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THE FEATURES OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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Abstract

Digital technologies open up new opportunities in the sphere of public administration and the provision of public services by improving the efficiency and quality of management. The purpose of this article is to identify the main changes which characterize digital transformation of public administration and to identify the features of the use of digital technologies in this area. The experience in the implementation of digital technologies in the field of public administration is analyzed. It allows to reveal modern trends in this sphere such as active use of platform solutions and mobile applications, the implementation of new forms of automation and reduction of extra stages in the process of public service rendering. The analysis indicates the efficiency of digital transformation of public administration. The authors define the main characteristics of public administration. This information makes it possible to reveal the features of digitalization of public administration. Lagging of institutional changes from technological ones, strengthening of interaction between citizens and digital government, increasing the level of information security are viewed as the main features of digital transformation of public administration. The article contributes to the issue of improvement of digitalization of public administration. It is suggested to create a single structure of the state digital platform, to stimulate the use of new digitalization instruments, to transfer all public services in electronic form and to further increase the level of information security.

1. Introduction

The growing use of digital technology enables you to quickly implement functional skills in the shortest possible time, save staff time, and spend your organization's resources most efficiently and rationally. This is true for all areas of activity, among which it is worth highlighting public administration as one of the priority areas of digitalization both in Russia and abroad. Accordingly, as the task of improving effective public administration as well as the development of skilled personnel is now urgent, there is an active search for methods that will allow to solve the existing problems as quickly and fully as possible. Digitalization of this area is particularly important, as it allows employees to effectively carry out various activities due to significant reduction of time in paperwork processing, simplification of bureaucratic procedures.

Digital technologies in the analyzed sphere are used for creating conditions for citizens 'access to information on the activities of State bodies, creating management automated systems and developing measures aimed at improving the information culture and professional skills of public servants. The term "digital transformation" itself is a set of changes in society related to the introduction and mastery of modern digital technologies (Janowski, 2015). In other words, digital transformation is seen as a key trend characteristic of different segments and sectors of the economy and social sphere. Digital technologies represent huge opportunities for the transformation of public administration, and at each new stage of their development there are significant changes in the use of technologies, in the organization of the activities of state authorities, in the interaction of citizens and state bodies.

Russia is in the initial stages of digital transformation of public administration (will be referred to as DTPA further in the article), while foreign authors highlight a different number of its stages, usually from three to five. Depending on the stage, digitalization is considered either as a means of optimizing and automating existing administrative services, or as an opportunity to implement services, create public goods. These factors improve the quality of public services, and, at an advanced stage, the quality of public administration. Within the framework of the Federal Project "Digital Public Administration," the national program "Digital Economy" in the Russian Federation is carrying out measures on DTPA. All activities are based on the following principles: the prohibition of requesting information from citizens that is available to the State, all necessary documents are requested from the electronic registers of authorities; the principle of an integrated approach to solving applicants' life situations through super services; minimizing participation of officials in service decision-making ; transfer of services to online mode; possibility of interaction using any user-friendly tools for seeking services (mobile devices, social networks, sites, banking applications, e-mail); exclusion of paper media in service delivery processes; interagency interaction and document circulation between authorities. Thus, the introduction of digital technologies in the sphere of public administration, as well as in the sphere of public services is a priority.

2. Problem Statement

As mentioned earlier, the process of DTPA in our country and abroad does not last long, but some progress is evident. In particular, the active rendering of public e-services is under way, further

development of electronic government is under way and its transition to a digital format is being prepared, which makes the state more open, transparent and accountable.

The significance of DTPA is described in their works by Russian and foreign scientists. Foreign literature explores the development of DTPA (Berger, Hertzum, & Schreiber, 2016; Prendville, 2018). The Russian literature pays considerable attention to the forms, principles and directions of DTPA (Dobrolyubova, Alexandrov, & Yefremov, 2017). However, the above-mentioned works ignore issues related to the peculiarities of the application of information technologies in this sphere, which are determined by its specifics. So these issues require more detailed consideration. DTPA should lead to improvement of its quality: reduction of unjustified state intervention, improving the efficiency of public administration. This determines the need to identify the peculiarities of the application of information technologies in the work of civil servants, whose work is complex, multi-functional and subject to numerous constraints. All the above makes it possible to define the direction of the study as follows: it is necessary to identify the peculiarities of DTPA to better outline the ways of further improvement.

3. Research Questions

The article provides for a study of the peculiarities of digital transformation of the sphere of public administration. The study requires the formulation of a number of research questions. One of the questions is to identify the main changes that characterize the process of DTPA. The second question is related to the previous one, and involves clarifying the peculiarities of the application of digital technologies in this field. Finally, the latest research issue concerns recommendations for more effective digital applications.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the process of DTPA and to identify its peculiarities. In order to identify the features of DTPA, it is also necessary to identify specific features of public administration. The analysis of the process of application of digital technologies in this sphere allows to identify the main forms, principles and directions of digitalization, as well as to develop measures to improve this process.

5. Research Methods

The article uses a set of popular scientific and special methods of research. This integrated approach combines analysis, comparison and synthesis with terminological analysis and normative analysis. Reports of OECD, World Bank, estimates of expert group Digital McKinsey were used as empirical basis of the study.

6. Findings

The DTPA is not a heterogeneous phenomenon. It is a transition from electronic to digital government through the application of big-data technologies, distributed registry, artificial intelligence. But it is also seen in terms of transforming public service rendering (Verma, Kumar, & Ilavarasan, 2017).

In Anglo-Saxon countries, digital transformation has already become successful. In those countries, the DTPA involves the use of platform-based approaches to organizational activities, involving citizens and organizations in the collaborative delivery of services, introduction of new forms of automation and reduction of unnecessary stages in the provision of services (Omar, Weerakkody, & Sivarajah, 2017). For example, the UK has already introduced the online platform Predictive, which permits testing the new methods of state regulation.

As been proved by having been implemented around the world, the DTPA contributes significantly to effectiveness improvement. According to the UK government electronic services survey, digitalization of 30% of the front-office government services contacts provides gross annual savings of more than £ 1.3 billion (The World Bank, 2016).

Russia has not yet shown amazing successes in this area, although some achievements do exist. Since 2010, more than 3 thousand MFCs (multifunctional centers) have been created, a single portal of public services has been functioning, a single system of interagency electronic interaction (SSIEI) has been created, a single public procurement information system has been functioning.

Many domestic and foreign experts note that Russia possesses significant prospects of capacity and development. According to the studies of experts from Digital Mckinsey, digitalization of the Russian economy can increase the country's GDP by 4.1-8.9 billion rubles by the year 2025 (Aptekman et al., 2017). Further prospects for the development of digital technologies in this sphere are rather reassuring. By 2022, it is planned to provide digital public services on a single platform by means of the MFC and other organizations. The total number of services provided is 85. Until the end of 2024, citizens and organizations will be provided with digital feedback connection. The same is true about its control of mass public services. A transition to digital government is also being planned.

However, in Russia and in foreign countries, there are some peculiar features of the digital transformation process, which affect the course of further development of digitalization. These features are primarily connected with the specific traits of public administration. This area has always been distinguished by a high degree of formalization, strict assignment of administrative regulations and procedures. It influences the digitalization process, since often transformations are made on the basis of existing administrative regulations, leading to technological changes being ahead of the institutional ones.

The features of digitalization are also determined by the fact that the main task of the government is to minimize costs and to increase the number of public services offered without changing the current funding. Quite often, inadequate budget funding is taking place. Within the framework of such restrictions, the digital transformation stretches for a rather long period, since no economy can allow such a transition in short time.

Even with sufficient funding, there is a high risk of encountering insufficient or unavailable human resources not used to working in the new environment. In Russia, it should be noted that the state staff is not prepared for mass digitalization. The proportion of civil servants majoring in information technology

ranges from 0.8 to 3% of the total number of employees. At the same time, it should be noted that digitalization provides excellent opportunities for advanced training of civil servants, which is already actively used in foreign countries. For example, in Australia special mobile applications are used for civil servants who have shown unsatisfactory results during certification. Every day they are invited to give an answer to one question related to professional activities. It helps to bridge the gaps in professional training at their job.

Another feature of the DTPA is connected with the fact that the quality of labor in this area is characterized by the effectiveness of decision-making. Accordingly, it is not easy to select and implement digitalization tools that would provide a similar guarantee. Indeed, most often, platform-based solutions, mobile applications, and software are offered as tools aiming at increasing the efficiency of the decisions made. However, they are more aimed specifically at interacting with citizens, and not at expanding the opportunities for civil servants to conduct complex multivariate assessments or execution of predictive functions.

Also, the current stage of digitalization is characterized by the transfer of priorities to meet the expectations of the "digital" generation, accustomed to convenience, mobility, and speed of service, which they have been already used to in the commerce. This, on the one hand, requires some additional efforts made by civil servants, and on the other hand, increases the need to create their own fundamental and applied inventions to be applied in public administration sphere.

A feature of the modern process of DTPA is to strengthen the interaction between citizens and the digital government. This is shown with formal quantitative indicators. For example, the development of digitalization has led to the fact that 27,000 public services are available to citizens now. In 2018 the number of registered users of the United Public Services Portal has increased almost 3 times from 25 to 65 million people. The ability of users to leave comments and suggestions on the portal enhances the feedback between the parties. And, finally, a fundamental feature of the DTPA is the steady increase in information security, having been achieved by all developed economies of the world. It should be noted that in 2017, in terms of the level of information security development, Russia was ranked the 10th in the world, which is a very good result.

Despite the considered features, not always showing positive trends, the DTPA can be considered a positive trend. Many of the functions that are currently consuming a lot of resources can be automated (Troshani, Janssen, Lymer, & Parker, 2018). This reduces both costs and the time devoted to services provision or decision making. Digital processing of a significantly larger amount of information will reduce the number of errors, checks, and excessive use. The considered features of the DTPA allow us to outline further options for improving this area.

The main directions of the further DTPA may include information integration of all government bodies by creating a unified structure of a state digital platform based on unified databases; expansion of used digitalization tools; expanding public e-services; enhancing cybersecurity and privacy.

7. Conclusion

This article is devoted to identifying the features of the DTPA. The analysis of the current situation allows us to draw conclusions about the features and future prospects of this phenomenon. In particular,

the following characteristic features of the digital transformation were identified: technological advances being ahead of institutional ones due to strict regulation and inflexibility of public administration; limited budget funding; insufficient human resources and their unwillingness to work in new conditions; focus on working with citizens' appeals, and not on expanding the opportunities for civil servants to work; transferring priorities to meet the needs of the digital generation; increased interaction between citizens and the digital government; focusing on improving the information security. The identified features allow us to outline further prospects for the development of DTPA. It is proposed to expand the scope of information system development through the use of new tools, to satisfy the need for a universal platform and to set a goal to ensure the provision of public services at the digital level. In general, the DTPA should become an example of the effective use of digital technologies (Shanini, 2015).

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