


Chapter 3

Beyond E–Government: A Systematic Review of Digital Transformation Imperative in Greek Public Administration

Labros Vasiliadis

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0272-4806>

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

Stefanos Papailias

Hellenic Open University, Greece

ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to critically analyze existing academic and policy-related studies on digital transformation in the public sector. The objective is to synthesize key insights across international contexts and to highlight the particularities and challenges of digital transformation efforts within the Greek public administration. The review is structured around the framework by Westerman, Bonnet, and McAfee (2014), focusing on the dimensions of digital challenge, investment orientation, organizational mobilization, and sustainability. The literature reveals a growing global consensus on the strategic importance of digital transformation in public governance. However, significant disparities exist in implementation capacity and policy coherence. In the Greek context, recent digital advancements—especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic—have accelerated transformation but continue to be hindered by institutional inertia, fragmented digital strategies, and limited digital literacy among public employees.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation (DT) has emerged as one of the most pressing and strategic imperatives for public sector organizations worldwide. As governments grapple with accelerating technological change, growing citizen expectations, and mounting economic and social challenges, the ability to leverage digital technologies effectively is no longer optional but essential. Digital transformation in the public sector refers not merely to the digitization of services but to the broader process of fundamentally rethinking and redesigning public administration, governance models, and service delivery to take advantage of digital technologies and data-driven decision-making (OECD, 2020; Mergel et al., 2019). This involves a shift from technology adoption in isolation toward integrated strategies that emphasize organizational change, cultural adaptation, leadership capacity, and long-term sustainability.

International organizations such as the OECD, European Union, and the World Bank consistently underline the transformative potential of digitalization in improving efficiency, transparency, accountability, and citizen trust (OECD, 2020, 2023; European Commission, 2022). Beyond efficiency, DT is increasingly framed as a means to enhance resilience in the face of crises, promote inclusivity, and strengthen democratic participation (World Bank, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic provided a global stress test for public administrations, demonstrating both the benefits of existing digital infrastructure and the costs of lagging investment and fragmented approaches (UN E-Government Survey, 2022). Governments with mature digital ecosystems – such as Estonia, Denmark, and South Korea – were able to pivot rapidly to online services and citizen engagement, while others faced significant bottlenecks.

From a theoretical perspective, scholars emphasize that digital transformation is not solely a technological challenge but a socio-technical process requiring institutional adaptation, leadership, and organizational mobilization (Westerman et al., 2014; Vial, 2019). Public administrations, often characterized by hierarchical structures and risk-averse cultures, face particular obstacles in embracing digital transformation compared to the private sector. Issues such as legacy systems, fragmented governance, inadequate digital skills, and short-term political cycles further complicate the process (Janssen & van der Voort, 2020; Dunleavy et al., 2021). Consequently, the study of DT in the public sector requires both a strong theoretical framework and an appreciation of specific national and organizational contexts.

This chapter applies the influential framework developed by Westerman, Bonnet, and McAfee (2014) in *Leading Digital: Turning Technology into Business Transformation*. Originally formulated for business organizations, this framework emphasizes the dual role of investment in digital capabilities and leadership capacity in enabling successful transformation. Adapting this model to the public sector, the chapter examines four critical sub-dimensions:

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