



Service Delivery in Local Authorities Necessitating Organisational Transformation

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the service delivery challenges in local authorities and its conflict with "Zimbabwe is open for Business" mantra necessitating organisational transformation in Bindura municipality. It aimed to identify the service delivery challenges facing local authorities, as well as the forms of organisational change to be adopted as a transformation undertaking, following the ushering in of the new dispensation. A descriptive research design and questionnaire were used with a sample size of 169 employees and the methodology used was a case study. The study reveals that the local authority is faced with several service delivery challenges among them technological challenges, behavioural challenges, structural challenges and functional challenges. Furthermore it reveals four major organisational changes (organisational structure, technological, functional and behavioural changes). The research also shows that the organisational change dimensions have some impact on the performance of local authorities in terms of Service delivery. The study recommends that the local authority should seriously consider organisational transformation so as to keep it aligned to the dynamic environment. Lastly it is recommended that a further research be undertaken using a multiple case study to improve the generalisation of the results.

Keywords: *Service Delivery, Local Authorities, Organisational Change, Organisational Transformation*

1. INTRODUCTION

Public sector organizations are facing many challenges, among them, ratepayer dissatisfaction from poor service delivery that requires modifications and changes (Bussen and Myers, 2014). Public sector organizations are faced with these challenges due to the importance given to bureaucracy and chain of command in their organizational culture and Parker and Bradley, (2013) state further that, due to the lack of awareness of change majority of transformations fail. Zimbabwe's local authorities continue to fail, in terms of service delivery, to meet ratepayers' needs and enable the expansion of economic growth. As there are no adequate services being rendered by these councils, ratepayers are unwilling to pay their rates. In Zimbabwe, according to Garaiza (2014) local authorities include cities, towns and rural district councils. Local authorities in Zimbabwe, being statutory bodies in terms of Part (3) Section (274-279) of the Zimbabwe constitution, are subdivided into two, namely the Urban Councils and Rural District Councils and are governed in terms of the Urban Councils Act [Chapter 29:15] and the Rural District Councils Act [Chapter 29:13] respectively. Local authorities are meant to provide public services that include infrastructure development, water and sanitation, public lighting and housing. This study explore the interconnection between organisational transformation and performance of local authorities in terms of the "Zimbabwe is Open for Business" mantra, using the case of Bindura Municipality.

Despite the central role that local authorities play in harnessing investments in their respective areas of jurisdiction through infrastructure development and service provisions many of them according to Makanyeza et al (2013) have been bedevilled by a multitude of fundamental strategic challenges over the past three decades. These fundamental strategic challenges consists of the technical, structural, functional, behavioural and marketing issues that as Masocha and Tevera (2003) posit translate in poor service delivery and above all low development in their areas (Rondinelli, 2005). The existence of such

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challenges and the opening up of the economy following the ushering in of the new dispensation through the “Zimbabwe is open for business” mantra reinforces how important organisational transformation is for local authorities in their strategic navigations.

There is vast substantiation in the media and literature (Makanyeza et al., 2013; Rondinelli, 2005) to the effect that local authorities have failed to provide suitable service delivery to support economic growth in Zimbabwe. Lack of the following aspects: sound relationship between central and local government, an adequate and sustainable funding base, central government funds transfers, human and material capacity, and a shared vision between central and local governments (Makumbe 2010). Extant literature is inundated with the importance of organisational transformation in the private sector (Schein, 1985, 1992 and 2004; Denison, 1990 and 2000; Ojo, 2009; Nelson and Quick, 2011; and Kotter, 2012). According to Rondinelli (2005) local community governance is essential not only for the practice of good governance but also economic growth and development. Consequently, in developed countries, notwithstanding their political and economic systems, it is common and as such they have a healthy system of local governance. In this twenty first century the world is faced with unparalleled challenges in all areas that have some directly or indirectly effect on the business environment. Globally, governance is a central issue in the discipline of public administration. This also explains why according to Olowu (2005) many developing and former communist states have made concrete efforts to augment the capabilities of their systems of local governance since the third wave of democratic revolution swept through and the results have been quite impressive (Rondinelli, 2005). The African continent could be the only exception though there have been some advancement in some countries.

Local governance systems require transformation to sustain improved social service delivery. In choosing the service delivery options for their areas, according to Combined Harare Residents Association (2014), local authorities should be guided by principles such as accessibility, affordability, value-for money, transparency, accountability, and sustainability. In line with these principles of social service delivery plan above, Councils can consider five social service delivery approaches suggested by UCLG and OECD (2013), namely Public-public partnerships, Partnerships with civil society, Contracting out, Public-private partnerships and Privatization.

Survival strategies in the face of economic meltdown (Zhang, Schmidt and Li, 2016), national isolation and the perennial impact of brain drain (Makanyeza et al., 2013) have had the effect of eroding the organizational capabilities (Gupta, 2015) of local authorities in the face of the current national economic turnaround. In this vein Masocha and Tevera (2003) posit that most local authorities are still finding the going very difficult regardless of the opening up of the national economy. Bindura Municipality is one of such local authority that is struggling to stay afloat. Would there be need for strategies to transform these local authorities so that they can as well benefit from the “Zimbabwe is Open for Business” mantra?

Over the past two decades a number of Zimbabwe local authorities have been instituting strategic changes in the face of current economic challenges, through corporate turnaround strategies. However, most if not all of them, have been focusing on retrenchment strategies with a view of confining themselves to their core business, and as such most of them have been pursuing divestures in a bid to cut costs through disposal of income generating entities, assets disposals and massive job cuts among a plethora of survival strategies. The question would be whether they are then able to embrace the “Zimbabwe is Open for Business” mantra in the same state or organisational transformation is the remedy to embracing the new dispensation’s mantra. Organisational transformation can be used to provide solutions to problems bedevilling service deliver by enabling local authorities in Zimbabwe to embrace “Zimbabwe is Open for Business”. This study targets is meant to gain insights into the concept of organisational transformation in the context of local authorities. It explores and analyses organisational transformation focusing on strategies to enhance effective organisational transformation in the local authorities, specifically the Zimbabwean context.

This paper focusses on establishing whether there is need for organisational change in local authorities by considering its role on organisational performance

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Burke and Litwin (1992) Organizational Change Model is used in dissecting organizational transformation in line with Mirkamali and Zahedi (2012). The theory is significant to this study in that it takes cognizance of organizational transformation’s multi-dimensional nature through its proposed components that include external environment, mission and strategy, leadership, culture, management practices structure, systems, organizational atmosphere, work skills, motivation, job requirements, individual needs, values, and performance that influence organizational performance.

Conceptual framework

Organisational transformation

Change refers to transforming an organization from the current situation to the desired state. It is necessary to have general cognizance, effective knowledge (Rondinelli, 2005) about organizational undercurrents and be able to identify how to modify them (Bassett-Jones and Lloyd, 2015). Organisational transformation is an upgrading strategy (Gupta, 2015) based on knowledge gained from group dynamic forces, theories, and practices that can resolve many vital human challenges in organizations. According to French and Bel (2008) organisational transformation involves guidelines implemented through programs and creating change aiming to solve problems in problematic settings.

In change process, Cummings and Worley (2014) posit that an organization tries to increase its adaption with processes, individuals, structure, strategy, and organizational change, develop new and creative solutions in organization, and develop their renovation ability in organization. Organizational transformation entails constant understanding and controllership over change process results. It is critical that organisational transformation needs to pay attention to among others, intentions, objectives and outcomes, and should be considered particularly in organizational change processes. Gomes et al (2016) argue that the manager’s main concern is the result of uncertainty in change consequences, particularly in behavioural outcomes and uncertainty in appropriate effectiveness of change process on organizational performance or sustainability of these benefits.

Regardless of the varied views between theorists, research has shown organisational transformation to be an on-going key element for survival and growth when faced with changes in the business environment (Armenakis et al., 1999; Judson, 1991; Kotter and Gestion, 1995; Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999;

Yukl et al., 2002). There is a lot of research on public sector organizations which also gives sufficient proof on the considerable role that organisational transformation play in adapting to its environment (Abramson and Lawrence, 2001; Burke, 2002; Borins, 2000; Doig and Hargrove, 1990).

Structural changes

An organizational structure as alluded to by Bassett-Jones and Lloyd (2015) is a combination of views and assumptions enshrined in organizational culture. Therefore, it reflects the notable organization rituals, behaviours of members and reward system and how employees respond. Organizational structures by nature are either centralized or decentralized. Centralized structures provide more flexibility to strategic change by encouraging communication and participation of employees in decision making. Decentralized structure increases employee satisfaction because in such structures free flow of lateral and vertical communication is encouraged (Gupta, 2015). The central challenge of organization design is according to Rivkin and Siggelkow (2013) subdivided into manageable tasks in order for the firm to benefit from ensuing synchronized actions and this could be achieved through using a matrix structure (Alawy, 2007) with cross functional teams (Bassett-Jones and Lloyd, 2015).

Technological changes

Bussen and Myers (2014) note that technological changes have become a certainty as an on-going spectacle facing organizations, and the intensity of this change has increased in the era of informational competition. However, as areas of change expand in their scope, modern practises are being developed for organizations to develop change techniques in dealing with the various forms of change.

Functional changes

Functional changes encompass the distribution of functional roles and the organizational or functional relationships (Alsamydai et al., 2013). Functional role is achieved by a structure even though it is conceptually separate from each other. Functions are meant for development and delivery of products and the provision of administration in internal sections. In such scenarios, there is then the disintegration of functions into more specific functions. Functions are normally representative of some long-term aspects of the organization (Zhang, Schmidt and Li, 2016) even though they can as well incorporate short- or medium-term objectives (Bassett-Jones and Lloyd, 2015) or goals for an organization (Alawy, 2007).

Behavioural changes

Numerous researchers have examined the effects of job satisfaction and including turnover. In order to cut employee turnover some organizations frequently follow innovative ways (French and Bel, 2008) yet with a low success rate (Wongrassamee et al., 2013). Employee turnover could also be affected by the nature of work itself, such as job involvement and satisfaction, commitment, and compensation. In this vein the incentives to stay can originate from working with groups that generate commitment.

Organisational performance

Organisational performance can be measured using the balanced scorecard developed by David Norton and Robert Kaplan in the 1990s. Wongrassamee et al. (2013) state that the research group achieved a comprehensive framework called the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) in which, the mission and strategic goals of the company could be converted into a set of performance criteria which according to Alhawamdeh and Alsmairat (2019) contains indicators and as such the result provides a broader picture of performance. The central purpose of the balanced scorecard (BSC) framework is to give a business perspective to managers and to focus on the core issues and strategy. BSC, by focusing on organizational strategies and matching in key areas of the organization (finance, customers, internal organizational processes, growth and learning) it therefore helps evaluate complex organizations.

In this regard organisational performance in local authorities is measured as service delivery and is about meeting the expectations of ratepayers. There are several indicators of service delivery but this study focuses on the metrics of delivery, flexibility, and quality.

3 Materials and Methods

Change is a dynamic and recurring process with an influential nature on all organizations, including local authorities. Therefore this requires enormous efforts to inquire the need for transforming local authorities to alleviate its effects, by quickly responding to it in a manner that reduce its effect on the organization. The main objective of the research is to examine the challenges of service delivery in councils and its conflict with "Zimbabwe is open for Business" mantra necessitating organisational transformation. To achieve this, the study focused on the following research questions:

Research questions:

1. Which of the factors hinder service delivery in local authorities?
2. To what extent does increasing organisational changes affect service delivery?

Research objectives:

1. To examine the factors that hinder service delivery in local authorities,
2. To establish the extent to which increasing organisational changes affect service delivery

Research Hypotheses

- H01: Organizational structure changes do not have any significant impact on service delivery
 H02: Technological changes do not have any significant impact on service delivery
 H03: Functional changes do not have any significant impact on service delivery
 H04: Behavioural changes do not have any significant impact on service delivery

This study is premised in Bindura, The case study research methodology was employed focusing principally on one municipality, Bindura, located in Mashonaland central province. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse data with the help of SPSS. It followed a deductive research approach which used the questionnaire, which is a quantitative method. The target population was 300 employees of Bindura Municipality, in its sub offices and Headquarter. A sample size of 169 formed the respondents for the study covering senior managers, line managers and operating staff. The study made use of stratified and simple random sampling techniques in selecting respondents. Therefore, employees were stratified according to their levels. Questionnaire with closed ended questions and on a six point Likert scale (Strongly disagree - 1; Disagree - 2; Slightly disagree - 3; Slightly agree - 4; Agree - 5; and Strongly agree - 6) was used to collect data.

Data analysis

Numerous statistical techniques that include Cronbach's alpha, mean, standard deviation, correlation and one way analysis of variance were used to analyse data with the help of SPSS Version 20. The collected data were coded and input into SPSS Version 20 through the excel spread sheet. In line with the formulated hypotheses, empirical testing was done by use of one-way repeated analysis of variance.

4 Results

This paper focuses on establishing whether the existing service delivery issues require organisational changes to ensure there is transformation in line with national development policies. Data analysis was performed at 5% level of significance. The results of demographics of respondents reveal that majority of the respondents were male (69.2%), and female were (30.8%) with work experience between 5 and 20 years. This had some positive contribution to the success of the instrument given the extent of experience and knowledge possessed by the respondents thus the response rate was 76.9%.

Mean, standard deviation, correlation and Cronbach alpha are depicted in Table 1. The constructs of the study depicted in Table 1 below include of organizational structure changes (STR), Technological changes (TEC), Functional changes (FUN), Behavioural changes (BEH) and Service delivery (SED). Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used with a value of ($\alpha = .947 - .989$) for all variables of the study, thus meeting the standard minimum threshold of 0.7 as suggested by Linnander et al (2019).

Table 1: Mean, standard deviation, correlation and Cronbach alpha

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach alpha	STR	TEC	FUN	BEH	SED
STR	130	4.09	1.389	.988	1				
TEC	130	4.84	1.055	.986	.920**	1			
FUN	130	4.21	1.357	.989	.969**	.934**	1		
BEH	130	4.68	1.201	.947	.928**	.957**	.930**	1	
SED	130	4.17	1.307	.984	.978**	.920**	.977**	.923**	1

Table 1 depicts positive and strong correlation between constructs. Specifically, there is a positive and strong correlation between constructs where r ranges between 0.920 to 0.977 and $p < 0.01$. These five constructs measure different organisational changes and service delivery, as such a higher level inter-correlation was likely. The correlations reveal a significant linear relationship between constructs. The mean of the constructs are within the slightly agree range of the six point Likert scale.

One Way Analysis of Variance Test of Hypotheses

Effect of organizational structure changes on Organization Performance

Table 3: ANOVA Hypothesis One

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	210.698	5	42.140	545.489	.000
Within Groups	9.579	124	.077		
Total	220.277	129			

The results in Table 3 show organizational structure changes as significant in enhancing service delivery in Bindura Municipality ($P \leq 0.05$). This reveals that the values of the respondents' opinions were statistically different at F-probability value of 0.000. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H01) is rejected.

Effect of Technological changes on organization Performance

Table 4: ANOVA Hypothesis One

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	188.868	5	37.774	149.130	.000
Within Groups	31.408	124	.253		
Total	220.277	129			

The results in Table 4 show technological changes as significant in enhancing service delivery in Bindura Municipality ($P \leq 0.05$). This reveals that the values of the respondents' opinions were statistically different at F-probability value of 0.000. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H02) is rejected.

Effect of Functional changes on Organization Performance**Table 5: ANOVA Hypothesis One**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	210.994	5	42.199	563.713	.000
Within Groups	9.282	124	.075		
Total	220.277	129			

The results in Table 5 show Functional changes as significant in enhancing service delivery in Bindura Municipality ($P \leq 0.05$). This reveals that the values of the respondents' opinions were statistically different at F-probability value of 0.000. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H03) is rejected.

Effect of Behavioural changes on Organization Performance**Table 6: ANOVA Hypothesis One**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	188.679	5	37.736	148.084	.000
Within Groups	31.598	124	.255		
Total	220.277	129			

The results in Table 3 show behavioural changes as significant in enhancing service delivery in Bindura Municipality ($P \leq 0.05$). This reveals that the values of the respondents' opinions were statistically different at F-probability value of 0.000. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H04) is rejected.

The study looked at the service delivery and its conflict with "Zimbabwe is open for Business" mantra necessitating organisational transformation in the context of local authorities. The results show that local authorities are faced with several challenges that include: Organisational structure challenges (conflicts among departments, changing functional roles, conflicting functional relationships); Technological challenges (poor communications technology, inadequate innovations, inefficient techniques and methods and lack of use of available knowledge); Functional challenges (conflicting roles between councillors and managers, poor relationships among managerial levels, and slow decision-making procedures); and Behavioural challenges (political interferences, general indiscipline among employees, and corruption). Based on the existence of the above challenges, local authorities have available to them behavioural, technical, functional and structural changes. Thus, the results show that there is need for organisational transformation.

For the successful implementation of organisational transformation in local authorities sector, it is recommended that they need to make behavioural changes: changing on conditions of work; roles; and behaviours to improve their financial position and working approaches. This is supported by Jordão et.al, (2014) who in their studies found that change in organisational culture assisted to generate new financial outcomes. To improve adaptability of local authorities are encouraged to undertake: Firstly, functional changes that is changing on (organizational relationships, distribution of functions; functional roles; and functional relationships); secondly structural changes that include (Changing the activities; changing the relationships; changing the roles; changing the decision-making procedures) as a way of providing compatibility of the existing organisational capabilities to the desired state to ensure customer satisfaction and improvement of internal business.

Given that the study was limited to a single case study when there are eighty-eight local authorities in the sector, it is also recommended that a multiple case study be carried out to improve the generalisation of the results and that further studies be undertaken on the specific growth strategies that local authorities can embark on in the current toxic and hostile business environment.

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Dr. Leonard Muzanenhamo – Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal Analysis, Writing-Original Draft Preparation, Writing-Review & Editing and project administration

Dr. Joshua, M Nyashanu –Fieldwork, Investigation andResources

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