

The Contribution of the Integrated University Management System to Public Service Delivery: A Study Conducted (2021–2022)

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the contribution of the Integrated University Management System (SIGU) to the delivery of public services within universities. It addresses the question of the extent to which SIGU contributes to service delivery, employing a qualitative methodological approach to better interpret information and the perceptions of interviewees regarding the system's operationalization. The findings indicate that SIGU yields benefits for universities by increasing work flexibility, preventing the massive loss of documents, and significantly reducing corruption within the institution. However, it is recommended that universities establish mechanisms for preserving grades both in physical format and on the digital platform and implement continuous training for system users, including students, faculty, and academic registry staff.

However, the study acknowledges that a single-university approach may not guarantee the transferability of results, and therefore, future studies should include multiple universities to improve the transferability of the results in question and compare different institutional experiences with integrated management systems.

Keywords: System, Integrated System, Public Services

INTRODUCTION

In Mozambique, the modernization measures advocated by the Global Public Sector Reform Strategy (2001–2011) supported by the Public Administration Reform and Development Strategy (2012–2025) were implemented through Cross Cutting Component A, known as Technological Modernization. This initiative paved the way for all public institutions to implement electronic public services.

In today's world, which is thoroughly shaped by Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), a society is considered developed when its government seeks to maximize the quality of public service delivery by using these tools to meet citizen demand, thereby achieving goals of good governance and the satisfaction of collective needs (José, 2013).

In recent decades, developing countries have witnessed profound transformations in public administration, primarily characterized by the shift away from older, less efficient management models toward a new paradigm rooted in technology driven public services designed to make these services more accessible and comprehensive for citizens and clients alike. The modernization of public administration is a cornerstone of state consolidation and governance; it serves as a contemporary growth strategy capable of driving improvements in public service delivery in the decades to come.

In this context, it is evident that governments seek to provide relevant information via electronic portals through the creation of new e-services, thereby leveraging Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as a tool of immense potential and innovation one that has impacted all aspects of national life, particularly within public administration institutions.

In Mozambique, the initial steps toward integrating Information and Communication Technologies into the public sector began in 2000 with Resolution No. 28/2000 of December 12, which defined the Informatics Policy (PI). This was followed by its operational document, the Informatics Policy Implementation Strategy (EIPi), drafted by the Informatics Policy Commission (CPI) and approved by the Council of Ministers in 2002.

However, it was with the approval of the Global Public Sector Reform Strategy (EGRSP) in 2001 that the quality factor in public service provision gained greater visibility, as the reforms initiated at that time consisted of a ten-year plan (2001–2011) defined by the Government and divided into two phases, namely:

METHODOLOGY

Regarding its purpose, the research was classified as applied; according to Barbosa and Guedes (2017), such research allows for the objective generation of new and useful knowledge for the advancement of science even without a specific foreseen practical application by addressing universal truths and interests. Furthermore, Marconi and Lakatos (2012) note that these studies arise from the interaction between the sample and the chosen sampling technique; therefore, this article employed non-probabilistic convenience sampling. This method enabled the selection of accessible subjects specifically, interviewees with insight into the SIGU provided they were representative of the target population, as advocated by Gil (2017).

Data analysis was conducted through a literature review, allowing for a discussion of sources found in databases such as Google Scholar; this facilitated the extraction of conceptual information to better explain phenomena related to the SGIU.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Currently, the Mozambican Public Administration is seeking mechanisms to make its services more efficient and effective by modernizing public services.

In this context, the role played by e-Government in recent years must be acknowledged; it has been regarded as a key driver of transformation in how public institutions interact with service users. Public universities are among the institutions focusing on the use of Information and Communication Technology to ensure the efficiency of university management mechanisms.

As late as 2020, some universities had not yet fully embarked on the modernization of their services specifically regarding the creation of an Integrated University Management System, which is essential for a higher education institution. However, for various reasons, the system was not yet functional at that time.

These issues drew significant attention from users and other stakeholders, particularly given the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The institution faced difficulties in maintaining online classes because tools such as Google Meet, Classroom, and Zoom did not initially offer sufficient reliability; it was difficult to monitor student attendance and assess their performance.

Against this backdrop, and acknowledging the issue at hand, the following question arises:

To what extent does an Integrated University Management System contribute to the improved delivery of public services?

CONCEPTUALIZATION

4.1.1 Reform

Reform can be defined as a set of changes occurring within various institutions involving their internal and external environments designed to enhance the management capacity of such organizations, whether public or private (Warren, 2016).

In this context, reform centers on the capacity to alter institutions; that is, it entails redesigning, restructuring, renewing, improving, or deepening the conduct of an individual or organization.

According to Booth (2019), reform is designed to alter the actions performed in order to achieve something new through innovations in productivity and performance within an organizational setting.

For his part, Manor (2015) presents the concept of reform by associating it with an initiative or project that possesses the capacity and mindset to perform an innovative function whether within a state or a public institution geared toward the delivery of public services.

4.1.2 Public Sector

According to Lane (2012), the public sector can be defined as a set of actions undertaken by the government involving investment and expenditure to ensure its functioning, regardless of existing hierarchies or organizational structures.

According to Amaral (2003), the public sector is defined as a mechanism used by organizations to establish governance arrangements for public administration, taking into account the specific context and nature of each State.

According to the Public Administration Development Reform Strategy (ERDAP) 2012–2025, the public sector in Mozambique is defined as “the set of institutions and agencies that, whether directly or indirectly funded by the State, have as their ultimate objective the provision of public goods and services” (p. 65).

Regarding the operationalization of these concepts, the perspective presented in the ERDAP was adopted, as it gives concrete form to the scope of e-Government action through "Cross cutting Component A" which entails technological modernization. This allows for an analysis of how such modernization contributes to improving public service delivery across various State institutions, including public universities.

Furthermore, the Public Sector comprises the entities that carry out the functions of the Central Government including the Council of Ministers and its ministries, State representative offices, provincial governments and directorates, district administrations and directorates, administrative posts, and local authorities—as well as public enterprises, public institutes, public universities, and other State agencies, all working toward the same goal: meeting the needs of Mozambican society.

4.1.3. System

A set of interrelated parts working to achieve a common goal. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Every system is a subsystem of a larger system.

According to Chiavenato (2009), a system is a set of elements united by some form of interaction or interdependence. Any set of interconnected parts can be considered a system if the focus is on the relationships between the parts and the behavior of the whole.

A system can be viewed as an organized whole aimed at achieving a common goal; that is, discussing the parts of a system entails establishing the union of elements that function together to achieve a shared objective (Hillier & Lieberman, 2015).

Furthermore, Pidd (2017) argues that a system can be defined as a set of elements characterized by some form of regular interaction or interdependence.

Therefore, Meadows (2014) notes that a system is not just any random collection of things, but rather an interconnected set of elements coherently organized to achieve something.

4.1.4 Information System

According to Lane (2012), an information system (IS) is a set of interrelated components that work together to collect, store, process, and distribute information to support decision-making within an organization. The ultimate goal of an information system is to provide useful and relevant information to support strategic and operational decision-making processes in an organization.

Information systems (IS) utilize hardware, software, telecommunications networks, computerized data management techniques, and other forms of information technology (IT) to transform data resources into information products. These products provide information for decision-making by managers.

According to Monteiro (2015), an information system aims to analyze problems, visualize complex matters, and create new, interconnected products that collect (or retrieve), process, store, and distribute information intended to support an organization's decision-making, coordination, and control.

Information Systems (IS) are computer-based systems that enable the collection, storage, retrieval, and dissemination of information for specific purposes (Turban, Ranier, & Kotler, 2017).

Furthermore, Carrera (2019) adds that an information system (IS) within an organization is understood to encompass all records and documents generated during its operations systems that may currently be computerized.

4.1.5 University Management

According to Carlos (2016), university management can be defined as the administration of an educational conglomerate that employs planning, technology, research, market influence, and management restructuring, while acknowledging the complexity and multiplicity of the university structure.

In this context, Rezende (2014) argues that university management involves a complex organization, given its nature as a specialized institution with diverse objectives and multiple tasks. The primary function of university management relates to teaching, research, and extension; although these activities are interdependent, their execution requires an organization that is specialized and harmoniously aligned with the environment external to the university.

According to Carlos (2016), university management consists of minimizing errors and unforeseen issues within a higher education institution and streamlining internal processes, while focusing on the introduction of innovative components and accompanying reforms, thereby offering students new ways of engaging through the tools necessary for optimal learning.

Based on the concepts presented above, university management can be understood as a form of management focused on service delivery within higher education institutions, ensuring the harmonization of existing resources to satisfy the specific interests of each institution, depending on its objectives.

CONCLUSIONS

Considering the objectives of this article, it was found that SIGU is a highly relevant tool for Public Administration in general and for public universities in particular as it has brought about significant changes for the academic community, including faculty, students, and staff.

Furthermore, the collected data revealed that the use of access credentials by students and staff necessitates a greater command of the system's tools, given the sequential nature of their use first by students, and subsequently by staff.

Another significant benefit of SIGU was the ability for students to easily access their grades from any location, without needing to travel. Furthermore, the system enabled a reduction in resource consumption; prior to its

implementation, all processes such as grade sheets, registration forms, and receipts involved printing, which consumed large amounts of paper and toner and placed a heavy financial burden on the Faculty.

Finally, a reduction in payment-related errors was observed, as there had previously been recurring issues when processing tuition and registration payments. In light of these findings, we acknowledge that the study of alternatives to address potential system failures could be a subject for future research.

It is recognized that a single-university approach may not guarantee the transferability of results; therefore, future studies should include multiple universities to improve the transferability of results and compare different institutional experiences with integrated management systems.

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