Digital Transformation of Human Resources in the Moroccan Public Sector

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Abstract:

The subject of the digital transformation of human resources is a rich subject in terms of research. Although digital transformation concerns not only the private sector but also the public sector. The present article is therefore dedicated to the treatment of digital transformation within Moroccan companies and public administrations, mainly from its HR angle.

Through a synthesis of articles consulted and read, we present a literature review composed of key concepts as well as a historical overview, and we focus on the contributions of digital transformation of human resources within the public sector and the challenges related to the subject while highlighting the conclusions cited by the authors.

Résumé :

Le sujet de la transformation digitale des ressources humaines est un sujet riche en matière de recherche. Bien que la transformation digitale ne concerne pas seulement le secteur mais aussi le secteur public comme étant un secteur qui jouit des impacts de celle-ci. Le présent article donc est dédié au traitement de la transformation digitale au sein des entreprises et administrations publiques marocaines, principalement sous son angle RH.

A travers une synthèse d'articles consultés et lus, nous présentons une revue de littérature composée des concepts clés ainsi qu'un aperçu historique, et nous nous intéressons aux apports de la transformation digitale des ressources humaines au sein du secteur public ainsi que les enjeux et les défis à liés au sujet tout en ressortant les conclusions citées par les auteurs d'articles.

Introduction :

Digital transformation has become a major opportunity for companies in recent years, especially with the influence of new information and communication technologies (NICTs).

Indeed, studies on "digital transformation" point us to a multitude of disciplines: economics; law; marketing; finance, etc., and human resources management is also affected by this digitalization.

It must be said that we are increasingly evolving in a world where everything is changing at high speed, and so the HR function is evolving more and more. This function covers all aspects of human resources management, including administration, recruitment, training and compensation.

Taking Morocco as our study context, it's fair to say that it has become aware of the importance of digitalization as a vector of human development and competitiveness for both private and public sector organizations, especially with the impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

The subject of our article therefore remains a topical one, especially that in recent years the digitalization in public sector has become an increasingly important topic. Royal speeches always focus on the public sector and the modernization of Moroccan public administration. Similarly, the Ministry of Digital Transition and Administrative Reform is promoting digital transformation within the public sector.

Indeed, Morocco has designated "digital transformation" as a crucial tool for driving forward the public sector, particularly public administrations. The aim is to provide first-rate services to all users, combat corruption and guarantee the traceability of all operations. What's more, the COVID-19 health crisis in Morocco was an opportunity to accelerate the pace of digitization of public services.

The digital transformation of human resources in the Moroccan public service is therefore a crucial point, given the need to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector, something that cannot be achieved without the contribution of the HR function, which has just evolved as a result of its strategic role.

The public sector is now benefiting from the digitalization of human resources, which is set to increase over the coming years, and this leads us to pose a number of questions, after presenting the following problem: **What assessments can be made of the digital transformation of human resources within the Moroccan public sector?**

So, the questions are:

- What is the digital transformation of human resources in the Moroccan public sector?
- What are the contributions of HR digitalization within the Moroccan public sector?
- What are the challenges of this digital transformation of HR within the same sector? and What are the main lessons learned for the successful digital transformation in case of Moroccan public sector?

To this end, it is timely to initiate a reflection on this subject, and to do so, this work will first address the definitions and background related to our subject, then in a second place to clarify the contributions of the digital transformation of HR within the public sector, and finish with the challenges of this digital transformation within the same sector.

I. Definitions and historical overview

This section aims to propose definitions of "digital transformation" in order to better understand the concept, to study its facets, its relationship with the HR function and its

presentation in the Moroccan public sector, which is our object of study.

1) Definitions:

Digitalization, digitization, digital transformation, e-transformation, each of the articles gives its own definition of the concept. In fact, digital transformation refers to the use of new technologies (NICT) to create new business and value-creation models.

According to **Aurélie Dudézert (2018)**, the digital transformation of organizations is a voluntary process that consists of "the exploration and exploitation of new possibilities generated by these information technologies, particularly at the organizational level"[1].

Digital transformation can also be defined as "a process that aims to improve an entity by triggering significant changes in its properties through combinations of information technology, computing, communication and connectivity" **(Vial, 2019cited by Ouajdouni & Chafik, 2020).**

On the other hand, and speaking of the human resources component, **Baudoin et al. (2019)** define the digitalization of human resources as: "the implementation of a set of responses, digitized or not, to enable

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[1] Aurélie Dudézert, La transformation digitale des entreprises, Paris ; éd. La Découverte, Coll. Repères ,2018

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departments in charge of human resources management to meet the challenges of a company's digital transformation, in response to the changing needs of its internal and external customers"[2].

The digital transformation of HR is therefore characterized by the search for and implementation of global solutions to accelerate HR processes, from recruitment to compensation, while reducing lead times and costs.

2) Historical overview:

The word on digital transformation in the public sector is linked to several historical contexts. Firstly, it is worth recalling the concept of "**E-Government**", which became known in the mid-1980s and refers to the combination of three families: Information and Communication Technologies (ICT); management concepts; and administration.

And speaking of the global context, it should be noted that the United Nations Organization (UNO) underlines the importance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in its 2016 report, while emphasizing the global trend towards digitalization.

In a Moroccan context, the public sector has great importance following the royal address by His Majesty King Mohammed VI in October 2016, which emphasizes the importance of using new technologies in public administration to improve the quality of services. So here we're talking about "**E-Administration**", which aims to use and apply information technologies to improve public services for citizens.

"...Electronic administration must be generalized according to an integrated approach allowing the various departments and services common access to information..." (Extract from the royal speech, October 2016)

In a similar context, a state entity dedicated to the implementation and deployment of Morocco's digital strategy up to 2025 has been created. It is the ADD (Digital Development Agency) which highlights digital transformation.

The HR function, for its part, has undergone a number of transformations, which are accelerating with the evolution of the technological environment. The term "**e-HR**" is associated with all computerized activities in the field of human resources management. These include the use of HRIS, e-recruitment, e-learning, etc., terms

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[2] Transformation digitale de la fonction RH par Emmanuel Baudoin, Caroline Diard, Myriam Benabid, Karim Cherif, 2018, P6

that are now used in both the public and private sectors to optimize traditional HR processes, especially in the context of the health crisis, which has increasingly led to the deployment of new HR tools.

II. The benefits of digital HR transformation in the Moroccan public sector

It should be said that the digital transformation of HR, especially in the public sector, is characterized by a wide range of features, including the use of HRIS, the dematerialization of HR processes, the use of intranet, online HRM services covering several areas such as recruitment, training and internal mobility, otherwise the delegation of certain tasks, and the integration of HR processes into the administration's or organization's information system.

The benefits are enormous. According to all the articles consulted, the use of digital technology in the HR function in the public sector has enabled companies in this sector, as well as public administrations, to provide managers and employees with free access to HR information, resulting in more efficient services and greater employees accountability.

Thus, **LARBI TAMNINE (2016)** in his article "Contribution de l'e-RH à la modernisation de la fonction ressources humaines dans l'administration publique: Le cas du Maroc" asserts that today's digital transformation enables HRDs to free themselves from administrative management processes in order to focus on strategic missions, thus transforming the HR function from an administrative function to a value-creation function. **Kalika et al (2005)**. This is in fact the same contribution identified by **MERIEM OBADA (2016)** in her article.

Then, speaking of the organizational contribution, it is necessary to say that digital transformation in the public sector has led to a reorganization of work translated by the use of the HR Intranet through the passage from a centralized information system, to an information system shared with the various players.

What's more, according to a study by **LARBI TAMNINE (2016)**, human resources management becomes more efficient thanks to the team's high level of professional involvement and efficiency, as a result of autonomy in the execution of work, hence organizational performance. According to the same author, and speaking of the human contribution, digital transformation is also a source of skills and knowledge development by providing employees with all the information they need and facilitating their use of digital technology.

And among the main benefits felt as a result of this transformation, we note the importance attached to the realization of a gradual evolution in the rigid vision that has characterized the HR function in the Moroccan public sector for years.

So, having summarized the benefits of this digital transformation, it's time to look at the issues and challenges.

III. The challenges of HR digitalization in the Moroccan public sector

Currently, in the public sector, the adoption of a digital transformation linked to human resources, or rather the human resources department, is considered a necessity which is linked to the development of public services and the sector as a whole, in order to build an effective and efficient administration and digitalized organization.

It should be noted that the number of studies that have looked at the challenges and success factors of digital transformation in developing countries such as Morocco are not numerous **(Alomari et al., 2012).** However, it is necessary to note certain failures detected following digital transformation within the public sector before detecting the issues and challenges.

From the articles consulted, we find that the authors agree on the fact that certain HR activities are less computerized at public administration level, as well as the problem of security, confidentiality of information and connection failures.

On the other hand, **Ouajdouni A., Chafik K. and Boubker (2020)** assert that the OECD calls for the reinforcement of the dematerialization of administrative procedures, which have the essential aim of improving public organizations' relations with their stakeholders.

Speaking of challenges, we note that some actions in the digital transformation of human resources in the public sector remain incoherent and unnecessary. At this level, we need to identify the strategic axes and challenges to be met, and allocate high value-added technologies, so the call for the implementation of **New Public Management** practices is paramount.

One of the challenges, too, is that change in the public sector cannot be made from one day to the next, as there is a risk associated with digital transformation in this sector, which can also affect working conditions and climate, and therefore influence employees, resulting in resistance to change. Among the facets of this resistance is the need for employees to familiarize themselves with the new HR tools, something that requires ongoing learning and training. Nevertheless, MERIEM OBADA (2017) concludes from the

quantitative study carried out that some HR managers have not registered any resistance following the introduction of ICTs, and that others note little resistance to change insofar as it has not led to disruptions in work execution.

In the same vein, it's worth noting that human resources managers report a lack of training in the ICT field due to low budget allocations. Inadequate training can be a real handicap to digital transformation in this sector. So, according to all the articles, it's important to focus more and more on investment in digital and support for this transformation process, in order to have skilled employees. And so, the challenge is to prepare, redeploy and train human resources for digital, and also to have human capital capable of adapting to future changes and committing its skills to this transformation.

Other success factors were identified in the qualitative study by **LAHSSAINI. S and FARIDI. M (2021)** are the following: The need to value the various teams, the importance of boosting employee productivity, and the obligation to properly revive management by objectives.

While **LARBI TAMNINE (2016)** argues in his article that the use of ICTs in administrations must be performance-based and must extend to other, more strategic

activities such as knowledge management and human capital development.

Conclusion:

From the articles we have read, it can be said that the subject remains important given the historical context in which it is set, and speaking of the case of the public sector, we have come to the conclusion that Morocco is developing more and more in this direction of the digital transformation of human resources, and giving more importance to this subject.

Then, by analyzing the contributions of this digital transformation, we concluded that it brings a panoply of contributions in terms of process simplicity and information sharing, as well as at organizational and human levels.

Secondly, the issues and challenges identified show that digital transformation in the public sector suffers from a number of shortcomings that need to be addressed, since the HR function is evolving more rapidly in pursuit of value-creation objectives and not just dematerialized administrative management. As a result, the role of HR managers and executives must become increasingly important, making the digital transformation of human resources not just a matter of dematerialization, but rather a necessity for human development,

competitiveness and continuous improvement.

So, while digital transformation may be a little under the radar in the public sector, the future calls for its acceleration, especially now that we're talking about the deployment of artificial intelligence and its advantages in terms of performance and efficiency. Thus, digital transformation can be seen as a future projection project for the public sector, which enjoys a number of specific characteristics. Its success therefore depends on the involvement of the players and employees in this transformation, as well as their support and, above all, their awareness of the impacts and implications of digital technology on the quality, cost and delivery times of public services presented to citizens.

So, the future of digital transformation in the HR field leads us to ask questions about the future of human resources in the public sector, especially in the light of developments in other concepts such as AI and big data, etc., which are also present in other research topics.

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