The Role of Electronic Management in Rationalizing Public Service in Municipalities -A Case Study in Chetouane MunicipalityTlemcen Province -

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Abstract:
In the context of the rapidly accelerating pace of development and the tremendous advancement in the field of information and communication technology, which has had a significant impact on improving the level of public services provided by public facilities, especially at the local level, the concept of electronic management has been instrumental. In an effort to keep pace with these developments and to modernize the management methods of local public facilities (municipalities) and to rationalize the public service they provide, Algeria has been diligently implementing a series of reforms at the level of local administration in general and municipal administration in particular, within the framework of implementing the concept of local governance.
Keywords: Public Facility; Public Service; Electronic Management; Rationalization of Public Service; Local Governance.
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Introduction

In recent years, some parts have changed drastically and arguably most prominent are information communication technology that has deeply touched the society and public administration for various aspects but also to a higher degreeHaving its grounds on most important areas especially public administration facilities in many ways. It is self-explanatory as these administrations work towards delivering a considerable volume of the public services that people, who are becoming more demanding about quality themselves. The most significant public facilities apart from multiple public facilities would fall under the category of municipal, because of daily interaction and close relationship with local population to be more flexible to changes. Traditional management to electronic management is probably the biggest issue that municipality faces as a result of which modern management vertical has emerged with new management shape to be defined.Like other developing countries striving to confront and keep pace with international transformations, Algeria has sought to implement a series of reforms at both the macro and local levels, aimed at reforming local administrative systems especially in the context of the pervasive and dominating information and communication technology revolution, making the shift towards electronic management in municipalities more than a necessity today.

Study problem:

The problem of this study can be formulated in the following main question:

How has electronic administration contributed to the rationalization of local public service at the level of civil status and organization service in the municipality of Chetouane – Tlemcen Province?

The following sub-questions fall under this problem:

- What is meant by a public facility and public service?
- What is the importance of electronic management? What are its characteristics? What are the requirements for its success? And what is its reality in the Algerian municipality?
- How does electronic management contribute to the rationalization of public service in the civil status and organization service in the municipality of Chetouane?

Study Hypothesis:

This study proceeds from the following main hypotheses:

The implementation of electronic management in the Algerian municipality plays a significant role in modernizing the public facility and thereby rationalizing public service.

Study importance:

The importance of this study lies in its examination of the issue of electronic management's contribution to the rationalization of public service. It is indeed a critical part of studying how new communication media contribute to improving public service and the major challenges and stakes this endeavor faces. This is achieved by discussing the concepts of public facilities and electronic management, and their reality in the Algerian municipality, and then exploring how they contribute to rationalizing public service in the civil status and organization service at the municipality of Chetouane, Tlemcen Province.

Study objectives:

The objectives of the study are to:

- Briefly discuss the concepts of public facilities, electronic management, and public service.
- Examine the reality of electronic management in the Algerian municipality and attempt to uncover the major deficiencies and obstacles it faces.

StudyMethodology:

This study employs a descriptive analytical approach in an attempt to describe the key theoretical concepts of the study, as well as to analyze and interpret the reality of electronic

management in the municipality of Chetouane, Tlemcen Province, and how it contributes to the rationalization of public service in this municipality. The study population consists of all employees of this service, and we selected a sample of 50 employees. To gather information, we used a questionnaire. The analysis of the results was performed using frequencies and percentages.

Study Structure:

We attempted to address the study's problem in two parts: the first theoretical, where we discussed the various concepts included in the study (public facilities, public service, electronic management, and rationalization of public service). The second part is anField study in the civil status and organization service at the municipality of Chetouane, Tlemcen Province.

I. The theoretical aspect of the study

I. 1. Concept of Public Facility

Public facilities, in general, are projects established and managed by the state through the executive authority or administration to meet the general needs of individuals. A public facility is defined as: "An activity carried out by the public authority towards citizens, either directly or indirectly (i.e., under its supervision, and sometimes it is the public apparatus itself that undertakes this activity), with the aim of serving the public interest and, at least partially, subject to the rules of public law (Nasser, 2011, p. 150)." A public facility is also defined based on two criteria, the organic or formal criterion, which sees the public facility as a structure, body, institution, or organization that works to satisfy the needs of the public and achieve public benefit. The objective or functional criterion sees the public facility as the activity or function that the administration undertakes to achieve public benefit, without aiming to make a profit (Mouloud, 2014, p. 212). The public facility is based on a set of elements, the most important of which are: it is established with the goal of serving the public interest, and it is a project established by the state and thus is subject to its authority.

I. 2. Concept of Electronic Management

If the general concept of management refers to "the human effort involved in planning, organizing, leading, and controlling human and material resources to achieve specific objectives efficiently and effectively (Al-Salmi, 2006, p. 32)," then in our current time, with the diversification and multiplication of services, activities, and events offered by public administrations to citizens or institutions, the necessity has arisen to shift from traditional management to electronic management. Electronic management is defined as "a new managerial approach based on the understanding and conscious use of information and communication applications in the practice of fundamental management functions, transitioning from paper transactions to electronic transactions (Bouamama & Halima, 2014, p. 35)." It is also known as "the use of electronic means and technologies as required by practice, organization, procedures, commerce, or advertising, allowing all administrators to interact immediately and instantaneously with each other to achieve common goals, ensure the interests of the administration and customers, leveraging effort, time, space, and economic existence, and enhancing service and satisfaction for all without needing to revert to higher leadership centers, considering this as a component of decentralization (Samir, 2009, p. 25)."

Furthermore, electronic management is defined as "the management and administration of public facilities and the organization of relationships between them and the citizen, using data communication systems to provide public services at lower costs and in less time (Al-Halou, 2007, p. 32)." Thus, electronic management is "a process that mechanizes all tasks and activities of the administrative institution, relying on all necessary information technologies, leading to the achievement of the new management goals in reducing paper use, simplifying procedures, eliminating routine, and completing tasks and transactions quickly and accurately, preparing every administration for integration with the electronic government subsequently (Al-Salimi, 2005, p. 235)." Here, it is important to note that if the concept of electronic management means making

transactions within administrations depend on information technology and conducted electronically, from correspondence to the integration of information systems, where tasks and activities are carried out using information technology, then the concept of electronic government means making all government administrations integrate with each other and provide services among themselves and between citizens and the private sector in a direct and electronic manner.

I. 2.1.Importance and Dimensions of Electronic Management

Electronic management holds significant importance at the level of both private and public sector institutions, as evidenced by the following:

- Simplifying procedures, which enhances the quality of government services provided to citizens.
- Facilitating communication processes between different departments and services.
- Reducing paper use, which eases the process of preservation and documentation.
- Shortening the time and increasing the accuracy of executing various administrative transactions.
- Employing competent workforce effectively.
- Encouraging investment in technology through the establishment of local industries in the field of information technology.
- Assisting in promoting the principles of transparency and accountability, reducing bureaucratic burdens, and saving time.
- Supporting and enhancing the reform of local administrative systems, as electronic management contributes to efficiency, supports transparency, and accountability, thus improving organizational efficiency.

As for the dimensions of electronic management, they include (Ahmed, 2013, pp. 73-74):

- **Administrative Dimension:** Based on the directives of senior administrative leadership, which plays a significant role in understanding and absorbing the concept of electronic management and striving to establish a new culture in the organization and create innovative capabilities.
- **Technical and Technological Dimension:** Includes the physical components, hardware, software, application programs, storage technology, communications, and networks.
- **Human Dimension:** Organizations strive to develop their human resources by securing their training needs and enhancing their innovative, technical, and administrative capabilities.
- **Knowledge and Information Dimension:** The information and knowledge unit is one of the most crucial elements in increasing the renewed informational and knowledge base of the organization.

I. 2.2.Reality of Electronic Management in the Algerian Municipality

Since its independence, Algeria has paid significant attention to the system of local communities in general and municipalities in particular, due to their fundamental role in activating local economic development. The municipality is considered the basic cell and the base regional community of the state, enjoying legal personality and independent financial liability (Ammar, 2012, p. 107). As electronic management has become a primary goal for the state to enable citizens to access a higher level of administrative service and improve public service to eliminate administrative bureaucracy, Algeria has been implementing a series of local reforms for years, one of the main pillars of which is the activation of electronic management.

The Ministry of Interior has taken several measures aimed at providing quality public services to local citizens and eliminating the queues that used to be seen in municipalities and districts. Some of the major projects implemented in this area include (Lazhar & Rahman, 2016, pp. 104-106):

A. Civil Status Digitalization Project

This is a web application that allows entering data related to the Algerian citizen's civil status contracts and documents into an advanced database hosted on main servers for preservation and later retrieval. This project was first implemented in the municipality of Batna on March 4, 2010.

B. Biometric Passport and Identification Card Project

Aimed at modernizing identity and travel documents, this project started in December 2010. These documents are more secure and flexible, facilitating citizens in carrying out various daily procedures.

In the same context, the Ministry of Interior has taken a series of measures that contribute to the development of electronic management applications and the fight against bureaucracy, including:

- Extending the validity of the biometric passport to 10 years.
- Reducing the number of administrative documents issued by civil status services from 29 to 14 documents.
- Eliminating the requirement for authentication of original documents delivered by public administration.
- Extending the validity of birth certificates to 10 years, previously valid for only one year.
- Abolishing the validity period for death certificates.
- Relieving citizens of the burden of traveling between the municipality and the court in case of errors in civil status documents by having municipalities coordinate with judicial authorities for corrections.
- Extending the declaration period for births for citizens of the South from one day to 20 days.

C. Smart Municipality and Electronic Citizen Project:

This is a project that the Ministry of Interior aims to embody and generalize across all municipalities in the country. It started in late 2013 and aims to reduce the citizen's archive to a single number that follows them for life. Through this system, citizens can extract all administrative documents electronically at the municipality, significantly alleviating the difficulties Algerian citizens face in extracting documents that have long been a concern for them.

I. 3. Concept of Public Service

In light of the rapid developments witnessed by various economies, whether advanced or emerging, providing services to citizens, ensuring their improvement, and striving to enhance their well-being have become some of the main priorities of government bodies in their relations with citizens and in improving the services that must be provided to them. Generally, a service is viewed as "an activity or benefit that one party can provide to another, which is necessarily intangible and does not result in ownership of any kind, and may or may not be linked to a natural product (Mok, 2001, p. 42)."

Public service is defined as "the ability to meet the essential needs necessary for sustaining human life and ensuring its welfare, which must be provided in the interest of the majority of the community, and is the fundamental driver of all policies in service affairs with the goal of improving the living standards of citizens (Bashir, 2009, pp. 138-139)." Therefore, it is incumbent upon the

local administration in general, and the municipality in particular, to ensure the provision of service to the citizen wherever they are, within the principles of adequacy, effectiveness, and the reduction of routine, procrastination, and delay in taking measures. This involves engaging the population in the planning and execution of projects, training them in electoral work, educating them to engage in constructive dialogue, understanding opposing viewpoints, and reducing conflicts and disturbances that violate the principle of cooperation and hinder the achievement of goals (Al-Ma'ani, 2009, p. 146).

Among the most important characteristics of public service, we mention:

- It enjoys a dual standard as it is administrative or economic on one hand and political on the other, due to state oversight.
- Public service operates under a special system subject to rules intended for the public interest.
- Typically, the provision of public service is monopolized by major institutions in terms of their operation rate and turnover.
- The goal of providing it is not necessarily profit-making but is social.
- The more responsibilities public services take on in a country, the higher the level of advancement and well-being.
- Public service is distinguished by not being offered to a specific social class but to all segments of society.

With the diversification of citizens' requests and changes in living conditions, which are today closely linked to technological development, we find several types of public service, including:

- Administrative services such as civil status service at the municipality.
- Social and cultural services such as educational services and healthcare.
- Industrial and commercial services such as water utilities, electricity, and gas companies...

I. 4. The Role of Electronic Management Governance in Rationalizing Public Service at the Local Administration Level in Algeria

Public service is considered one of the most essential functions of the state since its inception. Thus, finding the best mechanisms to improve this service is crucial, as it positively reflects on citizen satisfaction, instilling a sense of security and trust in the governing system, thereby stabilizing society. This can only be achieved through the implementation of electronic management, capable of ensuring the improvement of public service. Through its influence on the effectiveness of government administration, especially local administration, electronic management facilitates communication with citizens, speeds up response times, and enhances accuracy in performance.

Adopting electronic management contributes to the rationalization of public service by offering it transparently, consistently, and at reduced costs while ensuring efficiency and equity. Transparency is evident as the use of information technology in delivering public service leads to clarity in all aspects of activities and tasks, allowing for accountability and leaving no room to hide transactions, thus enhancing trust between citizens and administration. Cost reduction results from communication over the internet without the need for physical travel. This addition also increases the productivity of public service, reduces bureaucracy, speeds up responses, ensures timely completion, and enhances task accuracy according to precise standards.

In Algeria, local administration holds a significant position in the administrative system and is considered the most important public facility, owing to its effective role in development. The municipality forms the backbone of this system and is seen as the main local nucleus as it is closest to the citizen, established primarily to manage their affairs and improve the level of services provided

to them. With the evolution of political and economic conditions and the advancement of information and communication technology, reforming various structures and institutions of the state has become an unavoidable reality, as well as enhancing its human capabilities, defining the concept of public service, and rationalizing it by embracing the concept of good governance, especially at the local level. This involves managing public affairs transparently, participating in decision-making, defining responsibilities at all levels, and combating corruption. This has made the idea of reform at the local level a significant focus, especially in recent decades.

Governance alone is responsible for framing reforms appropriately because it has the ability to merge the concept of reform with the fair implementation mechanisms. If the political, economic, and social developments that the world has experienced in recent years have pushed most countries to revise how they manage their economic and social affairs according to the requirements of the stage and in response to citizens' demands, then Algeria, like other countries, has introduced deep and radical reforms that cover multiple areas, including the field of local administration by making it more flexible through the introduction of electronic management. This has highlighted the urgent need for local reform, which is a fundamental component of any comprehensive reform process. This general concept calls for adhering to the principles of sound public administration, i.e., a stable institutional structure, commitment to efficiency standards, separation of powers, transparency, disclosure, accountability, control, freedom of information flow (thanks to electronic management), responsiveness, and participation (Al-Qaryouti, 2001, p. 45).

Regarding the objectives of reforming local administration systems by adopting electronic management, they can be summarized as follows:

- Improving performance levels in the administrative apparatus and increasing productivity by simplifying administrative procedures, in addition to reforming financial and tax systems to provide resources and fairness in the distribution of burdens.
- Supporting the move towards administrative decentralization with the aim of encouraging popular participation in managing local affairs and in decision-making.
- Improving methods of dealing with citizens and enhancing the concept of responsiveness to their demands, considering that providing service to citizens is the raison d'être of administrative bodies, which is achieved by showing more transparency in the work of employees and administrative bodies and enhancing the concept of accountability and social responsibility.

II. Field Study

II. 1. Study Methodology

The study population includes the employees of the Civil Status and Organization Service at the Chetouane Municipality, in addition to a group of citizens present at the service. We selected a sample of 50 individuals. To gather information, we used a questionnaire that contained 20 questions divided into two axes. The first axis consists of 11 questions related to the dimensions of electronic management, including (the extent of using devices and programs, the use of administrative information systems, databases, and the suitability of the used programs). The second axis includes 9 sections related to rationalizing public service. The responses to the questions were closed-ended (yes or no). For data analysis, we used frequencies and percentages.

II. 2. Description of the Study Sample's Responses

II. 2.1.Description of the study sample's responses regarding the first axis (Dimensions of Electronic Management)

A. The First Dimension: The extent of using devices and programs

Table (1) Responses of the study sample to the first dimension

Number	Dimension of the extent of using devices and programs:	Answer	Frequency	Percentage %
1	The municipality has a sufficient number of computers necessary for work.	Yes	37	74
		No	13	26
		Total	50	100%
2	The municipality uses high-tech and modern devices.	Yes	35	70
		No	15	30
		Total	50	100%
3	The programs and devices used are appropriate for the nature of the required work.	Yes	38	76
		No	12	24
		Total	50	100%
4	The programs and devices contribute to the effectiveness of decision-making.	Yes	28	56
		No	22	44
		Total	50	100%

Source: Prepared by the researcher

From the table, we observe that the responses of the sample members to the Paragraphs in this dimension were mostly positive "yes" with similar percentage ranges from 70% to 76%, except for the fourth Paragraph at 56%. This indicates that the municipality uses computers and programs that are compatible with the nature of the work. This confirms the state's effort to provide appropriate devices with high technologies and software, thereby emphasizing its commitment to supporting the implementation of electronic management.

B. The Second Dimension: The extent of using administrative information systems

Table (2) Responses of the study sample to the second dimension

Number	Dimension of using administrative information systems:	Answer	Frequency	Percentage %
5	The information systems and programs used contribute to the rapid provision of necessary information.	Yes	42	84
		No	8	16
		Total	50	100%
6	The information systems and programs used contribute to providing all up-to-date information.	Yes	40	80
		No	10	20
		Total	50	100%

Source: Prepared by the researcher

From Table (2), we observe that the responses of the sample members were mostly affirmative, with 84% and 80% for the two Paragraphs of this dimension. This indicates that the information systems and programs used in the municipality effectively contribute to the rapid provision of necessary and up-to-date information.

C. The Third Dimension: Databases

Table (3) Responses of the study sample to the third dimension

Number	Database Dimension:	Answer	Frequency	Percentage %
7	Databases work to store a huge amount of information and retrieve it quickly when needed.	Yes	44	88
		No	6	12
		Total	50	100%
8	Databases contribute to facilitating the exchange of information between various services.	Yes	37	74
		No	13	26

		Total	50	100%

Source: Prepared by the researcher

From Table (3), we observe that the responses of the sample members were positive with close percentages (88% and 74%). This indicates that the databases have helped in storing a vast amount of information and facilitated its exchange between different services and departments within the municipality. It demonstrates that the use of modern electronic management applications contributes to reducing the burden on services by decreasing the use of written documents (paper archives), thereby speeding up the response to citizens' requests.

D. The Fourth Dimension: Suitability of the Used Programs

Table (4) Responses of the study sample to the fourth dimension

Number	Dimension of Suitability of the Used Programs:	Answer	Frequency	Percentage %
9	The programs used are characterized by ease of learning and operation.	Yes	26	52
		No	24	48
		Total	50	100%
10	In case of a malfunction, the programs used explain how to fix it.	Yes	23	46
		No	27	54
		Total	50	100%
11	The municipality has special programs for network security, information protection, and confidentiality.	Yes	39	78
		No	11	12
		Total	50	100%

Source: Prepared by the researcher

Table (4) shows that the responses of the study sample to the Paragraphs in this dimension were varied. For Paragraph 9 (the used programs are easy to learn and operate), 52% answered "yes" while 48% answered "no", indicating that some employees might find it difficult to learn the software used, suggesting a need for more focus on their training and education on these programs. For Paragraph 10 (in case of a malfunction, the used programs explain how to fix it), 54% of the sample responded affirmatively, indicating that when a malfunction occurs, employees might not know what to do without resorting to a technical specialist. As for Paragraph 11, with 78% responding "yes", it indicates that there are adequate programs for protecting and securing information in the municipality, similar to other public administrations.

II. 2.2.Description of the study sample's responses regarding the second axis (Rationalization of Public Service)

Table (5) Responses of the study sample to the Paragraphs of the second axis: Rationalization of Public Service

Number	Statement	Answer	Frequency	Percentage %
12	Current working conditions are good and facilitate effective performance.	Yes	30	60
		No	20	40
		Total	50	100%
13	Training opportunities are available for all employees to improve performance and avoid mistakes.	Yes	18	36
		No	32	64
		Total	50	100%
14	Electronic management meets the needs of citizens and helps them fulfill their requirements.	Yes	45	90
		No	5	10
		Total	50	100%
15	Electronic management has changed the environment in which public service is provided by introducing new concepts and methods.	Yes	43	86
		No	7	14
		Total	50	100%
16	Electronic management has encouraged enhanced trust between the public administration and citizens.	Yes	36	72
		No	14	28

		Total	50	100%
17	Electronic management has fostered the principle of transparency in decision-making and problem solving.	Yes	27	54
		No	23	46
		Total	50	100%
18	The speed of service delivery and provision directly saves effort, time, cost, and eliminates queues and bureaucratic hurdles.	Yes	47	94
		No	3	6
		Total	50	100%
19	The reform of administrative processes is still in its early stages and is a first step towards establishing successful electronic administration.	Yes	40	80
		No	10	20
		Total	50	100%
20	The reform of administrative processes still lacks training and the creation of new operations and procedures that lead to radical changes in administrative work methods.	Yes	42	84
		No	8	16
		Total	50	100%

Source: Prepared by the researcher

From the table, we observe that the responses of the sample members varied across the Paragraphs of this axis. Regarding Paragraph (12), 60% of respondents confirmed with a "yes" that the current working conditions under electronic management are good and facilitate work, thanks to reducing the burden on both parties (work pressure on the employee, and waiting pressure and document overload for the citizen). For Paragraph (13), 64% of the responses were negative, which confirms the lack of training opportunities or their unavailability to all deserving employees.

As for Paragraphs (14, 15, 16, and 18), most responses were positive with "yes" at consecutive rates (90%, 86%, 72%, and 94%), affirming the effective role of electronic management in improving public service. The responses indicated that electronic management has met the needs of citizens and fostered their trust in local administration. It also changed their negative perception by transforming the environment of public service delivery, which now saves effort, time, and cost for both the administration and the citizen, and eliminated the problem of queues.

Paragraph (17) saw a close split in responses between positive and negative (54% and 46%), indicating a divergence in opinions about whether electronic management encourages the principle of transparency in decision-making. As for the responses to the remaining Paragraphs (19 and 20), they were positive with "yes" at high percentage rates (80% and 84%), confirming that the reform of local public administration through electronic management is still in its early stages and still lacks training and activation of procedures.

II. 2.3.Hypothesis Testing

Study Hypothesis state thatthe implementation of electronic management in Algerian municipalities plays an important role in modernizing the public facility and thereby rationalizing public service.

From the previous analysis of the sample members' responses to the survey axes, we concluded the validity of this hypothesis. The responses from the study sample to the survey items showed that the application of electronic management in the municipality has indeed contributed to modernizing the public facility and thereby improving and enhancing the level of public service provided to citizens. Firstly, by improving and simplifying working conditions, speeding up processes, and reducing the pressure on various municipal service employees (modernizing public facility work methods), and secondly, for local citizens by providing services directly, saving effort, time, and costs, eliminating queues and bureaucratic hurdles, and thus changing the citizens' negative perception of the administration and increasing their trust in it. This is despite the fact that the implementation of electronic management in the Algerian public administration is still in its early stages and still lacks some procedures and even the necessary material and human resources.

Conclusion

Through this study, we aimed to briefly explore the role of electronic management in rationalizing public service through a series of local reforms implemented by Algeria in the local administration. These reforms have modernized and adapted the administration to various advancements in information and communication technology by introducing the concept of electronic management, which has become a crucial stage in the transition from traditional citizen interaction with public service institutions to modern and effective communication, utilizing various devices and ICT programs optimally. The implementation of these technologies has played an important role in modernizing work methods in public facilities, which has, in turn, improved and rationalized public service.

Study Results and Recommendations:

- Electronic management has become a necessity imposed by various digital transformations experienced by human societies.
- The application of electronic management concepts in public facilities contributes to modernizing work methods, thus improving and rationalizing the public services offered.
- For the employees of various municipal services, electronic management improves working conditions by simplifying and accelerating processes and reducing pressure.
- For local citizens, electronic management directly provides services, saving effort, time, and costs, eliminating queues and bureaucratic hurdles, thereby changing the citizens' negative perceptions of the administration and increasing their trust.

Among the key recommendations emerging from the study:

- The application of electronic management in Algerian public administration is still in its early stages and lacks some procedures as well as material and human resources.
- Preparing a suitable work environment for employees to improve the delivery of public service.
- Conducting specialized training courses in the field of electronic management applications for employees.
- Continuously updating information technology and communication tools, developing work procedures, and attempting to clarify them for employees to facilitate understanding.
- Providing specialized personnel in the field of programming and the use of advanced computer devices.

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