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RESEARCH ON DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND STATE GOVERNANCE IN VIETNAM

TRAN THU HA
Faculty of Archival Sciences and Office Management
Academy of Public Administration and Governance, Hanoi City, Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

Digital transformation is an objective trend in state governance in countries as digital technology develops explosively. Essentially, it is the application of digital technology in state governance processes, changing the method of state governance towards a shift from a physical to a digital environment. In reality, digital transformation is directly impacting state governance, requiring participants to possess the necessary digital capabilities to participate in state governance processes in a digital environment, including civil servants and citizens, and forming digital human resources such as digital civil servants and digital citizens. This study develops a theoretical framework for state governance in the context of digital transformation and analyzes the impact of the development of digital human resources (digital civil servants, digital citizens) on state governance. Based on this theoretical framework, the author surveyed 200 commune-level government leaders from three localities in Vietnam: Lai Chau province (Northern Vietnam), Quang Ngai province (Central Vietnam), and Ca Mau province (Southern Vietnam). The survey aims to collect data and conduct empirical analysis on state governance, and to analyze the impact of the development of digital civil servants and digital citizens on state governance in the context of digital transformation in Vietnam. Based on this, the author concludes the study and discusses policy solutions for developing digital human resources to meet the requirements of state governance in the context of digital transformation, tailored to the Vietnamese context.

Keywords: Digital transformation; State governance; Digital human resources; Digital civil servant; Digital citizens; Vietnam.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

During the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Vietnam proactively adapted to digital technology (CPV, 2019) and implemented national digital transformation (PMV, 2020). The results of digital transformation and the development of digital government have been highly ranked internationally: the e-Government Development Index in 2024 increased by 15 ranks, ranking 71st out of 193; the Global Innovation Index in 2024 increased by 2 ranks, ranking 44th out of 133; and the Global Cybersecurity Index in 2024 increased by 8 ranks, ranking 17th out of 194 (Hoang, M., 2025).

The national digital transformation program over the past years has helped Vietnam build a modern, professional, and efficient administrative system; the mindset and methods of state governance have changed positively, achieving better results and serving the people more effectively. The application of digital technology in state governance has transformed the

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operating model of government agencies, allowing citizens to access publicly available digital data quickly, accurately, and conveniently, and to interact with the government in the digital environment and register for public services online. This has practical significance, creating favorable conditions for the rapid and sustainable development of the country's economy and society.

However, digital transformation is a new issue that directly impacts state governance, requiring participants to possess digital capabilities to engage in state governance processes in a digital environment. This includes civil servants, citizens, and the formation of digital human resources such as digital civil servants and digital citizens. Therefore, research on digital transformation and state governance within the context of digital transformation is necessary and significant, and is also the reason for the author's interest in this study.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

State governance – also known as national administration in many studies – according to Thu, V.T. (2021), aims to maintain public order, serve the public interest, and protect the legitimate rights and interests of citizens. Or, as Thuong, D.T.T. (2023) affirms, the role of state governance is a method that can bring stability and prosperity to each nation, and has been adopted by many countries.

In the context of digital transformation, state governance has been emphasized in many studies as a modern form of state governance, also known by other names such as good governance or digital governance. Son, V.T. et al. (2021) analyzed modern state governance, emphasizing the application of the achievements of the fourth industrial revolution (digital technology application) to state governance. According to Chien, N.B. (2024) and Hung, T.D. (2025), in the era of the fourth industrial revolution, digital technology is developing explosively, and digital transformation in state governance is an objective necessity; therefore, state governance is given more substance, reflected in the application of digital technology (digitizing data and state governance processes), promoting the principles of efficiency, transparency, accountability, citizen participation, and the rule of law. Other studies such as Diep, V.T.H. (2023) and Dung, D.V. (2024), which shares a similar view, argues that state governance in the context of the fourth industrial revolution is about building a legal framework and a favorable environment to promote development, entrepreneurship, innovation, digital transformation, and digital economic development; and that the activities of state agencies adapt to digital technology and the digital environment.

With a modern governance approach, these studies have analyzed and explained in detail the fundamental issues of state governance in the context of transformation, as reflected in the application of digital technology, the establishment of digital operating models, data digitization, and state governance processes and public service delivery. The scale "State Governance" (SGOV) was developed to imply the following contents: The government builds a digital operating model, adapting to digital technology (SGOV1); State governance processes and public service delivery are carried out transparently and efficiently in the digital environment (SGOV2); Public officials and citizens access digital data publicly, quickly, accurately, and conduct transactions efficiently in the digital environment (SGOV3).

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Thus, state governance in the digital transformation trend has its core meaning reflected in the digital operating model, where state governance processes and public service delivery are carried out in a digital environment. And, for effective state governance in the digital transformation trend, the entities participating in state governance must possess the necessary digital capabilities. These entities include both civil servants (those directly implementing state governance tasks and providing public services) and citizens (those participating in state governance processes and public services), which, in modern terms, are called digital civil servants and digital citizens. Therefore, developing digital civil servants and digital citizens is both a task of state governance and a solution that directly impacts the effectiveness of state governance in the digital transformation trend. With that in mind, this study conducts an empirical analysis in Vietnam with the hypothesis that: Digital civil servants (H1) and digital citizens (H2) are the subjects of digital transformation, directly influencing state governance in the digital transformation trend (Figure 1).

- Firstly, digital civil servants are the direct implementers of state governance tasks and the provider of public services in the digital environment. The development of digital civil servants directly impacts the results and effectiveness of state governance in the trend of digital transformation. Chen, L. et al. (2024) and Bau, D.N. (2025) argue that training in digital knowledge and skills to develop digital capabilities for civil servants is a fundamental condition for civil servants to work in the digital environment, forming and developing digital human resources to perform public duties – digital civil servants. Hien, N.H. et al. (2026) analyzes the conditions for digital transformation in modern, effective national governance, emphasizing the need to develop digital civil servants, which involves training and encouraging civil servants to self-train in the necessary digital knowledge and skills to develop digital capabilities to meet the requirements of state governance in the digital environment. The "Digital Civil Servant" (CISE) scale is constructed with the following implications: Civil servants are trained in digital knowledge and skills, developing digital capabilities to meet the requirements of state governance in the trend of digital transformation (CISE1); Civil servants perform state governance tasks and provide public services in the digital environment, ensuring speed, accuracy, and fulfillment of assigned tasks (CISE2); Civil servants interact with and guide citizens in resolving documents in the digital environment, ensuring speed, accuracy, and citizen satisfaction (CISE3).

- Thứ hai, digital citizens là chủ thể tham gia các quá trình state governance và dịch vụ công trên môi trường số. Phát triển digital citizens cùng với phát triển digital civil servant là nhiệm vụ trọng tâm, ảnh hưởng trực tiếp đến kết quả, hiệu quả state governance trong xu hướng digital transformation. Theo Thang, C. (2024) và Nguyen, T. (2025), digital citizens có nội hàm thể hiện hiện năng lực số của người dân, bao gồm những kiến thức số, kỹ năng số được đào tạo, cập nhật và ứng dụng khi tham gia các hoạt động xã hội số; việc phát triển digital citizens là tiêu chí về kết quả digital transformation quốc gia và hiệu quả state governance trong bối cảnh digital transformation. Bởi vậy, việc tuyên truyền về digital transformation và đào tạo kiến thức số, kỹ năng số cho người dân là nhiệm vụ quản trị phát triển xã hội của mỗi địa phương để tạo nguồn digital human resources đáp ứng yêu cầu phát triển nhanh, bền vững. Khoi, M. (2026) nhấn mạnh rằng digital citizens không chỉ là người sử dụng công nghệ, mà còn chủ động tham gia, tương tác và sáng tạo trên các nền tảng số, góp phần hình thành môi trường sống, làm việc và học tập hiện đại, minh bạch, hiệu quả. Vì vậy, phát triển digital citizens không chỉ là yêu cầu tất yếu mà còn là nền tảng then chốt để xây dựng một xã hội số toàn diện, bền vững và giàu

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sức cạnh tranh trong kỷ nguyên số. Thang đo "Digital citizens" (CITZ) được xây dựng hàm ý những nội dung: Citizens are educated and trained in basic digital knowledge and skills to adapt to digital technology and digital transformation (CITZ1); Citizens have digital knowledge and skills and actively participate in policy processes in the digital environment (CITZ2); Citizens have digital knowledge and skills and proactively conduct transactions and request document processing in the digital environment (CITZ3).

Based on the above overview, the author has developed a theoretical framework for state governance in the context of digital transformation; simultaneously emphasizing the role and significance of developing digital human resources – digital civil servants and digital citizens – as key participants in state governance in the digital environment. The theoretical model consists of two independent scales/variables: "Digital civil servant" (CISE), "Digital citizens" (CITZ), and one dependent scale/variable: "State governance" (SGOV) [Figure 1]. The scales consist of nine observed variables, designed by the author as nine questions in a survey questionnaire and measured using a 5-point Likert scale: 1 - Strongly disagree; 2 - Disagree; 3 - Neutral; 4 - Agree; 5 - Strongly agree (Table 1).

Table 1. Theoretical framework

No	Scales	Encode	Rating levels				
			1	2	3	4	5
I	**Digital civil servant**	**CISE**					
1	Civil servants are trained in digital knowledge and skills, developing digital capabilities to meet the requirements of state governance in the trend of digital transformation	CISE1					
2	Civil servants perform state governance tasks and provide public services in the digital environment, ensuring speed, accuracy, and fulfillment of assigned tasks	CISE2					
3	Civil servants interact with and guide citizens in resolving documents in the digital environment, ensuring speed, accuracy, and citizen satisfaction	CISE3					
II	**Digital citizens**	**CITZ**					
4	Citizens are educated and trained in basic digital knowledge and skills to adapt to digital technology and digital transformation	CITZ1					
5	Citizens have digital knowledge and skills and actively participate in policy processes in the digital environment	CITZ2					
6	Citizens have digital knowledge and skills and proactively conduct transactions and request document processing in the digital environment	CITZ3					
III	**State governance**	**SGOV**					
7	The government builds a digital operating model, adapting to digital technology	SGOV1					
8	State governance processes and public service delivery are carried out transparently and efficiently in the digital environment	SGOV2					
9	Public officials and citizens access digital data publicly, quickly, accurately, and conduct transactions efficiently in the digital environment	SGOV3					

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Research methods

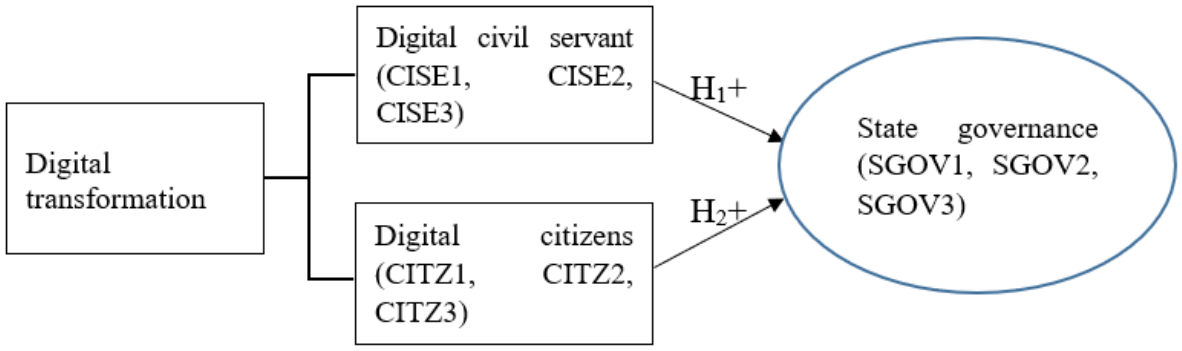


Figure 1. Research model

3.0 RESEARCH METHODS

To achieve the research objective of empirical analysis on state governance, the development of digital civil servants and digital citizens in Vietnam, the author uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative method is implemented through the collection and analysis of secondary documents to build a theoretical framework and model consisting of two independent scales/variables: "Digital civil servant" (CISE), "Digital citizens" (CITZ), and one dependent scale/variable: "State governance" (SGOV) [Table 1, Figure 1]. The quantitative method is implemented through surveys, collection, and analysis of primary data to test the theoretical model and research hypotheses.

According to Hair, J.F. et al. (2009), for quantitative research with exploratory factor analysis and correlation analysis, the required sample size is N = 5*m (m is the total number of observed variables). The authors applied a model with 3 scales and 9 observed variables to this study, so the sample size was determined to be N = 9*5 = 45. In practice, the authors surveyed 200 commune-level government leaders from 3 localities in Vietnam: Lai Chau province (Northern Vietnam), Quang Ngai province (Central Vietnam), and Ca Mau province (Southern Vietnam). The survey was conducted based on preliminary interviews and the consent of the respondents. The results showed that 200 out of 200 responses were valid, achieving a 100% response rate.

4.0 RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the survey data collected from 200 local government leaders at the commune level, the author first tested the reliability of the scales and observed variables in the research model. According to Hair, J.F. et al. (2009), the scale has reliability when meeting the standard condition Cronbach'alpha > 0.6; the observed variable has reliability when meeting the standard condition: Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3. The test results showed that all 3 scales and 9 observed variables have reliability when meeting the above standard conditions, providing a basis for conducting further analyses (Table 2).

Table 2. Statistical results and testing results of the scale

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Scales	Observed variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach ' Alpha	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
1. Digital civil servant (CISE)	CISE1	200	1	5	4.24	.679	.733	CISE1 = .609
	CISE2	200	1	5	4.19	.702		CISE2 = .588
	CISE3	200	1	5	4.21	.698		CISE3 = .603
2. Digital citizens (CITZ)	CITZ1	200	1	5	4.10	.698	.689	CITZ1 = .473
	CITZ2	200	1	5	4.04	.721		CITZ2 = .517
	CITZ3	200	1	5	4.03	.708		CITZ3 = .502
3. State governance (SGOV)	SGOV1	200	1	5	4.25	.696	.689	SGOV1 = .575
	SGOV2	200	1	5	4.21	.705		SGOV2 = .512
	SGOV3	200	1	5	4.22	.684		SGOV3 = .535
Valid N (listwise)		200						

Source: Author's survey results

The survey data in Table 2 shows that the observed variables of the three scales "Digital civil servant" (CISE), "Digital citizens" (CITZ), and "State governance" (SGOV) were all rated at mean ≥ 4.03 and mean ≤ 4.25, which are statistically significant according to the Likert scale (1-5), initially confirming the suitability of the theoretical model and the survey dataset.

The "State governance" (SGOV) dependent variable scale shows observations with high average values: Mean (SGOV1) = 4.25, Mean (SGOV2) = 4.21, Mean (SGOV3) = 4.22, indicating that digital transformation has positively changed state governance in Vietnam. Accordingly, the government is building a digital operating model, adapting to digital technology; state governance processes and public service delivery are carried out transparently and efficiently in the digital environment; and civil servants and citizens access digital data publicly, quickly, accurately, and conduct transactions effectively in the digital environment.

The independent scales/variables show differences in observed values. The "Digital civil servant" (CISE) scale has higher observed values: Mean (CISE1) = 4.24, Mean (CISE2) = 4.19, Mean (CISE3) = 4.21, indicating that the development of digital civil servants has helped localities maintain digital human resources to perform public duties, meeting the requirements of state governance in the digital transformation trend. Accordingly, civil servants are trained in digital knowledge and skills, developing digital capabilities to meet the requirements of state governance in the digital transformation trend; civil servants perform state governance tasks and provide public services in the digital environment ensuring speed and accuracy, meeting assigned tasks; civil servants conduct transactions and guide citizens in resolving documents in the digital environment ensuring speed and accuracy, creating citizen satisfaction.

However, the independent variable "Digital citizens" (CITZ) has lower observed values: Mean (CITZ1) = 4.10, Mean (CITZ2) = 4.04, Mean (CITZ3) = 4.03, indicating that the development of digital citizens is being implemented by local authorities, with citizens being educated and trained in basic digital knowledge and skills to adapt to digital technology and digital transformation. However, the results of developing digital citizens are still limited and have not met expectations. Specifically, many citizens still have limited digital capacity, are not

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actively participating in policy processes in the digital environment, or are not proactive in conducting transactions or requesting document processing in the digital environment.

This issue directly impacts the goals of digital transformation and the effectiveness of state governance; however, it is also an objective problem stemming from the reality of age and educational levels. Accordingly, the majority of the population is older and has a lower level of education, making it difficult for them to acquire digital knowledge and skills, while digital transformation and digital technology are new issues. Therefore, localities need more appropriate and effective solutions to develop digital citizens, so that each citizen becomes an active participant in digital transformation and proactively engages in state governance within this digital transformation trend.

The validation results confirmed that all three scales and nine observed variables in the model were suitable for further analysis. The author conducted exploratory factor analysis with Varimax rotation to preliminarily assess the unidimensionality, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the scales and to test the fit of the theoretical model (Table 3, Table 4).

Table 3. Total Variance Explained

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.737
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4202.200
	df	36
	Sig.	.000

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.454	38.381	38.381	3.454	38.381	38.381	3.159	35.098	35.098
2	3.053	33.926	72.307	3.053	33.926	72.307	2.956	32.841	67.939
3	1.106	12.286	84.593	1.106	12.286	84.593	1.499	16.654	84.593
4	.499	5.549	90.142						
5	.458	5.086	95.229						
6	.151	1.682	96.911						
7	.131	1.453	98.364						
8	.094	1.041	99.406						
9	.053	.594	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Author's survey results

Table 4. Rotated Component Matrix

Rotated Component Matrix[a]

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Scales	Observed variables	Component		
		1	2	3
1. Digital civil servant (CISE)	CISE1	.812		
	CISE2	.835		
	CISE3	.831		
2. Digital citizens (CITZ)	CITZ1		.836	
	CITZ2		.825	
	CITZ3		.817	
3. State governance (SGOV)	SGOV1			.844
	SGOV2			.839
	SGOV3			.848
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. a. Rotation converged in 4 iterations.				

Source: Author's survey results

Survey data shows: KMO = 0.737 > 0.5, confirming that exploratory factor analysis is appropriate for the dataset; Bartlett's test has an observed significance level Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05, indicating that the observed variables are linearly correlated with the representative factor; Total Variance Explained with Cumulative % = 84.593% > 50%, showing that 84.593% of the variation in the representative factors is explained by the observed variables (Table 3). All observed variables have Factor Loading > 0.5 (Table 4), indicating that the observed variables are statistically significant; the initial theoretical model is consistent with the survey research.

Initial Eigenvalues stop at 3 factors with Eigenvalues > 1 (Table 3), indicating that the observed variables were extracted into 3 factors corresponding to the 3 initial factors, further confirming the suitability of the theoretical model. Thus, the original theoretical model remains unchanged, consisting of: 2 independent variables "Digital civil servant" (CISE), "Digital citizens" (CITZ) and 1 dependent variable "State governance" (SGOV) with a total of 9 observed variables that are statistically significant and can be used for correlation analysis to examine the relationship between the scales in the model. The results of the correlation analysis are shown in Table 5, which forms the basis for the author's research conclusions.

Table 5. Correlation analysis results of the scales

Correlations				
		CISE	CITZ	SGOV
Digital civil servant (CISE)	Pearson Correlation	1	.433**	.535**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	220	220	220
Digital civil servant (CITZ)	Pearson Correlation	.433**	1	.496**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	220	220	220
State governance (SGOV)	Pearson Correlation	.535**	.496**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	220	220	220

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**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Author's survey results

The survey data in Table 5 shows that the correlation coefficients of the scales reached a value of $0 < r < 1$, indicating a positive correlation between the two independent scales/variables "Digital civil servant" (CISE), "Digital citizens" (CITZ) and the one dependent scale/variable "State governance" (SGOV); hypotheses H1 and H2 are accepted; the initial theoretical model is confirmed to fit the survey dataset. Based on the r values [r (CISE) = .535 and r (CITZ) = .496], it can be concluded that the correlation levels of the independent and dependent variables, in decreasing order, are: "Digital civil servant" (CISE), "Digital citizens" (CITZ).

Statistical results, analysis, and verification of Tables 2 and 5 show a similarity in the level of assessment of state governance practices and the development of digital civil servants and digital citizens in Vietnam. From this, the author has a basis to conclude the empirical research on state governance in the digital transformation trend in Vietnam as follows:

- Firstly, digital transformation has positively changed the way state governance is conducted in Vietnam; the government is building a digital operating model, adapting to digital technology; state governance processes and public service delivery are carried out transparently and efficiently in the digital environment; civil servants and citizens access digital data publicly, quickly, and accurately, and conduct transactions efficiently in the digital environment.

- Secondly, the development of digital civil servants has helped localities maintain digital human resources to perform public duties, meeting the requirements of state governance in the trend of digital transformation. Civil servants are trained in digital knowledge and skills, developing digital capabilities to meet the requirements of state governance in the trend of digital transformation; performing state governance tasks and providing public services in the digital environment ensuring speed and accuracy, meeting assigned tasks; and conducting transactions and guiding citizens in resolving documents in the digital environment ensuring speed and accuracy, creating citizen satisfaction.

- Thirdly, the development of digital citizens is being implemented by local authorities, whereby people are educated and trained in basic digital knowledge and skills to adapt to digital technology and digital transformation. However, the results of developing digital citizens are still limited and have not met expectations. Specifically, many citizens still have limited digital capacity, are not actively participating in policy processes in the digital environment, or are not proactive in conducting transactions or requesting the processing of documents in the digital environment.

The above reality directly impacts the goal of digital transformation and the effectiveness of state governance; however, it is also an objective issue stemming from the reality of age and educational level. Specifically, the majority of the population is older and has a low level of education, making it difficult to acquire digital knowledge and skills, while digital transformation and digital technology are new issues. Therefore, localities need more appropriate and effective solutions to develop digital citizens, so that each citizen becomes an active participant in digital transformation and proactively engages in state governance in the

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trend of digital transformation. Based on this reality and explanation, this study discusses solutions for developing digital citizens, which are:

- Short-term solution: Local authorities should flexibly implement various forms of communication about digital transformation and digital skills training for the people. This includes establishing self-governing digital technology community groups in residential areas and supporting/encouraging these groups to disseminate information, guide people in updating their digital knowledge and skills, and actively participate in local digital social activities. This solution is short-term but has a quick and effective impact in filling the current digital skills gap in the community.

- Long-term solution: Local authorities need to develop strategies for digital citizen development, emphasizing that digital literacy training should be researched and implemented within the formal education curriculum for students at all levels. When each citizen (the younger generation) is educated and equipped with digital knowledge and skills, they will develop the necessary digital competencies to participate in digital society activities and become digital citizens. This will give local authorities proactive control over digital human resources to achieve development goals in the digital age.

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