Chapter 3

The Importance of Innovation in Social Work Institutions During Digital Transformation Processes

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ABSTRACT

The business world and organizational structures have rapidly changed and developed today, with the effect of global social, economic, and technological developments. Digital transformation is at the top of these changes and developments. Digital transformation has also enabled the adoption of innovation in organizations in this context. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected the whole world since the beginning of 2020, has given significant momentum to digital transformation, and innovation has started to be seen more prominently in organizations. Social work institutions are one of the areas where innovation is effective due to digital transformation and the COVID-19 outbreak. In this context, the conceptual and theoretical framework related to innovation is presented first. Then, by evaluating the relationship between social work institutions and innovation, the importance of innovation in terms of social work institutions is examined.

INTRODUCTION

The transition from the industrial society to the information society is another phase of change in human history as a result of technological developments from the past to the present. With the transition to the information society, the concept of globalization, which entered the literature as a concept during this period, also began to spread rapidly throughout the world. The widespread use of computers and the internet and other means of communication and transportation have led to many socio-cultural changes after this period, and together with it, various developments have been experienced in the economy.

The most important of these changes and developments is digitalization, that is, digital transformation (Yeşilyurt Temel & Yapraklı, 2015, p. 2; Yankın, 2019, p. 8).

Digital transformation can be expressed as a process that makes life easier so that information and communication technologies can respond to the needs of individuals and society. This transformation process basically covers not only individuals and society but also all institutions and businesses. Institutions and businesses that keep up with new technologies by following the digital transformation in the modern information age in which we live also gain an advantage in terms of competition (Armağan, 2018, p. 388-389). However, due to the development of today's technology, the rapid spread of internet users all over the world, and the rapid advancement of technology, tools, and applications such as learning machines and smart devices are used effectively in both private and public sectors to be used in service provision. Individuals, institutions, business sectors, and many other elements are rapidly moving towards digitalization with digital transformation (Göçoğlu, 2020, p. 615-616).

Due to digital transformation, information and communication technologies lead to the development of social practices in almost all of daily life. Information and communication technologies provide a practical renewal of experiences such as working styles in daily life, socialization, consumption, health, social works, security, entertainment, and socio-cultural environment perception and cause these experiences to be attributed new meanings (Castells et al., 2007, p. 77). It is undoubtedly a fact that technological change in general, and more specifically, information technologies consisting of high-tech communication tools, computers, and internet applications of the present age, cause a radical change in individuals' perception of social and mental reality. Information technology applications, that are primarily used in the military and defense industry, and then have become widespread in the financial world, and have found use within the scope of social work since the last thirty years, offer very important innovations to professionals and experts at micro-level and to all institutions and businesses at a macro level (Tuncay, 2010).

The main purpose of social work is to ensure positive development and change in individuals and therefore in society. Within the scope of this development and change, it is very important to spread, become an corporate culture and internalize various innovative activities in all social work institutions in order to identify, explain and produce solutions for the main problem areas. Internalizing the information obtained about innovation within the institutions or businesses and sharing it by all employees in the unit, both horizontally and vertically, is the basis of the innovation process. In this way, sustainable competitive ability can be gained and performance increase can be achieved (Du et al., 2007; Kutanis & Mesci, 2013). In order to properly spread the newer and more effective corporate culture required in this context, care must be taken to ensure that the corporate structure, policies, procedures and interactions are in harmony with each other (Gabris, 1989).

Fundamental changes in social, economic, cultural, demographic and other areas in the digital transformation process, the depletion of resources, unplanned urbanization caused by rural-urban migration and thus the physical and psychological effects of education, housing, health, environmental and social-cultural problems on individuals and many more reasons draw attention to the need for social work institutions to demonstrate an innovative understanding to find solutions to these problems and to re-examine the service models they offer (Özmete & Akgül Gök, 2016, p. 132). In addition, due to the Covid-19 epidemic, which occurred in the last months of 2019 and affected the entire world as a global crisis from the beginning of 2020, the digital transformation process has gained serious depth and prevalence, accelerating even more than before the outbreak. Measures taken against the epidemic and practices implemented within the framework of new normalization have also led to the implementation of innovation both in social life and in business life. The Covid-19 epidemic, which affects all areas of life,

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