



DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND ADMINISTRATIVE EFFICIENCY IN THE NIGERIAN PUBLIC SECTOR: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Public sector in Nigeria has been characterized with inefficiency characterized with bureaucratic bottlenecks, delay in decision, This study examines how digital transformation can enhance administrative efficiency in Nigeria public sector. The study is descriptive in nature as data were sourced from primary and secondary sources. Regression analysis was utilized in the study to establish the nature of relation existing between the variables. The study findings reveals that digital transformation is essential tool for effective service delivery as it enhances timely delivery of services, eliminates red-tapism, excessive paper work and encourages green administrative system, in the same vein, the study put forwards the following recommendations that additional fund should be allocated for acquisition and implementation of digital transformation in Nigerian public service, digital training should be encouraged for adaptability and versatility of Public sector employees.

Keywords: digital transformation, efficiency, public sector, service delivery

Introduction

In recent years, digital transformation has emerged as a crucial driver of administrative efficiency in the public sector globally. Digital transformation involves the integration of digital technologies, automation, and data-driven decision-making to enhance governance, improve service delivery, and streamline administrative processes (Westerman et al., 2014). In the Nigerian public sector,

efforts towards digital transformation have gained momentum, albeit with challenges such as infrastructure deficits, resistance to change, and inadequate digital literacy (Eke et al., 2021).

Nigeria has made notable strides in adopting e-governance initiatives, digital record management systems, and online service platforms to improve public administration (NITDA, 2020). Government reforms such as the introduction of the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS), Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS), and Treasury Single Account (TSA) demonstrate the potential of digital technologies to curb corruption and enhance transparency (Obi, 2019).

Despite these efforts, Nigeria still lags in fully leveraging digital transformation due to inconsistent policies, weak digital infrastructure, cybersecurity concerns, and a slow transition from manual processes (Oni & Adebayo, 2022). Studies have shown that administrative inefficiency in the public sector is often linked to bureaucratic delays, redundant procedures, and lack of accountability, which can be mitigated through automation, digital workflows, and e-administration platforms (Adeyemi & Yusuf, 2021).

Administrative efficiency is a fundamental concept in public administration and organizational management. It refers to the optimal utilization of resources, time, and processes to achieve the desired goals of an organization or government with minimal waste and maximum productivity (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). It involves ensuring that public institutions operate effectively, deliver services promptly, and make decisions that enhance governance and policy implementation.

Justification for the Study

Understanding the relationship between digital transformation and administrative efficiency is essential for policy formulation, strategic implementation, and sustainable development in Nigeria.

This study seeks to explore how digital initiatives enhance governance, identify key barriers, and propose solutions to accelerate digital adoption in the Nigerian public sector.

Objectives of the study

The central objectives of this study is to examine the effect of digital transformation on administrative efficiency in Nigerian Sector and the general objectives are to:

- i. Examine the effect of digital transformation on administrative efficiency in Nigerian Public sector
- ii. Determine the comparative advantage of digital transformation over traditional service delivery method in Nigeria Public service
- iii. Identify the challenges of digital transformation in Nigerian public sector

Literature Review

Digital transformation has evolved from traditional information technology (IT) modernization to a comprehensive restructuring of business and governmental processes through digital innovation (Vial, 2019). According to Henriette et al. (2016), digital transformation is a multidimensional phenomenon that integrates technological, organizational, and strategic changes to create new operational efficiencies and service delivery models.

The concept of digital transformation has gained global significance as governments strive to improve public service delivery and administrative efficiency. Digital transformation involves the integration of digital technologies into various aspects of governance, aiming to enhance operational efficiency, transparency, and citizen engagement (Westerman et al., 2014). It is a broad

and complex process that requires a fundamental shift in how organizations operate and deliver value through digital innovation (Vial, 2019).

According to Fitzgerald et al. (2014), digital transformation encompasses the use of digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data analytics, cloud computing, and the Internet of Things (IoT) to create new or modify existing business processes, culture, and customer experiences to meet changing societal demands. It is not merely about digitizing processes but about leveraging digital technologies to drive efficiency, improve decision-making, and enhance service delivery (Kane et al., 2015).

Effect of Digital Transformation on Administrative efficiency in Nigeria Public Sector

Digital transformation is driven by several factors, including technological advancements, increasing citizen expectations, regulatory changes, and the need for operational efficiency (Kane et al., 2015). Research by Hess et al. (2016) highlights that organizations embracing digital transformation experience improved efficiency, cost reduction, and enhanced decision-making capabilities.

In the public sector, digital transformation has been linked to improved service delivery, transparency, and citizen engagement (Mergel et al., 2019). The implementation of e-government initiatives, such as digital identity systems and automated public service platforms, has significantly improved administrative efficiency in various countries (Gil-Garcia et al., 2018).

The bureau pathological deficiency associated with public service in Nigeria has been surmounted by Digital platforms to streamline the public service processes, reducing delays and inefficiencies

(Akinwale, 2020). The duration and process of getting things done in a bureaucratic setting is relatively cumbersome, but the technological innovation's application in the conduct of public service has significantly erode the unnecessary delay and thereby increase efficient service delivery

Digital transformation also has the effect of anti-corruption on administrative efficiency in Nigerian Public sector, digital platforms has encouraged adequate transparency and accountability. Online portals and blockchain technology improve data integrity and reduce corruption (Olaniyi, 2019). The bane of inefficiency in Nigeria public sector is corrupt practices, with the adoption of digital platforms such as RRR payment portal, online registration among others in the discharge of public services in Nigeria has drastically reduced. This corroborate Eze et al. (2020) highlight that initiatives like the Treasury Single Account (TSA) and Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) have improved financial transparency, challenges remain in fully integrating digital systems across all government agencies

E-government services facilitate seamless interaction between the government and citizens (World Bank, 2021). Improvement in Citizen Engagement is another significant area in which digital transformation has positively affected the public sector. With digital platforms, citizens can actively engage interactions and participations from the citizens. Irrespective of location and time, citizens can engage the service in public service

Constraints of Digital Transformation in Nigeria Public Sector

Nigeria struggles with inadequate digital infrastructure, including unreliable internet connectivity, insufficient data centers, and inadequate broadband penetration, which significantly affects digital adoption in government operations (Adebayo & Dada, 2021). This is basically common in semi-

urban and rural areas. In the same vein, large proportion of the Nigerian workforce lacks adequate digital skills, making it difficult for public sector employees to fully leverage digital tools for administrative efficiency (Okonkwo, 2023).

There is often institutional resistance to change within government agencies, as employees fear job losses and disruptions to established workflows, delaying digital transformation initiatives (Eze et al., 2020). Moreover, increased adoption of digital technologies exposes Nigeria's public sector to cyber threats such as data breaches, hacking, and identity theft, making cybersecurity a significant concern (Bello & Wahab, 2022).

The lack of comprehensive digital transformation policies and regulatory guidelines slows down the integration of digital systems into public administration (Fatile, 2018). Budget limitations and inadequate funding for digital projects hinder the procurement of advanced technologies and training programs required for digital transformation (Olaopa, 2019) all these pose a constraint to effective digital transformation of public service in Nigeria. The absence of a coordinated approach to digital transformation among government agencies results in fragmented initiatives that fail to achieve large-scale impact (Gil-Garcia et al., 2018).

Theoretical Frameworks

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Technology Acceptance Model theory was developed by Davis (1989), Technology Acceptance Model theory explains how users come to accept and use technology. It suggests that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use determine the adoption of digital technologies in the public sector. By this theory, public sector needs to accept relevant technological transformation that will aid efficient service delivery by primarily focusing on the perceived usefulness and perceived ease

of use of such technological breakthrough that can aid the attainment of goals in which such organization is established to pursue or attain, in other words, public sector should not only accept the relevancy of digital transformation as an impetus or strategy for improving efficacy in service delivery which was formerly characterized with bureaucratic delay, corruption, inefficiency and nepotism among others.

Conclusion

Digital transformation has emerged as a critical driver of administrative efficiency in Nigeria's public sector, revolutionizing the ways in which government institutions operate, deliver services, and engage with citizens. This study has shown that the integration of digital technologies ranging from e-governance platforms to data management systems can significantly streamline bureaucratic processes, reduce corruption, and enhance service delivery when appropriately implemented.

However, despite the evident benefits, the Nigerian public sector still faces a number of challenges, including infrastructural deficits, digital literacy gaps, resistance to change, and issues related to cybersecurity. These limitations hinder the full realization of the potential of digital transformation in administrative practices. Nonetheless, with sustained political will, investment in ICT infrastructure, and capacity building of civil servants, digital transformation can serve as a foundational pillar for achieving a more responsive, transparent, and accountable government.

Ultimately, improving administrative efficiency through digital transformation is not merely a technological endeavor but a systemic reform that requires institutional readiness, strategic planning, and a citizen-centered approach. If adequately addressed, digital transformation could become a catalyst for national development and effective public service delivery in Nigeria.

Recommendations

This study put forward the following recommendations;

- The government should invest heavily in modern and reliable ICT infrastructure across all levels of public administration. This includes internet connectivity, data centers, cloud computing services, and digital tools to support efficient operations.
- Continuous training programs should be implemented for public servants to build their capacity in using digital tools. A digitally literate workforce is essential for maximizing the benefits of transformation initiatives.
- Resistance to digital change within the civil service should be addressed through sensitization campaigns, stakeholder engagement, and reward systems for innovation and technology adoption.
- To protect sensitive government data and ensure public trust, Nigeria must adopt and enforce strong cybersecurity frameworks in line with global best practices.
- Leveraging partnerships with private technology firms can accelerate innovation, bring in technical expertise, and support the development of tailored digital solutions for the public sector.
- Government agencies should adopt interoperable systems that enable seamless data sharing and coordination across departments to reduce duplication of efforts and enhance efficiency.
- Update and enact comprehensive ICT and data governance laws that support digital transformation, protect citizens' rights, and establish accountability mechanisms.

- Periodic assessment of digital projects should be carried out to ensure they meet objectives and remain aligned with national development goals.

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