites. All the parliamentary websites except Morocco provide parliamentary document for download. Table3 gives summary of documents available for download on the websites.

Table 2: Information about Legislation, Budget, and Oversight

	Country	Legislation	Budget	Oversight	Activities of Committees	Plenary activities and Documentation
1	Nigeria	-	-	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2	Ethiopia	-	-	-	-	-
3	South Africa	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
4	Tanzania	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
5	Kenya	-	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6	Morocco	-	-	-	-	-
7	Ghana	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8	Angola	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	-
9	Madagascar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10	Burkina Faso	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11	Malawi	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
12	Zambia	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
13	Senegal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
14	Zimbabwe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
15	Rwanda	-	-	-	-	-
16	Somali	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	overview	overview	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
17	Lesotho	-	-	-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Source: Authors Compilation

Table 3: Types of Legislative Publications and Documents Available for Download

		Acts	Bills,	Hansards	Notice Papers	Order papers	Votes and Peoceeding	Minutes of Committee Meetings	Parliamentary Questions	Strategic Plan
1	Nigeria	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	
2	Ethiopia	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	
3	South Africa	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	
4	Tanzania	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	

5	Kenya	no	no	yes	no	yes	no	no	yes	
6	Morocco	no	no	no	n	no	no	no		
7	Ghana	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no	
8	Angola	yes							yes	
9	Madagascar	yes	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	
10	Burkina Faso	yes	yes	no	no	no	resolutions	no	yes	yes
11	Malawi	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	no	no	no	
12	Zambia	yes	yes	Standing order	no	yes	yes	yes	yes, ministerial Statement	
13	Senegal	law passed, Official journal, The Codes, Hansard								
14	Zimbabwe	yes	yes	yes			yes			
15	Rwanda		yes	provision was made for other documents but nothing uploaded						
16	Somalia	yes	yes							
17	Lesotho									

Source: Authors Compilation

5. **Consultation:** Consultation is a two-way relationship where citizens have opportunity to give feedback on issues (OECD, 2001). The usefulness of parliamentary websites for consultation purposes in the sampled cases revealed a low level of two-way online interaction between citizens and parliaments in Africa. Angola parliament is the only parliament that implemented electronic submission of petitions and other submissions. Zambia Parliament also implemented a generalized electronic submission platform. Tanzania Parliament also implemented online submission of question or comment to the speaker. Ethiopia Parliament's website has an online forum but topic can only be created by the administrator. Real Simple Syndication (RSS) feed is also available in Ethiopia as well as in South Africa and Senegal. The parliament of South Africa and Rwanda electronically initiate consultation process by given adequate information on submission and petition but the two participatory outlets cannot be concluded electronically. The Parliament calls for public consultation online but submission is made either to a designated office or via email or fax. In respect to petition, South Africa published the constitutional provision for petitioning the National Assembly and the National Council of Province. Information on the types of petitions, presentation of a petition, how to write and submit petition to either of the legislative bodies is available. Nigeria and Kenyan parliament websites publish and allow searching, viewing and downloading PDF version of petitions but the submission is offline and the process of it is not published.

Active Participation: There is no evidence of usefulness of the sampled websites for active participation. It is obvious that the websites of the parliamentary bodies studied have not reached the stage of using their websites to consult the public for participation on proposed legislations or public decision making.

6. Conclusion

Our analysis in this paper has revealed that despite the recognition of the imperative of democratic governance and the potentials of it being enhanced by electronic parliament, online interaction between citizens and legislative institutions in Africa is still at the information provision stage. Most African parliaments merely populate their web sites with information on parliamentary functions such as Acts, Bills, Order papers, Hansards, committee membership and reports, Votes and Proceedings and make the same available for view and download in portable document Format (PDF). Modern democratic parliaments have seized the opportunities provided by ICT for veritable interactive,

participatory and consultative platform for citizens' involvement in the decision-making process. Contrarily adequate provision has not been made to developing parliamentary websites to the stage of using ICT as tools for consulting, interacting and engaging citizens in public decision making. This further corroborates the findings of World e-parliament Report (2012) that legislative bodies in Africa only use their online presence as a means to disseminate information and allow little or no online interaction with citizens despite the wide establishment of e-government implementation strategy in the continent. With the continuous growth and increasing acceptance and usage of ICTs, citizens and their legislators can be more informed, they can interact more and engage in public decision making process. Parliamentary responsibility of citizens' representative can thus be more effective and efficient and the crisis of democratic disenchantment can be abated while democratic legitimacy increased. In this way citizens and their representatives become progressive partners in democratic governance.

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