IT Governance: Status and Level of Implementation in Zimbabwean Urban Local Authorities

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Abstract
Information Technology has become an indispensable tool in enabling business processes. The study sought to assess the status and level of implementation of IT governance in Local authorities in Zimbabwe. Three local authorities were used as case studies and respondents were purposively selected from Councillors of the three local authorities . Interviews were then conducted with senior personnel; Chamber Secretary, Town Clerk and the Treasurer. In order to assess the status and level of implementation, reference was made to the Institute of Information technology (ITGI) governance framework. It was discovered that, the Local authorities in Zimbabwe's IT functions are not aligned to business strategies. Urban Local authorities in Zimbabwe need to properly take on board IT in order to improve service delivery.
Keywords: Local authorities, IT governance, Service delivery, business strategy, ITGI

Introduction

Local governments are a vital arm of the governance system of any nation. Just like any other entity, these entities are accountable to various stakeholders. In the Zimbabwean local governments are governed under the Urban Councils Act [chapter 29:15] for urban local authorities whilst rural local authorities are governed under the Rural Councils Act [Chapter 29:13]. In these local authorities corporate governance issues are of utmost importance as local authorities are subjected to immense public scrutiny and are supposed to instil confidence in various stakeholders. This is essential when it comes to attracting fresh capital for financing public services. The operating environment is becoming very complex and local authorities find themselves in a quadrant where they have no option other than to keep abreast with technological changes.

The adoption of technology has resulted in new challenges for organizations in terms of governance issues. This has led to a robust focus on corporate governance. Since the subject of IT governance is relatively new in Zimbabwe, the study seeks to establish the status and level of implementation of Information Technology governance in Zimbabwe's local governments. Local authorities in Zimbabwe are now operating in a technology dependent world, it is vital to identify the governance structure, processes and value metrics in place so as to make a comparison with the best practices in IT governance.

Literature review
Governance of Urban local authorities in Zimbabwe

Urban local authorities in Zimbabwe are governed in terms of the Urban Councils Act (Chapter 29:15) . They fall under Local Government, Public Works and National Housing ministry. The Minister responsible for this portfolio has an overall say in the governance issues of local authorities. The council is the highest decision making board for a Local authority. In terms of section 64 of the Urban Councils Act (chapter 29:15), the Mayor is mandated to preside over all meetings of the council when present. In this case the Mayor is more like a Chairman of the board. Section 49 on election and qualification of Mayor allows one to take up the post if one is forty years and above, ordinarily resident in the local authority for the five years immediately preceding the election. The act sets five ordinary level subjects as the minimum entry point.

In the execution of his duties the Mayor is supposed to be assisted by elected Councillors in terms of section 40, for one to be elected as a Councillor, one should have attained the age of thirty and is an eligible voter. The act does not prescribe the minimum educational qualifications for Councillors. The council is run along the committee system of governance.

Various committees are available to aid the governance of a council, in terms of section 92 of the Urban Councils Act (chapter 29:15) immediately after an election there is need for the Council to appoint an executive committee which consists of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and the chairman of every committee of Council. Section 99 allows the executive committee to appoint more sub-committees for specific tasks. The Act further allows the setting up of special committees as per section 100 (1a,b).

Convergence of corporate governance and Information Technology governance.

The subject of corporate governance has taken centre stage over the last two decades with the crafting of the Cadbury report in 1992 being the major turning point in the entity governance systems. This was a direct