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From Governance to Ground-Level Outcomes: How Corporate Governance of Information Systems Shapes Public-Sector Service Delivery in South Africa

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Abstract

Corporate governance of information systems (IS) is institutionalized across most parts of the public sector in South Africa, yet its practical implications for service delivery remain underexplored. Previous ICT governance literature has primarily focused on governance systems, institutional limitation, procurement infrastructure, and leadership agency. This paper shifts the focus to the service-delivery implications of IS governance. The study draws on qualitative data from 55 Government Information Technology Officers (GITO) across national, provincial, and local government to examine how governance arrangements affect service timeliness, system reliability, organizational adoption, and operational continuity. The findings suggest that IS governance functions as an indirect conditioning factor shaping service delivery, particularly through delays in implementation, compliance-driven processes, and uneven institutional capability. At the same time, well-implemented and embedded governance practices can facilitate greater service stability and coordination. By linking ICT governance to tangible service delivery outcomes, the article contributes a downstream perspective to information systems governance research in developing-country context.

Keywords: ICT governance, public-sector service delivery, information systems governance, digital government outcomes, corporate governance of ICT

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从治理到实际成效：信息系统企业治理如何影响南非公共服务供给

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摘要

信息系统的企业治理在南非公共部门已广泛制度化, 然而其对公共服务供给的实际影响尚未得到充分研究。现有关于信息与通信技术治理的研究主要集中于治理结构、制度性约束、采购机制以及领导力的作用。本文将关注点转向信息系统治理对服务供给的后果。研究基于定性数据, 通过对国家、省级与地方层面55名政府信息技术领域管理者的访谈获得。研究结果表明, 信息系统治理由于实施延迟以及不均衡的制度能力, 作为影响服务供给质量的间接因素发挥作用。与此同时, 已实施的治理实践也可能促进服务供给的稳定性与协调。本文将信息与通信技术治理与服务供给结果相联结, 为公共部门信息系统治理研究做出了贡献。

关键词: 信息与通信技术治理、公共服务供给、信息系统治理、数字政府成效、公共部门信息与通信技术治理

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Introduction

Corporate governance of information systems (IS) has become a defining feature of public-sector administration in many developing and developed countries. In South Africa, a dense architecture of legislative, regulatory, and policy instruments governs how information systems are planned, procured, managed, and overseen across government entities. These governance arrangements are intended to promote accountability, transparency, risk management, and alignment between digital investments and public-sector mandates. As a result, corporate governance of IS is now formally embedded across national, provincial, and local government institutions.

Academic research has responded to this institutionalization by examining multiple dimensions of public-sector ICT and IS governance. The literature spans governance design and framework alignment, leadership and executive involvement, compliance regimes, audit findings, and governance failure. Across these areas, studies address bureaucratic complexity, procurement processes, and accountability arrangements in relation to ICT performance. This body of research has been particularly useful in highlighting the gap between the formal intentions of governance arrangements and their practical effects.

However, much of the existing literature stops short of addressing a critical downstream question. While governance structures, behaviors, and failures are well documented, comparatively limited empirical insight exists into how corporate governance of IS affects service delivery at the ground level. Governance is often analyzed as an object of design or critique,

rather than as a conditioning force whose consequences are reflected in service timeliness, reliability, relevance, and sustained operational capability. This creates an important gap in public-sector and information-systems scholarship: governance is assumed to matter, but its observable effects on service delivery outcomes remain insufficiently examined.

This gap is particularly consequential in the South African public sector, where information systems support a wide range of core service-delivery functions, including social assistance, healthcare administration, education, licensing, financial management, and regulatory oversight. When system implementation is delayed, platforms are unstable, or systems are poorly aligned with user needs, the consequences extend beyond technical performance or governance compliance. In practice, these conditions shape how public services are accessed and delivered, influencing day-to-day interactions between citizens and public institutions. Examining how governance arrangements are reflected in service-delivery experiences provides a clearer basis for assessing the practical significance of corporate governance of information systems.

This article focuses on the service-level consequences of corporate governance related to information systems. Rather than re-examining governance frameworks, leadership behaviors, or causes of failure, the analysis explores how corporate governance of IS is reflected in public-sector service delivery in practice. Drawing on qualitative evidence from senior ICT leaders across South African public-sector entities, the study examines service delivery across several outcome dimensions, including timeliness and throughput; system reliability and continuity; relevance and

citizen value; organizational capability and adoption; and cases where embedded governance practices are associated with more positive service outcomes.

The analysis considers how governance arrangements shape the pace, reliability, and practical use of digital services, as well as in internal control and compliance practices. The focus remains on the everyday conditions under which public services are delivered.

1. Literature Review: Governance and Service-Delivery Outcomes

Information systems play a critical role in facilitating the provision of administrative services, regulatory activities, and citizen-facing services in the public sector. Within contemporary public administration, these systems function as core operational infrastructures through which governments implement mandates, manage resources, and engage with citizens [Twizeyimana, Andersson, 2019]. Their performance therefore has practical implications for public service delivery, including speed, reliability, accessibility, and perceived value.

1.1. Information Systems and Public-Sector Service Delivery

Digital government research situates information systems within the broader context of service delivery, emphasizing their embedded role in operational practice and their active use in administrative processes. Prior studies document improvements in processing speed, interdepartmental coordination, data quality, and service responsiveness when digital platforms are integrated into routine administrative work [Twizeyimana, Andersson, 2019; Enaifoghe, Ndebele, 2023]. In a developing-country context, this body of research often links information systems to service access in settings characterized by limited administrative capacity and sustained demand for public services.

At the same time, empirical studies emphasize that service-delivery outcomes associated with digital systems vary across institutional and organizational contexts. As [Mojaki et al., 2025] note, although digital systems are frequently introduced to improve speed and efficiency, their impact is often constrained by institutional factors that delay implementation and limit practical use. [Ngcobo, Conradie, 2024] identify similar patterns, observing that service-delivery challenges often stem not from technological shortcomings, but from systemic conditions that slow the deployment and operational integration of information systems within public institutions. Taken together, these studies suggest that information systems alone do not guarantee improved service delivery, highlighting the importance of the institutional environments in which they are governed and used.

1.2. Governance as an Indirect Conditioning Force

Across the digital government and public administration literature, governance is more often treated as a contextual condition than as a primary object of analysis. It typically appears as an institutional backdrop shaping how information systems are introduced, resourced, and overseen, with implications for the pace and reliability of service delivery. In public-sector settings, governance arrangements influence approval processes, resource

allocation, accountability mechanisms, and risk oversight, thereby affecting how system-enabled services operate in practice [Fourie, Malan, 2020].

Studies of public procurement emphasize the role of procurement processes in shaping service-delivery conditions. Public procurement refers to the procedures through which government institutions acquire goods and services [Ngcobo, Conradie, 2024]. Research highlights delays in project implementation and instances of budget underspending in contexts characterized by multiple approval requirements [Ambe, Badenhorst-Weiss, 2012; Mojaki et al., 2025].

In the South African public sector, similar delays have been observed in the delivery of infrastructure and digital services, particularly where procurement practices prioritize procedural compliance [Ngcobo, Conradie, 2024]. These findings are reinforced by the literature on ICT-related procurement. According to [Latchu, Singh, 2025b], both centralized and decentralized ICT procurement arrangements have contributed to longer project initiation periods across government departments, directly affecting service-delivery timelines. Similarly, [Mkhonza, Mpungose, 2025] identify governance inefficiencies and bureaucratic procedures within ICT procurement systems as key factors contributing to delayed system implementation. Collectively, these studies indicate that governance mechanisms influence service delivery indirectly by shaping the speed and throughput of information systems procurement and deployment.

1.3. Reliability and Continuity of IS-Enabled Services

System reliability and continuity of service delivery in the public sector are also well established in the literature. Public services in areas such as social assistance, healthcare administration, education, and public finance rely on information systems that are expected to operate in a stable, secure, and consistent manner [Dempsey et al., 2024]. The literature documents disruptions to information systems—including cyber incidents, control weaknesses, and operational oversight challenges—alongside interruptions in service provision.

Research on ICT governance in South Africa similarly addresses ICT risk management in relation to the reliability of services delivered through information systems. [Nxozzi, Flowerday, 2021] report that weak ICT controls and poor corporate governance increase system vulnerability and are a frequent source of adverse audit findings, thereby undermining service continuity. Where risk management procedures are integrated into the day-to-day operation of governing processes, organizations report fewer system failures and more stable performance [Dempsey et al., 2024].

Auditor-General-based analyses provide additional insight into how ICT governance issues are reflected in service delivery. [Latchu, 2022] documents recurring ICT governance weaknesses across public entities, including gaps in disaster recovery planning, security controls, and skills capacity, alongside reported service-delivery challenges. In this body of literature, governance is conceptualized not as a performance outcome, but as the institutional framework within which information systems operate and through which sustained service delivery is enabled.

1.4. Relevance, Adoption, and Citizen Value

The literature also addresses the relevance and use of information systems in relation to service delivery. Digital government studies conceptualize citizen value in terms of alignment between information systems and service mandates, as well as their use by officials and service users [Twizeyimana, Andersson, 2019]. Other studies note that systems introduced primarily for compliance or reporting purposes tend to be less integrated into routine service-delivery practices.

South African empirical research highlights misalignment between governance arrangements and operational practice. [Latchu, Singh, 2024a] document the persistence of institutional governance forms during the period of state capture, alongside institutional paralysis and underutilized information systems. In related work, [Latchu, Singh, 2024b] describe fragmented control arrangements and audit-oriented compliance practices, combined with limited organizational attention to system adoption and service outputs.

These findings are reflected in broader public administration scholarship. [Shibambu, 2024] reports high failure rates of digital initiatives to generate citizen value in contexts where governance is reduced to symbolic compliance rather than operational enablement. Conversely, digital systems are more likely to enhance accessibility, transparency, and responsiveness in public services where governance arrangements promote alignment, enforcement, and meaningful use [Naguib et al., 2024].

1.5. Capability, Resources, and Change Uptake

Capability constraints are frequently discussed as part of the broader context in which service delivery occurs. Studies of South Africa's public sector document persistent shortages of ICT skills, limited organizational capacity, and constrained resources [Albertus, Hamman-Fisher, 2021; Enaifoghe, Ndebele, 2023]. These constraints have implications not only for system development, but also for subsequent use, maintenance, and long-term sustainability.

Several studies examine resource and skills limitations in relation to the uptake of information systems in the public sector. [Latchu, Singh, 2025a] describe cases in which limited internal capability coincided with increased reliance on external vendors in public-sector ICT initiatives. In a municipal context, [Mudzunga et al., 2025] report capacity limitations and project governance challenges in ICT initiatives, including instances of stalled or underperforming ICT-enabled services.

Across this body of work, governance arrangements are discussed in terms of how resources are allocated, skills are developed, and organizational change is managed in practice. Some studies describe contexts in which attention to capability development and system uptake corresponds with more sustained and effective use of information systems. In contrast, other accounts highlight instances where limited capability support is associated with underutilized systems, even where formal governance and compliance structures are in place.

1.6. Synthesis and Gap Identification

Taken together, the literature suggests that corporate governance related to information systems exerts a significant—yet largely indirect—influence on public-sector service delivery.

Governance shapes the institutional conditions under which information systems are procured, implemented, stabilized, and used, thereby affecting service timeliness, reliability, relevance, and adoption.

Much research in public-sector management focuses on governance structures, leadership dynamics or compliance mechanisms rather than on service-delivery processes themselves. Although governance is widely acknowledged as important, fewer studies systematically examine how governance conditions are reflected in service-delivery outcomes at the ground level. As a result, service delivery is often treated as an implied consequence of governance arrangements rather than as an outcome examined in its own right.

2. Research Design and Method

This study adopts a qualitative interpretive research design to examine how corporate governance of information systems shapes ground-level public-sector service delivery outcomes. A qualitative approach is appropriate given the study's focus on how governance conditions are experienced and interpreted by senior ICT leaders responsible for the design, operation, and oversight of information systems within public-sector organizations. Rather than measuring governance effectiveness or institutional compliance, the analysis foregrounds observable service-delivery effects as reported by participants embedded within organizational contexts.

2.1. Data Source and Participants

The empirical material draws on 55 semi-structured interviews conducted with senior ICT leaders across South Africa's public sector. Participants included Government Information Technology Officers (GITOs), Chief Information Officers (CIOs), and senior ICT directors operating at national and provincial levels, as well as within public-sector organizations. These roles were selected because of their direct responsibility for information systems that underpin administrative processes and service-delivery functions. Participants were therefore well positioned to reflect on how governance conditions translate into practical service outcomes.

The interview dataset was originally generated as part of a broader doctoral study on corporate governance and information systems in the South African public sector. For the purposes of this article, only interview segments relevant to the present research focus were extracted and analyzed. Material relating to governance design, leadership behavior, procurement mechanisms, or institutional reform was included only if it directly informed service-delivery outcomes.

2.2. Analytical Scope and Coding Strategy

To maintain clear analytical separation from prior research questions, the analysis employed an RQ6-specific coding lens. Coding and interpretation were explicitly confined to outcome-oriented dimensions identified in the RQ6 framework, namely: service timeliness and throughput; system reliability and continuity; relevance and citizen value; organizational capability and adoption; and observable service-delivery outcomes. Codes related to governance instruments, executive agency, compliance

mechanisms, or causes of governance failure were deliberately excluded from the analytical frame.

Thematic analysis followed an interpretive and inductive approach, allowing patterns in service-delivery outcomes to emerge from the data while remaining bounded by the study's outcome-focused scope. Interview transcripts were examined for recurring references to how information systems affected day-to-day service delivery, operational stability, and user experience. Where governance was referenced, it was treated as contextual background rather than as an explanatory variable in its own right.

2.3. Analytical Positioning

It is important to emphasize that this article does not seek to explain why governance arrangements succeed or fail, nor does it evaluate the effectiveness of specific governance frameworks or leadership practices. Instead, the analysis is deliberately limited to examining effects rather than causes. The study explores how governance, as enacted within organizational settings, conditions service-delivery outcomes without attributing causality or advancing reform-oriented prescriptions.

By constraining the analytical focus in this way, the study maintains methodological consistency with its outcome-oriented contribution while avoiding duplication with existing governance-focused research. This positioning enables a clear examination of service-delivery consequences associated with information systems governance, without re-analyzing governance structures, leadership behavior, or institutional design.

3. Findings: Governance Effects on Service Delivery

The findings reveal how corporate governance of information systems shapes public-sector service delivery in practice. They are structured around five outcome-oriented themes that capture how governance conditions influence service timeliness, reliability, relevance, capability uptake, and positive delivery effects. Governance is treated as an enabling or constraining context, while service delivery remains the analytical foreground.

3.1. Timeliness and Throughput

Across the interviews, participants consistently described service-delivery delays as a visible consequence of governance-linked approval and procurement cycles. These delays were experienced not as abstract administrative inefficiencies, but as concrete disruptions to service throughput, budget utilization, and operational schedules.

Respondents frequently attributed delays to the centrally controlled model of ICT procurement. One participant stated: "SITA causes service delivery delays" (Interview 6). Others emphasized prolonged and uncertain procurement cycles, noting that "procurement through SITA takes anything between 1.5 to 3 years or longer" (Interview 46). Delays in approval processes were described as placing projects at risk, affecting start dates and extending overall timelines.

The complexity of governance across multiple oversight bodies was also identified as a contributing factor. Interview 14 explained that "procurement processes are very long and confusing...

PFMA really impedes the organization," highlighting how differing interpretations of the Public Finance Management Act, National Treasury regulations, and SITA requirements constrain procurement processes. These dynamics resulted in delays, budget freezes, and underspending, compounded by shortages of ICT skills. Interview 27 described procurement and implementation as "a nightmare... which stems from the interpretation of the rules, particularly between SCM and IT."

Delays in claim approval were similarly linked to budget underspending and operational penalties. Interview 35 reported that "the Office is unable to spend its operating budget due to long procurement processes," while Interview 32 noted that "renewal of licences has been delayed with imminent penalties... which impacts organizational operations." In these cases, governance-induced delays translated directly into constrained service throughput, deferred functionality, and increased organizational risk.

3.2. Reliability and Continuity

Participants described service reliability as closely tied to the extent to which ICT risk management was embedded within governance routines and supported by stable leadership representation. Where governance structures actively monitored ICT risk, respondents reported more reliable system performance.

Interview 44 noted: "The committees are also very helpful in terms of helping steer the ICT unit and ensure that critical digitization and security investments are approved and holding ICT accountable for mitigating risks to an acceptable risk level and provide assurance." Similarly, Interview 38 reported: "Adoption of robust risk management frameworks and controls has reduced adverse events... I think we could enhance AGSA audits by having midyear compliance checks to spot risks early."

Respondents also linked continuity challenges to unstable ICT leadership representation. Interview 50 explained: "Prior to the merger the entity supported by aligning with the DPSA guidelines of having CIO IT representatives at EXCO. Now due to a merger this has halted but occasional representations are allowed." The same participant added: "CIO is fatigued as she has had many discussions with EXCO and the AGSA themselves but fails to get support from them. She feels that they still see ICT as a back-office support."

These accounts illustrate how governance arrangements influence whether IS-enabled services remain reliable and continuous over time.

3.3. Relevance and Citizen Value

Participants distinguished between information systems actively used to support service delivery and those implemented primarily to satisfy governance or audit requirements. Where governance emphasized formal compliance without ensuring meaningful use, systems were perceived as delivering limited service value.

Interview 22 observed: "Often, there is a gap between the IS environment and top management, either through lack of representation at executive level or through a lack of understanding in the executives charged with IS governance. This disjuncture results in a lack of support for IS programmes." This misalignment was experienced as reducing the practical

relevance of systems intended to support service delivery. Interview 50 similarly noted: “They still see ICT as a back-office support. EXCO should have training to understand digitalisation skills.”

These findings suggest that citizen value is realized only when governance arrangements promote active system use aligned with operational service needs, rather than symbolic compliance.

3.4. Capability and Adoption

Capability constraints were repeatedly cited as limiting the adoption and sustainability of information systems, with direct consequences for service delivery. Participants reported significant challenges related to shortages of skilled personnel and limited internal capacity to manage ICT workload.

Interview 11 stated: “Limited resources (personnel) to oversee and execute the function... skills are also scarce.” Interview 24 noted that governance and skills gaps intersect within procurement and implementation processes: “With SCM and NT guidelines involved, it slows down the delivery of IS. Having a specialist IT in SCM would assist.”

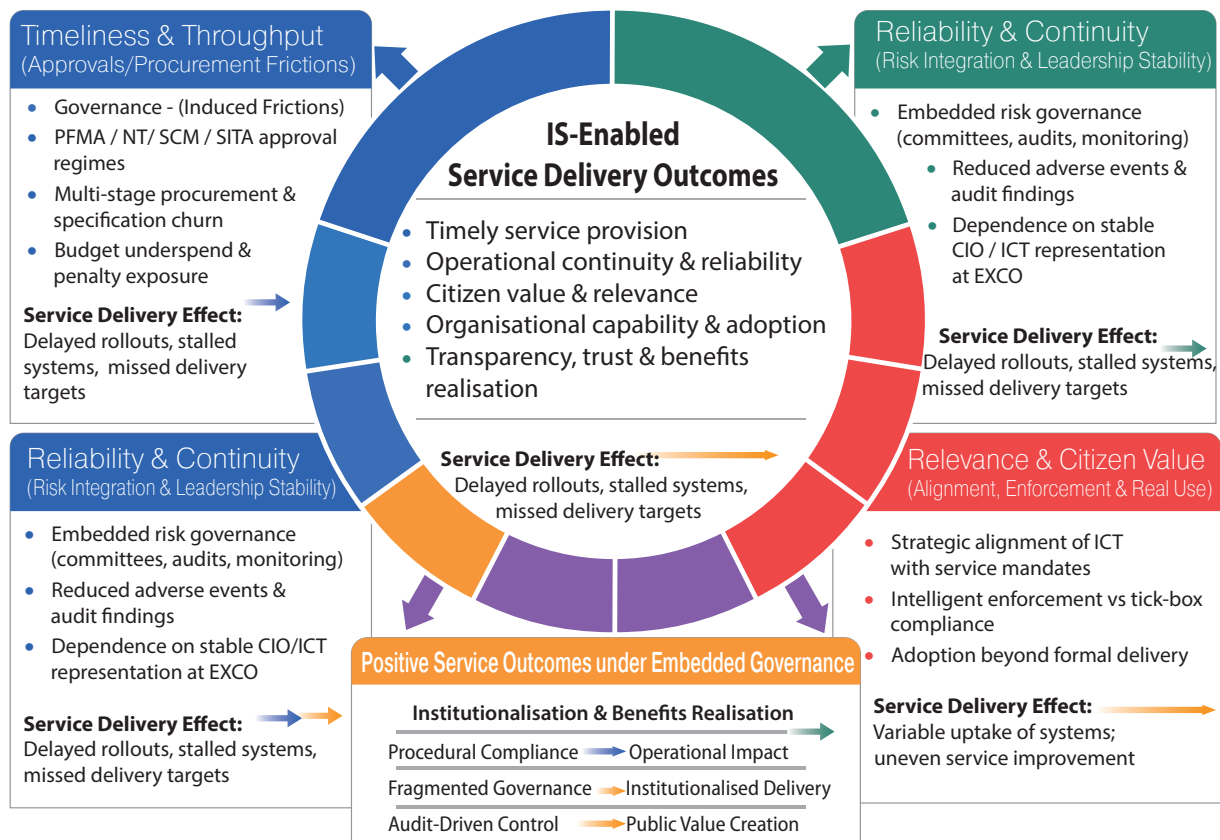
These constraints affected not only system implementation but also ongoing adoption and effective use, limiting the extent to which information systems could support sustained service delivery.

3.5. Positive Service Outcomes under Embedded Governance

Despite all these challenges, respondents identified situations in which embedded governance arrangements contributed to improved service delivery. In such cases, governance structures were described as actively supporting ICT risk management, accountability, and benefits realization.

Interview 33 reported: “The framework reduced ICT risk and made it more manageable; our audit findings decreased substantially since the governance system was introduced. The audit committee ensures proper governance, risk management and benefits realisation.” Interview 38 similarly noted broader organizational benefits: “These governance structures have helped IS effectively identify, assess, and report on risks... The improved IS reputation has enhanced stakeholder perceptions of the IS department and the organisation.”

These accounts illustrate the type of positive service outcomes associated with governance that is embedded and enacted in practice, without prescribing specific governance reforms or leadership interventions. The accompanying figure provides a descriptive synthesis of the service-delivery outcomes identified across the five themes. It consolidates observed outcome patterns associated with the enactment of information systems governance and does not represent a governance framework or causal model.



Source: prepared by the authors.

Fig. Descriptive Synthesis of Observed Public-Sector Service-Delivery Outcomes Associated with Corporate Governance of Information Systems

4. Discussion

The figure summarizes the empirically observed service-delivery outcomes reported by participants and serves as a descriptive reference point for the discussion that follows. Taken together, the findings indicate that corporate governance of information systems does not function merely as a distant compliance layer; rather, it is experienced through its consequences for everyday service delivery. What emerges is not a binary distinction between “good” and “bad” governance, but a patterned set of outcomes shaped by how governance is enacted, sustained, and embedded in organizational practice.

Across the five themes, a consistent pattern is evident: governance arrangements shape service delivery primarily through timing, stability, usability, and organizational readiness, rather than through formal adherence to rules or structures. Delays in approvals, procurement, and budget execution were described not as isolated administrative issues, but as cumulative constraints that slowed service throughput, disrupted operational planning, and increased financial and reputational risk. In this sense, timeliness emerges as a core service-delivery dimension through which governance is most immediately experienced by both officials and service users, echoing prior observations that administrative and digital processes are central to public value realization in government services [Twizeyimana, Andersson, 2019].

Reliability and continuity provide further insight into how governance conditions are reflected in service delivery without being framed as direct causal mechanisms. Participants did not attribute system stability to specific governance instruments; instead, they emphasized whether ICT risk oversight was sustained over time. In participant accounts, inconsistent governance attention—often associated with leadership turnover or limited executive engagement—was linked to unstable and reactive service delivery. Conversely, respondents described greater system stability in contexts where ICT controls were routinely monitored through audit and committee processes. Similar patterns have been documented in public-sector studies focused on risk management and audit practices in relation to information systems [Dempsey et al., 2024].

Accounts relating to relevance and citizen value highlight variation in how information systems were experienced within service-delivery settings. Although information systems were widely implemented across organizations, their practical contribution differed. Systems introduced primarily to satisfy reporting or compliance requirements were frequently described as underused or bypassed in day-to-day operations, with limited perceived service value. In contrast, participants reported improvements in turnaround times, service responsiveness, and user confidence where governance arrangements supported closer alignment between system functionality and operational needs. Digital government research similarly conceptualizes public value as emerging from the effective use of systems aligned with service mandates, rather than from the mere availability of technological infrastructure [Twizeyimana, Andersson, 2019; Enaifoghe, Ndebele, 2023].

Participant accounts concerning capability and adoption describe organizational conditions within which information

systems are sustained in practice. Skills shortages, resource constraints, and limited internal capacity were framed not merely as technical challenges, but as structural features of the organizational environment. In several accounts, systems were reported as technically delivered but only weakly adopted, with limited internal capability constraining their use in service-delivery activities. Comparable patterns have been reported in South African public-sector studies documenting capacity limitations and supervisory weaknesses alongside poor digital project performance and service delays [Albertus, Hamman-Fisher, 2021; Ngcobo, Conradie, 2024].

The findings also indicate that governance can be associated with improved service delivery in certain contexts. Where governance was embedded, visible, and accompanied by sustained oversight and engagement, participants described improvements in transparency, system performance, and confidence in service provision. These outcomes were discussed in relation to everyday organizational routines rather than to specific governance frameworks or leadership styles. Related work [Latchu, Singh, 2024a] similarly identifies instances of symbolic compliance coexisting with limited operational enactment of governance arrangements.

Collectively, these patterns position service delivery as the arena in which governance arrangements are encountered in practice. Much of the public-sector and information-systems literature, by contrast, treats governance mechanisms, compliance regimes, or leadership roles as distinct analytical concerns. The analysis presented here instead examines how governance is reflected in observable service-delivery dimensions such as timeliness, reliability, relevance, capability, and realized service outcomes. By focusing on these observable effects rather than on explanatory causes, the study offers a closer examination of how governance enactment manifests in the everyday performance of public-sector services.

The discussion remains grounded in service-delivery outcomes, drawing on the accounts of senior ICT leaders responsible for systems that support public-sector operations. In doing so, it situates the findings within existing governance scholarship on public-sector information systems without re-examining its primary analytical debates.

5. Implications

This study has implications for both scholarship and practice by clarifying why corporate governance of information systems matters beyond formal compliance and institutional design. By foregrounding service-delivery outcomes, the analysis shifts attention to the practical consequences through which governance is experienced in public-sector organizations.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

The findings extend the ICT governance literature by shifting the analytical focus from governance structures, mechanisms, and intentions to governance consequences as experienced through service delivery. Much of the existing literature evaluates governance in terms of framework adoption, compliance maturity, leadership roles, or institutional

alignment. While these perspectives remain valuable, they provide limited insight into how governance is translated into everyday operational performance.

By demonstrating how governance conditions service timeliness, reliability, relevance, capability uptake, and realized service outcomes, this study introduces an outcome-oriented lens to ICT governance research. Governance is shown to be neither inherently enabling nor constraining; rather, its significance lies in the service-delivery conditions it produces when enacted in practice. Service delivery is positioned as a reference point through which governance arrangements can be observed in operation. In this framing, governance is examined in terms of how it is enacted and sustained within organizational settings, rather than as a set of formal institutional artifacts alone. Attention to observable service-delivery outcomes allows governance to be assessed through its practical manifestation and organizational persistence, without advancing causal claims or reform-oriented prescriptions.

5.2. Policy and Practice Implications

From a policy and practice perspective, the findings highlight the risks associated with outcome-blind governance in the public sector. Governance arrangements that prioritize procedural compliance without sustained attention to service-delivery effects may achieve formal legitimacy while producing uneven or fragile operational outcomes. As demonstrated in the findings, delays, instability, underutilized systems, and constrained capability represent not merely governance shortcomings, but tangible service-delivery risks.

The study underscores the importance of outcome-aware oversight, where the performance of information systems is evaluated in relation to service timeliness, reliability, and user value, rather than compliance alone. It does not propose a universal reform model; rather, it emphasizes the need for governance actors to remain attentive to how existing arrangements are experienced at the service-delivery level and to recognize service outcomes as a critical accountability signal.

This perspective has implications for oversight and evaluation practices within public-sector ICT environments, without advancing prescriptive reform agendas.

Conclusion

This study examined how corporate governance of information systems is reflected in public-sector service-delivery outcomes, rather than in governance structures, leadership behaviors, or compliance regimes. Drawing on the accounts of senior ICT leaders, the analysis demonstrates that governance matters most where it shapes the everyday conditions under which services are delivered. Delays, instability, uneven system use, and constrained capability are not abstract governance deficiencies, but experienced service outcomes that affect organizational performance and public value.

The findings reinforce that service delivery represents a central accountability test for corporate governance of information systems. Governance arrangements are experienced as effective or ineffective not through their formal design, but through their consequences for service timeliness, reliability, relevance, and sustained delivery capacity. Where governance is enacted in symbolic or episodic ways, service outcomes tend to be fragile and uneven. Where governance is embedded and sustained within organizational practice, more stable and dependable service outcomes are observed.

The analysis approaches service delivery as the arena in which governance arrangements are encountered in practice, rather than as a set of intended mechanisms or formal designs. In doing so, it situates governance consequences within public-sector digital environments without revisiting questions already addressed in existing ICT governance research.

Future research may examine how governance enactment and service delivery interact across different public-sector contexts. Comparative studies across sectors, spheres of government, or national settings could further illuminate how governance conditions are manifested in service experiences, while remaining attentive to contextual variation and avoiding prescriptive reform assumptions.

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