

Modernization of local administration and moving from traditional to electronic local administration: A reading in the Electronic Municipality Project in Algeria

Received date: 07/07/2023 Accepted date:11/08/2023 Published date: 31/09/2023

Asma Belarbi ¹, Zahia Debbab ²

¹ university of Biskra, Algeria, **Email:** smsmbel@gmail.com

² university of Biskra, Algeria, **Email:** zahia.debbab@univ-biskra.dz

Abstract:

This article aims to highlight the concept of the electronic municipality and the most important services provided by the electronic municipality as one of the most effective solutions to eliminate problems that confront the pattern of the traditional municipality, and the optimal solution to eliminate administrative corruption and prevent its spread. The requirements of administrative reform have also come to impose a commitment to transparency and clarity in its work approach, especially with the increasing use of information and communication technology.

Keywords; modernization ; local administration ; electronic administration ; Algeria.

Corresponding Author: zahia debbab, **Email :** zahia.debbab@univ-biskra.dz

1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary challenges have imposed on all States, whether developed or developing, a rethinking of their roles, in terms of rethinking the nature of the activities they should undertake and those they should abandon to allow for a greater role than participation by other groups of society, whether private or voluntary. Since a State's administrative organ was its arm in implementing its objectives and orientations, and since there had been a change in those objectives and orientations, the administrative organ must keep pace with that change in the current format. The scope of the governing body's work should, therefore, first be determined, and then how to reform and develop to keep pace with changes in the local and global environment concerning the activities that represent the new scope of work of that body.

This is perhaps what Algeria has found itself obliged to interact with. Hence, Algeria had to reconsider its traditional management pattern in light of the developed countries' success in administering its administration, particularly in the field of public service, as it has used the latest technology in administrative reform, or so-called e-administration, which has helped bring the administration closer to the citizen. That was why the Algerian State had to move quickly to keep pace with that development in an effort to improve its administrative performance. This work is not done all at once but needs to be studied and planned through administrative reform.

The electronic municipality is considered the most important form of application of electronic administration to fix the local administration and reduce the burden on the citizen, which requires studying an electronic service framework for municipalities to convert the forms of services into electronic ones that take place via the Internet. The latter is done by opening the field of dealing with all local bodies and institutions to cooperate in this field and reduce the burdens of moving from one institution to another on citizens.

All of this we'll try to address in our article.

1. 2. Primary concepts:

- **Definition of administration:**
- **Linguistically:** In its linguistic meaning, administration means performing or fulfilling a particular purpose. Derivatively, it refers to the Latin word that consists of two parts: AD and MINSTRARE, which means performing the services of others. In the specialized and modern literature, the word MANAGEMENT is used to denote the social dimension of administration or the importance of the human aspect in the institution or organization. (Gharbi, 1996, p. 09)
- **Terminologically:** Among the definitions of some Western scholars, we find:
- Olin Johnson defines it as a process and method of work aimed at achieving a specific program by an administrative body with a certain organization, by creating an atmosphere of consensus based on cooperation and coordination of efforts to manage the institution towards its set goals. (Fahmy, p. 7)

- James Whelan Riley defines it as the spark that activates, directs, and monitors the organization's plan and actions. (Hashem, 2010, p. 29)
- **Among the definitions of Arab scholars, we find:**
- It is defined by Alaa Abdul Razzaq Al-Salmi as: It is the process of organizing tasks within the limits of available resources and following up and directing employees to accomplish them in order to achieve the specified goals. (Al-Razzaq, 2008, p. 13)
- While Ali Gharbi and others define it as: It is the process that includes the integration of human efforts in order to reach a desired result, with the least possible effort, the lowest possible cost, and the most accurate work, taking into account the conditions of the political, social, and economic environment, considering that the organization is not an isolated island, but rather affects the larger society in which it is located. (Gharbi, 1996, p. 10)
- **Definition of e-administration:**

Al-Salmi defines it as the process of automating all the tasks and activities of the administrative institution by relying on all the necessary information technologies to achieve the new objectives of the administration in reducing the use of paper, simplifying procedures, and eliminating the fast and accurate routine of tasks and transactions.

Moreover, Ghoneim defines it as the exchange of business and transactions between parties through the use of electronic means instead of relying on the use of other physical means such as direct means of communication. (Massoudi, p. 24)

It is also defined as an integrated electronic system that aims to transform normal administrative work from manual to computer-based

management by relying on robust information systems that help to make management decisions as quickly as possible and at minimal cost. Electronic administration can include both internal and external communications of an organization. The aim is to introduce full transparency and accountability, thereby improving electronic governance within an organization.

- **Definition of electronic municipality:** Several definitions of electronic municipality have been provided, including:
- Some researchers have argued that “e-municipality is a new and sophisticated pattern of management, through which performance and administrative efficiency are enhanced and the working climate is improved to facilitate all services and work provided by government institutions to citizens. Under this new type of work, citizens are able to complete all governmental transactions and even issue official documents through electronic means such as the Internet and cellphones quickly and effectively.” (Bahloul, 2017, p. 295)
 - The concept of electronic municipality in another definition means “the use of communication and information systems to provide governmental services to citizens, the business sector, and other government agencies. The electronic municipality projects aim to provide service to citizens satisfactorily, taking into account the saving of time, effort, and cost for the success of the electronic municipality in any society”. (Msitfa, 2018, p. 125)
 - It has also been defined as “the integrated platform through which administrative and social networks are established, where the possibility of citizens’ communication with the municipality to which they belong is provided through different channels and thus the possibility of making the best

decisions through municipal managers in real time”. (Bahloul, 2017, p. 259)

- It is also defined as “it is that municipality, which uses communications and information technology to deal with all associated citizens, the business sector, employees, and other government services, ensuring that the municipal business is performed transparently, efficiently, economically, and expeditiously”. (Yousef, 2007, p. 260)

Based on the previous definitions, the most important components of the electronic municipality can be limited to:

- **Internal effectiveness of municipalities:** Municipalities cannot provide excellent services to citizens if their internal administrative functions are not working properly, so work must be done to study internal procedures and try to simplify them in a way that does not conflict with the concepts of control and responsibility.
- **Development of structures:** Most municipalities in Algeria practice their work through a group of internal sections whose structure was designed according to the requirements and capabilities of the last century, which is not compatible with the technological orientation, given that radical changes in the field of providing municipal services must be matched by radical changes at the level of the administrative structure of traditional municipalities in order to take the electronic form as a structure and organization.
- **Electronic municipal services:** The electronic municipality is the most important form of application of electronic administration for the good of local administration and reducing the burden on the citizen. This requires studying an electronic service framework for municipalities to convert

service forms into electronic form that takes place via the Internet. The latter can be done by opening the field of dealing with all local bodies and institutions to cooperate in this field and reduce the burdens of moving from one institution to another, and on the other hand, developing the service of citizens' relations with the municipality in order to follow up their complaints and meet their needs electronically (Mowafek, no page).

2. 3. The importance of the electronic municipality:

The importance of the electronic municipality is evident through the benefits of its implementation, which are represented in the following:

a. Economic benefits:

- Saving time, effort, and money for all parties that deal with the electronic municipality compared to the traditional municipality.
- The service goes to the citizen or the concerned authority, not the other way around.
- Supporting economic development programs by facilitating transactions between the public and private sectors in the municipality, thus increasing the profitable return of the electronic municipality.
- Providing new job opportunities in many areas such as data entry, operation, and maintenance of electronic municipality infrastructure and information security.
- Unifying efforts instead of dispersing them, as well as some procedures in the traditional municipality are duplicated, whereas efforts are collected under one electronic portal in the e-municipality.

- Opening new investment channels through the integration of e-municipality locally and e-government centrally by using the same applications, techniques, and internal data exchange.

b. Administrative benefits:

- The electronic municipality concept allows for organizing administrative processes, improving functioning, working in a team spirit, and consolidating efforts.
- Management in the electronic municipality is more transparent in dealing, clearer and eliminates nepotism and courtesy, thereby eliminating bureaucracy.
- The electronic municipality abbreviates the long serial administrative pyramid usually followed in the traditional municipality and accelerates the implementation of administrative procedures.
- Communicate with various oversight agencies easily, exchange reports, and receive observations and amendments in a short time.

c. Social benefits:

- Motivate citizens to use the electronic municipality and thus create an information society capable of handling technical data and keeping abreast of the information age.
- Facilitate and speed social networking through many electronic applications such as e-mail and others.
- Activate various social activities by using many electronic applications.
- Activating and facilitating popular control of acts contrary to the principles of a dignified life, and consolidating the principle of “reporting”, which is widely known in civilized societies.

In order to access my municipal effective and successful electronic model, work should be done to update the range of internal procedures

and municipal services by applying the excellent practices adopted globally in municipal action.

3. 5. Objectives of the e-municipality:

The Electronic Municipality aims primarily to transform the provision of public services from the traditional to the electronic method. Accordingly, it seeks to achieve a number of objectives, the most important of which are:

- Approaching the local citizen via a comprehensive electronic portal about the municipality.
- Reduce transaction burdens on citizens and municipal administration by distributing electronic investments and enabling them to access information easily.
- Transferring manual services to the Internet and mobile phones.
- Promote the municipality and highlight its projects.
- Keeping up with progress in the surrounding economic environment and remaining at the top of modernized and developed competition.
- Improve interaction with the surrounding environment and increase the efficiency of municipal administration.
- Linking municipal internal systems to the Internet interface.
- Enhance the benefits of transparency, accountability, and rapid delivery of public services, as well as reduce administrative and financial corruption and costs.

6. CONCLUSION

4. Services provided by the Electronic Municipality:

The various municipal services can be explained through the dealers with electronic municipalities, each of whom is offered a range of services as follows:

- **Government to Citizens (G2C):** are concerned with the provision of all kinds of government services to citizens electronically. Each person can perform various services, such as civil documents, building permits, etc., from anywhere and at any time through various communication networks, primarily the Internet.
- **Government to Government (G2G):** It is concerned with exchanging information and correspondence between government departments of various kinds and levels. The system allows all parties involved in a particular subject to see all the information relevant to it and any subsequent update thereto, giving the right of amendment to each party in its field of competence.
- **Government to Employees (G2E):** Deals with transactions between different government departments and among their multiple employees who may receive instructions at any time and from anywhere to inform them of all new work required and otherwise, especially in urgent situations such as emergencies and others.
- **Government to business (G2B):** Deals with transactions between different government departments and between multiple companies that market their various products and services such as supplies, contractors, etc., or wish to benefit from certain services offered by government agencies such as bidding and others. (Msitfa, 2018, p. 126)

The following figure illustrates what was mentioned earlier:

Figure No. 01: Dealers with the Electronic Municipality



(Source: Msitfa, 2018, without page)

Some of the electronic services that municipalities can generally adopt can also be explained in the following points:

- Inquire about local activities and events.
- Inquire about health centers in the region.
- Apply for a house or institution restoration license.
- Apply for a building permit and follow up the transaction electronically.
- Apply for advertising license.
- Municipal news and e-awareness campaigns on smoking, common diseases, and local prevention.
- Download municipal forms and procedures.
- Inquire about public library services electronically. (Msitfa, 2018, p. 126)

5. Challenges faced by the Electronic Municipality:

- One of the main obstacles facing the current governing bodies to the transition from traditional municipalities to electronic ones is the scarcity of financial resources. Material aspects help to use advanced technology in municipalities, specifically in municipalities with weak tax collection for many reasons and also because grants are not available.
- Weak technical, physical, and information infrastructure capabilities.
- The employment policy is not based on competencies and is not commensurate with the development of the modern electronic system. The lack of technical skills of human resources and staff hampers the municipality's transformation into electronic administration, and some employees resist change.
- The lack of clear policies for the transformation process and the existence of ambiguity about the concept of electronic municipalities and how to access them.
- The existence of computerized systems that are not interconnected with each other in the municipality, in particular the financial system and the public service center system.
- Municipalities' inability to raise public awareness about their provision of electronic services.
- High maintenance costs for informatics systems and some companies' monopoly on informatics systems. (Haddad, 2020)

6. Algeria Electronic Municipality Project:

1. Defining the project:

Algeria's electronic municipal stages began through modern administrative services, namely remote services, which will dispense

citizens with any bureaucratic behavior and remove direct human interference in the performance of public service by adopting a remote electronic signature of administrative documents.

The Electronic Municipality Project will improve the municipal governance system and the way it deals with its surroundings. This is one of the most important modernization stations based on the achievement of the base structures of e-government.

This project serves as an opportunity for the State and regional communities to respond to citizens' needs, in addition to achieving the economic development of the State (by rationalizing the use of material and human resources). As previously decided, the Electronic Municipality Project was sought to be reflected by the state during the first quarter of 2018. The project aims to:

- Improving citizens' living conditions and the quality and resilience of municipal services.
- Municipal social and economic development, as well as valuing the management of human resources.
- Building a solid base for e-governance and e-government in general.
- Reducing distances and time in the relationship between administration and citizen by providing electronic services.
- Assisting for local development and reducing public expenditures.

2. Project's determinants:

This project will allow building a base for e-government development through the following determinants:

- **The first phase:** Caring for the municipality, the internal services provided, and the only window through which services are provided to citizens at the municipal level.
- **The second phase:** the project includes the Daira, the Wilaya, and the central services of the ministry.
- **The third phase:** The inclusion of the virtual window for online services (portal and mobile apps) and the integration of external services.

3. Project materialization mechanisms:

In parallel with the launch of the data center's terms sheet of the Ministry of Interior, the local network, equipment, and various programs were developed and prepared at the level of the municipality of Algiers-Center as a pilot phase through:

- The only window that guarantees a single interface for the citizen and fast, continuous, and flexible services.
- Follow up and monitor the preparation and implementation of the budget, and the completion of the administrative account of the municipality.
- Develop a system for waste management, prevention, public health, and the environment.
- Develop a local heritage management system and a system to manage urban planning, roads, and green spaces
- The only window that guarantees a single interface for the citizen and fast, continuous and flexible services.
- Follow up and monitor the preparation and implementation of the budget, and the completion of the administrative account of the municipality.
- Develop a system for waste management, prevention, public health and the environment.
- Develop a local heritage management system and a system to manage urban planning, roads and green spaces

- Develop a system for the management of associations and a system for the management of social affairs.
 - Develop a meeting management system and a dispute management system.
 - Develop many other systems such as: e-services platform, management of cultural and sports affairs, employment and apprenticeship, management of public procurement, human resources...
4. Implementation of the project:

A three-stage scheme: was developed:

- **The first stage:** the case of the municipality of Algiers-Center.
- **The second stage:** Analyzing the impact of the integration of modern technology on the organization and functioning of services.
- **The third stage:** not materializing transactions within the municipality (e.g. avoiding the use of papers).

In order to materialize this plan, the General Directorate of Modernization has taken several advanced measures that allow the construction of the electronic municipality, through:

- Construction of the internal network infrastructure in accordance with international standards.
- Construction of a sophisticated data center at the central level.
- Setting up a single window to provide all services at the municipal level.
- Adapting the position to the job by studying the employees in the municipalities as a result of the introduction of modern technology in order to prepare sufficient training programs that

allow the improvement and mastery of their services, and also propose a communication plan for the new service of the electronic municipality.

5. Electronic municipal services in Algeria:

In the context of the modernization of local authorities, the Ministry of the Interior has taken a number of measures to provide a quality public service to citizens, who can now obtain all civil status documents from the nearest possible municipality, regardless of the municipality in which they were born, in addition to national identity cards and biometric passports. This process eradicated the queues that were taking place in both departments and municipalities, and these procedures are:

– Creation of the single national identification number:

This is within the framework of the implementation of the “e-citizen” strategy, where the single identification number is considered as an electronic fingerprint that is impossible to repeat between two people, and is granted to natural persons of Algerian nationality, and to foreign nationals born in Algeria and legally residing there.

– Determine the list of civil status prints:

As a first step, the Ministry of the Interior and Local Authorities established the list of civil status prints by Executive Decree (10-211), (Executive Decree 10-211 of September 16, 2010, establishing the list of civil status publications, Official Gazette No. 54 of September 19, 2010), which specified the list of these prints in 29 documents, after it was limited to 36 documents, (Decree No. 72-143 of July 27, 1972, establishing the models of civil status publications, Official Gazette No. 63, issued on August 8, 1972).

This procedure was also followed by a recent amendment in 2014 by which the list of civil status documents was identified in 12 documents used in municipalities and consular services. Two documents were also provided for (Declaration of Marriage and Divorce, Declaration of Death) and are used among services in the context of the trend towards the complete abandonment of civil status documents once the application of the e-governance system is established at the community level.

– Digitization of the Civil Status Service:

It includes creating a web app that allows the entry of data on Algerian citizen, including civil status contracts and documents on an advanced database located on main devices and save them to be retrieved later, whether in order to obtain accurate information through a search conducted by the municipal employee, or in order to enable the civil registry officer to display electronic copies on the Internet of civil status documents and contracts of the citizen so that he can save or print them. The wilaya of Batnawas the first municipality in which the project of digitization of the Civil Status Service was applied, on March 4, 2010, and issued the first birth certificate No. 12 in a few seconds at the level of the electronic window. The latter is a technology that also embodies the possibility of preparing and delivering documents at the level of the branches of the same municipality without the citizen having to move and travel to the main center of the civil status.

6. Biometric passport and identification card project:

Within the framework of the regulation of biometric passport and the biometric identity card, the Ministry of the Interior, represented in the Minister, has issued several decisions, including:

- ✓ Resolution of October 17, 2010, specifying the technical specifications for the extract of the birth contract for the issuance of the national identity card and biometric passport.
- ✓ Resolution dated December 26, 2012, setting the date of starting using the electronic biometric national passport.

In practice, the Ministry of the Interior and Local Authorities announced on December 28, 2010, the launch of the first phase of the issuance of the electronic biometric passport starting from January 12, 2012, at the level of 45 Dairas in the provincial capitals of the administrative district of Hussein Dey in Algiers.

The passport and identification card project aims to modernize identity and travel documents, where both will be fully secured documents with a more flexible format that will ensure citizens' daily procedures.

Concerning the biometric electronic passport, it is an automated travel identity document that conforms to the standards dictated by the International Civil Aviation Organization.

– Electronic Biometric Driving License:

It is one of the national identity cards, which are used by the recipients in order to drive various vehicles according to their classification. Every citizen has the right to obtain them as soon as he meets the required conditions, and in order to obtain them, a file consisting of specific documents must be formed before passing a contest at one of the driving schools approved by the state.

In general, the measures taken by the Ministry of the Interior and Local Authorities are aimed at developing electronic administration



apps and combating all forms of bureaucracy that hinder citizens' access to administrative documents in a timely manner, including:

- Exempt citizens from submitting civil status documents available in the National Automated Register of Civil Status.
- Extend the validity of the biometric passport from 05 to 10 years.
- Reduce the number of administrative documents issued by civil status services from 29 to 14 documents.
- Abolish the requirement to certify copies of original documents delivered by public administrations.
- Extension of the validity of the birth contract to ten years after what was previously one year.
- Revocation of the validity of the death certificate after it was one year before.
- Municipalities ensure, in coordination with the competent judicial authorities, the requests of citizens wishing to rectify errors detected in their civil status documents and to carry out rectification procedures in their place, thereby freeing citizens from the difficulty of moving between the municipality and the court.
- Extension of the permit period for births and deaths for citizens living in the south to 20 days instead of one day, as previously applied.

7. Conclusion:

Finally, we can say that the modernization of local governance and its transition from traditional to electronic local governance constitutes the Government's top priority. This has been confirmed by various government projects aimed at encouraging citizens to enter the world of using electronic transactions rather than paper transactions that have corrupted the citizen's relationship with his local administration

for decades. The latter was sought to be done through the introduction of several procedures within the framework of the application of electronic administration at the level of local administration, the most important of which is the reduction of the number of documents, Biometric identification cards and passports, extracting some administrative documents remotely... We could therefore say that the e-municipality project, which the State seeks to implement holistically, points to the importance of the continuing efforts of the Ministry of the Interior and local communities in implementing it and reflecting its various objectives.

List of references:

1. SalmiAlaa Abdul Razzaq. (2008). Electronic Administration. Amman, Jordan.
 2. Al-Massoudi, Samira Matar (2018), obstacles to the application of electronic administration in human resources management in the private health sector in the city of Mecca from the point of view of human resources managers and employees, International Virtual University, United Kingdom, p. 27. (PDF).
 3. Amin, Samir. (2003). Post-capitalism. Algeria: National Foundation for Communication, Publishing, and Publicity.
 4. BahloulSomaya. (2017). Electronic municipality, a qualitative leap for the development and modernization of local government services. Electronic administration and local authorities in Algeria. Constantine: AbdelhamidMehri University.
 5. Hamdi Reda Hashem. (2010). Developing communication skills and administrative leadership. Amman: Dar Al Raya.
 6. Fahmy, Samia. Administration in social enterprises.Azarita: University Knowledge House.
- AbdelkaderMowaffaq.

8. Abdul Latif et al. (2018). Electronic municipality as a tool for improving service and a promising future vision. *Al-Assil Journal for Economic and Administrative Research* (03), 125.
9. Ali Gharbi. (1996). *Human Resource Development*. Azarita: University Knowledge House.
10. Wael Mohamed Youssef. (2007). *The Role of Electronic Municipalities in City Development: The Experience of Alexandria*, (p. 260). Cairo, Egypt.
11. Tamara Haddad. (05 01, 2020). Mechanisms of transformation from traditional municipalities to electronic municipalities and their impact on local development. Retrieved from
12. <https://www.wattan.net/ar/news/298781.html>