Chapter 2
IT Governance Maturity Patterns in Portuguese Healthcare

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ABSTRACT

The pervasive use of technology in organizations to address the increased services complexity has created a critical dependency on Information Technology (IT) that calls to a specific focus on IT Governance (ITG). However, determining the right ITG mechanisms remains a complex endeavor. This paper uses Design Science Research and proposes an exploratory research by analyzing ITG case studies to elicit possible ITG mechanisms patterns. Six interviews were performed in Portuguese healthcare services organizations to assess the ITG practices. Our goal is to build some theories (ITG mechanisms patterns), which we believe will guide healthcare services organizations about the advisable ITG mechanisms given their specific context. We also intend to elicit conclusions regarding the most relevant ITG mechanisms for Portuguese healthcare services organizations. Additionally, a comparison is made with the financial industry to identify improvement opportunities. We finish our work with limitations, contribution and future work.

INTRODUCTION

Information Technology (IT) has become crucial to the support, sustainability and growth of most businesses (Law & Ngai, 2005; Quershil, 2009; De Haes et al, 2015). IT not only has the potential to support existing business strategies, but also to shape new strategies (Guldentops, 2003; Henderson & Venkatraman, 1993). In this mindset, IT is considered a core element in most business models (Bartens et al, 2015) and becomes a relevant success factor for survival, prosperity and an opportunity to differentiate in order to achieve competitive advantage (Grembergen & De Haes, 2009).

Additionally, the pervasive use of technology has created a critical dependency on IT that calls for a specific focus on IT Governance (ITG) (De Haes & Grembergen, 2008; Grembergen et al, 2003). Prior research has demonstrated an important relationship between ITG and business-IT alignment (De Haes et al, 2010).

ITG defines the necessary mechanisms as a means of rationalizing, directing and coordinating an organization's IT-related decision making to ensure the present and future business/IT alignment objectives (Park et al., 2006; Gerrard, 2009; Weill & Ross, 2004).

These ITG mechanisms are expected to support IT-related decisions, actions and assets that are more tightly aligned with an organization's strategic and tactical intentions. However, good ITG is no longer a "nice to have", but a "must have" (Pereira & Mira da Silva, 2012). Proper ITG can contribute to higher returns on assets at a time when businesses are increasing their technology investment (Webb et al, 2006). Gartner states that ITG was recognized as a CIO top-10 issue for more than five years and has risen in priority between 2007 and 2009 (Gerrard, 2009).

A mixture of structures, processes and relational mechanisms exists (Grembergen et al, 2003). It is known that enterprises which have addressed properly ITG have actively implemented a set of ITG mechanisms that encourage behaviors consistent with the organization's mission, strategy, values, norms, and culture (Weill, 2004).

When designing ITG, it is important to recognize that it is contingent upon a variety of sometimes conflicting internal and external factors. Determining the right mechanisms for each organization is therefore a complex endeavor (Grembergen et al, 2003). It requires commitment from both the enterprise leadership and professionals as ITG implies continuous scrutiny.

Recent studies have identified some ITG problems as the inconsistencies and incongruities about the ITG mechanisms (Almeida et al, 2013) or the lack of consensus about ITG definition (Pereira & Mira da Silva, 2012). However, little research can be found on how organizations can effectively implement ITG (De Haes & Grembergen, 2008a; Lapão et al, 2009).

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