The Adoption of Innovative Strategies for Enhanced Service Delivery in the South Africa Public Sector

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Abstract

The objective of the study is to examine the challenges and prospects for the adoption of innovative strategies to enhance the delivery of service in the South African public sector. The public sector is under pressure to provide new public services with increasingly scarce resources. In the context of South Africa, public service is essential because public services are promised and guaranteed by the constitution, and more citizens depend on state provisions, due to the high unemployment rate in the country. As such, using a qualitative approach this study intends to interrogate the concept of innovation in the public sector and its role in ensuring that the public sector provides enhanced services and can meet the needs of the citizens. This article further provides a systematic review of the empirical literature on barriers and benefits within public sector innovation processes and suggests ways in which public service employees can overcome these barriers. The study concludes that public sector innovation has a considerable and varied impact on public sector performance as a result there's a need for innovation to be an integrated part of public sector service delivery.

Keywords: Public Sector, Innovation, Public Service, Barriers, Service Delivery

1   INTRODUCTION

The study examined the challenges and prospects for the adoption of innovative strategies to enhance the delivery of service in the South African public sector. The study responds to the question of service delivery failure in the South African public sector while contributing to the need to adopt innovative strategies to prevent the current dismal failure in the sector. The public sector is undergoing intense change and transformation and is under pressure to provide new public services with increasingly scarce resources (Enaifoghe, Jili & Mthethwa, 2023). Innovation is the implementation of new ideas, processes, or technologies that bring about positive changes in the public sector. Although the public sector is mainly financed by public funds (budget), it is subject to the rules of competition. As a result, public service is essential as the citizens are promised and guaranteed quality services by the constitution.

In the view of Bloch (2011), public sector innovation "comprises new or significant changes to services and goods, operational processes, organizational methods, or the way your organization communicates with users" (Bloch, 2011). According to Scupola and Zanfei (2016), public sector innovation is the creation or implementation of a new or considerably enhanced public service, communication method, procedure, or organizational method.

Innovative public service enables citizens to access public services more easily and efficiently due to innovative public sector.

One of the crucial factors in the success of the public sector to deliver enhanced, efficient and effective services is to implement innovation. Additionally, a plethora of service delivery protests in South Africa may be attributed to a lack of innovation in improving the effectiveness and efficiency of Local Government in service delivery, hence the need for focusing on novel approaches to service delivery. The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is one of the drivers of innovation in the public sector and has changed the way governments function.

As a result, innovation has become a prerequisite for adapting to the 4IR. The government sector views innovation as a chance to build connections between diverse stakeholders from various organizations to better engagement in order to enhance the delivery of government sector services and goods in order to create and achieve public value. This paper seeks to answer the question of what innovative strategies can be adopted by the government to enhance the delivery of services in the South African public sector.

To address this question, this article is structured as follows: the following section provides the methodological processes that were followed, followed by a literature review on innovation in the public sector, followed by the impact and barriers of innovation in the public sector; results and discussions are also presented, and conclusion and recommendations are provided to share best practice.

2   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a literature review that primarily collected data from different databases as secondary sources. The study used a desktop approach to review secondary literature, which included published books, journal articles, and government reports, in order to better understand the concept of innovation in the public sector and its role in ensuring that the public sector can meet the needs of the citizens. A narrative that tackles the obstacles to public sector innovation processes was produced as a result of the thorough literature analysis that was done. The information was arranged both chronologically and thematically in order to reach a certain conclusion that responds to the primary goal of the essay (Mthethwa, Ndebele & Thusi, 2023).

3 Conceptual Literature Consideration

The obstacles and opportunities in adopting digital innovation solutions for improved service delivery in South African local municipalities were investigated in the literature review and document review analysis of this study. Through a document analysis, this study also found that challenges to adopting digital innovations to improve service delivery include digital hesitation, leadership gaps, and a lack of innovative research culture. The study also found a lack of municipal readiness and the digital divide.

In line with Shava and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2022), this study, therefore, confirmed the absence of systematic and evaluative studies to guide public sector innovation, or that the expansion of digital innovations frequently caused implementation issues in many South African local municipalities. The authors further noted that implementing innovative digital techniques can be the answer to speeding up service delivery in South African local municipalities; as a result, therefore, Shava & Vyas-Doorgapersad (2022), argued that the implementation of a digitalized municipal government requires administrative readiness, increased revenue streams, as well as a stable regulatory and policy framework.

The significant demand that growing urbanization places on receiving cities' essential services (Enaifoghe, 2022; Bangani & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020; Koppenjan & Enserink, 2009:284; Klopp & Petretta, 2017:92). Due to these issues, several African communities have used technological solutions to manage and oversee the delivery of public goods and services while also reducing social evils (Ransbotham, Fichman, Gopal, and Guta, 2016:834; Tachizawa, Alvarez-Gil, and Montes-Sancho, 2015:237). The Local governments in Africa are experiencing pressure to increase economic development and job prospects while tackling a variety of social and environmental issues that have exacerbated urban poverty (Enaifoghe, 2022; Baud, Scott, Pfeffer, Sydenstricker-Neto & Denis, 2014:501).

Since they allow local governments to promote ICT and digital-related opportunities while improving their relationship with citizens, digital technologies, including ICT, have gained popularity in various African cities (Shava & Doorgapersad, 2021:141). Digital innovations are defined as "the use of technology during the process of innovating" (Nambisan et al. (2017:223).

Scholars like Enaifoghe, Balogun and Afolabi (2021), also argued that by developing and reconstructing the systems with new value and appropriation techniques, the goal is to fundamentally alter the landscape of service and product delivery. This study agreed with Enaifoghe (2021), who argued that digital innovation is a socio-technical phenomenon that makes it possible for changes to be made to the market offering, business operations, and business models because of digital technology.

3.1 Need for Innovative Strategies for Sector for Service Delivery in Public Service

In the public sector, digital innovation entails changing things by creating new concepts, disseminating them, and incorporating fresh ideas and technologies into the delivery of services (Nambisan et al. 2017:224). Institutions must focus more on the management of innovation and change in light of the quickly shifting global environment (Government Gazette, 2018). Within the public sector, there should be a strong drive to adopt innovation. Being creative and imaginative is a crucial "component of being an effective public manager in today's dynamic and always-changing world".

A healthy and prosperous society depends on an effective and efficient public sector because it is widely acknowledged that the public sector can function effectively (Enaifoghe, 2021). Because of this, efficient and effective public managers must be creative (Leitão, Alves & Pereira, 2016). This paper makes the case that innovation is crucial when it comes to the requirement for an efficient and effective public sector. This research holds that any genuine and audacious attempt to improve service delivery must start with the practice of innovation.

The purpose of innovation is to present fresh and different approaches to solving frequent and ongoing problems. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the obstacles to and potential for adopting novel ways for "improved service delivery in the South African public sector".

3.2. Developing An Innovation Culture In Public Sector Institutions

Institutions in the public sector are seen to be dealing with an environment that is both more dynamic and volatile than those in the private sector. Institutions must have an innovation-focused culture to achieve this. A key component of conducting business in the public sector should be innovation, "which should ultimately translate into delivering services to the communities" more cleverly and efficiently (Nzimakwe, 2015).

To enhance the management of government programs, public sector managers must employ strategies including strategic planning, and reinventing government.

"*A new managerialism, benchmarking, privatization, and team management, are also components of New Public Management which enhances managerial programs*" (Jili & Enaifoghe, 2023).

Managers in the public sector can use these strategies to improve the productivity and efficiency of public institutions (Maduku & Enaifoghe, 2020). Change coexists with innovation. The idea of change suggests doing things differently, whether it be creating new things or simply performing the same things in new ways. Wallace claims that "the process of changing practice therefore necessitates some level of individual and group learning for all parties involved" (Wallace, Fertig, and Schneller 2007:19). The objective of this paper is to present an analytical structure underpinning innovation, and examples of how these might be used in institutions in the public sector.

4 The concept of innovation in the public sector

There has been a significant corpus of studies "on innovation, much of which has been significantly influenced by the following two presumptions" (Minnaar and Bekker, 2005:149). In the larger organizational development process known as "creative destruction," which is based mostly on an organization's internal strengths, innovation is a process that has its intellectual and ideological origins. Innovation, according to Webster, is "a better thing to do or a better way to do" anything that furthers the goals of an organization (Hussey, 2000:176).

It could be a system, building, activity, or thing. Innovations are deliberate shifts intended to better things in line with their proponents' values. Some are designed to make it easier for people to learn how "to implement other changes, ranging from training programs to agreements for knowledge transfer between organizations to creative strategies for fostering the development of local communities of learning" (Wallace et al. 2007:19; Fox and Meyer 1995:64).

"Public sector management innovation is defined as the process through which public organizations create new standard operating procedures and policy designs to address issues with public policy" (Wallace et al. 2007:19). This relates to both the creation and administration of programs and policies (Cohen and Eimicke 2002:119). Understanding the term '*Innovation*', in Sekwati's words (2013:3), involves completely changing one's approach from normal, traditional methods of doing things to one where rapidity, productivity, and effectiveness are the key concepts.

Innovation can be characterized as the use of conventional private-sector management techniques to raise the level of organization and management in the public sector. According to Kachru (2009:803), innovation broadly refers to the process of developing an idea into a workable piece of hardware or a procedure, introducing it into society at large, and spreading and adopting it.

As part of a global drive known as rethinking government, these kinds of applications, have been widely adopted as part of extensive reform initiatives in the public sector management of many nations and members of nation-states. Initiatives to innovate have effects on the public sector.

5 Drivers of Innovation: The Implications of Value-Creation in The Public Sector

The idea of best value to enhance the public sector has become more prevalent while discussing new initiatives. It brought with it several priorities for managers in the public sector. Giving clients value for their money is part of providing the best value, along with new, inventive, and creative ways to give services. According to Curry (1999:180), the guiding concepts of best value include the following:

Table 1: The Underlying principles of best

➤ Good governance management	*With increased disclosure of governmental choices, policies, services, and performance, "a customer and citizen focus aims to improve access, responsiveness, and accountability at all levels".*
➤ Good operational management	*To maximize value for money, government authorities must use their financial resources as efficiently as possible. This is the goal of competent financial management.*
➤ Continuous improvement and competition	*To continuously improve the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of service delivery, "a mixed economy approach to purchasing goods and services is encouraged".*

The goal of healthy governance is to increase the disclosure of governmental choices, policies, services, and performance, of which a customer and citizen-focused "aim is to improve access, responsiveness, and accountability at all levels". Good and enhancing access, flexibility, accountability, and transparency at all levels through better publicizing governmental decisions, policies, services, and performance is the goal of good governance management (Enaifoghe & Adetiba, 2019).

This also has a customer and citizen focus. Standards for customer service must be raised to levels that are on par with best practices. "A clear direction for the government as a whole must be established as part of a process of ongoing progress that can be evaluated and measured" (Jili & Enaifoghe, 2023: 3). Furthermore, having sound or strong operational management must comprise putting in place the appropriate measures for more efficient service management, as shown in the table above (Table 1).

To ensure that government officials utilize their monetary assets as efficiently as possible to achieve their goals, solid oversight of finances (Enaifoghe & Adetiba, 2019). Thereby improving performance through monitoring and measurement. "A performance culture must be created across the entire organization, with a focus on continuous improvement, monitoring, evaluating, and measuring performance at the strategic, service, and local levels."

A multifaceted approach to the purchase of products and services is encouraged in this aspect to continuously improve the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of service delivery, as mentioned in Table 1 on the need for constant enhancement and competition. According to Hughes, Moore, and Kataria (2011) and Curry (1999), defined actions need to be assessed regularly to achieve meaningful service improvement. Benchmarking performance at the corporate and service level also aids in this. According to the values mentioned above, businesses must be inventive and creative.

6 The impact of innovation in public sector

The focus is on the techniques of management in the adoption of digital innovative strategies and the impacts on public sectors. We discussed the particular management innovation strategies that are used and put into practice in the public sector. "As part of putting New Public Management into practice, these include strategic planning, re-engineering, total quality management, benchmarking, team management, and privatization" (Jili & Enaifoghe, 2023).

6.1. Planning Strategically

Identifying what has to be done to prepare a specific organization for the future is one component of planning. The underlying framework of an organization's intended and actual resource allocations as well as its interactions with its environment can also be referred to as its strategy (Cohen and Eimicke 2002:124). Thus, identifying objectives and choosing methods to achieve them constitute the first steps in the design of a strategy. According

to Joyce (2001:8), planning for strategy aids in the transformation of public services and staying innovative in its approach.

Typically, a strategic planning exercise entails a company-wide initiative to reformulate goals and create fresh strategies for accomplishing them. Meetings are then organized to encourage the development of fresh perspectives on the organization's activities and mission. By enabling the company to link strategy to operational effectiveness, strategic planning benefits the organization. When a strategy is developed with significant stakeholder input, it may be used as a political tool to strengthen support for organizational change and to promote a sense of shared purpose and values (Brews in Luiz, 2006:366-367).

6.2. Re-engineering

Re-engineering is the radical rethinking and reworking of business processes to significantly enhance performance. Re-engineering is a top-down approach that necessitates a solid commitment that is communicated and upheld throughout the organizational structure, starting with the "top" level of the organization. Common stages include mapping the current process, figuring out which steps offer value, removing those steps, and re-engineering first before implementing "automation and new information systems technologies" (Cohen and Eimicke 2002:124).

Government organizations must strike a balance between the constitutional requirement of due process in service delivery and the customer's desire for rapid service. Public organizations may attempt to involve customers in the re-engineering of public service delivery systems, but they must be aware of the risks of combinations between competing interests and abuses of public trust.

Cohen and Eimicke (2002) and Bekkers, Tummers, and Voorberg (2013), state that trust is a prerequisite for creativity. The benefits of re-engineering, according to its proponents, include better customer service, employee empowerment, growth, and increased production (Enaifoghe, 2023). Advocates of this claim that it also makes it possible for businesses to respond to changing market conditions and client requests.

6.3. The Need for Team Leadership

In the context of the workplace, a team is a collection of individuals who collaborate to combine their skills, talents, and expertise to complete a project, achieve a goal, or address a problem. A team, according to Smit and Cronje (2002:372), consists of a limited number of individuals who share leadership and engage in interdependent tasks. A team consists of a limited number of individuals who share leadership, carry out interdependent tasks, and receive individual and collective accountability, evaluation, and rewards.

Project teams are quickly replacing traditional channels for innovation and transformation in contemporary organizations. An organization may switch from "managing by control" to "managing by commitment" as a result (Baskara & Mehta, 2016). Additionally, it can shift a company's focus from "individual motivation and output" to "team motivation and output," as well as from the conventional roles of "organizing, staffing, and evaluating" to "coaching and facilitating" (Cohen and Eimicke 2002:130). People work on several teams and in a variety of jobs, according to Kotter (Enaifoghe, Dlamini, Jili & Mthethwa, 2023; Kobrak 2002:187), which provides staff with a diverse range of expertise inside an organization.

Senior management will choose one team member to act as the team leader. The formation of a team is typically a sign from senior management that the team's work is a priority for the organization. Teams benefit from performing effectively because they include individuals with complementary abilities and experiences that go beyond what any one member could provide.

7 Specific Barriers impacting innovation in the public sector

In the public sector, there are specific barriers impacting innovation relating to the governance and public scrutiny of these services. The following section highlights some of the key challenges and barriers that hinder the successful adoption of innovative strategies in the South African public sector.

7.1 Lack of Resources

One of the major barriers to innovation in the public sector is the lack of resources. The lack of resources in the public sector relates to some government departments lacking enhanced technological systems and equipment (Computers and programs) to "ensure effective and efficient public service delivery". Additionally, "in the health sector, patient records" are not electronic and this harms the delivery of healthcare services in the health sector. Innovation requires investments in research, development, and implementation.

However, the South African public sector faces numerous resource constraints, including financial and human resources. The limited financial resources limit the "implementation of innovative strategies and technologies, while the shortage of human resources hinders the research and development of innovative solutions".

7.2 Resistance to Change

Another significant barrier to innovation is "the resistance to change". The culture of the public sector is often resistant to change, with numerous stakeholders reluctant to adopt innovative practices. The resistance to change is due to numerous factors, including the fear of the unknown, the reluctance to abandon traditional practices, and the lack of trust in innovation. Public servants are reluctant to try new things which is due to their inability to see opportunities on new things as well as a hostile attitude towards change and innovation.

7.3 Absence of a Supportive Culture

The absence of a supportive culture is another significant barrier to innovation in the South African public sector. The culture of the public sector is often bureaucratic, hierarchical, and risk-averse, which hinders the implementation of innovative practices. The lack of a supportive culture discourages experimentation, discourages risk-taking, and limits the freedom to try new ideas and processes. Due to the high demand for public services in South Africa, innovative elements implemented may be overcrowded by the pressure caused by the high demand for public services.

7.4 Bureaucratic Structure

The bureaucratic structure of the South African public sector is another barrier to innovation. The bureaucratic structure is often characterized by slow decision-making processes, hierarchical structures, and resistance to change. The bureaucratic structure leads to delays in the adoption of innovative practices, limits the flexibility of decision-making, and reduces the autonomy of public servants

8 Prospects of innovation in the public sector: The Promotion of Innovation in Public Organisations

We argued for the need to the promotion of innovation in public organisations. Minnaar and Bekker (2005:149) assert that organizations can foster innovation by fostering entrepreneurship, actively controlling organizational culture to foster innovative behaviour, and supporting "creativity and the pursuit of excellence using new technology". A more organized understanding of the innovation process is necessary to improve public administration.

The results of recent studies on innovation in organizations have been compiled by Metcalfe and Richards (1993:64–65) and the European Public Sector Innovation Scoreboard (2013), respectively. Improved user happiness, better user access to information, and quicker service delivery for businesses and residents are all benefits of innovation in public administration.

The scholars identified five subprocesses, of which two deal with initiation and three with implementation, through which new ideas become accepted:

Agenda-setting	Agenda-setting involves developing and recognizing the need for innovation: ➢ Matching involves assessing how well an inventive solution fits with a particular issue on the organization's agenda. ➢ Redefining involves adapting the innovation to better fit the needs of the organization. This might need more than simply routine specification. ➢ It might also need to be reinvented.
organizational structures	The organizational structures: ➢ Adapting organizational structures that are directly involved in receiving and utilizing the innovation is known as structuring. ➢ A new unit may need to be established to oversee the invention.
Interconnecting:	Interconnecting: ➢ incorporating the innovation into the overall operation of the organization so that it no longer stands out as a different entity. ➢ This framework offers practical instructions for tracking and assessing the development of any organizational innovation. ➢ It offers practitioners a simple checklist of the issues they must address while managing innovation.

As indicated in this study innovation in public administration refers to the adoption of new practices by a group of organizations as opposed to a single organization. For them, innovation calls for more than just original ideas; it also calls for the ability to mobilize support for concepts and ensure their adoption and implementation. Organizations must adapt to promote innovation.

According to Wallace et al. (2007:20), 'change agenda' proposals must be prepared. The potential for collaboration and supporting innovation within predetermined organizational boundaries must therefore be embodied in these. They might involve efforts to enhance the delivery of specific services; determine what needs to be improved, and assess whether and how much improvement has been made; enhance "service leadership and management to foster favourable conditions for a direct improvement" in services.

To encourage the application of innovations in the program, "build general capacity to implement externally initiated change" (Wallace et al. 2007:20–21). Individuals who are pleased with their employment circumstances produce a feeling of energy (Nel & Masilela, 2020; Hilliard, 1995:49). They are willing to impart their knowledge and expertise to others, and they are open to change and innovation without feeling threatened by it.

9 Conclusion and recommendations

The study examined the challenges and prospects for the adoption of innovative strategies to enhance the delivery of service in the South African public sector. It has been found that innovation is a critical component of the public sector that contributes to the betterment of society. Despite substantial obstacles and challenges, South Africa has made some headway in creating institutions that foster innovation.

These include a lack of funding, reluctance to change, a lack of a welcoming culture, and an inefficient bureaucracy. In order to encourage innovation in the South African public sector, certain issues must be resolved. Innovative approaches and technology can improve the efficacy, efficiency, and delivery of services, promoting the nation's economic and social development.

Therefore, it is essential to invest in innovation and create a supportive culture that embraces innovation and experimentation. Public sector leaders and policy-makers must prioritize innovation to build a better future for South Africa's public sector. The study therefore concludes that public sector innovation has a considerable and varied impact on public sector performance as a result there's a need for innovation to be an integrated part of public sector service delivery.

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