

Chapter 3


Drivers of Digital Transformation and Their Efficacy in Public Sector Human Resource Management

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ABSTRACT

The chapter examines digital transformation drivers and their efficacy in improving public sector human resource management in the digital age. Implementing Digitalisation in the public sector opens up possibilities for human resource management (HRM) to reform and accelerate the delivery of services using the most advanced digital technologies. Although digital transformation is expected to offer change in the public sector, various challenges may require significant backing to support the HRM function amid waves and shocks posed by digital transformation. The chapter employs a qualitative research methodology drawn from a systematic literature review to comprehensively evaluate the literature on digital transformation and its role in public sector HRM. Search engines such as Scopus, google, and Google Scholar were used to find relevant information on the role of digital transformation in enhancing public sector HRM. Keywords such as “digital transformation”, “public sector”, “HRM”, “were used in streamlining the search for the study for the study. Findings from the literature indicated several im-

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pediments, such as unreformed bureaucratic culture, staff resistance to change, and budget constraints that threaten digital transformation in public sector HRM. The conclusions drawn for this chapter suggest optimisation techniques, which include strengthening the HRM's information security system while encouraging a digitally-driven culture among staff members, which is key to improving digital skills and accelerating the public sector HRM for improved service delivery.

INTRODUCTION

The wave of change has engulfed public sector institutions globally with digital transformation taking a leading role in disrupting the existing status allowing new ideas, innovation and models to be implemented to enhance the delivery of public goods and services. Public Sector Human Resource Management is a key functional department in the public sector that was and is still being affected by trends in the technological environment as digital transformation takes shape and form. While various definitions are proposed in the literature regarding digital transformation, our study describes “digital transformation” as the ways in which digital technology has impacted all aspects of life for humans, or the continual process by which businesses employ their digital capabilities to create innovative companies, goods, and services in response to market and customer disruptions (Al-Ruithe et al., 2018; Vial, 2019). The merits of digital transformation in the public sector are many with Enaifoghe & Ndebele (2023) attesting to the benefits of digitalising the public sector and related institutions locally and globally.

Pockets of excellence in digitalising the public sector, for example, were noted in South Africa following the digital overhaul of the public sector revenue service. Over the past decade, the South African Money Service has deployed various innovative digital solutions that have improved the user experience, enhanced its ability to collect money, and empowered its employees (Ndebele & Enaifoghe, 2023). As a form of development triggered by modern technologies, the money service almost eliminated the use of paper, considerably accelerated its procedures, and increased risk management. As commonly understood in public sector innovation studies, HRM departments operate with dedicated budgets to ensure they deliver on their mandates. The effective revenue collection assures tax compliance, leading to an enhanced budget, which is reinvested in the country through capital projects that benefit local communities. Adapting to digital trends within public sector HRM is crucial to ensure that public sector organisations align their systems and structures to the demands of modern digital technologies.

The widescale use of “digital transformation tools such as 5G, cloud computing, big data, artificial intelligence, IoT, blockchain, and others” (Enaifoghe et al., 2020: 3) can help leverage efficiency in public sector HRM. It is imperative to note that digitalising information in the public sector is crucial for improving and using data-driven insights to achieve efficiency and productivity. Studies indicated that technology now plays a crucial role in delivering services, supporting growth, and assuring efficiency in both public and commercial sectors (Enaifoghe, 2021; Yu & Jinajun, 2020; Banga, 2018). The reappearance of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 posed a threat to organizations worldwide, including the South African Public Service. To prevent the spread of the virus, organizations needed to use Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technology to maintain HRM continuity during curfews and lockdowns. As a result, quick 4IR technologies transformed how the Public Service learns, lives, works, conducts business, and serves its stakeholders.

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