The Effectiveness of Management Strategies in Local Authorities in Zimbabwe: A Case Study of Harare City Council

Webster Chihambakwe

Lecturer, Faculty of Applied Social Sciences, Department of Counselling, Zimbabwe Open University, Zimbabwe

*Corresponding Author:
Webster Chihambakwe
Email: chihambakwewebster71@gmail.com

Abstract: The study sought to establish the effectiveness of management strategies in local authorities in Zimbabwe: A case study of Harare City Council. The representative sample consisted of thirty (30) participants who included both female and male employees of the Harare City Council. A qualitative research case study design was employed to guide the methodology. Data was collected using the interview schedule guide. Qualitative data analysis with narrative description was used in the presentation, interpretation and analysis of data. Findings from the study showed that effective management strategies in local authorities in Zimbabwe where present on paper. The implementation of the strategies was a major challenge due to various factors. Some of the factors noted were that there was a lot of political interference in the running of affairs in local authorities especially at the Harare City Council, lack of stakeholder participation in the strategic planning processes, lack of financial resources to fully implement effective management strategies to the benefit of residents and lack of clear policy direction. There was also a finding that there was lack of trust history between managerial staff and general employees based on political affiliation.
Keywords: local authority; management strategies; community and participation.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The significance of providing management strategies in local authorities that are effective in the communities and nation at large cannot be overemphasised in the Zimbabwean context. The advent of local authorities in Zimbabwe was to make urban planning and management at the various levels of development in life result in the improvement of delivery service to people a top priority. Local authorities are small democratic units which were created to spur democratic participation to citizens in matters that affect their daily lives [1]. The Zimbabwean central government anticipated that planning strategically was going to bring an end to poor service provision and see the dawn of quality service provision from the country's local authorities therefore increasing stakeholder expectations; this led to the introduction of strategic planning by local authorities. To this end, through Section 10 of the Regional, Town and Country Planning Act Chapter (29:12), Zimbabwean Urban and Rural District Councils were accorded planning authority status by the central government. Urban and Rural Councils prepare plans for their areas, they are therefore regarded as "planning authorities" Zimbabwe Institute Local Government Paper 0506 [2].Though many questions have been raised by members of the public on the effectiveness of the various management strategies being used in local authorities in Zimbabwe, there are also some challenges that such strategies have faced during the implementation stages. This chapter will focus on the background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance to the study and limitations and delimitations to the study. This study would focus much on the effectiveness (efficacy) of management strategies in local authorities in Zimbabwe: A Case Study of Harare City Council.

Strategic management has been touted as one of the effective management tools in strengthening organisation performance through effective decision making and systematic strategic formulation and implementation. Although strategic management was more prevalent in the private sector since the concept was first developed, the interest of using strategic management in the public sector has increased over the last decade [3]. Since 1980"s there have been a series of reforms taking shape in the public sector, resulting from increased awareness on the importance of quality in the public sector. According to Osborne and Gaebler [4], that strategic management appeared to be part of a package management innovations design to reinvent or modernize the public sector. Strategic management was found to be an effective management tool in transforming a bureaucratic public sector to a more responsive and innovative administration. In a management context, the word strategy denotes an

activity that top-managers perform in order to accomplish an organisation's goals. Nutt and Backoff [5]; Kamoche [6]; Bryson [7]; Kiggundu [8] define strategic management as that set of managerial decisions and actions that determines the long-run performance of a corporation. Aktouf [9] takes a similar view when he sees strategy as the maintenance of a "vision of the future" that is constantly updated by data on both the internal and the external environment. Other definitions emphasize the achievement of performance goals: A strategy is a specific pattern of decisions any actions that managers take to achieve an organisation's goals. (a goal is a desired future state that the organization attempts to realize). For most, if not all organisations, an overriding goal is to achieve superior performance.

Strategic approach concentrates on assuring a good fit between the environment and the organisation. It is oriented toward the future. It recognizes that the environment will change and that organisations should anticipate events rather than simply react as they occur. They must be sensitive to the needs and demands of their constituents. Putting a strategy into place and getting the organisation to execute it well call for different sets of managerial skills. And, one of such skills is the choice of leadership style which covers forces in the leader, forces in the situation and forces in the followers. While the strength of each of these factors will vary from instance to instance, the leader who is sensitive then can better assess the problems which face him and determine which mode of leadership behaviour is most appropriate. The leader's behaviour in many given instance will be influenced greatly by the many forces operating within his own personality. He will of course perceive the leadership problem in a unique way on the basis of his background, knowledge and experience.

Local Authority in Zimbabwe is a government at local level in the Zimbabwean three-tier, administrative system. It is responsible in providing urban services as well as implementing economic, social, physical and urban development within its gazetted administrative boundary. The roles of local authorities in Zimbabwe are varied and they act as the catalyst of economic, political and social development to the community. It is undoubtedly critical given its status, as the local government at the third level with certain autonomy power measured to enhance the increasing demands from the communities for a more customer-oriented and higher standard of urban services. It is this context that the study intends to investigate the effectiveness of management strategies in local authorities in Zimbabwe: A Case Study of Harare City Council. To what extent is strategic management being adopted and practiced by the Harare City Council as a local authority in Zimbabwe and to

determine factors associated to local authorities in adopting a strategic management framework as suggested by the western literature.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
Most Zimbabwean local authorities are producing strategic plans; however service delivery has not improved, this indicates inadequate implementation of strategic plans. There has been persistent failure by local authorities to translate their strategic plans into operational actions. Thus the question, what is the effectiveness of management strategies that are being used in local authorities in Zimbabwe?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
The purpose of this study was to establish the effectiveness of the management strategies in local authorities in Zimbabwe: A Case Study of Harare City Council.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
- What is the effectiveness of management strategies being used in local authorities in Zimbabwe?
- How effective is the management strategies in local authorities?
- What support systems are available to local authorities from the central government?
- Do you think that local authorities have a role to play in attaining effective management in local authorities?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE
'Value for money' has become an important aspect of local government management and is one of the factors that have stimulated the spread of performance measurement systems in local government. Greater expectations of all levels of government, with increased accountability to stakeholders and requirements for increased efficiency and effectiveness in government operations, have also increased the focus on performance measurement. Indeed, performance measurement and programme evaluation have been central to drives for a more efficient, effective and accountable public sector [10]. Traditional performance measurement systems have concentrated on the development of indicators largely relating to economy (inputs) and efficiency (costs) due to the limited ability to measure effectiveness or outcomes in government organisations. This traditional performance measurement has been much criticised due to the exclusion of non-financial dimensions of performance from many sets of measures [11]. In another similar model, Kaplan and Norton's [12] balanced scorecard argues for performance measurement over four dimensions of performance: financial, customer satisfaction, internal business processes, and innovation

and learning. Kaplan and Norton [13] effectively consider the three dimensions of quality, flexibility and resource utilisation in Fitzgerald *et al.*'s 1991 model to be the single dimension of internal business processes. Kaplan and Norton's dimensions can also be classified as results (financial, customer) and determinants (internal business processes and innovation and learning). Ballantine *et al.* [20] use Fitzgerald *et al.*'s 1991 model to illustrate the links between strategy and performance management. The linkage between strategy and performance is the cornerstone of the Kaplan and Norton [12] balanced scorecard and has been acknowledged by Atkinson and McCrindell [14] and Atkinson *et al.* [14]. When strategic concerns are impounded into performance then management, rather than the more limited concept of measurement, becomes the focus of performance.

Performance management is the process by which the organisation integrates its performance with its corporate and functional strategies and objectives [15]. In the government sector, given that objectives are often stated in non-financial terms, non-financial performance measures are needed as conventional financial reporting will not fully capture performance [10]. Guthrie and English also suggest that in government, performance measurement is essential for choosing between alternative strategies and prioritizing activities. The purpose of this paper is to report on research examining how performance management systems incorporating strategic and operational issues are developed and integrated across local government organisations in the State of Victoria, Australia. The aim is to understand how, in the local government environment, performance measurement systems are linked in an integrated, holistic way to a council's strategic choices so that overall efficiency and effectiveness of the council's operations are improved. Our argument is that when this occurs across the organisation a performance management system is in place. The literature on performance management in government is starting to address issues of strategic linkages with operational performance [14] and this is consistent with the literature on performance management in general [12, 16]. However the literature on performance management in local government is less strategic in focus. It is still largely grounded in operational concepts of efficiency, with a lower emphasis on effectiveness. Palmer's 1993 research provides evidence that organizations concentrate on measuring what is easily measurable and in local government this results in a bias towards measuring performance in terms of economy and efficiency, rather than effectiveness. Palmer found that the types of indicator most frequently used relate to costs, volume of service, utilization rates, time targets and productivity—all measures of economy and efficiency, not effectiveness.

The objective of the study is basically two-pronged. Firstly, it seeks to examine the extent of adoption of strategic management practices in the local authorities and secondly, is to see how factors such as leadership traits, organization culture do and organization structure have impact in the adoption of strategic management that suite the environment of the local authorities. The theoretical framework that would guide the study was derived from two theories of leadership, that is, the Trait theory and McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y. Universalist theories of leadership search for the one key characteristic or a cluster of key characteristics held by effective leaders, arguing that leaders with these traits will be successful regardless of the situation. Universalist theories represent the earliest approaches to the study of leadership. Two of these theories are: The trait theory and McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y. The general failure of the Universalist theories to isolate the characteristics associated with leader effectiveness led to a change in focus.

RESEARCH PARADIGM

There are two broad categories of research paradigms in the research field. These two categories are qualitative and quantitative methodologies. In this study, the researcher made use of the qualitative paradigm which fits in well with the study to be conducted. The research design under this paradigm that would be used is the case study, where only one region will be the major focus. Every research needs a plan or design. According to Borg and Gall [19], careful consideration must be taken in choosing an approach and whether that approach is in line with objectives and purpose of the study. Borg and Gall [19] therefore described research design as a process of planning and organizing the components that comprise of the study. They concluded that a research design is a plan of action. Thus, the nature of the research problem determines the nature of the research design and paradigm to be used. The case study design was selected in order to experience characteristics, for example behaviour, opinions, beliefs and knowledge of a particular individual are situation or group in the community. In the case of this study, the researcher had the opportunity to hear varied viewpoints with regards to the efficacy of management strategies being used in local authorities: a case study of Harare City Council.

STUDY POPULATION

Nunan [17] defines a population as all cases, situations, or individuals who share one or more characteristics. According to Neuman [18] population in statistics includes all members of a defined group that we are studying or collecting information on for data driven decisions. Thus the population for this study consisted of three thousand (3000) participants both

males and females from Harare City Council. The targeted study population were varied in terms of their educational levels, employment grades and cultural variations.

SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Purposive sampling was used in the study because of it being a type of non-probability sampling technique which focuses on the participants that are being investigated based on the judgment of the researcher. Purposive sampling also enabled the researcher to focus specifically on those characteristics of the population that are of interest. The sample population of the study included thirty (30) participants employed by the Harare City Council. All the participants had completed their O-Level, A-level and some had post secondary education (such as diploma, certificate, degree, etc).

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Structured interview guides were used to gather data from the research participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Background information of the research participants

This research study focused on an evaluation of the effectiveness of management strategies in local authorities in Zimbabwe: a case study of Harare City Council. The focus of the study was on the employees of Harare City Council in the various departments. The research participants consisted of males and females, who were all working for the local authority. The rationale behind conducting a study of this nature was embedded in the need to establish the effectiveness of management strategies in local authorities in Zimbabwe: a case study of Harare City Council. These research participants consisted of managers, supervisors and general workers, males and females of different age groups. The research participants were of various backgrounds in educational, job title and experience at the workplace.

Table 1: Composition of research participants interviewed in the study

Participants	Category	Qualification	Date of interview was conducted	Type of interview	Age	Gender
Rumbidzai	General Worker	Grade 7	07/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	42	F
Themba	General Worker	O-Level	07/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	33	M
Tindo	General Worker	O-Level	07/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	29	M
Tanaka	General Worker	O-Level	10/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	31	M
Vivienne		Certificate	10/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	38	F
Thomas	General Worker	Grade 7	10/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	49	M
Maggie	General Worker	Grade 7	11/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	45	F
Tungamirai	General Worker	Grade 7	11/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	55	M
Peter	General Worker	Grade 7	11/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	50	M
Memory	General Worker	Grade 7	12/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	33	F
Martie	General Worker	O-Level	12/03/14	Open ended interview questions(individual)	35	F
Dzimba	General Worker	Grade 7	13/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	44	M
Pomunoda	General Worker	Grade 7	13/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	54	M
Zaranyika	General Worker	Grade 7	13/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	60	M
Takaendesa	General Worker	Grade 7	14/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	58	M
Nyika	General	Grade 7	14/03/14	Open ended interview	42	M

	Worker			questions (individual)		
Shingirayi	General Worker	O-Level	14/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	29	F
Matilda	Manager	Degree	14/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	37	F
Florence	Supervisor	Diploma	15/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	38	F
Shupikai	Manager	Degree	15/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	45	F
Chipo	General Worker	O-Level	15/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	27	F
Paradzai	General Worker	O-Level	15/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	25	M
Marufu	General Worker	ZJC	16/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	39	M
Agnes	General Worker	ZJC	17/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	48	F
Mercy	General Worker	O-Level	18/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	33	F
Tariro	General Worker	A-Level	18/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	36	F
Tatenda	General Worker	O-Level	18/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	28	F
Wilbert	General Worker	O-Level	18/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	28	M
Mharidzo	General Worker	A-Level	19/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	33	M
Wellington	Supervisor	Degree	19/03/14	Open ended interview questions (individual)	34	M

Table 1 above shows the composition of the research participants who were interviewed in the study. In terms of the gender of the research participants in the study, there was almost an equal representation. The research participants were of a mixed bag in as far as their status was concerned in the city council. The names of the research participants used in this study as indicated on table above were pseudonym names. This was done to safeguard the ethical principle of confidentiality as required in research work. The identity of the research participants and their privacy should be safeguarded by the researcher at all times during the research process. The researcher sought for consent from the research participants to interview them. The rationale behind the researcher to seek for research participants before interviewing them would authenticate the research study to the recipients of the study who were the residents of that community. Clarification was done to the research participants on issues that they were not clear about before the interview. The researcher would conduct at least three interviews with different participants per day and these interviews would vary in terms of the duration of time taken to complete it. Below are the key findings of the research study:-

ENSURANCE OF TOP-MANAGEMENT SUPPORT AND COMMITMENT

Harare City Council is one of the biggest local authorities in Zimbabwe. Research participants alluded to the fact that the management as individuals or as a group within the organization should champion the cause for change. Top management support and commitment to change play an especially crucial role in success. It was also highlighted by the research participants that in some studies of organizational change stress the importance of having a single change agent or "idea champion" lead the transformation. An idea champion is a highly respected individual who maintains momentum and commitment to change, often taking personal risks in the process. Policy-implementation scholars have also offered evidence of how a skilful and strategically placed leader or "fixer" can successfully coordinate the behaviour of disparate actors and overcome obstacles by leveraging close personal ties and pursuing informal avenues of influence to the success of the council.

ENHANCEMENT OF INTERNAL SUPPORT FOR CHANGE AND OVERCOME RESISTANCE

Managerial leaders must build internal support for change and reduce resistance to it through widespread participation in the change process and

other means. Some of the research participants who were supervisors in their various departments stated that major institutional changes typically showed that successful leaders understand that change involves a political process of developing and nurturing support from major stakeholders and institutional members. This notion was aptly noted by some researchers in the area who concurred that individuals in institutions/local authorities resist change for a variety of reasons, for example, some ideas for change are simply ill conceived, unjustified, or pose harmful consequences for members of the institution/local authorities such as the Harare City Council.

INSTITUTIONALISED CHANGE TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES OPERATIONS

Managers and employees must effectively institutionalize and embed changes. To make change enduring, members of the organization must incorporate the new policies or innovations into their daily routines. Virtually all organizational changes involve changes in the behaviour of organizational members. Employees must learn and reutilize these behaviours in the short term, and leaders must institutionalize them over the long haul so that new patterns of behaviour displace old ones.

CONCLUSION

One can conclude that though Harare City Council has a strategic plan in place, though there are a number of impediments to implementation. These impediments have resulted in the research participants concluding that the management strategies in local authorities in Zimbabwe such as at Harare City Council were not all that effective. Some of the impediments of these management strategies were: lack of stakeholder participation in the strategic planning process which has led to stakeholders and ratepayers lacking interest in the implementation of the plans. It is clear that resident's feel neglected or rather sidelined by Council on the strategic planning and implementation process. The various legislations that guide the operations of local authorities restrict them to show up their full potential in implementing their strategic plans. Political polarisation at Harare City Council hinders implementation of strategies as council boardrooms have been turned into battlefields due to political differences. Lack of financial resources is another challenge that has threatened the successful implementation of strategic plans by Harare City Council. Harare City Council is cash strapped and revenue inflows are inadequate, inadequate funding from the government coupled with late approval of borrowing powers hampers implementation efforts. The local authority has failed to keep abreast with the rapidly changing technological environment as a result it is incapacitated technologically. It is imperative that

the local authority addresses the situation so as to improve service delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- Ensure top-management support and commitment in all the local authority activities such as timeous refuge collections, repairing of water equipment, etc.
- Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and Construction should enhance the need for internal support for change and overcome resistance amongst employees within local authorities in Zimbabwe;
- Capacity building of external support both from the public and private sectors so as to improve on the service delivery to the residents residing in the local authorities' armpits; and
- Establishment of institutionalised change in local authorities operations that would result in the effectiveness of management strategies.

REFERENCES
1. Vosloo WB, Kotze DA, Jeppe JO. Local Government in Southern Africa. Academica. Pretoria, South Africa. 1974.
2. Zimbabwe Institute Local Government Policy Review. 2006. Zimbabwe Institute Local Government Paper 0506. Cape Town South.
3. Smith RJ. Strategic Management and Planning in the Public Sector, Longman, Harlow. 1994.
4. Osborne D, Gaebler T. Reinventing Government, Addison-Wesley, Reading, Mass. 1992.
5. Nutt Paul C, Backoff RW. Strategic Management of Public and Third Sector Organizations, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco. 1992.
6. Kamoche K. Strategic human resource management within a resource-capability view of the firm. Journal of Management Studies. 1996;33(2):213-233.
7. Bryson JM. Strategic Planning for Public and Non Profit Organizations, Jossey-Bass Publishers. 1989.
8. Kiggundu Moses N. 'Civil Service Reforms: Limping Into the Twenty-First Century' in M. Minogue, C. Polidano and D. Hulme (eds), Beyond the New Public Management: Changing Ideas and Practices in Governance. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar. 1998;155-71.
9. Aktouf O. A administração entre a tradição e a renovação. São Paulo, Atlas, 1996.
10. Guthrie J, English L. Performance information and programme evaluation in the Australian public sector. International Journal of Public Sector Management. 1997 Jun 1;10(3):154-64.
11. Ghobadian A, Ashworth J. Performance measurement in local government-Concept and

practice. International Journal of Operations & Production Management. 1994 May 1;14(5):35-51.

12. Kaplan RS, Norton DP. Using the balanced scorecard as a strategic management system, 1992.

13. Kaplan RS, Norton DP. The balanced scorecard: translating strategy into action. Harvard Business Press; 1996.

14. Atkinson AA, McCrindell JQ. Strategic performance measurement in government. CMA magazine. 1997 Apr;71(3):20-2.

15. Bititci US, Carrie AS, McDevitt L. Integrated performance measurement systems: a development guide. International journal of operations & production management. 1997 May 1;17(5):522-34.

16. Brignall TJ, Fitzgerald L, Johnston R, Silvestro R. Performance measurement in service businesses. Management Accounting. 1991;69(10):34.

17. Nunan D. Designing and adapting materials to encourage learner autonomy. Autonomy and independence in language learning. 1997;192203.

18. Neuman SB, Copple C, Bredekamp S. Learning to read and write: Developmentally appropriate practices for young children. National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1509 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC (Stock no. 161, $12); 2000.

19. Gall MD, Borg WR, Gall JP. Educational research: An introduction . Longman Publishing; 1996.

20. Ballantyne JC, Carr DB, Suarez T, Lau J, Chalmers TC, Angelillo IF, Mosteller F. The comparative effects of postoperative analgesic therapies on pulmonary outcome: cumulative meta-analyses of randomized, controlled trials. Anesthesia & analgesia. 1998 Mar 1;86(3):598-612.