Survey on the Skills of Digital Transition Managers in Public Administration

Antonio Capodieci
Dipartimento di Ingegneria dell'Innovazione
Università del Salento
Lecce, Italy
antonio.capodieci@unisalento.it

Gianluca Elia
Dipartimento di Ingegneria dell'Innovazione
Università del Salento
Lecce, Italy
gianluca.elia@unisalento.it

Luca Mainetti
Dipartimento di Ingegneria dell'Innovazione
Università del Salento
Lecce, Italy
luca.maienetti@unisalento.it

Alessandro Margherita
Dipartimento di Ingegneria dell'Innovazione
Università del Salento
Lecce, Italy
alessandro.margherita@unisalento.it

Antonio.Romano
Dipartimento di Ingegneria dell'Innovazione
Università del Salento
Lecce, Italy
antonio.romano5@studenti.unisalento.it

Abstract— The digitalization of public administration is a crucial element for the socioeconomic progress of a country. In Italy, the digital transformation process converges towards an e-Government model that lags behind European standards. This study examines the role of the Digital Transition Manager (RTD) by investigating the number of entities that do not comply with the mandatory appointment of the role and the alignment between the skills required by law and those possessed by the appointed RTDs. The ultimate goal is to assess and propose solutions to improve the effectiveness of RTD appointments.

Keywords—Responsabile della Transizione Digitale, Amministrazione Digitale, e-Government.

I INTRODUCTION

In 2022, the Italian Public Administration invested over 7 billion euros in ICT technologies [5], but according to DESI, Italy remains below European standards, ranking 18th with a score of 49.3 compared to the European average of 52.3 [4]. The most significant shortcomings emerge in human capital and digital public services, crucial areas that require targeted interventions to close the gap with European standards.

Angeletti [2] notes that the discrepancy between rapid technological development and the slow evolution of digital skills hinders the effective transformation of the PA. Lombardi [6] emphasizes the need to update the skills required of officials to facilitate the digital transition. The legislator has recognized the importance of adapting procedures and skills to respond to digital change.

To this end, Article 17 of the CAD establishes that all administrations must establish an office dedicated to digital transition and appoint a Digital Transition Manager (RTD) responsible for coordinating and facilitating the digitalization process of the Entities.

In detail: "The Digital Transition Manager (RTD) is a senior managerial figure within the administration with technological, IT, legal, and organizational skills, empowered to drive and coordinate the process of simplification and inclusive growth of public administrations" [1].

Following the introduction of the RTD role, the designation process has been characterized by considerable slowness and a lack of uniformity in the first two years after the regulation came into force in September 2016. Based on these considerations, it was deemed appropriate to initiate an investigation aimed at identifying a screening method to answer the following questions:

RQ1: "What is the status of Digital Transition Manager appointments?"

RQ2: "What is the level of coherence between the skills required by the legislator and those actually possessed by the designated RTDs?"

II. MAIN RESULTS OF A PRELIMINARY SURVEY

A. RQ1 Results

The results obtained confirm the positive growth trend in appointments related to the Digital Transition Manager role.

As of October 2023, 76% (10,946) of Public Entities have declared the appointment of their Digital Transition Manager. More than seven years after the mandatory appointment of the RTD role came into force, 24% (3,439) of Public Entities still have not declared any appointment within IndicePA.

Within the category of Municipalities, Consortia, and their associations, in 17% of cases, the RTD role coincides with the Municipal Secretary, whose educational background and, consequently, the skill profile is likely far from what is expected for an RTD (Table 1)

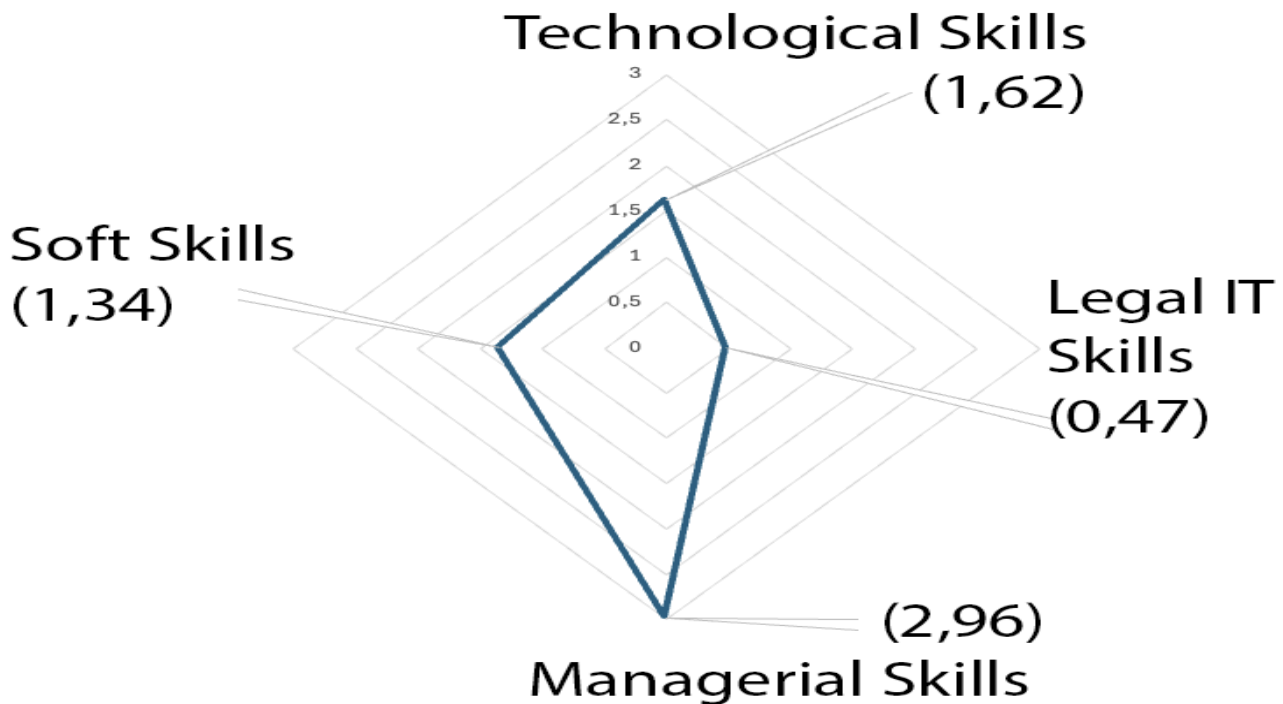|			
A.1	Appointments declared in IndicePA where the Municipal Secretary coincides with the RTD	1162	8%
A.2	Appointments declared in IndicePA	9784	68%
A (A.1 + A.2)	Appointments declared in IndicePA	10946	76%
B	Missing appointments	3501	24%
A+B	Public Entities investigated	14447	100%

Average skill profile of RTD

Table 1 *RQ1 Results*

B. RQ2 Result

At the second level of investigation, the RTD skill profile was examined, revealing that, on average, each RTD possesses skills in only two of the five areas related to technological skills (CT), while, on average, they lack skills in all three areas of legal IT skills (CG). Regarding managerial skills (CM), on average, each RTD possesses skills in only three of the eight areas examined. Finally, concerning soft skills (SS), it was noted that, on average, each RTD has developed abilities in only one of the three areas analyzed (Figure 1).

III. GENERAL DISCUSSION AND INTERVENTION PROPOSALS

In the complex landscape of public administration, the omission of the Digital Transition Manager appointment can be attributed to several factors.

In particular, it is believed that the provision in paragraph 1 of Article 17 of the CAD, which requires the internal coordination of the digital transition process to be assigned to an existing general management office without the possibility of creating one specifically for this task, may represent a difficulty, especially given the importance of identifying a manager with technological, IT, and managerial skills as specified in paragraph 1-ter of the same article. As a result, the body responsible for appointing the RTD often chooses a figure who coincides with a political or administrative leader, perhaps already holding a managerial position, but whose profile does not match the theoretical one expected by the legislator.

This topic requires careful reflection on the opportunity to remove the constraint established in paragraph 1, thereby opening the way to increasing the number of managerial offices beyond those currently in place.

The second point of concern emerged from the analysis of the RTD skill profile, revealing an unjustified inconsistency between the skill profile required by the legislator and those actually possessed by the designated and examined RTDs.

A partial explanation for the low level of skills identified can be attributed to the fact that, in many cases (37.83% of the situations analyzed), the Digital Transition Manager role coincides with a political or administrative leader of the Entity, whose training and experience do not include knowledge in the field of Information and Communication Technologies. In line with the approach proposed by the Parliamentary Inquiry Commission on the level of digitalization and innovation in Public Administrations [3], it is believed that the RTD role should be held by someone with a degree in computer engineering or equivalent.

Based on this, it is considered appropriate to propose a broad and structural proposal to be developed over a medium-term horizon, based on the establishment of the National Register of Digital Transition Managers.

The establishment of the National Register of RTDs would naturally lead to the possibility of creating an additional managerial office exclusively dedicated to coordinating the Entity's digitalization activity and, at the same time, to a change in the appointment procedures, which would no longer be subordinate to the will of the internal political or administrative body but rather the figure would be recruited through a specific competition in which only those registered in the register could apply.

However, to ensure the economic sustainability of the project for all small Entities, the RTD role should be provided exclusively in an associated form.

REFERENCES

[1]. AgID (2019), Piano Triennale per l'Informatica nella Pubblica Amministrazione 2019-2021.

[2]. Angeletti S. (2023). Competenze digitali del personale della Pubblica amministrazione: quali e come svilupparle. *Rivista di Digital Politics*, 3(2), p. 361-382

[3]. Camera dei deputati (2017). Commissione Parlamentare di inchiesta sul livello di digitalizzazione e innovazione delle Pubbliche Amministrazione e sugli investimenti complessivi riguardanti il settore delle tecnologie e della comunicazione. *Comunicata alla Presidenza delle Camera dei deputati il 26 Ottobre 2017*

[4]. Commissione Europea (2022). Indice di digitalizzazione dell'economia e della società (DESI) 2022.

[5]. Dipartimento per la Transizione Digitale (2023). Cresce la spesa ICT della PA (+5,8%) Migliora ancora l'indice complessivo di digitalizzazione. https://innovazione.gov.it/notizie/articoli/cresce-laspesa-ict-della-pa-5-8-migliora-ancora-l-indice-complessivo-didigitali/#:~:text=Nel%202022%20la%20Pubblica%20Amministrazio ne,grazie%20ai%20fondi%20del%20Pnrr.

[6]. Lombardi R., Mancini D. e Chiucchi M. S. (2020). Smart technologies, digitalizzazione e capitale intellettuale: Sinergie e opportunità. Smart technologies, digitalizzazione e capitale intellettuale, 1-42