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Digital Referendum - Effective Modeling of Public Administration in Georgia

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Abstract

State management in its content is a complex and at the same time dynamic process. The second half of the 20th century can be considered the initial period of management transformation and establishment of governance structures.

Governance based on democratic principles is based on a number of fundamental principles, the correct implementation of which is the most important prerequisite for the establishment of democratic institutions. One such important democratic process is the referendum.

In Europe, the practice of referendum is most established in Switzerland, which is governed by a system of direct democracy. Accordingly, in order to solve problematic issues, citizens in Switzerland take part in both regional and national referendums, which are undoubtedly democratic in content and respond to the fundamental principles of modern public administration.

In Georgia, where there is little experience in holding a referendum, the implementation of a digital referendum is the latest challenge, which will be an important step in the way of the country's European integration. The involvement of citizens in the solution of important issues for the state allows the so-called possibility of communication between society and government. It eliminates "black holes" and ensures the reduction of conflicts between them. Of course, all the positive results of the referendum depend on how fairly and objectively it will be conducted.

Thus, one of the important challenges of the digitalization of the public administration of Georgia is the digital referendum, the implementation and development of which is an effective step on the way of the state development of Georgia and as a result ensures the acceleration of the country's institutional and European integration processes.

In the era of digital governance, it is necessary to develop new approaches to state intervention in all spheres of public life and public service delivery systems in order to optimally respond to the needs of citizens. Analysis and comparison methods are mainly used in the work, proposals are given in the direction of improving the provision of public services in connection with the electronic referendum.

Keywords: Public management, Digital Transformation of Management, Referendum, Digital Referendum

Introduction

The institution of direct democracy has recently attracted more attention from around the globe. The most popular form of direct democracy is a referendum, which entails a nationwide vote of the populace to pass legislation or settle problems of public concern. It is evident that the active integration of Internet technologies into the voting system is intended to increase electoral activity and draw citizens into politics given the high hopes placed on immediate (i.e., direct) democracy in the areas of local self-government and the growth of civil society. In the age of information technology, the emergence and implementation of electronic voting seems to be a rather natural thing. Elections are not the only time that electronic voting is employed; this technology has not bypassed the institution of referendums. The lower organization expenses and quicker outcomes are the key benefits of electronic referendums. (Alekseev, R.A., 2015). In today's world, electronic referendum systems are rapidly developing. For the first time, the issue of organizing referendums in electronic form was raised in the USA as early as 1974 by Peter Parkinson.

Before we discuss the digital referendum, it is necessary to consider the main directions for using innovative technologies in public administration.

Since there is a growing trend to replace traditional public-legal instruments used in the administration process with artificial intelligence, which is still not legally regulated, the implementation of public administration using continuously updated innovative technologies essentially changes the future of a crucial state function—public administration. As a result, it's important to inform current leaders about potential futures for public administration design in addition to making full use of the tools of e-government available now (Alekseev, R.A., 2020).

The development of e-government is characterized by two types of effects, in particular, modernization is always related to progress, and in this sense, it has a positive impact on the public to ensure the implementation of the principles of accessibility, economy, and efficiency of public services. However, the innovative modernization of governance may even have a negative effect, due to questions surrounding the dubiousness of protecting the public interest in the said process, or even the ambiguities in the context of the protection of human dignity, equal treatment, and the inviolability of private life when governing through artificial intelligence (TaganaSvili, N., 2022).

The need to protect the public interest as well as the rights of each member of society derives from the fundamental principles of the legal state. It is these requirements that must be respected in the process of implementing public administration through innovative technologies, and accordingly, the ideological and functional compliance of the "public administration of the future" with the classical understanding of the legal state should be established.

Before the creation of a unified approach to electronic services in Georgia, state agencies provided more or less information to citizens and business entities about the services they offered. In most cases, receiving services required a site visit, often from one agency to another, so it was difficult for citizens to choose the relevant agency and service. (Toni, G.L.A. van der Meer., 2014).

A digital state, the main goal of which is definitely a subject of discussion: implementation of direct power of the people in the country; creation of a mechanism for interaction between citizens and the legislative branch; ensuring control over the actions of the executive branch, ensuring public control over the adoption of all national decisions, improving the electoral system.

The main components of the digital state are: Petitions; Discussions; Referendums; Elections and Testing.

Referendum:

- Any citizen has the right to vote in nationwide electronic referendums using the functionality provided by the system;
- All bills that have passed 3 readings in parliament and signed by the head of state are submitted to nationwide electronic referendums;
- Issues prepared by local authorities are submitted to regional or local referendums;
- To eliminate possible falsification of votes, technologies such as blockchain can be used - after voting, each citizen receives a hash of his vote, a hash of a block of votes, and a hash of the entire vote, which makes it possible to verify the correctness of the recording of each vote and the reliability of the results of the entire vote;

- The number of referendums is not limited, they can be held daily, with several referendums per day (Kopanev, G., 2019).

When pursuing an open access policy, an important condition for the introduction of new institutional forms is the publicity of decision-making and the open nature of expressing one's attitude to urban policy issues. The majority barrier serves as a key element in the publicity of proposed new practices; the approval of the majority is decisive in the process of institutionalization.

Literature review

When pursuing an open access policy, an important condition for the introduction of new institutional forms is the publicity of decision-making and the open nature of expressing one's attitudes towards urban policy issues.

"The E-Governance and Leadership Handbook" discusses in depth the issues surrounding e-Governance in Georgia and highlights the challenges that must be addressed in the future through the introduction of both effective legal instruments and strong enforcement approaches.

E-government is the will of the state to use modern information and communication tools to make the government itself and the services provided by it more efficient, flexible, and easily accessible. E-governance includes:

- Easy access to government information;
- Involvement of citizens through direct communication with civil servants;
- Openness of the government by presenting its activities as transparently as possible;
- Interactivity, opens borders for different urban and rural residents and gives them equal opportunity to access government services online, saving them time and money (Gabisonia, Z., 2021).

John McCarthy noted that the issue was our redefining of procedures as early as 1956 when he introduced the idea of "artificial intelligence," developed by Prof. Which computing techniques could be deemed clever was a mystery to us. Only a portion of the mechanisms underlying intelligence are understood by us. As a result, from the perspective of computer science, the term "intelligence" should only be used to refer to computational abilities that may be applied to achieving global objectives. However, this description is only appropriate for the 1950s of the 20th century. In science, there are three stages of artificial intelligence growth (generation) because of how much its scope has grown in recent years. Three categories of artificial intelligence can be distinguished based on their phases of development: narrow artificial

intelligence, general artificial intelligence, and super artificial intelligence (McCarthy, John., 2007).

Ilsu Cho's article "Digital Democracy and Citizenship as a Form of Democratic Political System in the Information Age," presented at the 52nd ISSS Annual Meeting in 2008, also raises the issue of electronic referendums. In the opinion of the author of the article, mass computerization of the population implies the opportunity for every citizen to use more political information, as well as to have more communication channels that will allow him to convey his ideas to representatives of various socio-political organizations or to his fellow citizens (Cho, Ilsoo., 2019).

A fairly large-scale study was conducted by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) in 2012. The scientific article by Jordy Barrett I. Estif, Ben Goldsmith, and John Turner is devoted to the prospects for the development and conduct of referendums - "International experience of electronic voting. Norwegian Electronic Voting Project", in which much attention is paid to the experience of electronic voting in different countries, as well as the Norwegian approach to such a voting system. Jordi Barrett I. Estif, a professor of constitutional law in Catalonia, has been involved in a wide range of research projects on electronic voting in many countries around the world that actively use online referendum technology in their electoral practices (Sanoff, H., 2000).

The purpose of our article is to determine what means the public sector offers to citizens to get involved in the decision-making process and initiation, what other alternatives the population has to express their opinion online, and to what extent the community itself uses this opportunity to communicate with government agencies and civil servants, to share their ideas.

The European Union has greatly contributed to Georgia's accomplishments, which are the result of a lot of hard work. According to the United Nations University, Georgia is a country at the nexus of the West and the East that, based on the Soviet experience, is a country on the verge of government collapse. In light of the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals for innovative, equitable, and sustainable growth (SDG 9), smart cities and communities (SDG 11), and strong and resilient institutions (SDG 16), UNU-EGOV continues to support these initiatives as part of the partnership with Georgia's Data Exchange Agency (DEA) (United Nations University. 2019).

Conclusion

The dynamic penetration of information technologies into everyday life is a challenge for building a specific communication infrastructure that ensures the interaction of city authorities with citizens through information technology and the Internet. Electronic referendums are one of the tools for implementing the publicity of city politics.

Public administration is becoming a sphere where everyone finds their own civic identity. The concept of participation in the implementation of deliberative policies implies not only the formal right to be heard but also guarantees that the interests of citizens will be taken into account when making decisions and implemented through democratic institutions.

The use of electronic, multifunctional digital governance is essential to achieve simple, ethical, accountable, responsible, and transparent governance.

Georgia should start actively and rationally advocating e-government initiatives, working tirelessly for flexible, sustainable, innovative, and democratic public administration, which is necessary for effective and result-oriented governance based on participation.

The conclusion is based on the propositions revealed as a result of the analysis and comparison methods regarding the electronic referendum and the improvement of public services. The mentioned recommendations come from the conclusions obtained as a result of the forum conducted by us - Digital Referendum - effective modeling of public administration in Georgia.

Main findings:

- The problem is that civil servants (especially at the municipal level) do not have a vision of how the public management process can be made better thanks to digital technologies.
- Many people in Georgia still do not have information about the services that can be obtained without leaving home, without spending extra money and time;
- The current version of the General Administrative Code of Georgia (GAC) does not recognize the definition of service (including e-service);
- The new strategy of Digital Georgia has not been updated, in this part it is important for agencies to develop relevant action plans independently;
- In terms of ensuring cyber security and personal data protection, it is necessary to continue to find appropriate funds and train citizens in this direction;
- We face many other challenges in terms of digitalization of services, low public awareness of digital services, especially for older people who may not have the necessary skills (low e-literacy) to work with technologies.
- Insufficient access to internet infrastructure is also a problem. Researches prove that among the neighboring and Eastern Partnership countries, citizens of Georgia (63%) and Ukraine have the lowest access to the Internet.

Recommendations:

- The government of Georgia should take into account all the recommendations given to it by the European Council in the e-mail. in the direction of justice;
- Administrative bodies should show more initiative to place all electronic services on the citizens' portal;
- The "Digital Georgia 2014-2018" strategy should be updated, which includes a number of issues of e-referendum and e-elections;
- It should become mandatory for all agencies to independently develop a long-term "digitalization" action plan.

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