Readiness for Adoption of Electronic Records Management at a City Council in Zimbabwe

Sigauke Oscar
sigauke2013@gmail.com
National Archives of Zimbabwe
&
Wutete Obert
National University of Science and Technology, Zimbabwe

Abstract

The paper assesses the readiness for the adoption of electronic records management at one of the seven city councils of Zimbabwe. The assessment was done through the lens of the International Records Management Trust E-records Readiness tool of 2004. The researchers used an interpretive and qualitative case study research design with interviews, document review and observation serving as data collection methods. The data were presented and analysed according to the themes derived from the study"s research objectives. The study concluded that the City Council is not yet ready for the adoption of electronic records management. The level of readiness is still low as evidenced by the lack of an electronic records management policy; tools and procedure manual; lack of an electronic records management system; lack of dedicated budget for electronic records management; lack of qualified personnel for electronic records management and lack of top management commitment to the adoption of electronic records management. Therefore, the study recommends the formulation of an electronic records management policy, tools and procedure manual; allocation of a dedicated budget for electronicrecords management; recruitment of competent records management staff; retraining of existing records management staff and the installation of an electronic document and records management system.

Keys words Readiness, electronic readiness, electronic records, electronic records management, City Council

Introduction

The advent of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) transformed government operations across the world and brought numerous benefits. Benefits presented include the opportunities for improving service delivery, reducing corruption and bureaucracy, enhancing accountability and transparency, increasing revenue collection, empowering citizens and increasing efficiency and effectiveness among others (Nyahunzvi, 2016; Munkuli, 2015). Realising the benefits to be exploited, several countries across the world adopted the use of ICTs in their business operations. In this context, the government of Zimbabwe also adopted the use of ICTs by implementing several e-government initiatives. The e-government initiatives adopted by the government of Zimbabwe are documented by several studies such as Mutsagondo (2017),

Nyahunzvi (2016) and Munkuli (2015) among others. One striking feature of these e-government initiatives in Zimbabwe is the generation of huge quantities of electronic records. The study by Magama (2018) in Masvingo province of Zimbabwe confirmed this striking feature. However, the adoption of the use of ICTs and the subsequent generation of electronic records has occurred without regard to electronic records readiness issues. This has given rise to the need to address electronic records readiness issues in organisation that adopted the use of ICTs.

The International Records Management Trust (IRMT) defines e-records readiness as the capacity or preparedness of organisations to have electronic records management systems that ensure that electronic records are captured and managed in conformity with best recordkeeping practices (IRMT, 2004). The concept of electronic records readiness emerged in response to the limitations of the e-readiness assessments with regards to electronic records management, especially the failure of the tools to measure electronic records readiness during e-readiness assessments (IRMT, 2004; Kalusopa, 2010). This led to the development of electronic records readiness assessment tools that were to be used in assessing electronic records readiness in organisations. The UK NHS Information Governance Toolkit, the National Archives of Canada‟sInformation Management Capacity Check Model (IMCC), the Archives and Records Management Association‟s Risk Profiler for records and information management and the IRMTe-records readiness Tool of 2004 were some of the tools developed to measure electronic recordsreadiness. Of all the above-mentioned tools, it is the IRMT E-records readiness tool that has gained currency in electronic records readiness assessments across the world, particularly in developing countries. Perhaps this stems from the fact that the other tools were designed for specific environments while the IRMT E-records readiness tool was developed for a wider audience.

While there is a dearth of electronic records readiness assessments by governments and organisations in Africa, individual researchers have conducted several studies to assess electronic records readiness in both public and private organisations in the ESARBICA Region. For instance, studies by Nengomasha (2009) in the Public Service of Namibia, a study on e-records readiness in labour organisations in Botswana by Kalusopa (2010) and Tsabedzi (2018) on e- records readiness in an e-government setting in Swaziland (now Eswatini). In Zimbabwe, Nkala (2016) focused on e- records readiness in government ministries. While revealing a general lack of preparedness for the management of electronic records in the studied organizations, thestudies have not paid attention to local authorities, particularly city councils. Therefore, thisstudy focused on local authorities with a special focus on one of the seven City Councils in Zimbabwe. For the study, the studied city council is referred to as the City Council.

Contextual background of the study

The City Council is one of the seven city councils of Zimbabwe. It started as a Municipality in 1893 gaining City Council status in 1971 through an Act of Parliament. The City Council operates with six specialist departments namely Town Clerk‟s Department, Housing and Community Services, City Engineering, Health, Chamber Secretary and Finance Departments. In

terms of leadership, the Mayor is the political head while the administrative head, who is in charge of the day-to-day operations, is the Town Clerk. All departments, serve for the Town Clerk‟s department, are headed by directors who report to the Town Clerk. Currently, the City Council is administered in terms of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Number 20 of 2013, Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15, Urban Councils Act Chapter 29 Amendment 16 and several City By-laws (Besa, 2016). This legal framework imposes several obligations on local authorities such as the City Council under study.

Through the above-mentioned departments, the City Council executes its legal mandate of providing the following services to the City‟s residents:

- Housing services and social amenities
- Potable water
- Infrastructure
- Primary healthcare and education
- Waste and environment management services
- Planning services
- Management and regulation of the transport system, promotion of investments, formulating and enforcing by-laws and promotion of corporate governance (The City Council Clients Charter, 2015).

Preliminary investigations at the City Council revealed that the City Council installed several electronic business systems to enhance its effectiveness in the execution of the above-mentioned functions. The City Council installed the Enterprise Resource Planning System with modules such as financial management, human resources and payroll, health information management, stores management and geographical information management, among others. Other systems include M-DATA, which is an instant messaging system, and e-mail systems. With these systems, most of the records at the City Council were being generated electronically confirming the assertion that more than 90 percent of records in the world are created in the electronic environment (Kulcu, 2009, p.1000). As indicated earlier, the literature surveyed showed that there was no research or study conducted in Zimbabwe to assess the readiness of local authoritiesfor the management of electronic records. Therefore, the study provided scholarly interventionby assessing the readiness of the City Council for the adoption of electronic records management.

Statement of the problem

Governments over the world have appreciated the significance of e-government as a tool to transform public service (Muchanyuka and Fostin, 2017). Consequently, governments and local authorities, including the City Councils in Zimbabwe, have adopted ICTs in the provision of public services leading to the production of large volumes of electronic records. According to IRMT (2004) organisations that seek to implement e-government must conduct an e-records

readiness assessment to gauge their readiness for the management of electronic records to be generated by e-government systems. However, the studied City Council installed electronic business systems without an electronic records readiness assessment to find out whether the City Council is ready for management of the resultant electronic records. Reported cases of loss of electronic records, unintentional deletion of e-mail records leading to inadvertent closure of council information, lack of coordinated disposal of electronic records and failure to capture electronic records into records systems (Survey report, 2015), raised questions as to whether the City Council was prepared for the management and preservation of electronic records generated by its systems. Therefore, there was a need for a study to be conducted to assess the readiness of the City Council since it was supposedly at high risk of losing key business information if it was not ready for the management and preservation of electronic records created by its electronic business systems.

Purpose of the study

The study sought to assess the readiness of the City Council for the adoption of electronic records management to ascertain the extent to which the organisation is e-records ready in terms of its set-up and operations.

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. ascertain the existence of policies and assigned responsibilities, tools and procedures required for the adoption of electronic records management at the City Council.
2. establish the level of training and resources for the adoption of electronic records management at the City Council.
3. establish the availability of ICT infrastructure for the adoption of electronic records management at the City Council.
4. examine the readiness of top management for the adoption of electronic records management at the City Council.

Conceptual framework for the study

The study was conducted from the lens of the IRMT E-records Readiness tool of 2004. The tool was developed by the International Records Management Trust in 2004. According to Kalusopa (2010) the tool provides a benchmark for organisations to assess their readiness and capacity concerning the management of electronic records resulting from e-government initiatives. The tool comprises twelve e-records readiness components, which are divided into two categories. The first category of the IRMT e-records readiness tool is the National E-records readiness with six components, which measures readiness at the national level. The second category, which was particularly of interest to this study, is the Agency E-records readiness category. This second category contains key e-records readiness aspects such as policies and responsibilities for records and information management; tools and procedures for records and information management; E-

records management products and technologies; resources and training for records and information management personnel; internal and public awareness of records and information management; and compliance with records and information management policies and procedures(IRMT, 2004). These agency-specific components were used as the basis for assessing the readiness of the City Council for the adoption of electronic records management. The objectives of the study were crafted from these components

Research methodology

The study used an interpretive and qualitative research methodology. Consequently, a case study research design, which was interpretive and qualitative, was adopted for the study. The study used face-to-face interviews, observation and document review as data collection methods. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with the guidance of semi-structured interview schedules. The researchers purposively identified three employees from each department of the six departments of the studied City Council to constitute the target population of the study. Therefore, to set the boundaries for the study, the researchers purposively identified eighteen employees of the City Council as the target population for the study. These employees were targeted because of their knowledge of the research questions that the researchers sought to answer through this study. The 18 employees were adopted as the sample from the City Council‟s employees, who were purposively selected to participate in the study. Of the eighteen employees selected to participate in the study, seventeen participated in the study. The collected data were presented and analysed according to the research objectives.

Findings and discussion

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study. The findings are presented and discussed following themes drawn from the research objectives.

Policies and Responsibilities, tools and procedures for electronic records management at the City Council

This part of the article presents and discusses findings on policies and responsibilities, tools and procedures for the adoption of electronic records management at the City Council.

Policies and responsibilities for electronic records management

Policies play an invaluable role in engendering a culture of records management within organisations. According to ISO 15489 (2016), organisations must develop, document and implement records management policies to ensure the creation, capture and management of authentic, reliable and usable records that possess the integrity required to enable business activity for as long as they are required. The commitment of governments, and indeed government agencies, to the management of electronic records can be measured by the availability of records management policies and procedures (Abdulkareen, Isah, Mnjama and Sebina, 2020). The study, therefore, sought to find out whether the City Council has developed,

documented and implemented a policy for electronic records management. The study established that the City Council is operating without a documented or written electronic records management policy to guide the management of records that are being generated electronically. Most of the respondents revealed that it was taking the individual effort to manage electronic records in the absence of guidelines in form of an electronic records management policy. The absence of the electronic records management policy at the City Council points to a lack of policy framework required for the adoption of electronic records management. Perhaps this explains the lack of a coordinated approach in the adoption of electronic records management at the City Council.

These findings confirm previous studies elsewhere in the public sector of Zimbabwe, which also reported a lack of policies for electronic records management. For instance, Nkala (2016) in a study on e-records readiness in government ministries of Zimbabwe similarly revealed that government ministries lacked written electronic records management policies to guide the management of e-records in those ministries. The findings of the current study together with those of Nkala concur with Mutsagondo (2017), who found that all sixteen government departments he studied in Midlands Province were operating without an electronic records policyand that staff members were relying on a „hit-or-miss approach" in the management of electronic records. Studies conducted in the ESARBICA Region agree that most organisations are operating without electronic records management policies. This is frequently cited as the key impediment to the proper management of e-records (Nengomasha, 2009; Kalusopa, 2010; Moatlhodi, 2016).

According to ISO 15489 (2016:9), responsibilities for records management should be designated to all personnel in an organisation. Such responsibilities must reflect job descriptions and similar statements. It was, therefore, important for the researchers to find out whether the responsibilities for electronic records management have been formally assigned to staff members at the City Council. The study found that, although there is no policy to assign formal records management responsibilities, all records officers have been formally assigned records management responsibilities and these are appearing on their job descriptions. This is consistent with earlier studies which established that there are clear records management responsibilities given toofficers with records management duties (Moatlhodi, 2016; Nkala, 2016). However, these responsibilities are confined to paper records; the assigned responsibilities are not extended tothe management of electronic records. What was particularly concerning was the fact that the records users were not assigned any records management responsibilities even though some of the records management duties have shifted to records users as the City Council increasingly move towards electronic business systems. This practice goes against international records management standards such as ISO 15489 of 2016, which stipulates that all employees within an organisation must be formally assigned records management responsibilities. It is, therefore, difficult to adopt electronic records management at the City Council since it is not clear as towho will take which responsibilities in the absence of properly assigned records management responsibilities.

Tools and Procedures for the adoption of electronic records management

According to IRMT (2004:9) records and information management policies must be supported by tools and procedures for effective policy implementation. Organisations seeking to adopt electronic records management must therefore put in place tools and procedures for electronic records management. These tools include standard forms and templates, records classification schemes, records metadata schemes, records retention and disposition schedules, security and access classification schemes, search and retrieval indexes and taxonomies, central repositories for digital records, systems backup and recovery procedures. Concerning the availability of thesetools, the study established that the City Council has not developed and implemented key records management tools such as records classification schemes, records retention and disposition schemes, records metadata schemes, access and security classification schemes and central repositories for electronic records. The respondents revealed that search and retrieval indexes and systems backup procedures are in existence but, as one respondent indicated, „they were inadequate in ensuring effective adoption of electronic records management". The paper, therefore, posits that the City Council is not ready for the adoption of electronic records management since it has not developed the tools required for electronic records management.

The absence of key tools for electronic records management is widespread in developing countries, which include countries in the ESARBICA region. Previous studies in the ESARBICAregion confirm this assertion. Asogwa (2012), in a study on the readiness of Nigerian Universities, also reported the lack of tools such as „basic and uniform records classification schemes and retention and disposition schedules for electronic records they created, rather, each department has its internal method for managing all the record and information they created". Similarly, studies by Nengomasha (2010) in the public sector of Namibia and Kalusopa (2012) inlabour organizations in Botswana have shown that most records management tools in studied organisations were not developed elaborately for the management of e-records. Consequently,the tools were inadequate for the management of electronic records. Put into this context, the findings at the City Council as reported in the current study, illustrate a general lack of preparedness for the adoption of electronic records management by organizations in developing countries.

IRMT (2004:9) highlights that „records management tools need to be accompanied by procedure manuals describing when and how staff should fulfil their responsibilities for creating, capturing, classifying, capturing, storing, retrieving, tracking, disposing and preserving records". Regarding the availability of a procedure manual for electronic records management at the City Council, the study established, through interviews and document review, that the existing recordsmanagement procedure manual has not been designed specifically for electronic records management. As revealed by one respondent, „the manual was developed for use when all the City Council"s records were in paper form and it has not been updated to cover electronic records". The manual cannot, therefore, be useful in guiding staff on how to perform electronic records management tasks. This explains why staff members use their discretion when

performing electronic records management tasks. These findings reveal a similar pattern whereby the existing procedure manuals in developing countries have not been updated to cover electronic records. Therefore, the study corroborates previous studies by Moatlhodi (2016) and Nkala (2016), which similarly revealed that the available procedure manuals in studied organizations only catered for physical records and that they were not set against any electronic records management standard. Since the execution of electronic records management tasks depends on procedure manuals, the adoption of electronic records management in the absence of a written procedure manual would be catastrophic to the City Council‟s business information.

Resources and training for the adoption of electronic records management at the City Council

The success of an electronic records management programme hinges on the availability of financial resources and trained personnel to implement such a programme. IRMT (2004, p11) states that any agency that seeks to establish an electronic records management programme must have qualified records management staff supported by regular and adequate financial support. The current study, therefore, sought to find out the resources and training levels for the adoption of electronic records management at the City Council.

Resources for the adoption of electronic records management at the City Council

The adoption and establishment of an effective electronic records management programmerequire regular and adequate financial resources (IRMT (2004:11). Financial resources are critically important in the adoption of electronic records management because they cater for the procurement of software for electronic records management, initial set up costs, training of users, procurement of computers, scanners, servers, storage media, cables and upgrading systems(Mutsagondo, 2017; Sejane, 2004; Mukred et al, 2016). This instigated the researchers to ascertain the availability of financial resources for the adoption of electronic records management at the City Council. Through interviews and document review, the researchers established that the City Council has no budget specifically allocated for records management. Records management is allocated funding through the administration unit. As a result, records management is made to compete for financial resources with other items in the administration unit. Most of the respondents concurred with one respondent who indicated that,*„ ...with competing priorities in the administration unit, records management does not receive the allocated financial resources when it comes to the actual disbursement of funds..*‟. Therefore, therecords management programme at the City Council lacks the funding required for procurement of ICT infrastructure, recruitment of qualified personnel, training of staff members and initial set-up costs, which are prerequisites in the adoption of electronic records management. Given the above, the existing records management units are, therefore, incapacitated to adopt proper electronic records management at the City Council.

The lack of dedicated funding for records management and electronic records management in particular, as reported in the current, is prevalent in many organizations in developing countries.

Prior studies have also reported a lack of funding as one of the major barriers to the establishment of an effective electronic records management programme (Mutsagondo, 2017; Chikomba, 2018). For instance, Chikomba (2018), in a study on management of digital records in financial parastatals in Zimbabwe, revealed that all studied parastatals did not have separate budgets for electronic records management rather the funds were allocated through the ITdepartment. He went further to point out that lack of funding was the major cause of the lack of improvements in the management of electronic records in financial parastatals in Zimbabwe. An earlier study by Mutsagondo (2017) also revealed that the absence of a separate budget for records management in sixteen government ministries studied in Midlands province was adversely affecting the management of electronic records in government ministries. Studies inthe ESARBICA region have also reported this challenge. Tsabedzi and Kalusopa (2018:59) established that there are inadequate resources to manage electronic records effectively withinthe ministries as evidenced by the inadequate budget allocated specifically for the records management unit. From this perspective, the paper perceives the lack of funding for electronic records management as the major impediment to the adoption of electronic records management at the City Council.

Training for electronic records management at the City Council

Effective management of electronic records requires proper training and experience (Kamatula, 2019, p.108). Organisations may establish records and information management policies, tools and procedures but they will be ineffective unless they are supported by qualified records management staff (IRMT, 2004). However, the study established that the records management staff at Mutare City Council does not have formal training in records management. This was confirmed by a senior officer at the City Council, who revealed that,„…*unfortunately that is a serious gap that we have … we do not have qualified persons to man our records management units…*". The records management staff at the City Council lack the basic knowledge required forrecords management. All the respondents were, therefore, not qualified for records management work, particularly electronic records management work. This is in sharp contrast to what is obtained elsewhere in the public sector of Zimbabwe, where studies have established that,although the programmes of the study did not cover electronic records management, most public sector records personnel had received basic training in records management with most of them holding certificates, diplomas, and degrees in records management (Mutsagondo, 2017; Nkala, 2016).

The study also established that the respondents, including all records management staff at the City Council, have not worked in any environment with proper electronic records management. Therefore, they lack the experience and practical skills required for effective capture, classification, indexing, storage, retrieval, tracking, appraisal, disposal, and preservation of records in electronic environments. This has been exacerbated by a lack of regular training on electronic records management for staff members at the City Council. These findings imply that the City Council has not developed, among its staff, the competencies required for the effective adoption of electronic records management. This is not peculiar to the City Council. Earlier

research has also reported a lack of training and a dearth of practical skills for electronic records management. For instance, Nkala (2016) and Mutsagondo (2017) showed that although most registry personnel in ministries have diplomas and degrees in records management, none had the training, knowledge and skills required to perform electronic records management tasks. Similarly, Mosweu (2019) in Botswana and Abdulkareem, Mnjama and Sebina (2022) at the Ministry of Finance in Nigeria demonstrated that records officers were not prepared for the management of electronic records since they lacked the critical skills required for electronic records management work. Put into this perspective, the lack of practical skills required for the adoption of electronic records management among staff at the City Council reflects a general trend in developing countries.

ICT infrastructure for the adoption of electronic records management at the City Council

According to Alkhofani et al (2019, p.6), ICT infrastructure furnishes the basis upon which electronic records management can be built. As such, the success of the adoption of an electronic records management programme depends on the availability of ICT infrastructure for electronic records management. The study, therefore, sought to ascertain the existence of ICT hardware, electronic records management system and ICT units with qualified personnel. The study established, through interviews and observation, that the City Council has installed basic ICT infrastructures such as computers, servers‟ scanners, printers, internet connectivity as well as storage media such as USB, CD, DVD and external hard drives. According to Tsabedzi and Kalusopa (2018, p58) organisations that have put in place such ICT infrastructure have an advantage in the implementation of electronic records management since such ICT infrastructure can be utilised as a start. Given the above and even though the ICT infrastructure at the City Council was not purchased to specifically enable the adoption of electronic records management, the infrastructure can be used as a start in the establishment of an electronic records management programme at the City Council.

The electronic records management systems form part of the key ICT infrastructure required for the proper adoption of electronic records management. The systems provide organisations with capabilities to capture, classify, store, retrieve, and track e-records regardless of format (IRMT, 2004). The IRMT (2004:10) indicated that some of the systems developed include Records Management Application Software, Electronic Document and Records Management System, Electronic Document Management System; Electronic Records Management System and Enterprise Content Management System. Researchers were, therefore, interested in ascertaining the availability of electronic records management systems for the management of electronic records generated by the City Council.

All respondents (17) indicated that there was no electronic records management system installed to enable the enterprise-wide capability to manage e-records. Consequently, most of the respondents admitted that, as captured by one respondent, „ the City Council‟s business system, the enterprise resource planning system, was not integrated with any electronic records management system to ensure proper management of electronic records being generated in the

system". This implies that, in terms of electronic records systems, the City Council is not ready for the adoption of electronic records management. The lack of electronic systems for records management is rampant in organizations in developing countries. Several studies in developing countries have also reported this phenomenon (Asogwa, 2012; Nengomasha, 2009; Nkala, 2016; Kalusopa, 2010; Mutsagondo, 2017). However, some countries, such as South Africa, have already implemented electronic document and records management systems (EDRMS). For instance, a study by Ndebele (2021) at KwaZulu-Natal Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs revealed that an EDRMS has been implemented and that it was having a positive impact on the management of electronic records at the department. These departments can provideuseful case studies to the City Council, which is still to implement an EDRMS.

Johare et al (2013) posit that a strong involvement of ICT personnel in electronic records management would provide an excellent foundation for developing a credible electronic records management in an agency. Information and communication technology personnel is critical in the customising or designing, implementing and maintaining electronic records management systems that conform to requirements for the creation, capture, maintenance and preservation of electronic records (Johare et al, 2013) It is in this context that the researchers sought to ascertain the existence of ICT units and qualified ICT personnel to assist in the adoption of electronic records management at the City Council. The study established, through observation and interviews, that the City Council has a dedicated ICT unit with qualified ICT officers. The unit is headed by an ICT Manager with a Master of Science degree in Information Systems. The researchers also established that most of the ICT officers in the unit have qualifications in Information Technology. Although the ICT unit and its personnel have not collaborated with records management units on records management at the City Council, its existence guarantees the records management units of technical support required in the adoption of proper electronic records management. Furthermore, the National Archives of Zimbabwe has „stream-lined the roles of records management and ICT professionals both at national and agency levels to avoid confusion due to overlapping roles" (Magama and Nduna, 2020, p151). This would guide records management and ICT officers as they assist in the adoption of electronic records management at the City Council

Readiness of top management for electronic records management

Top management support is one of the essential critical success factors for the adoption of electronic records management. It influences the availability of resources, funding, staff, and ensures system take-up across an institution (Nengomasha and Chikomba, 2018). For top management to be ready for the adoption of electronic records management, it must be, first, aware of the importance of well-managed and trustworthy electronic records. To determine the readiness of top management for the adoption of electronic records management, the study examined the awareness of top management on the importance of well-managed records as well as its commitment to electronic records management issues. The study established that top managers at the City Council were aware of the importance of well-managed and trustworthy

electronic records in organizational efficiency and effectiveness. The level of awareness by top management was rated highly by most respondents. This was confirmed by one of the top managers who revealed that„*it is more efficient to retrieve a record electronically than manually…only at a click of a button you get access to all required information and be able to perform your duties faster thereby quickening the decision-making process within the Council …"*. However, this high level of awareness is meaningless unless it is backed by the commitment of resources to the electronic records management programme. Therefore, the researchers were interested in establishing whether top management at the City Council has committed resources for the adoption of electronic records management.

Regardless of the top management‟s high level of awareness of the importance of well-managed electronic records, the researchers established that there was a lack of commitment to theadoption of electronic records management by top management at the City Council. Most of the respondents, including some top managers, admitted that top management has not been seriously committed to the adoption of proper electronic records management. The lack of top management support for the establishment of an effective electronic records management programme at the City Council was evidenced by a lack of dedicated budget and policies for electronic records management, unqualified and unskilled records staff and lack of an electronic document and records management system, which are prerequisites for the adoption of electronic records management. These findings reveal a lack of readiness for the adoption of electronic records management by top managers at the City Council. The lack of top management support has also been cited by previous studies as one of the key impediments to the adoption of electronic records management (Mutsagondo, 2017; Chikomba, 2018). For example, Chikomba (2018) in a study on financial parastatals in Zimbabwe posited that the lack of major changes concerning electronic records management since the adoption of e-government was a testament to the lack of top management support. Given the current study‟s findings read together with the above scholars‟ findings, the paper argues that it is pointless to attempt the adoption of an electronic records management programme without top management support.

Conclusion of the study

The study sought to assess the readiness for the adoption of electronic records management at one of the seven city councils of Zimbabwe to ascertain the extent to which the organisation is e-records ready. The study concludes that the readiness of the City Council for the adoption of electronic records management is very low. The City Council is not yet ready for the management of electronic records generated by its business systems. The researchers reached this conclusion after establishing that the City Council lacked the policy, tools and procedures for electronic records management; assigned records management responsibilities for all employees; an electronic document and records management system; a budget dedicated to electronic records management and trained and skilled personnel for electronic records management. The researchers also established that there was a lack of commitment to theadoption of electronic records management by top managers at the City Council. The top

management has not committed resources for the establishment of an effective electronic records management programme.

Recommendations

The study makes the following recommendations

- The City Council must formulate an electronic records management policy to ensure the effective adoption of electronic records management at the City Council. The policy must cover key electronic records management processes such as creation, capture, registration, classification, access and use, storage, retrieval, tracking, preservation and disposal of e-records.
- The City Council should assign formal electronic records management responsibilities to all its employees. To comply with ISO 15489-1, the assigned responsibilities must appear in both the electronic records management policy and the staff members‟ job descriptions.
- There is a need for the City Council to craft and implement electronic records management tools such as records retention and disposition schedule, records classification scheme, records metadata scheme, access and security classification scheme among others.
- The existing procedure manual must be updated to cover electronic records. The updated procedure manual will provide staff members with guidance on how to perform electronic records management tasks such as records creation, capture, classification, storage, retrieval, tracking, disposal and preservation.
- The City Council must install an Electronic Document and Records Management System to provide itself with an enterprise-wide capability to capture, classify, store, control access, retrieve, track, preserve and dispose of electronic records generated by its electronic systems. The system will serve as the central repository for all electronic records generated at the City Council. The installation of the system will also allow effective adoption of electronic records management at the City Council thereby ensuring the authenticity, reliability, accessibility and integrity of the City Council‟s electronic records.
- All future business systems development or procurement must ensure electronic records management functionalities are integrated into the system to ensure proper management and preservation of electronic records generated by such systems
- The establishment of an electronic records management programme is hinged on the availability of financial resources for the purchase of an electronic records management system, ICT hardware, initial set up costs, training of personnel and recruitment oftrained records management personnel. The City Council must, therefore, allocate adedicated budget for the adoption of electronic records management, which will cater to these issues.

- The City Council must recruit qualified, skilled and experienced records officers to spearhead the adoption of proper electronic records management at the City Council. The existing records management staff must be retrained so that they acquire the knowledge and skills required in the establishment of an electronic records management programme.
- Top management at the City Council must show commitment to the adoption of electronic records management by availing all the resources required for the successful adoption of electronic records management. Top management must appoint one of its members as the champion for the adoption of electronic records management. The member will help in spearheading the adoption of electronic records management at the City Council

Notes on contributors

Oscar Sigauke is an Archivist at the National Archives of Zimbabwe with more than eight years of experience in the field of records and archives management. He is currently the head of Mutare Records Centre, a provincial office of the National Archives of Zimbabwe in the Manicaland province of Zimbabwe. He holds a Master of Science Degree in Records and Archives Management from the National University of Science and Technology, Zimbabwe. His research interests include, but are not limited to, e-records readiness, digital records managementand digital records preservation.

Obert Wutete is a Ph.D. holder from the University of Fort Hare in South Africa. He is a lecturer and chairperson of the Department of Records and Archives Management at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST, Zimbabwe). He has research interests in information science-related areas such as management of electronic records, virtual archives systems as well as indigenous knowledge systems. A member of professional organisations such as the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives, Oral History Association of South Africa and South African Society of Archivists.

References

Abdulkareem, M.Y., Mnjama, N.M. and Sebina, P.M.I.M. (2022). Training and resources of e-records readiness at the Federal Ministry of finance in Nigeria. *Records Management Journal*, 32(1), 43-61. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1108/RMJ-06-2019-0028

Abdulkareen, M.Y., Isah, A., Mnjama, N.M., and Sebina, P.M. (2020). Compliance of e-Records Readiness, a Trajectory of the Federal Ministry of Finance in Nigeria. *OKADA Journal of Sociology,* 2(1), 176-188

Alkhofani, W., Yusof, Z.M., Mohamed, H., and Mukred, M. (2019). The significant factors for the implementation of digital records management initiatives in Yemen: A Conceptual Framework. *International Journal of Technical Innovation in Modern Engineering and Science*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication

Asogwa, B.E. (2012). The readiness of universities in managing electronic records: A study of three federal universities in Nigeria. *Electronic Library 3(6),* 792-807.

Besa, G.T. (2016). Challenges and prospects of residents associations in holding urban local authorities to account: The Case of Mutare City, Zimbabwe. BA Dissertation. Gweru: Midlands State University.

Chikomba, A. (2018). Management of digital records in selected financial services parastatals in Zimbabwe. Masters Thesis. Pretoria, South Africa: University of South Africa.

IRMT. (2004). The E-records readiness Tool. London: International Records Management Trust International Standards Organization.2016. International Standard Organisation 15489-1: Information and Documentation-records management. Part 1: Concepts and Principles. Geneva: International Standards Organization.

Johare, R., Masrek, M.N., and Sa‟ari, H. (2013). Information Technology Leadership on Electronic Records Management: The Malaysian Experience. Retrieved from http://www.interpares.org/display_file.cfm?doc=ip3_malaysia_dissemination_cpr_johare_et-al_ecmlg_2013.pdf

Kalusopa, T. (2010). Developing an e-records readiness framework for labour organizations in Botswana. PhD thesis. Pretoria, South Africa: University of South Africa.

Kalusopa, T. & Ngulube, P. (2012). Developing an e-records readiness framework for labour organizations in Botswana. *Information Development 28(3)*, 199-215.

Kamatula, G. (2019). An assessment of e-records readiness as a pre-requisite for e-governance in Tanzania: a case of selected public offices. *University of Dar es Salaam Library Journal*, 14(1), 98-115

Kulcu, O. (2009). Evolution of the e-records management practices in electronic government. *Electronic Library 27(6),* 999-1009.

Magama, B & Nduna, V. (2020). Journey to EDRMS solution in Zimbabwe public sector. In S.M, Keakopa and T. L, Mosweu (Ed.). *Cases on electronic records management in the ESARBICA region* (142-159) Retrieved from http://doi: 10.4018/978-1-7998-2527-2.ch007

Magama, B. (2018). Strategies for preservation of digital records in Masvingo Province of Zimbabwe. *ESARBICA Journal 37*, 17-38.

Moatlhodi, T.M. (2015). An assessment of e-records readiness at Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs Headquarters in Botswana. Masters thesis. Gaborone, Botswana: University of Botswana.

Mosweu, O. (2019). Knowledge and skills requirements for a records manager in Botswana in the networked environment. *Journal of South African Society of Archivists 52*, 110-132.

Muchanyuka, M.R and Fostin, R. (2017). M-governance as a remedy to service delivery in Zimbabwean local governments: The M-DATA project of the City of Mutare. *International Journal of Law, Humanities and Social Science 1(3)*, 53-67.

Munkuli, T. (2015). An evaluation of e-government implementation: The Case of Harare City Council. Master Thesis. Stellenbosch, South Africa: Stellenbosch University.

Mutsagondo, S. (2017). Electronic records management in public departments in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe. Masters Thesis. Pretoria, South Africa: University of SouthAfrica.

Ndebele, I. (2021). Management‟s support and implementation of electronic document and records management systems in government departments. Master Thesis. Durban, South Africa: Durban University of Technology

Nengomasha, C.T and Chikomba, A. (2018). Status of EDRMS implementation in the public sector in Namibia and Zimbabwe. *Records Management Journal 28(3)*, 252-264

Nengomasha, C.T. (2009). A study of electronic records management in the Namibian public service in the context of e-government. PhD Thesis. Windhoek, Namibia: University of Namibia.

Nkala, G. (2016). E-records readiness in Zimbabwe‟s public sector. Mphil thesis. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe: National University of Science and Technology.

Nyahunzvi, V.T. (2016). Evaluating the utilisation of ICTs as a service delivery tool in Urban Councils: A case study of Harare City Council. Bsc Dissertation. Gweru, Zimbabwe: Midlands State University.

Tsabedze, V. & Kalusopa, T. (2018). E-records readiness in context of e-government strategies in Swaziland. *ESARBICA Journal 37*, 37-68.

Mutare Records Centre. (2015). Survey report. Mutare: National Archives of Zimbabwe.

Sejane, L. 2004. An investigation into the management of electronic records in the public sector in Lesotho. Masters‟ Thesis. Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal.