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DIGITAL LITERACY OF CIVIL SERVANTS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE EFFICIENCY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstract

Digital literacy is an essential component of the development of professional skills of civil servants. In an era of digitalization, the use of information technologies can significantly contribute to the efficiency of public administration. This study analyzes the importance of digital literacy among civil servants in the Republic of Moldova and its impact on administrative efficiency.

Keywords: digital literacy, efficient public administration, civil servants.

JEL Classification: H83, K10.

1. INTRODUCTION

The fourth industrial revolution is fundamentally influencing global development and transforming society at an unprecedented pace. Digital transformation involves the integration of digital technologies into all aspects of any field of activity. This fundamentally changes the respective sector and provides added value to stakeholders. At the same time, digital transformation also requires a transformation of organizational culture, by constantly questioning the status quo, aiming to identify the best optimization solutions. Digital transformation also aims to be customer-oriented. In other words, digital transformation causes and influences radical changes in all aspects of human life.

The Republic of Moldova has reached the moment when it must rethink its digital transformation possibilities, from a holistic perspective, at the level of the entire society, by identifying new opportunities through which people, businesses, public administration will interact, and by stimulating the demand for digital skills and solutions.

The Government of the Republic of Moldova's Action Plan, which identifies digital transformation as one of the most important policy objectives for the next four years, is in line with the Association Agreement with the European Union and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The recent granting of candidate country status to the Republic of Moldova for accession to the European Union (on 23 June 2022) is another

mobilizing factor for the country's integration into the legal framework of the European Union and the digital single market. In this context, it is necessary to accelerate the transformational processes already initiated, to align national strategic measures with European and global trends, and to implement new policies, based on the latest cross-cutting priorities of the European Union, as well as the specific needs of the Republic of Moldova (Ministerul Dezvoltării Economice și Digitalizării, 2025).

2. THE CONCEPT OF DIGITAL LITERACY

Education is a bridge between misery and hope. It is a bulwark against poverty and a cornerstone of development, ... a platform for democratization and a means of promoting cultural and national identity. ... Ultimately, education is the path to human progress and the means by which every man, woman and child can realize his or her full potential (United Nations, 1997).

The importance of digital education, or digital literacy, is widely recognized at national and international levels. The process is a long one, which takes place at a different pace, depending on the system, society, technical, social and economic possibilities. An important role in this regard is played by knowledge about the protection of personal data, in particular, but also access to verified and complex information on information and cyber security, in general.

In this context, we can conclude that digital literacy refers to the integrated set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies that allow the individual to use technology effectively and consciously in all dimensions of daily life. Along with literacy specific to traditional media, it constitutes a fundamental dimension of media literacy.

In the current context of contemporary society, marked by the emergence of the information society and significant transformations in political paradigms and the global balance of power, multiple dimensions of human existence – both in the public and private spheres – are increasingly mediated by digital technologies. This extensive digitalization has led to the reconceptualization of social relations and the configuration of a new socio-technological order. In this context, the widespread use of electronic services has facilitated the emergence of a generation of citizens adapted to the new digital realities, known in the specialized literature as “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001), natively familiar with the tools and practices of the information society.

Thanks to the implementation of electronic services, government has the opportunity to be closer to citizens and adapt to their needs. The process of digitizing public institutions and the services they offer results in increased efficiency, transparency and predictability, thus streamlining their entire activity.

3. DIGITAL LITERACY OF CIVIL SERVANTS

In this sense, digital literacy of civil servants is no longer an option, but a strategic necessity for achieving the objectives of e-government, institutional efficiency and administrative transparency. The integration of digital solutions in the work of public authorities – such as e-government platforms, electronic signature, digital registry or online services for citizens – presupposes the existence of basic and advanced digital skills among administrative staff (Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization, 2025a). Civil servants must be prepared to effectively use government platforms, communicate with citizens by electronic means and manage documents in digital format.

Despite significant progress in digitalization, the Republic of Moldova continues to face challenges related to the uneven level of digital literacy in the public sector, especially in rural areas and decentralized structures. According to data provided by the Electronic Governance Agency, there are discrepancies between the level of technological endowment and the ability of civil servants to effectively use digital tools (National Agency for Research and Development, 2022, Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization, 2025b). This not only slows down the implementation of reforms, but also limits citizens' equitable access to modern and efficient public services.

Thus, the digital literacy of civil servants must be addressed as an essential component of human resources policies in public administration. Continuous training and professional retraining programs should include digital skills modules adapted to institutional needs and the profile of the civil servant. In addition, the development of an organizational culture that is open to technological innovation and continuous learning is crucial for strengthening administrative capacity in a dynamic digital context (Mukonavanhu, 2022).

The professional development system of civil servants is regulated by Law No. 158/2008 on the civil service and the status of civil servants (Law no. 158/2008), which defines the state policy on training in the public service, and by the Regulation on the continuous professional development of civil servants (Decision no. 231/2012) approved by Annex No. 10 to Government Decision No. 201/2009, which defines the mechanism for implementing this policy, including the functions and responsibilities of each factor involved in carrying out training activities.

Law no. 158/2008, through art. 37 and art. 38, provides for the right and obligation of the civil servant to continuously improve his/her skills and professional training, as well as the specific conditions of the professional development process, and each public authority is responsible for ensuring the organization of a systemic and planned process of continuous development of the civil servant. Thus, according to the normative provisions raised, the public authority is obliged to provide initiation courses for newly appointed civil servants, professional development courses on the development of managerial

skills for senior civil servants and senior civil servants and professional development programs/courses on the development of professional skills for executive civil servants with a duration of at least 40 hours annually.

Currently, the main national provider of training for civil servants is the Institute of Public Administration within the State University of Moldova. The current process of training for civil servants has an annual, short-term perspective. This is achieved through the approval by the Government of the Annual Plan for Training and Professional Development of Public Authority Personnel within the Institute of Public Administration and, according to the provisions of Annex No. 10 to Government Decision No. 201/2009, through the approval by the management of public authorities of the annual plans for professional development of personnel.

4. THE IMPACT OF CIVIL SERVANT LITERACY ON THE EFFICIENCY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

The implementation of the Professional Development Program for Civil Servants for 2025-2027 will directly contribute to achieving the strategic objective of the Public Administration Reform Strategy 2023-2030 “The Republic of Moldova has an integrated and competent civil service and civil servants system that efficiently and fairly manages quality and accessible public services, through professionalization and stability, supported by a professional/meritocratic, transparent and motivational system of human resources management in the public service” (Decision No. 126/2023). The objectives established within the Program will generate a significant impact in various areas of public administration activity, including:

Increasing administrative efficiency – better trained civil servants will be able to better manage administrative tasks and processes, which will ensure the successful implementation of public policies;

Increasing the quality of public services – professional development enhances the knowledge and skills of civil servants, contributing to better delivery of public services.

Facilitating adaptation to new administrative structures at local level – by the end of 2026, over 100 level I ATUs will be amalgamated or in the process of amalgamation, and their institutional capacity will be significantly increased. Training programs will help civil servants in local public authorities adapt and be prepared for new roles and responsibilities.

Motivating and retaining professional staff – quality training opportunities improve job satisfaction and motivate employees, thus contributing to the retention of high-performing staff and reducing staff turnover.

Adapting to digital government solutions/innovations and changes – continuous training, including the exchange of experience, will allow civil

servants to adapt more quickly to technological and legislative changes, facilitating the implementation of new solutions and effective practices.

Strengthening trust in public administration – more qualitative and transparent public services contribute to strengthening citizens' trust in state authorities and institutions.

Thus, literacy of civil servants is not only a matter of personal competence, but a fundamental condition for the modernization of public administration in the Republic of Moldova. Investment in the continuous training of civil servants, especially in functional, digital and legal skills, can lead to a more efficient administration, a more flexible and professional bureaucratic apparatus, a more transparent and efficient relationship with citizens.

The analysis of the professional development system in the public service highlights the existence of problems, which in our opinion, remaining unresolved, will not allow improving the professional development process of civil servants, which will lead to the impossibility of achieving the expected impact in the result of training and on the efficiency of public administration.

However, the lack of a strategic vision and approach to developing the training and professional development process reveals the absence of a clear direction and long-term planning for the development of civil servants' skills. Without a strategic vision, training efforts can be fragmented and inefficient, not consistently contributing to the objectives of public administration reform and adaptation to legislative and technological changes.

The low level of training of local public authority personnel, which affects their ability to provide efficient and quality public services. The limited budgets of local public authorities reduce the possibility of investing in training and professional development programs for civil servants. Another cause is the difficult access in some areas to educational centers and institutions, as most of them are located in large cities.

Lack of a systemic process for identifying training needs at individual, group and organizational levels. Without a structured mechanism to determine training needs, it is difficult to develop relevant training programs for civil servants. This leads to programs that do not meet the real needs of civil servants or public authorities, which limits the effectiveness and impact of training.

Training programs with a limited number of topics, which do not cover the demand of public authorities and government priorities. Current training programs focus more on the accumulation of theoretical knowledge, neglecting the development of practical skills necessary for civil servants to effectively perform their roles and respond to government requirements and priorities, especially the development of managerial skills, team management, implementation of digital solutions, application of EU procedures, negotiation, program management, etc.

The organizational culture does not value the continuous professional development of civil servants. Most public authorities reported that they do not have an Annual Professional Development Plan approved by the head of the public authority, as required by the national regulatory framework. These practices reduce the motivation of civil servants for professional development.

The market for training service providers for the needs of public authorities is poorly developed. Identifying competent trainers in certain areas is difficult, and this problem limits the quality and effectiveness of available training programs. At the same time, the creation and development of a network of trainers among civil servants to cover specific training needs was not prioritized.

Real reduced capacities of human resources subdivisions regarding the organization and implementation of the internal and external training process. Human resources subdivisions within public authorities do not have the necessary resources or capacities to organize and effectively manage training and professional development programs. In the last 5 years, no capacity building programs for personnel responsible for human resources management have been organized and implemented. This affects the quality of the implementation of the professional development process and the inability to meet the training needs of civil servants.

Lack of standards and mechanisms for ensuring the quality of training programs in the public service. Currently, there is no regulatory and/or methodological document that would contain clear standards or minimum requirements and mechanisms for evaluating the developed/proposed training programs and the training activities carried out. For this reason, it is difficult to ensure that the proposed training and professional development programs are effective and correspond to the requirements/needs of the public administration. This can lead to variability/lack of standards regarding the quality of training and lack of confidence in the effectiveness of these programs.

Reduced institutional and professional capacities of the subdivision responsible for civil service management within the State Chancellery necessary to efficiently and systematically coordinate the training process of civil servants (quality of training programs, coordination of the network of training service providers, evaluation of training programs and activities, etc.). The department responsible for civil service management does not have the capacities either in terms of number of units or in terms of developed professional skills necessary and sufficient to efficiently plan, coordinate and monitor both the System and the Training Process of Civil Servants.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Digital literacy of civil servants is an essential element for the modernization of public administration in the Republic of Moldova. Increasing digital skills contributes to more efficient resource management, transparency and better interaction with citizens. It is essential that the government continues to invest in the training of civil servants and in the development of digital infrastructure.

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