Telework in Ecuador’s public administration: Challenges and opportunities in the digital age

Teletrabajo en la administración pública ecuatoriana: Desafíos y oportunidades en la era digital

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ABSTRACT

In the Ecuadorian social fabric and its reflection at the global level, a considerable challenge arises in the application of principles that guide the judge. The weighing up of the disvalue of the action and the result becomes essential, demanding a doctrinal approach that deepens the understanding of the principles at the time of applying rights. In this context, the principle of opportunity emerges as a valuable instrument to optimise public utility and prevent superfluous criminal proceedings. However, its application must go hand in hand with unrestricted respect for the fundamental rights of individuals, limited to situations where the integrity of human rights is not violated. Its essence lies not only in remedying the results of crime, but above all in preventing prosecution when legal conditions are not met.

Descriptors: right to employment; labour law; labour disputes. (Source: UNESCO Thesaurus).

RESUMEN

En el tejido social ecuatoriano y su reflejo a nivel global, se plantea un desafío considerable en la aplicación de principios que guíen al juzgador. La ponderación del desvalor de la acción y del resultado se torna esencial, demandando un enfoque doctrinal que profundice en la comprensión de los principios al momento de aplicar derechos. En este contexto, el principio de oportunidad surge como un instrumento valioso para optimizar la utilidad pública y prevenir procedimientos penales superfluos. Sin embargo, su aplicación debe ir de la mano del respeto irrestricto a los derechos fundamentales de las personas, limitándose a situaciones donde no se vulnere la integridad de los derechos humanos. Su esencia radica no solo en remediar los resultados del delito, sino, sobre todo, en evitar la persecución cuando no se cumplen las condiciones legales.

Descriptores: derecho al trabajo; derecho laboral; conflicto laboral. (Fuente: Tesauro UNESCO).


Letter to the editor
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Teleworking has experienced a significant increase in the last decade and has become a central issue in the Ecuadorian Public Administration. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of this model, generating the need to reconsider the way in which government functions are executed. This transformation has not only posed logistical, technological and cultural adaptation challenges, but has also opened up opportunities to improve efficiency and equity in public service (Reyes-Narváez, et al. 2021).

In the Ecuadorian context, telework in public administration faces unique challenges. Although significant steps have been taken towards the digitalisation of processes, the technological infrastructure is not yet fully consolidated. The persistence of the digital divide in some regions of the country limits access to essential technological resources to implement telework effectively. This highlights the need for continued investment in infrastructure and training to ensure equitable participation of all civil servants (Ramírez-Velásquez, et al. 2021).

One of the most notable challenges is the cultural resistance to change. The traditional work culture in the public administration has been rooted in presence, hierarchy and direct supervision. The transition to telework implies a change in the mindset of employees and their superiors, as well as in the way performance is evaluated. In this new paradigm, mutual trust and autonomy become crucial, requiring a conscious effort to overcome resistance and foster a more flexible and results-oriented work culture (Ramírez-Velásquez, et al. 2021b).

Despite these challenges, telework in the Ecuadorian Public Administration offers numerous opportunities. Decentralisation of work allows the recruitment of talent beyond geographical limitations, diversifying the workforce and promoting the inclusion of people with specialised skills from any corner of the country. This
enriches the perspective and expertise within teams, while driving efficiency and innovation (Muy-Pérez, 2021).

In addition, telework can contribute significantly to organisational resilience. The ability to maintain critical operations even in emergency situations demonstrates the importance of having a flexible system that adapts to unforeseen circumstances. Virtualisation of administrative processes becomes a key strategy to ensure continuity of public service and minimise disruption at critical times.

Another positive aspect of teleworking in public administration is its impact on sustainability. By reducing the need for daily commuting, the carbon footprint associated with transport is reduced. Successful implementation of telework can contribute to government efforts to address environmental problems and promote more environmentally friendly working practices, generating long-term economic savings (García-Rubio, et al. 2021).

However, it is essential to address concerns related to digital disconnection and the possible loss of a sense of belonging to a work community. Telework should not translate into isolation; strategies should be implemented to foster communication, collaboration and a sense of belonging through virtual platforms and online social activities. Effective team management in a remote environment implies a more proactive approach to building relationships and promoting a healthy working environment (Andrade-Ortiz, 2022).

Telework in the Ecuadorian Public Administration is a complex phenomenon with challenges and opportunities. Overcoming technological barriers, transforming organisational culture and promoting flexible working practices are fundamental to the success of this transition. By strategically embracing telework, Ecuador can build a more efficient, inclusive and sustainable public administration, ready to face the challenges of the 21st century.
Closing reflections

In the context of the Ecuadorian Public Administration, telework has emerged as a phenomenon which, while presenting notable challenges, also opens windows of opportunity for significant transformation. The acceleration of this modality of work, driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to a profound reflection on the way in which governmental responsibilities are carried out.

Despite advances in the digitisation of processes, challenges such as the technology gap and cultural resistance rooted in face-to-face presence and direct supervision persist. These challenges underscore the need for continued investments in infrastructure and training to ensure equitable participation of public officials.

Amidst these obstacles, however, telework offers significant opportunities. Decentralisation of work enables the inclusion of talent beyond geographical constraints, diversifying the workforce and encouraging the inclusion of specialised skills. This diversification not only enriches teams, but also drives efficiency and innovation.

In addition, organisational resilience is strengthened by the ability to maintain critical operations in emergency situations. Virtualisation of administrative processes is positioned as a key strategy to ensure continuity of public service and minimise disruptions at critical times.

The positive impact on sustainability is another important aspect, as the reduction of daily commuting contributes to reducing the carbon footprint associated with transport. Successful implementation of telework not only benefits the environment, but can also generate long-term economic savings.

However, it is essential to address concerns such as digital disconnection and the potential loss of a sense of belonging to a working community. Proactive strategies to foster communication and collaboration, both on virtual platforms and in online social activities, are crucial to maintain a healthy working environment and avoid isolation.
In conclusion, telework in the Ecuadorian Public Administration is a multifaceted phenomenon that demands a comprehensive response. Overcoming technological and cultural challenges, combined with the promotion of flexible working practices, positions Ecuador to build a more efficient, inclusive and sustainable public administration. By strategically embracing telework, the country is preparing to face the challenges of the 21st century with agility and adaptability.

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**REFERENCES**


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