ASSESSING THE PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC SECTOR INSTITUTIONS IN ZIMBABWE: A CASE STUDY APPROACH

by

SIPHO AROTE MANDABA NSINGO

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STUDY LEADER: PROFESSOR JERRY O. KUYE

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To my loving mother and late father whose departure from this world in 1997 reduced the very meaning of life in me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ACRONYMS

ADC   Association of District Councils

ADF   African Development Fund

APA   African Purchase Area

ARDC   Association of Rural District Councils

AULA   African Union of Local Authorities

BRDC   Beitbridge Rural District Council

BSAC	British South Africa Company
BSAP	British South Africa Police
CBMC	Community Based Management Component
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CHOG	Commonwealth Heads of Government
DA	District Administrator
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DC	District Council
DDC/O	District Development Committee
DDF	District Development Fund
DLG	Democratic Local Government
ELCZ	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
FRD	Forum for Rural Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOZ	Government of Zimbabwe
GPH	Gwanda Provincial Hospital
ICAC	Intensive Conservation Area Committee
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRWSSP	Integrated Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme
IULA	International Union of Local Authorities
LAA	Land Apportionment Act

LHC	Lancaster House Constitution
LSCF	Large Scale Commercial Farm
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MDSD	Most Dissimilar Systems Design
MEWRD	Ministry of Energy, Water and Rural Development
MILGRUD	Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development
MOHCW	Ministry of Health and Child Welfare
MOEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MOLGANH	Ministry of Local Government and National Housing
MOPCHN	Ministry of Public Construction and National Housing
MORTS	Ministry of Roads and Transport Services
MSSD	Most Similar Systems Design
NC	Native Council
NGO	Non – Governmental Organisation
NHF	National Housing Fund
NPC	National Planning Commission
NPM	New Public Management
NPS	New Public Service
OGIL	Open General Import License
PA	Provincial Administrator
PDC/O	Provincial Development Committee

PF – ZAPU	Patriotic Front - Zimbabwe African People's Union
PSIP	Public Sector Investment Programme
RA	Resettlement Area
RC	Rural Council
RDC	Rural District Council
RDCCBCC	Rural District Council Capacity Building Coordinating Committee
RHC	Rural Health Centre
RLG	Rural Local Government
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SCCF	Small Scale Commercial Farm
SCN	State Certified Nurse
SDF	Social Development Fund
SEO	Senior Executive Officer
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SRN	State Registered Nurse
SSI – UK	Social Services Inspectorate – United Kingdom
TTL	Tribal Trust Land
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VIDCO	Village Development Committee
WADCO	Ward Development Committee
WB	World Bank

WPHM	Working Party of Heads of Ministries
ZANU – PF	Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZIMCORD	Zimbabwe Coordinating Conference for Development
ZIPAM	Zimbabwe Institute for Public Administration and Management
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army
ZRP	Zimbabwe Republic Police

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Amalgamation: It entails bringing together two systems to make them one. In Zimbabwe, it is used to describe the process of integrating Rural Councils (RCs) and District Councils (DCs) into one rural local government system (Roe, 1992:12). The process has led to the formation of 57 Rural District Councils, which now stand as rural local government units in the country. Prior to this, rural local government was separated on racial lines. DCs were established for blacks and RCs were instituted for white communities. The amalgamation policy marked a positive step, particularly towards undoing the effects of colonialism and developing and strengthening the rural local government (RLG) system in Zimbabwe. Thus, amalgamation should not be viewed as a basic decentralisation initiative, but as a concept for transforming the RLG system. Among other socio-economic imperatives, it sought to unite rural blacks and their white counterparts in commercial areas, thereby bridging the racial gap and ushering in a new era of racial harmony and social coherence in rural Zimbabwe.

Commercial Areas: These are areas set aside for commercial farmers. Before independence they belonged to white commercial farmers and were known as Large Scale Commercial Farming Areas (LSCFAs). The Land Apportionment Act of 1930 led to the demarcation of land in Zimbabwe. It led to the creation of racial apartheid in land distribution and ownership. All fertile land was reserved for white farmers as commercial land areas (Moyo in Mandaza, 1987:188-192). On the other hand, land that was known for its poor ecological conditions was reserved for blacks as Tribal Trust Land or Native/Africa Reserves.

Communal Areas: These are areas inhabited by mostly black peasant farmers. Before independence they were known as Tribal Trust Lands (TTLs) or simply Native or African Reserves. Blacks were pushed into these areas after the promulgation of the Land Apportionment Act in 1930. The areas have become overpopulated and are incapable of sustaining small-scale farmers and their families (Moyo in Mandaza, 1987:187-188). Communal areas are the focus of most rural development efforts from central government, local government and donor communities.

Community participation: It entails the involvement of the public in a wide range of issues of a local government nature. It includes taking part in electing councilors, making decisions on policy matters, programme and project conception and application, determining the modalities of resource sharing and the whole process of local governance. In addition, Paul (1988:2) notes that community participation is an active process by which beneficiaries/client groups influence the direction and execution of a development or local programme with a view to enhancing their well-being in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance or other values they cherish.

Decentralisation: There are many definitions of this concept. However, the definition by Rondinelli and Cheema (1983:18) seem to be applicable. They see decentralisation as the transfer of responsibility for planning, management and resource raising and allocation from the central government and its agencies to field units of central government ministries and agencies; subordinate units or levels of government; semi-autonomous public authorities or corporations; area-wide, regional or functional authorities; or non-governmental, private or voluntary organizations. Concentration in this study is on decentralisation as transferring these powers to local levels of government, known as local authorities or local government units. It is the manner in which a state adopts this concept that determines the type of local government system in that country.

Local governance: This is a process where a local public authority organizes communities to govern themselves so as to achieve their fundamental purpose: the good life of all. Any local governance system should have a democratically elected council, appointed staff, and communities whose quality of life needs to be improved. The purpose of local governance is to promote the welfare of communities within any local authority area (Fox and Meyer, 1995:55).

Local government: Local government occurs when a nation state is subdivided into smaller geographical units, capable of exercising political and administrative autonomy as provided by the Constitution or enabling legislation. It is a lower level or tier of government, closest to the people (Reddy, 2000:8). The units created through this process should be given the authority to manage their own affairs without the interference of central government. Local government plays an important role in community development. It enhances, if well established, local

participation, responsiveness and administrative efficiency and effectiveness. Thus, a well functioning local government system is that which has the autonomy to determine a combination of services for communities, how these services should be provided and with what resources. In its conduct of duty, local government is expected to maintain a sound tripartite relationship among councilors and staff, central government, and individuals/communities and other interest groups. Such a relationship should be that of equal partners, rather than that of dominance of one group over others.

Performance measurement: This is the process that organizations use to ascertain the level at which they are carrying out their tasks in order to meet set objectives. It is also an attempt to find out if the organisation is able to meet certain set standards (DeJesus, 2001:3). Consequently, performance measurement does not only focus on objective attainment (effectiveness), but on the whole conduct of duty of a given institution, particularly its efficiency, responsiveness, adequacy, appropriateness and equity considerations.

Rationality: The ability to use one's powers of reason in determining courses of action for an organisation and, in involving all stakeholders in decision making, providing services or products to customers, and managing with excellence (Fox and Meyer, 1995:110). According to Bozeman (1979:63), rationality is embedded in the philosophy of rationalism, which is an embodiment of a faith in humans and their capacity to solve problems reasonably, by using scientific analysis, logic and systematic enquiry. Thus, underlining the premise of rationalism is that world phenomena, though complex, can be solved by employing well calculated, reasonable, objective and logical arguments to unravel these complex phenomena and provide answers that can lead to societal change and development.

Resettlement Areas: These are made up of commercial farms that were purchased by the Government of Zimbabwe from commercial farmers through a willing buyer willing seller arrangement. The GOZ acquired these farms in order to resettle landless Zimbabweans, particularly peasant farmers and unemployed blacks (Moyo in Mandaza, 1987:192).

The Rational Actor Model: This is adopted from Graham Allison (1971:28). This is a rigorous model of goal directed action, emanating from well-constructed and well thought out decisions that follow proper human reasoning. This model indicates that rational choice consists of value maximizing actions that follow a systematic procedure of laying down goals and objectives, exploring alternatives for attaining the set goals, weighing the consequences of each action/alternative and making a maximizing choice (Dunn, 1994:274-275). The model is derived from liberal economics with its fundamental notion of humans as maximisers with unlimited wants. However, these human actions are limited by the scarcity of resources, hence the need to make intelligent choices in order to obtain the best satisfaction from these limits.

Transitional Constitution: This is the first Constitution of independent Zimbabwe. It is also known as the Lancaster House Constitution. It was drafted in Lancaster in 1979, just before Zimbabwe's independence in 1980. It was a compromise Constitution intended to facilitate the transfer of political power from the minority whites to the black majority. There were clauses within it that protected whites from arbitrary abuse by blacks, especially where land and property ownership were concerned (Herbst, 1990:47).

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the performance of rural local government institutions in Zimbabwe and the Beitbridge Rural District Council (BRDC) in particular, between 1993 and 2002. Specific focus was on the BRDC's effort to enhance democratic participation and empower local communities; its performance in providing services of a local nature; and the level of performance of its management in its bid to infuse and maintain ethos of institutional excellence in the council.

Interviews, questionnaires and documentary search were used as instruments for collecting data of both a qualitative and quantitative nature. Consequently, the study does not draw polarity between quantitative and qualitative dimensions of research because of the need to derive benefits from both methodologies. The analysis of data followed a similar approach.

The findings of this study are that there is no sufficient community participation in BRDC affairs. Although there is a platform for community participation in the form of VIDCOs and WADCOs, officials of these committees tend to dominate the planning process and consequently, plans reflect the decisions of a minority rather than a majority. Councilors only report back to communities when they feel like and council staff are not responsive to the communities they serve. Thus, the performance of the BRDC in enhancing community participation is below the expectations of communities and this has created a strained relationship

between council and the latter. On service provision, the indications are that services are not adequate to meet the demands of communities particularly in housing, recreational facilities, water and transport. Besides, the provision is not responsive to community needs. Inefficiency and ineffectiveness manifest themselves in the process. Council management is bedeviled with several forms of non-performance due to resource wastage, lack of responsiveness and a general lackadaisical attitude.

One would conclude that the manner in which the council is performing indicates a lack of economic and administrative rationality in both councilors and council staff. Consequently, there is need to build the capacity of both incumbents and infuse ethos of excellence in running council affairs. This can be done through training and staff development programmes.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

The performance of public institutions has received worldwide reviews in recent years. This is mainly due to, among other reasons, a common perception that these institutions are at the centre stage of discourses on democracy and good governance, national economic growth, global integration, improved social welfare, and sustainable national development. Thus, failing to expose the nature of their performance denies society the chance to understand the strengths and weaknesses of these institutions as they try to fulfill their role. Public sector institutions are many and varied. They include central government departments or ministries, public enterprises, courts, provincial or regional government units and local authorities in both urban and rural settings. Their multiplicity and diversity presupposes the existence of differences in operations, location, autonomy and functional capacity. Attempting to carry out an analysis of all of them in one research project would be exposing oneself to a mammoth task that would be difficult to handle. Consequently, this study focuses on the performance of rural local government units known as Rural District Councils (RDCs) in Zimbabwe. As the name implies, these are rural based local government units run by locally elected councilors and a local bureaucracy appointed by the former. These units are popularly referred to as local authorities. There are fifty-seven (57) RDCs in Zimbabwe. The need to highlight the minute details of their performance compelled this study to select one RDC, the Beitbridge Rural District Council (BRDC). Thus, this is a case study research focusing on the performance of the BRDC between 1993, when these institutions were established, and 2002.

It is generally acknowledged that trying to measure the performance of public sector institutions is a complicated and complex matter. The complexity of it lays in the lack of generally accepted performance indicators in this sector, unlike in the private sector, where variables like profit and market share are commonly used. Objectives of public sector institutions are usually broad and tend to encompass the economic, social, political and other environmental domains (Hughes, 1994:205-206; and Burger and Ducharme, 2000:59-61). Besides, there is a plethora of complex relations among government institutions that may enhance or undermine the performance of a particular institution.

The lack of standard indicators also makes it rather risky to compare the performance of one institution to that of others. The institutions may have different missions, resource bases, social settings and operations. Moreover, the institutions may be faced with completely different influences from political office-bearers. All these realities reduce the commonality of standard indicators and complicate both measurement on a comparative basis and benchmarking

Although performance measurement is embedded in complexity, it is essential as it helps the institution to know how well it is performing and whether or not it is focused on achieving its goals and objectives. It is only through the results of such measures, that strengths and weaknesses can be noted and capacity-building mechanisms put in place to enhance the viability of such institutions. This is critical, particularly to nascent institutions whose operations may easily go wrong if the negatives are not noticed on time. They may be easily disorganised. Dysfunctional conflict between the institution and the communities it serves may manifest itself. Negative and incapacitating reporting from the media may worsen their situation and they may eventually die. It is with this in mind that public sector performance is under the spotlight in this study, to try and determine the *modus operandi* of public institutions and their capacity to serve communities well. This is the fundamental mission of the state: to improve social welfare and to make life

good. Aristotle, one of the classical philosophers, is cited in Botes, Brynard, Fourie and Roux (1992:3) as saying:

> Every state is a community of some kind, and every community is established with a view to some good; for mankind always acts in order to obtain that which they think good. But, if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims at good in a greater degree than any other, and at the highest good.

The state cannot achieve the 'highest good' if public institutions are not performing well. It cannot be left to chance that these should perform as expected. What is needed is to determine the levels of performance and indicate whether or not such is acceptable.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

RDCs were established in July 1993, during the Third Republic of Zimbabwe, and thirteen years after independence. These institutions are expected to provide services of a local nature to communities within their areas of jurisdiction. RDCs are expected to initiate sustainable development projects for Zimbabwe's rural population estimated to be 65%. They are expected to ensure that these people's welfare is improved and that they enjoy the good life, which independent Zimbabwe is expected to offer. It is significant to note that most of these people are poor. This means that RDCs have the responsibility to enhance the socio-economic and political growth of these people. They are expected to empower these people to enable them to make decisions on issues that affect them, and encourage mutual coexistence and resource sharing among them regardless of race. They are expected to provide communities with essential services like water, health, education and housing, and manage communities efficiently and effectively. Whether the multiplicity or diversity of functions they are expected to perform are fulfilled, can only be ascertained through gauging their performance since their inception in 1993.

In order to understand RDCs better, it is important to provide a brief outline of Zimbabwe as an African country that has emerged from colonial rule and has, over the years, tried to chart its development path with internally induced strategies, albeit with successes and failures.

Zimbabwe: A socio-economic, demographical and political brief

Zimbabwe is a land-locked country in the Southern part of Africa. Its geographic coordinates are 20 00 S, and 30 00 E. It is one of the fourteen Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) countries. Zimbabwe shares its borders with South Africa in the south (225 km); Botswana in the west (813 km); Namibia in the north west (0 km, i.e. at the quadripoint where Zimbabwe, Botswana and Zambia share a common border point); Zambia in the north (797 km); and Mozambique in the east (1 231 km). That Zimbabwe is land-locked is significant in that its access to overseas markets greatly depends on its relationship with its neighbours and the political milieu obtaining in these countries. For example, Zimbabwe faced problems during the debilitating civil war in Mozambique (1980 – 1990). It also had economic problems before South Africa became independent in 1994. However, this does not mean that all its economic problems can be attributed to this geographical setup. Some, if not most, of them are due to poor economic policies and ineptitude in the management of the national economy. The other problems are attributed to the political environment in the country, where political leaders have become insensitive, unresponsive and tend to ignore the rule of law (Mattes, Bratton, Davids and Africa, 2000:6).

The total surface area of Zimbabwe is about 391 000 square kilometres. Of this area, about 387 000 square kilometres is land mass while the remaining 4 000 square kilometres is water. Zimbabwe has a tropical climate. Its temperature ranges between 5 degrees Celsius and 38 degrees Celsius. Its rainfall is between November and March and ranges between 450 mm and 1200 mm. The land is made up of Savanna grasslands with high plateaus and low velds. The

highest point is 2 592 metres at the Nyanga mountains and the lowest is 162 metres above sea level at the confluence of the Save and Lundi rivers in the southeastern part of the country (www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/zi.html, 15 June 2001:1-2).

The population of Zimbabwe is about 11 million people (1998 estimates) of whom 98,8 percent are blacks and 1,2 percent are of European origin, Asians, and mixed races. Sixty five percent (65%) of Zimbabwe's population is rural based, hence the paramountcy of RDCs. The two main ethnic groups are Shona (71%) and Ndebele (16%). Other smaller groups like the Tonga, Sena, Hlengwe, Venda and Sotho make up 11,8%. As indicated above, the other 1,2% is that of Whites, Asians and Coloureds or Basters (mixed races). The population growth rate has been relatively high at 3% per annum since 1980 although the 2001 indications are that this has dropped to 1,12% due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Forty-four percent (44%) of Zimbabwe's population is between 0 – 14 years; 54% is between 15 – 64 years; and 2% is 65 years and above. This places the country's life expectancy at 39,19 years (www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/zi.html, 15 June 2001:2-3).

Zimbabwe is very much dependent on mining and agriculture. Minerals such as coal, chromium ore, asbestos, gold, nickel, copper, iron ore, vanadium, lithium, tin and platinum are found. There is a lot of crop and animal farming by both black and white farmers. Apart from South Africa, Zimbabwe has the largest number of whites in sub-Saharan Africa, about 250 000 at independence in 1980 and an estimated 112 000 in 1998 (www.nationamaster.com/country/zi/people, 15 June 2001:1). Although this number seems to be negligible, its significance lies in the fact that it controls, together with foreign companies, about 75% of the country's wealth through its ownership of commercial farms, the commercial and industrial sector, and the mines. It also makes a fairly large contribution to the country's senior managers in the private sector, professionals like lawyers, doctors, accountants, economists and technicians. The significance of these

explications is that there is an unhealthy distribution of resources between the races. This means that the pre-independence situation of skewed resource distribution has not changed fully and yet it was one of the rallying points of the liberation struggle between 1965 and 1980. For example, this can be illustrated through the assertion that early in 2002, about 4 400 whites owned 32% of Zimbabwe's farmland (News.bbc/1/zi/world/Africa/594522.stm, 8 August 2002:1). However, although the latest land distribution figures are not available, one should hasten to say that the rather irrational land redistribution policies introduced in 2000 by the Government of Zimbabwe (GOZ) have changed the land ownership outlook. These are irrational in the sense that most white farmers have been evicted from their land and replaced by black farmers. The eviction process has not been constitutional to say the least. It has violated individual rights, particularly the right to own property and to be protected by the law and the state.

The duality of Zimbabwe's structure is also evident in both the urban and rural areas. For example, no whites are found in the formerly black townships throughout the country. It is only in the former white suburbs that one can find affluent blacks. In the rural areas, blacks are classified as Small Scale Communal Farmers (SCCFs). These are relatively backward and impoverished. They live in communal areas that constitute 41,8% of the total land area. However, 75% of this land is located in the worst regions with low and erratic rainfall, poor soils and poor grazing land (Chipika, 1998:7). This means that most of this land is generally incapable of sustaining meaningful cattle and crop farming. On the other hand, white farmers are located in what are referred to as Large Scale Commercial Farms (LSCFs). These make up 35,2% of the total land area. However, these LSCFs cover about 66% of the best agricultural land. While each white farmer owns about 3 000 hectares of fertile land on a free hold tenure, the average size of a communal farm is 3 hectares, excluding grazing land (Rukuni and Eicher, 1994:3). It is also significant to note that communal land is owned by the state and cannot be bought or sold. There are also what are

referred to as Resettlement Areas (RAs), which occupy about 7,9% of the land and which are allocated to about 60 000 blacks on a state permit tenure system, where each family owns about 12 hectares of land (Chipika, 1998:12). If anything, all these figures help to depict the unequal resource distribution that exists in Zimbabwe, the poverty that exists in rural areas and consequently, the type of person found in RDCs and the assistance he/she needs from the local authority, central government and the international community for him/her to develop.

Zimbabwe gained its independence on 20 April 1980, after a bitter-armed struggle lasting about 15 years (1965 – 1980). The liberation movements that were in the forefront of this struggle were the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) led by Joshua Nkomo and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) led by Ndabaningi Sithole, and later Robert Gabriel Mugabe. Significant is that ZANU is a result of a splinter faction that defected from ZAPU in 1963. The fundamental reason for the split, it is argued, was on the modalities or processes for bringing about independence to Zimbabwe, and not the basic principle of liberating the country. While the splinter faction leaders favoured an outright war against the colonialists, the remaining part of ZAPU, led by Joshua Nkomo favoured a strategy of calculated diplomacy and negotiation. Interesting enough, a closer look at the parties after the split indicates the birth of ethnicity in Zimbabwe's politics. ZANU was mainly dominated by Shona ethnic groups while ZAPU although its leadership was mixed, had a Ndebele support base (Mandaza, 1987:31). This political dispensation managed to split blacks into two distinct ethnic groups that remained divided and antagonistic towards one another throughout the struggle and after independence. The split created a wound that is difficult to cure (Herbst, 1990:28). Even now, there are doses of both overt and covert tension between Shonas and Ndebeles. This is a reality no rational person can deny.

In 1975, ZANU and ZAPU formed the Patriotic Front. This was firstly an acknowledgement of the importance of both parties in the liberation equation and secondly, it was an attempt to have one voice when negotiating for funding from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the international community. Thirdly, it was an attempt to join forces and subsequently unite the armies: the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), under ZAPU and the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZNLA), under ZANU (Mandaza, 1987:31-33). Consequent to this, ZAPU changed its name to PF-ZAPU and ZANU became ZANU-PF. The Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA) was formed to join the two armies. However, this development was short-lived as differences between the two parties still existed and each had a high degree of operational autonomy. ZANU-PF waged the liberation war from Mozambique while PF-ZAPU was based in Zambia.

The liberation struggle led to the Lancaster House Conference (LHC) in 1979. It was during this conference that a Transitional Constitution for the independence of Zimbabwe was drafted. Britain assumed its colonial master status and Lord Soames became the Governor of Zimbabwe replacing colonial Rhodesia's (Zimbabwe's name before independence) Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) leader Ian Douglas Smith, who had usurped the power to rule Zimbabwe from Britain in 1965. On 20 April 1980, the Zimbabwe flag was hoisted and the day declared Independence Day. Robert Gabriel Mugabe became the first Prime Minister and ZANU-PF, the ruling party, up to this day. The Constitution of Zimbabwe has since been amended to enable the Prime Minister to become the Executive President (Mandaza, 1987:34). Thus, President Robert Mugabe has continuously ruled Zimbabwe from 1980 to this day. It is significant to note that the locus of decision making in terms of policy formulation has not changed. Whatever changes government has put in place, are a result of ZANU-PF's initiative more than anything else.

In 1987, PF-ZAPU was incorporated into ZANU-PF under a Unity Accord signed to end the civil war that had engulfed Matebeleland between 1982 and 1987. Since then, a new ZANU-PF has emerged with political incumbents from both the Shona and Ndebele ethnic enclaves. Although this is the case, traces of ethnicity are heavily evident. Because of the deteriorating economic situation in Zimbabwe, a new political party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) has since emerged to challenge ZANU-PF's rule. In the 2000 elections, this party won 59 of the contested 120 seats in the House of Parliament. Appointed parliamentarians from among traditional leaders and eight (8) governors (all appointed by the President) occupy the other 30 seats in the 150 seat unicameral legislature (www:zimbabwesituation.com/results.html, 15 June 2001:1). The leader of the MDC party, Morgan Tsvangirai challenged Robert Mugabe for the Presidency of Zimbabwe in the 2002 elections. However, the former came second best. There are numerous accusations that ZANU-PF rigged these elections. However, these elections are not a subject of this study.

Just like other African countries, Zimbabwe's economy depends very much on the economies of developed countries. Problems in the latter are easily translated into African economies. In like manner, turmoil in one African country can easily affect the economies of neighbours. This is in line with what Chazan, Mortimer, Ravenhill and Rothchild (1992:232) call the principle of *complementarity* where the colonising countries wanted to have close economic relationships with African states with the principal objective of satisfying colonial needs. This relationship created 'an economic umbilical link' that was difficult to severe. Africa became excessively dependent on the metropolis and the economies of the former were fashioned on the lines of the colonizing countries.

Zimbabwe inherited a control oriented economic system. These controls were necessitated by international sanctions directed towards the Rhodesia Front Government of Ian Douglas Smith (1965 – 1980). When Smith cut 'the political umbilical link' with Britain through the UDI, Britain called for international

sanctions against its colony (Mandaza, 1987:105). This means that colonial Zimbabwe had to develop a home grown economic system that was expected to sustain its commercial, industrial, mining and farming sectors. It managed to do so with highly innovative import substitution initiatives geared towards weathering the storm of economic sanctions. The resilient Rhodesian economy was able to even supply neighbouring countries with tobacco, maize, fruits, beef, agriculture, mining implements and highly skilled human power. Its major trading partner was South Africa, a country that at that time was also facing economic sanctions (Herbst, 1990:35). One would have expected that since 1980, the Government of Zimbabwe would have built on this resilience and would have created a more vibrant economic giant in the region. True, the government did not nationalise private business. However, it came up with unique and incapacitating administrative and policy controls, particularly on prices, employment, and the transfer of funds to parent companies outside Zimbabwe. This, together with its socialist rhetoric and antagonism towards private enterprise, was a license for capital flight, disinvestment and economic decline.

More than half the whites (approximately 125 000) had left Zimbabwe by 1985. Most of them were skilled 'White Rhodesians', as whites are commonly called even now, in both the public and private sector (Herbst, 1990:223). Bureaucratic delays in approving foreign investment and the general policing attitude of the state, portrayed Zimbabwe as an unfriendly country, too risky in which to invest. These macro-economic policies marked the decline of Zimbabwe's economy, which was not helped by severe draughts in 1983, 1986, 1991 and 1992. Consequently, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) fell by 8% and agricultural output by 25%. The manufacturing output also fell because of a combined effect of agricultural input shortages, a drastic decline in domestic demand, shortages of water and electricity, and tight credit control policies (Leistener and Cornwell, 1996:128). Rural communities suffered the most as their farming potential was drastically reduced. Most of their livestock died, crops withered away, and consequently, they had no disposable incomes for food and other necessities like

paying school fees for their children, restocking and even paying RDC levies that would contribute to a local authority's development efforts.

As a consequence of the developments highlighted above, Zimbabwe's economic growth rate has been quite variable and volatile. In the early years (1980 – 1982), the economic growth rate reached double figures (Kadhani in Mandaza, 1987:107). However, a general decline can be noticed in the other years. During this time, the public sector deficit ballooned to unacceptable levels, as the new government tried to redress colonial imbalances by expanding its expenditure on social goods and services. On the budgetary side, the fiscal deficit remained unchecked. Inflation also rose to about 48% in the drought years particularly during 1991/1992. After that, it stabilized at about 20% but has since worsened particularly between 1997 and 2001. The expectations are that worse is still to come (www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/zi.html, 15 June 2001:2).

In order to harness the economic downturn, a mammoth macro-economic programme, popularly known as the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP), was introduced in 1991. Its broad aim was to create incentives for private investment in manufacturing, reduce government deficit, encourage exports, allow free market forces to determine efficient resource allocation in the economy and hence, generate economic growth and employment (Chipika, 1998:8). ESAP was based on four key components:

1. Trade liberalization: This involved moving away from a regulated socialist type economy to a free market economy, driven by the need to encourage foreign investment and expand the economic base of the country. This led to currency devaluation, expansion of the Open General Import License (OGIL) and several tariff reforms.

2. Budget policy/Fiscal Deficit Reduction: The major focus here was on reducing the fiscal deficit to less than 5% of GDP by 1995, as well as

increasing efficiency and effectiveness in the public service. This led to the minimisation of subsidies, reforming parastatals to enhance their viability, cost effectiveness measures in education and health, and reducing the size of the public service.

3. Domestic deregulation/monetary and interest rate policy: The focus was on shifting from direct controls to market based monetary and interest rate policy instruments. The need to mobilise savings and reduce inflation was articulated under this component. This led to the removal of price and wage controls as well as consumer subsidies. This was supposed to lead to more competition and allow enterprises to react to market forces rather than control oriented economic parameters of government.

4. The Social Dimension of Adjustment/The Social Development Fund: This was to help vulnerable groups like women, children, and the unemployed and retrenched workers (Chipika, 1998:8).

Chipika (1998:9) vividly summarises fiscal and monetary outcomes of the ESAP effort as follows:

> The broad outcome of ESAP was macro-economic instability characterised by high government budget deficits which remained at around 10% of GDP and were largely domestically financed. This increased the demand for loanable funds, thus pushing interest rates up. This, together with a tight monetary policy, pushed interest rates to unbearable levels of 40% - 48% from 1992 to 1994, rising from 13% in the 1980s …high interest rates have crowded out private investment and suppressed economic growth and employment creation.

Apart from these weaknesses, ESAP led to the devaluation of the Zimbabwe Dollar and left it weak and vulnerable. While it was Z$ 0.40/US$1 in 1980, it fell to Z$9.31/US$1 in 1995; Z$19.00/US$1 in 1998; and Z$40.00/US$1 in 2000. Because of a lack of foreign reserves, people resort to the black market where the rate in 2002 is approximately Z$250/US$1. The signs are that worse is still to

come as the economy is getting worse and the country finds it difficult to service foreign debt. Even unemployment has grown to unacceptable proportions. In 2001, it was estimated at 55% (www:odci.gov/cia/publication/factbook/zi.html, 15 June 2001:2).

Zimbabwe inherited a society polarised along racial boundaries, just like any other typical African state emerging from colonialism. It can be found that Europeans are at the top level commanding the large industries, major mercantile concerns and plantation farming. At the second or middle level are Asians particularly those of Indian origin. These control medium level industrial wholesales as well as larger retail outlets. At the bottom level are Africans. Most of these are engaged in peasant farming, petty trading and the provision of cheap labour services. However, these are not watertight categories, as occasionally there are some overlaps. Significant, however, is the fact that these divisions were left to continue unabated even after Zimbabwe became a sovereign state. Despite the Government of Zimbabwe (GOZ) calling for economic justice between races, the colonial legacy has grown unabated. Most of the people affected by this economic disparity are those found in rural areas. The existing system has marginalised the rural people further and created an army of poor Zimbabweans who are barely surviving (Jayne, Chisvo and Rukuni in Rukuni and Eicher, 1994:301).

Land ownership has remained skewed, despite promises of redistribution. The mal-distribution is not only in favour of whites, but an emerging black elite who are being allocated land that is confiscated from white commercial farmers. This has led to heated demands for redress by both peasant farmers and whites that have lost their land. The international community has also entered the fray accusing the GOZ of naked violence, failure to safeguard the property of the minority races, abuse of human rights and corruption.

Despite the high levels of poverty that are rising daily, special mention should be made of the fact that the GOZ has managed to broaden education and health services, two significant social services. Primary and secondary education enrolment has grown manifold from 74 012 in 1980 to 670 615 in 1989. In 1992, about 61 500 students were attending institutions of higher learning (Leistener and Cornwell, 1996:125). Because of educational expansion, the literacy rate in 2001 was estimated at 90% (www:nationmaster.com/country/zi/people,15 June 2001:1).

Through its elaborate health policies, the GOZ managed to raise the life expectancy of the population from 45 years in 1980 to 53 years in 1993 (Leistener and Cornwell, 1996:126). Infant mortality was reduced from 100/1 000 live births in 1980 to 67/1 000 births in 1993. The HIV/AIDS scourge is now threatening these plausible contributions. In 1995, the Minister of Health and Child Welfare, Dr. Timothy Stamps indicated that 1 million people were HIV positive during that year and 90% of deaths between 0 – 5 years and 20 – 35 years were associated with this virus. Besides, there was a high exodus of medical doctors to neighbouring countries, Britain and the greater world. Of the 500 doctors trained since 1990, about 52 were still in the country in 1992. As a result, Zimbabwe finds itself relying on expatriate doctors, 89% operate in the rural areas (Leistener and Cornwell, 1996:126). Significant here is the fact that, apart from doctors, other highly trained personnel are leaving the country for what is popularly termed 'greener pastures' in South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, the United Kingdom and other countries. For example, informal conversation with academics at the University of Zimbabwe indicate that in 2001 the university was operating at 67% of its capacity meaning that at least a third of the academic posts are not filled each year. This has a negative effect on the quality of education.

The brief historical background of Zimbabwe reveals several points that are important for this study. These are outlined below.

1. Rural areas in Zimbabwe are characterised by poverty and social insecurity. This poses a challenge to RDCs who have to provide basic social services to local communities, stimulate confidence in the government and motivate locals to participate in self-help projects to obviate their desperate economic situation. Faced with these incapacitating historical facts, the RDC performance may be negatively affected, yet the success of these institutions is critical for community development.

2. Rural communities still face a shortage of land that is necessary for developing their agricultural prowess and enabling them to be self-sufficient. Without land, rural poverty is likely to prevail making the life of RDCs difficult in their bid to mobilize resources of a local nature from communities. This would inherently lead to poor performance.

3. The general decline of the economy indicates that a considerable level of economic and political mismanagement exists in Zimbabwe. This means that wrong economic policies are made and there may be laxity in implementing good economic policies. There may even be no political will to implement reforms that would improve the economic situation. The question is, is it not possible that these management anomalies may replicate themselves in RDCs leading to poor performance by these institutions?

4. The locus of decision-making in government revolves around the Chief Executive, the President and his deputies, Cabinet Ministers, and senior members of ZANU-PF. This means that decisions are made by 'political heavy weights'. The question is, is it not possible that 'RDC heavy weights' also make decisions without consulting the common person in the district? For, according to Paolo Freire (1982:33), 'to be is to be like'

meaning that, if dominating tendencies are characteristic of the political process at the centre, these would inevitably manifest themselves at the periphery. This would reduce democratic or popular participation and self-initiated development by communities in RDCs.

5. The downturn of the economy has reduced government spending both on a national and sub-national level. This means that RDCs can no longer receive a fair share of the national allocation of development funds, yet the deregulation of prices and labour on the other hand, have exposed rural communities to spiraling price hikes and retrenchment by unscrupulous traders and commercial farmers. This has inherently reduced the disposable incomes of rural communities who end up adopting unsustainable survival strategies. These include poaching, prostitution, relying on government food handouts, withdrawing girls from school, relying on traditional healers, as they cannot afford the cost of medicine, and even stealing from one another. What can be seen on a daily basis, are people gathered in growth points drinking the meager income that they have, to allow each day's misery to pass by with little notice. A desperate situation of survival indeed. It is these people who are represented by the RDCs. The question is, how do these institutions cope with these problems so as to maintain some modicum of social sanity and acceptable development levels? These questions among others make it imperative to gauge the performance of RDCs in Zimbabwe.

Rural local government brief

As indicated above, the first of July 1993, witnessed a major policy transformation for rural local government in Zimbabwe. The date marked the birth of Rural District Councils (RDCs) as local institutions tasked with championing and coordinating peripheral (rural) development. It also marked the end of District Councils (DCs) and Rural Councils (RCs). These two institutions represented

rural local government for blacks (communal land) and white areas (commercial farming lands), respectively, between 1980 and 1993. In fact, RDCs emerged under an amalgamation (bringing DCs and RCs together under one administration) policy that created a unified rural local government (RLG) structure in Zimbabwe (Roe, 1992:5).

Before this date (1 July 1993), rural development apartheid manifested itself. DCs and RCs reflected a two-pyramid policy framework that was characteristic of the *modus operandi* of colonial governance between 1890 and 1980. The colonial scenario was characterised by racial segregation policies. Africans were regarded as second-rate citizens in social, political and economic processes of the country. Several administrative instruments were put in place to regulate African activities and settlement patterns in a manner that was considered as non-threatening to the first-class citizens, the whites. Paramount among these pieces of legislation was the Land Apportionment Act of 1930. Through this Act, blacks were bunched onto the so-called Native Reserves that were characterised by unfavourable climatic and economic conditions. It is these areas that form the present communal areas (former DC land). They are still considered to be overly populated, overgrazed and incapable of sustaining the present rural populations. On the other hand, the rural white population was located in the sparsely populated and vast commercial farming areas (former RC land) bordering the communal areas (Herbst, 1990:181-182; and Rukuni and Eicher, 1994:18). Figure 1.1 on page 18, illustrates the racial separation that existed before amalgamation.

As can be seen from the illustration, the history of Zimbabwe's rural local government system is that of separate development. Each administrative district had two local authorities, one for blacks and the other for whites. It is interesting to note that this colonial set up prevailed for thirteen years after Zimbabwe's independence – 1980 up to 1993. The reasons for this are many and they include the following:

Figure 1.1 *Black and White Rural Local Government in Zimbabwe, 1890 – 1993*

Black Rural Local Government	White Rural Local Government

Kings, Chiefs & Advisors, depending on ethnic groups

1890 — Native Commissioners

1910 — Native Boards

1930 — .... Road Councils

1937 — Native Councils

Intensive Conservation Area Committees

1941 — ....

1957 — African Councils

1966 — .... Rural Councils

1980 — District Councils — **Amalgamated** —

1993 —

RURAL DISTRICT COUNCILS
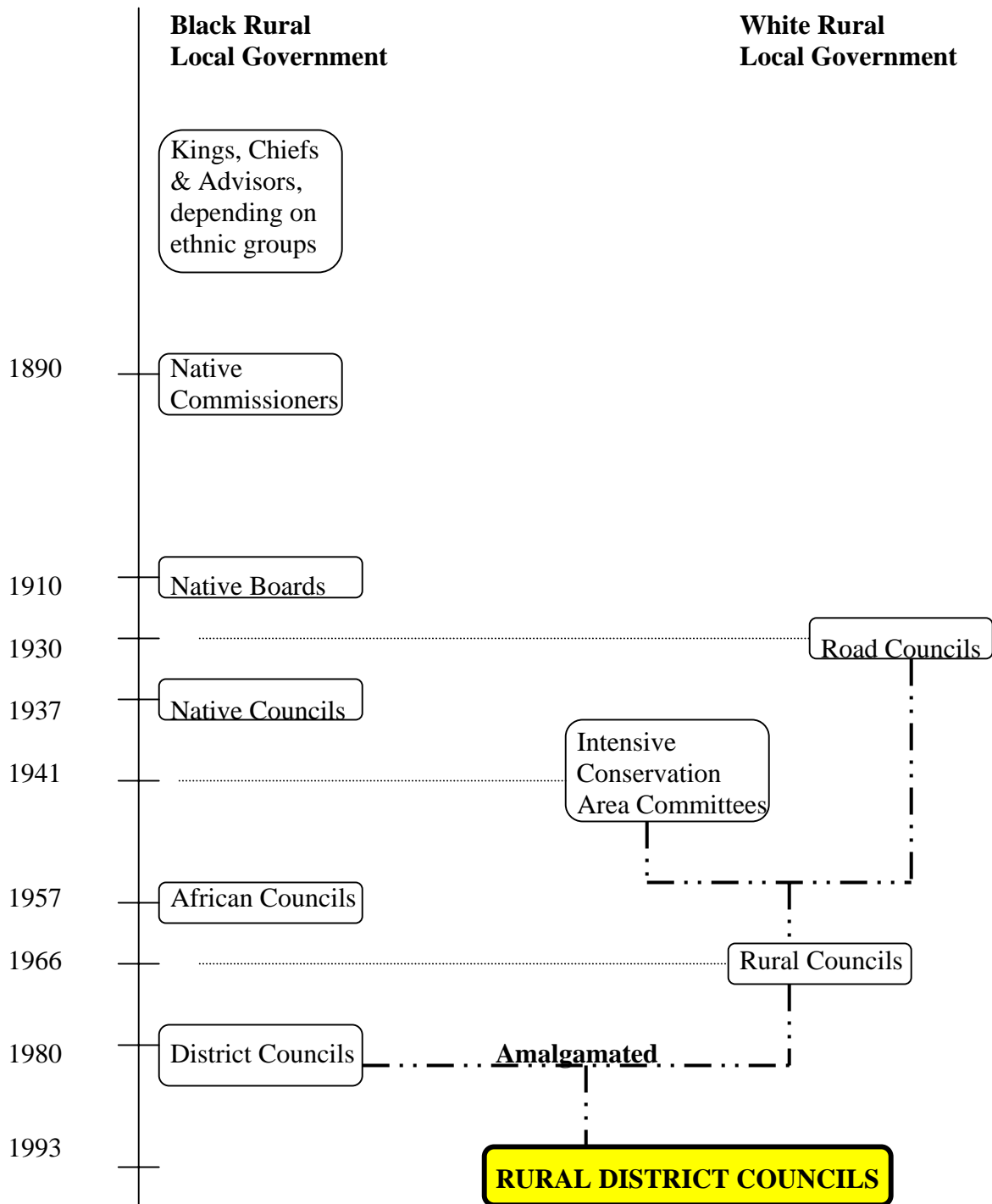
Source: Social Change, No. 37 of 1995:13. From separation to amalgamation

Firstly, this period was part of the transitional phase of Zimbabwe's independence. The Lancaster House Constitution of 1980 that was independent Zimbabwe's first Constitution, provided for a ten year transitional phase in which minimal change was to be effected on certain racially based structures to enable citizens, particularly whites, to cope with change processes that were to be effected. It was to facilitate a smooth change for them.

Secondly, the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) led government, adopted a reconciliation policy as a fundamental philosophical guide for its development strategy. This policy advocated for a smooth transition of socio-economic and governmental institutions to reflect the accommodative nature of government as well as to assure the white community that it had a role to play in the development of Zimbabwe. In fact, these whites are indeed Zimbabweans and need to be treated as such, that is, with respect and dignity and thus, to be appropriately mobilized for development purposes not as appendages of the political system, but as an integral part of the whole.

Thirdly, the delay allowed the ZANU-PF government to perfect its rural local government policy and put in place what it considered to be the necessary operational mechanisms that would minimize the chances of failure at the policy implementation stage. As an example, the Rural District Councils Act of 1988 was adopted during that year but was only implemented fully on 1 July 1993. This delay was a rational exercise free to a certain extent, of rash politically inspired decisions that normally have the effect of backfiring at implementation.

The new rural local government dispensation was born out of this brief historical background. It was born out of a system with racial overtones; a system that was unacceptable for an integrated holistic rural development strategy, as it divided districts into two authorities governed by separate policy instruments, that is, policies that led to different development trends in terms of population density,

land utilisation tendencies, the provision of resources, particularly those of a financial nature, and the provision of services to the local communities. At independence in 1980, the Government of Zimbabwe (GOZ) was conscious of the fact that rural local authorities were difficult to coordinate and control. Thus, discussions about changing the dual system were, in fact, part of the rural local government agenda since 1980 (Msika, 1993:2).

The amalgamation policy marked a positive step, particularly towards undoing the effects of colonialism and developing and strengthening rural local governance in Zimbabwe. The policy, therefore, should not be viewed as a basic decentralisation initiative but as one that deals with the transformation of Zimbabwe's rural local government system. The policy sought to re-orient Zimbabwe's rural institutions, unite rural blacks and their white counterparts, bridge the racial gap and usher in a new era of harmony and social coherence in a bid to propel the nation to greater heights of sustainable socio-economic prosperity in the new millennium. Thus, the reasons for amalgamation can be discussed within four analytical strands: the political, social, economic and administrative imperatives.

- **The Political Imperative for Amalgamation**

1. One of the reasons for this imperative is to bring to an end the racially based two-pyramid policy of rural development. This policy (two-pyramid policy) thrust favoured white communities at the expense of blacks in the allocation of resources. Amalgamation brings to an end institutionalised legacies of colonialism and provides a springboard for an equitable distribution and redistribution of resources. It also sets in place the trickle down effect where all the communities in a given place can share the advantages of the former RCs. This argument stems from the realisation that unfair land distribution, unfair labour practices and unfair allocation of resources during the colonial era gave whites an unfair advantage

over their black counterparts. Now that they are one, both peoples should share advantages and disadvantages that accrue in each local area (Roe, 1992:15-18).

2. Another reason is to develop a political culture of unity among blacks and whites and to create conditions for them to be partners in development. Political culture entails the collective political attitudes of a population, their views and orientations towards the body politic in general and towards specific political events, symbols, and activities. It is part of the more general culture of society and as such is deeply affected by it, and its orientations are implicit, conscious, and often taken for granted and treated as a priori. It expresses itself in the daily activities and thoughts of a given community. Political culture is a shared and society-wide framework for political orientation and encompasses the society in its entirety. It is the manifestation in aggregate form, of the psychological and subjective dimensions of politics. It has the same effect on political behavior that the general culture has on social behavior; it shapes and provides guidelines not only for political values and orientations but also for patterns of mass political behavior (Blondel, 1995:18; and Du Toit and Nel, 1996:176-179).

It can be seen from the preceding explication that political culture is about socialisation and as such, it is hoped that bringing blacks and whites under one institution of self-governance would have the effect of socialising these peoples in a culture of tolerance of each other, a situation that is desirable for transformation, reconciliation, democracy and mutual coexistence.

3. A third reason for this imperative is to strengthen local government institutions, while at the same time, reducing state interference in local affairs. This allows local authorities to take charge of local affairs with

minimal state interference, a position that enhances democracy, local participation and self-determination. The state should come in as a partner in development, and in most cases, it should enter the development fray only through the invitation of these local institutions. This political imperative is fundamental to this study. It is about recognising the abilities of local communities for self-determination, creating local decision making confidence in the local people and rendering local government institutions acceptable by the communities of concern. It builds credibility for these institutions and the enabling instruments thereof, and is in fact, a recipe for good governance. Besides, the rationalisation of the responsibilities of the centre and local government has the effect of improving accountability and institutional performance (Nkomo, 1993:3).

- **The Social Imperative for Amalgamation**

The social imperative for amalgamation expresses sentiments of service provision. The rationality of social considerations is that rural local government institutions should be well placed to provide both pure and impure public goods of a local nature. Thus, the GOZ saw it fit to create unified local institutions in order to improve their service provision outlook in line with the needs of the local people. The GOZ sought to create machinery that would be effective and efficient in customer service provision (Roe, 1992: 10; Mhlanga, 1993:10-11). An analysis of Roe and Mhlanga's articles indicates that the objectives of the social imperative can be enumerated as follows:

1. The first objective of the social imperative is to rationalise resource allocation for the provision of essential services, such as water, health, education, roads and sanitary facilities. The thrust here was on achieving equity in resource provision within one district.

2. A second objective is to enhance quality service provision within the public sector and for all rural communities. The understanding here is that service provision will never be qualitative where discrimination exists. Such discrimination necessarily provides a skewed service provision framework that is bound to favour one group over the other. An amalgamated system is likely to consider, in a rational manner, what the people want and proceed to develop well-conceived processes geared at responsiveness, and the timely provision of the required goods and services. The thrust of this objective is on acknowledging local communities as active, rational and politically conscious customers rather than passive recipients of public services.

The issue here is that amalgamation was expected to reform the system of local governance and entrench efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness and accountability within the system. Local authorities should take a leading role in promoting locality welfare within those functions provided for by the enabling Act, including any other activities it considers necessary for societal gain. Local authorities should be involved in and be concerned with all aspects of community life, not just those areas of responsibility allocated to them by Parliament, but also the right to undertake any activities which they feel to be in the interests of their citizens, unless such activities are actually forbidden or assigned to other bodies (Reddy, 1996:23). In fact, the argument is that local authorities look after their citizens from the cradle to the grave. They register births, deaths, and if necessary, any intervening marriages, and then, finally play a role in funerals or cremations.

- **The Economic Imperative for Amalgamation**

The economic imperative for amalgamation advances the notion that economic development is a vehicle for self-sufficiency, independence and

growth. It is concerned with the promotion of efficiency in local resource mobilisation and carrying out council activities. It emphasizes self-sufficiency and innovativeness. It acknowledges the existence of competitive advantage in any social setting and the need to be guided by value for money considerations in undertaking local authority activities (Reddy, 1996:23-24). Below are the objectives of amalgamation within this framework:

1. The first objective is to minimise the dependence of local authorities on central government funding. This scenario has the advantage of enhancing local authority responsibility and ensuring economic self-sustenance through local economic growth (Roe, 1992:3).

2. Another objective is to promote locally initiated development that takes into cognisance the needs of the district and its peoples. The new RDCs have been given the functions of overseeing peripheral development in that they can formulate short and long-term development policies, monitor their implementation and rationalise funding for different projects, which they are implementing. In order to facilitate such developmental initiatives, RDCs have been empowered to develop land for residential, commercial and industrial purposes, to construct buildings and sell or let these according to their needs (Makumbe in Reddy, 2000:286).

- **The Administrative Imperative for Amalgamation**

1. One of the aims of this imperative is to empower local authorities and provide them with the capacity to influence, organise and shape the destiny of local communities. This is because councillors and the administrative arm of these councils are better placed to articulate local issues and to provide local service more quickly than central government. Thus, local authorities should have their local capacities

developed so as to respond rationally to the wishes of the people and be able, at the same time, to administer and manage local resources efficiently (Roe, 1992:15-17).

2. Another aim of this imperative is to enhance the capacity of managers to plan and lead organisations. The capacity of managers and their ability to lead organisations are crucial elements for local authority viability. Local authority managers should be innovative and entrepreneurial; be capable of driving organisational change and development; and be in a position to rationalise resource utilisation in order to maximise social gain. Local authorities should act as catalysts for planning, promoting and coordinating peripheral development (Msika, 1993:1). For example, it is through management capacity that they can be able to develop Growth Points, Rural District Service Centres and Business Centres. Local authorities should be allowed to control local resources as they are better placed to respond to the changing needs of the local people.

The new RDCs are charged with the responsibility of leading, directing and coordinating development in the rural areas. In carrying out their responsibilities in rural areas, all key actors should, as a matter of priority, exploit the potential of these RDCs. A strong partnership should be created between these institutions and all other organizations, be they government departments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs) and private sector organisations that have businesses in each locality. The Minister of Local Government and National Housing (MOLGANH) buttresses this viewpoint by saying that:

> Ministries and other development agencies should acknowledge that given adequate resources and capacities, Rural District Councils have the mandate to do all those things that they are required to do in terms of the provisions of the first schedule of the Rural District Councils Act No. 8 of 1988. Ministries will be expected to formulate the basic policy framework and should only

come in where collaboration is needed between Central Government and the Local Authority concerned. As a matter of policy, Central Government should only come in (sic) where a local authority has no resources and capacity and has thus indicated a need for assistance (Msika, 1993:7).

This is a fundamental policy statement that outlines the extent of the autonomy, which local authorities should have. It also indicates government's interest in improving the functional capacity of these authorities so that they can meaningfully participate in local development processes. This statement comes after a rational consideration of past experiences where rural local government, particularly DCs, relied heavily on government financial assistance. This scenario, among others, contributed to the lackaidaisic performance of these institutions and killed their innovative and entrepreneurial spirit. Within this light, the Minister adds that:

Ministries should redefine and establish appropriate functional relationships with the Rural District Councils … success or failure of Local Government is measured by the impact it has upon the lives of the ordinary people. If decentralisation results in the over concentration of power and responsibility in a Local Government, but fails to improve the quality of life of the people, then our Local Government system will have failed. Local Government is not so much sharing of the political spoils of independence; it is the sharing of functions and responsibilities to make life happier for the majority of our people. Central government will thus retain the interest and accountability for the type of life that the people feel at the local level (Msika, 1993:7).

The Ministerial positions outlined here reflect government policy on how local authorities should be viewed in Zimbabwe. It is important then, to check if RDCs are performing according to policy provisions and whether they are achieving the goals for which they were established. This deliberate evaluative undertaking has not been done in Zimbabwe, yet it forms the basis for determining whether or not these institutions operate for the benefit of local communities.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since Rural District Councils were established in 1993, there has not been a coherent study to determine the performance and capacity of these entities to meet their institutional obligations. Whatever evaluations can be found are piecemeal and tend to concentrate on a few services that these councils provide. Their basic aim is to serve as advocative instruments for NGO entry into specific local government areas for development purposes. As such, they lack a lucid theoretical focus. This is particularly so in the Beitbridge Rural District Council. There is no documentary evidence that studies to determine the performance of the BRDC have been ever carried out. Whatever investigations there were, into the performance of the RDC, have been in the form of complaints by communities and council deliberations where councilors came up with mixed reactions to the performance of the district council, particularly regarding the manner in which council handles its finances and the quality of services it provides. Central government, through its parent ministry, the Ministry of Local Government and Housing has also indicated displeasure with the manner in which the BRDC conducts its affairs. Adverse media reports have noted this and have portrayed council management as incompetent and not qualified to manage the local authority. An analysis of these complaints indicates that most of them focus on the relationship between council communities, the quality of services that the council provides and the manner in which council managers conduct their duties.

A preliminary survey, through observation, indicated that these complaints were justifiable as the researcher could observe a prevalence of litter throughout urban Beitbridge. Residents sometimes go without water and sewerage systems are frequently out of order. While this happens, there is no attempt by council to hold meetings with the community to explain these issues and the high propensity of their manifestation. Thus, these observations indicated that a systematic and

scientific study was essential to determine the magnitude of the problem and to determine what capacity building manoeuvres are needed to rectify the situation.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Given the nature of the problem identified above, the purpose of this study is to:

1. Critically examine the performance of the Beitbridge Rural District Council, focusing on:
   a) its ability to institute democratic participation in the district;
   b) its ability to provide quality services to communities; and
   c) the ability of council management to manage the affairs of the local authority.

2. Synthesize the various findings of the study with a view to making policy recommendations that can be used to enhance the performance of the BRDC.

3. Employ Allison's Rational Actor Model to act as a guiding philosophy as well as both, a descriptive and normative tool for understanding current RDC dynamics and how these can be redirected or transformed to enhance the performance of the BRDC and other rural local government institutions in Zimbabwe and elsewhere.

Perhaps a justification of the choices of these objectives needs to be made in order to clarify the substance and focus of this study. Firstly, in order to examine the performance of the BRDC, the study first provides a review of Zimbabwe's local government system and its performance from the colonial times until its amalgamation on July 1, 1993. It then focuses on the operations of the BRDC in the background of the enabling act, the RDC Act No. 8 of 1988. It also looks at

the actual performance of the BRDC in terms of its objectives and how these have impacted on local communities. The focus here is on efficiency, effectiveness, adequacy, equity and responsiveness considerations. These criteria are considered within three distinct variables: popular participation; service provision; and managerial capacity. Incapacitating factors are also analysed in order to determine how these can be corrected so as to create institutional capacity.

As indicated above, the RDCs are responsible for discharging duties of a socio-economic, environmental and political nature within their areas of jurisdiction. The duties include those of developing and managing local infrastructure such as roads, water, health and educational facilities; planning and coordinating rural development in the district; mobilizing both human and natural resources within the district; discouraging any activities that may lead to land degradation; securing wild life; and ensuring local participation in developmental endeavors and civic duties. These responsibilities allow the RDCs to forge a developmental alliance with the local communities, not as subordinate participants but active actors in the whole process of policy formulation and implementation. Such responsibilities and duties, because of their nature and diversity, cannot be performed without problems. Problems can be such as those of a financial nature; a weak local base in terms of the nature of the community and both the physical and social environment; a demotivated and intransigent bureaucracy; an incompetent bureaucracy because of poor training and inappropriate skills; interference in council affairs by central government and its functionaries; an incompetent council; weak definitions of lateral and vertical linkages; an uncooperative community; and general resource wastage and corrupt tendencies within council. It is the purpose of this study to explore this wide range of issues to establish the extent to which they limit the RDC operations and performance. It is from the framework of these problems that capacity building measures can be mooted.

The second objective concerns the best way forward for rural local governance in Zimbabwe in the context of the arguments and the strengths and weaknesses of the current rural local governance system. Every study endeavors to make recommendations for the future. This enhances the utility of the study as well as giving it meaning as a vehicle for change and development. This is a rational and utilitarian position with which this study wishes to associate itself. It is hoped that the utility of the study will not be limited to the BRDC and Zimbabwe only, but that it will be useful to a wide range of countries engaged in rural local government transformation, particularly in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC).

The third objective provides a philosophical and analytical framework for the study. Allison's Rational Actor Model is selected as the philosophical and analytical tool of this study. Allison's rational actor model is a product of rational policy philosophy. The use of a policy philosophy in analysing and gauging the impact of a policy is seen as an important scholarly approach that relates actions to a particular mindset. The issue here is that, as public sector institutions make decisions about various courses of action they want to follow, they do not do so in a haphazard fashion. They follow certain beliefs and values that form a philosophical base for their actions. These values help these institutions to undertake action that they consider to be appropriate for a particular situation. Thus, for the BRDC to come up with good action, it has to discard certain actions that it considers bad. The 'good-bad' approach is an acknowledged value laden guide to rational human action.

Any policy philosophy should be understood within the framework of values such as political, traditional, professional, organisational and policy values. The values held by decision makers affect the political culture of society and direct society to a particular set of political developments that in turn, fundamentally affects the actions of decision makers. Once established and a particular life style is associated with such values, the actions of the political, legal and administrative

systems will be designed in accordance with such values and consequently, the whole governmental system acts within these limits (Bozeman, 1979:60). The notion of policy philosophy is important in this study as it helps the exploration within an acknowledged theoretical framework, the value premise of policy action, the predispositions of policy actors to these values and the influences therein that make them respond in a certain manner when confronted by policy options. It (policy philosophy) expresses a set of values that institutions consider important in setting out their priorities and in determining their actions. It expresses a decision frame and a means to achieving a desirable state of governance within considerations of the objective realities of a particular society.

Several policy philosophies can be enumerated such as rationalism, protectorism, brokerism, pragmatism, transferalism and egoism (Bozeman, 1979:62). It should be noted that different scholars, an examination of which falls beyond the scope of this study, label these differently. However, of importance are the substance and the philosophical roots of each policy philosophy that underscores its difference from the other.

The Rational Actor Model

According to Bozeman (1979:63), 'rationalism is rooted in a faith in man's reason and the assumption that problems of governance are amenable to reasonable solution through scientific analysis, logic and systematic inquiry. The prototypical rationalist administrator is the management scientist.' The underlining premise of rationalism is that world phenomena, though complex can be solved by employing well calculated, reasonable, objective and logical arguments to unravel these complex phenomena and to provide answers that can lead to societal change and development. Rationalism employs the politics of reason to determine courses of action that should be followed for the amelioration of problems. It has its philosophical base in philosophers such as Aristotle, Locke, Berkely, Hume, Bacon and Weber. Fundamental to this philosophy is that a

public institution should input proper procedures and values of designing and planning what it wants to do. Thus, to be reasonable, both its political and administrative dynamics must be properly reasoned out, planned, designed and implemented accordingly. For public officials to engage in planning and designing they should portray a scientific mind in their approach to governance. The argument here is that decision-making is only plausible if it contains a scientific analysis of issues. This means that decisions on what courses of action to undertake should only be made after a proper weighing of the pros and cons of several decision options. It is only after this cost/benefit analysis exercise that a particular option can be undertaken. Preferably, the selected option ought to be that option that maximizes value within given national and institutional constraints (Bacon's sentiments in his *Novum Organum* – 1620 are echoed here). In Zimbabwe, the need for a new rural local government policy led to the establishment of a Forum for Rural Development. This consultative forum necessarily means that the policy went through several stages of policy option weighing. For example, government could have elected to have each authority go its way with increased capacity building for the black rural local government institutions, or it could have decided to nationalise white farms and create cooperatives to run these farms, thereby completely doing away with the apartheid face that still manifests itself in these rural areas, despite amalgamation. However, all these options were discarded in favour of amalgamation as it, presumably, brought socio-economic gains as well as political advantages for the government, since the amalgamation option takes into consideration the interests of both racial groups (Nkomo, 1993:6-7).

Public Administration should be considered as a science. As such, public administrators should be trained in liberal sciences such as decision-making techniques, quantitative management analysis and statistics. This should be done in order to improve their sense of reason. Thus, while the morality or value premise of political decisions is appreciated, emphasis should be on the quantitative thrust of decision-making, so that where appropriate, quantitative

advantages can be considered together with other moral/value laden considerations for a particular course of action. This approach has the tendency to sharpen the decision-making skills of administrators who should always be broad minded about issues in order to see different ways of solving societal problems. The rationale for this approach is that decisions made are likely to be based on an intendedly reasonable analysis of all these issues.

Reasonableness, logic, systematic thinking and the proper evaluation of the pros and cons of an action, are activities that are consistent with serious and business-minded officials whose interest is to fulfill the public interest. These actions have the advantage of avoiding half-baked decisions that are only remedial in nature. The issue here is that as public administrators respond to the policy frameworks of elected officials, they are actually responding to the public interest. It is therefore, important that they should make rational decisions and implement them in an efficient manner to avoid wasting the scarce public resources. Thus, making sound policy decisions should be complemented by sound procedural decisions to put a rational policy into operation. These sentiments are aptly summed up by Schubert in Bozeman (1979:64). The author indicates that in rationalism:

> Government decision making [should] become a value neutral technical process with the authority of expertise. Their [public officials] job is to translate into specific rules of action the public policy goals already determined by the decision of the people … Human discretion is minimised or eliminated [where possible] by defining it out of the decision situation.

The proliferation of centres for policy studies, offices of management and budgeting, institutions of development studies and departments of economic planning and management, the world over, is an acknowledgment of the utility of rationalism. The belief is that proper planning and designing are the keys to successful management of development and all economic affairs of a state. Thus, rationalism is fundamental in all policy actions. However, it must be clarified that the argument is not that all rational actions are implemented

accordingly. It is only to say that, at least before implementing any action, one has to determine what is best for a given situation. Such a process obviously does not dismiss rationality, instead it highlights that circumstantial rationality can be allowed to take centre stage where what is considered as best cannot be implemented.

Zimbabwe's rural local government system from the colonial times can be used as an example where two different systems of rural local government were put in place in a single country with different ministries being assigned the task of overseeing the development of these institutions. This emphasizes the point that the colonial masters knew very well about the best way to manage local affairs, but chose a control oriented system for black rural local governance and a liberal utilitarian system for the whites. This was done to extend government's control to the blacks in order to subordinate and subjugate them. This was consistent with their desire to promote values of their oppressive colonial system (Makumbe in Reddy, 2000:277). This does not mean that they did not know the best way, but that circumstances dominated by values of white supremacy took centre stage in determining the way forward for rural local governance within the colonial framework.

As indicated at the beginning, the rationalist premise has confidence in human beings. It asserts that human beings have been endowed with the power of reason. Besides, human beings are basically good and considerate. In order to relate to others, they do so through reason. The reasonableness of human beings actually inspires humans in their daily endeavors. It is through the belief in human reason that societies entrust issues of governance to a selected group of governors. They expect this group to use reason in planning and designing governance courses of action. Societies retain the right to change those who govern if they feel that the governors no longer carry out their tasks appropriately. Thus, in their selection process societies use reason when they select and change each group of governors. At least, in an ideal situation where

societies have the knowledge, political capacity and information about governance issues such rationality is expected to prevail in its best form. Bozeman (1979:66) sums up these sentiments by stating that:

> … the policy philosophy of rationalism has been influential in policy making because it inspires confidence. It says that though the world may be complex and its problems of great magnitude, social, economic and political problems may be understood and perhaps solved … The human condition is not irremediable, policy options need not inevitably entail conflict and power politics; and by resorting to reason we may find that the best way (or at least a close approximation). Thus unlike several policy philosophies, rationalism encourages government by design – planning, social engineering and intervention.

The rationalist philosophy explains the rational actor paradigm, which guides Allison's Rational Actor Model. By paradigm is meant a systematic statement of the basic assumptions, concepts and propositions employed by a school of analysis (Merton in Allison, 1971:28). It is a an outlook or analytical view of the world using a set of analytical view points that express one's view of the world in so far as a particular phenomenon is concerned. The Rational Actor Paradigm by Allison, in line with the above definition includes several analytical factors such as basic units of analysis; organising concepts; the dominant inference patterns; and general and specific propositions (Allison, 1971:28). A systematic explanation of the paradigm follows below.

Basic Unit of Analysis: The paradigm takes government as a basic unit of analysis. Government's action is exemplified by the choice it has selected among competing alternatives and the operations therein. The term government here does not necessarily imply all institutions of government acting in unison, or for that matter, the actions of the management committee of government (Cabinet), but can refer to a few individuals in this committee or other government officials or even one member for that matter; or those sanctioned by government to make decisions on its behalf, such as commissions of inquiry. Of importance to the rational process, is to explain how government comes up with strategic solutions

to problems with which it is confronted. This is what is vital for this analysis in order to provide explanations and predictions for future actions, given the consequences or the outcomes of the selected policy strategy for the problem at hand. Allison (1971:28) emphasizes that the various actions of government can actually be packaged into a single actor, hence the rational actor model, implying as it were, action by one person.

In the RLG case in Zimbabwe, this approach indicates that central government and all who have been sanctioned by it to make decisions on the type of action to be implemented for rural local governance in Zimbabwe ought to be identified as a single governmental actor. The question is: Is the policy emanating from this actor consistent with the needs of the rural people? Is it sufficient to give rural local government institutions the power to champion the development of local communities or is it cocooned with central government self-preservation clauses that, in a subtle way, give this central actor overall decision-making powers?

Organising Concepts: These are the important elements on which an analyst focuses within the parameters of governmental action. These elements highlight the actual actor, the problem he/she wishes to solve, and the processes of rational action. The actor proceeds within the confines of the goals articulated, in line with what he/she wants to achieve by solving the problem. He/she considers the options open to him/her and the consequences of each of the alternatives. In fact, the organising concepts he/she uses to articulate his/her course of action express the actor's rational action. Thus, rational action is indeed, the rational actor model. It outlines the goals that have to be achieved; the options or policy alternatives open to the decision maker; consideration for the consequences of each action; and the choice that the actor finally makes, among the many competing options.

Dominant Inference Patterns: This explains the importance of the action in terms of it being a maximizer of values, a satisfying undertaking or just a stopgap

measure that is temporary and would as a result, call for in-depth considerations of the problem and the action that should follow later.

General Propositions: This is the process by which the rational actor gathers information to justify the objectives, actions and their consequences.

Explanations of rationalism and the rational actor paradigm highlight the basis of Allison's Rational Actor model. Thus, the model is contained within the rational actor paradigm and it is explained in the organising concepts of this paradigm, as indicated above. This model seeks to explain why government chooses a particular course of action, among others, in order to accomplish its goals. For example, given the historical condition of racially based separate rural local governance in Zimbabwe, and the disparities in resource bases of both the former RCs and DCs, one may ask the question: Why did government choose to amalgamate the two rural local government institutions? Why did government come up with this choice among other contending alternatives? These can be followed by the question: Is the selected course of action achieving the goals for which it was designed? Thus, the explications that follow in answering these questions can be found by gauging the performance of these institutions.

The centrality of the Rational Actor Model as in rationalism is that human behavior is purposive, well calculated and planned. It is goal oriented and thus, intendedly rational. The Rational Actor Model is a rigorous model of goal directed action emanating from well-constructed and well thought out decisions that follow proper human reasoning. Allison (1971:28-29) gives a vivid description of the model by indicating that:

> The model's rigour stems from its assumption that action
> constitutes more than simple purposive choice of a unitary agent.
> What rationality adds to the concept of purpose is consistency:
> consistency among goals and objectives relative to a particular
> action; consistency in the application of principles in order to select
> the optimal alternative … the rigorous model of rational action
> maintains that rational choice consists of value maximising

adaptation within the context of a given pay off function, fixed alternatives and consequences that are known in one of the three senses corresponding with certainty, risk, and uncertainty.

Allison (1971:29-30) further indicates that the model highlights a number of principles as important in guiding choice and action. These are listed below.

Goals and objectives: These are the favoured or preferred consequences of action. The rational actor looks at action in so far as it has some utility or pay off measured in terms of its ability to meet these preferred consequences. For example, in coming up with a decision to amalgamate RCs and DCs, GOZ is expected to have measured its benefits as indicated by preferred consequences of action. Increased benefits are to be expected; as more than what used to be the case under the separate rural local authority system (RCs and DCs respectively).

Alternatives: Alternatives define the range of optional courses of action that can be undertaken in order to attain the set goals and objectives. The point here is that the rational actor is confronted with several policy options (alternatives) that can be undertaken to remedy a given situation. He/she has to have ample knowledge of this situation. Armed with such a realisation, he/she should articulate these policy alternatives in an explicit and precise manner in order to differentiate one from another, for the purpose of analysing them further in order to gauge their viability.

Consequences: The tabling of the alternatives is followed by a clear and precise exposition of the outcomes of each alternative. Both socio-economic and political costs and benefits of each alternative explicitly identified. The assumptions here are that the rational actor can proceed identify these costs and benefits in an accurate manner and that he/she is capable of generating information on each of the consequences or outcomes emanating from each of the alternatives.

Choice: Following the weighing of the consequences and benefits of each of the alternatives, a rational choice is made. This choice is simply that of the alternative with the highest net benefit. It is that which maximises the rational actor's pay off function. The pay off function in this case should not be viewed entirely in financial terms but also in social and political terms where considerations for social and political acceptability of the course of action is weighed against the economic gains to establish its popularity and other spillover effects which are difficult to quantify.

In Defense of the Model

To defend the rational actor model, one can start by defending rationalism from other policy philosophies such as protectorism, brokerism, pragmatism, transferalism and egoism. The rational actor model is a humanity-based model. It accepts the ability of human beings to govern themselves unlike in the case of protectorism, which has a pejorative view of human beings. Protectorism is based on the philosophies of philosophers such as Plato in the *Republic,* Thomas Hobbes in the *Leviathan* and Edward Banfield in *The Unheavenly City.* The fundamental philosophical thrust of protectorism is that human beings are, by nature, basically bad. They love conflict and creating problems for others and themselves. Their lives are embedded in chaos, violence, selfishness and suspicion. They have limited knowledge and thus, for mutual coexistence and harmony, they need strong government. Thus, government should act as a protector, protecting them from other human beings and themselves. In view of this, the chief actions of government should be to regulate the operations of human beings. This means that laws should be enforced to ensure compliance and where possible, ruthlessly, especially when rebellious attitudes are detected.

One can argue that in such in such a scenario, the politics of domination and constraint exists. Those with power determine policy action and expect society to comply. Thus, if such compliance were not obtained voluntarily, it would be made

possible by force, hence the concept quasi-compliance. Those in power set standards and procedures for doing things. Rule bound actions manifest themselves. All within a state act in accordance with the constraints set by those who govern. This philosophy exhibits dictatorial tendencies as it considers that those who govern possess the knowledge to do so and those who are governed should follow the designs of the governors, as such are intended to facilitate their livelihood. Colonial rural local government in Zimbabwe can be given as an example where black rural local government was placed under the Ministry of Internal Affairs rather than that of Local Government where its white counterpart belonged (Namusi, 1998:7). The local government system for blacks was monitored by a Native Commissioner. These government functionaries had power to determine the nature and content of local policy. Besides, they also determined who should represent the local people. They were not accountable to the people they administered. They maintained compliance in the locality with whatever means they saw necessary at the time. In fact, placing rural local governance under the Minister of Internal Affairs was designed to allow swift action by the ministry if any acts of subversion and non-compliance are detected in any locality. Since the ministry also controlled the state's coercive arm, the police, it was considered to be the rightful department to monitor African affairs, which needed maximum supervision and control (Namusi, 1998:8).

It can be argued that this is a rational move in so far as it allows those who govern, the chance to think of methods of effectively governing the "suspicious" human beings who need to feel the presence of government each time. The argument is sustainable in so far as this form of rationality can be given a qualifying epithet, such as 'protectorist rationality' since it is rational action only in so far as governing by suppressing others, is concerned. This type of rationality is unacceptable as it gives those who rule unlimited power over the ruled, a condition for authoritarian rule that is not responsive to societal demands and democratic principles.

The second policy philosophy that needs to be focused upon in defending rationalism is brokerism. This philosophy exhibits pluralist conceptions of governance and thus advances the notion of the politics of representation and involvement. The philosophical standpoint of brokerism accepts the diversity of society and the need by government to create a system of involving all the different groups of society in decision-making about governance. Government, in this instance, acts as a broker. It creates an atmosphere that enables different groups to interact bargain, persuade each other and make compromises about policy issues. Policy, in this case, is resultant of the varied policy inputs that are synthesized and weighed accordingly to produce what is best under the circumstances.

Sentiments by Schubert in Bozeman (1979:68) vividly emphasize the paramountcy of brokerism. The author indicates that:

> The supreme virtue of any government is the multiplicity of points of access that it affords for the manifold conflicting interests … in a pluralistic society. The function of government officials is to facilitate the continuous readjustment of conflicting interest…

In the same vein, Robert Dahl in Bozeman (1979:68) indicates that brokerism provides multiple power centers, which share power, with none in a position to dictate policy. Thus, in Dahl's contention, the existence of several loci of power:

> will help… to tame power, to secure the consent of all, and to settle conflicts peacefully because: … [if] one centre of power is set against another, power itself will be tamed … while coercion will be reduced to a minimum. … [when] even minorities are provided with opportunities to veto solutions they strongly object to, the consent of all will be won in the long run. … constant negotiations among different centres of power are necessary in order to make decisions, [and in this way] citizens and leaders will perfect the precarious art of dealing peacefully with their conflicts … not merely to the benefit of one position but to the mutual benefit of all the parties to a conflict.

While this philosophy, which is system based, is acknowledged to be central in good governance discourses, it does not receive centre stage in this study. The main reason for this is that group participation in policy making seems to suggest

that all groups have equal access to information and that they are adequately conscientised of the policy issues at hand. This is not normally the case in the practical world. Some groups are more advantaged than others in terms of information access and policy making literacy. As a result, group dynamics seems to promote the interests of the more powerful. Besides, it is difficult to carry out an appropriate group-balancing act that levels the policy field for every actor. Secondly, brokerism seems to have an inherent interest in conflict reduction. Such tendencies push the philosophy towards a regulatory approach to policy making which is a protectionist way of doing things and contrary to people empowerment especially, as policy power differs among groups. The end result is a situation where the powerful are protected from the weak a scenario that defeats the very fundamentals of the philosophy. If one wants to accord it a rationalist status, it can only qualify as brokerist rationality.

The introduction of District Councils in Zimbabwe sought to reform African Councils that existed just before Zimbabwe's independence (Jordan, 1984:11). Although District Councils were created to enhance mass participation and self-help initiatives in line with the government's socialist policies, those interest groups with power in the localities dominated local decision-making. This was despite the fact that structures for rural participation such as Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) and Ward Development Committees (WADCOs) were put in place. In certain cases, decisions of VIDCO and WADCO chairpersons always dominated the policy process although the local people in general, held different views. People's views were craftily subordinated to allow those with power to have their decisions accepted and converted into policy action. Besides, central government that provided funding for these institutions also dominated decision-making as it was interested in its programs and projects being implemented at the expense of those that the local decision makers had prioritised. Within this critique, it is acknowledged that there may be different settings for groups in which to participate in local affairs, but the questions ultimately are: Whose decisions prevail and what type of decisions are they? Are they decisions that

are a result of group dynamism, or do they reveal a skewed frame that is consistent with the different power centres of different action groups?

The rational actor model is also selected in the face of its major critics, that is, pragmatists. The works of James Dewey and Charles Lindblom are associated with this philosophy. The underlying principle of pragmatism is that in making policy, 'do everything that works.' Decisions should be made based on what has worked and any changes should be cognisant of this fact. Thus, pragmatism is incremental in nature and promotes incremental decision-making. Incremental decision-making has its benefits because the problems facing society are such, that they should be solved within the shortest time possible. Thus, policies have to be made quickly. Pragmatism likens policy makers to 'firefighters' who have to make decisions immediately. The assertions are that policy options cannot be pondered over a long time to search for the best way of doing things. It is a practical rather than a philosophical exercise and one has to be practical about its process. Anderson (1990:113) captures the thrust of incrementalism when he says that it is:

> A decision theory that avoids many of the problems of the rational comprehensive theory [rationalism] and at the same time is more descriptive of the way in which public officials actually make decisions.

The assertion here, in line with pragmatist philosophy, is that incrementalism takes into cognizance what actually happens. Although it is normative in nature, it is based on reality. It is about what is observable in the real world of decision making. The basic characteristics of pragmatism are that:

- The decision maker, when confronted with a problem, attempts to define the problem within the realities of existing programmes and policies. He/she proceeds to select goals and actions within these parameters.
- The decision maker, who realises many limits affecting him/her, considers only those alternatives that vary marginally from the existing

course of action. This means that in his/her exploration of alternatives, he/she uses the existing courses of action as a basis for making decisions.

- The decision maker evaluates the alternatives, taking into consideration what he/she considers as important within a particular setting. In other words, he/she prioritises consequences and only attempts to know more of those that are considered crucial for goal attainment in a particular setting.

- A continuous process of defining and redefining the problem is undertaken, as more information becomes available and more unexpected consequences manifest themselves (Denhart, 1993:95-96).

The decision maker operates on the premise that there is no single right solution, but that a solution is adopted in so far as there is agreement by the various analysts that it can be adopted, within the limits in which the actors or organisations of concern are operating. Pragmatism or incrementalism offers a remedial frame of decision-making. It is geared more to the amelioration of present concrete social imperfections than to the promotion of future social goals. It is a 'something that will work' approach based on consent rather than on rigorous mathematical calculations. Further argument indicates that pragmatism is realistic and reduces a lot of risks and costs associated with undertaking courses of action that are revolutionary and with no relevance to what is already there. Besides, this decision frame accepts the limits of humans in terms of their intelligence, capacity to obtain all the necessary information, the time limits they face and the availability of resources that may limit other options that may be considered viable.

Major criticisms of this theory centre on its remedial nature. It is criticised as being a quick fix policy-making frame that shuns a rigorous analysis of issues to produce what can be considered best. This approach seems to exhibit a

conservative outlook, since what works is what has been tried and, therefore, there is no need to completely eradicate what was done before. Its lessons are that decision makers should, instead, build on what is already there. The approach seems to favour those who have been in power, as their decisions are likely to be perpetuated under such a decision-making system (Roux, Brynard, Botes and Fourie, 1997:139). As such, the approach is not suitable for Africa, a Continent that is emerging from colonialism. The challenge for African countries is to build a new political dispensation that is so far removed from the colonial framework that favoured a few whites because of the colour of their skin. The transformation policy for rural local government in Zimbabwe should be a complete departure from the dual system that existed. Secondly, it should be a complete departure from the unnecessary control of local institutions that was manifested during colonialism and during the transitional era. As such, pragmatism with its interest in preserving the past ceases to be a guiding light for the transformation process, since there is very little if any, acceptable past to be preserved. This policy philosophy undoubtedly, has elements of domination. It appears to reject innovation and creativity and have a preference for tradition.

Another interesting policy philosophy that rationalism, as adopted in this study, has to be defended against, is transferalism. Some scholars refer to it as a philosophy of the welfare state. It is a philosophy of taking from the 'haves' to give to the 'have nots' (Bozeman, 1979:70). Marx, Rousseau, Ricardo and Pigou are associated with this philosophy. This is essentially a redistributive philosophy. It acknowledges that poverty and deprivation are a result of the nature of society rather than of an inherent condition of the 'lazy' people who have no drive for success. Transferalism is mostly concerned with the ends. The central question here is: In the final analysis, have the poor benefited from governmental action? The problem with this as a philosophy of policy making stems from the fact that society is not, by nature, driven by the desire for equality. Issues of self-advancement to the full abilities of one outweigh these egalitarian frames of thinking. Thus, in policy making, although issues of redistribution are

acknowledged, policy makers should be guided by decision frames that offer the best courses of action for developing individuals to their fullest potential, rather than inculcating a receiver syndrome that is detrimental to the receiving individual as well as to overall national development. Surely, RDCs are not about taking from the rich and giving to the poor. They are about creating wealth through local initiative so as to enhance self-determination rather than create a dependency syndrome. It becomes a task of this study to measure the reasonableness of the amalgamation policy towards achieving this elusive goal of development.

The adoption of rationalism as a philosophical frame for the study can also be defended against the egoist policy philosophy. Egoism as a policy philosophy negates issues of public interest. The dominating concern of egoism is that gains from the policy process accrue to policy decision makers and bureaucrats. Thus, the concern of those in power is to accumulate power so that they can remain in these positions of authority. The survival of those in power overrides all decision-making. In analysing bureaucratic behavior as exhibiting egoist characteristics, Anthony Downs (1967:2) indicates that:

> The fundamental premise of the theory [egoism] is that bureaucratic officials, like all other agents in society, are significantly – though not solely – motivated by their own self interest … Bureaucratic officials in general have a complex set of goals … but regardless of the particular goals involved, every official is significantly motivated by his own self interest even when acting in a purely official capacity.

Although egoism is difficult to measure, any analysis of governance that ignores issues of self-interest is not likely to produce far-reaching conclusions, because this is fundamental in human existence. While self-interest can manifest itself on an individual level, it also exists on an organisational level where the interest is to enhance the position of one's organisation vis-à-vis others. Bozeman (1979:73) notes that:

> [At an agency level], egoism is reflected in extreme levels toward agency expansion, agency budget growth, 'territoriality,' and

bureaucratic imperialism (when these efforts are not designed to promote some social mission).

However, egoism cannot be used as a principle of this study as such an approach would be to encourage self-aggrandisement at the expense of society. It could be used to indicate what is actually going on, but subsequently, would cease to be of normative value to this study and overall policy making. The interest here is to bring out clearly whether or not reasonableness has permeated the policy process and whether there are shortcomings. If such shortcomings exist, what is it that can be done to remedy the situation? Rationalism is seen to offer both a descriptive and normative approach to policy making and is acknowledged in this study to be the most relevant policy framework for transforming rural local governance in Zimbabwe.

It is clear from explications of the rational actor model that, fundamental to this model, is the concept of rationality. Thus, behind every classical explanation of rational action is the fact that the rational actor undertakes a cyclical process of policy making where he/she identifies a problem; sets objectives to be achieved; identifies choices or alternatives (policy options) that can be followed to achieve the objectives; carries out a cost-benefit analysis to weigh these alternatives; selects a preferred choice that is, the one with the highest net benefits; prepares implementation procedures and actually sees to the implementation of the selected alternative; monitors and continuously evaluates the implementation process to ensure that goals are being achieved, as per the expectations. This classical explanation of rational action has been much criticized by several scholars. Although this looks like a perfect procedure to be followed when analysing problems with the intention of solving them, this very process is criticized because the rationality of the decision maker is limited by several factors that make it impossible for the decision maker to act in this ideal, logical manner. In fact, to expect human beings to act in this manner is to raise them to the level of a deity with unlimited powers of reason. Some of the limiting factors

enumerated by several scholars such as James Anderson (1990:114), Charles Lindblom (1993:27-28) and Jean Blondel (1995:363-364) include the following:

1. The complexity of problems makes the isolation and definition of problems rather difficult and a taxing exercise. This is especially so where a ripple causation – effect process makes it difficult to state what exactly the problem is. For example, when local authorities fail to perform as per expectation, the questions to ask are: What is the problem? Is it poor management, inadequate resources, central government interference, the general non-viability of local authorities or some other reason? The causation – effect process here is such that it is difficult to establish the actual cause. Establishing the cause becomes complicated such that a careless attack on poor management may actually lead to wrong policies being formulated in an effort to address the problem. For example, during the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe, many injustices took place, where human rights violations were at their highest. The questions are: Should the individual perpetrators of human rights abuse be the targets of those who were affected or unjustly treated or should the target be the system of oppression that existed? What kind of policies should government implement to try and eliminate the problem? Are the correct policies those that take the unjust system as the cause or those that target individual perpetrators as the cause?

2. Decision makers often find themselves in situations where they have difficulties in getting information on the problem and the alternatives they want to institute to solve them. Besides, they are confronted with the problem of time since most decisions need to be made as soon as possible. Their capacity to predict the future is also limited, so is their ability to carry out complex calculations that assist in future predictions. The fundamental assertion of this critique is that human beings do not

know all there is to know. Their knowledge is limited and so is their rationality.

3. Decision-making is affected by many competing values such as political, organisational, personal and social values. These to an extent, tend to impede a rational comprehensive approach to making decisions, as numerous value conflict situations inevitably manifest themselves in such scenarios. For example, where one's decisions may affect one negatively while affecting the organisation positively, what decision is one likely to take? Is one not likely to take a compromise position and make decisions that only satisfy rather than maximise?

4. The issue of sunk costs also limits the rational comprehensiveness of the decision maker. Such costs may be in the form of decisions made previously or commitments and investments in existing policies and programmes. These may be such that it may be difficult to make certain sets of decisions that would lead to the cancellation of the existing decisions, commitments and investments. Within this scenario, the decision maker is bound by what already exists such that it becomes difficult for him/her to think of options that are outside this frame, as such decisions could be too costly and practically difficult to implement.

5. The rational model, apart from being criticised for placing too much emphasis on the intellectual capacities of the decision makers, does not allow the setting of objectives prior to, and distinct from, a consideration of alternative policies including both financial and time costs. It is also criticised for ignoring intra- and extra-organisational behavior as influential in the rational actor's decision making processes.

Although these points are acknowledged in this research, they are not taken as weaknesses of the model, but weaknesses of the intra- and extra-environmental

actors that tend to incapacitate the rational actor. These do not, according to this study, dismiss the model but indicate that the model should actually function with a clear awareness of these factors. They are thus, capacity giving criticisms where rational actors have to explore the width, depth and length of the problems they wish to solve and do so with the recognition of environmental destabilizers that may affect the thought processes of human beings. In fact, the model also acknowledges these points and projects itself as an ideal model of policy making, if the world was free of these environmental destabilizers. To further support this point, one would argue that the centrality of this model is that it can be used as a mode of thought that can open up a critical discussion about processes of policy making (Dunn, 1994:273-275).

The rational actor model allows one to critically analyse the way policies have been made or have to be made, such that, in a situation where policy makers resort to a little resourcefulness in developing policy, one can argue that the produced policy lacks excellence, insight and vision: positions that are inconsistent with an already existent model – the rational actor model. It is the contention of this study that policy makers, as a result, should not jump to the soft options of making incremental changes, when all that is required is some insightful thinking which can reveal other more satisfactory policy options.

The policy environment understandably is turbulent and full of information closures, and requires urgency in addressing social issues. Criticism of this model that it is not ideal for situations that exhibit such factors should not be interpreted as rejecting the model per se, but rather as using it within the context of flexibility and subject to contingent factors.

It should also be indicated here that whatever decision making model is adopted, a proper weighing of issues is required, to generate meaningful decisions. With this in mind, the onus is on decision makers to be as rational as possible in making their decisions. Whatever the model or approach adopted, they (decision

makers) cannot afford to be impulsive and irrational. Rationality is therefore, a fundamental concept within the realm of decision-making. Making decisions presupposes the ability to think logically. It also presupposes purposefulness arrived at through:

(a)   recognition of the need for a decision;

(b)   analysis of the situation at hand;

(c)   identification of a policy option that can remedy the situation at hand; and

(d)   operationalisation of the selected course of action or policy option to actually realise the objectives one is trying to achieve (Allison, 1971:29).

These procedural actions pervade all processes of decision making, in whatever mode. Thus, rationality can be viewed as the ability to make viable choices, given competing alternatives. To be rational therefore, is to be reasonable, objective, logical, sensible, purposeful, to defy haphazard action, and to take into consideration the consequences of an action. Thus, the rational actor model rests of course on the concept of rationality itself. This term has been used in a large number of different ways. In the policy making literature it is often prefixed by a qualifying epithet, sometimes, to convey a flavour to the concept, which the author subsequently wishes to use as a basis for criticism (Dunn, 1994:273).

Thus, qualifying epithets alter the substance of rationality to suit a particular analyst, a situation that to an extent, distorts rationality as it should be viewed but, on the other hand, acknowledges the many actions of decision makers that can be considered as rational, thereby underlining the utility of rationality and its pervasiveness in decision making. Hebert Simon, an adherent of incrementalism and pragmatic philosophy indicates that all human behavior has a rational component, but not in terms of 'economic rationality' (that is, value maximising behavior), but its '*multirational*' nature, which allows the selection of preferred behavioral alternatives in terms of some system of values whereby the

consequences of behavior can be evaluated (Dunn, 1994:274). Within this argument, it is important to note that different forms of rationality can manifest themselves such as:

(i)   objective rationality – which is rationality in line with identified values which have to be maximised;

(ii)   subjective rationality – which is maximising value subject to the knowledge of the decision maker;

(iii)   conscious rationality – consciously adjusting means to ends;

(iv)   deliberate rationality – the adjustment process of means to ends is deliberate;

(v)   organisational rationality – oriented towards the organisation's objectives; and

(vi)   individual rationality – oriented towards individual goals (Denhart, 1993:89-90).

Some scholars want to refer to the different rationality frames as value rational action, affectual rational action, traditional rational action, and instrumental rational action (Moyo, 1992:29-30). Other scholars such as Dunn (1994:273) refer to the rationality variants as technical rationality, economic rationality, legal rationality, social rationality and substantive rationality. These different forms of rational action acknowledge the ubiquity of this concept. Rationality therefore, among others, can help:

(a)   improve the nature and content of whatever undergoes a rational process;

(b)   enhance efficiency in resource utilization, bearing in mind issues of scarcity and choice. In fact, rational action has tremendous economic utility as it deals with these economic issues of choice under conditions of scarcity, the essence of the economic problem;

(c)   improve the effectiveness of actions geared to achieve set goals;

(d)   decision makers address issues of equity (redistribution) in a competent manner using the underlying criteria of efficiency; and

(e)   enhance the capacity to make judgments about diverse issues that affect the nation. In this case, making judgments on the nature, policy content, and operational procedures of rural local governance in a manner that ensures the attainment of the very values of local governance, liberty, participation, responsiveness, equity and development.

As indicated above, this concept (rationalism) has permeated most government organisations gearing themselves for change and development. Zimbabwe has set up an institute for public administration and management known as the Zimbabwe Institute for Public Administration and Management (ZIPAM). The institute, among other duties, is expected to carry out scientific analysis in the management and administration of the public sector, with a view to making recommendations to government so as to keep the management and administration of this sector up to date with current methods and techniques of running organisations. The institute also trains public sector managers in policy making and decision making as well as in project management and managing for change. These are rationally conceived aspects of public management, which help to enhance the capacity of public managers to make rational decisions.

The rational actor model is a model for realists, idealists and rationalists (Bozeman, 1979:63-66). One feels compelled to indicate that this is, in fact, the umbrella model of decision making and policy making. All these other models are not far removed from it but complement it in terms of emphasizing a particular

thrust of rationality consistent with certain contingencies, which they consider to be important. Thus, to talk of incrementalism, is really to talk about incremental rational action. To talk about the optimal model (mixed scanning) is to discuss optimal rationality. The argument is similar to all other arguments that apply qualifying epithets to rationality, such as comprehensive rationality, technical rationality and purposive rationality. All these are acceptable as they do not minimise rationality, but enrich it with consideration of rationality being a mother set and the epithets being sub-sets that need proper theoretical grounding. Thus, rationality ranges across a continuum bounded on one end by sub-conscious non deliberate adaptations of means and ends based on incomplete knowledge and on the other by conscious deliberate adaptations based on complete knowledge (Simon in Denhart, 1993:89-91).

This contention may be extended to the philosophies mentioned above, that is, protectorism, brokerism, pragmatism, transferalism, and egoism. All these have rational characteristics in so far as rationality is described in terms of purposeful, reasonable, scientific, planned, and logical action. All these –isms exhibit sequential steps of reasoning and decision making. They are not haphazard in nature. They aim at maximising the attainment of results within the limits they are operating. In fact, as indicated before, to say rationality does not consider the presence of limits in which such as the value premises of decision making, the self interest of administrators and politicians (egoism), and the need to be consultative in defining policy (representativeness and societal involvement), is to defy its characteristics of realism and utility that are the major theoretical thrusts of this philosophy.

This study argues that the GOZ in its bid to transform rural local government in Zimbabwe followed this rational process. For example, the formation of the Forum for Rural Development, composed of administrative experts with the necessary knowledge and proven scientific backgrounds for social engineering, is testimony of an attempt to be as scientific as possible in coming up with a new

form of rural local government. However, because of different philosophical orientations impinging upon political leadership, it must be recognized that purposive rationality can be derailed in the process, to accommodate the different interests expressed by central government. In each case where the Act (RDC Act of 1988) reveals the derailment of purposive rationality and where practice actually deviates from such purposiveness, especially where such actions affect the autonomy and functional capacity of RDCs, such variations are stated in this document and become subjects of recommendations geared to re-orienting these institutions in order to enhance their viability, efficiency and effectiveness.

This study considers the rational actor model as a useful tool as it helps in the management of change, programme planning and design, and programme implementation. It brings forth a sequential pattern of explaining the policy process using a process mode1 that highlights policy initiation; policy estimation; policy selection; policy implementation; and policy evaluation and termination. Although this sequential pattern of policy action has not been spared the rod of criticism by the ardent critics such as Lindblom in Anderson (1990:114) and Ham and Hill (1993:84), who prefer the iterative framework. This process is indeed an ideal one where the iterative component becomes an addition to it, in order to remove its apparent rigidity and to cater for any system trouble-shooting mechanisms that are directed by activities in a particular environment.

 As reflected in the preceding discussion, the rational actor model is based on rationality. Rationality stands for the notion of reflection as a prelude to action. Instead of acting upon hunches, the decision maker should analyse the situation carefully, consider alternative options and list their strengths and weaknesses. Rationality has an instrumental value. It is concerned with the maximisation of some goal or the application of some value judgment to a specific phenomenon. Rationality also stands for the popular idea of reasonableness, that is, it seeks harmony where conflicting aims abound. This is fundamental to this study,

hence the need to determine rationality of local government managers in serving communities.

THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question that guides this study is:

How well has the Beitbridge Rural District Council performed between 1993 and 2002?

To address the complexity of the research question, the following propositions surrounding this great debate are made. Firstly, the performance of the BRDC has neither lived up to the expectations of local communities, nor to those of the central government. This means that the BRDC has not appropriately carried out its duties to enable the grass roots people to develop. Secondly, while the BRDC is legally entrusted with the authority to provide services of a local nature such as education, health, housing, roads, and water, as well as initiate sustainable development programmes and projects, it has not managed to do so in the most appropriate manner. Thirdly, the BRDC has failed to institute effective and efficient management machinery with the capacity to formulate appropriate strategic plans and manage internal components of the organisation such as personnel and the council's transport section. It also has problems with collecting and utilizing revenue in the most effective and efficient manner. Council decision-making is highly centralized. There is no democratic or popular participation in decision-making and this tends to reduce compliance and the overall viability of council decisions. These hypothetical statements provide the scope of reviewing the performance of the BRDC so as to proffer recommendations that can help to improve the operations of the council.

IMPORTANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is important and significant in a number of ways. Firstly, this study is a pioneering research project, the intention of which is to provide a clear picture of the operations of RDCs in Zimbabwe, albeit specifically the Beitbridge Rural District Council, and how these operations affect communities. This means that this is a results-oriented study. It is outcome rather than input based. How RDCs have translated objectives into actions and what impact these actions have on communities is fundamental to this study. The essence of local government is to proffer socio-economic advantages to localities, whereupon the ability to provide these (advantages) underscores acceptable performance. This is significant in this study.

Most of the studies on amalgamation were carried out before the current decentralization policy was implemented. They were basically analytical and prescriptive, but this study adopts a descriptive approach backed by a sound theoretical framework (the rational actor model) to help explain the current performance level of RDCs and reasons for this level of performance. This approach allows the study to develop prescriptive models of local authority operations. Thus, while the existing studies basically have a constitutional analytical focus, this study adopts a neo-institutionalist integrated approach that blends together both behavioral and constitutional approaches (Blondel, 1995:8-9), to emphasize the importance of institutions, behavior, constitutions and practices. This helps to produce a coherent and far reaching analysis of contemporary government activities. The approach allows the study to include both substantive and procedural policies in its analysis in order to come up with what actually happens and whether this leads to objective attainment or not. Of significance here is that the written word in legislative provisions and policy statements by government does not reveal what is happening on the ground. These legislative provisions are about what ought to be. They are normative in

their outlook, and therefore more often than not, those who are tasked with effecting these, fail to come up with proper procedural instruments that would lead to successful goal attainment. If they do, actual operation fails in most cases, to be in accordance with the intentions of the written word. For this reason, this study has departed from legislative analysis to practical and insightful exposition of the actual policy implementation dynamics.

Secondly, the influence of local government as an instrument of development, good governance and democracy has been noted the world over. Throughout Africa and the developing world, efforts have been made to give more power to the people at the grass roots level so as to enhance their participation in democratic governance. The materialisation of such cherished collaboration by all in raising socio-economic and political development can be, or is achievable through the institutions of local government that can have the requisite autonomous and functional capacities to service their locales. The study, therefore, notes and acknowledges, within this framework, that local authorities have a tremendous influence on the people they serve and *vice versa*. Therefore, not to study local authority operations is to neglect studies on how the political system responds to the wishes of the electorate. It is broadly, to neglect studies in democracy, good governance, and socio-economic development within a given polity.

Thirdly, public executives in Zimbabwe are not normally exposed to standard measures to gauge their policy exploits and general leadership qualities. This study wishes to provide a framework for these measures, as there is a general realization that the proper management of public organizations requires men and women of great vision and peculiar decision making abilities; men and women who are well trained and cherish organizational strategies for excellence and success under stressful political environments that dominate such organizations; and men and women who are endowed with the gift and experience to subvert undue political pressure for the good of their organizations. This study wishes to

check such management issues as they apply to local authority management as a way of developing local authority administration and management for enhanced performance and societal responsiveness. It is important to note that this study is a 'best practices' review of how far short an RDC is on service provision, work process management, cost effectiveness, innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship.

Fourthly, government reform, at whatever level, emphasizes efficiency, quality service provision, customer orientation, efficient and effective financial management and accountability, participatory decision-making, and community empowerment. Gauging the attainment of these values is the essence of the performance measurement that is important in this study.

Fifthly, performance measurement enhances responsibility and accountability. These are the concerns of nearly all, if not all public sector institutions. It is from analysing performance results that RDC functionaries can determine whether they have satisfied these requirements or not.

The sixth point is that the study will make a meaningful contribution to the understanding of Zimbabwe's rural local government system so as to enable individuals, scholars and interested parties to engage in debates on the system. It should also be mentioned that local government is a practical discipline whose operations affect the ordinary people on a daily basis. These effects play a role as measures of the acceptability and unacceptability of the local government system. The study exposes these issues with the hope that more meaningful debate will be generated to build the capacity of rural local government the world over. It should be noted that during the past few years the wind of change and decentralization has been blowing in Africa. Efforts for strengthening democracy in Africa have to be complemented by invigorating the institutions and processes of decentralization. Local government has a special role in this context. Decentralization and good governance need to be promoted due to political,

social, economic, geographical and administrative advantages. Local government as an instrument of decentralization assumes additional significance as it facilitates involvement of people in the formulation and implementation of development plans and promotes self-help, decentralized and participatory government and can also be an important element in good governance (Sharma in Reddy, 2000:73).

The seventh point is that the study wishes to raise interest in local government studies. Most people outside the world of local government think that local government studies are boring. The poor performance of some local government institutions has also added to this lack of interest. Consequently, most people are not well informed about local government and its vitality in the whole process of national governance. This study hopes to raise the level of consciousness of most readers in local government and to stimulate their interest in these institutions and particularly the RDCs in Zimbabwe. After all, Zimbabwe is mainly rural and agricultural, such that the lives of the majority of the people depend on farming activities that are undertaken within these rural areas, which are supervised by RDCs. Now that African countries are in charge of the decision processes of what happens and should happen within them, it is important to examine how this has translated itself to institutions at the local level, and to determine by that very fact, the extent and nature of the democratization process in Africa, or to determine whether democracy remains an illusory phenomenon in this part of the world.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on the Beitbridge Rural District Council located in the most southerly part of Zimbabwe. A full exposition of this RDC is found in Chapter 4. Despite its focus on only one RDC, the study may be faced with the following limitations:

1. **Time**: This is an academic study that has to be completed within a specific time frame. As such, it was not possible to interact with all stakeholders to gather additional information relevant to the study.

2. **Information**: Not much is written on RDCs in Zimbabwe. There are base-line surveys, piecemeal instrument or legislation analysis, and workshop or conference papers that lack the academic coherence and rigour needed for a study such as this. Besides, the BRDC has no culture of recording all its proceedings, be it in the form of minutes of meetings or reports on projects or departmental performance. This, coupled with an unwillingness to share meaningful information by community respondents and councillors, made it difficult to obtain conclusive information on the performance of the BRDC.

3. **Funding**: The research was carried out without any supportive study loan or grant. This placed some restrictions on the researcher and assistants in terms of travel throughout the district to collect information.

4. Besides the limitations associated with items 1 to 3 above, others include the following:

   (a) The degree of subjectivity and error that may be present in the interpretation of documentary and other evidence of the study.

   (b) This is a study of past political and policy restructuring. As a result, the study is cognizant of the fact that there are difficulties in individuals' powers to recall the past. As such, some of the information may not be quite as accurate as documented material and this can affect the conclusions of the study.

   (c) Information distortion may easily occur, as is the case when individuals want the researcher to believe that they are knowledgeable and

understand local authority dynamics, or when their interest is to portray a good or bad picture of the institution being studied.

(d) The level of political privacy that is consistent with the 'black box' of political decision making should also be taken into consideration, as issues of official secrecy may have led to information distortion.

In spite of all these limitations, available data was collected and used to draw conclusions and make recommendations that could be used to enhance institutional performance. Below is a brief outline of the structure of this study.

ORGANISATION OF THE RESEARCH

This study is divided into six chapters. The first chapter outlines the research problem and highlights the significance and importance of this study, in particular, and issues of local governance, in general. The chapter provides an introductory frame that emphasizes the problems of performance measurement in the public sector. It then provides an outline, albeit brief (as this is covered later in chapter 3), of the transformative nature of the new rural local government dispensation in Zimbabwe. This transformation is further clarified through an outline of the imperatives for amalgamation in order to provide a base that enables the study to engage in a critical analysis of the modus operandi of rural local government institutions in Zimbabwe and the objectives that they have to achieve. It is within the context of this information that the purpose of the study and the research problem and hypothesis were developed.

Chapter two deals with methodological issues. Particular emphasis is on the research design, research instruments, data collection schedule and an elaborate discussion on how the data is analyzed. This is an important section of the study as it helps to authenticate the study's findings. It also gives the study its

'scientific face' and guides the researcher towards adopting a systematic way of dealing with the data.

Chapter three deals with the concepts of 'decentralisation' and 'local government'. It further discusses the evolution of rural local government in Zimbabwe, from the colonial times, in order to show how rural local government institutions have performed over time. This provides a proper foundation for a discussion on the amalgamation policy as an instrument for transforming and developing rural local governance in Zimbabwe, since July 1993. It should, however, be noted that the historical development of local government during the colonial era is not discussed as extensively as compared to that of post colonial Zimbabwe, for the simple reason that the thrust of the research question is to investigate the impact of the current piece of legislation (RDC Act of 1988). Also, document searches have revealed that there are no meaningful details for pre-independence rural local governance in the archives. However, the discussion offers meaningful information that acts as a stepping-stone to the current rural local government dispensation and provides an understanding of the current performance of the BRDC.

Chapter four discusses the Beitbridge Rural District Council as the main area of this study. It lays out its geographical location and formation through the Rural District Councils Act, Number 8 of 1988. It outlines its structure, functions and operations and thus, lays a foundation for performance data that was collected and analysed.

Chapter five deals with data presentation and analysis. The data collected using the instruments highlighted in chapter two are presented and analyzed, both quantitatively and qualitatively, as per the demands of such data. A summary discussion of the findings is also made, taking into cognizance the underlying theoretical framework of the study and the hypothetical statements that are being tested. Finally, chapter six outlines the conclusions and recommendations of the

study. This chapter also touches on those aspects of the Act that need to be altered in order to enhance the autonomy and functionality of RDCs. It also suggests a local government philosophy that should be adopted by government in order to enhance overall local government viability in the country.

CONCLUSION

Assessing the performance of public sector institutions has become a critical process of building institutional capacity and ensuring that government organizations operate in a manner that safeguards the interests and needs of communities they serve. This is the essence of quality service provision. Consequently, any institutional reforms, such as has happened in Zimbabwe with the formation of RDCs, should be followed by overt action to gauge the performance of the new institutions. A rational process of developing corrective instruments should follow the results of such measurement. The instruments should be implemented so that the desired socio-economic and political effects are achieved.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

In any scientific research, the worthiness of the findings would depend largely on the manner in which data is collected. With this in mind, and in keeping with the need to maintain comprehensiveness of issues, through descriptive evidence coupled with empirical observation and reporting, the case study method, within an evaluative framework was selected for this study. In addition, the need to investigate and illuminate the rather complex system and dynamics of the RDC structures and functions led this study to further utilize the intensive case study approach rather than use a large scale case investigation. Because of the size of large-scale investigations, they tend to ignore certain minute processes and procedures whose occurrences may have a fundamental impact on the functioning of RDCs. It is significant to note that cases are not generally used to outline or traditionally demonstrate generalisability. The results obtained are applicable to that specific case. However, the tendency to generalize is not ignored in this study, particularly where some assertions are seen to be relevant to most local authorities if not all, in Zimbabwe.

It is important to emphasize the fact that this study is located within the parameters of government studies where the overall rationale is to expose governmental activities at the local level; activities that are geared to enhancing good governance, at the same time, ensuring societal change, development and human progress. Thus, this is research in public affairs and, specifically, public administration/management. It analyses policy execution and the results thereof. It tries to find out if local authorities are achieving the ideals of the state and if

they meet the needs of local communities. Hutchins in Botes (1995:1) indicates that a state exists:

> … not merely to make life possible but to make life good … Every state is a community of some kind, and every community is established with a view to some good. The state derives its very nature and existence from the aspirations and ambitions of mortal beings to obtain those things they regard as good.

It is clear, within this synopsis that the fundamental drive of mortals is to improve their social welfare, either on their own or through state action. As such, the mortal being is confronted on a daily basis with issues of choice: to choose what is good or what is bad, or to decide what is right and what is wrong. In this process of making choices, the mortal being is regulated by the need to avoid pain and suffering in order to enhance his/her happiness. Putting a form of governance in place is to desire the fruits of pleasure and gain that such a governance system promises to offer to the mortal being. It is with this in mind that the study approaches issues of rural local governance in Zimbabwe, as a system that has been transformed to offer some benefits to society that to an extent, maximize gain and minimize losses to the individuals of each locality. The need to systematically analyze the forms of gain and losses of RLGs propels this study to adopt a scientific research methodology with its proven research procedures that allow one to conclude findings with reasonable accuracy and certainty of their authenticity.

The purpose of this chapter therefore, is to describe the research design and to outline the cases used and the sampling frame. The chapter also discusses the methods of data collection and the data collection processes utilized. These are discussed, taking into consideration issues of validity, reliability and ethics of the research process. Data analysis methods utilized in chapter four of the study, are also discussed in this chapter. The final section is made up of the data collection plan or schedule and a summary that encapsulates the whole methodological approach utilized in this study.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

Different scholars have different conceptions of research. However, the conception here, as indicated by Botes (1995:26) is that:

> … research in Public Administration is a purposeful and systematic investigation of behavior, processes and techniques in the administration of public institutions in order to describe, explain and predict certain phenomena pertaining to these behaviors, processes and techniques.

Thus, the orthodox image of research is that which is consistent with natural science methodologies where research is carried out to test hypotheses that, in turn, are derived from various theories offered to explain some feature of the physical world. This means that research is about the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake or for improving certain ways of doing things. This study acknowledges this view as its fundamental interest is to determine the performance of the Beitbridge Rural District Council in Zimbabwe, provoke interest and thought on rural local government issues from different sections of the community and make contributions to improve the system for good governance and overall societal upliftment.

Knowledge can be obtained through different ways such as traditional ways that accept the knowledge repository nature of the elderly. It can also be acquired through rational processes. Rational processes rely on the powers of reason possessed by human beings. To reason is to use "pure abstract intelligence" in order to discover laws. This process is used in fields such as mathematics that uses the axiomatic approach and as such, relies purely on the power of abstract reasoning. However, such a process, though it has positive factors within it, has limits in social science inquiry because of the inherent nature of human intelligence and knowledge, that is, that human beings have limits in their rationality. The other process of acquiring knowledge is through empirical processes. These processes rely on observation. It is only that which can be

observed that constitutes knowledge. Although these methods are plausible, they have been criticised. They are said to possess an inherent inability to establish relationships of facts and explanations of these in terms of how they are connected in time and space (Bless and Higson-Smith, 1994:2). These weaknesses undermine the utility of the methods as independent methods that can be utilised for a meaningful far-reaching study. As such, a high breed method has been developed, the scientific method. The scientific method uses description, explanation and prediction as fundamental processes of any inquiry.

Many scholars of research methodology such as Bless and Higson-Smith (1994:2-3) and Botes (1995:33-34), agree that the scientific method of acquiring knowledge is a systematic investigation of a question, a phenomenon, or a problem using certain fundamental research principles. As such, the scientific method is indeed, the scientific research method. All different sciences are united not by the nature of their subject matter but by their common method of inquiry and as such, by the way knowledge is acquired. This method is the guiding philosophy of this research.

Important in scientific inquiry is the realization that the researcher starts with being curious about a particular phenomenon and has inconclusive answers that seek to describe and explain such a phenomenon. The researcher undertakes to define the phenomenon so as to have the correct answers should he/she be asked about it. The researcher then undertakes a systematic process of determining what the truth is about a phenomenon. Once this has been established, the researcher can input the utility of the answer he/she has obtained about this phenomenon, so that anyone confronted by similar doubts can use the same process to arrive at the correct answer. In the process of finding the answer, the researcher enhances his/her knowledge about a phenomenon. The researcher's process of inquiry and how he/she arrives at answers provides knowledge for other scholars who are curious and want to know more.

This process clearly indicates that the scientific method starts with the realization that a problem exists. Thus, it is this problem that arouses research interest and sets the basis for scientific inquiry. Once a problem has been identified, the scientific process of unraveling the truth about phenomena and enhancing understanding of such phenomena should involve description, analysis, and ultimately, prediction.

Rural local government has been a problem in Zimbabwe mainly because of its duality, excessive interference in local affairs by central government, and general administrative ineptitude (Roe, 1992:15-16). The introduction of amalgamation does not in itself mean that scholars should sit back and pretend that rural local government problems are over. What is required is to get into the rural local government fray to see whether the institutions are performing accordingly under their new mandate; whether all past problems have been solved; and if there are new ones that have come up.

TYPES OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

There are different types of scientific research and different authors use different names to describe these. There is exploratory and descriptive research; correlational and explanatory research; evaluation research; participatory research; and action research. Without dwelling much on each of these, it is of importance to indicate that this study used evaluation research as a suitable research type for an in-depth inquiry into RDC operations. This approach allowed this study to look into the intervention, that is, the policy; the operations of the policy; the strong and weak points of such operations; recommending remedial action or developing some room for maneuvering where anomalies have been noticed.

The policy on the amalgamation of DCs and RCs is an intervention mechanism to restructure, reorganize, reorient and rationalize rural local governance. It is a transformative mechanism designed to enhance effectiveness, efficacy, equity and representativeness in rural local governance. This intervention mechanism has not been assessed to check its performance within a given institutional setting, that is, that no meaningful academic effort has been made to gauge the performance of RDCs, taking into account the provisions of the Rural District Councils Act, No. 8 of 1988 and the competence of implementers.

Evaluation research is used as a premise of operation to investigate and diagnose the extent of autonomy and functional capacity provided for by this policy vis-à-vis what used to be the case prior to such an intervention. The aim here is to identify those areas on autonomy and functional capacity that have been neglected by the policy or the actual conduct of actors in guiding the implementation process. It also checks on the operations of the policy against the substance of the policy as per its legislative provisions. The idea here is to check on deviations and, thereby determine the effects of these on the outcome of policy. It is also aimed at validating the policy and to give it credibility in the eyes of the communities, government and any other agencies that wish to assist the rural local government institutions in their development processes. Bless and Higson-Smith (1994:47-48), define evaluation as a method of social science used to assess the design, implementation and usefulness of social interventions. The authors make further vivid explications of evaluation research and its utility when they indicate that:

> Evaluation research used as a diagnostic tool may help the people implementing an intervention to identify neglected areas of need, neglected target groups and problems within organization and programmes. A comparison of a programme's progress with its original aims is another of the functions of evaluation research. This may serve to adjust the programme to the particular needs and resources of the community within which it is situated. Further, evaluation research can furnish evidence of the usefulness of the programme.

Three important types of evaluation can be ascertained from these explications. These are diagnostic, formative and summative evaluation. These evaluations, though different, are mutually compatible and complementary (Bless and Higson-Smith, 1994:48). This study considers it important to focus on all of them so as to provide a holistic assessment of the policy. To explain the rationale for such an approach, one needs to provide explanations of these types of evaluation.

Diagnostic evaluation is for the provision of data that can be utilized to plan new courses of action that are meant to redress an existing problem, be it explicitly known or perceived. The rationale here is that, as an example, communities (consumers of policy), boards of directors, management and the generality of the workforce may have perceptions of some inadequacies of a particular organization. However, these people may have a problem of identifying exactly what the problem is so that they can design intervening mechanisms. Diagnostic research becomes particularly useful in such a situation; to explore and identify the problems at hand; to highlight the implications for such problems; and to provide sufficient information for reorienting a particular mechanism within the desires of the people concerned, or completely formulating a new strategy.

Formative evaluation, also known as process evaluation, is that evaluation whose aim it is to shape a particular course of action (policy) so that it is consistent with the desires of the intended beneficiaries of the action. No matter how well formulated a course of action is, obstacles always manifest themselves. It becomes important for an organization interested in efficiency and effectiveness to always include this type of evaluation as part of its planning, service delivery and other functions, as a continuous process of remodeling the policy to rid it of distasteful system destabilizers that may be a result of many varied factors.

The third type of evaluation is summative evaluation, also referred to as end

evaluation. This evaluation particularly focuses on the aims and objectives of the programme of concern and is used to determine whether the project or programme of action has attained these objectives or is in the process of doing so. It should be noted that although the term suggests something that is done at the end of a process, the reality is that this evaluation is also carried out during implementation, simultaneously with formative or process evaluation, but, on a more controlled interval basis consistent with the sub-objectives within the life of a particularly long life project or programme. Bless and Higson-Smith (1994:51-53) enumerate five steps through which summative evaluation should proceed. These are:

(a)   the identification of the programme's aims and objectives;

(b)   the formulation of the aims and objectives in measurable terms;

(c)   the construction of the instruments of measurement;

(d)   designing the evaluation study and data collection; and

(e)   reporting back.

While it may not be necessary to explore these steps fully, as they represent the whole research process, what seems to be important is the fact that the three types of evaluation tend to have similar elements so that this study has integrated all these into a broad framework of evaluation, where elements which manifest themselves in each type, may actually be determined in this broader framework, hence, integrated evaluation. As indicated earlier, the rationale is to offer a comprehensive and holistic approach to the issues at stake as the viability, or otherwise, of the amalgamation policy can be determined through a deliberate process of trouble-shooting the system (diagnosis), understanding its implementation process and endeavoring to come up with corrective action (formative), and checking whether the policy is on course, that is, checking it against its aims and objectives (summative). In fact, as is, the differences seem to lie in the reasons for the evaluation rather than the process of evaluation. This study, accordingly, integrates these reasons and unifies the process into a coherent whole, in order to come up with a holistic evaluation of RDC operations.

This approach to evaluation brings in a high level evaluation in which Bless and Higson-Smith (1994:54) note that:

> … although presented separately, ... diagnostic, formative and summative evaluation are all interrelated and occur side by side in the course of ongoing interventions. The aim and methods are assessed using formative evaluation and recommendations for improving the project are discussed. Finally, the summative evaluation determines whether the aims have been met. If not, those responsible for the programme must consider further diagnostic and formative research in order to isolate and resolve problem areas. Comprehensive and integrated programme evaluation, which uses all three forms maintains the ongoing effectiveness, facilitates flexibility in response to changing circumstances and ensures credibility and the ongoing existence of programmes.

This, as indicated in the preceding citation, is the manner in which evaluation research is viewed in this study.

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The word 'design' connotes planning. To design a research project is to put together the various components of that particular research project. A research design is, therefore, a grand plan of a particular research project that shows how one wishes to proceed with the research and how to guard it against both internal and external factors, which may interfere with its processes. It is supposed to be a full proof plan that enhances a research's validity, thereby improving its acceptability as a knowledge base within the discipline in which it is rooted. More importantly, a researcher should be able to handle extraneous variables, as these are a major source of invalidity of a research. Two major categories of extraneous variables can be discussed. These are uncontrolled variables and confounding variables (Bless and Higson-Smith, 1994:33-34). Uncontrolled variables are those influences that are known to be present as an integral part of the social phenomenon under study, but which the researcher does not want to address. For example, when one considers RDC performance, variables such as

those rooted in personal differences between councillors and bureaucrats may influence performance but may not be of interest to the researcher. These can only be acknowledged and noted. However, this study is not interested in most of these personality variables, although their presence is acknowledged and noted.

As indicated above, another category of extraneous variables is that which is referred to as confounding variables. This is a category of those influences that are unknown to a specific research project, but can influence the results of the research. Ignorance of these leads to erroneous conclusions being made about the research in that the researcher may attribute his or her conclusions to the variables he or she has been dealing with under control, yet the hidden variables may have had a tremendous influence on the nature and substance of the research findings (Bless and Higson-Smith, 1994:34).

The purpose of a research design, therefore, is to manage these extraneous factors so as to minimize their influence on the research findings of a particular study. Several procedures can be followed to manage such factors. Exclusion is one of them. In this case, researchers try to 'keep out' some of these known variables to render them insignificant in so far as their influence on the study is concerned. Another approach is known as accounting for extraneous variables. This is a situation where some known extraneous variables and their influence cannot be excluded. As a result, these variables are allowed to influence the study. An attempt is then made to measure the nature and magnitude of their influence. After that, another attempt is made to exclude or eliminate these influences from the actual results. Other variations of exclusion are controlling, through an experimental design approach, which uses the experimental and control groups and the randomization method, where some factors have these variables and others do not. This approach takes care of these scattered but unwanted influences (Bless and Higson-Smith, 1994:41).

Several research designs can be enumerated. These include descriptive

research, correlation research, causal or causal comparative research, *ex-post-facto* research, experimental and the quasi-experimental research design, developmental research, ethnographic research, action research and the case study research method (Bless and Higson-Smith, 1994:41).

As indicated in the introduction of this chapter, the case study method is the basic design frame that has been adopted for this study. This method is used within a qualitative research framework that is associated with a naturalistic research paradigm, that is, a social-anthropological approach. This is a preferred paradigm for qualitative research rather than the agricultural-botany approach that involves experimentation (Kuye, 1997:3). In addition, Kuye distinguishes between social anthropology (naturalistic) and the agricultural-botanic paradigm. Kuye prefers the naturalistic approach to the agricultural-botanic paradigm for most qualitative research on the grounds that pre-ordinate, experimental methods are inappropriate in social science.

However, emphasis on qualitative approaches is not intended to nullify the importance of quantitative methods in case study methodologies. In fact, it may be unwise to try and draw a hard-and fast distinction between qualitative and quantitative studies. The difference is not absolute; it is one of emphasis. One emphasis should not be considered superior to the other. The appropriate approach would depend upon the nature of questions under consideration and the objectives of the researchers. Many social scientists draw a line between these two because of the technical nature of the quantitative dimension and sheer fear of the abstractness of mathematical or statistical approaches. Because of this problem, many social science scholars shy away from such methodologies, although they acknowledge their (statistical methods) utility in research. Thus, the apparent dismissal of quantitative methods from social science research borders on 'mathophobia' or 'statsophobia' (fear of mathematics and statistics respectively), or both. This study, however, integrates these two methodologies although mostly, it uses the qualitative thrust.

A definition and explanation of the case study method is appropriate at this point, as it would clearly set out a picture on how and why this study proceeded within this framework. Bell (1999:10) indicates that the term case study is an umbrella term for a family of research methods having in common the decision to focus on inquiry around an instance. It is an extensive description and examination of a single action, a decision, an individual, an organization or a system. In line with this observation, Mouton (2001:149) notes that case studies are usually qualitative in nature and aim at providing an in-depth description of a small number of cases.   This means that the case study approach is about making a deliberate choice of a particular entity as a unit of analysis of whatever phenomena a social scientist wants to focus his/her attention. The case becomes the object of the study and is isolated, taking into consideration the peculiarity of its characteristics or, for that matter, the similarities of its characteristics with other cases, which for different reasons cannot be included in the study.

Kuye (1997:5) in describing the process of coming up with cases, notes that the method involves selecting a number of cases, usually institutions or sites in which fieldwork will be carried out. The sample may be selected on a purposive non-probability basis. This note by Kuye is consistent with how this study selected its cases, that is, by purely using an opportunity sampling approach that will be explained shortly. The case study method tries to build a detailed picture of the selected case(s), bringing out all the factors under consideration so as to make a well-informed judgment about issues being raised. Thus, it is important for a researcher to make justifications of his/her selected cases in line with the nature and demands of his/her study. Such justifications may for example, be in line with trying to make generalizations or merely to table information meant to improve an intervention or the case itself. As such, the case may lead social scientists to revisit certain theoretical misconceptions about certain phenomena and to reformulate and correct such misconceptions for the improvement of knowledge of a particular discipline that forms the broad frame under which a particular problem is being investigated.

In fact, there is no intellectual alternative to getting knowledge from the actual case, describing its experiences and explaining why it had to undertake certain courses of action as opposed to others. Thus, the case focus gives any researcher or policy analyst, a chance to analyze isolated policy developments within a given political order. It gives the researcher a chance to understand human and organizational behavior under certain conditions fully and thus, enhance his/her understanding of a given system. Cases expose the operational reality of organizations and allow one to bring out the strengths and weaknesses of such organizations and enhance one's chances of engaging or suggesting remedial action for such organizations. The medical fraternity and law societies use case approaches in their operations, as they appreciate the uniqueness of each incident. Such appreciation enables them to develop remedial action that is peculiar to the case as it is uniquely affected by a complexity of factors that distinguishes it from other similar scenarios. It is after a thorough diagnosis and analysis of different cases that, where possible and depending on the degree of representativeness of the cases selected, generalizations can be drawn.

Sometimes cases are utilized under a comparative framework. The comparative framework allows one to draw similarities and differences between or among different case phenomena. Comparison liberates the study from ethnocentric tendencies. This is especially so where cases are drawn from two or more distinct regions where different viewpoints on doing things are a distinguishing factor of the two populations. Two types of case comparison can be enumerated and discussed. These are, the Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD) and the Most Dissimilar Systems Design (MDSD). MSSD involves a limited number of similar cases, normally between two and five cases. Most characteristics of these cases should be similar. However, any characteristic differences should be noted, highlighted and explained so as to bring out the complications or advantages for that matter, that such differences may bring to the study. This is important for a social scientist where upon the differences, though apparently minor, may influence the substance of the research findings (Bell, 1999:10-12).

For example, two different regions, may be interested in getting assistance from government to alleviate hunger. If the two regions are such that one does not support the government of the day, intervention by government may not go well for the group that does not support government fully. Such a scenario demands that any researcher, who is interested in looking into the nature and extent of desirability of the intervention, considers the fundamental case differences, which for example in this case, may be rooted in issues of ethnicity, environmental diversity, or other socio- economic or political factors.

MDSD, as a comparison framework, normally involves a large number of cases, which include both similar and dissimilar ones. These cases are exposed to statistical tests to indicate the inherent similarities and differences. This method is acknowledged as a useful one in testing hypotheses and producing or validating generalizations. The comparison approaches have not been adopted for this study because of limits in terms of time, finance, and other human and material resources, which would have been required to include several RDCs in this study. The focus here is on one case, the Beitbridge Rural District Council.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

The paramountcy and process of acquiring data cannot be overemphasized in social science research. Data creation entails a deep analysis of issues, a focused exposition of phenomena and an exploring mind that is determined to link different factors in terms of causality links, in order to indicate how a particular phenomenon under investigation manifests itself. The process is not a layman's field of endeavor, but that of a competent social scientist with the ability to select and isolate needed data from a complex environment of a phenomenon under investigation. Bless and Higson-Smith (1994:99) note that data can be classified variously, and especially by the way it was collected. There is primary data, which is that data that is collected by the researcher for a particular purpose. Data that is directly related to the study is essential in any research

undertaking as it precisely tries to answer the problem for which the study has been initiated. There is also secondary data. This is data that has been collected by others for their own purposes but which a particular researcher sees as useful to his/her research and as a result, tries to incorporate some of the information in his/her own work. This data is also referred to as historical data. Its utility lies in the fact that it can be used to support one's research or refute points of view raised by other authors. This data can be both quantitative and qualitative. A resourceful researcher finds it incumbent upon him/her to accumulate as much of this data as possible so as to develop theories and conclusions about a particular discipline. Bless and Higson-Smith (1994:100) further indicate that whether data has a property of being quantitative or qualitative is very important since it determines the way data can be utilized. Although the tendency exists to consider numerical (quantitative) data [although many social science researchers do not want to involve themselves in the actual development of such data] as more reliable and easier to utilize, in particular by statistical techniques as science is inconceivable without non numerical data which may assist in interpreting numerical data and the disregard of which would lead to incomplete description of the social reality.

This study in particular, utilized the questionnaire, interview and the record/historical profile as data collecting instruments. The three forms constitute what is known as the triangulation method of data collection.

Interviews

Interviews provide a direct encounter between researchers and respondents. The interview method is an acknowledged way of collecting data in social research. Moser and Kalton (1971:271) describe an interview as a conversation between interviewer and respondent with the purpose of eliciting certain information from the respondent. Thus, the purpose of interview to probe beneath the surface of events (such as the behavior, including utterances of an individual), in order to explore the underlying processes from which these events arise. Thus, a skillful

interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings, which other methods can never do (Bell, 1999:135).

The approach to an interview can be likened to that of a therapist who, on certain occasions, takes control of the interaction process and asks clear probing and specific questions and reacts to the client's responses. In another instance, the therapist puts the client in control of the proceedings and allows him or her to explore the conditions under investigation and occasionally guides the process to keep the investigation on track with the objectives of the therapy. Constant probes and prompts are made to solicit more information and compel the respondent to agree with the interviewer's point of view or to refute it thereby, giving reasons why for disagreement or agreement. Although probes and prompts are a crucial interview strategy, they have to be used with great care as they might disturb the spontaneity of a respondent's responses. It is significant to note that the foundations of interviewing are to be found in the mundane observation that people can resort to what they feel, tell others about aspects of their lives, disclose what their hopes and fears are, offer their opinions and state their beliefs. To state it simply, people have the ability to impart masses of information about whatever it is that is under study. Interviews, therefore, take this fact into account and utilize it for gathering information about their research.

In this study, a combination of structured and unstructured interviews was used. Armed with structured questions, the interviewer was given the chance to probe for clarification of responses. The method of combining the two also gives the interview flexibility and increases rapport and cooperation between the interviewer and interviewee. Information provided is more likely to be valid as it is given instantly (Bell, 1999:138). The data collection plan, which is discussed later in this chapter, clearly indicates how this method was utilized. One should also mention that there are different techniques such as the standardized interview, exploratory interview, group interview, and the telephone interview that were utilized by this study. A combination of all these was used to spread the interview and data sources especially where some people, mostly officials, were difficult to

contact for interviews. Besides the interview method, questionnaires were used to collect data.

Questionnaires

The concept of questionnaire denotes a set of questions with fixed wording and a sequence of presentation, as well as fairly precise indications of how to answer each question (Bless and Higson-Smith, 1994:106). The standard questionnaire is presented to different respondents so they can provide responses freely, without the interference of the researcher. Such questionnaires (self-administered questionnaires) are distributed by the researcher or his/her assistants and then collected after completion. Some of these can be mailed to the respondents where it is difficult for the researchers to get to the intended respondents. The self-administered questionnaire, together with the interview method, allowed the researcher to gather information from others, in addition to observing issues at hand. This situation also allowed respondents to state what they knew, in terms of knowledge and factual information; to state their value preferences, interests and tastes; to give their thoughts, attitudes and beliefs; and to state their experiences of what happened before and what is happening now. Bless and Higson Smith (1994:116-119) further outline certain conditions that have to be met in research in order to ensure that objectivity prevails. The first condition pertains to the respondents' cooperation. Respondents have to cooperate in sharing their knowledge. Secondly, they should also give responses that are consistent with reality and not what they think reality should be. Thirdly, they should be aware of their feelings about an issue and what they think should be done about it to align it with normality. It is from this realization that meaningful information can be communicated to form a basis for decisions, conclusions and recommendations based on the results of this study.

The use of interviews and questionnaires raises the issue of sampling. A sample as a group of items selected from a given population. It can also be viewed as a

subset of the universal set, that is, the population of concern (Bell, 1999:126). A population in social science research is the total collection of factors, items, people or events that are being investigated in a particular research scenario so as to make inferences about it. Three types of sampling procedures can be identified. These are random sampling, theoretical sampling and opportunity sampling. A random sample is that which is drawn from a population in such a way that every member of the population has an equal chance of selection as a member of the sample, and that inclusion or exclusion from the sample could not be affected by any factor other than chance (Botes, 1995:103). The rationale for a random sample is to minimize issues of bias allows the researcher to take the sample as a statistically reliable representation of the population. This approach was not considered as suitable for this study, since the selection of the case in this study was affected by a preference system that was built into the process.

The second theoretical sampling is also referred to as non-random sampling. It includes procedures such as stratified sampling, cluster or multi-stage sampling and quota sampling. Non-random sampling is employed where the researcher has a desire to include certain specific samples that may otherwise be excluded if subjected to a random sampling procedure. This approach was used in this research and had the effect of changing the nature of the research results from results, which would have allowed generalizations to be drawn for the whole population of RDCs to results, which are case specific and which only allow conclusions and recommendations to be drawn for the specific case under attention. It was with this in mind that non-random opportunity sampling was used to select the case.

It is significant to note that the smaller the sample, the more features are left out and the greater the chances that it is not representative. Statistically, a representation of ten percent is considered as a fair representation that can allow one to draw generalizations for the whole. This study does not fall into this category, as the selected RDC, in percentage terms constitutes a representation

of only 1.75%. As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, this study is not about drawing generalizations. The main aim is to know whether these entities can stand on their own as organizations in terms of their capacity to perform, and whether government has really 'set them free' for self-determination. In addition to interviews and questionnaires, the historical method (documentation search is used to collect data. A brief discussion of this method is provided in the section that follows.

Documentation Search

While interviews and questionnaires involve, to some extent, a certain degree of manipulating the context within which an inquiry takes place, documentary search also referred to as the historical or the records method involves the mobilization of already existent information produced during the daily activities of individuals or organizations (Tosh, 1991:54; and Evans, 1995:18). Such information can be derived from minutes of meetings, policy documents, organization plans and employment records, statistical reports, annual reports and budgetary documents. The researcher needs the skills to sift such documents in order to come up with information that relates to his/her study. In the process, there is need for ethical considerations where such information may be considered confidential. Documents have to be coded in order to conceal the actual document that produces certain kinds of information.

This study utilized a lot of documented information from the following sources:
- Meeting of council, wards, administrative/management staff, and councils and NGOs;
- Parliamentary Acts such as the RDC Act: DC and RC Acts; the Education Act; the Health Act: the DDF Act; and the Roads and Transportation ACT;
- Parliamentary reports: e.g. Hansard Reports of the House of Assembly;
- Reports of the Forum for Rural Development;
- Policy statements and Cabinet memoranda;

- Circular letters and official directives; and

- Books, periodicals and bulletins that deal with the research topic.

Documentation search has its own advantages and disadvantages. The following advantages led to the choice of this technique:

- The researcher acts independently of the organizations under scrutiny, that is, while in certain cases he/she may ask for documents from the institution concerned, some of the information can be obtained from the national archives, libraries and government printers.

- There is no reliance on the memory of individuals as sometimes recall may not be accurate, although not always intentionally.

- First hand information of what actually happened can be obtained through scrutinizing documents, especially minutes of meetings and parliamentary reports and policy pronouncements by ministers in meetings.

- Any original facts from the documents can be easily made available for the research, although with considerations for ethical provisions of course.

- Documentary information allows the researcher to use a selective mind by carefully scrutinizing the information made available for the study and selecting that which he considers useful for his/her purposes (Botes, 1995:98; and Bell, 1999:112-116).

However, disadvantages also accrue from documentary search, especially the following:

- The time consuming nature of reading documents and ultimately not finding much information related to the study. Even if much information

useful to the study can be obtained, the process is painstaking and needs a lot of time, which is normally not available to researchers.

- Personal views of authors may distort certain facts. This sacrifices objectivity, a situation that can have a multiplier effect of distortions to other studies that rely on such information.

- Written material is by nature secondary information as it expresses the ideas and perceptions of others. As such, it must be viewed critically (Botes, 1995:98; and Bell, 1999:112-116; and Mouton, 2001:108). All the same, and after considering the pros and cons of this technique, this study used documentary search as its advantages were considered to be greater than its disadvantages. In fact, using the technique with the knowledge that weaknesses exist actually strengthened the researcher's resolve to be objective and thorough in this form of data gathering. As soon as different types of information are collected, analysis should follow.

DATA ANALYSIS

As indicated earlier, the study uses both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. This means that it has to deal with both types of data in its analytical framework. Issues of data analysis, although they receive much attention from researchers, find themselves not adequately articulated by social scientists, such that its presence in reports and methodology sections of studies is usually scant with very little explanation of the data and its analysis. In simple terms, the section on data analysis provides or explains the stage at which the information that has been gathered is transformed into data via the process of analysis (Mouton, 2001:108-109).

Data analysis is sometimes discussed within the qualitative and quantitative

divide. However, a closer look at such polarization and the interest of some scholars in pursuing it brings out traditional epistemological divisions of linking the qualitative/interpretive framework with what is often termed the 'soft' approaches of the social science, while the link for the quantitative/statistical frame is for the 'hard', and apparently, more cognitive focused natural sciences. Such polarization manoeuvres seem to have a 'political motivation' of distancing the two fields (social and natural sciences) and sending a message that one is more superior than the other specifically, that natural science, acclaimed to require higher cognitive capability. This study rejects this apparent binary choice. Instead, it integrates the two within the study to show that the two are compatible and complementary and work well together to produce well focused social science research that does not compromise both reliability and validity in its analytical frame. These two are important concepts in any research. They are discussed more elaborately in the section that follows.

ETHICS, RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

As indicated above, reliability, validity and ethics are important terms in any scientific research. Reliability is a matter of whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object, would field the same results each time (Bell, 1999:103). Reliability is the level of consistency of an instrument. In this study, to make sure that the interview schedule elicited for the same answers from interviewees, questions were focused on specific variables. Carrying out a pilot study also ensured that all questions were clear and designed to obtain the relevant information needed for the study. Reliability should also ensure that the researcher should be in a position to ask the same questions, or similar questions more than once and to determine whether or not in each case he/she receives similar responses. If any one of the questions does not result in the same answer as before, then that question is not reliable and should be removed or restated. The same people should be asked the same questions at different

times (test-retest).

Validity, on the other hand, refers to the degree to which a test succeeds in measuring what it is set out to measure (Bell, 1999:104). It is the extent to which a specific measurement provides data that relates to commonly accepted meanings of a particular concept. Validity measures the truthfulness of the provided data. It answers the question whether the test measured exactly what it is supposed to measure. To check for both reliability and validity, the following approaches can be used: triangulation, repetition of the research questions, or asking the participants over and over again about the truthfulness of the information they have provided. For this study, the use of questionnaires, interviews and document search provided the necessary triangulation that allowed different methods to provide sufficient corroborative evidence and support for one another. During the interview sessions, some questions were repeated to check on the truthfulness of the answers provided.

However, within this scenario, it should be realized that the intended participants have a right to refuse to cooperate. Such a right needs to be respected by researchers. As such, the issue of the rights of respondents raises the issue of ethical consideration in research. The following ethical issues have been considered in undertaking this research. Research is about interfering with other people's liberties or private domains. For the purpose of this study, the researcher explained to the respondents what the research was all about so that they could make an informed decision as to whether or not to participate. The thrust of this study, its benefits and costs to the researcher were explained, except some of the unforeseen spillover effects, both positive and negative. Another ethical issue that the study took into consideration was that of anonymity. The issue of anonymity is vital where respondents have to respond to certain questions that require information of a private nature. Respondents, in this case, may demand anonymity and this should be guaranteed. This study covers several sensitive issues of government policy and the internal dynamics

of rural local government institutions. As such, most respondents were not in favor of publicizing their names being given. These requests were accordingly granted. The impact of guaranteeing anonymity lies in respondents providing truthful answers, as they would be aware that their identity would remain undisclosed.

Demands for anonymity go along with those of confidentiality. An organization can only agree with information about its internal dynamics if it is certain that such information will not find itself in the hands of competitors. Such assurances are likely to produce honest responses and sufficient information related to the study. Issues of anonymity and confidentiality are particularly important in case study research, where respondents can be easily singled out and 'persecuted'. Organizations can also find themselves under fire from the public or government that have learnt what actually goes on in a particular organization. Such precautions have been taken into consideration in this study, hence the free and meaningful responses from the various samples that were targeted for data collection. The following section lays out the data collection plan for the research.

DATA COLLECTION PLAN

The data collection plan indicates the manner in which the researcher organized the process of collecting research information. This process was designed, taking into cognizance the fact that three different data collection methods had to be used, that is, the questionnaire, interview, and the historical/record method. Secondly, there was a realisation that there were three distinct parts to the study: democratic participation, service provision and management capacity. Below is an outline of the issues considered, the effects and indicators for each of them, and the means of verifying the presence of democratic participation.

Democratic participation

Behind the success of local government is the capacity of those institutions of a local nature to involve communities in their affairs. Communities have to be seen to be performing certain tasks, from their own volition. These should contribute the well being of such communities and that of local government. These tasks or activities include engaging in self-help projects, neighbourhood watch committees, and building schools and clinics. This is not only democratic but a humanizing approach, which allows people to determine and shape their future. In fact, democratic participation is the foundation upon which decentralization and local government are based and can be built. It includes genuine consultation, involvement in project design and implementation, and soliciting public opinion on the performance of local institutions (Blair, 1977:92-93). This makes them feel part of the local institution and they would more than likely go out of their way to make it succeed. In light of this, one can measure whether or not a local government system is democratic by focusing on the quality of functions by private citizens. These functions indicate the extent to which communities accept a local government system and are satisfied with its work. Thus, they are critical in gauging the performance of these institutions. The questions to ask are, do communities participate in the affairs of local government and is this participation meaningful? Answering these questions helped the research to determine the ability of the Beitbridge Rural District Council to involve communities in local authority affairs The following indicators were used to investigate these questions:

- Presence of instruments for use in democratic participation;
- Evidence of democratic participation advocacy by councilors;
- Community participation in local elections;
- Involvement in volunteer services like neighbourhood watch, clubs, building schools and clinics;
- Attendance at ward and village meetings;

- Consulting communities in decision making;

- Participation in self-help projects;

- Report back to communities by councilors;

- Payment of development levy;

- The presence of a public relations post;

- The presence of a local authority magazine or any information circulars to communities;

- Getting public opinion on performance related matters; and

- Black/white harmonization initiatives.

Questionnaires, interviews and documentary search were used as instruments for collecting data. The physical presence of some of these indicators was also ascertained. Data were collected from communities in the wards, councilors, council staff, and private organizations.

Service Provision

The question of service provision was in relation to whether or not the Beitbridge Rural District Council is providing adequate service to the communities it was expected to serve. The following services were focused upon: health, education, housing, roads, water, transport, recreation facilities and refuse collection. Service provision was expected to lead to improved conditions of living for the communities in Beitbridge. A breakdown of the service and their indicators follows below:

a) **Health**
- the presence and nature of health facilities;
- the number of health facilities per given unit of population;
- RDC health policy;
- budgetary allocations for health;

- central government involvement in health in terms of annual financial outlays as a ratio to local finance;
- ownership of Institutions of Health;
- task division between the RDC and the MOHCW; and
- changes in health provision facilities since 1993.

The information was obtained from the RDC Department of Social and Community Services, Council Committee meetings, Council Meetings minutes, Communities, District Medical Officer of Health documents, Council Chairman and selected councillors, CEO and SEO interviews, and questionnaire responses.

b) **Education**

- educational establishments: council versus central government schools, both primary and secondary schools;
- presence of qualified teachers;
- teacher/pupil ratio;
- changes in teacher accommodation since 1993;
- availability of adult literacy classes;
- improved changes in educational facilities since 1993;
- increased budgetary allocations for education since 1993; and
- presence of RDC instruments on education.

The information was obtained from the RDC policy documents, Department of Social and Community Services documents, District Education Officers documents, Council files and minutes of council and committee meetings, School Development Committee meetings, and information from interviews and questionnaires.

c) **Roads**

- improved condition of RDC roads;

- RDC budget for road maintenance since 1993;

- presence of RDC equipment for road construction and maintenance;

- presence of other players like central government private companies in road construction and maintenance; and

- presence of RDC instruments on road construction and maintenance.

The information was obtained from RDC committee and council meetings; budget statements, DDF documents; questionnaire responses and interview information.

d) **Water**

- improvement in the provision of water since 1993;

- dam construction planned and actual number of dams constructed since 1993;

- RDC instruments on water provision;

- central government involvement in water provision; and

- budget allocation for water.

The information was obtained from minutes of Council and committee meetings, Department of Projects documents, Department of Community and Social Services documents, Ministry of Energy and Water Development documents, questionnaire and interview responses.

e) **Housing**

- number of housing units constructed since 1993;

- number of houses and waiting list comparisons;

- central government involvement in housing provision;

- donor community involvement in housing provision;

- BRDC instruments on housing provision;

- annual budget provisions for housing; and

- involvement of private sector in housing provision.

The information was obtained from minutes of Council and committee meetings, Department of Community and Social Services documents, MOLGAHN documents, RDC policy documents, interviews and questionnaire responses. The third issue to be considered is management capacity.

Management capacity

The administration of council falls under Council Committees and appointed workers. There is a Chief Executive Officer who heads the Council's administration. Below the Chief Executive Officer, is a team of trained administrators who are expected to resource different departments that make up the Council. The function of this team of specialists is to see to it that Council programmes are implemented, in line with the enabling instruments. Apart from implementing policy, they are tasked with making policy recommendations, managing the Council's financing, planning and designing intervention measures that are designed to improve Council functions, and control all operations of Council. The argument here is that the ability of these functionaries to manage organizational activities is vital for the manner in which the Council runs its business. This is an important variable in gauging the performance of Council, hence its incorporation in this study. One should also add that the history of rural local government in Zimbabwe indicates that administrators of these local institutions have always been attacked for lack of professionalism and seriousness of purpose. They were considered to be basically corrupted; unaccountable and ill qualified to handle these institutions (Roe, 1992:10-11). In order to determine their performance levels after amalgamation in 1993, the following factors were considered:

a) **Corporate planning**: The indicators for corporate planning included:
- Mission statements;

- organisational and departmental objectives;

- action plans;

- financial management plans;

- total corporate plans; and

- evidence of advocacy regarding RDC activities.

The information was obtained through interviews, questionnaires and council documents. A physical check of plans was done to authenticate the presence of these documents.

b) **Integrated strategic and policy planning**: The indicators here included:

- Policy documents;

- master plans;

- VIDCO and Ward projects;

- nature of RDC planning staff;

- NGO involvement in projects; and

- presence of information systems.

The information was obtained from council documents, questionnaires and interviews. Physical check up was done to authenticate the presence of these documents and activities.

c) **Project planning and implementation**: Indicators included:

- Evidence of project appraisal and prioritisation systems;

- availability of implementable projects;

- evidence of three or five year rolling plans for projects;

- evidence of proper implementation scheduling with a clear outline of project costs;

- the nature of project personnel; and

- project implementation initiatives since 1993.

The information was obtained from council documents, questionnaires and interviews. Physical check up was done to authenticate the presence of these documents.

d) **The management of finance**: This includes aspects such as financial viability measures, revenue raising capacity and expenditure patterns. Specific focus was on checking:

- Financial autonomy ratios, that is, local revenue versus government and other revenues;
- the disparities that exist between expected revenue and collected revenue;
- methods of improving resource raising capacity and actual operationalisation of these, together with evidence of improved efficiency yields;
- additional sources of revenue identified and implemented; and
- budget deficit considerations.

The indicators for the above included checking the:

- Existence of standard financial accounting systems;
- production of timely budgets (there should be one budget at least one month before the end of each financial year);
- production of end of year accounts (within three months of the end of a particular financial year);
- production of financial plans and cash flow forecasts. These are financial statements that indicate how funds will be utilized, mechanisms for appraising and implementing budget plans;
- production of regular statements for RDC commercial enterprises;
- production of up to date asset inventories and maintenance budgets;
- nature of financial accountability; and

- qualifications of RDC financial personnel.

The sources of information for the financial aspect of the study included audit reports, annual budget statements, Finance Committee meeting minutes, monthly financial returns, CEO and SEO interviews, and questionnaire returns.

e) **Transport and equipment management**: The indicators included:

- Evidence of inventory registers;
- evidence of inventory register;
- evidence of procedures for use and hiring out;
- evidence of equipment maintenance records;
- evidence of stationary and office equipment accounting;
- procurement and stores management procedures; and
- evidence of personnel in charge of transport and other equipment.

The information sources included council documents, interviews and questionnaires. Some of these can be checked to verify their presence.

f) **General administration**: Indicators included:

- Evidence of proper personnel management procedures;

- clear reporting structures;

- presence of information management systems;

- evidence of a public relations system;

- evidence of dispute procedure systems;

- evidence of use of staff motivation strategies;

- evidence of RDC Health and Safety procedures;

- evidence of standard tendering procedures in use; and

- general office administration and record keeping.

The sources of information for the administrative frame includes policy documents, different kinds of plans, minutes of meetings, departmental and council reports, project documents, implementation plans, certificates of project completion, monitoring and evaluation reports, qualitative evaluation reports, personnel files, inventory registers, vehicle log books, interview and questionnaire information.

g) **Coordination, Monitoring, and Evaluation**: Indicators included:

- Documentary evidence of an established system of coordination;

- documents showing minutes of coordination meetings;

- evidence of meetings between council committees and management;

- attendance registers for these coordination meetings;

- evidence of collaboration between ministries, RDCs, NGOs, and the private sector;

- presence of monitoring and evaluation documents;

- presence of well outlined formats for monitoring and evaluation;

- presence of monitoring and evaluation teams;

- fund allocation for monitoring and evaluation of programmes; and

- evidence of project lists and their performance.

Information was obtained from council documents, interviews and questionnaires. A physical check of documents was done to authenticate their presence and determine the quality of information in them.

The study used the services of two research assistants, one with a Masters degree in Public Administration and the other with a Bachelor of Business Studies (Marketing specialisation) degree. The duties of these research assistants were broadly, to distribute questionnaires; carry out interviews; retrieve historical data; and write brief reports on their findings for onward transmission to the researcher. It should be noted that, although the research assistants were required to write brief reports, all the interview information was recorded with the aid of a tape recorder so that the researcher could also be exposed to the responses first hand and have the opportunity to record his interpretations apart from those in the research assistants' reports. The layout for the data collection plan was as follows:

- **Questionnaire Distribution:** This was carried out between 15 and 22 February, 2002;

- **Interviews:** These was carried out between 8 January 2002 and 15 February 2002; and

- **Documentary search:** This was carried out between 15 December 2001 and 15 April 2002.

To collect data, questionnaire and interview schedules were designed. In addition, there was extensive use of historical data. The section that follows

provides a brief discussion on the interview and questionnaire schedules and the focus of the historical data.

Questionnaire schedules: Two schedules of questionnaires were drafted in accordance with the people being invited to participate as respondents. Schedule A was prepared for distribution among members of the community selected through opportunity sampling. These included members of Village Development Committees (VIDCOs), Ward Development Committees (WADCOs), District Development Committees (DDCOs), Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the general public. Two hundred and fifty (250) questionnaires were distributed for this schedule. Some questionnaires were mailed to those VIDCO and WADCO members who were physically distant from the RDC head office. Schedule B was prepared for councillors and staff of the BRDC. Fifteen questionnaires were distributed among the selected officials. These included seven councillors, three senior managers, three middle managers, and two junior managers. All these were selected through opportunity sampling. Each official in this schedule was asked to respond to the questionnaire.

Completed questionnaires were collected between February and June 2002. This time was considered to be long enough taking into consideration the diversity of questions that were asked in the questionnaire, and the fact that respondents were also busy with their normal work schedules.

Interview schedules: Research assistants were asked to carry out standardized and group interviews. Within this context of standardization, an element of exploratory interviewing was allowed to set in towards the end of the interviews. This was done in order to give the interviewees a chance to explore widely on issues of RDC performance and by so doing, input much information that was vital for the study.

The following were selected for interviews:

1. **Councillors**

> (a)　The Chairperson of Council; and

> (b)　Four (4) other councilors, two black and two white.

2. **Management Officers**

> a)　The Chief Executive Officer of the RDC;

> b)　Head of Administration and Services;

> c)　Head of Finance;

> d)　The District Administrator;

> e)　The Resident NGO Head; and

> f)　The Provincial Administrator.

3. **Group interviews**

> a)　Middle management and other selected council employees;

> b)　Selected RDC residents, VIDCO and WADCO members;

> c)　The Finance Committee;

> d)　The Development Committee; and

> e)　The General Purpose Committee.

4. **Head Office and Other**

> a)　The Deputy Minister of MOLGANH;

> b)　The Permanent Secretary of MOLGANH;

> c)　The President of the Association of Rural District Councils; and

> d)　The Former CEO of BRDC.

Historical/Recorded Data: Several documentary sources were used. These included central government, provincial and district level documents. Some of these sources included the Hansard, Acts of Parliament, national constitutions, gazettes, provincial meeting minutes, and circulars. Employment records were also sought, including information related to staff rationalisation and training,

especially with respect to management staff and councillors. Information on development projects and how they were being implemented was also obtained. It should be noted that apart from current RDC records, records on the now defunct RCs and DCs were also obtained.

CONCLUSION

As indicated earlier, there is no intellectual alternative to getting knowledge from the actual case. However, it all depends on how one blends the different data collection instruments for both primary and secondary information. The use of the interview, questionnaire and the historical method was seen as a balanced attempt to extract as much policy relevant information as was necessary. Besides, this information was considered to be sufficient to answer the concerns of the research question and to make scientifically relevant recommendations that would help to build the capacity of the BRDC to offer community relevant services to the local people.

CHAPTER THREE

DECENTRALISATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND EVOLUTION IN ZIMBABWE

INTRODUCTION

The need to decentralise political power and administration is an age-old political phenomenon. In this modern era, large and small states have some form of decentralisation, where local people are given some modicum of power to determine their destiny. All contemporary states should be seen to embrace the decentralisation imperative. In fact, the smooth operation of any state, whether small or large, requires it to have a locally based administration system with the capacity to provide tailor made services to the local people. Through this system, the local communities are given a chance to determine the mixture of goods and services that they need at a particular moment. Consequently, the state is expected to respond to these needs if resources allow it to do so. This approach has the capacity to cultivate a closer relationship between the state and a diversity of social groups within a given country.

While this points to the need for decentralization in modern states, a historical review of pre-colonial states in Africa and elsewhere indicates a similar view. Before the colonial era, most socio-cultural groups had their own elaborate governmental structures with recognizable politico-administrative leadership hierarchies of authority (Oyugi in Hofmeister and Scholz, 1996:89-90). However, other socio-cultural groups did not have this elaborate hierarchy. These could be

referred to as stateless societies. Significant, however, is the fact that in each case, the politico-administrative life of these people exhibited some form of decentralisation along kinship lines depending on the social formation of the groups and their survival strategies. Each social unit had some form of autonomy and could decide how it wanted to cultivate its land, how many cattle families could have, and how disputes within the group could be settled. Clear guidelines were provided on how the social group could communicate with higher authority up to the king or leader of the whole socio-cultural grouping.

This indicates that the history of humankind has, one way or the other, always entrenched some form of autonomy and self-determination. The rubric of decentralisation, as it is known today, follows these principles with the aim of limiting central government power as well as enhancing human freedom, the right to individual participation in issues of governance, and promoting a democratic culture cherished by all peace loving nations.

Despite these convenient values of good governance, it is common to find that central governments more often than not and, especially in Africa and the developing world, have a desire to involve themselves in matters of a local nature. Such tendencies are lamented the world over as they stifle local initiatives and create a culture of dependence within local communities. State involvement also means excessive central planning that, more often than not, is followed by inadequate implementation processes. Generally, it is a dilemma for Africa to find a state that is supposed to be developmental in orientation, usurping decision-making powers from local communities. This is an antithesis of the cherished notion of development. An awareness of these tendencies has led to vigorous calls for decentralisation and the need to strengthen local government institutions.

DECENTRALISATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Decentralisation and local government are topical concepts where issues of democracy and good governance are discussed. These concepts are precursors to the formation of RDCs in Zimbabwe. Consequently, they form the conceptual schemata of this thesis. Scholars and government practitioners have defined the concept of decentralisation variously. These definitions reveal important distinctions and concentrations that help one to understand the complexity of the concept and the many forms it has. This means that it is difficult to standardize the concept. What it means, depends on its practical manifestation in different national settings albeit, of course, that some fundamental general notions will inevitably be the same.

Decentralisation

According to Mawhood (1983:18), decentralisation is 'the sharing of part of the governmental power by a central ruling group with other groups, each having authority within a specific area of the state.' The definition has connotations of power sharing in a territorially demarcated state. The reason being that the people in each area should have the latitude to make decisions on matters that affect them. This is not only expedient but also necessary. While the basic idea is to share decision power with other agencies or organizations, or within the organisation itself, it also refers to 'the unblocking of an inert central bureaucracy, curing managerial constipation, giving more direct access for the people to the government and the government to the people, and stimulating the whole nation to participate in national development plans (Reddy, 2000:16). Paramount here is the need to offload some administrative/managerial work from central government, build managerial capacity and empower communities to be able to determine their needs.

Olowu (1997:66) defines decentralisation as 'the process or processes designed to disperse power from the center to the periphery.' This means that decentralisation is about the transfer of authority, legislative, judicial, administrative, from a higher level of government to a lower level. In this case, the state decides to 'let go' or to free lower level structures so that they can become distinct local government units with not only administrative authority, but all the necessary powers needed to function as a governmental unit. This also means that central government decides to transfer some of its decision-making powers as well as some of its workload from the center to peripheral or field agencies, so that they can act on its behalf. To this end, Rondinelli and Cheema (1983:18) define this concept as:

> the transfer of responsibility for planning, management and resource raising and allocation from the central government and its agencies to:
> - (a) field units of central government ministries and agencies;
> - (b) subordinate units or levels of government;
> - (c) semi-autonomous public authorities or corporations;
> - (d) area-wide, regional or functional authorities; or
> - (e) non-governmental, private or voluntary organisations.

This means that decentralisation is about 'moving away from the center' to enable those outside it to make decisions that directly impact on their lives. This suggests the creation of a strong periphery with a high degree of autonomy to govern itself. It entails empowering local communities and allowing them to participate in local level politics. This has the tendency to improve center/periphery relations and is acknowledged to be a recipe for democratic good governance. In this light, one can indicate that there are several reasons for decentralization. According to L'Oeil (1989:71-72), these reasons include the following:

a) The service provision imperative: The demand for services varies from place to place. It is only prudent to decentralize the provision of these services so that people in a particular setting can appropriately prioritise

their demands and come up with intelligible plans meet these demands through the assistance of central government.

b) The efficiency imperative: It indicates that locally financed and produced services are likely to cost less. Thus, rather than centralize the provision of such services, it is more efficient to use peripheral agencies to provide them.

c) The political imperative: Decentralising decision making powers is a recipe for cultivating democracy in any given country. Fundamentally, this is because of its participative approach where local level people are given the chance to exercise their right to express themselves and prioritise their needs.

d) The constitutional imperative: Constitutions of many countries have entrenched the notion of decentralisation in their constitutions as a way of enhancing the attainment of the three imperatives outlined above. Fulfilling this provision becomes the *raison d'etre* of governments.

There are four models that can be used to differentiate among the types of decentralisation. These are the privatization model; the delegation model; the deconcentration model and the devolution model (Meenakshisundaram (1994:11). The privatization model occurs when central government gives voluntary and/or private institutions power to perform some of its functions. This can also be described as government's voluntary withdrawal from providing certain services that it acknowledges can be provided better by these voluntary and private institutions (Henry, 2001:320). The rationale is to reduce state dominance in the economy, stimulate private initiative and support informal sector development, which is rife in local government areas. Privation should lead to higher economic productivity, the promotion of competitiveness and general economic diversification (Olowu, 1997:65). Privatisation takes many

different forms. These include selling off private assets to private companies, contracting with private providers and nonprofit organizations to deliver services, hiring consultants, distributing vouchers, selling franchises, granting subsidies and chartering government corporations (Henry, 2001:320). This is applicable to Zimbabwe where central government is faced with resource scarcity. Consequently, there is need to involve private actors to enhance national soicio-economic development.

The second model of decentralisation is delegation. This term denotes central government transfer of responsibilities to manage and perform certain activities to semi-autonomous institutions (parastatals) that government creates so that they can undertake certain socio-economic activities that government cannot perform directly. These organisations are given a high degree of operational autonomy. They are vested with powers to plan, manage and implement programmes and projects, which fall under their areas of jurisdiction, with very little interference or control from government. Other interesting definitions are that delegation is:

1. entrusting to another the execution of some power or duty vested in oneself. Such delegation implies in its very essence, the transfer to another of more than a mere executionary power; a discretion is also transferred (Meyer, 1978:104)
2. a transfer of power in terms of which one public authority authorises another to act in its stead (Baxter, 1984:432)
3. the transfer of broad authority to plan and implement decisions concerning specific activities to organisations such as local authorities that are technically and administratively capable of performing them (Rondinelli, 1989:74)

Delegation as highlighted by these definitions, indicates that although these institutions have a high discretion of operational power, the ultimate power of

decision and policy making lies with the delegating institution, which in this case, is central government. The delegatee exercises discretion in so far as policy directives of the delegator are concerned. Craythorne (1994:437-438), describes the general characteristics and legal implications of delegation as follows:

1.   The delegator vests the delegatee with power to act in his stead; the delegatee acts instead of the delegator acting.

2.   The delegatee is vested with administrative or legislative power and makes an independent decision on local issues.

3.   The delegator parts with power but is not denuded of power, which means that the delegator retains concurrent power.

4.   In certain circumstances, the decision of the delegatee also binds the delegator and renders him *functus officio*. If the delegatee exercises a quasi-judicial power both he and the delegator are *functus officio* after the decision has been given.

5.   Delegation cannot be used as a device to escape responsibility for duties imposed by the legislator on the delegator, personally.

6.   The need for delegation does not imply the need for uncontrolled and uncontrollable delegation.

7.   As a general rule the delegator incurs no liability for the delegatee in the exercise of the delegated power.

What emerges from the analysis of the delegator and the delegatee is that the emphasis is on administrative convenience. It is about administrative power, to a large extent, rather than on the conferment of political power to the delegatee. In

addition, the interest here is to avoid administrative crisis at the center, as well as to increase state legitimacy. It is to create government institutions that can perform their delegated duties outside the cumbersome rules and regulations of central government. The interest of this kind of decentralization is to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

The third form or model of decentralisation is deconcentration. Livigan and Mfundu in Reddy (2000:239) express a similar view that:

> Deconcentration involves the dispersion or redistribution of administrative responsibilities from the central government ministries or departments to field offices without transferring also the political power. It is about the transfer of the workload from central government head offices to regional branches located outside of the capital. It may involve limited discretion for field staff to perform functions within central government guidelines. Effective control over major policy decisions normally resides with the central levels of power.

The Zimbabwean scenario provides a simple and clear form of deconcentration. There is the office of the Provincial Administrator that has been created to coordinate government activities at provincial level. Below is the office of the District Administrator created for similar functions at that level. Ministries also create offices at both these levels, for example, the provincial and district offices of education and health (Chikate, 1996:8). It is significant to note that these field offices have implementation power as well as to some extent, policy formulation power as they recommend policies to the head offices of their ministries where such recommendations may be ultimately adopted as ministry policy.

During the colonial era in Zimbabwe, this form of deconcentration received the greatest priority from the colonial masters. In fact, Native Commissioners, who were in charge of regions and later, District Commissioners, were given both administrative and political power to act as they saw fit. They were ordered not to trouble the centre with unnecessary peripheral governance issues except when the 'natives' exhibited rebellious attitudes and actions that needed to be halted

through military means. These powers allowed these peripheral functionaries to develop autocratic powers aimed at total control of the 'natives', without bothering about the latter's problems (Namusi, 1998:10).

There are basically three models of deconcentration: the functional model; the integrated prefectoral model; and the unintegrated prefectoral model (Reddy, 2000:239). The functional model is one in which each central government department decentralises functions to provinces and districts in order for them to take charge of the interests of central government at those lower levels (examples of the Zimbabwean scenario have been given above). The important thing to emphasize apart from the examples already given is that these numerous departments created at the periphery are not coordinated at that level. Each owes its allegiance to its parent ministry, and the human resources resourcing these offices are really central government human resources. As a result, it is not surprising to see these central government institutions retaining policy making powers. Field officers supply their central government counterparts with vital information for policy making.

In the integrated prefectoral model, there is a central administrator who coordinates all activities of a local nature. This prefect or principal administrator is an employee of central government whose task it is to ensure a viable and adequate communication network between the centre and the periphery. He/she is authorised to act on behalf of and oversee all ministries at the local level. This model, typically, defines the French system of local government (Ismael, Bayat and Meyer, 1997:102). The system is also practiced in several Francophone countries in Africa. The prefect is the Chief Executive Officer of government at that level. Even where elected officials exist, he/she becomes Chief Executive Officer of Council. Zimbabwe and other former British colonies like Tanzania and Zambia adopted this model at one time or another (Ismael, Bayat and Meyer, 1997:102). In Zimbabwe for example, the District Administrator was the Chief Executive Officer of African Councils and later, District Councils. However, it

should be emphasised that he/she did not have overall supervisory powers on other ministerial departments operating in the rural areas of Zimbabwe.

Finally, there is the unintegrated prefectoral model. In this hybrid model, the prefect was the central figure in the field but by no means as powerful as in the French system. Thus, the prefecture was only a channel of communication and each specialist functionary in the field was allowed to maintain independent links with his departmental headquarters. Although there were normally regular contacts between the prefect and field officers, the former had no overriding authority over their operations. Nor did the prefect occupy the position of Chief Executive in the local government system although he did supervise it (Ismael, Bayat and Meyer, 1997:103). This adequately explains the unintegrated prefectoral model. It touches on certain elements that applied to the Zimbabwean system before the introduction of the Amalgamation Act. In fact, all of it defines the Zimbabwean system during that time, except the last part that says: 'nor did the prefect occupy the position of chief executive in the local government system.'

In Zimbabwe, up to 1993, the District Administrator did not just supervise District Councils he/she was also the Chief Executive Officer. Thus, while the Zimbabwean system had and still has the functional model intact, it used parts of the other two models to produce its own form that, in spite of the differences in all defining characteristics, was chiefly a field administration form of decentralisation; a functional approach that exhibited elements of central control. Thus, as in field administration, localities were not 'let go' but were brought together under the ambit of central government such that the government's directives determined the only room for manoeuvre (Jordan, 1984:18). Within this argument however, it should be noted that the unintegrated type has elements of devolution, such that it can be described as a compromise approach between outright devolution and the exclusive control patterns of field administration. But still, whatever the argument, tendencies of centralisation in the system are noted,

and as such they lead one to view it with suspicion as an ineffective form of decentralisation. This analysis in fact, also draws one's attention into reviewing the current rural local government system vis-à-vis the three models. Consequently, one would argue that the current system seems to fit, perfectly, the unintegrated model because of the following:

- line ministries still have independent links with their departmental headquarters;

-

- the District Administrator has no overriding authority over the operations of line ministries;

- the District Administrator does not occupy the position of Chief Executive in the local government system; and

- the District Administrator is only one line of communication with the province and the centre, a line of communication, which is provided by the Development Committee System from VIDCOs, WADCOs, DDCs, and PDCs (Provincial Development Committees).

The difference comes from the fact that the District Administrator in the new system does not supervise the local government system, although through his/her functional contact with it, he/she can note in reports on how the local government system is operating, issues that can lead to the formulation of policy initiatives designed to correct the problems observed. This difference also gives the current rural local government system its autonomy as a system structured under the decentralisation model known as devolution.

A closer analysis of deconcentration and delegation indicates that the two have similar characteristics that are superseded by that of administrative convenience. Thus, 'hiving off power' to delegated and deconcentrated institutions is not very

much about giving power to peripheral people, but to ease the administrative pressures of the center, while retaining overall decision making powers. The nature of these two forms has led scholars to refer to them as 'pseudo-decentralisation' concepts that are linked to functional decentralisation, a concept also coined to emphasise the managerial or administrative imperatives of 'hiving off' central government responsibilities. This administrative/managerial imperative was popular in British colonial Africa, especially during the early years of colonialism. The British, before granting independence to its colonies, had started a process of moving away from this system that was characterised by excessive control of the peripheral folks. However, independent Africa repopularised these systems (deconcentration and delegation) during their formative years of independence.

The fourth form of decentralisation is devolution. This is acknowledged to be the most acceptable and well-intentioned decentralisation. It is a form that is considered to be genuine in empowering local people to take part in the provision of social services of a local nature, while at the same time, teaching or orienting them to the mechanics of governance. Devolution is the transfer of power to sub-national units of government, which are autonomous and distinct from central government and only need indirect supervisory control of the center (Litvack and Seddon, 1999:3). It is about the conferment of rule-making and executive powers of a specified or residual nature on formally constituted sub-national units.

Devolution is also referred to as territorial decentralisation as it is concerned with the creation of sub-territories within a state and vesting political power to these smaller geographical units so that they can exercise some form of local authority discretion in making decisions that can expedite the provision of services to local communities (Onesmo in Hyden, Olowu and Ogendo, 2000:184). Devolution entails strengthening sub-territories financially, legally and administratively so that that they can perform their local tasks in an atmosphere of freedom from interference and control from central government. It entails greater autonomy and

the capacity to make policies, at that level, through local legislation and execution authority that is consistent with the needs of peripheral societies. Devolved local authorities should exhibit the following characteristics:

- (a)   they should be constitutionally separate from central government and be responsible for a range of services;

- (b)   they should have a legal status which gives them power to sue and be sued;

- (c)   they should have their own treasury, separate budget and accounts;

- (d)   local taxes should produce a substantial portion of local revenue;

- (e)   local authorities should have their own personnel, with the right to hire and fire such staff;

- (f)   local government policy should be largely decided by local councils, predominantly consisting of elected representatives; and

- (g)   higher levels of government should only play an indirect advisory, supervisory and guidance role (Mawhood, 1993:9).

These characteristics, although they give local authorities greater local discretion, do not in anyway mean that these devolved units should function outside the confines of central government or constitutional provisions. The characteristics indicate that they should have both specified (as sanctioned by central government) and residual (making policies that are not contrary to central government policies) power that allows them to act independently of central government, with the ultimate aim of complementing central government development strategies. The two should not be viewed as institutions in competition but as mutually supportive institutions whose ultimate aim is excellence in service provision.

Devolved institutions should also realise their subordinate nature and as such, should function within the legislated directives of the mother body. It should also be noted that draconian legislation with too many provisions for central

government interference in local affairs through, for example, Presidential Directives or sweeping supervisory powers of the responsible Minister, actually erodes the viability of the institution and violates the very defining characteristics of devolution. This scenario has a tendency of centralising power and leaving local authorities without autonomy and the capacity to function effectively and efficiently in their efforts to meet the demands of the local communities. Viewed on a decentralisation – centralisation continuum, devolution lies at the extreme left, while delegation and deconcentration are in the middle, with centralisation at the extreme right. This study illustrates this relationship diagrammatically as indicated in Figure 3.1 below.

THE DECENTRALISATION ----- CENTRALISATION CONTINUUM

Most Autonomous   **Least Autonomous**

Privatisation   Devolution   Delegation   Centralisation

Deconcentration
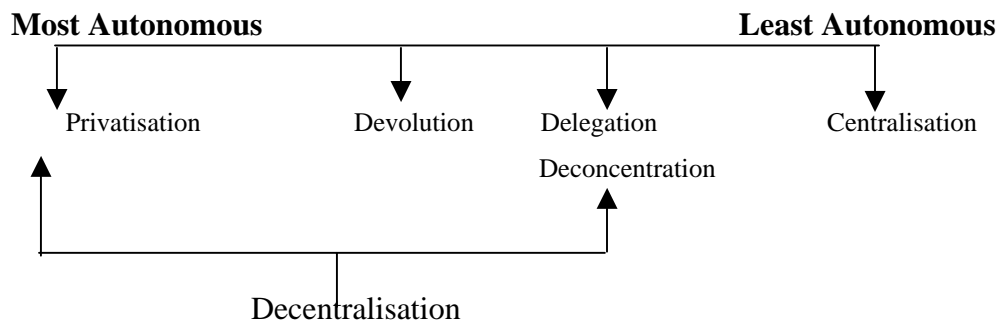
Decentralisation

Devolution provides the least centralised form. This is because it has elements of territorial separation while deconcentration and delegation are mainly about functional separation. Thus, the motives behind each of these forms of decentralisation provide a clear indication of the differences among them, and the ability of the state to control each form. Devolution also provides higher latitude of local participation since the local people decide who should be their leaders and determine a combination of services with which they want the decentralised body to provide them. Table 3.1 as provided by this study on page 116, distinguishes the four types of decentralisation by motive or rationale and provides examples of each of these forms.

Decentralisation is an attempt to move away from centralisation and its dysfunctions. However, a number of developing countries find it difficult to move

away from the tendency to centralize. Centralisation can be viewed as a tendency to concentrate administrative and political power in the upper echelons of an organisation's hierarchy (Blondel, 1995:230). It is movement towards the centre of power in any system of governance. It is an acknowledgment that those at the centre are better placed to formulate decisions for the whole society in a given polity. Thus, centralisation tendencies negate decentralisation. Viewed as factors along a continuum, they lie at the extreme ends of this continuum. Blondel (1995:231-233), advance several reasons to explain why states tend to favour centralisation, at the expense of decentralisation:

Table 3.1 Forms of decentralisation and their rationale

Type of Decentralisation	Rationale	Examples
Privatisation	-withdrawal from service provision -transferring responsibilities to parallel institutions	private sector involvement, special interest group involvement, e.g. professional associations, trade unions women and youth groups, voluntary orgs.
Delegation	-transfer of managerial and operational responsibility -creating institutions with power to plan and implement policies	semi- autonomous institutions, e.g. parastatals, regional development agencies and project units.
Deconcentration	-creation of field agents, -functional power 'hiving off' -managerial/administrative empowering -easing the administrative load of centre	creating provincial and district offices, e.g. the PA and DA's office, Development Committees, line ministry field agents. weak systems of local government with the DA as Chief Executive Officer.
Devolution	-territorial autonomy -operational autonomy -policy making autonomy -functional autonomy -enhanced local participation -interest group representation	creating provincial govt. (development from the middle). Creating district government (development from below).

1. Centralisation ensures an equitable distribution of resources to all corners of the state. Resource distribution and redistribution is said to be a major function of central government. Thus, government can effectively carry out

this function if it is in charge of all processes of distribution and redistribution. This is said to have the effect of making sure that people with similar life styles in different parts of the country (similar life style, meaning similarity in income, and so on) get similar treatment so as to avoid advantaging or disadvantaging the other, should their localities be tasked with carrying out the implementation of such policies. In addition, the argument is that if each local authority is allowed to carry out its redistributive policies, then localities that are richer than others will prosper, while the poor ones will remain poor.

Although this point has some elements of plausibility, it is not in keeping with the views espoused by this study fundamentally, because decentralising authority to make decisions at the local level does not mean that government should sit back and rely on these local institutions to carry out these redistributive policies without it having any input. The fact that certain localities are richer than others make, it easy for central government to realise which areas are weaker than others. It is after such a realization, that central government can come up with equalisation policies to uplift these disadvantaged areas. An umbrella entry by central government to all areas in pursuit of a policy to be felt in all corners of the state is likely to exacerbate a skewed phenomenon of resource distribution, as there is likely to be a tendency to give even to those who have. This scenario is evident in Zimbabwe where umbrella grants, given to local authorities between 1980 and 1993, have led to deep-rooted local authority disparities, rather than advancing the equity goal which is mentioned as a focus for the need to centralise. Thus, centralisation for distributive and redistributive purposes does not seem to concur with the focus of this study.

2. The second argument is that of controlling the allocation of resources. The argument is that central government is better placed to conduct macro

economic policies for the nation. Where local authorities are in charge of their own tax systems, or control large amounts of the tax bill, this creates a situation where central government is powerless and unable to influence economic growth and stability. A scenario in the United Kingdom is given as an example of local institutions whose fiscal behaviour runs contrary to national interests because of the fiscal powers, which the local institutions have.

This argument comes from situations where local government systems have not been properly rationalised in line with overall national interest. The idea of local government is not to create institutions that act in competition with the national government, but to create responsive institutions that give central government capacity to function effectively for national gain. It is to create institutions that complement the efforts of central government, rather than undermine such efforts. Thus, the need to control macro-economic policies is understood. However, if such control cannot be put into practice because of decentralization, it is an indication of failure to rationalise functions between the two systems. This makes it difficult to create operational policies that lead to the effectiveness of both systems.

3. Centralisation ensures accountability. The argument here is that central government cannot be influenced by local interest groups to act inconsistently with its overall mission of service provision and ensuring overall national development. Central government is, thus, better placed to respond favourably to the wishes of the people than is local government. Local institutions are more prone to corrupt tendencies, since pockets of influential people can sway these institutions to their own advantage, as those in office are mostly 'local boys' who can easily succumb to pressure.

This argument is difficult to justify in this study because practice in Africa

does not, in any way support this point. Secondly, the study argues, this point would only be justifiable where society is depoliticised in such a manner that only those who wield economic power are political. According to this study, practice, especially in Zimbabwe runs contrary to this argument. In fact, politicians at the local level can easily be controlled. For example, these officials can loose their posts if they do not respond to local communities. Local communities are likely to find it easy to control their officials since they know that they are the ones who give them power. However, it is difficult for locals to control field officers whose power lies at the centre. As a result, one would argue, these field officers are to a greater extent, more prone to corruption than local officers. In addition, central government also interferes with the deliberations of local authorities by influencing electorates to choose candidates who are supportive of their policies. In the final analysis, candidates are torn apart and fail to function, both to the satisfaction of central government or local communities. In the presence of this confusion, one cannot rule out looting. Indeed, decentralisation is not a panacea for good governance and development but is one of the factors that should make things happen. It is one of the factors that should lead to good governance, democracy and responsibility in rulership.

4. To enable the centre to know what is going on in the periphery so as to offer timely remedial action. Is it not in fact easier for central government to know exactly what the local situation is like from local people, rather than from its field officers, and secondly, who knows the local conditions better than the other, the local people or field officers?

5. To ensure a well planned development process for the whole country. Central planning has been accused of failing to take detailed local needs into cognizance. As a result, it has led to situations of allocating resources to areas that do not, in fact, need them. Thus, central planning tends to

lack a rational analysis of local conditions and, as such, it is not better placed to come up with prescriptions that can treat peripheral areas. Although central planning, as a concept of national development is not dismissed at this stage, the argument is that it can only be meaningful in a situation where the local communities determine what is good for them and when such decisions are incorporated in the overall national development strategy. Community involvement can only take place where there are local institutions to advance the cause of the local people. Central government field agencies, arguably in Zimbabwe, may not be as reliable as expected in forwarding the interests of the local people to government. In addition, the officers in these field agencies may recommend policy actions of their interest rather than that of the community. For example, funds may be allocated for schools when the local communities needed clinics. Dams may be built in areas where communities feel that such infrastructure is not suitable for that area. Consequently, communities may resist certain development projects that are centrally determined and implemented. This is inconsistent with the requirements of sustainable local development.

Arguments for centralisation tend to be oriented towards autocracy. They defy democratic practices and deny communities the chance for self-determination. Society is so complex and its problems even more so, that the few officials at the centre and their field officers cannot penetrate local areas and handle all the problems that these people face without suffering from political exhaustion that may ultimately negate any positive actions by the state in its attempt to rule effectively. In fact, democratic values indicate that government is best that governs least. Such government can only govern least if it entrenches a system of self-government that can be properly instituted through decentralisation.

According to Blondel (1995:233), the tendency to centralise governance originates from four fundamental factors: history, ideology, structure, and

efficiency. These factors are explained as follows:

History: Blondel (1995:231) indicates that the historical legacies of nations exhibit ongoing patterns of centralisation and decentralisation. The issue is highlighted further when the author says that:

> Some countries such as France or Japan are regarded as traditionally centralised. The same appears to be true of many Latin American countries if not all. On the other hand, countries such as the United States, Britain and Germany are regarded as inherently decentralised. Indeed although in Western Europe in recent years pressure for decentralisation has increased, long standing traditions persist and seem to continue to account for the fact that some states remain centralised while others are decentralized (Blondel, 1995:231)

The historical factor indicates that some states may find it difficult to modify their historical past. These tend to continue in their governing ways, be they centralised or decentralized, as they fail to move away from such historical legacies.

Ideology: National ideology fosters a kind of national outlook with which states want to be identified. Ideology is a philosophical orientation of the state that in turn, helps to shape its behavior. Once a state has an ideology which guides its actions, it can easily be predicted how it is likely to respond to certain societal demands. Liberalism and egalitarianism are the common ideologies that polarised the world into two: the East and the West, for a long time, until the fall of the Soviet Union. For example, countries that follow an egalitarian ideology are said to exhibit decentralisation tendencies, while those that follow egalitarianism are likely to have centralisation tendencies in line with the philosophy of democratic centralism that characterised Communist Europe, Cuba and all socialist states (Blondel, 1995:231).

Countries that lack a proper ideology find it difficult to identify themselves. As a result, they vacillate between the right (liberal democracy) and the left (egalitarian

democracy) in a manner that brings operational confusion to the state. This confusion is an African problem where most African countries find it difficult to say what ideology they are following. However, countries such as Tanzania during the time of President Nyerere and Zambia during the leadership of Kaunda, managed to define themselves as following African socialism and humanism respectively. When viewed on a continuum, these two fall somewhere between egalitarianism and liberalism. The question is, did they develop and follow policies that exhibited such ideological convictions or were these philosophical standpoints convenient means of keeping both the west and the east guessing as to whether they had the support of such countries or not.

Zimbabwe, on the other hand, has exhibited serious ideological problems. While at independence it pronounced that it was Marxist-Leninist, its practices were not purely egalitarian. Zimbabwe operated under a transitional Constitution that had entrenched clauses that could not be changed for periods of five and ten years. This Constitution was basically a western machination that protected the rights of minority groups (particularly the whites) for up to a period of ten years. Consequently, one would argue that Zimbabwe could not, because of these constitutional provisions apply its Marxist-Lininist ideology at the time. This would have meant the introduction of drastic redistributive policies that would have been in contravention of the Constitution to which central government was a signatory. Although the top hierarchy in the ruling party had interest in egalitarianism, the practice of it was never in place. At the beginning of the Third Republic in 1990, Zimbabwe was affected by IMF and World Bank prescriptions for development. These were encapsulated in the infamous ESAP (Chipika, 1998:8). This programme, as has already been explained in Chapter one, was designed in line with liberal philosophies and the free market economy. The implementation of this programme was supposed to lead to economic growth, improved social welfare and democratic good governance. As has been explained, these values were never attained. Of significance is the fact that while the government's chance to implement its Marxist-Leninist philosophies had

arrived in the Third Republic, because of the end of the transitional era under the Lancaster House Constitution, the realities of development at that moment, pushed Zimbabwe from implementing these communist ideas. This scenario created a lot of conflict and uncertainty as the President continued to utter words of Marxism and Leninism while the country was busy implementing 'western world' programmes. This confusion meant that the Marxist-Leninist philosophies remained at the level of rhetoric in Zimbabwe. One would argue that this confused state of affairs was of no benefit to the country's local government system as there were doses of egalitarianism and liberalism that were not properly synchronized to produce a viable state ideology.

Structure: This relates to issues of societal conflict, where an inherently conflictual society, for various reasons, such as those of ethnicity and racism, tends to have centralised systems, that the leaders argue, is intended to deal with issues of conflict, dissension and general societal contradictions that may threaten the very existence of a particular regime in power. On the other hand, a state that has a fairly stable society has greater chances of practicing decentralisation. Blondel (1995:231-232) notes that:

> A relationship exists between ideology, the degree to which a regime is accepted and centralisation. Liberal regimes that are well accepted will tend towards decentralisation. Authoritarian regimes are likely to promote centralisation except if they are so well accepted and so traditional that they do not propose to put a new mark on their polity. Most authoritarian systems and those liberal systems which are not well accepted are likely to veer towards centralisation, though to a varying degree and with greater or lesser consistency.

This indicates that the government in power and its ideological outlook tends to play a major role in cultivating or limiting decentralization.

Efficiency: Efficiency is about the attainment of results at the least cost. It is about the maximisation of net benefits in any given policy scenario. As such, regimes are said to deal with issues of centralisation in terms of cost saving or

the reduction of inefficiency. Centralisation is particularly associated with inefficiency while the opposite holds for decentralisation. All states cherish this economic factor from the obvious point of economic prudence brought about by the undeniable fact that all countries operate under conditions of scarcity of resources (Blondel, 1995:232-233).

The centralisation of power has led to much criticism by development scholars. They argue that a state with centralising tendencies develops a patronage-based civil service that, in its daily undertakings, functions to gain political compliance from members of civil society rather than concentrating on its fundamental goals of serving the community and facilitating local development. The civil service, in this case, becomes an extension of the reigning politics of the day as it endlessly engages itself in politicisation processes rather than administrative and executory functions. Leftwhich (1994:381) indicates that after gaining independence, most states in Africa failed to realise the importance of creating institutions of governance that adhered to the demands of proper policy making and implementation. The author adds that the post-colonial state in Africa is always busy consolidating its power. As a result, it tends to forget that the fundamentals of power consolidation actually lay in creating responsive institutions of governance.

The other problem with the state in Africa is that through its central tendencies, it has failed to develop administrative systems that are competent enough to handle local government institutions appropriately. There are several management and administrative failures in Africa. Consequently, poor development strategies and inappropriate implementation frames are employed, hence the perpetuation of underdevelopment. Another important factor that concerns proponents of development like Leftwhich is that those who define development processes did not give the state in Africa, sufficient preparatory ground to enable the state to appropriately define itself in developmental terms (Picard and Garrity in Fitzgerald, McLennan and Munslow, 1997:62-63). Thus, it

was one thing, on the part of the state, to term itself a developmental state and another to actually carry out developmental practices, as it was not aware of the characteristics it had to exhibit in order to function as such. This state of affairs affects many of Africa's development initiatives, such that, even in situations where funds for development are provided, the state still fails to 'take off' as it cannot fundamentally understand the characteristics it has to exhibit to undertake developmental tasks.

The state can define its development mission as a cherished goal for human advancement and progress, but fail to translate this definition into practical programmes that it can put into practice to achieve this goal. The fundamentals of such failure lie in its failure to mobilise and manage the very resource that needs development: the human resource. The practice, mostly in Africa, is to distance this resource from decision making and policy making in such a manner that it (the human resource) feels alienated from the programmes and projects being undertaken (Leftwhich, 1994:381). This erodes its (the human resource) spirit of commitment leading inevitably, to the failure of such programmes and projects. The contention here is that central government is too extensively involved in the process of development. One would argue that central government wants to become an engine room for the conception of development ideas, a factory for designing work processes, a finance house or treasury for providing and distributing development resources throughout the country, a police officer for monitoring the implementation process, and even a judge to determine the level of performance has been. One would also argue that this is not a plausible approach as it tends to be centralised, authoritarian and even to an extent, totalitarian, leading the state to suffer from 'development constipation' and an inability to create room to manoeuvre and remove itself from the mess it has created for itself and its people.

Within the parameters of these criticisms, this study further argues that where local governance is concerned, this approach also erodes local institutional

autonomy which compromises local decision making and the overall functional capacity of these institutions. Thus, the purpose of decentralising power is ultimately destroyed. It becomes a cost to central government and the localities themselves. Lack of development, corruption in the form of misuse of funds, and favoritism manifest themselves and lead any country involved in development endeavours towards the brink of collapse. Eventually, external donor institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) propose development strategies for such countries, strategies that have, in most cases, exacerbated poverty and suffering in the recipient countries. Although the nature and content of these strategies may be blamed for the development of such a scenario, recipient countries should also shoulder much of the blame. The reasons being that these countries, with no culture of development, receive a lot of external funds which they, in turn, use inefficiently, thereby extending the country's debt, poverty and lack of development.

Zimbabwe had a chance of reviewing the situation indicated above, for more than twenty years. Instead of avoiding similar problems, it has engulfed itself in this dilemma. Popular participation is still a far cry from being a reality. Government seems to have involved itself in a system where it relates more to its field officers than to the rest of the people and this situation has created a vacuum between the people and government, a situation that has affected development processes negatively as popular participation, programme coordination, planning and implementation become difficult to synchronise. Even where government has created local authorities, these have not brought any hope because significantly, no serious decision making takes place within these local authorities. The people, and even their representatives at local level are not used to choosing among alternatives, or deciding what the alternatives are. They are used to being told what is good for them, often in great detail, since central ministry guidelines specify uniform standards and methods to be used across the country (Mushauri in Hofmeister and Scholz, 1996:271).

Smith (1985:40) seems to provide a temporary answer to the whole scenario of overcentralisation, thereby exacerbating over-dependence and lack of local power for local authority people. Smith says that:

> … if people are to be shareholders in development, contributing their capital (savings, labour, knowledge), they must have a say too. They need institutions that allow them to have a direct say. This implies a shift in both resources and control over resources and decision making to the rural people. These are the consequences of adopting a bottom up approach [which, in this modern world is fundamental for development initiatives].

Criticisms of centralisation have strengthened ideas for decentralisation. Both authoritarian and liberal states agree that decentralisation is important. The only difference arises in the nature and extent of decentralisation that is permissible in their respective regimes. Blondel (1995:229), in the analysis of state centralisation and decentralisation begins by noting that:

> No government, even the most authoritarian, can ever take all public decisions at the centre. Some power has therefore to be given authorities below the national level to take the decisions that the centre cannot take. From this general remark, emerges the idea of decentralisation, an idea that can, of course, take many forms and vary markedly in extent.

Using the above citation, one can argue that African countries also found themselves in the same boat after independence. It was evident that the rapid expansion of government services after independence would put pressure on central governments to decentralise responsibilities to sub-national institutions. This would in turn allow local communities to participate in matters of government. It would also reduce central control and increase public accountability.

To further strengthen the need and in fact, indispensability of decentralisation in Africa, the Africities 2000 Summit held in Windhoek came up with ideas for an African Vision for Decentralisation. Mayors and Ministers of Local Government expressed these after a week of deliberation on this issue. The following views

were expressed:

1. We, the Ministers and Mayors gathered together in Windhoek agree to commit ourselves to promote and support the vision of decentralisation in our respective countries.

2. The purpose of decentralisation should be to devolve power and responsibility to lower tiers of government, promote local democracy and good governance, with the ultimate objective of improving the quality of life of the people.

3. Decentralisation should be to local government structures that are representative of and accountable to all sectors of the population, including marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

4. Decentralisation should be to levels of local government structures that enable effective community participation in local governance.

5. Decentralisation should involve the transfer to local government institutions those powers and functions necessary to enable them to:

    a) provide services for the local population efficiently and effectively;
    b) provide a conducive environment for local economic development;
    c) develop and manage local resources in a sustainable manner.

6. Decentralisation should include the provision of access to the resources needed to execute the above powers and functions efficiently and effectively, including financial and manpower resources.

7. Financial resources should be available to local authorities in a manner that is reliable, adequate, predictable, transparent, accountable,

sustainable and equitable.

8. The basic components of a decentralised system of local government should be enshrined in the constitution (AULA - Africities Communiqué, 2000:1-2).

These ideas encapsulate Africa's decentralisation spirit and act as a guide to any country on the continent that is keen on embracing this concept in restructuring its government system.

Local Government

The concept 'local government' is embedded in the umbrella concept of decentralisation. Its significance has been emphasized the world over as an important aspect of stable government, democracy and community empowerment. Simply defined, local government:

> … is a second or third level of governance created to ensure that government is brought to the grass-root population to give its members a sense of involvement in the political processes that control their lives (Reddy, 2000:1)

As can be seen from this definition, local government is about the political subdivision of a nation or state so that substantial control of local affairs is by the local leadership that should be democratically elected by the local people. The definition indicates that local government is a result of demarcating a nation's geographical area into smaller geographical units that can stand separately, according to laid down criteria. These geographical units are given the powers of self-determination by central government, either through constitutional provisions, or through parliamentary legislation. This legislative provision gives it a legal status that allows it to operate independently and where it has to be sued, such can be done and where it has to sue the legal provisions give it such authority. Reddy (2000:8) defines local government as the '…second or third

level of government deliberately created to bring government to the local populace as well as to give its members a sense of involvement in the political processes that control their daily lives.' Emphasis here is on the separateness of local government from central government, locality orientation, community participation, and self-determination. In like manner Meyer (1978:10) defines local government as:

> …local democratic units within the democratic system … which are subordinate members of the government vested with prescribed, controlled governmental powers and sources of income to render specific local services and to control and regulate the geographic, social and economic development of defined local areas.

An analysis of these definitions indicates that the basic features of local government have to do with:

- **Locality:** that its concentration is on a small area within a state. Locality entails nearness and ownership. This allows the local community to identify itself with this body and participate in all its development efforts.

- **Legal personality:** that local government units are a creation of the state as a constitutional requirement or legislative imperative. The enabling Act of Parliament allows it to be a juridical person capable of suing and being sued.

- **Autonomy:** once established, the local authorities operate independently from central government. They make binding decisions on the mixture of services they want to provide in their areas of jurisdiction.

- **Governmental power:** Other than doing what they want in terms of servicing their local communities, they complement government strategies of improving social welfare and making life good for all citizens. Thus, their actions are endowed with government power to carry out formal

government functions.

- **Participation:** communities are expected to participate in local decision making. This allows them to determine what they want at a particular time and to prioritise services. In addition, participation gives communities the chance to learn the tricks of the political game. It enhances their political consciousness and capacity to engage meaningfully in national politics.

- **Representation:** local authorities have the power to choose their own representatives through a local government electoral process. If the representatives do not perform according to standard, communities have the power to replace them. The representatives form the council's legislative body, which is in charge of locality decision making.

The purpose of local government units is to make decisions of a local nature based on their requisite power and authority and to raise revenue through local taxes and levies as they see fit. To carry out its functions, the local government unit operates through an elected councilor system, which establishes a body of councillors to carry out legislative functions of a local nature. Sometimes provisions for appointing councillors exist in different local government systems. The ideal situation, however, is for the majority of council members to be elected to council by vote.

However, it should be noted that during the colonial era in Zimbabwe, there were more appointments than elections, as it will be seen later in this chapter. As such, local government units, depending on the nature of government, can exhibit extreme forms of both centralisation and decentralisation. This means that the evolutionary process of local government in one country can vacillate between the two extremes, depending on the government in power. Internationally, there have been similar variances in the structures and functions of local governments (Reddy, 2000:1).

Local government should be dynamic to keep up with the changing nature of societies. Rural local government transformation in Zimbabwe should recognize the need for dynamism to reorient rural local government to the changing socio-economic and political demands of the country. With this in mind, local government should play a number of roles, such as the provision of services of a local nature; regulating locality processes; building external and internal relations; facilitating community participation and harmony; and assuming a leadership role as a representative, governor, and voice of the local communities.

These roles indicate the paramountcy of local government institutions as facilitators of local choice. Once local communities have selected what they want provided to them (such as water, housing, health, education, and roads), it is the duty of local authorities to organise and gear themselves for actions that lead to the efficient production and management of such services. Needless to say, the local people should feel duty bound to contribute to the production and management of such processes. Where local authorities have no internal capacity to undertake such services, there is need for these institutions to facilitate processes that would lead to entry by other institutions to partner it in producing these goods and services, hence the need to mobilise the private sector, NGOs, and central government involvement in local affairs, not as major policy makers, but as vital guests of the locality development process.

There is a constant need by local authorities to monitor or regulate locality processes of doing things and to keep the democratic flame burning by creating structures of community participation so as to constantly get feed back on their actions and whether or not they are providing the essential goods and services in an efficient and effective manner.

In order to undertake their duties effectively, local authorities also need a sound council, which is the management committee and decision box of the local community. The council should be community based and should consist of locally

elected leaders who derive their power from the local people, rather than some external source of power, such as central government persons or senior party ideologues who penetrate local authorities and influence locality dynamic to the detriment of local interests. This means that councillors should, in turn, put in place an administration which is composed of administrators with sound planning, policy making, financial, human resources and project management knowledge; administrators who are driven by professional values of excellence rather than personal interests that are inconsistent with the demands and nature of their duties.

Because of the multiplicity of roles they have to fulfill, local government institutions are faced with several challenges, which if overcome, would ensure their (local authorities) viability. These challenges include the challenge for the maintenance of democratic ideals; the challenge for functional fulfillment; and the challenge for managerial competence. These challenges are a basis for local government autonomy and functional capacity. Gauging the performance of local government demands that there be measurement of the extent to which the objectives of local government are achieved taking into account the resources available to the locality and the demands of the local communities. This means that deliberate central government initiatives to establish local government institutions should ensure that clear policy frameworks are set in place, to enable local institutions to meet these challenges.

- **The Democratic Participation Challenge**

It is generally accepted by several scholars of local government that these institutions exist to promote the values of liberty, participation, responsiveness, equity and development (Blair, 1977:4-8; and Chandler, 1996:6-9). The values, if internalized and acted upon, will ensure local democracy. Liberty is a fundamental value of democracy, as it is about the entrenchment of the fundamental rights of individuals to determine their own destiny. Local government ensures the attainment of this value as it facilitates local competition

for local government positions, local power and control of locality proceedings; gives local people the chance to relate easily with local centres of power as they are within easy reach; and limits rural local government influence on local proceedings, a situation that enhances individual freedom and eliminates excessive control of the periphery by the centre. The argument is that for local government to be effective, there should be a diffusion of power, which should enhance the liberty of communities and reduce the tendency of central government to centralize power. This leads to a more balanced power distribution between the state and civil society.

Although this argument is sustained by local government development in countries such as the United States of America, France and some African countries at independence, the argument is criticised for its inability to ensure local democracy. However, the counter argument to these negative sentiments is that in order to ensure local democracy, it is important for the whole country to exhibit a democratic culture of participation. It is indeed rational to provide for this democratic approach in constitutions and Acts of Parliament. But for this provision to be of useful, it should be followed by extensive processes of acculturation, to develop in people a culture of appreciation of democratic governance. This is fundamental as a national priority because a country which is not sure of its political values and uses dictatorial tendencies in its governing processes, is likely to find the same scenario spreading in its local institutions. This becomes a tradition of rule in that country.

The second value is that of participation, also referred to as the value of equality. The notion of participation is a call upon local government to mobilise communities to take part in issues of governance. It is a pluralist notion of enhancing the politics of involvement or inclusion. It is an attempt to put the people first. Participation stems from the realisation that human beings possess the power of reason and thus, it is only rational to create viable institutions, which can enable a wide network of human beings to engage in socio-economic and

political discourse aimed at their own upliftment. Local government has been identified as such an institution which can allow human beings to put into practice their powers of reason by debating locality issues for their own benefit. Involving people in governance is in fact, part of the democratisation process that empowers the people. It seeks to involve communities in decision making on what they want; involves them in the implementation and monitoring of development programmes; and allows them to evaluate all these programmes and projects that affect their lives. This enables communities to think and rethink development strategies. An analysis of the concept of participation also indicates that:

- people's participation in development is the engine for launching the process of economic transformation; it is the motor for accelerating the process of change and development;

- people's participation expands the areas of debate on national development issues, it diffuses power and subordinates state control to popular politics;

- self-reliant development requires that power be redistributed in favour of society rather than be concentrated in the hands of a few;

- the politics of consensus and consent, conviction and commitment, compassion and accountability are the practical corollary of a concern for a nation as a whole, not just for a particular group;

- there must be material incentives for people to make the fullest possible use of their skills and talents – that is, to participate meaningfully – and this calls for a development ethic which is not only informed by social justice, but the benefits which are sufficient to provide the basic needs of the individual and the family;

- to achieve and sustain meaningful development, it is necessary to ensure the education and training, health, well-being and vitality of the people so that they can participate fully and effectively in the development process;

- there is need for the creation of an enabling environment in terms of political freedoms – of speech, association, freedom from arbitrary arrest and molestation. It is in such an environment that high levels of productivity can be generated and sustained, and values of self reliance and self confidence can be developed; and

- within African countries, the initiative and vitality of the rural poor have for too long, been sapped by the rural rich and the government officials from the city (Marsden in Crook and Jerve, 1991:32-34).

Participation benefits all who are engaged in local government, which is inclusive of communities, councilors, the local bureaucracy and ultimately, central government. However, it should be realised that this participation is not an overnight affair. It is a process, which requires vigorous attempts by central government and local authorities to mobilise all forces of participation and gear them towards creating conducive environments to ensure the attainment of this value.

One of the roles of local government is to provide goods and services of a local nature. For these to be provided effectively, local government should be responsive to the needs of these local communities. Responsiveness is one of the fundamental values that local government should satisfy. Local government institutions are better placed to respond to a desirable mixture of goods and services needed by the local communities. This is mostly because it is closest to the people, whereas central government is rather remote (Chandler, 1996:9). The argument put forward by some scholars that central government is able to

feel the 'heart throbs' of the local communities through its field agencies can be true but not plausible as these 'heart throbs' cannot be coordinated by these functional specialist departments that may be interested in different 'pulse rates' that have nothing to do with the interests of the local communities. For a holistic approach, these different pulse rates need to be coordinated and a pulse rate curve drawn to exhibit a full picture of the ailment and thereby offer an appropriate 'drug punch' that is capable of dealing with the undesirable condition of the community. Local institutions provide these coordinative mechanisms. They can coordinate various community requests and provide, within the limited resources, the appropriate decisions and programmes to alleviate the problems that the community faces. Local government institutions, are indeed, better placed to perform the locality welfare function in an efficient manner.

Responsiveness is crucial for developing countries such as Zimbabwe, where local populations have several demands in basic social services that were denied them during the colonial era. Thus, the argument here is that local communities need local institutions that they can constantly monitor to make sure that they act in accordance with the needs of the former. Failure to do so should lead to representatives being replaced through the vote for a new breed of councillors who, through fear of treading the paths of their predecessors, are likely to 'tighten their belts' and deliver the goods these local communities need.

The fourth value is that of equity. This value has gained prominence through advocates of welfare economics. It is closely related to legal and social rationality and refers to the distribution of effects and effort among different groups in society (Dunn, 1994:286). Thus, the argument put forward concerning equity in this study, is that local government is well placed to ensure that a minimum standard of living exists throughout the community and country as a whole. Although the general argument is that equity (which is about income distribution) is better effected and controlled by central government, local authorities can also have an input as they are aware of the economic disparities of people in their

areas. Central government should, therefore, provide local authorities with grants aimed at equalizing such disparities by varying the expenditure needs of the localities to cater for the disadvantaged poor. However, it should be realized that the study notes that grants are somewhat problematic in that they have the effect of even advantaging the rich in situations where discrimination of service provision is not possible.

Finally, the value of development entails a multi faceted process, which is aimed at improving the quality of life and the world outlook of individuals (Fox and Meyer, 1995:36). It embraces socio-economic, political, environmental and cultural variables that lead to the sustainability of societies as well as promoting the advancement of their standards of living. This study argues that the notion of development as a condition that can be enhanced by local government stems from the realization that local government:

- is a mechanism for overcoming the problems of highly ineffective centrally controlled planning that has been used in many developing nations since independence;

- can reduce congestion at the centre. It can cut through the red tape and the highly structured hierarchy of central planning in developing nations due largely to the over-concentration of power, authority and resources at the national capital of the country; and could lead to the speedy completion of projects by giving locals greater decision making powers;

- can allow greater political and administrative penetration of national government policies into remote areas where central government plans are often ignored by or unknown to the local elite and where support for national development plans is often weak;

- aims at improving the standards of living of the poor; namely, the

amelioration of poverty, inequality and material deprivation. Thus for these to succeed, the local clientele should participate in the planning and implementation of relevant programmes designed to address these issues;

- has the effect of increasing the skill base of local communities and enable them to competently undertake development initiatives without foreign intervention; and

- can rationalise development processes and unite different interest groups who are aware of the need to act in unison in order to fulfill the needs of all in the locality.

The fulfillment of these values leads to a democratic culture among the locals; a culture that can be sustained by continued efforts to open up the governing system so that all feel obliged to take part in order to enhance their chances of development.

- **The Functional Challenge**

This is a challenge to allow local authorities to fulfill their functions both traditional and developmental. Local government institutions are established to perform functions of a local nature which central governments find difficult to perform because of their remoteness from local situations and, specifically, because of the local nature of certain services which make one area different from others. This scenario needs local attention from local people who, in fact, are to be the beneficiaries of such services. As such, since human beings are endowed with rationality, it becomes imperative that these local people determine the mixture of services they want and how they need these to be provided to them. Such decisions cannot emanate from central government without it being charged with being dictatorial. These functions of a local nature include:

1. the provision of essential services like education, health, housing, roads, water, sewerage and drainage systems;

2. carrying out development functions such as:
    (a)   promoting the development of local authority areas;
    (b)   formulating development policies;
    (c)   preparing development plans, both short term and long term plans;
    (d)   acquiring property as an investment initiative;
    (e)   engaging in income generating projects;
    (f)   engaging in cooperative arrangements with other local authorities, business persons, firms and even central government;

3. carrying out regulatory functions such as making regulatory by laws, registering, licensing and inspecting properties within the local authority area; and

4. collecting and expending revenue in line with the provisions of the enabling legislation (Seely, 1978:36-37).

The question to ask here is, did local authorities manage to perform their functions appropriately in the last eight years of their institution? What are the legal provisions that hinder or facilitate local authority functional capacity? What kind of resources are they allowed to collect? Are these resources adequate for local authority purposes and do these local authorities in fact, have the capacity to collect such revenues?

All these challenges hinder or facilitate local authorities in their bid to perform in accordance with their mandates. Meeting these challenges has the effect of popularising these institutions in the eyes of their clients. This has the positive effect of encouraging local involvement in council affairs, a situation that is much needed in Zimbabwe where rural local authorities have been institutions of

ridicule since the colonial days (Roe, 1992:5).

- **The Management Challenge**

To manage local affairs, local authorities create functional committees tasked with making sure that different duties of council are performed in a responsible manner. Apart from these committees, one would say that a local bureaucracy, composed of experts in administration and management is appointed, to provide the needed administrative and specific functional skills consistent with the needs of the locality.

The management scenario means that the challenges of local authorities lie in their ability to manage local affairs. This is an important function of local authorities that has been found wanting in Zimbabwe where local authorities lack decision making skills and consequently, are frequently accused of corruption, misuse of funds and general administrative incompetence (Hlatywayo, 1992:56).

The quality of management should be such that it has the necessary craft literacy and craft competence. Craft literacy is about the ability of management to produce viable plans such as corporate plans, strategic plans and project plans which are consistent with the abilities of council. Craft literacy also calls upon local authority managers to be able to make viable policy recommendations, which can assist local authorities in their decision-making (Moyo, 1992:62-63). Apart from craft literacy, local authority managers have to exhibit relevant competencies in implementing council programmes and projects. This competence should be accompanied by the ability of mangers to draft procedural policies that ensure local authority efficiency and effectiveness. It is significant to note that local authority resources are scarce and it is imperative that these management skills be geared to the maximisation of output with minimum cost. The whole scenario of management should thus encompass the economic question while rationally considering issues of equity.

The organisational frame of management calls upon local authorities to create

departments that can easily relate to committee functional areas. This scenario has the effect of creating the much needed rapport between committees and the local bureaucracy, who often accuse each other if the system is not well coordinated and besides, if the system is not coordinated properly, there is likely to be uncalled for duplication of services which defeats the whole purpose of resource rationalisation and efficiency. Other management challenges, which local authorities face include:

- the ability to look beyond the requirements of service provision to the needs and problems of the community;

- the ability to focus on the public as a customer and citizen, which is brought about both as a recognition of the changing demands of the public and as a response to legislation, challenges of the departmental model mentioned above and a professional culture which should be inputted in the local authority system of management;

- the ability to make strategic plans and define mission statements and objectives of organisations in behavioral terms so that they act as an achievable guide to all local authority actions as well as a response to the changing needs of societies;

- the ability to manage influence across the boundaries of the local authority and redirect such influences for the benefit of a particular local authority;

- the ability to articulate policy, both substantive and procedural, in order to lay a clear foundation for councillors in their policy deliberations;

- the ability to devolve management to lower echelons of the organisation and communities to increase community and council responsibility, responsiveness and initiative;

- the ability to encourage council to adopt an entrepreneurial approach to local authority business so as to exploit all developmental opportunities, programmes and projects in which councils can involve themselves to achieve the much needed council growth;

- the ability to input into the management system current staffing procedures aimed at realising potential for growth; and

- the ability to emphasize the importance of market forces in the workings of council as this has the effect of creating innovation and economic prudence in resource utilization (Leach and Stewart, 1982:182-185).

It remains to be seen if the Zimbabwean rural local government scenario measures up to these expectations. Before discussing the Zimbabwean scenario of rural local government, it is important to provide a brief discussion of traditional models of local government in general. This will enable one to understand the model with which Zimbabwe's local government system is associated, albeit with modifications.

Traditional systems of local government originate from the European systems of local government. The colonial process brought with it these European traditions, which have been influential in shaping local governance in these countries. However, a clear analysis of African local government indicates that these systems were not transplanted from Europe to Africa. Variations were introduced to create two systems, one for blacks and another for whites so as to entrench white supremacist policies and further subjugate the colonized black populations.

Although local government in Europe dates back to the Greek City States and the Roman Empire, constitutional local government manifested itself between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. The constitutionalisation of local government

was a major transformation of these institutions and government in general. The new local government dispensation enabled local government to become part of the acceptable national system of rule (Stoker, 1991:1-2; and Chandler, 1996:1-2). This ensured that local government was protected by constitutions. As a result, these local bodies could sue central government if it interfered with their duties.

Four traditional types or models of European local government systems can be isolated for comparison. These four European forms of local government have been influential in determining the path and development processes of local governance, particularly in Africa where they were imported during the colonial era. Not surprisingly, and for reasons indicated above, these systems were introduced with mixed characteristics in Africa. Colonialists especially the British introduced mixed systems to cater for blacks and whites. While the white local government institutions approximated the British local government system to a reasonable extent, the black institutions were basically modelled along a control-oriented system. The rationale here was to subjugate and control blacks that were viewed suspiciously. Blacks were taken as being rebellious by nature and needed close policing to make sure they 'towed the line' (Hlatshwayo, 1992:7). This scenario erased fundamental philosophical bases of local government in these countries. One may argue that the mixed tendencies have produced local government systems characterised by ambivalence, status uncertainty and a general intrusion into local affairs by central governments, contrary to policy positions announced by political leaders in these countries.

During the numerous struggles for independence, Africa came into contact with the Soviet System, which had raised the status of the political party, the Communist Party to overall supervisor of national affairs – hence the spirit of democratic centralism. This scenario was appealing to liberation movements. After all, it was partly through Soviet assistance that some of these countries emerged as victors in their struggles for independence. Thus, the Soviet

influence introduced some measure of Soviet local governance to Africa. The system was appealing and popular as it advocated for political party control. The model enabled the ruling parties to oversee all national activities, a situation that was politically plausible for the emerging states, as it would lead to the consolidation of power for those who occupied the seat of government. This mixed system of local governance in Africa has led many scholars to accuse African systems of lacking a philosophical base. Most systems are systems of convenience, whose fragility is exacerbated by a lack of a philosophy. This means that the lack of a guiding philosophy also indicates a weak political culture and hence, the failure to rationalise central/local relations. These issues are reflected in the Zimbabwean system and are revealed at each stage of the development of rural local government in Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, one should emphasize that the current state of local government in Africa is a reflection of pragmatic developments geared toward redressing the socio-economic, and political imbalances found in these countries.

The major defining characteristics of the generic local government systems of Europe are encapsulated in the terms general subsidiarisation; dual subsidiarisation; dual subordination; and functional regulation. Humes and Martin (1969:5-6) give a general view of these characteristics. The views are summarized in Table 3.2 on page 146. Humes and Martin indicate the following:

- General subsidiarisartion defines the German system of local governance. It is a system in which the local executive is responsible to the council for most functions. However, this executive is also responsible to a higher authority for the implementation of specific central policies. In this system, a general ministry exists to oversee and coordinate local authority functions with those of functional ministries. These ministries communicate with this ministry to make sure that their programmes are implemented in accordance with their plans.

Table 3.2 Four European local government systems

	General Subsidiarisation (German)	*Dual subordination (Soviet)*	*Dual supervision (France)*	*Functional regulation (British)*
Political Culture: Philosophical tradition	Cameral	Marxist	Rational	Utilitarian
Local government role	Subsidiary	Integral	Agent	Partner
Relations: Central coordinating Agency (and role)	Ministry of interior (general oversight)	Party secretariat (strong coordination)	Ministry of interior (coordinating)	Department of Environment (Housekeeping)
Regional executive	*Regierungsbezirke* President	*Oblast* party bureau local and government executive committee	Prefecture	None
Local structure: Committees/board committee	Board/main includes key agency has strong role	Executive committee *(municipalite)* heads	Mayor and adjoints	Government by committee
Local chief executive	Local chief executive	Party first secretary/ board chairman	Mayor is political head	Relatively weak executive
Local Resources: Personnel	Common (framework) Pattern	Integrated	Uniform national corps	Separate
Principal fund sources	General revenues	Integrated	General fund and grants	Block grants and rates
Scope of local Services	Broad	Very broad including enterprises	Fairly broad but dependent	Not as broad

Source: Humes and Martin, 1969:10. European local government systems

- Dual subsidiarisation defines the former Soviet Union system. This is a system of subordination where the local executive is part of the central government hierarchy, that is, the hierarchy of the Communist Party, which assumes executive power over all institutions of governance. Thus, local government falls within the concept of democratic centralism where democracy is expressed through this vanguard party (the Communist Party). Strong coordination from a central agency is expected, as the centre is the seat of ultimate authority, composed of top members of the

party hierarchy.

- Dual supervision defines the French system of local government. This is a system in which the local executive is partially responsible to council and, as a designated agent of central authority or a member of a central hierarchy, is directly responsible to it and supervised by it. In this system deconcentration and delegation are intricately intertwined. Field agents of different service ministries control the provision of the specific services they are mandated to provide. There is also a general-purpose ministry whose function it is to supervise local government institutions and generally oversee and coordinate local affairs.

- Functional regulation defines the British system of local governance. In this system, the local executive is fully responsible to council and not directly to any higher authority. In this system, functional ministries directly provide specific services. A general-purpose ministry is established to carry out 'housekeeping' functions. This ministry has weak coordinating powers. This scenario gives functional ministries the leeway to provide their services as they please as they are assured of little or no interference at all from the housekeeping ministry.

A description of these systems allows one to slot in other types of local government systems both in Europe and Africa as these four prototypes have been adopted in one way or another by countries on these continents. 'One way or another' in the sense that variations exist to reflect the objective conditions of each country and the type of political culture that the country has developed or is developing. Humes and Martin (1969:11) summarize these sentiments by saying that:

> While each system has evolved from separate traditions there has always been a cross-cultural sharing of ideas and adaptation of institutions. No system of local government is a pure bred model; all represent a mixture of traditions. As the countries of the world have

become more inter-communicative and interdependent, such transnational sharing and adapting has become more frequent.

This is the view that is adopted by this study in analysing Zimbabwe's rural local government system The thrust allows one to consider the opportunities open to government during the time and make decisions as to whether the chosen transformation route was plausible.   A brief rendition of Zimbabwe's RLG is provided in the section that follows.

THE EVOLUTION OF RURAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN ZIMBABWE

Hlatshwayo, Jerkins and Chisaka in Namusi (1998:13) indicate that the colonial legacy of extreme centralisation, which is dubbed "bambazonke" in Zimbabwean pidgin parlance, granted very restricted powers to the local population to participate in issues of governance. This centralisation process meant that colonial governance was neither based on consensus nor all the other democratic ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. This colonial heritage saw Zimbabwe and other independent states in Africa developing, at least in the early years of independence, a strong bias against decentralising power to local communities. This tendency has led to extreme development pitfalls for several of these states on the African continent and, particularly Zimbabwe.

However, current democratisation changes indicate a willingness to part with the past and usher in a more community-focused approach that realises the limits central government has in championing local development. This is because such human progress needs a lot of flexibility and adaptation to local situations and the needs of the people at any particular time. This approach basically dismisses the notion of a strong central state as necessary for preserving unity among diverse ethnic and culturally heterogeneous groups of people that can be found within a given state. Centralisation of power has, instead, led to suppressive and oppressive governments; engendered resistance from society; social upheavals;

coups and counter-coups; and a general breakdown of peace and stability in these countries. Centralisation has led to poor performance by these institutions. Their record in promoting democratic ideals, providing social services, and ensuring managerial excellence, cannot be commended.

It is within this background that this study reviews rural local government in Zimbabwe. This will draw attention to the effects of previous systems on the current system. Four rural local government eras can be isolated and discussed. These are the pre-colonial era which is the period before 1890; the colonial era, 1890 to 1980; the transitional era begins in 1980 and ends in 1993; and the post-transitional era, which is the period from 1993 to 2002.

The Pre-colonial Era

This era covers the period before 1890 when Zimbabwe was colonised and occupied by the British through Cecil John Rhodes and his British South Africa Company (BSAC). This era exhibits a pre-colonial mode of local government (Namusi, 1998:2). In this era, different ethnic groups particularly the Shona groups that include tribes such as the Karanga, Khalanga, Zezuru, Manyika, and Korekore developed their own local government systems that were agricultural and pastoral based on the needs of peoples. These systems were reflective of the nature of livelihood of these people at the time. The Nguni ethnic groups included the Ndebele and the Shangani. These were militant groups. As a result, their local government system was reflective of the military organisation that was peculiar to these groups. All the same, local government manifested itself. Whether basically military or agricultural, the local government system reflected a highly decentralised structure. At the top was central government headed by the king (Mambo or Inkosi in the Shona and Ndebele traditions respectively). Below the king were several chiefs (Madzishe or Izinduna) who ran different groups of people located in a particular area. These undoubtedly, were the king's subjects. However, each chief ran his area (isigodi in Ndebele) the way he wanted without

unnecessary interference from the inkosi (Namusi, 1998:2). Thus, a lot of decision-making autonomy was left to the izinduna/chiefs who had local advisers. The indunas were well-trusted men and they had the capacity to perform their duties as per the requirements of their subjects and the king. The different chiefs were expected to pay taxes to the king and this guaranteed their loyalty to him. The payment of such taxes also ensured support from the king anytime the induna wanted it, especially when a war broke out. Although in certain cases coercion manifested itself, especially when additional ethnic groups were captured, there was a general air of peace and mutual support for one another. This situation guaranteed the prosperity of the people of the land, as a whole.

Rationality prevailed in setting up local government structures during the colonial era. Among others, kings were faced with two major options: either to integrate the conquered lands and its people with other communities, or to cater for the conquered group's development processes by allowing it to stay on its land, pay its taxes and be available to the king's services, especially the army. Apparently, the second option prevailed. The conquered ethnic groups were allowed to settle as a group with their own chief. This approach catered for ethnic differences and allowed the conquered people to lead their lives as long as they kept their obligations to the king in mind (Namusi, 1998:3). The payment of taxes and the freedom of each group to practise its culture enhanced the performance of each isigodi. This is because people were allowed to determine their own destiny, as long as their chief was not authoritarian himself.

The Colonial Era (1890 to 1980)

This era reflects ninety years of white rule in Zimbabwe (1890 - 1980). White rule brought with it British local government practices. The system fused with Dutch systems as a result of Anglo-Dutch relations at the Cape (Hlatshwayo, 1995:12). The colonial process subordinated pre-colonial local government systems to usher in a new era of local government that was alien to the indigenous people.

This was basically control oriented. The aim was to control blacks and force them accept the superiority of the whites. Rural local government in the colonial era evolved through four systems: the Native Commissioner system, Native Boards, Native Councils, and the African Councils.

- **The Native Commissioner System**

As indicated in Figure 1.1 page 18, the Native Commissioner (NC) rule heralded the first form of rural local government brought to Zimbabwe by whites. This came about through the oppressive nature of the BSAC. Contrary to the provisions of the Royal Charter, which instructed the BSAC to respect African laws and customs, they actually went on the rampage to subjugate the local people. They forced blacks to pay taxes and controlled their movements by issuing them with travel documents known as 'passes' (Namusi, 1998:5). This process of subjugation led to mass uprisings, which culminated in the murder of Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi, who up to now, are seen as symbols of African resistance and the guiding spirits of Zimbabwe's liberation war. These turbulent years led to the establishment of the so-called Native Reserves that were areas specially demarcated for blacks. The Native Reserves were to be supervised by officers known as Native Commissioners as provided for in the Order-in-Council Act of 1898 Section 79.

The Native Commissioners took charge of African Affairs. They were given powers to supervise Africans in their daily lives, as the conviction was that Africans could not easily determine their future without the inspirations of a superior power. The African, it was alleged, was accustomed to looking to the chief for personal guidance. As such, Africans required some form of personal government to guide their daily activities. This policy framework guided Native Commissioners in dealing with Africans. An interesting scenario is that, although it was considered important to provide guidance to the African, no special training in government was required as a qualification for this great job (Native Commissioner) of guiding Africans. Hlatshwayo (1995:10) indicates that:

> To secure a job as a Native Commissioner in early colonial Zimbabwe, no special training in government was required. However, preference was given to candidates with previous experience in "handling natives", knowledge of the "lingo" and common sense. Strength of character and rugged individuality, swift and decisive action in discharging the duty of "keeping peace" was added advantages.

As for a proper chronicle of duties, which the Native Commissioners had to perform, Hlatshwayo indicates that a Native Commissioner at the time, William Edwards known locally as "Wiri" in Mrewa where he was the Native Commissioner once commented that:

> There were no written instructions as to our duties. No weekly dispatch of circulars asking for reports of this, that and the next thing. All I was told was, "Get to know your district and your people. Keep an eye on them, collect tax if possible, but for   God's   sake don't worry headquarters if you can avoid it (1995:10).

These sentiments are reflective of the fact that what was important at the time was a situation where the Native Commissioner kept Africans under control and saw to it that they did not disturb the activities of central government. Thus, central government prepared what it considered a rational policy framework that was aimed at keeping Africans under check while they went about their "looting" activities without hindrance. The Native Commissioner was also not involved in drafting policies, but was granted sufficient autonomy to rule the Africans in such a manner that he preserved peace and order to ensure that white enterprise went on undisturbed by blacks. To an extent, Native Commissioners were effective in collecting taxes and keeping natives under check. Significant however, is the fact that the NC system was designed to pursue the interests of the BSAC. It was not responsive to the needs of local communities. Managerial excellence was defined by the ability of the NC to keep natives in fear and knowing that any rebellious tendencies would be dealt with ruthlessly. There were no democratic ideals to promote except those of the superiority of the colonial master.

- **The Native Boards**

Native Boards replaced the Native Commissioner rule in 1910. This came as a result of a piece of legislation, the High Commissioner's Proclamation No. 55 of 1910. These Native Boards were set up in each district and were directly under the control of the Native Affairs Department. Each Board was presided over by a Native Commissioner. The difference between these Native Commissioner systems was that in the previous system, the Native Commissioner acted independently and without advice from the local people. He was the ruler, adjudicator, legislator, and administrator with controls on his activities only coming directly from above, if at all. On the other hand, the Native Board was a kind of consultative forum, which allowed the Native Commissioner to work with the local chiefs and headmen as ex-officio members. In addition to chiefs and headmen, some ordinary citizens were elected by local people, in a scenario where the Native Commissioner would determine the qualification of the candidates for election from time to time (Namusi, 1998:7). However, as indicated above, this body was merely a consultative forum with no decision-making powers. It was practically dependent on the Native Commissioner as the chief decision maker in the locality as well as the decision systems of central government. The High Commissioner's Proclamation No. 55 of 1910 strengthened the powers of the Native Commissioner. This legislation allowed the Native Commissioner to formally assume magisterial powers that enabled him to preside over Native Affairs, both civil and criminal (Hlatshwayo, 1992:10; and Namusi, 1998:8). The activities of Native Commissioners were further strengthened by the 1923 National Constitution that confirmed the Native Department as a separate structural entity, headed by a Chief Native Commissioner who doubled up as Secretary for Native Affairs. This study notes that through this Constitutional Provision, the Division of Native Affairs became a 'government within a government' hence, a formal local government institution.

While the proclamation consolidated the position of the Native Commissioner, it led to the disintegration of tribal bonds between the chief and his subjects. This

was obviously a deliberate move by the colonialists to destroy African unity while at the same time making chiefs unpopular. Hlatshwayo in Namusi (1998:9) notes that the Chief Native Commissioner at the time, even commented on the success of this policy pronouncement when he noted that:

> Chiefs complain that they no longer controlled their followers as they did in the past and that the young people are gradually breaking away from tribal control ... The increased powers granted to Native Commissioners materially assisted in breaking up these tribal methods of control and I am glad to say that the results have so far proved satisfactory.

As indicated in the citation, it is important to note that the process of breaking apart indigenous local government structures and consolidating the colonial form of local government, involved assigning to chiefs and headmen, all the unpopular duties of reporting all criminal offences to the Native Commissioner, collecting taxes, and seeing to the maintenance of law and order as defined by the colonialists. These functions virtually turned chiefs and headmen into agents of the colonisers, thereby leading the African population to view their chiefs and headmen as informers and collaborators, who worked together with the coloniser in the process of subjugating them (Sithole, 1997:63). This process further entrenched the divide and rule approach that led Africans into fighting one another and resulted in the colonialists coming in as neutral arbiters and maintainers of peace and tranquillity. One should reiterate the fact that to the whites, the process of setting black against black was necessary. It was a rational process, motivated by the need to gain superiority over blacks. It was a strategy used to further control the local people expedites the collection of taxes and the mobilisation of labour for their farms and mines.

The issues discussed above indicate that Native Boards had no ultimate power to determine the pace of life of local communities. These boards were just a sounding forum, which was used by colonialists to learn more about the Africans and how they thought. An inclusive rulership was used as a deceptive strategy to enable Africans to expose themselves and render themselves more vulnerable to

further oppression. Native Boards like the Native Commissioner system were still a local government of control and marginalisation rather than one that ensured local development. It was rational in so far as the need to control Africans was high on the agenda. Its performance would be judged as acceptable by colonialists, while 'natives' would consider it unsatisfactory.

Native Boards can arguably be described as an imitation of the British local government system that was put in place through the Local Government Act of 1888. This Act created Local Government Boards that allowed a measure of central co-ordination and compelled authorities to use their public powers. In addition, certain administrative functions performed by judicial or government departments were transferred to elected local bodies. The Native Boards were without doubt modelled along these lines although they evidently had a strong racial bias, where the Native Commissioner assumed all decision making powers rather than decentralising them to the elected members. Another variation, was the lack of concern for local development by the chief decision makers of these boards unlike the way in which local government functions in the British scenario, where the intentions were to enhance local development through the participation of local communities.

- **The Native Councils**

The passing of yet another piece of legislation, the Land Apportionment Act of 1930, led to yet another system of local government, the Native Councils. These councils were established through the Native Councils Act of 1937. The councils were established in areas that were designated as Native Reserves and Native Purchase Areas. The Native Councils Act of 1937 further legalised and entrenched separate structures for blacks and whites, a process of separation that only ended in 1993, thirteen years after independence in 1980. The Native Councils were composed of locally elected councillors whose election was closely monitored and controlled by central government. All the chiefs and headmen in an area were part of the membership of council. As was the case

with previous local government structures, the Native Commissioner was the Chief Executive Officer of the Native Council and as such, he chaired all council meetings. However, the centralisation tendencies still manifested themselves in these councils, since the Governor of the land retained the powers to abolish the council if it was seen to be acting outside its legal framework and was a threat to local peace and tranquility in its area of jurisdiction. The Governor could also unilaterally change the decisions of council in preference to those he considered viable for a given area. As far as duties and problems were concerned, Hlatshwayo in Namusi (1998:9) outlines these explicitly when he says that:

> Native Councils were entrusted with potential powers of environmental protection, construction and maintenance of roads, provision of education, and public health as well as powers to make their own by laws (which could be instantly repealed by the Governor). But all these statutory powers had little meaning in practice since Native Councils had no power to raise revenue. The only council revenue base was that of a grant received from central government plus some additional income from small fees and donations.

A few changes to the powers of taxing were made in 1943, when an amendment allowed Native Councils to collect poll tax, dog tax, bicycle tax, and animal drawn cart tax. These councils could collect such monies whose utilisation however, was to be approved by the Native Commissioner who could, as an individual, refuse authority for such funds to be utilised in an undertaking seen as fit by council but not worthwhile as far as the Native Commissioner was concerned. It should also be noted that while these councils could collect these monies, they were definitely not sufficient. As a result, central government had to come up with grants for these councils, a situation that entrenched the dependence of these institutions on central government and justified its control of them. In addition, councils were not allowed to apply for loans or invest so as to raise additional revenue. Truly speaking these local institutions were just extensions of the government's administrative structures. They could only perform their duties as per the wishes of central government rather than any local directives from the local people. As such the practices of these institutions effectively marginalised

them and virtually eliminated their viability, as they had no autonomy to act, nor any capacity to function outside the framework of government.

- **The African Councils**

In a bid to popularise the idea of self-governance among the Africans, the Federal Government transformed the unpopular Native Councils and established African Councils through the African Councils Act of 1957. The Act provided for a combination of traditional authority and elected representatives, as was the case with Native Councils. However, with this form of local authority, there was a shift of power from the traditional leadership to elected officials who numbered anything between six and twelve, depending on the size of the authority. Where an authority was established in African Purchase Areas, chiefs and headmen had no representatives, as these areas did not fall under traditional authority (Namusi, 1998:10). However, in Tribal Trust Lands (TTLs) chiefs and headmen were automatic ex-officio members and a chief or headman was elevated to the post of vice-president.

A remarkable development in this set up was that the Native Commissioner, who was then called the District Commissioner, played only an advisory role and had no voting powers to influence the course of council matters. Although this appears to be a more relaxed form of local authority which conferred more power to the local communities, the truth of it is that central government still retained considerable powers of control through the Minister of Internal Affairs who directly administered these institutions (Namusi, 1998:11). As point of interest, whereas African rural local government institutions were under the Minister of Internal Affairs, white rural local government was under the Ministry of Local Government. The Ministry of Internal Affairs was also in charge of the Police Force. As such, it would be easy for the Minister to know what these local authorities were doing and if there were any deviations from the rules, the Minister would swiftly call upon the police to exercise control by whatever means necessary. Such a process would be easier than in a situation where the local

authorities were under a different Ministry. Were this is the case, much coordination would be required, a process that would be expensive and ineffective. In addition to supervising these institutions, the Minister of Internal Affairs had powers to establish and abolish these institutions. These powers led to the proliferation of several African Councils. As an example, while there were 76 African Councils in 1967, there were 220 units in 1979 (Jordan, 1984:11). Their numeracy and small size weakened the institutions seriously, especially in terms of their revenue generating capacities, political clout and general effectiveness and efficiency in discharging their functions. They also existed at the whim of the Minister and their authority and powers were expressed through him. It must also be mentioned that these councils existed at the height of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. As such, it would be naive for one to think that the government of Ian Smith would give African Councils added capacity to perform their duties or the autonomy to carry out their duties without central government interference. To do so would have been to engage in a self-defeating strategy that would impact negatively on the whites. For all intents and purposes, the councils would be effectively used as organising fora for upstaging white rule in the country.

WHITE RURAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE COLONIAL ERA

As indicated earlier, Zimbabwe had a dual local government system in rural areas. There was local government for blacks and that for white farm owners in rural areas. The structure for the rural local government for whites can be discussed under Road Councils, Intensive Conservation Area Committees and Rural Councils. Each is discussed in the section that follows.

- **Road Councils**

Formal rural local government structures for whites did not exist until 1930 when the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 came into being. Before that, white rural

local government had no legal framework. Farmers and miners made agreements on a person-to-person basis to provide them with whatever services they needed to expedite the handling of their products. Government also assisted on an ad hoc basis. Formal structures, such as Road Councils, were put in place in 1930. The main purpose of Road Councils, as the name implies, was to oversee the construction and maintenance of feeder roads that were critical for the movement of the landowners' products from their areas to the towns (Jordan, 1988:14). Road Councils were composed of the District Commissioner, who was a central government official that served as the chairman of council, and up to six members who were elected from amongst landowners (Jordan, 1984:14). These were given legislative and decision making powers to determine courses of action that were seen as necessary for the life of the locality and its people.

Road Councils obtained their funds from taxes levied on one another, particularly unit tax and vehicle fees. These councils also got the bulk of their funding from central government, which awarded them grants for road construction and maintenance as well as the general upkeep of council.

It should be noted that Road Councils were meant to service the local white population. This community was given the right to participate in the formulation of policies that affected them. There was no subjugation of this white community by central government or its agents. Instead, central government supported this community extensively on financial matters and even assisted it to move their produce from their farms and mines to the towns. Apparently, central government was aware of the need to 'let go' institutions of a local nature so that they can determine their destiny with minimal central control. It is this awareness that raises interest in that when dealing with the African rural local government, the same government did not see the need to 'let go'.

- **Intensive Conservation Area Committees**

In 1941, Intensive Conservation Area Committees (ICACs) were established in

line with the demands of the Natural Resources Act of 1941. These committees were tasked with soil and water conservation. Although the committees consisted of members elected by landowners in each area, the remuneration of these members and all other expenses of the committee, including the implementation of conservation programmes, were met by central government (Namusi, 1998:13). Although central government was responsible for funding and control, ICACs had decision making autonomy. They also had the capacity to implement these programmes as they were provided with the funds and had the technical expertise to put these conservation programmes into practice. It should also be noted that ICACs existed side by side with Road Councils, although the two fell under two different ministries.

- **Rural Councils**

ICACs and Road Councils merged in 1966 to form Rural Councils. This was made possible by the introduction of the Rural Councils Act of 1966. This merger also came to be because of the new political dispensation that saw the rise of the Rhodesia Front of Ian Douglas Smith into power and the Unilateral Declaration of Independence that came with this party. Rural Councils had wider powers compared to the Road Councils and ICACs combined. They were tasked with regional planning; the establishment of town boards, area committees in villages, and area boards in African townships; the construction and maintenance of feeder roads within their areas; the provision of health and sanitary facilities; and any other social services they saw fit within their areas of jurisdiction (Jordan, 1984:14). Rural Councils were composed of elected white property-owners.

These councils had the power to employ a Chief Executive Officer to run the affairs of council. The District Commissioner was a member of council but he had no voting powers, nor any power to derail the course of development of a particular council, as long as such development processes were within the parameters set out by central government. Besides the payment of levies by each property owner and several license charges and rates, the Rural Councils

received substantial grants from central government. These grants came in the form of general grants and categorical grants for purposes considered a priority by government, especially natural resource conservation and the provision of water (Hlatshwayo, 1992:17). There was very little, if any, interference from central government.

THE TRANSITIONAL ERA (1980 – 1993)

The colonial system of rural local government, which existed before independence meant that the Transitional National Government which took office in April 1980, inherited a dual system of rural local government together with its strengths and weaknesses. While the white rural local government system had reasonable autonomy and functional capacity, and was thus, fairly competent, effective and efficient, the black African Councils had no autonomy at all. The councils were generally weak with very little financial resources. Their human resources were not well trained for the positions that they had and as such, they were generally inefficient, ineffective and incompetent as local institutions that were meant to take charge of peripheral development. Central government was faced with the mammoth task of rehabilitating these institutions to create responsive and accountable local government units, while at the same time dealing with the problem of rural fragmentation in terms of the white/black rural separation manifested by the two institutions of rural development, namely Rural Councils and African Councils.

It must also be noted that at independence, the Lancaster House Constitution in all its actions limited central government. All development processes were supposed to be undertaken within the framework of reconciliation, a process that was expected to take into consideration black/white differences and proceed with the introduction of development policies on a conciliatory note, without unnecessarily disadvantaging either party (Mandaza, 1987:42). The progress, or

lack of it, of rural local government transformation, should also be seen within this light.

The transitional era covers 1980 up to 1993 when rural local government was amalgamated. Of note here is the fact that the rural local government transitional era goes beyond the life of the Lancaster House Constitution. This, according to government sources, was necessary so as to come up with a well thought out rural local government system that could effectively and efficiently service the rural populace. The transitional era as indicated above, is faced with two institutions of rural local government (RCs and DCs). A brief outline and comments on each, is necessary in order to take note of the effects of the transitional phase in rural local government development.

- **Rural and District Councils**

 The rehabilitation of African Councils led to the development of District Councils under the District Councils Act of 1980. The rehabilitation process led to the consolidation of 242 African Councils into 55 District Councils. It is significant to note that among the major weaknesses of African Councils were:

- their lack of representativeness within the communal areas (former Tribal Trust Lands – TTLs);

- strong centralisation tendencies where the centre through the District Commissioner and the Ministry of Internal Affairs controlled the decision making process;

- a weak financial base that rendered these councils non viable entities of local governance; and

- the lack of confidence in these institutions by the local communities as they were associated with oppression (Jordan, 1984:10-12).

District Councils were created to surmount these problems. The councils were expected to usher in a new sense of purpose and local participation in self-governance by the local people. It should be noted that District Councils were just one part of the rural local government transitional process. These DCs represented the black communal people. Side by side with this local government structure were the Rural Councils that represented commercial farming areas and small urban centres. This rural local government dispensation indicates the continued maintenance of the dual processes of rural development. However, the same government department, the Ministry of Local Government Rural and Urban Development, now coordinates the two.

As indicated above, the GOZ strengthened these structures by providing a great deal of financial resources to these councils. Although this seemed to contradict Zimbabwe's policy of self reliance, the resource provision initiative was a rational awareness of the objective conditions of these institutions, which was aptly summed up by the ZANU-PF Department of the Commisariat and Culture in 1985, when it indicated that District Councils faced a monumental challenge of funds and means of generating revenue to attain self-sufficiency in all respects. This problem meant that central government entry was inevitable, as a means of rationalising resource scarcity and providing these institutions with the necessary capital injection that would allow them to stand on their feet. Consequently, GOZ assisted DCs with block grants and loan facility arrangements. for these institutions. The pattern of DC revenues indicated in Table 3.3 on page 164 indicates this heavy reliance on government funding by these institutions. Thus, DCs have a very narrow or limited resource base. They receive more than 80 per cent of the annual budget from central government. This money largely pays the salaries of DC staff and also funds selected, specific projects. It is also used for the provision of education and health facilities. The money cannot be used for the funding of unapproved people initiated projects without government approval. DCs raise funds locally through the collection of a development levy, rates, and

license fees on business properties and through the sale of alcoholic drinks Hlatshwayo, 1992:27-29).

This analysis paints a picture of financially constrained institutions. Such constraints definitely have a telling impact on overall DC autonomy and functional capacity. This means that central government, which controls the funding will inevitably extend its arm of control to these institutions to monitor expenditures and ensure that they are utilized as per the stated provisions of issue. Such a scenario also reduces the functional capacity of DCs as they can only act with the concurrence of central government, which provides them with the financial 'life-line'. Above all, it has the effect of decreasing local participation in local affairs, especially in decision-making and policy making which are vital criteria for measuring self-governance.

Table 3.3 District Council Pattern of Revenues, 1985-1988

Category	% of Total
Central Government Grants	85.10
Local Taxes (Rates and Development Levy)	0.30
Rents/Charges/Lease Fees	0.40
Utilities	0.01
Social Services Fees	5.10
Operational Surpluses	0.80
Other	7.50
Total	**100.00**

Source: Adapted from Hlatshwayo, 1992:29. *Demarcation of center-local fiscal relations and financial viability of rural local authorities (District Councils).*

District Councils were weakened in that they were closely interwoven with central government departmental structures, since the District Administrator was made the Chief Executive Officer of DCs, much the same as in the African Council

scenario. These local authorities did not see themselves as agents of change and development but as central government creatures whose lives depended on central government. This situation led to weaknesses in understanding local initiatives by both councilors and administrative staff, as whatever initiatives they had planned or which were in progress, would be subordinated to central government development plans.

It must also be noted that government funding, which increased the role of central government in local affairs, although not an ideal situation, had several benefits. These include:

- Central government initiated resettlement programmes to resettle landless and displaced Zimbabweans;
- A rapid expansion of both health and education provision was witnessed throughout the country especially in the communal areas;
- A redirection of agricultural state services to peasant farmers was evident through the extension of loan facilities for agricultural purposes to these farmers;
- An extension of loan facilities to intending rural commercial entrepreneurs was evident;
- A rapid expansion of rural infrastructure such as roads and water services; the development of growth points; and district service centers to strengthen the spatial structure of the communal areas; and
- The creation of development structures from the village level upwards to the controlling ministry (MILGRUD). These include VIDCOs, WADCOs, DDCs, and PDCs (Hlatshwayo, 1992:9-10).

The question is: Was direct funding of DCs and direct involvement in local affairs the only viable options for strengthening the financial position of DCs? A closer look at this scenario indicates that central government had other options. The ideal one would have been one where central government improved the resource

base and resource raising capacity of these institutions. This involves giving local authorities added taxation and levying powers and refraining from unnecessarily charging taxes from the businesses of these institutions. This option is in line with recommendations made by the Commission of Inquiry into Taxation in Zimbabwe in 1986 as cited in Hlatshwayo (1992:1). The recommendations were that:

(a)   There must be a clear division of responsibilities between the central Government and local authorities.

(b)   There must be minimum dependence of local government on central grants through the provision of certain substantial sources of revenue to local authorities.

(c)   Local finances should be placed on an assured basis instead of being dependent on year-by-year Central government grant decisions. The finances made available should be commensurate with the responsibilities transferred to them.

(d)   Local government tax bases should be broadened and, in particular, communal areas should be enabled to raise some resources of their own.

(e)   An appropriate compensatory grant mechanism should be instituted to equalize for difference of income and revenue potential between local authorities.

A study carried out by the Association of District Councils (ADCs) in 1992 indicates that these recommendations were based on the principle of maximum possible autonomy for local governments within their designated spheres, financial responsibility, efficiency in the use of resources and inter locality equity Hlatshwayo, 1992:2). It is important to find out if this principle was used after amalgamation. This can be determined after a discussion on the amalgamation era.

THE AMALGAMATION (RURAL DISTRICT COUNCILS) ACT

The Rural District Council Act No. 8 of 1988 as indicated in chapter one, is a major rural local government reform policy in Zimbabwe. The fundamentals of the policy lie in the acceptance by government – at least theoretically – that the broad masses of the Zimbabwean populace should be both the principal agents of development as well as the chief beneficiaries of this process. This is an undeniable right of the masses, which is in line with the local government values of liberty, equality, efficiency, and development.

Although the process of coming up with the amalgamation policy was long and protracted, both before the adoption of the policy and afterwards, it eventually came to fruition in July, 1993 when 57 RDCs were established countrywide. Taking into cognisance the racial fragmentation that existed in rural local government and the paternalistic approach of government to District Councils; government's commitment to principles of decentralisation, democracy and people's participation in decision making should be applauded. It should be noted, also, that what is applauded at this point, is not its practices so far but the mere change of strategy in rural local government as it is hoped that the new system would bring with it proper decentralisation, efficiency, effectiveness, equity, and responsiveness. To reiterate this commitment to decentralisation, the GOZ issued a statement in 1993, which reaffirmed government's commitment through '13 general principles of decentralisation' adopted as a guiding light for Zimbabwe's decentralisation and rural local government system. What follows is an outline of Nkomo (1993:6-8)'s pronouncements interspersed with comments of this study.

1. Decentralisation is necessary and desirable in Zimbabwe since it promotes and strengthens democracy and civic responsibility, as it gives a chance to citizens to participate in their own governance and development.

2. Decentralisation in Zimbabwe be defined and understood to mean the legislated transfer of functions and authority on a permanent basis from central government to local authorities; and that once provided for in law, such transfer of powers and functions can be reversed only on the basis of an amendment to the appropriate law.

3. All ministries in Zimbabwe should use the same rural local government institutions (RDCs) for the implementation and management of decentralised functions and not to create parallel or separate institutions. This means that where such parallel institutions are in existence, they are to be harmonised.

This principle reaffirms that all other decentralised government institutions that came to be through deconcentration should be subordinated to RDCs, to create a unified structure of rural local government under the devolution principle. This scenario simplifies the process of coordinating departments and also raises the confidence of communities on their RDCs. As it is, RDCs are in competition with other deconcentrated structures, which because of the visible single service, which they provide, are more visible and acceptable to the communities, more so than RDCs. For example, the Ministries of Health and Education have made a more visible impact on rural people than has any other government institution. On the other hand, RDCs are viewed with suspicion as they are said to come to people only when they want to collect levies and taxes.

It should be stated here that RDCs have a legacy of unpopularity with communities. This dates back to the days of the liberation struggle when their predecessor institutions, African Councils, were viewed as instruments of oppression that should be shunned by the African people. Politicians preached negatively about these councils. However, at

independence they forgot to undo the damage they had caused these institutions of local government. They forgot to go to the people to repopularise these institutions.

4.   Decentralisation should be viewed as a process not an event, as such it should be implemented systematically, cautiously and progressively, with the necessary regard for the nature of resources such as human, material and financial, which local authorities may have at a particular time to effect the necessary transformation changes.

5.   In the execution of their legal powers and responsibilities, RDCs should comply with the requirements of national policies, laws and regulations. In addition, where activities and projects of other sector ministries have to be implemented, RDCs have to understand that these ministries have the power and authority to set standards, monitor performance and intervene appropriately to ensure compliance.

6.   A Ministerial Committee of Ministers be established to manage decentralisation and capacity building initiatives. Such a Committee was established in 1995 and is known as the Working Party of Heads of Ministries (WPHM). It is made up of:

      i.   the Minister of Local Government and National Housing;

      ii.   the Minister of Finance;

      iii.   the Minister of Health and Child Welfare;

      iv.   the Minister of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Cooperatives;

      v.   the Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare;

      vi.   the Minister of Education and Culture;

      vii.   the Minister of Lands, Agriculture and Water Development; and

      viii.   the Minister of Transport and Energy.

This committee/working party works in close liaison with the Rural District Council Capacity Building Coordinating Committee (RDCCBCC), which is composed of representatives from the above stated ministries as well as those from the Office of the President, the National Economic Planning Commission; the Association of Rural District Councils; and the Public Service Commission. The interests of the WPHM and the RDCCBCC are particularly in enhancing RDC capacity, with special emphasis on institutional, human resources, and capital development.

7. Central government in its bid to make sure that RDCs are effective institutions should endeavour to strengthen RDCs especially in so far as their human and financial resources are concerned.

8. Central government should retain the responsibility to provide trunk services that are national in character or those that impact on more than one local authority. These are mostly programmes and projects that need a lot of resources such as the construction of major national roads, railway lines, electricity and all other infrastructure and economic projects that are national in character. To determine which projects exhibit such a character, there has to be a close liaison between each RDC and line ministries as is the case with the presence of the WPHM and the RDCCBCC.

9. The MOLGANH exhists to promote and facilitate coordination between line ministries and RDCs but as a matter of principle, RDCs and line ministries should endeavour to work together so as to determine the sharing of responsibilities for programmes and projects of line ministries that are implemented in local authorities. This is vital so as to determine how resources for the successful implementation of these programmes will be channeled.

10.   All grant moneys for recurrent and capital expenditure sourced by line ministries and earmarked for RDCs be disbursed to the RDC soon after the promulgation of the Appropriation Act. Such grants should not pass through the MOLGAHN to avoid unnecessary bureaucratic delays.

11.   All loans for RDCs should be channeled through the MOLGAHN. At face value, this principle is problematic. It is partly inconsistent with principle 10 above and is likely to cause a lot of unnecessary delays in the provision of finance to the RDCs for their programmes and projects. Unnecessary bureaucratic delays are likely to manifest themselves in the process, a situation that may be detrimental to RDC development strategies.

12.   RDCs through their enabling Act are mandated to levy, collect taxes and user charges or fees for the purposes of financing those services that they are legally bound to provide in terms of any appropriate laws or regulations.

13.   In situations where there is need to transfer personnel from central government to RDCs as part of the decentralisation process, the Public Service Commission will handle such transfer processes for the good of central government and the recipient RDC.

These principles form the basis through which the RDC Act of 1988 was modeled. However, questions still remain about this policy, such as how was this policy conceived? Who were the major architects of the policy? Taking into consideration these principles, what are the provisions of this policy? How has the policy been implemented for the past five years? What has been the performance of RDCs so far (1993 – 2002)? Have they been able to raise and utilise funds appropriately; provide services as expected by communities; and has RDC management performed its duties in an excellent manner, that is, to

avoid waste and stimulate growth? All these questions form the fundamental focus of this study.

In analysing this policy, government is taken as the unit of analysis for a variety of reasons. It is government, which took it upon itself to champion the process of transforming rural local governance in Zimbabwe. In fact, one may argue that transformation processes need strong governments with purpose and vision to play leadership roles in processes of change and development. This fact is supported by development processes that have taken place elsewhere particularly in Asia. For example, the giant Asian economies particularly of Thailand, Taiwan, Korea and China were characterised by powerful military based authoritarian regimes that took a leading role in shaping the economies of their countries. The dictators who ran these countries had development and national reconstruction visions, foresight, and clarity of mind and purpose about the development initiatives that were appropriate for their countries. This also serves to indicate that a visionary state can take a leading role in shaping developmental processes in a given state. This, it can be argued, was the case with Zimbabwe when it undertook to develop a new rural local government dispensation, which was aimed at transforming Zimbabwe's rural areas.

In fact, the process of transforming Zimbabwe's rural local government system and, indeed, the birth of amalgamation should be analysed in relation to the Prime Minister's Directive on Rural Development that was issued in January 1984. In this directive, the Prime Minister called for the establishment of structures that would enhance popular participation throughout the country (Rambanapasi in Helmsing and Wekwete, 1993:123). This directive was an attempt to strengthen the involvement of people, in the rural areas, in matters of self-government and development. This notion of people's participation in development, led to the pronouncement of several policies by central government. One can indicate in line with Marsden in Crook and Jerve (1991:32-34), that the conviction in the participatory approach was that:

- participation was a prerequisite for development;

- people's participation would lead to the alleviation of poverty, enable rural restructuring and promote growth and development;

- people's participation would lead to well conceived programmes being made and implemented, that is, people's participation would facilitate appropriate programme planning, project design, and implementation;

- people's participation was a foundation for self-reliant and self sustained development;

- people's participation raises people's confidence and self esteem as well as bringing power to the people; and

- people's participation brought power to the people, strengthened democracy, brought government close to the people and ensured the development of innovativeness, initiative and accountability.

This conviction underlined the government's socialist policies. The Prime Minister's directive showed support for these policies. The Prime Minister, Robert Gabriel Mugabe indicated that there was a need for a comprehensive and more democratic system of involving the local communities both horizontally and vertically in the process of planning and effecting their development, thus providing Government with a viable channel for receiving and assessing the developmental needs and priorities of the district, ward and village areas within the province (Rambanapasi in Helmsing and Wekwete, 1993:123). Prime Minister's Directive led to:

- the creation of the Posts of Provincial Governors appointed by the Prime Minister from among MPs. These were raised to the level of Cabinet Ministers in order to give them the essential powers necessary for coordinating socio-economic, political and environmental development in the provinces;

- the creation of the Provincial Council to act as an engine room for the development of provincial policy; and

- the creation of development structures from village level upwards (Rambanapasi in Helmsing and Wekwete, 1993:123-124). These structures are illustrated in Figure 3.2 on page 175.

Amalgamating Rural and District Councils started as a concept in the early 1980s. In 1982/83 officials from the Ministry of Local Government conducted an in-depth study of the Swedish System of Local Government. Swedish consultants were also hired to assist the government in its endeavor to unite rural and district councils. In order to come up with rural local government policy, the GOZ set up a Forum for Rural Development (FRD) in 1984 whose duty was, among others, to coordinate ideas on rural transformation. In its duties, the FRD used the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) as the main consultant/advisor (Chipangura, 1996:11). As their terms of reference, these institutions were expected to:

1. to diagnose Zimbabwe's rural local government problem;

2. develop a remedial policy to usher in a new era of rural local governance, which would lead to local participation, democracy and development. Thus, most of the contents of the RDC Act of 1988 are the product of these organizations, albeit with several modifications made by central government; and

Figure 3.2 Local Government Structure in Zimbabwe.
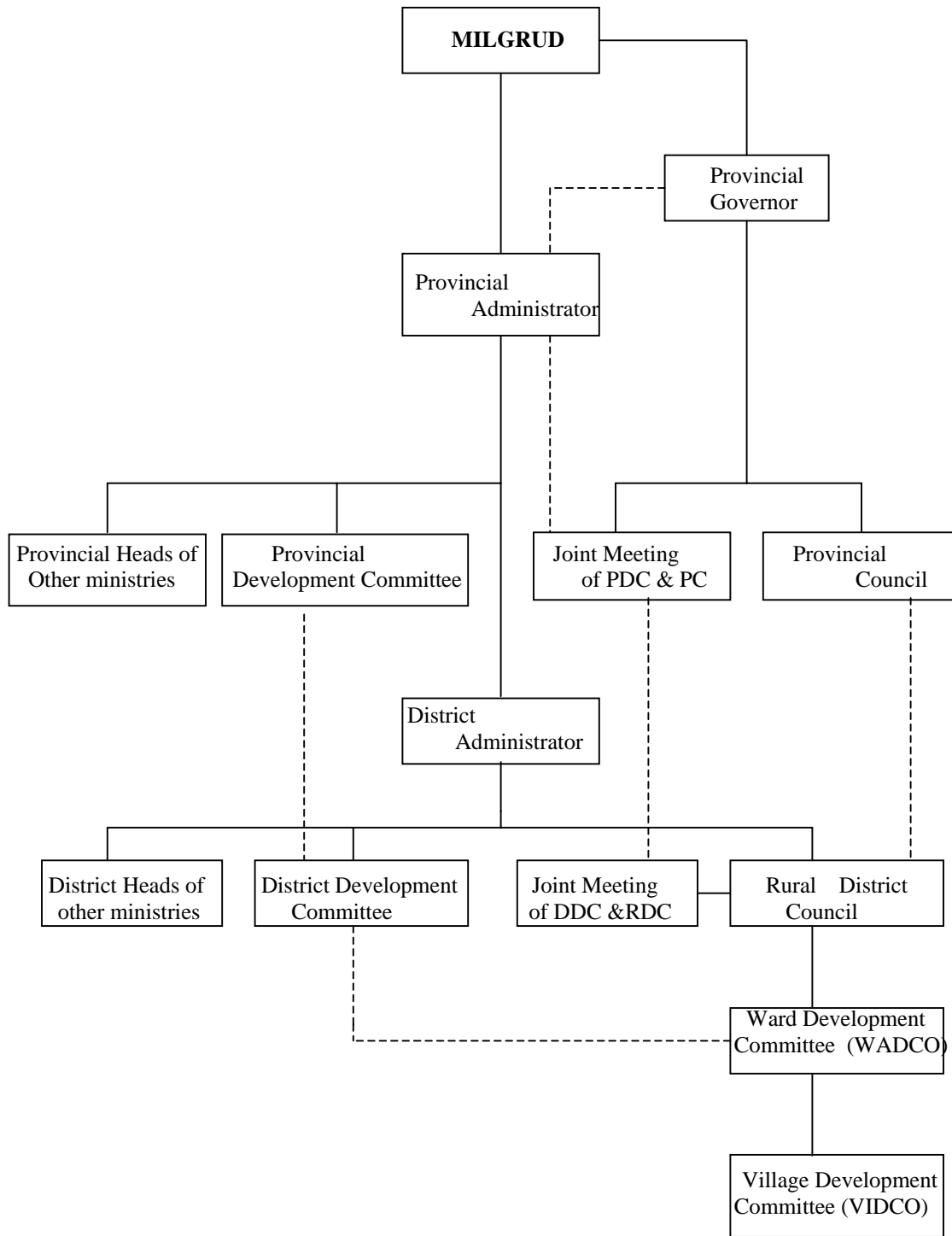
Source: Chipangura, 1996:13. *Decentralisation in Zimbabwe.*

3. recommend to the Minister, the following:

    - the boundaries of the proposed councils;

    - the headquarters of the councils;

    - the name of each of the proposed councils;

    - appointment of assets and liabilities of the former local authorities that were breaking up and joining different councils;

    - the placement of staff of the former local authorities;

    - the organisation plan of administration for the new councils;

    - the need for area committees, their composition and how they would function vis-à-vis council; and

    - wards and committees of the new councils

After several meetings, recommendations, debates and revisions thereof, the Rural District Councils Bill was drafted. This led to the promulgation of the Rural District Councils Act of 1988. The processes of amalgamation involved appointing District Administrators as returning officers to register all interested voters within each area and ward as provided for in part IV of the Rural District Councils Act, 1988 (Chipangura, 1996:19).

A brief analysis of the above scenario indicates that the appointment of the FRD was a purposeful move by government. The move was intended to create a 'mediator' between government and other stake holders, particularly the development structures rooted in society such as WADCOs, VIDCOs, political parties, traditional leaders, the former DCs and RCs and their bureaucracies, the business and the donor community. As far as setting up this policymaking institution was concerned, government had both structural and situational autonomy, as it did so without consultation.

The FRD processes culminated in the production of the RDC Act of 1988. The Act, in line with universal local government, exhibits the following generic

characteristics:

a) A non-racial rural local government system was designed and adopted;

b) An elaborate system of voter qualification, disqualification, nomination of candidates and the electoral process itself, was put into place;

c) A well stated procedure of carrying out council business, as well as an elaborate committee system;

d) Well-stated powers and duties of RDCs with clear relational provisions that the RDCs have to maintain with central government and other institutions that directly impact on them (RDCs); and

e) Well-stated provisions for making by-laws, collecting levies, and other finances; budgeting, staffing and other ancillary provisions peculiar to Zimbabwe (general provisions).

The Act has fifteen parts and a hundred and sixty two sections. These are arranged as follows:

i. Part I: covers preliminary issues such the name of the Act, interpretations (definitional issues), the classification and specification of RDC land.

ii. Part II: is on the naming, alteration and abolition of districts, as well, as the consultation processes that go with these issues.

iii. Part III: is a provision on the establishment, nature and membership of RDCs. This includes dividing the area into wards, consultative provisions for establishing these councils and the process of

coming up with first councillors for the RDC.

iv.   Part IV: is on qualifications, disqualifications and enrollment of voters.

v.   Part V: deals with qualifications, disqualifications and terms of office for elected and appointed concillors.

vi.   Part VI: elections and election procedures are the major issues provided for in this part.

vii.   Part VII: is on how RDCs are expected to conduct their proceedings. Of note, is the election of the Chairperson and Vice-chairperson, holding meetings, attendance by councillors and provisions for certain resolutions, which need ministerial approval.

viii.   Part VIII: directs council on the committee system of RDCs. Thus, specifications are made as to which committees RDCs should have, for example, the Finance Committee, Area Committee, Roads Committee, Ward Development Committee, the Rural District Development Committee and other general provisions applicable to other committees.

ix.   Part IX: is on staffing issues, particularly the appointment of senior officers, employment of other general staff, conditions of service, labour relations and other issues of ethics.

x.   Part X: is an elaborate section, on the duties of RDCs, as well as, provisions for ministerial consultation. Most of the issues will be discussed later.

xi.   Part XI: is a critical area on making by-laws and consultations with the minister on such laws.

xii.   Part XII: is another critical part of the Act. It deals with levies and other charges, which RDCs should collect from their communities.

xiii.   Part XIII: Yet another crucial section on financial matters, which specifies the accounting system and issues of borrowing.

xiv.   Part XIV: deals with alteration and abolition of RDCs.

xv.   Part XV: deals with general provisions and matters of ministerial supervision.

This study does not deal extensively with all the issues but selects those it considers crucial for RDC performance, as stated in the statement of the problem. These are centred on issues of democratic participation; RDC funding: collection and utilisation; and service provision. The selection of these brings in the problems of measuring local government performance, which is discussed in Chapter Four.

CONCLUSION

It is clear from this chapter that decentralization is a necessary condition for a viable local government system. The preferred model in a democratic polity is devolution. This form enhances local participation, self-determination and mutual coexistence between central government and local government units. The RDCs in Zimbabwe operate under this devolution policy framework. However, it is significant to note that a well articulated decentralization policy does not necessarily mean that it would be implemented accordingly. The world of

practical policy implementation is a different one. It is full of unpredictable administrative, personal, political and community influences that may facilitate or hinder the attainment of policy objectives, hence the need to gauge the performance of specific institutions to see if they are able to fulfill the demands of policy. In this case, the performance of the BRDC receives spotlight attention. The profile, organization and operations of this institution are covered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PROFILE, STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS OF THE BEITBRIDGE RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the basic features of the Beitbridge District. It looks at the organisation of the Beitbridge Rural District Council and explores its operations as provided in the Rural District Councils Act of 1988 and the by-laws of council. The chapter then looks at performance measurement in the public sector and local government, in particular. This is followed by a discussion of democratic participation, service provision and managerial excellence including highlights of their relevance to this study.

BEITBRIDGE DISTRICT PROFILE

The Beitbridge District is located in the most southern part of Zimbabwe. It is one of the six districts of Matebeleland South province. It shares borders with Botswana in the west, South Africa in the south, Mwenezi District from the north to the east, and Gwanda District in the northwest. Its geographical area is a result of amalgamating the Beitbridge District Council and part of the Mwenezi-Beitbridge Rural District Council. The other part of the latter was amalgamated with the Mwenezi District to form what is now the Mwenezi District Council. Significant to note, from the onset, is that Beitbridge District is one of the least developed districts in Zimbabwe. Worse still, it is located in region five (5), which is characterized by poor rainfall and very hot conditions. As such, it is not suitable for crop farming, although this takes place through irrigation schemes.

The district is made up of an undulating landscape with shrubs, isolated hills and four big rivers. The rivers are the Limpopo river (which forms the southern border with South Africa) and its tributaries, the Shashe from Botswana and the Umzingwane from the interior of Matebeleland South. The fourth river is the Bubi on the northern side and forming a border with Mwenezi District. It is significant to indicate here that although the rivers have potential for tourism because of their richness in flora and fauna, this potential has not been tapped until now. The land area is approximately 1 269 665 hectares. The land is divided into five land categories: Communal Land Area, Commercial Farming Area, Resettlement Area, Tuli Safari Area, and Beitbridge urban sometimes referred to as Beitbridge town. More is discussed about these later in the chapter. The population of Beitbridge District is approximately 120 000 (BRDC Annual Report, 2001:1). It is significant to note that the next census survey is scheduled for 2003. Of these people, about 79% are found in the communal land area. About 14% are in Beitbridge urban while the other 7% is in the commercial farming area. Of these, approximately 1% is white. Below is a table showing the distribution of the population by land area and the size of each land area.

Table 4.1   Land categories and population distribution in Beitbridge

Land Category	Area (Hectares)	Percentage (%)	Population	Percentage (%)
Communal Land Area	677 800	53.3	94 670	79.0
Commercial Farming Area	468 979	37.0	7 960	6.7
Resettlement Area	91 721	7.2	#	#
Tuli Safari Area	22 699	1.8	__	__
Beitbridge Urban/Town	8 474	0.7	17 170	14.3
TOTAL	1 269 665	100.0	119 700	100.0

- Included in Communal Land Area
Source: *The BRDC Annual Report*, 2001:1, Land categories and population distribution.

As indicated earlier, the Beitbridge District is one of the hottest districts in Zimbabwe. Its temperatures range between 25 degrees Celsius and 35 degrees Celsius. Summer temperatures are mostly around 38 degrees and 40 degrees Celsius. The air is hot and dry with windy conditions. This makes it almost unbearable for human life. Rainfall is variable. In good years it can be as high as 650mm and in bad times it can be as low as 80mm. The hot weather coupled with poor rainfall, makes it difficult for communal farmers to engage in crop farming (BRDC Annual Report, 2001:2). This situation poses a very big problem for the community, as it has to buy food every year. This means that those who have no cattle and goats to sell find it difficult to make a living. Besides, poor rainfall poses yet another problem, i.e. that of water supply.

Communal farmers depend on water from dams and boreholes. The latter is the main water supply option. Several boreholes are scattered throughout the district. There are about 68 earth-filled masonry dams, which supply water for human consumption, livestock, wild life and small-scale irrigation. The biggest dam is the Shove dam, which was completed in 1994. This dam has become a major source of fish for domestic consumption and trade. This has gone a long way to improve the standard of living of the communities in Beitbridge. There are five irrigation schemes in Beitbridge, the Shashe, Jalukanga, Bili, Khwalo and Chikwalakwala. The Ministry of Agriculture and Water Development manages these irrigation schemes. Although water is a problem in the district, the current supply in the form of dams and boreholes has helped some communal farmers to diversify their farming (BRDC Annual Report, 2001:2). A large number of these farmers are now engaged in both cattle and crop farming and this has had a positive effect in uplifting their standard of living.

The vegetation in the Beitbridge District is that which is typical of savannah grasslands with bushes and large panoply of woodlands, acacia species such as the colophosperum (mopane – the dominant tree in the district), the thorny

acacia (umbrella thorn) and the sickle bush (dichrostachys cinera), Adonsonia digitata (the baobab tree) and others. There is no information of commercially attractive trees and this remains a gray area for research. Communal areas are overgrazed and this is becoming a threat to the vegetation.

Beitbridge District has a low animal population due to extensive periods of draught, land pressure exerted by an increase in human population and subsistence poaching. Five wards seem to enjoy considerably large numbers of wild life species. These are Maramani, Machuchuta and Masera in the west, and Chipise and Dite in the east. These areas are influenced by their proximity to Botswana, South Africa's national parks and Zimbabwe's Gonarezhou National Park in the east. Wildlife species such as elephant, buffalo, lion, leopard, eland, waterbuck, nyala, zebra, kudu, impala and bushbuck are found (CAMPFIRE Report, 1996:15). The Rural District Council through the CAMPFIRE project manages this wildlife. While wildlife is a source of income for communities in these areas, it is also a source of distraction for communal farmers' agricultural produce. There are reported cases of elephants and baboons destroying crops. Lions, jackals and hyenas are also devouring livestock.

The district has several mineral deposits such as coal, diamonds, magnesium, dolomite and other precious stones. Pande mine (magnesium), Kimberlitic mine (diamonds) and Chituripasi mine (coal), which were the three major mines, were closed down during the liberation struggle for Zimbabwe in the 1970s (BRDC Natural Resources Survey Report, 1992:2) This deprived the Beitbridge communities of a meaningful source of income. Consequently, income from mining undertakings is negligible.

Beitbridge District is divided into twelve (12) Communal wards, four (4) Urban wards, two (2) Commercial wards and three (3) Resettlement wards. Altogether there are 21 wards. The population density in the communal wards is variable, ranging from 6 to 29 people per square kilometer. In some communal areas like

Dendele, Siyoka I and II, and Mtetengwe, there are concentrated settlements. In other wards, households are scattered all over the ward. This makes it difficult to provide service infrastructure for electricity, water, telephone and road communication. Table 4.2 below shows the distribution of the population according to ward, population density and the size of each ward.

Table 4.2 Population distribution per communal ward

Name of the Ward	Hectares	Population
Chipise	72 200	6 470
Dite I	75 400	9 400
Dite II	104 000	7 370
Mtetengwe I	52 400	6 070
Mtetengwe II	68 900	9 311
Mtetengwe III	67 200	7 412
Maramani	49 000	3 787
Masera	33 400	2 206
Machuchuta	64 000	3 558
Dendele	33 000	5 278
Siyoka I	21 900	6 359
Siyoka II	39 400	6 290
TOTAL	677 800	63 963

Source: The BRDC Annual Report, 2001:1

Commercial areas cover more than one-third of the district, yet their population is an insignificant 5 500. Most of these people are farm workers who now live on these farms on a permanent basis. There are no specific figures to indicate how many white farmers are found in these areas. Estimates put the number at fifty (50). It is important to realize that all these commercial farming areas belong to white farmers. These farmers are engaged in ranching, safari operations, cotton farming, wheat cultivation, and citrus farming through the assistance of irrigation. These farms provide employment for the local communities. In fact, they are

considered to be the engine room of economic growth in the district.

There are three resettlement areas in the district. These cover an area of approximately 121 416 hectares. They include River Ranch, Jopembe and Shobi Block. The first two are for human resettlement and the last one is for animal grazing (Agritex Report, 1996:7). A negligible number of families have been resettled in these areas. The question is, how is this area and the people within it administered? The next section provides answers to these questions through an expose of the organization of the Beitberidge Rural District Council.

THE ORGANISATION OF THE BRDC

As indicated earlier, the Beitbridge Rural District Council is a result of amalgamating the Beitbridge District Council and part of the Mwenezi-Beitbridge Rural Council. Amalgamation itself was an exercise in restructuring, reorganising and rationalising rural local government in Zimbabwe. While the transitional era (from 1980 to 1993) maintained the dual structure of rural local government that existed before independence, the current dispensation brought about by amalgamation, has merged the two structures to produce a coherent and unified structure seen as essential for enhancing community empowerment and rural development (Roe, 1992:12). Thus, it can be conclusively said that the new restructuring process has led to a new organisation system whose structure and functions should differ from the old order.

Amalgamation is not about the political regeneration of local government only. It is a coordinated, holistic and techno-political process that includes managerial, financial and service delivery transformation (Roe, 1992:12-14). This move was indeed perceived to be necessary, as it is aimed at solving problems and challenges that are facing government, especially, those to do with racial integration, autonomy, functional capacity, accountability and transparency.

The rural local government (RLG) transformation process involved what can be termed the 4Rs of organisation change (reorganisation, restructuring, rationalising, and reorientation). These Rs are intricately interwoven processes that aim to instill functional capacity to institutions. Thus, transformation entails a change process undertaken to correct and realign existing systems, processes and human resources so that they become sensitive and adaptive to the 'new way' of doing things (Swilling and Woodbridge in Fitzgerald, McLennan and Munslow, 1997:491). It is about implementing the 4Rs of change. According to Swilling and Woodbridge, the system thrust of transformation is intended to highlight the holistic approach to change. It should be looked at as a rational process of decision making aimed at dealing with the external environment of organisations, the strategic decision making apparatus, all internal dynamics of an organisation including the personnel systems, the products or output of the organisation as well as the impact these have on communities and consequently, the latter's reaction to these impacts. This can be illustrated through the open systems model, which is represented by means of a diagram as shown in Figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1 Easton's Dynamic Response Model

The Decision Subsystem

The Input Subsystem

Extra and intra environmental factors

Demands

Supports

Decision Box

Output subsystem

The feedback subsystem
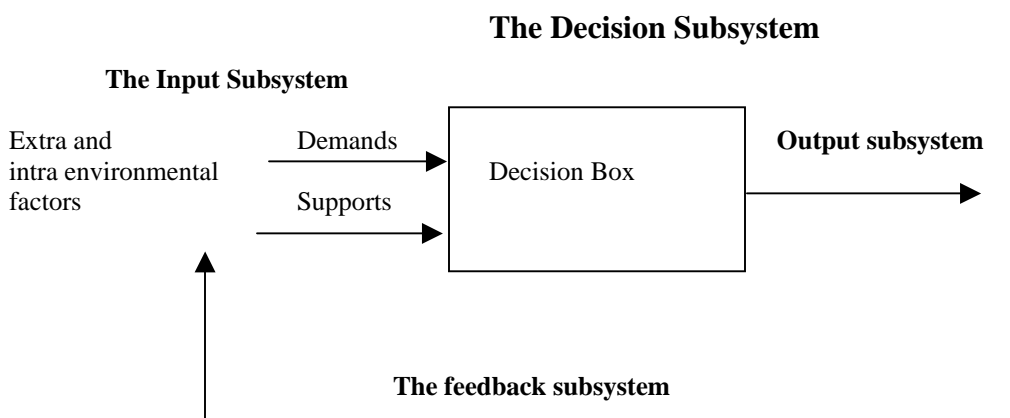
Source: Anderson, J. *Public Policymaking*, 1990:26

Transformation makes an attempt to revitalise the whole system. It is holistic in

nature. It is both a reactive and proactive process, driven by a rational analysis of the objective conditions of issues of governance and what can be done to improve a given situation. Within the context of rural local government processes of change in Zimbabwe, the transformation process, through amalgamation, should thus be viewed as a deliberate policy intervention, initiated by government to redress past and present anomalies in the rural local government system. Furthermore, its objective is to create systems and processes that are responsive, adaptive, efficient, effective and sustainable. According to this study, transformation should include the implementation of affirmative action, the development of employment equity practices, the introduction of people-empowering decentralisation systems, instituting an effective service-oriented ethos, change management design and infusing a new organisation culture that is intended to sustain excellence in the institution's operations.

The fact that transformation, among others, includes change management design, presupposes that it must be a deliberate, continuous or cyclic process that involves a careful analysis of problems at hand, designing intervention mechanisms, developing these mechanisms in operational terms, implementing and monitoring these interventions and evaluating the mechanisms to see if the desired change has been achieved. Where there are problems, the whole process should be started again. However, although in actual practice, such a process cannot follow a smooth cyclic pattern, its iterative nature is noted. The point is that the cyclic process provides a diagnostic and analytic tool that indicates what takes place at each stage of the design process. It is an ideal model of planning, which indicates deliberate intervention through the use of human reason, to set up systems that are geared towards redressing problems that affect a particular organisation. This study illustrates the change management process diagrammatically as shown in Figure 4.2 on page 189.

Among other explanations, transformation can be explicitly explained in terms of the four core change processes indicated above, namely restructuring,

reorganisation, rationalisation and reorientation. Restructuring entails a planned or conscious process to changing existing structures and replacing them with new ones considered to be consistent with current trends and requirements of organisations that are responsive to the needs of communities. This can be achieved through the process of de-layering to make the organisation flatter and consequently, more responsive.

Figure 4.2 The change management process

Problem Analysis

Intervention Conceptualisation

Intervention Design
and Development

Implementing Intervention
Mechanism

Evaluating Intervention
Success and Failure
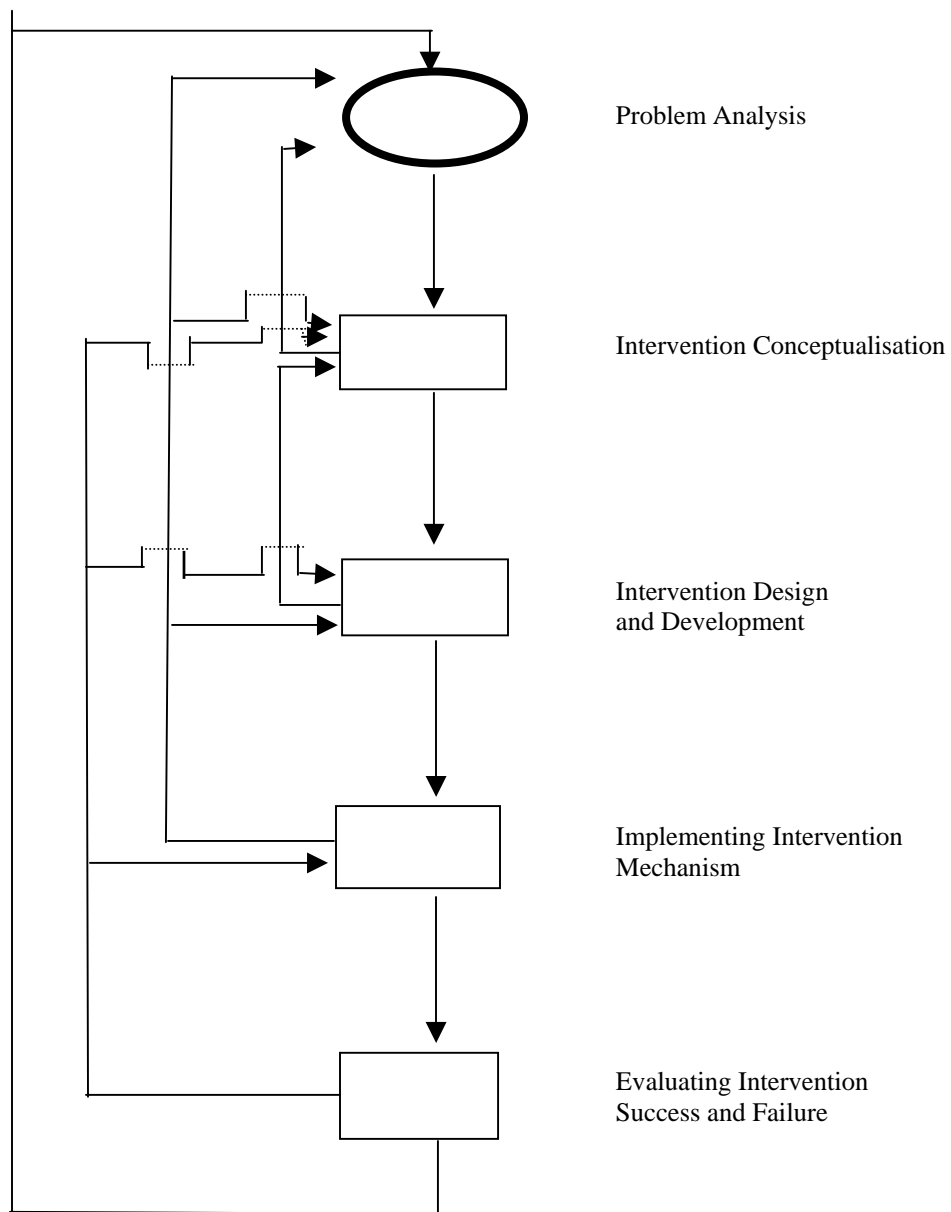
However, changing structure alone may not be sufficient as it can result in new structures operating within old traditional values that may be inconsistent with the new ethos. What is required is an in depth system transformation that is aimed at changing the content of the structure, hence reorganisation. This means that the purpose of reorganisation is to change the internal operations of an organisation. According to this study, this includes changing decision-making traditions, communication channels, the existing culture, the nature of relationship that internal components have and the manner in which the organisation should relate to the external environment (Swilling and Woodbridge in Fitzgerald, McLennan and Munslow, 1997:490). This is both system and culture oriented change aimed at building institutional capacity.

Reorientation involves realigning the organisation with the current trends of doing things. It entails the sensitisation of an organisation to the new demands brought about by the nature of societal dynamism, economic and political changes, and continuous modernisation trends that are part of the imperatives of globalisation. It is about enhancing the capacity of an organisation to respond to the communities it serves. Thus, it is a customer or client driven strategy as well as a response to competition from other service providing institutions. It helps the organisation to keep abreast with modernity and current temperatures of governance, societal development, and efficiency and effectiveness needs. This means that reorientation is aimed at transforming the 'engine-room' of organisations, that is, its management, in order to keep it informed and able to cope with new demands that may affect organisations. Reorientation also underlines the ubiquity of change and the need to constantly evaluate existing systems to realign them with these changing trends and events.

Rationalisation involves a thorough assessment of systems to see what can be adjusted to suit the current needs of communities. It is a transformation strategy that involves change actions such as organisational downsizing, service delivery improvement, the implementation of cost reduction measures and the alignment

of such costs with the value of organisational output. It is a strategy that uses benefit cost analysis and effectiveness analysis criteria in the employment of scarce financial and human resources. To rationalize is to organise the most favourable form of production that gives the maximum yield and uses the minimum effort, time and money. It is a deliberate renewal action with the aim of making government services as efficient as possible, by means of effective actions with the economic use of funds. To this end, Swilling and Woodbridge in Fitzgerald, McLennan and Munslow (1997:490), view rationalization as the process of streamlining the size and productivity of staff so that human resource costs are commensurate with the value of the output of the organization. Thus, rationalisation includes business process re-engineering. This includes financial management redesign, service provision reorientation, information systems development and reform, and changing project management systems. It also includes reconsidering options for outsourcing service provision, structural integration, rationalising functional areas, and rightsizing. Rationalisation also calls for the formulation of implementation strategies (in this case RLG implementation strategies) with specific reference to service design and delivery, programme development, and the development of appropriate internal and external institutional arrangements that can lead to efficiency in service provision.

The focus of the rationalisation strategy indicates a clear overlap with restructuring, reorganisation and reorientation. It is about:

- building an efficient structure for making decisions and carrying out functions;

- placing emphasis on system renovation to facilitate effective utilisation of resources; and

- reconsideration of governmental activities to avoid unnecessary and wasteful duplication of functions among different governmental tiers, that

is, central government, provincial government and local government (Public Service Commission, 1997:38-39) .

As can be seen from the above explications, the 4Rs are intricately intertwined processes that complement one another in coming up with a new system of doing things. Thus, ignoring one R normally results in piecemeal changes that may serve to destabilize other processes and still render an organisation ineffective and inefficient, in the final analysis. Reference to these strategies is fundamental to the exposition of Zimbabwe's policy of amalgamating rural local government systems. This is because the aim of amalgamation among others is to develop new institutions of rural local governance that are sensitive to the changing socio-economic and political trends of this country. To highlight the importance of the 4Rs, Craythorne (1994:247) states that:

> An organisation bears some semblance to the human body. it requires a structure (the skeleton); muscles to perform tasks (staff); a brain to make decisions; and nerves to communicate with the various muscles. When a body becomes sick or is injured, it does not perform properly and it has to be taken to the doctor or surgeon. If the illness is severe, drastic action is required.

This situation resembles pre-amalgamation structures. It is within this context that the Forum for Rural Development (FRD), the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), and the Government of Zimbabwe (GOZ) have combined their effort to remedy the structural problems of local government in Zimbabwe.

The mention of government here indicates that public sector transformation is mostly driven by central government. It is central government that is in charge of the public sector. In addition, revamping any aspect of government, at whatever level, would require an authoritative base of operation that can only be provided by central government. This argument acknowledges the state as a principal actor that is essentially rational and uses its authoritative base to diffuse power and mobilise public/private cooperation in charting a nation's development

initiatives. The argument is that the state as a facilitator, integrator, driver, thinker and in possession of authoritative power should create a conducive environment for mobilising varied inputs from different sources so that this information pool can be reviewed, analysed and sifted to produce what is considered best for a particular system of governance. Alford and Friedland (1992:9-10) refer to this kind of state as a development or managerial state. The authors advance the notion that the state is a dominant force within society. It is at the apex of the political system. It includes government, its coercive apparatus, and leaders of politically co-opted institutions such as business leaders, trade union leaders, leaders of opposition parties, traditional leaders and politically active intellectuals. The state's main functions are to instill order and ensure that development takes place in the whole country. From this analysis, one can indicate that the major characteristics of this state are that:

- It is dominated by elites who determine resource allocation and utilisation. Their dominance allows them to make decisions whether to centralise or decentralise power.

- The state is autonomous, coercive, and technocratic. It always negotiates with private organisations and social elites as it realises their economic and social power respectively. Behind such negotiations is the need to mobilise these institutions so that they can assist it (the state) with achieving its development agenda.

- Following the point above, the state is constrained by the complex nature of the society it leads and limited of resources. Society is complex in the sense that there are ethnic and racial cleavages, a prevalence of many poor citizens and a few who are rich, high levels of illiteracy and a lack of skills seen as essential for development.

Consequently, the state has to determine the development pace both at national

and local levels. Some of these elites are willing to decentralise while others decentralise by word and are not committed to the success of this sub-national development imperative. One would add that while many governments talk about decentralisation, their commitment to the process is suspect although they are aware of the benefits of this practice. In spite of this, it is significant to note that the state undoubtedly plays a leading role in the transformation process, guiding the national flagship while at the same time, welcoming the whole of society aboard and sharing ideas with it on how it should guide this development ship.

In the transformation process of RLG in Zimbabwe, the GOZ also took the initiative to champion this venture. The centrality of central government in these transformative and development processes does not, as indicated in the above analogy, downplay the critical role of state/civil society interactions in policy development and effectuation – what is referred to as the 'politics of inclusion,' which emphasizes grassroots participation in policymaking. This analogy allows one to understand the role of central government in instituting RLG transformation processes. It also allows one to understand whether central government has the commitment to uplift rural communities and drive peripheral development to new and greater heights that can lead to sustainability and the reversal of the flow of migration from rural areas to urban centres that are already reeling from the effects of overcrowding. Thirdly, it allows us to understand whether the pioneering nature of central government should just be viewed as a form of lip service to society where nothing materialises for the benefit of all or that, whatever is achieved and gained is centralised and utilized for the ultimate benefit of the former, a scenario tantamount to engaging in the politics of deceit or self-interest. In coming up with the new RDC structures, government among others, had to consider the following:

    i)   The type of product or service the organisation is intended for. In this case, consideration is for an RDC that is mainly a public service provider and one capable of running business units and

projects which it could operate on its own or, in conjunction with other interested parties (creating partnerships and contracting out).

ii)   The nature of human resources that can be employed to service the organisation. The question is, should the organisation rely on specialists or generalists? What departments should it have and what is the nature of personnel who should run these departments?

iii)   The number of operating units the organisation needs taking into cognisance efficiency and effectiveness considerations (organisation centralisation and decentralisation imperatives).

iv)   The basic administrative unit which may be organised in one of two ways, that is, either:

        a) the work may be divided up into functional stages of horizontal levels, each of which is assigned to an individual official or group of officials acting as specialists on that part of the work which flows in the process from one group to another; or

        b) the work may be divided into units in such a way that each official or group of officials deals with all processes needed to complete the task of the unit, which in this way is divided vertically and assigned to the subsections on an alphabetical or numerical basis (Craythorne, 1994:250).

v)   The type of Chief Executive Officer needed. Ideally he/she should, as the name suggests, be the chief decision maker of all administrative issues and tasked with a coordination function where he/she facilitates contacts with different departments and arranges meetings to discuss policy matters. The effectiveness with which

he/she exercises his/her functions depends on his/her personality and the craft literacy and craft competence he/she has in relation to the organisation where he/she is chief.

vi)   The nature of structure required, that is, whether it be a flat or steep hierarchical structure.

vii)   The type of organisation system required, that is, whether it should be an open or relatively closed system.

Altogether, fifty-seven RDCs were established to take charge of rural life, estimated to be about 70% of Zimbabwe's national population of 11 000 000 people (Leistner and Cornwell, 1996:125). The estimates for 2001 put the figure at 13 million people. A brief analysis of the composition of the fifty seven-RDCs indicates that they are a result of an amalgamation of former Rural Councils (RCs) made up of the large white commercial farming sectors. These were white dominated and included urban settlements established to oversee the administration of these commercial areas as well as act as local commercial centres. These areas were administered through the Rural Councils Act, 1980. The RCs had reasonable autonomy, as compared to their counterparts, DCs (Namusi, 1998:12). In fact they had all the characteristics of devolution and their administration was considered to be more efficient and effective.

The RCs were combined with former District Councils (DCs). These DCs were made up of communal lands, which were divided into small-scale commercial farming areas (former African Purchase Areas and Tribal Trust Land) and resettlement areas (Former commercial farming areas bought by government to resettle landless peasants). District Councils were established through the District Councils Act, Chapter 231 of 1980. These were established to revitalise the former African Councils that existed before independence in 1980. District Councils were dominated by government as witnessed by the fact that District

Administrators were the Chief Executive Officers of these local authorities (Namusi, 1998:13). A further breakdown of these RDCs into wards indicates a clear aerial diversity of these local institutions. Each RDC can be found to have some or all of the following wards: large scale commercial farming and/or mining wards. These are wards located within the commercial farming sector or mines as the case may be. Within them, however, are large numbers of workers who are disenfranchised, as they do not own the land they live on. In order to ensure that these workers are represented in council, a system of appointing representatives has been adopted where the Minister of Local Government and National Housing (MOLGAHN) uses his discretion to select such representatives. These farms and mines form what is known as 'special interest areas' and the appointed councillors are known as 'special interest councillors'. Section 31 of the Rural District Councils Act, 1996 (Revised), provides for the appointment of councilors for special interest areas. Section 31(1) indicates that after RDC elections, the Minister, by notice in writing addressed to the Chief Executive Officer of the council concerned shall appoint such number of persons to be councilors as he may have fixed in terms of Section 11. This Section (Section 11) states that each council shall consist of:

a) One elected councilor for each ward of the council area; and

b) Such number of appointed councilors representing special interest, not exceeding one-quarter of the number of elected councilors, as the minister may fix in respect of the council by statutory instrument.

This number may vary from time to time as long as it does not exceed one-quarter. Beitbridge Rural District Council has two areas with appointed councilors under these conditions. An RDC can also have small-scale commercial farming wards. These are mainly composed of black farmers who own farms that were designated as African Purchase Areas during the colonial days. These are small in scale in that they do not have much farming infrastructure in place, partly

because of the discriminatory nature of loan procurement that existed during the colonial era. It was difficult for a black farmer to get a loan from a bank or government, as he/she would be asked to produce collateral security, which he/she did not have. However, his/her counterpart, the white farmer did not have to go through this rigorous process as he could use his land as collateral. Most of these farms (small scale farming areas) were family dependent plots with not even a tractor to assist the farmer in tilling the land. This means that for most of the labour, the farmer depended on the family's manual labour and drought power from his cattle and donkeys.

Resettlements wards can also be found in an RDC. This is independent Zimbabwe's development. These wards came into being through the land acquisition process, where central government bought some commercial farms, mostly those that were not productive. These farms were bought to resettle landless people after independence. The farms lacked the necessary infrastructure like roads, schools, business centres and any forms of communication with the 'civilised world'. As a result, people who were resettled in these areas experienced problems in making a living, as they did not have any animals, like cattle and donkeys to depend on for farming. It is not surprising that up to this day, most resettlement areas approximate communal areas or are even worse off, in terms of development. Those resettlement areas that are bordering communal areas have been invaded by the communal folk and now face the same problems of land degradation being experienced in communal areas.

The other important type of ward that can be found in an RDC is a communal ward. Communal wards are basically wards located in the former Tribal Trust Lands brought about by the Land Apportionment Act of 1930. These areas are mostly overpopulated with black Zimbabweans who are economically poor. These wards are home to the millions of Zimbabwe's peasantry. It is within these areas that the majority blacks are supposed to determine their development and

change. It should also be noted that communal areas, apart from being conspicuous by their large population, are easily noticeable by their aridness, poor rainfall patterns, overgrazing, and their general failure to support the peasant population. Altogether there are twelve wards in Beitbridge as outlined earlier (Roe, 1992:5).

Finally, RDCs have urban wards. These are located in the local urban centres, which grew up as administrative and commercial establishments during the colonial era. Most of these centers have not attained town status, although they are frequently referred to as towns because of their urban characteristics. They have an ever growing urban population and elaborate housing schemes. They are the nuclei of rural development and hubs of peripheral commercial enterprises. Most of these are now referred to as 'Growth Points' pending their upgrading into being towns. Growth points are rural centres that are being developed by government to serve as administrative and commercial centres for rural areas. These centers are 'mini towns' so to speak. The growth points are expected to act as coordinating points for rural development. Over time, one would expect them grow into towns. Wards in these areas are administered by what are called town boards. These are committees composed of councillors tasked with the responsibility to oversee the development of these centres.

According to the RDC Act of 1988, Part IV Section 28, each ward elects a councillor who becomes the ward's representative in council. These councillors, together with the appointed councillors constitute the RDC's lawmaking body. It is also important to indicate that among the appointed councillors, there are traditional leaders. These are the custodians of the culture of the black people. Before the colonial era, they were the traditional heads of tribal groupings within the country. Colonialism failed to completely destroy these African leaders and their structures. It only managed to subordinate them for the benefit of colonialists. They are Zimbabwe's cultural heritage and will remain intact for the foreseeable future.

In a bid to pacify these leaders or offer them formal recognition as paramount in post-colonial development, the GOZ has recognized them and has worked relentlessly to integrate them into modern structures of governance. In fact, some of the chiefs are appointed as Members of Parliament where they are expected to air their views on issues related to tradition and black culture. This enables traditional leadership to be represented at both the national and local levels. Section 11 and 31 as indicated earlier, provides for their appointment. The issue of appointed councillors raises controversy from the beginning as it is about people who are disenfranchised within a given area, yet local autonomy, self-determination and democracy are pronounced as the reasons for coming up with devolved local government structures.

Apart from the aerial and legislative composition of each RDC, the Rural District Councils Act of 1988, Part VII, VIII and IX provide for an administrative system that is made up of council committees and a council bureaucracy headed by a Chief Executive Officer. Part VIII of the Act provides for the establishment of Committees. These include the Finance Committee, Area Committee, Town Boards, Ward Development Committee, Roads Committee, Rural District Development Committee, Natural Resource and Provision for the Conservation Committee, and a provision for others as approved by the Minister (stipulated in Section 62). The RDC bureaucracy is drawn from the two amalgamated councils (DCs and RCs). The process of establishing the RDC's bureaucracy was reasonably smooth, as no serving employee was dismissed or laid off. The Chief Executive Officer is an appointee of Council. However, his appointment is subject to the Minister's approval. This is stipulated in Section 66, which also discusses the appointment of other council staff. Consequently, it is not possible for this person to be a member of the opposition party, unless he/she becomes such a member after his/her appointment. On appointment in 1993, the Chief Executive Officer relieved the District Administrator who acted as CEO during the amalgamation period. Appendix II shows the map of Beitbridge District with all

the wards, their numbers and names.

Part X of the Rural District Councils Act of 1988 outlines the powers and duties of RDCs. While the Act specifies certain powers, it also provides for additions to such powers by the responsible Minister as he/she sees fit. This means that a council can incur expenses for the purpose of executing the powers and duties allocated to it. Fundamental to this process, is that the council has power to:

a) establish and regulate a sewerage system in an urban area;

b) award title deeds to individuals who purchase land and its area of jurisdiction;

c) promote development within its area;

d) prepare among others, annual development plans;

e) monitor the implementation of policies and plans;

f) scrutinize the annual district development plan prepared by the district development committee. Consequently, the council can approve, amend, or modify such plans;

g) forward district development plans to the provincial development authority;

h) charge those who own property within the council area, for services rendered by council;

i) levy taxes, rent, and so on for the issuance of certificates, licenses, permits, and inspections within its area. It can also fix rent for property let by council to individuals and companies; and fix deposits for services

provided by council;

j) acquire land within or outside its area but with the written consent of the minister;

k) enter into contracts with other agencies for the purpose of enhancing its performance;

l) receive, analyse, approve or reject tenders;

m) engage in income generating projects of a commercial, industrial and agricultural nature;

n) establish cooperatives to carry out any commercial, industrial, or other activities that it considers as important for its members. The council can assist such cooperatives with funds. However, the Minister has to provide written approval for such actions;

o) enter into cooperation with the State, other local authorities and persons for the betterment of the council and communities within its area. As a practice, the Minister should give his approval for such activities; and

p) make, execute and repeal by-laws. Once council has resolved to pass a by-law, it has to submit such a law to the Minister for approval. The Minister may decide to publish such by-laws as he sees fit.

Just like all other RDCs in Zimbabwe, the Beitbridge Rural District Council is expected to have been performing these duties and functions since 1993. The question is, has it managed to do so in line with council and community expectations or it has performed below this level? Are communities, councillors, the provincial administration, MOLGAHN and central government pleased with

BRDC's performance? This can only be ascertained through carrying out performance measures on issues considered to be important in gauging the accomplishments of BRDC. The question is, what is performance measurement and on what issues should one focus when measuring a local authority's performance? What follows is an attempt to answer these questions.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The 1990s have seen a lot of criticisms leveled against the public sector. This is mostly attributed to the poor performance of this sector during the 1970s and 1980s. During this time, it has been observed that the public sector particularly, in developing countries, lacked accountability and responsiveness. Communities received what the centre determined. There were very few attempts to mobilise communities so that they could participate meaningfully in their own development (Kaul, 2000:2). Participation was mostly at the programme implementation stage. This meant that whether the programme was seen as meaningful or not by communities, they had to see it through. They had to comply with decisions made by the centre. Non-compliance would lead to sanctions that were too ghastly to contemplate. Thus, whatever government departments did, communities could not ask the former to answer for their actions. This means that communities were, to an extent, subservient to functionaries of these institutions (Kaul, 2000:2-5).

Apart from lacking in responsiveness and accountability, the public sector was known for inefficiency and ineffectiveness. This has mostly been through bureaucratic ineptitude, the pursuit of self-interest by government functionaries, nepotistic tendencies, and a lack of foresight (Hughes, 1994:91). As a result, there has been wide spread resource misuse and the conception and implementation of programmes and projects that were not viable. A telling picture of this inefficiency can be seen from the performance of parastatals in several

African countries. Instead of mobilising resources for government through the profits they were expected to make, most of these entities became a conduit for resource drain. These parastatals were being subsidised on an annual basis, and their mammoth losses were continuously being written off through government grants. This has reduced the capacity of the state to concentrate on other community oriented development projects. Consequently, the state failed to effectively offer services to communities. Whatever, was offered has been inadequate and unfairly distributed among these communities. This has exacerbated development inequities that have led to abject poverty at grass-roots level. This situation is now proving difficult to undo.

Many governments have noticed these negative results and have adopted agendas to try and correct this situation of non-performance. The current wish is to instill democracy and good government, in order to be able to serve society well. The Commonwealth (a group of countries that were colonies of Great Britain, Great Britain itself and other countries who have opted to join this group of countries) has come up with an elaborate programme to assist in enhancing the performance of member states. Concrete efforts started rolling in 1991 when the Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOG) met in Harare. At this summit, CHOG noted that the public services of member states were under-performing and this led to continued poverty and underdevelopment in these countries. Consequently, they issued a communiqué that was intended to instill democracy and good government in these countries. The communiqué reads:

> We pledge the Commonwealth and our countries to work with renewed vigour, concentrating in …(inter alia) democratic processes and institutions which reflect national circumstances, the rule of law and independence of the judiciary, just and honest government (Harare Communiqué of CHOG, October, 1991:1).

A similar communiqué was issued in Cyprus in 1993. It reads:

> Heads of Government … reaffirmed, inter alia, their commitment to democracy, fundamental human rights, the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, and just and honest government, as essential ingredients of the Commonwealth's fundamental political

values (The Cyprus Communiqué of CHOG, October, 1993:1).

The emphasis of these communiqués was on building democracy, entrenching the rule of law in their systems, ensuring the independence of the judiciary, promoting human rights, and just and honest government. In November 1995, CHOG endorsed the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Secretariat, Chief Emeka Anyaoku's initiative entitled "Towards a New Public Administration" (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1996:5). This initiative was aimed at assisting member countries in their efforts to improve the performance of their public services. Pursuant to this initiative, the Secretary-General indicated that the changing responsibilities of government required a radical reshaping of the public service. These responsibilities required governments to position themselves strategically to deal with global socio-economic competitiveness and customer needs. According to him, these could be met if the old equation of government was replaced by the new equation of government which requires value added production, open markets, dynamic enterprises, a skilled workforce, delivery of service that are consistent with public expectations, and financial prudence. To this, the Commonwealth Secretariat (1996:6) indicates that:

> In the new equation of government, the public service is no longer seen as a constant, to be taken for granted when things are working well. The role of the public service has entered the equation as a key variable, particularly its ability to deliver the economic and regulatory services that underpin competitive success. In this equation, rising public expectations, previously seen as a drain on the resources of government, are now to be seen as one of the drivers of quality services.

Thus, the need for the competitiveness of government institutions has taken centre stage in this era of globalisation. Government institutions find themselves entering the new equation of government as vital agencies for the promotion of democratic good governance, quality service provision and enhancing the capacity of communities to participate proactively in their own development. This new equation is different from the old or apparently, traditional equation whose emphasis was on primary production, managed markets, a stable workforce,

public acceptance of institutions of government without question and the ability of governments to know what the people want, thereby deciding on the mixture of goods and services for different communities. This led to non-performance. The conviction is that the new equation of government would inherently lead to socio-economic and political success in member countries. A comparison of the two equations of government is shown in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 A comparison of the old and new equations of government

The old equation of government	The new equation of government

Economic and competitive success
 	
  = Primary production
 	
  plus managed markets
 	
  plus industrial capacity
 	
  plus stable workforce
 	
  plus public acceptance of
     the institutions of government
 	
  minus public expectations
	Economic and competitive success
	
	  = value-added production
	
	  plus open markets
	
	  plus dynamic enterprise
	
	  plus skilled workforce
	
	  plus public expectations of quality
	     services
	
	  plus responsive public service
	
	  minus public expenditure

Source: The Commonwealth Secretariat, 1996:6

It is significant to indicate that the new equation of government is not limited to central government institutions only, but echoes through all institutions whether they be parastatals, provincial government institutions or local government institutions. Although the new equation of a government is a remarkable prescription for good governance, its success would depend on how different each governments implement it.

In order to promote this new equation of government, public agencies find it imperative to incorporate performance measurement systems so that they can convincingly assess their capacity and progress towards meeting these cherished goals. It is these measures that can help them to determine their

strengths and shortcomings and consequently, enable them to develop capacity enhancing initiatives that would catapult them to greater heights of performance. This means that establishing performance measurement standards is not much of a witch-hunting exercise where the interest is to find faults and show how bad one agency is compared to others in a similar business. Instead, it is very much a tool for capacity building used by both the private and public sector institutions (Hughes, 1994:205-206). To this, one should note that if performance indicators are comparable or represented to be comparable to other institutions, then, it is possible for one to check the performance of his/her agency against others. He/she can then determine whether his/her agency is performing well or not. This is important if one wants to improve the performance of the agency of concern.

From this, it is evident that even nascent institutions like the BRDC need to gauge their progress, successes and failures. In fact, it should be realised that the need to measure is part of human life. People measure children when they are born to determine their weight, height, and temperature among others. These measurements become a basis for determining the rate at which the child should grow and whether the child needs medication to correct some anomalies that have been detected. When people want to loose or gain weight they have to continuously measure ourselves to see if we are changing for the better or worse. When children are at school, assignments and tests are given to them. These act as a measure of our intellect and ability to understand what has been taught. Joy is derived when after continuous measurement improvement is noted. Lack of improvement may first leave people dismayed but later it may spur them on until they achieve their cherished goals.

From the above, it can be easily ascertained, that even at an organisational level, the measurement of the performance of an agency is vital. It only helps the agency to strive for better results. Thus, performance measurement is a process that organisations use to ascertain the level at which they are carrying out their tasks in order to meet set objectives. It is also an attempt to find out whether the

organisation is meeting certain standards, be they quantitatively or qualitatively defined. For example, achieving a profit of $ 20 000 per day; serving 200 customers per day; treating 1 000 patients per day; or building 500 low-income houses per year, are quantitative standards that are easy to measure. On the other hand, if the objective is to improve service provision, ensure that development takes place, or to provide clean air or security to the residents, it is difficult to develop concrete standards and this makes it even harder to use performance measurement criteria to determine success in concrete terms. These rather broad and vague objectives are said to characterise the public sector. As a result, the use of performance measurement in this sector has been delayed.

However, whatever the case, performance measurement is an invaluable asset for institutions. It provides answers to performance questions that can be posed by individuals, management and communities (DeJesus, 2001:3). It makes it easy to pinpoint difficulties and create solutions to deal with them. It helps managers to initiate change and even get support for such change initiatives from senior managers and subordinates. Through performance measurement, it is easy to understand one's organisation and its human resources better. Such information can be used to motivate employees to exert more effort in their duties. It can also motivate managers to develop new systems that can enhance the performance of their organisations.

Going through reports detailing how other agencies have performed overtime, can bring benefits to an agency. Such comparative information acts as a cross pollinating agent for managers who may want to emulate or do better than these organisations. Thus, performance measurement may also enhance an agency's competitive spirit and the need to survive and be at the cutting edge of excellence. The contention in this study is that performance measurement:

- can be used as a diagnostic tool to reveal specific areas that fall below

acceptable limits.

- can be used to justify programmes and projects.

- can lead to staff promotion or a raise in salary.

- makes it easy to develop cost saving mechanisms.

- can serve as a marketing tool for an entire organisation, highlighting savings and achievements.

While performance measurement was carried out on an ad hoc basis and specifically when there was a crisis, it has now become an integral part of an organisation's life. In some organisations, performance measurement is done routinely at monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly or every six months. However, others carry out such measurements once a year. In addition, DeJesus (2001:4) says that making a commitment to performance measurement:

> … makes everyone 's job easier. First it keeps organisations and their projects on target, so less time is wasted on off-goal activities. Second, problems become apparent before they get out of control. Finally, the spirit of performance measurement with its orientation toward professionalism and results sets the tone for the organisation's programmes – people are aimed for success and positive accomplishments.

In the same manner, DeJesus concludes by emphasizing that:

> Performance measurement exists to support change and activate creative solutions. Taking a proactive role toward performance measurement results in numbers that can improve your department, your organisation and your careers. Improvement often can appear rapidly, as well as form a foundation for long term and sustainable progress (2001:4).

It is with this perception that the need to gauge performance is seen as important in this study. Whatever the perception though, this analysis indicates that performance measurement is critical to the operational success of any institution. More so to local government institutions that are facing shrinking central government grants and an ever-increasing demand for services from communities. However, the question is, if performance measurement is vital, even in local government, what exactly can be measured?

Mukwena (1999:46), in his analysis of performance measurement in local government, tries to answer this question in the context of local government institutions in Zambia. In his analysis, the author confirms the need to measure performance of local government units. Mukwena indicates that such measurement should focus on the objectives to be achieved (effectiveness) and the capacity of local authorities to mobilise resources and offer a certain mixture of services within the existing financial constraints (efficiency). Mukwena also notes that for performance measurement to be meaningful, it should take place where there are appropriate systems of monitoring, reporting and record keeping. Mukwena's analysis supports Flyn (1986:393) who indicates that any optimal local government performance measures should focus on effectiveness and efficiency.

There is, of course, general agreement that measuring the performance of public sector institutions is rather difficult (Hughes, 1994:208). Firstly, the difficulty stems from the fact that there is no agreement as to the standard measures of performance that can be used in local government. This is unlike in the private sector where profits, volume of sales, output per employee, sales growth, earnings per share, changes in stock price and return on investment can be used (Mukwena, 1999:47). Secondly, it may be a consequence of lack of the goals to be achieved such that people can interpret these differently. Thirdly, it may be a lack of political commitment to establish standard measures for local authorities and fourthly, because of the nature of services provided by local authorities. For example, where public goods are provided, it is difficult to come up with a narrowly defined performance criterion.

While the concentration of most scholars is on efficiency and effectiveness measures, this study broadens the horizon of local government performance measurement to include equity, responsiveness and adequacy as integral components of this imperative. The need for equity measures stems from the

realisation that in Zimbabwe, communities in communal areas were marginalised. These communities occupied land that was not suitable for sustaining farming enterprises, yet these people were supposed to survive through animal and crop farming. Besides, these semi-arid regions were overpopulated and overgrazed, thereby diminishing their chances of offering a better livelihood to the communal folk. In fact, the communities' condition of abject poverty is a result of the type of land that was allocated to them through the draconian Land Apportionment Act of 1993 as explained earlier in the study. The question is, what have RDCs put in place to try to address this problem?

Another second important issue to consider is that side by side with communal farmers can be found white commercial farmers with vast lands some of which are not utilised fully. These white owned farms, particularly in the Beitbridge District, are sparsely populated and enjoy a concentration of basic resources that are critical for district development. These include an abundant water supply, irrigation infrastructure, vast grasslands for grazing cattle, well maintained roads, electricity and telephonic services. Now that the two are part of the same Rural District Council, are the two people who were separated by apartheid policies now sharing the benefits of these local resources, or is access and benefit accumulation still skewed? What has the RDC done to try to equalise resource distribution and development? One, of course, would expect many distributive and redistributive policies to be in place, to advantage the formerly disadvantaged folk but without seriously harming those who were advantaged. If these policies are there, are they fair and reasonable?

From the above, it can be seen that equity has to do with issues of social justice and fairness. Thus, equity measures the manner in which the effects of policy efforts have been fairly distributed among members of the community. Once this is achieved one expects a reduction in hostility and pressures of animosity, haboured by the two ethnic groups toward each other. In fact, one of the fundamental purposes of amalgamation was to allow blacks and whites in one

district to coexist as brothers and sisters, equally enjoying the benefits offered by their locality. While it is appropriate to achieve equity, the problem is that it is difficult to tell whether one has managed to distribute or redistribute resources fairly. However, John Rawl's utilitarian justice idea is that a social welfare situation is preferable if it results in a gain in welfare for members of society who are worse off (Dunn, 1994:330). The target here is the oppressed masses and the poor. Once they are made to gain, then the distribution or redistribution is fair. This is, indeed, the basis of equity in this study.

Responsiveness highlights the ability of a policy to provide a mixture of services that is satisfactory to those who need them. Such a provision can only take place if communities are empowered and have the capacity to make decisions on issues that affect them. These people should be capable of making demands to the RDC, which should become an instrument for satisfying the needs of these people. This can only happen if there is a system of organic planning that is encapsulated in participatory discourse theories. This means that to be responsive, the local authority should engage local communities in policy discourse and planning. This does not only humanize communities but it gives them a chance to say what they want and prioritise these needs as a basis for policy.

Adequacy is a measure of the extent to which a solution or selected option satisfies the needs, values, preferences and opportunities of communities (Dunn, 1994:271). Thus, a course of action is satisfactory to those concerned if it is in line with set objectives and manages to meet these. Note should be taken that this is not the same as effectiveness. Effectiveness focuses on objectives while adequacy focuses on satisfying those who were affected by a given problem, that is, whether the problem is satisfactorily and sufficiently solved is the focal point here. Communities may be provided with services such as water, electricity, telephones, education and health facilities. But the question would be, is the community satisfied with these services? The adequacy criterion helps the study

to determine these levels of satisfaction. The BRDC has made inroads in providing a host of services to the Beitbridge communities. The question is, are these services sufficient or are there any deficiencies that can still be noted? The five-criterion approach to local government performance measurement offers a rather holistic framework that can provide meaningful information for programme support or for the generation of innovative and creative ideas for enhancing the performance of the district. In order to carry out these measurement exercises, the study focuses on three variables: democratic participation; service provision; and managerial excellence. What follows is an analysis of each of these three foci and an indication of their relevance to this study and performance measurement in the BRDC.

DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

The concept of democracy has assumed centre stage in all development literature in the Third World. Even donor agencies, international financial institutions like the IMF and the World Bank, and governments of developed countries who wish to provide aid to developing countries emphasize this concept before they can give any assistance. Any developing country that does not convincingly apply the principles of democracy in its governance process may actually be denied such aid (Wanyanda in Hyden, Olowu and Ogendo (2000:242).

All regimes in Africa have realized that the transition to democracy is inevitable. In fact, it is key to their development and prosperity. Without delving too much into the explications of this concept, this study adopts Ntalaja (1997:5-9)'s approach to analysing this concept. In his analysis, Ntalaja (1997:5) indicates that democracy is a political concept premised on value, process, and practice. The value premise indicates that democracy is a moral value demanded by all freedom-loving human beings. It is an aspiration of all who want a better socio-political order that protects humanity and advances the interests of the latter. The

thriving of individuals is to feel free and be able to strive for a better life. Any regime that advances and protects this project is democratic. Democracy, as a value also encapsulates issues of tolerance of one another, acknowledging people's diversity and the ability of these people to coexist harmoniously amidst diversity.

Democracy as a social process is viewed as the tendency of a political system to continuously promote equal access to fundamental human rights and liberties such as:

- the fundamental right to life and security;
- the fundamental right to basic socio-economic necessities of life;
- the freedom to worship, assemble, express oneself, move and associate with others; and
- the freedom and right to engage in self-determining endeavours that raise one's consciousness to remake his/her world while acting within the confines of social parameters (Ntalaja, 1997:7).

Thus, according to Ntalaja (1997:7), democracy becomes that social process through which people strive to expand these rights within a given political order and seek to promote and defend them effectively, in line with notions of the social contract of humans. It is acknowledged that most African countries have failed in this agenda. These countries have not managed to promote and expand human rights and freedoms. Economic development and social justice have remained an illusion. Self-determination is a far cry from being in place. People are inundated with programmes and projects emanating from political leaders. The communities are not given the opportunity to determine and pursue programmes related to their own priorities. Consequently, there has been a decline in the standard of living of the people and gross social inequities. The process of promoting the standard of living of people and addressing social inequities has now become a priority for democratic good governance and social stability.

Democracy as practice implies a way of organising and exercising power in a given polity. A democratic exercise of power hinges on legitimacy or authority emanating from the people; the rule of law where government power and authority are defined to allow others space of socio-economic and political action; respect for other institutions of government like the judiciary; enhancing accountability; guarding the right of citizens to participate in the management of public affairs; and protecting the rights of people to change a government that no longer serves their interest (Dye, 2001:13)

Combined, these three: value, process and practice, produce a holistic type of democracy cherished by all free nations. All regimes in Africa have realised that the transition to democracy is inevitable. Even authoritarian regimes have now started processes leading to the re-democratisation of their political systems. This transition process is premised on the following theoretical foundations, which can be attributed to Leftwhich (1994:371-373)'s analysis of 'governance, the sate and politics of development' in the Third World.

a) The self-realisation or functional theory. This means that authoritarian regimes sooner or later realise that their systems are not sustainable. Their methods, functional needs and operational modes become outdated. Invariably, they create tension and conflict among the ruling elite, i.e. conflict that can actually destroy these regimes. In the long run, they tend to accept the need to democratise their institutions and political dispositions to enhance humanity and people's participation in government.

b) The loss of legitimacy theory. Overtime, authoritarian regimes tend to loose legitimacy. This scenario lowers their ability to survive and perpetuate themselves. Once the pillars of community support begin falling apart, the regime's life is threatened. Its ability to rise from such a situation becomes dependent on it embarking on a process of re-

democratisation.

c) The international and foreign pressure theory. International pressure emanating from financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF, developed countries, and Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), may force authoritarian regimes to capitulate from their anti-democratic agendas. These external pressures reduce the regimes' external support in terms of ideological comradeship and military assistance. Ultimately, the regimes' backbones may begin to crack thereby opening up avenues for re-democratisation.

A closer look at these theories indicates that each cannot adequately explain the movement of African countries towards democracy. One would rather propose an integrated theoretical approach. This is because African initiatives towards democracy are driven by a complexity of factors, both internal and external to the state. It should be realised that most oppressive regimes have functioned under the direct tutelage and advice of neocolonial forces that have benefited tremendously from Africa's misrule. However, as soon as they see that the predisposition of the regime is becoming a threat to their self-interest, they are quick to dissociate themselves from it and begin pressuring it to embrace democracy. Thus, their 'push for democracy' is not premised on their interest in African communities, but on that of furthering self-interest, that is, that their interests cannot be fulfilled under a situation of political turmoil. Of course, some political analysts tend to deny this type of analogy and one can only say that this is nothing but a denial of reality.

African societies have suffered considerably under oppressive regimes so that they have realised that it is incumbent upon them to install governments that derive power from them. Thus, the process of change towards democracy and development should be for Africans and should be driven by them. Through this realization, revolutionary actions initiated by the masses and armed forces have

been witnessed, and cleavages within the ruling parties have been noticed. All these, one can argue, have led to managed-transitions to democracy. Hence, the need to adopt an integrated theoretical framework to try and understand democratic processes in Africa.

It is significant to realize, however, that the concept of democracy is not a national government concept only. Instead, it pervades all institutions of government, be it at regional/provincial or local/district level. In fact, it has been used to bring about devolved local government structures in many developing countries. This is because devolved decentralisation is designed to allow greater representation in council from different ethnic groups and people of different socio-economic status. It is also expected to expedite direct participation in issues of governance by the local people hence, the term 'democratic local government'.

From the above, one can see that there can be no talk of democracy without reference to participation. The two are intricately intertwined, as a measure of freeing people and allowing them to determine their development process. The heart of democracy lies in civil society. There are two Zimbabwean proverbs that also indicate the need for participation in any democratic polity: 'The river is only important because of the streams that feed it' and 'A king is a king only through the contributions of every citizen around him.' In the same vein, Pacere in Hofmeister and Scholz, (1996:221) indicates that:

> National construction cannot come about without the constructive participation of the lower structures, namely, the towns, communes, villages, rural communities and civil society, which are alongside the holders of power and the constituent bodies.

The words "participation", "popular participation", "community participation", "people's participation", and "democratic participation" are often used interchangeably in current development parlance. Community participation is an active process by which beneficiary/client groups influence the direction and

execution of a development project with a view to enhancing their well being in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance or other values they cherish (Campbell and Marshall (2000:321). Community participation involves a dynamic process of mobilizing communities to take part in the socio-economic and political activities of their locality or country, making them effective participants and beneficiaries of the collective decisions that have been made and implemented (Lennon in Fitzgerald, McLennan and Munslow, 1997:120-121). This kind of participation, also referred to as democratic participation focuses on:

- involving people to contribute to the development process;
- involving communities in decision making in respect of goal-setting, policy formulation, planning, implementation of social programmes and projects and evaluating them; and
- allowing people to share equitably in the benefits derived from this development.

These factors can only be meaningfully achieved where there is a devolved local government system. In a democratic local government system there is a transfer of responsibility and authority for self-governance to local communities rather than the local bodies as representatives of the people. In this case, the communities wield actual power and local institutions become highly accessible and accountable to these communities. According to Blair (1998:1-3), these local citizens enjoy full political rights and liberty. These citizens have the consciousness to determine the composition of council and the mixture of goods and services council should provide to them. In this case, the flow of decision information should be bi-directional rather than uni-directional between the people and their representatives at the local level. Thus, the notion of democratic local government (DLG) has been advocated for what it is and for what it does or what it should do, that is, as a process or end-in-itself and as a means to further ends, in this case the outputs of DLG. On the process side, at the heart of the DLG rationale are the twin ideas that it will enhance meaningful citizen's participation in governmental activity that affects them and that it will improve

people's ability to hold local government to account for how it is affecting them (Campbell and Marshall, 2000:321-323). This means that DLG can lead to increased popular input into the activities of local government at the same time, it can increase popular control, that is, the ability of local communities to take charge of what local government has done or is expected to do. On the output side, DLG can be justified in that it can improve local service delivery and contribute significantly to poverty reduction. This means that DLG has the capacity to empower the local people, protect them and enhance their resolve to improve the quality of their lives.

It is evident that the history of rural local government in Zimbabwe, particularly black rural local government, was not about the promotion of local democracy. It was mainly a governance system put in place to advance the process of controlling and subjugating blacks within the confines of the 'whiteman's rule' that was evident at the time. Thus, in the 1960s and 1970s, black rural local government in Zimbabwe was placed under the Ministry of Internal Affairs who was able to monitor what was going on in black areas and if there was something suspiciously contrary to the interests of the whites, the Minister would undertake measures to swiftly end the 'deviant behavior' since he also controlled the police force. Rural local government institutions were actually established by this Ministry. Consequently, more than two hundred small and fragmented local authorities were set up. These were deliberately made smaller so that they could be weak. This in a way, was a move to avoid them becoming 'centres of power,' a situation that was considered detrimental to white rule.

This approach to rural local governance has since changed, hence the consolidation of African Councils into 57 RDCs only. Nowadays, the political thrust of rural local government, among others, is to mobilize community participation for developmental purposes. It involves a process where communities are involved in planning, implementing and evaluating policies, programmes and projects that affect them. Thus, devolved local government is

premised on this need for community involvement. Without it, there is no decentralization. There are many forms of community participation in which rural local government in Zimbabwe should be interested. According to this study, there are several aspects of participation that are critical.

i.   Participation where councillors consult with the people in their constituencies (wards), specifically on development issues in order to enable people to air their views on what they would like to have done in their localities to improve their quality of life. This consultative process allows communities to input their opinions on issues of development. It also helps raise community interest in local development matters that make it easy for RDCs to launch programmes and projects of a local nature. In fact, the talk of "government of the people, for the people, and by the people" can never be meaningful without community participation. Thus, the sustainability of democracy is dependent on people's participation in matters of governance and self-determination.

ii.   Participation where communities take part in providing labour and sometimes finance for major infrastructural development projects like dam and road construction. This input by the community is vital as it can have the effect of cost reduction to the implementing agent. It also gives people that degree of ownership of the project that makes them want to contribute more each time there is a project to be implemented in the localities. Of importance to note here, is that such a process raises the level of responsibility of the local communities.

iii.   Participation where people are mobilized into development councils or committees so as to encourage them to come up with their own projects and seek funding from NGOs and other donor communities

or even finance houses for the purpose of implementing their projects. RDCs come into this process to try and help people secure the needed finances and then help these people in the management of their projects. This participation helps to build the much-needed entrepreneurial skills of local communities. It should also be noted that these councils or committees such as WADCOs, VIDCOs and Youth Councils also act as local assemblies, which apart from giving people participative fora, also help to train people in issues of governance and political discourse. This is helpful to those who acquire higher political offices in future.

iv.   Participation where those who manage the process of development realize the need to mobilize ideas from different sections of members of the community. This is important, as it makes these managers realize the heterogeneity of society and makes them inclined to mobilize these differences as a source for varied ideas that are a vital input for decision making.

v.   Participation where local communities choose their own councillors through the electoral process. For these elections to be meaningful to the people, and the whole democratic process, there has to be minimal interference from central government in local electoral processes. If for example, the political leadership decides on candidates for the party in each locality, this effectively means communities have no power of making local choices. The result is a local authority full of party representatives who owe their allegiance to the 'top brass' in the party rather than those communities who elected them to these positions. This defeats the whole concept of DLG, as the fundamentals of democracy will have been violated. Elections would just have been a process of authenticating party candidates. However, where local choice is made for primaries and

actual elections for councilors, communities would have been given the much-needed autonomy for self-determination. This also increases the capacity of council to function with clear local objectives in mind rather than with divided focus, which includes a focus on those who had the political clout to push incumbent councillors into their positions.

Thus, the electoral process provides individual choice, which is vital for democracy. Moyo (1992:6-7) explores the issue of electoral choice and consent and tries to show how different scholars view these issues. Moyo's analysis shows that choice and consent go hand in hand. However, there are situations when people consent to choices made by others, such as for example, when people consent to institutional arrangements made by others. The issue is that for consent to make sense, it must be prefaced by choice of what one needs. Following this argument, Hermet in Moyo (1992:11-12) defines elections with choice as:

> … those in which the voter has an opportunity (1) to have his franchise recognised through registration; (2) to use his right to vote without being segregated into categories dividing the electorate and revolving the idea of popular sovereignty; (3) to cast his ballot free from external hindrance; (4) to decide how to vote, even to spoil his ballot, without external pressure; and (5) to expect his ballot to be counted and reported accurately, even if it goes against the wishes of those in power.

This means that elections that do not fulfill one of these conditions tend to violate the element of choice and minimize voter autonomy. The question to ask therefore is that, does such 'voting purity' as indicated in the definition exist in RDCs or is choice always compromised for some other preferences which the political system puts in place as a symbol of free choice. Voter choice and consent, although one may argue that they are difficult to instill in any electoral system, are compelling concepts for analysing voter behavior, just as democracy is a concept, though difficult to attain completely, in practice. What is important is to determine the degree of rationality exercised by those in authority to make the

electoral process as rational as possible in order to enhance choice.

It is evident from the above, that participation is the foundation of DLG. Without people's participation there cannot be effective local governance. Participation gives people power to influence and understand decisions that affect their lives. People develop the feeling of having power over their lives and that they are not alienated from the governing process but are an integral part of this process. Participation fosters responsibility for policy, programmes and projects. This is because communities tend to develop a high sense of ownership of these instruments and therefore, feel compelled to defend them. It can be argued that local democracy, the essence of participation, consists of the expressions of and conflict among diverse views and values held by contending groups attempting to shape local government decisions to meet their ends, with all-important groups having the ability to gain access to and exercise some degree of influence over decision makers. The question is, has BRDC enhanced community participation? Do communities have the right to make choices about programmes, projects and their local representatives? These questions are answered in Chapter five of this study.

It is interesting to note that that the Rural District Council Act, Act Number 8 of 1988 provides for community participation. The first such provision is contained in Section 15, which specifies the qualifications of voters. Section 15(1) states that:

> … every person who, on the first March in the year in which a voter's roll is prepared
> a) is of the age of eighteen years or more;
> b) is a citizen of Zimbabwe; and
> c) is an owner or occupier of immovable property in a commercial ward or an urban ward;
> shall be entitled to be enrolled on the voters' roll as a voter in that ward.

However, it should be noted that Section 5(1) Part C indicates that only those who have movable property in a commercial ward, are allowed to vote. This

means that commercial farm workers, although they have appointed representatives are disenfranchised. This is the same with lodgers in urban wards. Section 15(5) states that:

> … the number of persons that may be enrolled on a voters' roll by virtue of their occupying as lodgers any one property within a specified area shall not exceed such number as the Minister may describe in regulations, either generally or in respect of any particular class of property or any particular specified area.

In addition to these legal requirements of community participation, grass-roots structures of participation exist in Zimbabwe. These are the VIDCOs and WADCOs established through the Prime Minister's directive of 1984. While VIDCOs submit their community plans to WADCOs, the latter submit them to District Development Committees (DDCOs) and these are in turn sent to PDCOS – Provincial Development Committees. Ultimately they are taken to the central planning agency, the National Planning Commission in the Ministry of Finance. A simple functional model of these structures shows that the GOZ made every attempt to establish structures for grass-root participation. Thus, decision-making on programmes and projects of a local nature are expected to originate from the grass-root. Grass-root proposals are expected to filter through the political system, being refined at each stage, until they get to the national level. This study illustrates this filtering process diagrammatically as shown in Figure 4.3 on page 225. In this model, elected local structures are given the chance to participate in programme prioritization. Their functions include:

- identification and articulation of village needs;
- coordination and forwarding village needs to the WADCO;
- coordination and cooperating with government extension workers in the operations of development planning;
- coordination and supervision of all activities relating to production and genera development of the village area; and
- organising the people to undertake projects that require a considerable workforce.

Figure 4.3 The proposal/planning filtering process

………. VIDCO 1,   VIDCO 2,   VIDCO 3   VIDCO 4   ……….

……. WADCO 1   WADCO 2   WADCO 3,   WADCO 4 ……..

………. DDCO 1   DDCO 2,   DDCO 3   DDCO 4, …..

………. PDCO 1   PDCO 2,   PDCO 3,   PDCO 4,   …..

NPC (National Level Planning)
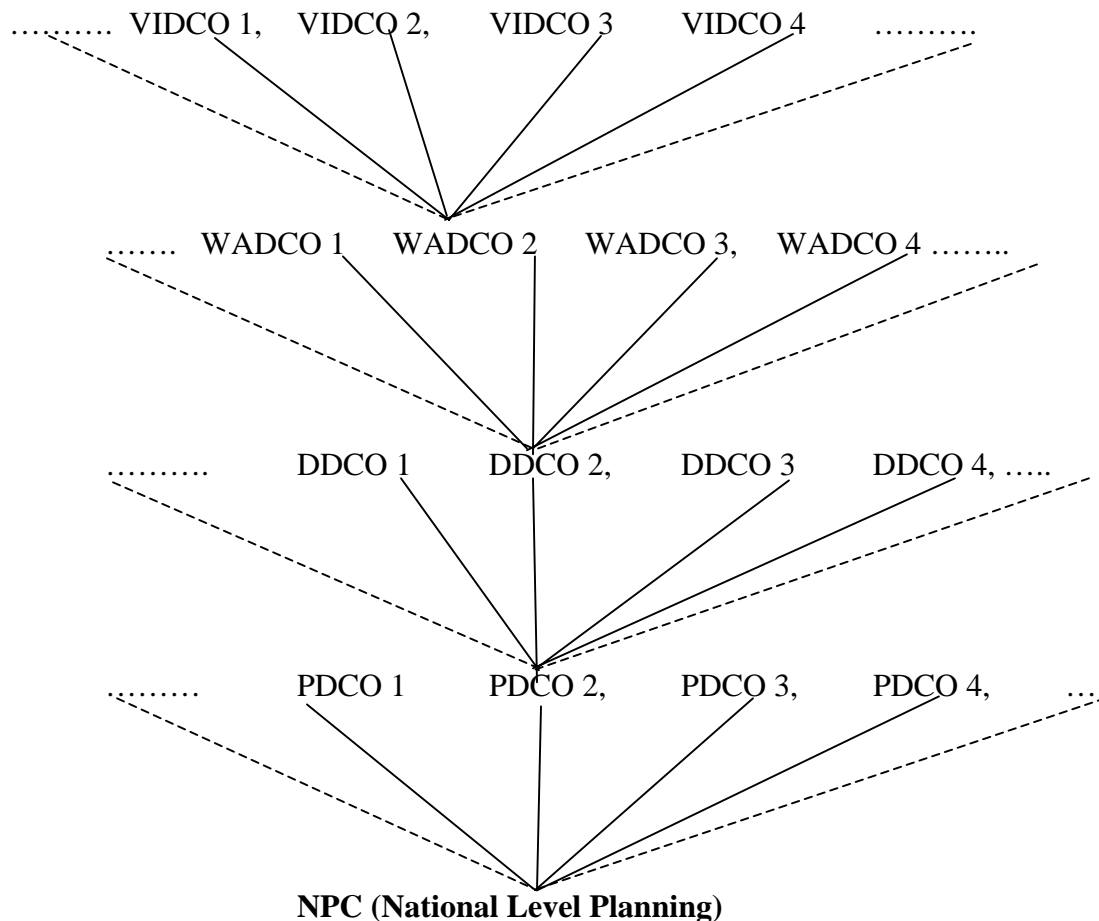
The WADCOs on the other hand, are expected to be the central planning agencies for VIDCOs. They are expected to think critically about VIDCO proposals and to make appropriate recommendations to the DDCOs. However, the practice has been that WADCOs, instead receive plans from central government and ZANU-PF and then channel them to VIDCOs, thereby offsetting the whole functional structure and reducing the decision making capacity of rural communities (Mushauri in Hofmeister and Scholz, 1996:255-256). This means that the two local level assemblies are now used as political mobilisation structures for the ruling party rather than for community initiated development strategies. The question however is, does the BRDC have these structures in place and are they still functional in a manner that enhances local participation? Are these structures capable of providing excellent services to the communities of the BRDC? This question emphasizes the paramountcy of service provision in

local government. This aspect is dealt with in the section that follows.

THE PROVISION OF SERVICES

Rural District Councils are expected to provide a considerable range of services to communities within their areas of jurisdiction. This is in line with the major tenets of decentralization, that central government should shed some of its workload to local level institutions of government, so as to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in making services available to local communities. Besides, allowing local institutions to provide local oriented services is a democratic gain for society. The initiative empowers society and enhances the democratic concept of self-determination. This is because communities can easily make decisions on a mixture of services that they see as desirable to them at a particular time. Thus, services become easily customised and those who provide them are likely to have an inclination towards providing quality services to those customers.

Legislative provisions indicate that RDCs have certain specific services that they have to provide. Consequently, this shows that local authorities generally have many powers, duties and responsibilities that they use as a basis for carrying out their functions. Their responsibilities are clearly defined in the First Schedule, Section 71 of the RDC Act of 1988. They are sixty-four of them but they can be grouped into three categories:

    i.   The provision at a local level, of essential services such as education, health, water, sanitation, housing, roads and road services, recreation facilities, and civil protection.

    ii.   Acting as catalysts for planning, promoting and coordinating development, especially the development of growth points, Rural

District Service Centres, and Business Centres, the conservation of natural resources, and providing agricultural services.

iii.   Policing and controlling the use of local resources and monetary benefits arising from the development process.

This section is concerned with the first category. The other two categories are discussed later under managerial excellence discussed on page 236 of this study. The question is, do RDCs have the capacity to provide services of a local nature? How have they managed to provide them since 1993? Are communities satisfied with the mixture of these services and the way in which they are provided?

It is significant to note that deciding what services local authorities should provide depends on several priority decisions. These include answering questions of obligation, responsibility, the value of community growth, and personal values. Within this light, Hale and Franklin (1997:384) indicate that in making these priorities, the following questions should be asked and answered:

a) What is government mandated to provide?
b) What conditions can be found in communal, resettlement, commercial and urban wards that can affect the mixture of services to be provided?
c) What condition do service providers wish to promote?
d) What image do communities themselves wish to promote?

According to Hale and Franklin (1997:385), once these questions are answered, local authorities are expected to make final decisions on their priorities and start the process of making these services available. Although this seems to be a fairly easy process, its complications arise from the fact that there are fundamental approaches that can be used to ascertain this mixture of services. Adopting one of the approaches may in fact, bring a set of results that are different from adopting another set. Hale and Franklin (1997:385) further indicate that there are

three approaches for ascertaining the mixture of services. These are incrementalism, the conceptual approach, and the performance approach. Under the incremental framework, decisions are made based on the need for marginal increases each year (Anderson, 1990:113-114)). The past is used as a guide for the future. Thus, increment or decrement is based on previous funding. This approach is favoured in certain local authorities because it emphasizes stability and routinised decision-making. In addition, it minimizes uncertainty. It accommodates the 'politicalness' of the prioritization process through allowing a series of trade-offs within what existed before. This means that there is a yardstick for decision-making in this approach. This yardstick is the combination of goods and services provided in yesteryears. However, one should indicate that the approach tends to have some policy draw backs, as it is not highly responsive to community demands. Besides, it offers little substantive and procedural answers to new situations that need policy action.

The second is the conceptual approach. This approach answers questions of service mix and prioritisation by focusing on the fundamental concept of the purpose of service provision. The questions that need to be answered are as follows: Is service provision designed to enhance the self-sufficiency of citizens? Is service provision only for basic needs? Is it a way of complementing other service providers and individual communities themselves? Hale and Franklin 1997:386) say that there are three major guidelines that should be used to answer these questions and prioritize services. These are the societal view, the structural/governmental view, and the humane perspective.

- The societal view: In this view, local authorities should meet mandated responsibilities, then offer optional programmes which provide important services for large numbers of people or help government to meet its legal responsibilities. The issue here is that local authorities should help individuals to achieve a desirable modicum of self-sufficiency. This can be through offering them basic needs such as low income housing,

education, health, sanitation and engaging in programmes that would train them to be better and responsible citizens. The interest in these answers is in improving the welfare of society as a whole. This is in fact, the fundamental mission of government: to improve social welfare and make life good.

- The structural/governmental view: This is where decisions are made, taking into cognizance, programmes with long term benefits and the ability to multiply these benefits to communities at the local and national level. These should also have the tendency to sustain themselves where possible. The realisation here is that local authorities are structures of government. As such, they are expected to provide services where it is impossible for communities to do so on their own. Thus, programmes and projects should meet the basic needs of the people. These include skills training programmes, offering public security, housing, health, education, water, sanitation services, and environmental sustenance programmes. Fundamental to this view is that it is the duty of government through its structures to provide a combination of these services. It can do so by delegating to local authorities with the power to make such provisions on its behalf.

- The humane perspective: This is where local government is expected to support communities who do not have the physical, mental and emotional capacity to do work. Thus, the combination of services is only through compassion and empathy. It is only based on humane values, where responses to crisis situations are made, for example, the provision of food in times of drought, shelter to squatters, clothing and health care to the poor, and so on. The whole focus of service provision is guided by compassion and a moral responsibility rather than as a legal duty.

Although these are plausible views, the problem is that they seem to be elitist.

Those with authority are involved in making decisions on a combination of services, which they see as appropriate for a rather voiceless community. One can argue that these centrist driven strategies tend to reduce democratic participation and community choice, the very basis on which devolved local government is based.

The third approach is the performance-oriented framework. This approach focuses on results rather than inputs, as happens with most traditional approaches. Thus, the performance approach implores local government to focus on goals, programme values, the needs of communities and their satisfaction with services that have been provided before. The performance approach calls for rationality in decision-making where there is need to use managerial skills and knowledge to assess community needs and formulate goals that are achievable. The contention here is that it is through this rational assessment that programmes that can maximise positive impacts while minimising the negative ones, can be formulated. This means that the performance approach would greatly rely on the professional nature of managers. If these managers were professionals, they would not make decisions without a broad based consultative framework. For the performance approach to work properly, one can argue, there is need for minimal political interference and manipulation. Clear measures of success should be built into every programme to facilitate the measurement of success or lack of it. However, because of the nature of public services, one would ask, is it possible to exclude politics? Local authorities derive their powers from political authority and thus, this authority provides these organisations with their livelihood. Trying to exclude them would raise suspicions and create divisions between managerial and political incumbents, to the detriment of the local institution and the communities they are expected to serve.

In the light of these approaches and their basic deficiencies, one would advocate for an integrated approach to be able to deliver a combination of services. This is

where the advantages of each of the above approaches are considered and integrated into a single approach that is accommodative and contingent upon all local situations and their variable and dynamic environments. This is because all the approaches are not diametrically opposed. The approaches are mutually compatible and complementary. Thus, incremental considerations to improve service provision, together with a conceptualisation of the being of local authorities within a given polity as well as the need for appropriate information to measure performance and determine future service needs, are all vital for decision making. It makes the whole regime of service provision well thought out. Besides, the integrated approach should be value based, meaning that it should include popular participation as one of the cardinal points for decision making. Here communities are empowered to influence the prioritisation process, as well as provide performance measurement information on whether they are satisfied or not with a particular combination of services and how each has been provided. The Social Services Inspectorate's (SSI) Management Guideline in the United Kingdom (UK), as cited by Stewart and Stoker (1996:161) states that 'all users [of local government services] should be encouraged to participate to the limit of their capacity because a passive role will only reinforce a sense of dependence.'

It is needless to say that the role of local government is to deliver a combination of services in an efficient and effective manner and to take into cognisance equity, responsiveness and adequacy criteria. In this light, advocates of Municipal Reform in the UK indicate that:

> Local government exists to perform functions and render services which the people of the community demand and which can be performed more cheaply by government than any other way (Stewart and Clerke, 1996:162).

Thus, when the communities are assessing the desirability of these services they should ask the following questions:

a) Am I receiving all the services which local government should, by reason

of economy and convenience rightly perform?

b) Are these services being efficiently and effectively rendered?

c) Is local government sufficiently subject to democratic control, sufficiently responsive to public opinion, in performing those services?

d) Are the services being fairly distributed among all members of the community?

e) Are these services sufficient to address the needs of communities?

Whatever the approach or perception, it should be acknowledged that most social services are subject to legislation. Local government Acts prescribe what services local government has to provide. Additional services can only be provided through the instrumentality of by-laws. The question always is, how do these come to be prioritised? It can be argued that the prioritisation should take into cognizance the fact that a carefully mixed bag of services:

- enhances the development of equal opportunities among local citizens;
- is politically expedient as it reflects a caring government in the eyes of communities and the consequently enhance its (government) legitimacy;
- shows that local government has the discretion to determine the volume of services it has to offer;
- minimizes state involvement in the periphery. Conversely, it frees the state from decisional and functional overload; and
- emphasizes individual responsibility and community care by any local government institution.

The BRDC also provides a range of services highlighted in the enabling Act, the Rural District Councils Act of 1988. Prominent among these are those that have

been enumerated earlier in the first category. These are education, health, sanitation, roads and road services, water, recreation facilities, and civil protection. Below is a brief analysis of each of them.

Educational Provision: As a matter of policy, the management of the school system in Zimbabwe is a partnership among central government, responsible authorities (who can be churches, boards of governors of privately owned schools, and local authorities namely, RDCs and urban councils), and local communities. It is within this spirit that RDCs have, as one of their functions, the power, 'subject to any other amendments, to provide, operate and maintain schools and other educational institutions and facilities and amenities connected therewith, and for such purposes, to levy and collect fees and other charges.' (Section 71, subsection 45).

The Education Amendment Act of 1991 also makes it clear that the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) still maintains the following responsibilities:

    i.   to make additional regulations providing for the responsibilities and duties of responsible authorities; and

    ii.   to prescribe, through the Minister, the functions of the School Development Committee (SDC) established by the responsible authority.

These provisions clearly indicate that, as far as education is concerned, the MOEC leads. In order to make sure that this leadership is understood, by RDCs. The MOEC has tasked these RDCs to set up SDCs whose role it is to administer schools (secondary schools only) in their jurisdiction, and particularly on issues of finance. These SDCs are expected to be directly answerable to MOEC through its field officers. This is an interesting management scenario, where RDCs who actually use their funds (although partly granted by the MOEC) to construct

schools, and use their time to create SDC structures, suddenly in a practical sense, give away the responsibility to run these schools to these committees. What is interesting again is that these SDCs are not answerable to the RDCs which created them, but to the MOEC. Of course, one would argue, that SDCs are instruments for enhancing community participation. Although this is true, the decentralisation imperative would expect them to function through RDCs.

The MOEC channels grants, especially per capita grants, to the SDCs. The latter are expected to work closely with the headmaster or headmistress. Together, they determine how funds should be used. Apart from being the custodians of educational grants from the ministry and managing school affairs in any locality, SDCs are also in charge of fund raising for the schools and administering finances through financial subcommittees which they have to establish. The subcommittees are also tasked with taking appropriate measures to preserve and maintain school facilities. School Development Committees also have power to collect fees as well as borrow money. These are critical functions of SDCs which really give them power to develop schools as they see fit. It is of interest to note the following about the provisions for education:

i. While RDCs are in charge of the process of establishing SDCs, they do not have power over these SDCs. Once established, SDCs work in consultation with the MOEC rather than the RDCs. These committees work directly with the Ministry of Education in running the schools on a daily basis.

ii. Although RDCs are the owners of the secondary schools they have built, they do not seem to play an active role in running these schools on a daily basis.

iii. The establishment of SDCs seems to be a move by the MOEC to centralise power and run schools without the interference of the

actual owners of the schools. It appears the partnership concept is sacrificed here as one of the partners is made to play second fiddle in the whole process of administering secondary schools.

iv. While RDCs receive grants from the MOEC to build and equip schools, the MOEC also builds its own schools within the localities. This seems to be an unnecessary duplication of services. It would be plausible if instead, the MOEC would add to these grants and ask RDCs to meet certain targets that it wants to achieve each year.

The BRDC operates under this general framework. Despite some of these constraints, they have managed to provide education at primary and secondary level. They also provide and operate crèches or kindergartens (Education Amendment Act of 1991, Section 71(37)). However, the question is, are people satisfied with the facilities for education? Are these facilities sufficient to cater for BRDC communities? Are schools properly staffed with trained teachers so as to provide quality services? These questions are answered in chapter 5.

The Provision of Health: The Ministry of Health and Child Welfare (MOHACW) has adopted a complementary approach to health service provision at the local level. In this endeavour, local authorities, churches, and any other private health providers complement it. The provision of health is expected to meet MOHACW's goal of providing health for all by the year 2000. As a matter of policy, these partners are not expected to compete with one another, as this may be detrimental to the attainment of their cherished goal.

A referral system is used as a basis for availing health to everybody, without the danger of denying other people a chance of being treated in better equipped hospitals. The referral system is arranged in such a manner that people who are seeking medical attention should go to their nearest clinic, and if the clinic cannot

handle the type of ailment, the patient is referred to a higher institution, for example, a District Hospital, which can also refer the patient up the ladder to the Provincial Hospital and ultimately to the National Hospitals. This approach, among other reasons is designed to avoid unnecessary congestion at the national hospitals, which are more equipped than those in peripheral areas.

As part of the health provision policy, RDCs are empowered to build, maintain, equip and conduct clinics, maternity homes and dispensaries, as well as take any measures that are aimed at health provision subject to the approval of the Secretary for Health (Section 71(34)). The Health Act, Chapter 328 of 1981 provides in Section 14 that:

i.   Local Authorities should take necessary precautions within the law, to prevent the occurrence of any diseases within their areas of jurisdiction and that they should exercise their powers and perform their duties in order to alleviate the problems to do with the spreading of diseases especially in the rural areas where medical facilities are not as sophisticated as in the cities.

ii.   Local Authorities should employ Officers for Health and request for a 100% grant to pay the salaries of these officers.

iii.   Local Authorities should apply to the Ministry for grants that will enable them to set up health facilities in their localities.

As indicated above, the MOHACW provides councils with grants to build clinics and any other health facilities deemed necessary by both the RDC and the MOHACW. Besides, the MOHACW provides RDCs with an expenditure grant of approximately 100% to use for their recurrent expenditure, which covers the maintenance of health facilities and the payment of salaries of health personnel.

The BRDC has one District Hospital and twelve clinics spread throughout the district. The question is, are these facilities sufficient for communities in the district? Are they able to provide effective services to the sick? Are the facilities equipped with enough well trained medical personnel and are do they have sufficient equipment and medicines required by the local people?

The Provision of Roads: The Roads Act, Chapter 203; Section 15 confers power on RDCs to construct and maintain all local roads that are not national in character. Within the same Act, RDCs are empowered to construct bridges and culverts, in line with the Ministry of Roads and Transport Services (MORTS). Within the same framework, RDCs are empowered to maintain roads, bridges and drains, and also to guard against any acts that may vandalise or damage this infrastructure. Thus, RDCs are charged with maintaining former DC and RC roads that fall under their areas. The provisions of this act are concretised in Section 71 (20) of the RDC Act. Subsection 20 indicates that RDCs are empowered:

(1) Subject to this Act and any other enactment, to provide and maintain, by itself or through any contractor or agent, roads, bridges … and culverts.

(2) To name roads and streets and to number and renumber premises and buildings.

(3) To maintain roads including buildings and culverts … for access to or in connection with any facility or amenity provided or operated by the council, and either solely by council or jointly with any other local authority or with the State or any statutory body.

Instead of giving RDCs all grants for the construction and maintenance of roads, central government inherited the African Development Fund (ADF) from the former government. This department was used for constructing and maintaining

roads in rural areas. The GOZ christened it the District Development Fund (DDF). The responsibilities of the DDF include the construction and maintenance of roads, providing water to rural communities and building dip tanks. The DDF is currently the recipient of central government grants for road construction and maintenance. It is a fully-fledged government department, or so to speak, a public enterprise which has an Act – the District Development Fund Act No. 55 of 1981, which governs its operations. Apart from being funded through the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP), DDF has an annual allocation through the national budgetary process. It also receives donor funds to help it carry out its activities. So far it has benefited from the Zimbabwe Coordination and Development (ZIMCORD) funds, German Bank loans and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) funds.

The DDF, as an institution, is also independent of RDCs in its decision-making. Thus, on an annual basis, it makes decisions as to what areas it has to involve itself in, in road construction and maintenance. It has its own operation programme which is independent of RDC planning and prioritisation. As a result, some RDCs feel robbed by this institution as they can go for a year or so without their roads being maintained, yet, as most are gravel roads, they need annual maintenance in order to cope with the road traffic demands in each area.

It appears that the existence of the DDF marks a major area of role duplication by central government. One would have expected that the government would have given RDCs all the road construction and maintenance grants, in accordance with the annual budgets of these institutions and that these RDCs would, in turn, put to tender any services that they required. In this way, using the efficiency criterion, they would identify the most appropriate construction company. This would in turn, perceivably, reduce the size of government in terms of capital expenses and recurrent expenditure, as they would of necessity, dismantle the DDF.

The BRDC has been serviced by the DDF on several occasions. Whether the roads, bridges and culverts it has constructed and maintained on behalf of the BRDC are consistent with the needs of communities and the BRDC itself, needs to be the subject of this evaluation.

The Provision of Water: The RDC Act, 1988 has a standing provision that RDCs should provide water to the local communities. The RDCs are empowered to provide, maintain and control supplies of water for domestic consumption, irrigation, industrial or mining purposes (Section 71(28)). Central government also assists local authorities in the provision of water through direct funding. One should also note that complementing RDCs, the DDF and the Ministry of Energy and Water Development (MEWRD), are Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) such as Christian Care, the Lutheran World Federation, the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). Their presence in Beitbridge is evident and their assistance is acknowledged by the BRDC (BRDC Annual Report, 2001:3).

The ugly head of service duplication manifests itself again, in the provision of water. Tendencies towards centralisation of service or competition between the MEWRD and RDCs are evident. Since there is in existence, well established local government structures, logic and instrumental rationality seem to suggest that all water provision undertakings should be the responsibility of RDCs with the MEWRD and any other organisation coming to assist, only by invitation. This would avoid much unnecessary conflict. For example, it is common to hear that the local community and the MEWRD are in conflict over the location of a dam where the local authority has its own site and central government also has its own point site. This is a clear case of lack of consultation between central government and local communities. One can argue that the fact that central government decisions prevail, this makes a mockery of the whole democratic process, which government wants to establish in Zimbabwe. Such cases exist in Beitbridge and chapter five provides an indication as to whether the current

operational mechanisms has enhanced or eroded the performance of BRDC in its attempt to provide this vital service.

The Provision of Housing: Urban migration in Zimbabwe, has brought with it serious problems of providing accommodation to local authorities. It should be realised that this problem does not only affect urban councils. RDCs are equally affected, since most of them have urban wards. RDCs normally provide housing through loans from the MOLGANH. Housing schemes have to be approved by the responsible Minister before such loans can be applied for. Once approved, the RDC can use its borrowing powers to obtain loans from the National Housing Fund (NHF), which operates under the auspices of the MOLGANH. After the construction of houses, these are let out to the communities who are charged an economical rate to enable the RDC to pay back the loans. The NHF offices expect each RDC that has been given these loans, to make payments every six months. These payments include interest charges.

Before the MOLGANH established the NHF in 1997, the provision of houses was somewhat problematic, in that the then Ministry of Public Construction and National Housing used to construct its own houses side by side with RDC houses, in this way, and creating competition between the two authorities. Of course, the term 'complementing' was used rather than competition to create an aura of assistance through invitation (MOLGHAN Report, 1998:5). Apart from eroding profits, which could accrue to RDCs through rentals, the Ministry created a dislike of RDCs by the local people who felt that the Ministry was better than RDCs in terms of house provision. This undermined RDCs, which are not well liked by communities, who feel that government departments are more efficient than these institutions of local governance. This does not help decentralization, but destroys the whole concept of government from below as well as popular participation.

Besides these schemes, RDCs can invite interested parties such as banks,

building societies and private contractors to build houses for people, subject to the conditions laid down by RDCs and the MOLGAHN. The significant factor here is that housing provision applies to urban wards. The question is, has the BRDC managed to supply a desirable combination of housing services to its urban population? Are communities satisfied with the council's supply of this vital commodity? Answers are provided in Chapter five of this study. The third aspect that is considered in this study is managerial excellence. An explicit discussion of this aspect follows below.

MANAGERIAL EXCELLENCE

It is common practice nowadays to find government practitioners and communities using the words public administrator and public manager to refer to the same incumbent of a public sector organisation. Such a dual reference, in most cases, indicates minds that are immersed in a conceptual quagmire. The emergence of the latter concept (public manager or public management, for that matter) and its consequent wide use has not been matched by efforts to explain it vis-à-vis public administration particularly to most practitioners. Even scholars do not draw a valuable comparison between the two to enable those interested in public sector organisations to understand them better. The result has been an astigmatic acceptance of this concept as a replacement of public administration and with some, still resisting this change. A closer look at this scenario indicates hat both parties (those who replace and those who resist); hardly have any scholarly explications to buttress their standpoints. Hence the need for conceptual clarity in order to remove the 'cocoon of mist' surrounding these rather formative elusive concepts.

Public administration denotes that part of government that has to do with the direct provision of goods and services in a government setting. Thus, the concept applies in all government institutions be they central, regional, or local in nature.

Its evolution as a field of practice indicates that it derives its operational powers from political authority. Its generic functions include:

- participating in policymaking, advocacy and analysis. By that very fact, it is fundamental that the public administrator realises that he/she is not only responsible for the daily management of institutions placed under his/her command, but has responsibility to support and advise political office bearers on future policy alternatives. For this reason, the public administrator has been given the power to determine, within his/her own right; exactly what is good or bad for society as a whole (Botes, 1995:5). Thus, in its conduct of duty, public administration has the power and authority to continuously shape public life to improve social welfare and make life good. Consequently, public administration is the practice of governmental efficiency and effectiveness. This is the *raison d'etre* of its existence.

- setting up appropriate institutions for mobilising and distributing resources in order to fulfill governmental action as determined by policy. This is an organisational function indicating the reliance of politicians on the skills of public administrators to come up with operational departments geared towards efficiently and effectively achieving the goals of government;

- collecting and disbursing government finances as well as ensuring their prudent use;

- ensuring that government institutions are provided with appropriate, well-trained and judicious personnel who are capable of executing tasks without bias or favouritism;

- designing appropriate work systems, methods, and procedures to

enable government employees to work in accordance with predetermined standards expected to promote efficiency and effectiveness; and

- controlling and monitoring government business to ensure that the purpose of public policy is attained.

The etymology of the word administration itself, presupposes that administrative functionaries are servants of organisations. The Latin word *'ad'* means 'to' and *'ministrare'* means 'serve'. Thus, this fundamental role of the public administrator is encapsulated in Hutchins' statement, cited by Botes (1995:6), that:

> The mere fact that mankind appoints rulers to rule over them means that there are those who rule and those who are ruled. This is not only expedient, but also necessary. Where man rules and another is ruled, it may be referred to as a reciprocal duty. The administrator comes in as a servant, to facilitate the ruler – ruled relationship with a view to maintaining order, peace and good government. In all his/her activities, the public administrator should be conscious of the fact that his/her powers and authority are derived from political society who may demand an explanation of their choices aimed at enhancing good life and happiness if they are not being pursued in an effective and efficient manner.

This quotation also underlines the importance and pervasiveness of public administration in the process of governing and that administrators are servants or messengers of politics. However, they also have the power to direct and manage government affairs in the best possible manner to ensure the good life of all, hence Fox and Meyer's (1995:105) definition that a public administrator is 'a public employee with managerial responsibilities'.

A significant fact is that orthodox public administration seems to reduce the capacity of public administrators to make decisions for public sector institutions. Servants cannot have ultimate authority to make independent decisions. These servants have to consult with the owners of agencies who may override administrative decisions in preference of their political ones, no matter how

inefficient these may be. The fact that it derives its authority from politics also suggests an overly compliant, docile, and rule bound administration with very little room for manoeuvre. This can also be understood from the fact that public administration is modeled along traditional Weberian bureaucracy and the maintenance oriented classical POSDCORB principles of Gullick and Urwick. While Weber's bureaucratic type of bureaucracy was first developed in theoretical terms, it was promoted to the status of guide to organisational design and management by the scientific management school and has since then been adopted by governments throughout the world as the perfect model of a public sector organisation (Denhart, 1993:33-35). This traditional organisation operates under the dictum 'trust is good, control is better, fear is best'. This dictum can only be maintained where there is centralised decision making, top-down control mechanisms that limit discretion, reliance on strict rules and regulations to delineate action, formality, conformity, and a concern for inputs rather than outputs. These attributes have led to public sector organisations characterised by rigidity, lack of responsiveness and accountability, corruption, a lackadaisical attitude to work and general non-performance.

The bureaucratic dysfunctions have led to a worldwide movement to reinvent government. The common theme has been the use of market mechanisms and terminology similar to what happens in private sector organisations. Thus, reinvention by importation became the guiding *modus operandi* of those who had an interest in building goverment capacity and its ability to provide goods and services to society. This new invention came with the New Public Management (NPM) concept (Hughes, 1994:2).

While some scholars do not agree on the distinctive nature of the New Public Management concept, others indicate that there is an epistemological difference that is worth noting (Denhart and Denhart, 2000:551). This difference makes the new public sector appealing, both theoretically and practically. Roux, Brynard, Botes and Fourie (1997:240) indicate that public management is part of public

administration. Public management is narrower than public administration. It only serves as an 'oiling function' that gives public administration the capacity to make rational decisions, coordinate all operations, evaluate performance and institute corrective measures to the public administration organisation. Cloete (1993:24), on the other hand, argues that public administration and public management are similar and can be performed by the same government functionary. According to this analysis, the use of public management is a matter of taste and a borrowing from private management. Consequently, there is no theoretical shift but a cultural shift. These arguments tend to minimise the importance of the New Public Management, just a one would play down the difference between globalism and internationalism. The mixed views also make it difficult for practitioners to know what term to use, hence the freedom to use any of them as a matter of personal choice.

The contention here is that there is a difference. The knowledge bases differ. Though the two may perform similar generic functions, their theoretical standpoints differ. Orthodox public administration is based on Weberian bureaucracy, political theory and social arguments proffered by some scholars. On the other hand, NPM is based on economic theory, sophisticated dialogue and positivist social science (Denhart and Denhart, 2000:550-551). It is based on discontent with public sector performance particularly in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s; the managerial ideology; the new equation of government; and the democratic wave sweeping across nations.

The dysfunctions of traditional public administration premised on its rigidity, central control, corruption, unfairness in resource distribution, inefficiency, ineffectiveness and a lack of customer care, has left governments and scholars thinking of new ideas that could be infused in public sector practice in order to enhance its performance. This has come through managerialism, the new equation of government and neo-managerialism. All these are based on economic theory, particularly public choice theory and economic rationality

arguments. The contention here is that for the public sector to perform as expected, it has to define itself in economic terms (Terry 1998:194). These scholars postulate that once the public sector has defined itself economically, it will inevitably need management which is a distinct organisational function and one that plays the crucial role of planning, implementing and measuring the necessary improvements in productivity. Thus, the success of the public sector will depend on the quality and professionalism of its managers. For these managers to perform the best they can, they should be granted reasonable 'room for manoeuvre' that is the right to manage (Politt, 1990:2-3). This means that 'better management will make institutions perform, provide the key to national revival, help to identify and eliminate waste, to concentrate resources where benefits can be seen to be greatest, and give a clearest display where money is spent' (Terry, 1998:196). Pollitt and Terry's arguments also indicate that in an ideal world where managerialism is recognised, objectives to be achieved are always clear, staff are highly motivated, prudent use of resources is cherished and red tape is eliminated. According to Pollitt (1990:3), such management already exists in the private sector and should be tapped by public sector organsations.

There are different approaches to NPM, but all these emphasize his economic focus. Lynn Jr. (1996:56) talks of the quantitative/analytical management approach which tries to infuse rational decision making in public sector management. The contention is that public administration is averse to the use of quantitative analytical approaches, yet they are critical as they free decision making of socio-political values and personal interests that have led to poor performance of public institutions. This means that public sector decision-making should lean towards these techniques such as linear programming, cost benefit analysis and other forecasting techniques. The contention is that it is only public management that has such capacity. Roberts (1995:293) advocates for the political management approach, which seeks to empower, public managers by allowing them to participate in public policy, set goals and determine the pace of

their implementation. Larrymore in Terry (1998:195) argues thus:

> In traditional conceptions of 'public administration,' the fundamental responsibility of public managers was to develop efficient, programmatic means for accomplishing well-defined goals … In contrast, our conception of 'public management' adds responsibility for goal setting and political management to the traditional responsibilities of public administration … We think it is inevitable and desirable that public managers should assume responsibility for defining the purposes they se to achieve, and therefore to participate in the political dialogue about their purposes and methods.

This means that the political management approach rejects the politics/administration dichotomy. It says that public management should be involved in politics and consequently, policy making should be part of their *raison d'etre*. To them, a successful public manager's one who can guide an organisation through the maze of the political milieu within which he/she operates. There is also the liberation management approach of Thomas Peters and Paul Light cited in Terry (1998:195). These call for the deregulation of bureaucracies to give public managers the discretion they need to make decisions for the organisations they lead. This is closely followed by Guy Peters (1996:28) who advocates for market driven public management, which should emphasize efficiency, effectiveness and economy.

Some scholars have argued that the public sector should instead embrace an entrepreneurial ethos, which will enable public managers to run public institutions as their own. Entrepreneurialism is premised on the public choice theory and the rationality of humans to want to maximise gain in whatever they do. This means that once public managers claim ownership of institutions of government, the decisions they are likely to make would ensure excellent performance by these institutions. To complement these approaches Denhart and Denhart (2000:554) indicate that the NPM cannot be complete without incorporating theories of democratic citizenship; models of community and civil society; and organisational humanism and discourse. This focus, allows public managers to foster

community participation in decision-making, policy design, execution and evaluation. It helps managers to realise that serving the public should be premised on dialogue with those who need the service. It is only then that public mangers can be responsive, accountable, and fair in resource distribution and provide adequate resources to communities. To this, Berkich (1998:17) says:

> It seems to me that the key … is to encourage communication and dialogue with as much of the population as possible and to involve as many citizens as possible in strategic planning on issues of he future. The burden is on those of us in local government management to be proactive in steering the communication process, to develop the dialogue and involvement so critical to sound local government management.

Denhart and Denhart (2000:554) refer to this new democratic approach to public management as the New Public Service (NPS). They proceed to give a vivid scheme, which compares traditional public administration, NPM and NPS. Of importance here is that local government institutions should no longer be administered, but they should be managed. The NPM and the NPS should guide local government managers so that they can catapult local institutions to greater heights of performance. Berkich (1998:18) adds to this assertion by saying that 'the new demands of running local government institutions requires that local government managers be reoriented to enhance their managerial competence.' This would enhance their flexibility, personal choice and ability to learn new ideas and implement them for the benefit of their institutions and the communities they serve. This would also develop their interpersonal skills, adaptability, ability to work with peers and subordinates, and the capacity to mobilise communities so that they feel as part of the process of local government. It would also raise their desire to achieve results and disposition to organisation excellence. It would humanise citizens and give them control over their destiny. In fact, it is significant to note that citizens' control over the operations of public agencies is at the core of democracy. Thus, those who manage local government institutions should have sufficient information on what the citizens desire and what governments offer. This can only happen if local government management systems are

reformed.

From the ensuing discussion, it would not be sufficient to gauge he performance of the BRDC without focusing on managerial capacity to plan, collect and disburse resources, initiate new programmes and projects of a development nature, motivate subordinates so that they can provide an excellent service to communities, maintain council resources and its ability to mobilise communities and empower them to determine their future. The performance of management in these areas affects institutional performance as a whole. While all these variables are critical for managerial excellence and measuring institutional performance, the ensuing section focuses on finance as a critical variable in the performance of the BRDC.

- **Rural District Council Finances**

The establishment of local authorities (RDCs) and the conferment of powers upon them to undertake certain tasks, entail making decisions about them to collect/receive revenue. The process of collecting and expending revenue is political in nature. Despite this, it has far reaching implications. This calls for properly conceived administrative and management processes of handling financial transactions and ensuring that the goals and objectives of the local authority are realised. All these processes should be conceived and outlined within considerations of financial management, which is a requisite component of the whole management process of organizations, whether public or private.

Local government management should realise that public funds, whether central or local belong to the people. These funds are entrusted upon government institutions to engage in activities that are beneficial to communities. Of importance is the fact that public funds are a scarce resource. Consequently, their utilisation requires well-established management procedures to avoid misuse. The funds should be guided by efficiency motives in order to maximise the return of every dollar that is spent. All revenue collection and expenditure

patterns must be calculated to fall within a specific time frame for the convenience of the public as well as the institution. All these figures should be reflected in a budgetary frame that takes cognisance of the economic tempo of the locality vis-à-vis the social demands of the people. The budgetary process should be transparent and allow communities to participate in order to indicate their needs and how they ought to be met.

While local authorities are tasked with providing services to communities, they face a similar problem of insufficient funds. As a result, they rely heavily on central government funding although such reliance, more often than not, leads to increased central government control. In fact, local authorities would achieve greater status and independence if they could meet the whole of their expenditure from local sources. Unfortunately, this is not practicable. They receive considerable funding from central government. Unfortunately such funding has increased the role of central government in local socio-economic activities. In fact, it has given the center greater control of local activities (Chingosho, 1995:12). In spite of this, one should also add that the nature of local government units, that is, that they are subordinate government structures in charge of smaller geographical units within a state, is such that they cannot have sufficient funds for services like education, health and water since they require large amounts of both capital and recurrent expenditure. Thus, it is only logical that they seek assistance from central government. Several reasons have been advanced to explain why local authorities seek external support. The following are some of them:

1. Functional decentralisation, which is not met by an accompanying financial decentralization: This leads to a situation where there are too many tasks to be performed by the local authority yet its sources of revenue are such that it cannot undertake such tasks.

2. The apparent rigidity of property rates, which lag behind inflationary

changes: The issue here is that property rates provide a substantial amount of council revenues. If the cost of living goes high while this revenue remains constant, the chances are that the council will not be able to meet the requirements in terms of service provision, as the finances would have.

3.   Most rural areas are made up of black rural folk who are basically poor and have very little sources of income. The land they occupy is also basically poor and fails to sustain them. This, plus the relatively stagnant rates amidst changing living standards, negatively affects the financial base of local authorities.

4.   Local authorities have limited borrowing powers. All such powers are retained by central government. The latter is responsible for rationalising these institutions' demands and making decisions as to whether they should borrow or not (Chingosho, 1995:13-14).

With this scenario manifesting itself, it is clear that local authority units have no room for maneuver, financially. Any such financial maneuvers can only be provided by central government. It is indeed true that finance is the glue that holds any institution together and RDCs are no exception to this rule. Failure to harness sufficient funds may lead to the disorganisation, disintegration and death of a particular institution.

RDC sources of revenue are diverse. The Rural District Councils Act No. 8 of 1988 Part XII, indicates that these they can be derived from:

i.   Grants from central government, which go mainly to health, education, and general administration including council allowances and staff salaries. These are normally tied grants, which assist council with its recurrent expenditures. Other grants may be made

available as will be indicated later in this chapter;

ii.   Licenses, which include vehicle, liquor, shop, and hawkers' licenses;

iii.   Rates, which are mainly in the form of unit tax paid by the communal folk and property rates which are mainly paid by commercial farmers. These include both land and property taxes;

iv.   Royalties, these are mainly for sand extraction and timber exploitation depending on the local authority of concern;

v.   Wild life proceeds;

vi.   Leases from stands; and

vii.   Profits mainly from the sale of liquor and other income generating projects.

While this looks like a diverse revenue base, all is not rosy as there are annual complaints from local authorities that their finances are inadequate. This means that the wide resource base does not necessarily mean an abundance of resources. Maybe a more detailed discussion of some of these sources of revenue for local authorities should be made. This is important in order to gauge the ability of BRDC to collect revenue from these sources and use it in the most effective manner.

- **Local Tax Revenue**

Local taxes include rates (property and land tax) and development levies (per capita tax). Property is an important source of revenue. Property tax is that tax levied on fixed capital and land. Such tax in the new RDCs affects commercial farmers who own large tracts of land and fixed property (capital). Such a tax is not normally present in communal wards. As a result, residents in these wards pay a development levy instead. Property tax follows the rating system where the property is evaluated by professional evaluators. The current market value is used as the value of the property. A tax value is then attached to such properties or land and the owner pays the tax to the RDC (Hlatshwayo, 1992:38-39).

Four rating systems can be used, that is, site rating (for land only); flat rating; composite rating; or differential rating. Site rating is about taxing the land. Whether the land is improved or not, is immaterial since acquisition of the land means an interest in working on it and therefore, failure to fulfill this obligation is detrimental to the landowner not council. The second is flat rating. This implies making a total assessment of both the land and improvements and then fixing a single tax rate on all of them. While this method is easy to use, it has a disadvantage in that those who do not want to improve the land can still get away with it. The third, composite rating is about rating both land and improvements, using different tax rates. Normally improvement rates are lower than the land rates, a situation that encourages landowners to improve their land. The fourth is differential rating, which uses a standard rate for all property whether improved, or not. However, this is followed by a tax rebate, which is consistent with the type of usage to which the land has been exposed. Thus, classes are established which indicate how land can be used. If land usage falls into a category that qualifies it for a rebate, then this is awarded within this system of rating. This is a tax relief system and is normally taken advantage of by landowners for example, in building residential houses and schools on their land.

In addition to property tax, is the development levy. This is a form of poll tax charged on every adult; that is, every person eighteen years and above. This is payable by the communal people and is generally anything between Z$6.00 and Z$20.00 (1996 estimates), depending on the financial viability of council and the ability to pay of the general public. To encourage payment, some RDCs use the receipts indicating payment as a passport to providing any other services to individuals. However, it should be realised that this method may have serious incriminating legal implications on the part of the RDC instituting such measures. Some RDCs have incorporated traditional leaders particularly kraal heads to act as development levy collection agents. This gives them the status of tax collectors, an assignment given them during the colonial days, which made them

very unpopular with the masses. Because of this historical factor, kraal heads were kind of ostracised at independence and thus had no legal status in the Chiefs and Headmen's Act as well as the RDC Act. Kraal heads work in liaison with VIDCO chairpersons to mobilise this resource. Because of their traditional power and influence, the scheme seems to be working although there are neither legal provisions nor punitive measures for defaulters. Councils may also impose a special development levy. This is raised in the same manner as the development levy except that it is raised for specific purposes, in a specific area and for a specific period, for example, a levy such as for road construction and building schools or clinics.

- **Service Charges (Fees and Licenses)**

Fees are mostly charged for the provision of electricity, water, and sewerage, cleaning and refuse collection, education provision (school fees), health provision (hospital/clinic fees), boarding, leasing premises and equipment. This constitutes a significant amount of council revenue (Hlatshwayo, 1992:43-46). The problem is that it is committed revenue, in that a large proportion of it is used to defray the expenditure incurred in the process of providing these services. In addition, royalties can be included under this section, as these are fees or charges to entrepreneurs for the exploitation of natural resources like timber, game, quarry, sand, fishing and mining within the council area. House rentals, where councils have elaborate housing schemes to assist semi-urban dwellers with accommodation, can also be classified under this category.

There are also licenses. These are mostly regulatory charges on vehicles, liquor, shops, dogs, carts, cycles, and hawkers' licenses. The state, through the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) helps in the enforcement process. These are normally paid annually. The hawkers' licenses are somewhat problematic to enforce. People do not normally want to renew them and, secondly, they want to use these licenses as passports to do anything even to open tuck shops. When administrators try to intervene, these hawkers cry foul and the whole issue

becomes political in which case these hawkers approach politicians for support, and not only local council politicians but also those at national level. Normally, they get this support. The bureaucrat is then considered as a person without feelings for communities hence, the negative image he/she carries in society. As a result, bureaucrats tend not to enforce any council laws because of the awareness that politicians can override their decisions.

In addition to the problem of hawkers, councils do not normally enforce dog, cycle, and cart licenses, as these normally engender resistance from the communal people, mostly because of the colonial history where they were seen as an instrument of further subjugating the black people. It should be noted, at this point, that the most revenue that council accumulates is through council charges to its communities. These charges are in general terms, a form of tax to the people. As such, the levying of such charges should follow general tax principles with which RDCs should comply with to make their taxes acceptable to the communities who are required to pay such taxes. According to these principles, a good tax must be:

- Productive: This means that the tax should be efficient; meaning, it should produce sufficient revenue to cover the general expenses with which it is associated, with the most minimum of costs, while it maximises the utility of the revenues collected. It must minimise tax evasion and be as broad as possible, to include all those who have to pay it.

- Elastic: This means that the tax must have some element of flexibility, such that any slight variations will be acceptable and minimize disruptions on the part of those who pay and those who receive the revenue.

- Certain: Those who are required to pay, should know in advance what they should pay; where they should make payment; and in what form. They should also know how tax is calculated. The tax regulations should

also be designed in such a way that those who are required to pay cannot easily evade it.

- Impartial: This means that the tax system must be just, reasonable and without favour. This is a call to tax fairness, a situation where the tax burden is equitably distributed among the paying public, in accordance with their earnings, and other obligations they have within society.

- Convenient: There is need for the taxpayer to know the time, place and method of payment that is used for a particular tax. An element of convenience to the taxpayer should be taken into consideration. A rationalisation of how the tax should be paid should be reached with the paying community where possible.

- Simple: This is important as it enables both the taxpayer and collector to understand and apply it regularly without any irregularities.

- Stable: This is in spite of the economic changes and inflationary tendencies that may cause unnecessary fluctuations in the economy. These unnecessary changes may increase dissent by the paying public, a situation that may lead to the erosion of resources, which local authorities normally get from this public.

- Perceptible: This means that the taxpayer should ultimately develop an appreciation for paying tax. Such appreciation is normally high where the receiving institution is accountable and transparent in its actions, making people realise and appreciate the services that it provides through the tax that the public pays (Hlatshwayo, 1992:33-37).

It is with this in mind that a local government tax system should be designed. Although Zimbabwe is expected to use these principles in designing local

government taxes, one would argue that the whole process is not transparent. Consequently, these taxes usually generate a lot of resistance from communities since the taxes appear to be an imposition from authorities with no explanation of the desirability and utility of such taxes.

- **Government Grants and Loans**

RDCs rely to a great extent, on finances from government, which come in the form of grants and loans. These are financial transfers from central government to RDCs, which are intended to finance activities such as education, health, general administration, heavy vehicle purchases, the construction of houses and any capital ventures that require large outlays of money and are considered by central government to be essential and developmental in character. Of particular note is that it is to be so considered by central government not the RDC. Grants normally contribute the largest share of RDC funding Chingosho, 1995:59-60). These grants usually take several forms, for example, block grants, equalisation/deficiency grants, per capita grants, and revenue matching grants. The question which needs to be answered more elaborately maybe is, why grants? Several reasons have been suggested for this scenario:

i. The spillover effect of certain social services: There is in existence, scenarios of spillovers, which affect people outside the borders of the RDC. Central government should be in a position to assist RDCs, which are faced with such problems. For example, car owners from other regions or RDCs who are in a position to enjoy road services provided by another locality such as if they frequent that locality, like the Beitbridge Rural District Council, which is an RDC servicing Africa's busiest border. The chances are that Beitbridge may not be able to cope with properly maintaining the road system, as the deterioration rate would be faster than what it normally would have been if mainly the local people used the roads. As such, the benefits of their road system spill over and above the intended customers who actually pay for such services.

Central government should be in a position to provide relief to such an RDC, by extending some grant to it so that it can undertake the additional road maintenance activities resulting from this spillover use.

ii.   Grants also assist in satisfying horizontal equity objectives. The rationale is that individuals with the same socio-economic status should receive similar benefits, regardless of the RDC to which they belong. Thus, if two RDCs have natural differences in income generating ability, government should equalise the availability of financial resources, so as to minimise such differences and to ensure the attainment of equity, thus upholding the principle of treating equals equally within a state.

iii.   To avoid unnecessary upward local tax rate fluctuations, which may be determined by factors such as inflation as in (i). The intervention is indeed political, as drastic fluctuations would affect the RDC and the government of the day, in terms of popular support from the masses affected by such tax hikes.

iv.   To stimulate new services which are considered as essential to an RDC. Thus, grants can also be an economic incentive and can serve to incentivise the local authority to get into new ventures, which are considered viable in a particular district. As such, these are not blanket grants but are determined by different RDC situations.

It can also be mentioned that government grants, particularly unconditional or block grants play a major role in the welfare of people within the various RDCs. Grants provide councils with the much-needed funds to augment their meager resources, as well as enable councils to keep local taxes down, thus allowing

individuals to spend more on private goods. This is undoubtedly a health situation, which improves the welfare of the community.

Central government also gives loans to RDCs. These are ordinarily for special projects, such as for housing construction. The RDC uses its borrowing powers approved by the Minister to get such loans, which are directly disbursed, to the receiving RDC. Although it seems as though RDCs can get a lot of assistance from government, this is no longer the case. Such grants and loans are dwindling. This is mainly because central government itself has a shortage of funds and is not in a position to meet the funding requirements of other national projects. Thus, the growing fiscal stress on central government itself is making it more and more problematic for central government to continue subsidizing RDC operations on a large scale. For example, while central government used to provide salary grants for the Senior Executive Officer, three Executive Officers, two clerks/typists, an Executive Secretary, and two drivers, these provisions have since been cut and, what remains, is a paltry lump sum just labelled as grant-in-aid of salaries. However, RDCs still receive full aid for health staff.

- **External Loans**

The RDCs may also apply for loans from banks and other financial houses. However such applications have to go through the Minister who decides whether or not such loans should be availed to the RDC.

- **Interests on Investments**

RDCs also run businesses, which they create, mostly in their areas of jurisdiction. If councils accumulate funds, these can be invested with the ministry. The most common investment is in beer outlets. These in fact, rank as some of the first infrastructure to be put up by councils once they are established. In addition to these, some other projects like shops, butcheries, wildlife management, poultry, ostrich farming and piggery projects are thriving in Beitbridge.

- **Other Sources of Revenue**

This revenue category includes revenue from reconnection fees especially for water and electricity, sale of building plans, inspection fees, interest on arrears, cemetery and cremation fees as well as donor funding. Donor funding can be quite substantial as it depends on the project(s) that is/are to be undertaken. However, these donor funds have to be approved by central government before anything is signed.

The various sources of revenue indicate how RDCs access their revenue. Such monies, once collected are expended in order to attain the social goals that councils are obliged to fulfill in line with their enabling Act. In order to collect and utilise funds, councils need viable financial management procedures, with capable financial personnel who understand the need for prudence in controlling public monies. This prudent financial control often comes through proper budgeting procedures and the ability to stick to such budgets. A budget is thus, an instrument of financial control, which every organisation should have. In ordinary usage, a budget is a financial statement, which reflects the estimated revenue and expenditure of an organisation over a given period of time, normally one year and is usually, termed the financial year. The budgetary process is a political process, which shows what those who run organisations want to achieve in a given year (statement of expenditure) and how they hope to finance what they want to do for that period (statement of revenues).

The budget is a legislative instrument that guides RDCs in their social, economic, and political activities. It is an enforceable document, which means that those who are required to pay taxes, are compelled to do so in order to realise the budgeted-for revenue and those who administer such funds, have to do so within the context of the provisions of such budgets and, in turn, utilise such funds accordingly. This means that every budget must have in place an effective

auditing system that shows detailed council expenditures and funds collected. Auditing is thus, an important function of the overall financial management system as it helps to prevent fraud and wastage while, at the same time, enhancing accuracy in handling finances in keeping with the economic problem of scarcity. Besides, communities must be mobilised to participate in the budgetary process. This makes it easy for them to hold councils accountable. It is only through such involvement that communities can also gauge the performance of their councils. This study looks at these issues with interest. It endeavours to determine the performance of BRDC in collecting resources, prioritising projects, budgeting and controlling the use of these resources.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is significant to note that Beitbridge district is made up of people from different ethnic groups. Consequently, there is a high demand for the BRDC to continuously promote equal access to fundamental human rights and civil liberties. There is need for the BRDC to exercise power, which legimately should emanate from the diverse community it leads. This means that the socio-economic and political actions of the BRDC should be based on popular participation and be consistent with the values of transparency, accountability and managerial excellence. To ensure adherence to the fundamental requirements of democratic participation, excellent service provision and astute management, there is need for benchmarking and continuous measurement of performance of the BRDC. Such measures would enable the BRDC to be aware of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It is from such information that the council can design appropriate strategies for change and development in the district.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

The worth of any scientific research is dependent on the manner in which data were collected and analysed. This means that once data has been collected, it has to be sifted, tabulated, and grouped appropriately to convey a meaning that is consistent with the research question or problem being investigated. One may have piles of completed questionnaires, interview results and several documents collected on a particular issue, but before the data are properly analysed or converted into interpretable information, this mass of data remains meaningless. Thus, every piece of scientific research needs a data presentation and analysis component.

The main purpose of this study is to measure the performance of the Beitbridge Rural District Council over an eight-year period from the time RDCs were introduced in July 1993 to the end of the year 2001. While there are many variables that one can focus on within this framework, this study looked at three important factors: democratic participation, service provision, and management performance. The establishment of RDCs was a way of entrenching decentralisation principles and in particular, those of devolution in Zimbabwe's government system. This was intended to give people at the local level a chance to govern themselves and make decisions on the combination of goods and services that would enhance their welfare and make life good for them. Thus, RDCs were expected to raise the consciousness of local people so that they could realize that their socio-economic and political well being lay in their hands,

rather than those of central government officials and those at the sub-national levels. In fact, these officials were expected to respond to the needs of these communities and provide services in line with the demands, aspirations, and choices of these local people. This imperative humanizes communities, removes aspects of docility and hero-worshipping government officials and allows communities to take responsibility for their lives. It becomes important to find out if RDCs have accepted this imperative and if they have supplied communities with the democracy they need to determine who governs them, how they are to be governed, the combination of goods and services they prefer and how these are delivered to them. Thus, the question to ask is, has the BRDC managed to allow communities to participate freely in determining the course of development of the district? Has it raised the level of consciousness of communities through participatory approaches to planning, and decision-making?

The other important focus of this study is to gauge the BRDC's performance in service provision or delivery. This has been necessitated by the fact that RDCs, apart from the need to enhance local democracy, are established to provide a combination of services to local communities. To indicate the paramountcy of this imperative, the RDC Act of 1988, Section 71 provides an elaborate list of services council is expected to provide, as indicated in Chapter 4 of this study. Using a generic typology these include community security, subsidised, commercial, environmental, economic and convenience services. These can be indicated by means of a table as shown in Table 5.1 on page 264.

Once an RDC has been established, it should be seen to be fulfilling this task in a fair and efficient manner. This is because the provision of these services is an attempt to raise the social fabric of communities and make life good for them. Thus, measuring the performance of RDCs would not be complete if there is no mention of this social service imperative. In trying to achieve this objective, the RDC should also take into account that resources are scarce.

Table 5.1. Services of a local nature

Classification	Type of Service
Community Services	Community hall Municipal health Roads and Streets Water and drainage
Security Services	Civil Protection Traffic control Law enforcement
Subsidised Services	Ambulance Libraries Museums
Commercial Services	Electricity Gas supply Produce market Abattoirs Urban transport Water
Environmental Services Economic Services	Pollution Control Conservation Refuse collection Housing Building Control Licensing Sewerage Cleaning
Services of Convenience	Recreation facilities Nature reserves Swimming pool Ablution facilities

Source: Ismael, Bayat and Meyer, 1997:69-70.

This means that appropriate economizing choices of resource provision should be made in order to minimize waste but at the same time, maximize gain for the communities. The RDC should also take cognizance of the need to distribute and redistribute resources among communities, in order to achieve the fairness or equity criterion. This is particularly important since some communities are

disadvantaged more than others because of a multiplicity of macro and micro environmental factors obtaining in their wards. Once services are provided, communities are expected to testify to their adequacy, desirability and appropriateness. Thus, in this case the question to ask is, has the BRDC managed to provide services to communities in a fair and efficient manner and do communities consider these services to be adequate?

Among others, the desirability of RDCs is dependent on the performance of its managerial staff. The roles of the RDC staff are those of directors and managers of local government affairs. The RDC staff have the responsibility to guide council in the definition of its mission, setting objectives, laying out broad organisation plans, employing and motivating staff, setting up work standards, keeping records and generally providing leadership for their organisations. In 1937, the Brownlow Committee to President Roosevelt talked of the need for good management in the public sector when it said in its report:

> Good management will promote in the fullest measure, the conservation and utilization of our national resources and spell this out plainly in social justice, security, order, liberty, prosperity, in material benefit and in higher values of life (Report on the Committee on Administrative Management to the President of the USA. US Government Printing Office, 1937:13).

Managerialism and Neo-managerialism have popularized management in public sector institutions. Thus, public managers in RDCs are seen as a solution to institutional ills and the capacity of these agencies to achieve the goals for which they were established. The managers are expected to:

a) inculcate the values of efficiency, effectiveness and economy into RDC operations;

b) rid RDCs of their dysfunctional culture and infuse a culture of responsibility, responsiveness, accountability and good performance;

c) reorient RDCs into output oriented rather than input oriented establishments;

d) rationalise RDC operations so that they are goal driven rather than driven by rules and regulations;

e) change the service ethos of RDCs so that they cherish quality service provision;

f) promote a participatory approach to designing programmes and making RDC decisions as a way of accepting the utility of communities and councilors in the life of these institutions; and

g) create an amicable relationship among RDC staff, councilors and communities.

With this in mind, the question to ask is: How has the BRDC management performed in its attempt to create a competitive local government institution? This indicates that measuring the performance of these institutions cannot be complete without looking at management performance itself.

As indicated in Chapter Two, data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and documentary search. The observation method was employed intermittently although of course, this was not as extensive as the other three techniques. Simple opportunity sampling was preferred for selecting respondents for questionnaires and interviews. Respondents to questionnaires were divided into two categories: communities within the district and the BRDC officials (both councilors and staff). A total of 250 community questionnaires were distributed while fifteen (15) questionnaires were distributed among councillors and management staff of council. See Questionnaire Schedules (Schedule A and B) in the appendices section of this study. To guard against non-responsiveness

due to illiteracy, research assistants were asked to assist community members with completing questionnaires. Altogether 248 out of 250 questionnaires were collected. This signifies a high response. However, only eight (8) completed questionnaires were received from councilors and the BRDC staff (5 from the councilors and 3 from the BRDC management staff). This means that only 53% of the questionnaires were received.

Structured interviews were conducted with individuals and groups as specified in Chapter two, pages 99 – 100. Among others, these included the Deputy Minister of Local Government and National Housing, the District Administrator of Beitbridge District, The Chairman of the BRDC, two councillors, and the Chief Executive Officer of the BRDC. See the Interview Schedule in the appendices section of this study. Documentary search included reviewing council plans; a sample of council minutes; special reports; annual reports; circulars; financial statements; the mission statement; evaluation reports; and personnel rules and regulations. The presentation and analysis of this data follows below.

RESPONSES ON DERMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

Questionnaires, interviews and documentary search were used to collect data on democratic participation. Communities were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with each of the following: the conduct of elections, community consultation on matters of policy, community debates on policy issues, VIDCO and WADCO participation in project planning, integration of traditional authority in RDC leadership, ward briefings by councillors, training of VIDCOs and WADCOs, and RDC/Community communication. Eighty two percent (82,2%) of community respondents indicated that they are satisfied with the conduct of council/local elections. Of these, 51,6% is very satisfied with the process. According to their comments, local elections are competitive and transparent. The administration of elections is also acceptable. It is significant to note that the electoral process

starts with primaries where each party chooses its candidate for council elections. Independents are also allowed to contest local elections, as long as they have at least forty-five people who endorse their candidature and manage to pay the electoral fees as required. It is significant to note that 4.4% are dissatisfied with the electoral process. These respondents indicate that there is a tendency for candidates to be imposed upon communities by political heavy weights in the ruling party. This tends to reduce democratic participation in the electoral process.

According to interviews carried out with councilors and the Chief Executive Officer of the BRDC, there have not been any incidents of violence during elections. One of the reasons for this is that Beitbridge district has mostly been a one party district. The unity accord signed in 1987 between ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU, created a dominant ZANU-PF party with no other political party in contention. Thus, if there had been any disgruntlement with council elections, these were largely insignificant and covert. However, the rise of the MDC party in 2000 has raised the potential of opposition to ZANU-PF and as a result, the next council elections in 2004 are likely to be hotly contested.

In any democratic dispensation, communities are expected to take part in policy making particularly during the initiation and formulation of public policies. Fundamentally, this is because policies are formulated to solve societal or community problems. Communities know and experience these problems. As such, they have an idea as to how they think they can be empowered out of their predicament. To exclude them would be to minimise one's understanding of issues that are at the core of these problems. Consequently, policy makers are expected to consult with these communities to know how they feel about specific issues and how these are solved. This is the essence of an empowering democratic dialogue. It appears that the BRDC has not performed well in this aspect of community empowerment as shown in the graphical presentation in the next page.

Only 40.6% of the community indicated satisfaction, with 13,2% of these being highly satisfied with community consultation on policy matters. More than 120 of the respondents, about 54.4% show dissatisfaction with this process. In fact, their comments indicate that in most of the cases, they are told what council will do for them. They are not even aware of the policies that guide the operations of council and those that need to be formulated. This also means that there are no meaningful policy debates (58.9%). What exists are 'policy communiqués issued by council at their own will and with no latitude for communities to voice dissatisfaction. Although communities may be asked to react on any action of council, such reactions seldom occur because of lack of knowledge and the fear of going against authoritative decisions of council.

In addition to dissatisfaction with the community consultation process, there is also an element of unhappiness with the openness of council to policy debates by or with communities. Only 37,9% of respondents shows approval of this process. This is a rather low percentage showing that most policy issues are discussed at institutional level.

From the above, it can be seen that the community has a minimal role to play in matters of policy. In fact, most policies are dictated to communities. In addition, this may actually indicate that communities are not conversant with most policy issues and feel reluctant to take part in the policy process. This only means that the performance of council on these themes has to be transformed.

In every ward, there are VIDCOs and WADCOs. These are local structures, which are expected to participate in project planning, development and management. Each rural ward has a VIDCO structure. There are at least 54 VIDCOs in Beitbridge. Most of these VIDCOs are functional and take part in project work. They participate in project planning and development. A 72.6% approval rate is indicated for this type of work. A similar percentage of respondents (67.3%) expressed approval for community autonomy in project

work. This means that communities are given the responsibility to manage local projects. The BRDC, together with NGOs assist these communities with project management training. However, communities seem to be dissatisfied with the kind of training that is provided. A high percentage (62.9%) of dissatisfaction with training is indicated. VIDCOs and WADCOs are the grassroots structures for initiating and managing local development. They cannot do so if they are not trained to raise their skill levels in planning, decision making, and managing local programmes and projects. The process of training those involved in these structures will also improve the manner with which they are expected to participate in the whole local governance process, a fundamental requirement for democratic involvement in local affairs.

In spite of the failure to train those involved in VIDCOs and WADCOs, the high rate of participation in project work shows that the BRDC or those sponsoring projects are aware that project success lies in the contributions made by communities. By their nature, projects may also require the physical presence and the labour of communities. Thus, it is only logical that those whose labour would be needed be included in decision making, so as to induce them to take part in project work. Sometimes such projects require financial and other technical inputs from communities. Without their (communities) involvement in the whole project process, demands for funds, labour and other inputs may be rebuffed. In fact, projects become meaningful if communities are allowed to run them. This enables them to be closely attached to the project. It becomes their 'baby' and a strong sense of nurturing this baby becomes prevalent and, indeed, the driving force behind continuous participation. Significant then is the fact that continuous participation in project planning has the effect of cultivating a culture of democratic participation, which is seen as essential for community empowerment and self-determination.

Another important indicator of democratic participation that was tested is that of involving or integrating traditional leaders in matters of policy and RDC decision

making. It is significant to note, from the onset, that the formation of RDCs as a major form of local governance tends, to marginalise traditional authority. However, in Zimbabwe, the understanding and policy guidelines are that traditional leaders can be incorporated into RDCs as appointed councilors. Traditional leaders should not comprise more than 25% of the whole council complement. The role of these leaders is to give advice to council on matters of land and local/community traditions. Besides, they could be used to mobilise communities to participate in council affairs particularly, in terms of collecting resources from their subjects. Significant also is the fact that those traditional leaders who wish to stand for election as councilors, are allowed to do so although this is not encouraged, in case they loose. If the latter happens, their authority in that particular ward may be damaged. Thus, government has a wish to avoid this at all cost. However, in practice, traditional authority functions are overly dominated by local councilors, WADCOs and VIDCOs. This has greatly minimised the authority of these leaders. The traditional leaders now seem to be subservient to these modern forms of local power. Communities themselves are rather dissatisfied with the manner in which their traditional leaders are given the chance to participate in local affairs hence, a modest 36.8% approval rate. This means that the current practice is not popular.

One of the major tenets of liberal democracy is that representatives have to continuously seek the community mandate on policy issues as well as inform the same of new decisions and developments taking place in the district. This means that there has to be continuous interaction between representatives (the councilors) and the communities they lead. This helps to build the requisite elements of democracy and community empowerment. The question is, does this actually take place in Beitbridge? Only 20.1% of respondents indicate that councilors sometimes call for meetings to tell communities about new decisions of council. This low figure indicates a derailment of democratic participation. Council should always get back to their constituencies to discuss matters of council. It is only then that they can be legitimised. In fact, the problem of poor

interaction between the BRDC and its communities is further indicated by a low community/councilor communication rate (30.1%) and a very low staff/community relationship rate (13.3%). In addition to asking communities to provide input on their satisfaction or otherwise with the BRDC's attempts to fulfill the fundamental imperative of decentralisation and local government, councilors and council staff were also asked to give their opinions on this issue. These were asked to respond on the following:

- the existence and active participation of community groups in council affairs;

- the level of operation of these groups in the development hierarchy, that is, at village, ward or district level;

- participation of groups in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation;

- the authority that determines the relationship between and among groups and council;

- the groups that participate in the planning process;

- whether the BRDC has a well written strategy for encouraging communities to participate in the policy making process; and

- whether the RDC has a public relations department/unit or not.

The response of councilors and staff on community groups that are present in the BRDC is indicated in Table 5.2 on page 274. The diagram also shows whether each of the groups is active in local authority issues or not.

Table 5.2 Community groups in the BRDC

	EXIST	ACTIVE	NOT ACTIVE
Women's groups	X	X	
Farmers Groups	X	X	
Business Groups	X		X
Youth Groups	X		X
Religious Groups	X		X
Elderly Peoples Groups	-	-	-
NGOs	X	X	
Government Agencies	X		X
Residents Associations	X		X
Political Parties other than ZANU-PF	X		X

According to responses from councillors and the BRDC staff, all groups except the elderly people's groups are present. It is interesting to note that residents associations and other political parties, though present, are not active. Urban Beitbridge is full of substandard residential structures, untarred roads, no commuter service to the shopping malls except taxis, which charge exorbitant prices, and very little if any, recreational facilities. To have a residents association that is not vocal on these issues and how they should be solved undermines the process of representation and democratic participation.

Responses also indicate that although other political parties exist, they are not active in local government issues. This is due to the fact that they are not represented in council. This lack of representation, because of the "winner takes all" electoral process, has denied these parties a platform through which they can criticise council and advocate for a different policy agenda, other than that which is advocated by ZANU-PF. If communities know of the existence of alternatives

and they can thus put pressure on council to deliver the requisite services in a more efficient and effective manner. The absence of an active opposition also means that what ZANU-PF wants as policy will, inevitably become policy. This undermines democratic participation, particularly if these policy actions come from senior government officials and are imposed on councils. Besides, it instills fear in those who have alternate ideas, as these would be interpreted as harbouring anti ruling party sentiments. This is dangerous. The danger comes in many forms and one of them is where party officials and communities are sanctioned by preventing them from benefiting from certain services such as drought relief, development loans, and project. All these community services are channeled through the ruling party so that those who do not belong are easily left out. At the extreme, the danger comes through physical persecution and denouncing members of the opposition through the media so as to dehumanize and undermine their personality.

From the responses, Beitbridge does not have a senior citizens' home. It can be argued that a population of about 90 000 people does not need this sort of facility, as resources for it cannot be easily made available. However, a counter argument would be that the urban settlement is growing rapidly. In fact, many elderly people are living in the dilapidated old location, which approximates nothing but a squatter camp, with no one seeming to notice the desperate position of these elderly citizens. Any community has to show respect for the elderly and empower them to make a living up to the end of their days on earth.

Seven (7) of the eight (8) councilors and staff (87.5%) who responded to the questionnaire indicate that women's groups are the most active. Farmers' groups follow this, with five (5) out of the eight (8) respondents (64,5%). This is understandable in that women form the backbone of Beitbridge's rural economy. They are the ones who till the land, engage in community development projects, and take care of homes, while their husbands go to the cities and farms to search for employment. As a result, women have managed to organise themselves into

formidable economic groups. Both the responding councilors and staff indicate that women's groups have been strengthened by the visible hand of the ZANU-PF Women's League which has done a tremendous job in mobilising women and raising their socio-economic and political status and consciousness. As a result, women in Beitbridge have become a dynamic force that can influence elections at the local level and even see to the downfall of councilors. Councils can, in fact, improve their capacity to empower communities by organising society around these women.

To a large extent, white commercial farmers and communal farmers represent farmers' groups. The amalgamation process has meant that the two groups of farmers should cooperate to utilise land for the benefit of all. In Beitbridge, there has developed an amicable relationship between the two groups. Commercial farmers have agreed to assist communal farmers in times of draught. Thus, whenever there is draught, communal farmers make representation of this situation to council after which a formula on how communal livestock can be accepted on commercial farms is developed. Consequently, although there is animosity between black and white farmers in Zimbabwe generally, Beitbridge district has not experienced this problem. White-owned farms have not been invaded by 'War Veterans' as communities feel that there is fair land sharing and their livestock is not exposed to the dangers of communal drought because of this sharing spirit. Besides, commercial farmers offer employment to communities and thus, they are a vital source of income for these local people.

On participation in the policy process by groups, respondents indicate that women, farmers, and NGOs have a telling influence on the nature and substance of policy. Seven (7) out eight (8) respondents, approximately 87.5%, indicate this. These groups make resolutions, which are then passed to council for consideration. On the other hand, youth groups, religious groups, and political parties, other than ZANU-PF, have a minimal role to play in RDC policy making. In fact, these groups are not very coherent themselves and it is not surprising

that they do not have well framed development agendas that they can articulate to influence policy decisions.

It is also significant to note that the participation of groups in RDC affairs can also depend on who determines the relationship between such a group and the RDC. One would expect the group concerned and the RDC to have a mutual relationship initiated by the two. If any other third party is involved, the relationship may be turbulent and conflictual particularly where one party feels that it has been forced into the relationship. In the BRDC, the groups and the council determine most relationships. In such a situation there are amicable relationships that foster democratic participation in matters of local governance. It is significant, however, that there are some relationships, which are determined by central government through ministerial directives, via line ministries who have deconcentrated structures in localities and legislative provisions. For example, the District Administrator is the coordinator of district development. This is provided for in the Prime Minister's decentralisation directive of 1984 (Mushauri in Hofmeister and Scholz, 1997:265).   A struggle for power between the RDC and District Administrator's Office leads to conflictual relations that undermine the rubrics of democratic participation in the district.

Councilors and council staff were also asked to indicate whether or not VIDCOs and WADCOs participate in district development planning. All respondents indicated that these two organs are actively involved in district development planning. Explanations for this include the following:

- VIDCOs and WADCOs construct their own development plans, which are submitted to the District Development Planning Committee.

- The chairpersons of VIDCOs and WADCOs are part of the District Development Committee and consequently, they are involved in prioritising district plans.

However, the respondents also mention the problem of chairpersons of these structures who tend to dictate plans to communities. Sometimes VIDCO and WADCO plans are dominated by influential figures at the village and ward levels. These include teachers and ZANU-PF officials. Besides, priorities of VIDCOs and WADCOs are seldom implemented to realise community goals hence, the tendency by communities to say that they are not consulted or they have a low level of involvement as indicated earlier. All these responses indicate that the whole process of community participation needs to be investigated seriously by the BRDC, in order to enhance democracy and good governance at the local level. Council is in charge of the local communities and has to see to it that all local participation is invigorated and made meaningful and empowering.

Besides these issues, it is also important to indicate that the public is normally informed through community meetings with councilors and when council staff does attend such meetings, although this rarely happens. During such meetings, councillors report back council plans and development decisions. It is significant to note that information is only disseminated through the word of mouth. No written reports are distributed among community members. Although communities are free to inspect council documents, no one has the time to go all the way to council to ask for council minutes, budget statements and other council documents. Thus, communities rely on these oral reports, which very much depend on the eloquence of each speaker. Significant also is the fact that some information is deliberately left out if the speaker suspects that it generates controversy and he/she is unable to defend himself/herself if questions are asked. The literacy rate in Beitbridge is quite high and as such, the council should feel obliged to document and circulate information to communities without fear. Another problem is that there is no public relations department. Each councilor or council officer acts as a public relations officer and may tailor information according to his/her audience at a particular moment. This is highly unacceptable, as it encourages information discrimination and distortion.

The second aspect that is investigated in this study is the performance of the BRDC in service provision. The next section deals with this aspect. It presents and analyses the responses of interviewees, questionnaire respondents and documentary evidence gathered on this aspect.

THE STATUS OF SERVICE PROVISION IN THE BRDC

As indicated earlier, the BRDC is expected to provide a large array of services of a local nature. These include health, education, water, public transport facilities, sanitary/sewage facilities, housing and crime prevention. Results obtained from communities through the questionnaire method are presented by means of a frequency table and graph, as shown on the next page. Below is an analysis of each of the services that were considered in this study.

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The provision of health

Beitbridge has one District Hospital. The hospital was renovated and modernised in 1990. However, it still lacks sufficient medicines, nurses and doctors. Consequently, it makes many referrals to the Gwanda Provincial Hospital (GPH) and the National Central Hospital (NCH) in Bulawayo. There are thirteen (13) Rural Health Centres (RHCs) or clinics of which eight (8) are administered by the BRDC. These eight (8) are located in Zezani, Masera, Swereki, Shashe, Tongwe, Chasvingo, Makakavhule and Dulibadzimo. The other five (5), Majini, Dite, Shabwe, Chituripasi and Chikwarakwara are administered by the GOZ and directly by the MOHCW. The RHCs are moderately equipped and serviced with running water and radio communication systems. However, not all of them have electricity. There is also insufficient accommodation for nurses.

Although these clinics depend on grants from the MOHCW, these are not sufficient to meet the maintenance needs of clinics such as buying cleaning material and medicines. Health provision in Zimbabwe is supposed to be free for all those earning below Z$1 500 per month. However, these clinics end up charging a Z$50 levy for every consultation made. Those who do not have the money, are treated free of charge. The problem however, is that members of the community who do not have the Z$50 tend to stay away from the clinic although they need medical assistance. This makes the levy a counterproductive instrument. Consequently, more than 50% of community members who completed the questionnaire indicate a poor performance on health provision.

It is also significant to indicate that a State Registered Nurse (SRN) runs each clinic. If this person cannot be recruited, then a State Certified Nurse (SCN) takes charge of the hospital. In addition, there should be a nurse's aid, an Environmental Health Technician and a groundsman. The RDC Circular, Number 2 of 2001 shows that each clinic is expected to provide a number of health-related services such as:

- promotive services (e.g. family planning advice and the provision of contraceptives);
- disease surveillance (e.g. monitoring of the health situation);
- environmental health services (e.g. the siting of toilets);
- outreach services (e.g. supervision of traditional midwifery);
- baby delivery services;
- treatment and rehabilitation; and
- referrals. In fact, the shortage of medicines has turned these clinics into referral agencies as every small case is referred to Beitbridge District Hospital.

According to the CEO of the BRDC, the Ministry of Health applies three criteria for the establishment of RHCs. These are:

   (i)   Distance: The distance to other RHCs should not be less than 20 km. And should have a population of not less than 5 000.

   (ii)   Accessibility: The RDC should have access roads throughout the year.

   (iii)   Water supply: There should be water supply throughout the year and preferably, piped water.

This has led to clinics being congested with those seeking medical treatment, especially where there is a high population density. For example, Dulibadzimo clinic cannot afford to handle cases in Beitbridge urban and nearby Makakavhule, Malala, Mtetengwe, and Chamnanga. As a result, communities go straight to the Beitbridge District Hospital, only to cause more congestion and delays. All these problems have influenced community responses where only 30,6% indicates satisfaction with health provision. As indicated in the clinic establishment criteria, some wards have no clinics. Even those that have do not have adequate medicines to treat the sick. However, it is significant to indicate that the infrastructure is there, but what is needed is improvement in the service provision itself particularly in terms of the availability of medicines, the availability of qualified health personnel (nurses and doctors), the maintenance of medical facilities and accommodation for health staff.

The provision of Education

Education reports indicate that there are fifty-four (54) primary schools and eleven (11) secondary schools in Beitbridge. Most of the primary schools are administered by the BRDC. In addition, the Council facilitates the financing of building materials, maintenance and the provision of school furniture. Communities also take part in the actual building/construction of these schools. However, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) supplies these schools with teaching materials and also pays teachers' salaries. Taking into consideration the catchment area of a 10 kilometre radius for each primary

school, it is clear that Beitbridge is well supplied with primary education. What is needed, is to upgrade the classrooms, provide more staff accommodation and improve the supply of qualified teachers.

As indicated earlier, there are eleven (11) secondary schools in the district. These are Vhembe, Chidhihwa, Nuli, Malunguzi, Chasvingo, Tongwe, Majini, Zezani, Shashie, Chamunangana, and Chituripasi. Below is a table indicating the names of secondary schools, the authority in charge of the school and enrolment figures as at September 2001.

Table 5.3 Secondary schools in the Beitbridge District (1996 Figures)

Ward	Name of School	Authority	Enrolment
Chipise	Tshitulipasi	BRDC	86
Dite I	Malunguzi	BRDC	179
Mtetengwe I	Tongwe	Government	490
Mtetengwe II	Nuli	Government	330
Mtetengwe III	Tshidihwa	BRDC	282
Maramani	Tshimimile	BRDC	190
Machuchuta	Kohomela	BRDC	194
Dendele	Zezani	ELCZ	356
Siyoka I	Siyoka	BRDC	300
Siyoka II	Kwalu	BRDC	333
Beitbridge Urban	Vhembe	BRDC	769

Source: Ministry of Education and Culture, Beitbridge Circuit, 2001:1

These secondary schools are capable of absorbing all children in the district who qualify for secondary education. Where classrooms are not sufficient, the school is expected to introduce a 'hotsitting' arrangement where some classes are conducted in the morning while others are conducted in the afternoon. Another important point to indicate is that there are only two secondary schools that offer advanced level (Form VI) education. These are Zezani and Vhembe. The remaining schools end with ordinary level (Form IV) classes. This situation needs

improvement, as it denies many children the chance of doing 'A' levels, yet this is the qualifying level for anyone who wishes to enroll for university education.

Community responses on the provision of education indicate an 83,5% satisfaction rate. This is because primary and secondary schooling are considered to be the core educational services and they seem to have been catered for appropriately. Every primary school has a non-formal component to cater for adult education. The high literacy rate, in the district testifies to this. What still needs to be improved is the supply of qualified teachers, a lower teacher/pupil ratio and an increased budget allocation to cater for teaching materials particularly in the science subjects. Another important component that is needed is that of kindergartens or pre-schools. These are not a common phenomenon in communal wards. They can be found in urban Beitbridge, but still, they are not enough. In Beitbridge there are only three kindergartens for a population of more than 25 000. In rural areas, kindergartens are more plentiful during drought years or in spring or early summer when communities have less food supplies. Kindergartens fall under the MOHCW as part of its duty to feed children, particularly from poor backgrounds. Thus, one can safely conclude that crèches are seasonal. In these crèches children are fed with beans, soup and sadza (maize meal/thick porridge). They have played a meaningful role in preventing diseases and malnutrition. It is important that this becomes a regular feature in order to play a meaningful role in the education of children.

One can conclude that the performance of the district in educational provision is commendable. There is high community participation, particularly in school construction, the payment of academic fees and the school development levy. Parents are also involved in school management through School Development Committees or Associations. The Ministry of Education and Culture through its offices in the district, supervises educational provision to make sure that it approximates national standards.

The Provision of Water

Water provision has been made possible through boreholes, wells, piped water schemes, dams and irrigation works. However, 80 boreholes and 445 wells were dry in 2002. This left the district with 243 boreholes, 569 wells, 32 piped water systems of which 18 are non functional. Table 5.4 illustrates how these water points are distributed through out the communal wards.

Table 5.4 Water points per ward in Beitbridge District (1999 figures).

WARD	BH	Dry BH	Well	Dry well	Piped Sch.	Non Fnal Sch.
Chipise	29	7	41	34	5	2
Dite I	27	5	13	9	4	2
Dite II	22	6	60	53	-	-
Mtetengwe I	24	8	19	12	4	2
Mtetengwe II	21	4	85	71	8	5
Mtetengwe III	10	3	62	48	2	2
Masera	7	2	49	37	1	0
Maramani	40	22	23	17	3	2
Machuchuta	23	11	46	39	2	1
Dendele	15	6	60	50	-	-
Siyoka I	12	4	55	42	3	2
Siyoka II	6	1	55	43	2	1
Resettlements	7	1	2	0	-	-
TOTAL	**243**	**80**	**569**	**455**	**32**	**18**

KEY: BH - Borehole
Fnal - Functional
Sch - Scheme

Ministry of Energy and Water Development Report, 2000:1

It is important to note that not all water points are perennial. This has necessitated the intervention of other actors like the DDF, the Integrated Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme (IRWSSP) under the Ministry of Water, Energy and Rural Development (MOWERD), and NGOs like the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), to assist local communities with the supply and maintenance

of boreholes. Communities are also trained through the Community Based Management Component (CBMC) of the IRWSSP to manage and maintain water points since 1994.

A survey was conducted in 1994 to determine water needs of the Beitbridge communities in each ward. Only Chipise and Masera had enough water points in the form of boreholes. The other wards needed several boreholes to be constructed in their villages. Table 5.5 shows the survey under district population, reliable water points and extra boreholes needed.

Table 5.5 Need for more water points per ward in Beitbridge District

Ward	Total population	Reliable water point	Needed boreholes
Chipise	6 470	31	-
Dite II	7 370	29	22
Dite I	9 400	37	13
Mtetengwe I	6 070	25	2
Mtetengwe II	9 311	60	2
Matete III	7 412	34	15
Masera	2 206	28	-
Maramani	3 787	20	4
Machuchuta	3 558	22	13
Dendele	5 278	28	13
Siyoka I	6 359	18	18
Siyoka II	6 290	30	5
TOTAL			**107**

District Development Fund Report, 1999:3

It is significant to note that these irrigation schemes have become a source of food supply and employment for communal people. It is important that BRDC diversifies these schemes and makes them available to a large section of its communal people. The table above shows that the district still needs more water points, hence the 42,4% satisfaction percentage. Dams also provide Beitbridge

town with water. There are 68 dams scattered throughout the district. These include the largest dam, the Zhove Dam along the Umzingwane River, which was completed in 1994. It is significant to note that some of these dams need rehabilitation in order to ensure a perennial supply of water. Community programmes are being initiated to try and involve communities in the building, maintenance and management of dams. One should also indicate that there are some dams that have irrigation schemes attached to them. This in fact, is one of the projects the BRDC wants to engage in throughout the district, that is, to have as many dams as possible attached to irrigation schemes. Besides each of the small-scale irrigation schemes of about 20 hectares each, there are large-scale schemes maintained by government. These are Chikwarakwara, Tongwe, Shashe, Jalukanga, Bili, and Kwalu. Below is a table showing the ward, the location of the irrigation scheme and the size of the plot being cultivated.

Table 5.6 Large Scale Irrigation Schemes in Beitbridge

Ward	Name of Scheme	Size in Hectares (ha)
Chipise	Chikwarakwara	65
Mtetengwe I	Tongwe	24
Maramani	Shashe	120
	Jalukanga	45
Machuchuta	Bili	23
Siyoka II	Kwalu	48

District Development Fund Report, 1996:2

The Provision of Roads

There are three types of roads that are found in the Beitbridge District. These are primary roads, secondary roads and tertiary roads. There are five (5) primary roads that is, Beitbridge - Bulawayo; Beitbridge - Harare; Lutumba - Chikwarakwara; Makakavhule - Hwali; Makado – Hwali. These are also known as national roads. The roads are maintained by the DDF. The secondary roads are

those that link other outlying areas of the district with primary roads for example, Lutumba - Tongwe, Makakavhule - Lutumba, and Makakavhule – Shashe. Council maintains these roads as Beitbridge communities commuting from one ward to the other use them.

Tertiary roads are those found in urban Beitbridge, farms and mining enterprises. These are the responsibility of the BRDC, individual farmers, and mining authorities respectively. In addition there is a railway service to Bulawayo, Harare and Johannesburg in South Africa. The roads are sufficient and reasonably well maintained. Fifty two point four percent (52,4%) of community respondents show satisfaction with the roads in Beitbridge. On observation, however, tertiary roads particularly, in urban Beitbridge need a great deal of attention. There are no tarred roads in the townships. As a result, and because of high traffic flow, the residential areas are always clouded with dust. This, in itself, is a health hazard and has led to several cases of dust tuberculosis in the district. However, statistics were not available to show the exact numbers of tuberculosis cases caused by dust from these roads.

The provision of transport services
Since 1980, buses owned by companies located outside the district serviced Beitbridge district. These companies obtained permits to service specific routes in the district. Most of them however, serviced routes along the primary roads on their way to urban centres in Bulawayo, Masvingo, Harare and Johannesburg. Only these companies serviced a few secondary roads to rural Beitbridge. Companies that used primary roads include the Shushine Bus Service, Chitanda Bus Service, Magwizi Bus Service, Dambanyika Bus Service, Inkosimayivuma and Country Boy Bus Service. However, most of these bus services are no longer servicing these routes. Either they have gone bankrupt or have just decided to ignore Beitbridge routes. This has led to a proliferation of minibus services with no fixed routes and times. This causes a lot of problems for

travelers in the district hence, the low level of community satisfaction (16,5%) with transport services.

The provision of recreation facilities

It has been observed that Beitbridge has a low level of recreation facilities. The only common recreation facilities are soccer and netball fields. This is what one can find in communal areas, resettlement areas and commercial farms. A similar situation exists in urban Beitbridge. There are no parks, halls for film shows or places for electronic games. Urban Beitbridge, apart from the usual soccer and netball fields, has one recreation club with two tennis courts only. Apparently, it appears that recreation facilities in Beitbridge are in the form of bottle stores. This is where people flock to after work. Consequently, all spare time is spent drinking rather than on something that can relax one's mind and prepare one for the next day. Because of this, people are not satisfied with the performance of the BRDC in making recreation facilities available. The community responses indicate an 18,2% rate of satisfaction with the provision of recreation facilities.

The provision of security

The council has a police force to ensure compliance with council laws. However, these are not enough to cover the whole district. In fact, they are expected to service the urban centre only. Even then, the force is overwhelmed by the amount of ground it has to cover. The only advantage is that people in Beitbridge are peace loving people and do not engage much in criminal activities. However, security is a problem nowadays, because a lot of people from Masvingo, Bulawayo and Harare flock to Beitbridge, in order to try and cross the border into South Africa legally or otherwise. Those who fail to do so, end up roaming the streets and selling cheap wares. Some of them find themselves resorting to criminal activities such as pilfering, mugging elderly people and engaging in the black market particularly, the sale of hard currency.

Two aspects of the study, that is, democratic participation and service provision have been analysed so far. The third aspect focuses on the performance of the BRDC's management in its effort to provide excellent services to the community and maintain the council as a viable institution for local development.

MANAGERIAL CAPACITY OF STAFF IN THE BRDC

Management in any setting is expected to drive organisation action. However, it is significant to indicate that the performance of public sector management, in general, has been disappointing over the years. Among others, rigidity, central control, lack of responsiveness and accountability, misuse of resources, ineffectiveness, an obsession with rules, lack of skills and a general ineptitude in the performance of its duties have characterized it. While most of this blame for non-performance is directly apportioned to these managers, it should be mentioned that as executive instruments of government institutions, political office bearers who wield control over these institutions and, invariably determine their modus operandi directly influence their action. The African experience tells us that most of these leaders themselves have not been accountable and responsive to the people they represent (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1996:6). One would say, is it not a case where the public manager copies from the master or doing what the master says should be done? Whatever the case, it is significant that once political office-bearers fail to perform their duties appropriately, it is highly unlikely that public managers will execute their duties well. In fact, for the political arm of government institutions to get away with what it wants, it is likely to recruit subservient managers who are not likely to question their decisions.

Whatever the case, one can indicate that that public management is crucial in the effective performance of duties by any government institution. Consequently, many governments have adopted initiatives to improve the capacity of their

management systems. These initiatives are seen as essential in dealing with the rising expectations of society, the need for regional and global competitiveness, the need to institute a responsive, accountable and committed system, which are capable of empowering communities and promoting democratic and good governance. Such a system should be one that assumes ownership of government institutions and has an inherent desire to see public institutions succeed in what they do, hence the call for entrepreneurial management. Entrepreneurial management is driven by public choice theory and consequently, the need for public managers to possess innovative, proactive and 'hands on' skills, which are seen as essential for catapulting their public organizations to the highest forms of institutional performance. Thus, recognition of these fundamentals has made it imperative for this study to gauge the performance of the BRDC management since it is a vital cog in the overall performance of this institution. The questions asked or issues investigated centred on the three management dimensions of Graham Allison's management typology. Allison indicates that management is expected to be pivotal in (a) strategic decision making; (b) managing internal components; and (c) dealing with external constituencies of an organization (Allison in Golembiewski and Gibson, 1985:456). Consequently, the following were checked to determine the BRDC management astuteness.

a) **The Planning regime**, that is, whether the BRDC:
- Has a mission statement;
- Has strategic plans;
- Departments formulate plans and what kind of plans they formulate; and
- Coordinates the different plans into one coherent plan?

b) **The Project Regime**, checking:
- The nature of programme and project planning and implementation; and

- The programme and project monitoring and evaluation regime.

c) **Coordination and team building efforts**

d) **The nature of financial management**, specifically:

- The production of timely and accurate budgets;
- Preparation of other financial statements;
- The presence of an asset inventory;
- The financial accountability of managers; and
- Revenue raising capacity.

e) **General administration** with specific reference to:

- The establishment of effective personnel management systems;
- Effective recruitment systems;
- Effective management and administration of meetings; and
- Record keeping.
- The management of transport.

Planning Action

Councilors and staff indicate that the BRDC has strategic plans (6 out of 8, which is 75%). Respondents, calculated as a percentage, enumerated the following strategic plans:

(i)   Housing provision strategy (87,5%);

(ii)   A general strategy for the BRDC as a whole (87,5%);

(iii)   Development plans (87,5%); and

(iv)   General sectional plans (75,0%).

A majority of respondents indicated that the prevalent plans are the short-term plans for operational purposes. However, most of these are ad hoc and their implementation depends on the whims of departmental heads. Obviously, this is not conducive for running council affairs. As such suggestions have to be made

in order to improve this situation. Although there was a general indication that planning takes place, these assertions were not accompanied by documentation to prove the point. No documents were produced, which stated the choices and priorities of the BRDC on a long-term (over 5 years) basis, or a medium-term (5 years) basis. One also expected to see planning documents indicating overall policy direction, resource availability and how different departments are integrated. This was not available. With this in mind, one can safely say that no meaningful planning is taking place. Although it is there, it is not comprehensive or taken seriously. In fact, one can safely say that the BRDC's planning process is weak and unsystematic. Policy prioritization is weak and needs to be reviewed. This means that most planning is, indeed, ad hoc and depends on departmental heads.

The programme/project regime

The BRDC has a unit or department for projects. This is separate from the main departmental structure of the council. This is because most projects are funded by NGOs. As a result, the sponsoring institutions insist on having separate structures that cannot be incapacitated by the council's bureaucracy. This is also done for the purpose of accountability. The top officers include the Project Coordinator, Assistant Coordinator, and Field Officers in charge of specific programmes. Although a degree is a requirement, the current project coordinator does not have one. The incumbent has a diploma and some certificates in local government and project management. Although most projects have an agricultural orientation, there is no one with agricultural qualifications on the project management team. The assistant project coordinator only has a certificate in accounting. This is the same with field officers. The Project Coordinator has more than ten years working experience. Field officers also have more than five years relevant work experience. Officers in the project unit are priviledged in that they have a chance to attend skill based courses designed to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness in handling projects.

Most, if not all, projects are community based and need well-trained officers who can coordinate community efforts and even motivate communities so that they can have an interest in project work. Several projects are currently running in the district. The coordinating officer is expected to write project appraisal reports to indicate progress in each of the projects. Another form of evaluation is through monthly meetings where each officer is expected to give an account of the operations and progress of the project(s) he/she is supervising. However, the problem is that the records for these meetings are not well written and besides, they are not well kept. In fact, some of them get lost in the process.

One should, however, indicate that project management is well organized. Annual plans are produced. A review of progress is carried out and work-in-progress is clearly noted. Project priorities are clear and any project to be discontinued is discussed and reasons for discontinuity are provided. The project regime makes it easy to know which project exists and in what locality. There is evidence of project analysis, particularly economic and social analysis, assessment of project costs, operational and maintenance implications and the lessons and experiences of previous related projects, are also provided. Implementation plans are also available. These show:

- full quantities and costs;
- scheduling of activities;
- implementation responsibilities;
- the monitoring requirements; and
- how to deal with problems that may arise.

However, although these plans are evident, there are problems with BRDC's project regime, as most projects are not implemented according to plan. Secondly, it appears that there is no efficiency in implementation. An interview with the Council Chairperson indicated that resources are misused, project vehicles are diverted to destinations where there are no projects at all and there

is no close monitoring and supervision. Consequently, some projects have experienced a reduction in production due to management laxity, particularly in making prompt decisions. For example, when an internal audit indicates misuse of resources, no disciplinary action is taken with regard to members responsible for such waste. There is a tendency to adopt a "wait and see" attitude rather than deal with the officers responsible for this waste of resources. Sometimes council shops go without the necessary goods, not because there is no money but due to management negligence. This tends to erode the profitability of such a venture. Chickens are sometimes left without food and this affects their growth and at the end of the day, the price they can fetch from the market.

A review of project documents indicated that project evaluation reports do not succinctly indicate project efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness. Hence, there is a tendency to have projects from which communities cannot easily derive benefits for example, shops, bottle stores and grinding mills. Regular quarterly and annual reports are produced, but although these reviews may record physical and financial progress, they tend to be overly descriptive and lack the analytical focus that is necessary for directing management effort towards improving project systems. This results in the lackadaisical manner in which management deals with these problems. In addition, although these reviews are carried out, it is clear that the lack of commitment by staff in project implementation leads to very little systematic monitoring. This is because there are no regular performance-monitoring meetings or reports. Any monitoring that is done is usually on an ad hoc basis, for example, when there are requests for progress reports by the CEO or NGOs. This shows a lack of commitment to project success by these incumbents.

Sometimes council initiates programmes to benefit communities, but fails to manage them in such a way that communities benefit. An interesting project is the Wildlife Management Programme that the BRDC has initiated and implemented to control wildlife and, at the same time, make sure that

communities where wildlife is found can benefit. The BRDC project reports indicate that five wards are expected to benefit from wildlife in Beitbridge. These are Maramani, Machuchuta and Masera in the west and Chipise and Dite in the east. Quotas are sold to Safari companies and 50% of the revenue is expected to accumulate to the council, while the other 50% should go to the communities directly. Estimated wildlife populations, quotas and costs of each animal are given below in US dollars.

Table 5.7 Wildlife in the Beitbridge District

Species	Estimated Population	District Quota	Revenue/ US$	Total in US$
Elephant	600	3	8 000	24 000
Buffalo	400	unlimited	1 500	unlimited
Lion	20	1	2 500	2 500
Leopard	100	5	2 000	10 000
Eland	500	5	650	3 250
Waterbuck	100	1	700	700
Nyala	300	3	1 250	3 750
Zebra	160	4	550	2 200
Kudu	500	5	550	2 750
Bushbuck	200	2	450	900
Impala	1 500	20	75	1 500

BRDC Wildlife Report, 1996:2

As can be seen from the figures, wildlife is intended to be a viable source of income for communities in these wards. However, since the programme started, communities have not received their share of wildlife proceeds. All the money goes to council coffers. This is rather unfair, as the same wild animals particularly, elephants ravage the community's crops in the fields and leopards and lions eat their livestock. This means that this programme is not beneficial to the community and thus, its relevance is questionable unless new implementation modalities are put in place.

Another important factor to consider in managerial capacity is financial management. Below is a presentation and analysis of data concerning the performance of the BRDC in managing council finances.

Financial management in the BRDC

As indicated earlier, the focus on financial management was on timely production of budgets, accurate budgeting, the production of annual accounts, the preparation of regular financial plans and cash flow forecasts, the production of accurate asset inventories and management accountability on financial matters. Other important issues included management capacity to collect revenue in a cost effective manner, its ability to come up with innovative ideas on new sources of revenue and capacity to manage its meager available resources.

It is evident from document reviews that budgets are prepared on time, on an annual basis. Council accounts are also audited. The reports of these audits are made available within three weeks of each audit. This is good. However, the main purpose of these audits is to ensure that the BRDC abides by the financial regulations of the GOZ rather than to encourage it to improve its effectiveness in managing council finances. Budgets, although prepared on time, have not been accurate. According to policy provisions, accuracy is expected to be within 20% of the budgeted estimates of actual income and expenditure. However, more often than not, the estimates are very far from these limits. An analysis of financial statements indicates that expenditure can be underestimated by as high as 38% and income can be under budget by up to 48%. This calls for improvement in financial decision making.

Statements for commercial enterprises are produced on an ad hoc basis and do not emphasize the need to improve performance. Financial plans and cash flow forecasts are also produced. Although these are produced quarterly, they have been significantly inaccurate and as such they are not used frequently to manage council finances. As far as asset inventories are concerned, document reviews

indicate that the BRDC does not have a coherent inventory system. It is even difficult to get documents on inventory control. This makes it difficult to have an accurate maintenance budget. In addition, unscrupulous councilors and managers can team up to 'milk' council of its resources since the majority of councilors would be ignorant of what is happening. Unfortunately, this situation has actually happened in the BRDC and has led to a lot of financial losses in the council.

While some councilors are conversant with financial issues, others are not. The most conversant are councilors with businesses, teachers and commercial farmers. The rest have a problem understanding these issues. As a result, the rather financially ignorant councilors find it difficult to make intelligible contributions on financial issues. They can be easily manipulated and mesmerized by accounting figures. This in itself reduces the level of financial accountability of council staff.

For council to have its revenue in place in line with its budget, it has to have an appropriate system for revenue collection. An interview with the Chief Executive Officer indicated that the BRDC finds it difficult to collect all its revenue, particularly the development levy, where collection may be as low as 30% of the budgeted income. Sometimes there are even problems in collecting business levies and house rentals. This tends to have a negative impact on council's efforts to meet the volume of activity for which it has budgeted. On the other hand, council has found it a bit easy to collect revenue from wildlife programmes, lease rents, vehicle taxes, business licenses, beer levies, and commercial enterprises income. On the whole, between 75% and 80% of the revenue is collected each year. This exacerbates over expenditure, as the expected income falls far short of what is needed in each financial year. Significant within the revenue collection regime particularly on the development levy, is the realization that communities are ordinarily poor. This limits their capacity to pay development levies. These communities, although willing to pay, are such that

their financial position does not allow them to pay. Thus, non-payment is not a deliberate attempt by communities to short change council, but a result of financial deficiencies facing these rural communities.

On the other hand, urban dwellers also have problems with paying what they owe to council. This includes failure to pay house rentals and water charges, hospital fees and school levies which are normally paid after a year or so. The problem is that the BRDC has no effective strategy to use when communities fail to pay levies. There is no concerted effort by the DC to follow these funds. If there are follow ups, they are not consistent and they normally die down before monies are actually collected. This is sometimes attributed to kickbacks being paid by defaulting members. Urban migration also makes it difficult to keep figures for those who are required to pay the development levy. In order to solve the problem, the BRDC normally relies on peace-meal procedures. Sometimes it tries to deny those who have not paid levies certain services like processing birth certificates and hawkers licenses. Communities and councilors furthering the conflict relationship between councilors and communities have opposed this. Similarly, there are no effective sanctions for non-payment of rent and business licenses. On the former, council usually disconnects water services from the residence in question. However, a house owner who decides to get water from neighbours can circumvent this situation and render it ineffective.

From the above, it was not surprising when an overwhelming 100% of community respondents indicated that the council has financial management problems. The problems indicated include general over expenditure, misuse of funds, failure to collect most of the revenues in a given year and a general lack of financial prudence. These problems have not been solved yet. Consequently, remedial action is needed in order to harness this anomalous situation. Respondents offered some suggestions of the courses of action that can be followed to alleviate the problem. These include:

- General cutbacks on programmes: This means that the council should avoid doing too much considering that its resources are limited.
- Strict internal auditing to notice any financial anomalies at an early stage: This should be done quarterly, at least.
- Strict financial controls by the Chief Executive Officer who in fact is the accounting officer of council.
- Control of RDC vehicles that are misused and which are causing more resource wastage in terms of skyrocketing maintenance and fuel expenditures.
- Putting in place programmes where communities can pay through labour, for example, they can be made to assist in building dams, schools, roads, and clinics without asking for pay.

Some of these are plausible and can lead to the collection of more revenue than is currently the case.

Another important aspect of management capacity focused upon was general administration. This involved making an assessment of personnel systems, record keeping systems, effective administration of meetings, the transport management system, the administration of stores and timely procurement of resources for council. Some interesting findings emerged. All eight (8) council and staff respondents indicated that there was no proper staff distribution among departments. Some departments are overstaffed while others are stretched, for example, the project and technical/engineering department. In some departments, there are inexperienced and unqualified people. Even the department head is not appropriately qualified hence, the inability to proffer appropriate management services to his/her department. Examples include the Finance Department, Engineering Department and Project Management Department and the Housing Section.

Apart from this anomaly, council and staff interviewees indicated that there are no proper recruitment systems. Although proper recruitment procedures are laid down clearly, they are not followed. There is a tendency to recruit those known to councilors, the Chief Executive Officer or senior managers. Once a vacancy has been identified, these people go to their home areas to recruit their kith and kin. They then lobby for these relatives to be employed. This means that the recruitment system promotes 'villagism' or 'homeboyism', for lack of a better adjective, at the expense of academic/professional qualification and competence. If such a person is recruited in a department that is not headed by his/her relative, the incumbent tends to undermine his/her supervisor. This is because the incumbent sees his/her supervisor as the 'only official' in council. Whatever happens in the department, he/she quickly goes to his/her relative to relay the information. This makes it difficult to enforce discipline. Besides, it creates pockets of allegiances, creates divisions, suspicions, fear and an environment not conducive to organisation excellence.

This sad story also indicates that there are no coherent management systems. Council staff interviewees indicated that although staff rules and regulations exist, these are seldom followed. Although absenteeism is rife, it is not investigated, and staff reprisals are rarely carried out, hence the prevalence of the misuse of resources. Job descriptions exist, but these are rather sketchy and are not revised. While a job description states one thing, it is common to find someone doing chores that are completely outside of this description. This leads to job overlap and a reduction in accountability.

Another important administrative imperative is about the management of meetings. Council holds several meetings for legislative and administrative purposes. This means that meeting agendas have to be produced and circulated in time. Those who are expected to contribute should be given sufficient time to research on issues that need their input. Once sessions begin, minutes are to be taken, transcribed, crosschecked and circulated to the appropriate persons. If it is

a legislative session, communities should be conscientised and given a chance to sit in if space allows. It is significant that these minutes are important as a source of information for council deliberations and courses of action that the body wishes to undertake. Findings indicate that the management of meetings is not appropriate. For example, notification of meetings is not done in a timely manner. Dates of meetings can be arbitrarily changed and, at short notice for that matter. Although meeting agendas are circulated, they usually do not provide details. They are just a list of items to be discussed, without specifying exactly what is to be discussed and decided upon. Sometimes sessions take too long because councilors are allowed to deliver long winded, repetitive and inconclusive speeches. This tends to reduce the quality of meetings. The same takes place during staff or department meetings. Although minutes are accurate, they usually do not point out succinctly and in procedural terms, resolutions on courses of action to be taken on a specific issue. This tends to create implementation delays. Sometimes minutes are late, and when they materialize, members are no longer enthusiastic about the issues of concern.

A good organization is one that has interdepartmental teams to discuss and coordinate the work of all such departments. The existence of teams is beneficial and assists the planning process in that it is easy for these teams to lay out operational parameters which complement each other, rather than operate in isolation. Interviews with senior council staff indicate that teams do not exist in the BRDC. Each department is independent of the other and produces action plans consistent with what it considers to be necessary for its survival and 'appropriate' execution of its duties. What exists in the BRDC is a management committee that is frequently referred to as a team. This committee acts as a coordinating agent for council. This is mandatory in all RDCs. As such, it should not be confused with the concept of teams, as it is only there to perform routine coordinating tasks. The crux of the matter is that each department holds its own planning and evaluation meetings and submits its reports to the Chief Executive

Officer. The Head of Department determines the agenda and pace of these meetings.

The other important matter was that of keeping records. It was observed that the BRDC is sufficiently computerised. Thus, records are kept through a computer system and manually, through filing. However, problems are still experienced, as accurate information is not properly harnessed by the two systems. More than anything else, these are problems of negligence on the part of management in not ensuring that their internal staff does not perform effectively all the time. It may also be attributed to failure to have well designed work systems procedures for staff to follow. This allows employees to adopt lackadaisical approaches to their work. This undermines organisation excellence. One of the reasons for laxity in information recording or keeping records is because there is a poor system of monitoring and evaluating work actions.

Another important aspect of general administration that was investigated concerned the management of council vehicles. This has a negative impact on these two important functions of management. Processes that are not monitored and evaluated are not likely to produce the needed results. In fact, how can management know whether work performance is efficient and effective, and targets are met if it ignores this vital component of its functions? This is not to say that there is no monitoring and evaluation but to indicate that these are not done properly. Monitoring and evaluation are not systematic and consistent. At best, they depend on a manager's whims. They do not seem to be an integral part of management excellence.

Transport management is vital for any institution, particularly the BRDC, which is vast and needs council officers to visit different wards to check on projects and check if communities are getting the services they require. The council does have a considerable fleet of vehicles, most of which are pick-ups or 'bakkies'. The Project Department has the most vehicles. There is a maintenance section,

which is responsible for servicing these cars and any council equipment. Vehicles are allocated to departments. There are two pool vehicles that can be used by any officer, as long as he/she needs it for council business and, accordingly obtains its release. On observation, these vehicles, together with those belonging to departments, have been misused. There is a prevalence of these vehicles being used by council staff and councilors for personal rather than council business. Consequently, this has had the effect of wearing down these vehicles, increasing their maintenance costs and lowering their life spans. Sometimes the condition of vehicles is so bad that council technicians are unable to repair and maintain them so that they have to be taken to privately owned garages, which charge exorbitant prices. This raises maintenance costs and has the effect of depleting the budget.

The last question asked was on cultivating mutual relationships between council staff themselves, council staff and councilors, and council staff and communities. Although this theme was handled above, it is relevant here as it concentrates on management efforts to create an amicable operational environment within council and with those outside council. It is an attempt to gauge the capacity of staff to handle councilors, communities and colleagues.

It was found that council committees do not always attend meetings called by council staff to discuss specific committee issues. Sometimes only the chairperson attends. This weakens the decision capacity of council management, since these committees are indeed part of the management team of council. Another important finding was that there is no amicable relationship between council staff and councilors. Council staff despises councilors while the latter view the former with suspicion. This is a universal phenomenon. There is no trust between the two. Councilors accuse council staff of embezzling council funds and failing to advise council properly on matters of policy. Thus, these councillors view council staff as incompetent hacks that are just a burden to council. Some of the lack of trust between the two stem from the fact that the recruitment of staff

is rather biased along tribal lines. Thus, Sotho councilors will tend to like Sotho managers. This is the same for those who speak Venda, Shangani and Shona. This situation erodes staff accountability to councilors. As a result, these managers tend to take advantage of the situation to misuse council resources.

It is significant to indicate that at face value, these distressful scenarios are not immediately evident. They are beyond the naked eye. A casual visitor would leave council thinking that all is well. Its only when one tries to unravel the mysteries within the inner cocoons of council operations that these problems can be detected.

There are also relational problems between council staff and communities. Communities also accuse council staff of embezzling council funds, misusing vehicles and having a domineering attitude. Communities also accuse council staff of being unfriendly with no humane qualities, and not supportive to the general public. It is always difficult they say, to talk to council officers. Even when one wants a birth certificate or to pay levy, the manner in which he/she is received and asked questions, reveals a master servant relationship where the council staff are the masters. Consequently, when council staff call for meetings in wards, communities are reluctant to attend, adding that it is not useful to do so as these members of staff are rude and can be insulting. In addition, these staff members come to meetings with decisions having been made. Thus, the whole process seizes to be consultative and rather becomes prescriptive where discussions or the flow of information is unidirectional with council staff being the providers of information and communities the recipients. These revelations indicate lack of proper service provision and an inability to promote democracy and good governance by council staff. These happenings do not augur well for the smooth running of council affairs. Indeed the situation needs some remedy. It is significant to note that once officials adopt attitudes that do not promote democratic values, the tendency is for such officials to exhibit four key biases that are likely to undermine the performance of an organisastion. Brenton and

Wintrobe as cited in Dunleavy (1991:149) indicate that these four biases include the following:

a) officials always distort information communicated upwards to superiors or politicians so as to present their own or their section's activity in the most favourable light.

b) officials respond to decisions by their superiors or politicians in a discretionary way, implementing decisions consistent with their self-interest more speedily, and de-emphasizing those that are inconsistent.

c) in choosing between broadly equivalent policy choices, officials always favour outcomes advantageous to their interests.

d) officials 'search' behavior for new policy solutions is heavily influenced by self-interest.

This is the case with the BRDC and without doubt, such tendencies have minimized the performance levels of the council and its ability to offer excellent services to its communities. This means that the council still needs to put in place several practical measures to enhance community satisfaction in service provision.

Page 307 provides a summary of results indicating what communities think about the BRDC's management capacity with specific reference to the allocation of business and stands, handling of squatters, dealing with street vendors, handling council funds, initiating community projects, creating employment, distributing food relief, assisting communities with development issues and cultivating council/community relations. In simple terms, the results indicate a lack of satisfaction, which the BRDC has to address.

CONCLUSION

This chapter brings out interesting findings on the operations of the BRDC. Apart from the provisions of the District Councils Act of 1988, which guides its actions, the BRDC has an operational manual, which spells out the basic convictions of council and how it should conduct its business. Some of the convictions that councillors and management staff are expected to commit themselves to are as follows:

1. As councillors and officers, we are convinced that the democratic principles of governance, in which transparency and accountability are dominant, are paramount in serving the community.

2. As councillors and officers we believe that social development and social justice cannot be attained in the absence of peace, and the absence of respect for all human rights, obligations and freedoms.

3. As councillors and officers we commit ourselves to create an economic, political, social, cultural, religious and legal environment that will enable each person individually and corporately to achieve the basic corporate mission of development (BRDC Convictions, Mission Statement and Management profile document, 2000:1-2).

Although these are laudable guiding convictions, the practice does not show strict adherence to these assurances. It is evident that considerable effort is made to enhance democratic participation, provide excellent services and to manage council operations appropriately. However, there are shortcomings that need attention as indicated in the conclusions and recommendations in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

After independence between the 1960s and 1980s, many African states tried to build polities that would take a leading role in development. However, continued underdevelopment and a degeneration of most states into centrist machines that were not accountable and responsive to society, made them realise the need to revisit their strategies in order to come up with new ones that would invigorate this national agenda and perchance, turnaround the developmental misfortunes of these states. Thus, the 1990s started with a rigorous agenda for African change that was encapsulated in notions of democracy and good government. This has led to multiple programmes of public service reform. Some of these included the acceptance and incorporation of decentralisation and local government initiatives as an integral part of the transformation and development agenda. This was aimed at redefining the central power of the state and diffusing it to allow local communities in peripheral areas to govern themselves and take responsibility for their lives.

As indicated earlier, the GOZ undertook similar initiatives that led to the reorganisation of its rural local government system, which was modeled along racial lines. The two pyramid system (District Councils coexisting with Rural Council in one district) was united or amalgamated into a coherent one – Rural District Councils, that were expected to take responsibility for rural transformation and ensure sustainable development within these areas. In the pursuit of its

vision to improve the lives of communities in the periphery, the GOZ adopted devolution with its attendant advantages of entrenching political, social, economic and administrative autonomy in demarcated geographical units, as an antidote for fostering the idea of self-government. The priorities of government were to:

- enhance democratic participation and community empowerment within each RDC;

- promote unity between blacks and whites;

- eradicate the vestiges of colonial apartheid;

- improve service delivery;

- enhance government accountability and responsiveness;

- improve governance and the management of local resources; and

- enhance sustainable development.

Decentralisation was, indeed, taken seriously in Zimbabwe. A great deal of resources was expended to try and bring into fruition all the efforts of this initiative. While government can provide a policy framework to guide institutions towards the realisation of these cherished fundamentals, the onus is upon the institutions themselves to lay down appropriate operational procedures and implement decisions in a manner that would enhance institutional viability. Thus, it would be naïve to expect the institution of a decentralisation framework to yield instant results, without an effort from both central government and the agencies created by this policy. The expectations are that these institutions, in this case RDCs, must perform in order to realise these goals. The achievement of better performance is in itself a complex endeavour, which results from a multiplicity of factors, inclusive of both internal and external dynamics that may impinge upon these institutions. It is with this in mind, that the focus of this study, all along, was on gauging the performance outlook of one of these local institutions, the Beitbridge Rural District Council, with specific reference to democratic participation, service delivery and managerial performance. The results of this research have been presented and analysed. What remains is to proffer some

conclusions and recommendations intended to solidify the study and enhance its practical utility.

However, before outlining both conclusions and recommendations, it is imperative that one outlines, albeit briefly, some of the problems associated with conducting this study. A study of this nature is indeed a mammoth task that requires time and financial resources. Limited resources placed constraints on this study. The researcher did not have any financial assistance and thus relied on his meager resources to engage research assistants who were helpful in distributing questionnaires, interviewing officials, and collecting completed questionnaires. Besides, the researcher was working full time in Namibia and this reduced the researcher's capacity to make regular trips to Beitbridge. The district itself is vast and requires ample time for one to traverse all its parts. This, the researcher did not have.

It was also difficult to contact all interviewees. Some of them did not honour their appointments for interviews, making it difficult to collect as much information as was possible. Others would be present but failed to provide meaningful information using the guise of such being confidential. Currently (2002), Beitbridge has a new Chief Executive Officer who was engaged in 2000. Thus, the whole management system is undergoing change. This made it difficult to collect documented information, as the current officers could not trace some of these documents. However, despite some of these setbacks, a meaningful project research was conducted with many insightful results that would allow one to offer conclusive recommendations that are likely to build the capacity of the BRDC as well as improve its performance. Conclusions have been drawn for each of the themes (democratic participation, service provision and managerial capacity) focused upon. These conclusions form a basis for the recommendations proffered later in the chapter. The conclusions for each of the themes are discussed in the sections that follow.

CONCLUSIONS

As indicated in the preceding section, conclusions are drawn for each of the major areas of the study. It is on the basis of these conclusions that recommendations are proffered later in this chapter.

Democratic participation

Any institution of a local nature, which is created to strengthen local development, should be judged by the manner in which it empowers communities by allowing them to actively participate in all initiatives intended to strengthen their resolve to be agents of their own development. There are positives and negatives that have been noted on this issue in the BRDC. While communities, through local groups such as VIDCOS and WADCOS, are given the chance to participate in local decision-making, there are no overt attempts by council to strengthen this fundamental imperative of local government. This leaves communities unsure as to whether or not they should go all out and influence the manner in which their council operates. This element of uncertainty undermines the democratic outlook of council. It is in a way, a derailment of community empowerment initiatives. Although communities have the freedom to choose the councilors of their liking, they do not seem to use their VIDCOs and WADCOs to influence council decisions.

Another important point is that council has not developed instruments that could be used to make it compulsory for councilors to report back council decisions to the communities. This means that the discretion to consult and inform communities remains with individual councilors, a majority of whom does so when it suits them rather, than the community. The result of this is that communities are not sure whether participation is guaranteed or their resolve to know and influence council should always depend on the whims of council

officials. With this in mind, one would say that council action is not overly effective in enhancing community or democratic participation. The doors for this participation are open, but it appears there is no one standing at the door to urge communities to come in and open up their minds.

VIDCOs and WADCOs are the bodies in charge of local planning. A platform to allow people to participate in designing local plans is in place. This is an attempt to foster council responsiveness to local needs or priorities. However, these local initiatives are poured into a filter as indicated in Chapter 4. Here, different stakeholders make decisions as to what the district's priorities are. This means that some of the local plans do not pass through the filtering process. As such, they are left out. At the end of the day, plans from the DDCs get priority and the opportunity to be filtered down to the PDC. Although VIDCO and WADCO chairpersons attend DDC meetings, their influence is minimal. Their voices can be easily 'drowned' by their superiors in the party and the fact that the latter have better planning knowledge. This tends to undermine responsiveness, leaving communities unsatisfied with the manner in which their needs have been addressed.

Significant among these conclusions is that councilors are failing to provide the necessary political education to their people. For example, they are not predisposed to educating communities about council functions, the importance of paying levies, and the role of communities in council. As such, people do not know what council is all about, that is, whether it is their own or for councilors and staff, or still, for central government. Is it there to serve their interest or those of central government? Until these issues are explained to them, it would be difficult for them to willingly and openly participate in council affairs.

In spite of these problems, one should acknowledge council effort at mobilising communities to take part in project work. This has the effect of injecting an element of worthiness in the people. Through this process, they can feel that they

are in charge of their lives and can indicate what they want and how things should be done so that they could derive some benefits from the process. This is commendable as it rekindles the spirit of democratic participation and community empowerment. In conclusion, it is evident that much work has to be done in order to improve community participation in council affairs.

Service provision

As indicated in Schedule 71 of the RDC Act of 1998, the BRDC is expected to provide a wide range of services to its communities. The multiplicity of these services means that the manner in which they are provided and the satisfaction derived from these services by communities in respect of each of them would differ. However, a general assessment of the products of the BRDCs to provide a combination or mixture of these services for the satisfaction of its populace can still be made.

a) **Health Provision**

Health care is provided in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare. It is the latter, which provides grants for the maintenance and sustenance of these institutions, although the BRDC has the latitude to construct as many RHCs as it could, as long as they are established in line with MOHCW's criteria stated in Chapter 5. Although RHCs have been established in Beitbridge, they do not have sufficient medicines to satisfy the medical needs of the communities. Consequently, they have become more of referral centers, rather than institutions for treating the sick. In addition, the consultation levy charged to prospective patients undermines their popularity with communities. This also tends to violate ministry policy that anyone earning less than Z$1 500 should be treated free of charge. Failure by these Rural Health Clinics to offer sufficient medical services has led to congestion at the District Health Centre in Beitbridge. This has undermined the operational capacity of this hospital, which also faces an acute shortage of nurses, doctors and medicines in spite of its modern

infrastructural framework. The 30.6% satisfaction response by the community clearly indicates the undesirable state of health provision in Beitbridge and underlines its ineffectiveness and inadequacy.

b) **Education Provision**

The provision of education in Beitbridge as with health provision, results from cooperative initiatives between the BRDC and the Ministry of Education. Churches also contribute to the provision of education. The provision of education is satisfactory to say the least. Every child of school going age has the chance to attend a school of their parent's choice. Secondary schools are scattered all over the district, making it possible for children in the district to obtain at least an ordinary level (Form IV) education. The BRDC's educational provision is reflective of Zimbabwe's policy of extending education to all. Although there may be hitches in terms of parents failing to pay fees, the state easily comes to the rescue to make sure that all children can at least get an education up to Form IV. This is a commendable state of affairs. The only improvement needed is on teachers' houses, bringing down the teacher/pupil ratio and recruiting qualified teachers. The last two needs depend on the availability of these in the country and is mostly controlled by the MOEC.

c) **The Provision of Water**

Although Beitbridge is in Region 5 well known for its aridness, the BRDC with the assistance of donor communities and the Government of Zimbabwe, has made inroads into providing communities with sufficient water for drinking, for watering animals and even for irrigation. Although more water points are needed in most of the districts, there is enough for drinking for both humans and animals, except in drought stricken yeas. It is also important to note that Beitbridge is coming up with water sustainability schemes to make sure that wells do not dry up and to encourage people to add more water points of their own. Besides a number of NGOs such as the Lutheran World Federation and Christian Care are involved in the provision of water in the district.

d) **The Provision of Roads**

The BRDC is well provided with roads. However, most gravel roads need to be maintained to enable them to remain accessible throughout the year. The problem with roads provision is significant in urban Beitbridge where these 'communication services' are not tarred and, consequently are a source of dust, which causes health hazards for the urban community. This is a source of dissatisfaction for the community and needs to be investigated.

e) **Transport Services**

Beitbridge communities are now witnessing a transport shortage that is unprecedented in the history of the district. While the urban population is expanding and houses are constructed far from the urban centre, there is no meaningful increase in transport to cater for these communities. On the rural side, the buses that used to ply the rural routes are no longer available. It appears that most road companies that used to operate in the district have decided to withdraw buses from these routes and this has caused enormous problems for the Beitbridge traveler. This is a situation that causes concern and needs to be addressed.

f) **Recreation facilities and security provision**

Except for the dusty soccer fields and netball pitches throughout the district, there are no recreation facilities in the district. Significant is the fact that these facilities are vital for the maintenance of a healthy body and a sound mind. Because of the lack of these facilities, communities now recreate in bottle stores, where they can be found drinking all day. This situation needs to be addressed as it leads to crime and the misuse of hard earned money. On security provision, it is significant to note that urban Beitbridge has not witnessed major criminal activities. However, the growing population indicates a need for a concerted effort on the part of the council to improve urban security.

Managerial capacity

While management is crucial for the performance of institutions, the BRDC management has been found to be the main cause for the council's ills and failure to perform as per the expectations of communities. It has been systematically instrumental in wasting resources, providing shoddy services and reducing community power and endangering the very existence of the institution. To further support this, the BRDC nearly went bankrupt in the year 2000 and this led to mass demonstrations by people in urban Beitbridge. Consequently, senior council staff was fired, particularly in the Finance Department. Even the CEO had to resign in 2000 under pressure. The new complement of staff and the incumbent CEO, are now engaged in cleaning the mess left by the previous regime. Thus, whatever shortcomings are in existence at the moment, they are not entirely of the current management's making, but of the previous administration. Management performance was assessed in relation to its capacity to plan, manage finance, build team spirit, manage subordinates, manage projects and perform general administrative duties. The following conclusions were drawn.

a) **BRDC Planning**

The BRDC carries out some planning activities. However, planning is not coherent. At The best, it is ad hoc and dependent on heads of departments. Management is about planning. Without it, rationality is compromised and organisation actions are bound to be problematic. There is likely to be a lack of foresight, coordination and unity of action. Thus, there is need to revisit this area and strengthen it as it is vital for good performance.

b) **BRDC Project Planning**

It appears there is a lot of project planning in the council. However, most of it is demanded by donor agencies, the District Administrator's office and the MOLGANH. In addition, the realisation that programme success depends on

community involvement has influenced council to encourage communities to participate in project work. Besides, project officers in the BRDC have some relevant training and as such, these officers are sometimes eager to 'show off' their knowledge and skills.

In spite of the strengths shown in project planning, there is a need to strengthen project implementation and evaluation by injecting a spirit of commitment into project officers who are responsible for implementation activities. The BRDC has to see to it that programmes and projects benefit local communities rather than the council itself.

Significant is the fact that failure to implement and evaluate programmes has led to a waste of resources through embezzlement or personal enrichment practices. Thus, although the projects are appropriate and result from community participation, they are inefficiently managed, a situation that has undermined their effectiveness as agents for community development. The wildlife management programme discussed in Chapter 5 is an example.

c) **Financial Management**

From the findings, financial management has been the weakest part of the BRDC`s management. As indicated earlier, it has resulted in two financial managers being relieved of their posts. In short, the council's financial management system has undermined the council's performance. Interestingly enough, this department had the longest serving members of council. This is an indicator of council naiveté. The whole system needs to be revitalised as it has drained council of its resources and rendered it inefficient and ineffective. The whole financial management crisis has also been exacerbated, for example, by a lack of proper financial control by the CEO, the absence of internal audits and asset control systems, misuse of vehicles, high vehicle maintenance costs, and council's failure to collect all revenues or at least 85% of revenues. This has

greatly reduced BRDC's performance levels and its viability as an institution tasked with peripheral development.

d) **General Administration**

A general assessment of council administration indicates that there is favouratism in staff recruitment. This has even undermined discipline in the organisation. There are no systems to rationalise staff in different departments and as a result, some departments have excess staff while others have insufficient personnel. Council departments do not work as teams and this inevitably creates problems of coordination. Each department protects its autonomy and independence from others, rather than working organically with others. All this leads to inefficiency and ineffectiveness. This means that the personnel system of council needs to be improved in order to enhance its performance.

In addition to the personnel system, it has been found that there are problems with record keeping, the administration of meetings, stores and the procurement of resources and services for council. In addition, the manner in which council staff behaves makes it difficult to have amicable relations with councilors and communities. Whatever conducive relationships exist, they are in pockets of close friends derived from tribal or village association. This is indicative of a system that lacks accountability and responsiveness. Apart from these ills, it is interesting to note that there are very good relations between blacks and whites on commercial farms in the BRDC. This is unlike the other parts of Zimbabwe. White commercial farmers have adopted a comradely attitude in their dealings with communal farmers. They are always willing to help the latter, particularly in times of draught. Because of this relationship, it is difficult to envisage a situation where communal farmers would invade white farmers, unless some politically inspired groups from outside the district are brought in to distabilise these harmonious relationships. The BRDC has to be commended for playing a part in

creating this much-needed rapport between the two people. This, in fact, was one of the fundamental reasons for amalgamating RCs and DCs into RDCs.

All in all, the observation is that the performance of council in democratic participation and service provision has been modest. This is one of the reasons for the tranquility in the district, despite the fact that council has failed to manage the resources of council appropriately. On the other hand, the management regime of council has been disappointing. It will take a long time before people are satisfied that council management can, in fact work, positively for their benefit.

All in all, however, the study has revealed, beyond reasonable doubt, that the performance of the BRDC is rather unsatisfactory, mainly due to lack of rationality and an entrepreneurial spirit in running council affairs. Councilors and council staff are not acting rationally to optimise or maximise benefits for the BRDC and minimise its costs. Rationality here is about a 'self-conscious process of using reasoned arguments to make or defend advocative claims' (Dunn, 1994:274). Instead of such reasonable behavior manifesting itself for the benefit of council it is evident that councilors and council staff tend to adopt a general model of self-interested behavior, which is premised on individualistic and selfish motives that have to do with:

- self – power accumulation;
- the interest in maximising one's money income by both overt and covert means;
- interest in prestige;
- interest in self-convenience through minimising one's effort in the process of accumulated the greatest benefit for oneself; and
- security where what has been gained should be guarded jealously with inimum losses being incurred in the process (Dunleavy, 1991:148).

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to improve the performance of the BRDC in democratic participation, service provision and management capacity the following recommendations are made.

Democratic Participation and Community Empowerment

Local development can only be meaningful to the local people if they are given the chance to participate in the determination of programmes and projects initiated to contribute to their development. This enhances compliance, legitimizes the programmes and projects and gives communities the chance to take responsibility for their own development. In spite of this, councilors are failing to mobilize communities for this imperative. These officials are failing to provide the necessary political education to their people so that the latter can understand council functions and, the role of the community in the life of the council. Consequently, a recommendation is made to deal with this situation.

Recommendation 1

The recommendation is that council should ensure that communities are conscientized and motivated to participate in the work of council through establishing and implementing programmes on the roles and functions of council. There should also be a public education on these issues where discussions on democratic participation and community empowerment are highlighted. The policy discourse models should be adopted for the public education programme. This is imperative if democracy and good governance are to be promoted and achieved. The participation of communities will enforce the accountability of councilors to their wards and the BRDC as a whole. Communities should be encouraged to use the power of the vote in order to reward good performers and sanction bad performers (as far as councilors are concerned). This should be

done in an enlightened and discriminating manner rather than selfish promotion of certain individuals at the expense of others.

It is significant to note, as indicated above, that the key to such consciousness is public education that will enable communities to understand issues of democracy such as human rights, the basic freedoms of individuals and the logic of taking interest in whatever happens in one's district. Councilors on the other hand should take advantage of the high literacy rate among communities if they wish to improve people's participation. Of importance also is that, this participation should not end in rhetoric, but should be translated to implementable action plans.

During council meetings, councilors should always include an item on democratic participation and community empowerment in their agenda. This would give them a chance to debate on the issue and convince one another of its importance. Councilors would also feel duty bound to include such issues in their agenda when they address communities in their respective wards. Where council feels that it is incompetent to initiate such a programme, a consultant can be engaged to justify the advocacy of such an education and lay out concrete aspects that need to be focused upon. This is needless to say that the success of this advocacy will require the cooperation and full commitment of communities, council, central government and other stakeholders or NGOs who may assist in funding the programme.

As indicated earlier, democratic participation in matters of policy, can be strengthened by adopting policy discourse models. These make it imperative for official decision makers to involve communities in what they do. These models would become a guiding or prescriptive frame where councilors would be asked to give evidence whether they have involved communities in arriving at decisions on issues they are presenting to council. For example, a councilor may be asked to indicate the ward or village meetings held to review certain problems; how

decisions were made; how courses of action were prioritized as viable for dealing with a specific issue; and when these consultative meetings were held. Thus, rather than presenting a particular view as completely personal, the views of councilors should be rooted in the communities they are representing. The council can make follow ups through council committees to make sure that what councilors say is from communities rather than a mere fabrication.

Service provision

The major function of any local authority is to provide services of a local nature. This should be done in an effective and efficient manner. An investigation into service provision in the BRDC indicates that the council falls short in this function and, consequently, improvement is needed.

Recommendation 2

The BRDC should be encouraged to have a customer service charter, which should be circulated to all members of the community. This should be encapsulated in the public education programme outlined earlier. This charter should outline the services to be provided, how they should be provided, how communities should voice discontent on any service provided, how officers should conduct themselves when dealing with communities, and how these communities should conduct themselves when dealing with council officials. These operational modalities encapsulated in the charter, are important as they would define the *modus operandi* of council to enable all citizens to be aware, before-hand, how a particular service is provided. This would eliminate doubts, foster transparency and improve effectiveness, efficiency, equity, responsiveness and accountability.

The BRDC should also adopt the 'Best Value" performance models that seek to involve all stakeholders who are interested in quality service delivery and local government performance excellence. Thus, service provision should be a result

of a thoroughgoing consultative process involving communities and their pressure groups, central government departments, political parties, and any bodies networking with local government at any particular time. This is a democratic and transparent process that is expected to lead to excellent delivery of services, which takes into cognisance the need for quality, cost effectiveness, economy and efficiency. Significant here is the fact that:

> … 'Best Value' is related to a local authority's need to be accountable to local people and to have a responsibility to central government in its role as representative of the broad national interest --- to promote customer care in the public sector, the emphasis is on openness of information about services and service standards as a key means of promoting accountability (Speller in Johnson and Scholes, 2001:114).

The process of establishing and working through a Best Value Strategy can be represented diagrammatically as shown in Appendix 6.1. Thus, Best Value should integrate both national development plans and economic strategies with district plans, community plans, corporate plans and service plans. All these should be filtered and harmonised to produce the Best Value performance plan, which should then be implemented and reviewed to gauge performance success. The Best Value performance review process is shown in Appendix 6.2.

Central government expects RDCs to be at the cutting age of service provision and democratising society. Consequently their operations should be guided by the 5-Cs of achieving excellent performance. These are challenge, compare, consult, compete and collaborate. The simple model in Appendix 6.3 illustrates how the 5-Cs are related.

Management Capacity

The ability to provide services to communities depends very much on management capacity to plan, implement, and administer action plans that are consistent with quality service provision. Besides, the BRDC can only function appropriately if council management values excellence in management, which

includes, among others, the ability to plan, manage local authority finances and perform general administrative tasks appropriately. The BRDC management has been found wanting in these areas. Consequently, a recommendation to improve council management is provided.

Recommendation 3

The recommendation covers three aspects of council management: planning and benchmarking, financial management and general administration.

a) **Planning and Benchmarking**

This is a critical part of the BRDC that needs much attention. However, from the onset, it is evident that the council needs to establish a department of policy planning and development. Using Mintzberg (1983:262)'s model of the structure of organizations, this is a technostructure post created to advise council through the CEO, on policy matters and strategic planning. The incumbent should also assist all departments with the preparation of plans and be the coordinating agent of these plans. It is in this department that strategic plans should be prepared. Apart from this, the department should be involved in evaluating council policies, programmes and projects.

Benchmarking should be introduced in the BRDC to try to instill in council departments, the need for continuous improvement of their performance. Benchmarking, although quite frequently misunderstood by managers, does not mean copying what others are doing. It should be a learning process that is expected to challenge existing ways of doing things and then trying to identify minute changes, on a step-by-step basis, that are needed to close the gap between current performance and what is considered to be the best (Wisniewski in Johnson and Scholes, 2001:85). He also adds that:

> … benchmarking should not be seen as a one-off-quick-fix solution to current problems or concerns. Benchmarking is a continuing search for, and implementation of, performance improvement. It

> requires considerable effort motivation and good management to
> be effective but it does offer considerable paybacks.

Thus, the establishment of the policy planning and development unit would ensure that a benchmarking approach is developed and adopted by council. This approach would also help council to continuously review, strategies, service delivery and management processes. It would also assist council to gather and examine comparative data within and outside the organisation, that is, data that could be used to improve the council's performance by learning new ideas and strategies employed by others. The contention here is that:

> Any effective manager in any organisation is interested in continuous performance improvement: improving service delivery, reducing costs, improving efficiency, increasing effectiveness, increasing customer satisfaction. What frequently prevents a manager from improving performance is lack of knowledge: not realizing that things could be "better" not knowing how much "better" things could be or not understanding exactly how to make performance "better" (Speller in Johnson and Scholes, 2001:86).

Thus, the adoption of benchmarking would go a long way into improving the performance of managers.

Another important recommendation for improving management performance has to do with the adoption of managerial and neo-managerial ideology, which advocates for private sector strategies of running public sector institutions, defining public sector organizations in economic terms as well as having managers who take ownership of these organizations and treat them as their own. In this case, public managers become entrepreneurs, driven by public choice theory and the need to ensure excellent performance in these organizations (Terry, 1998:197-199). This gain should inherently accumulate to the organisations they lead, as these could be problematic if taken too far. This shift of management conception is likely to lead to five major changes that may enhance the performance of the BRDC. These are:

- A shift from being service led to being customer led, and from an emphasis on inputs to outputs.
- A move away from professional cultures towards cooperate cultures.
- A move from direct service provision and a sole supplier approach towards an emphasis on a facilitating and enabling role, and towards a joint provision and partnership approach.
- A shift from only meeting minimum standards towards a concern for cost efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery.
- A change from a non-competitive culture towards a competitive approach in providing services (Terry, 1998:198-199).

Fundamental to these changes is that council managers should serve communities as they would their customers. This would, in turn, cultivate a harmonious relationship between council staff and these communities. However, this can only take place if council managers agree among themselves (happens with a lot of introspection) to change their mindset and incorporate a new culture of doing things.

Management also needs to develop an 'outside-in' approach to making decisions and prioritising programmes and projects (Speller in Johnson and Scholes, 2001:112). This approach stems from the fact that stakeholders should be the initiators of policy action and think tanks of council plans. An organisation driven by this approach accepts to be client or customer led. It becomes consultative and listens more to get explanation of a story rather than talk more to explain a story happening away from a manager's environment. This also allows management to think with communities and allow them to develop plans that would be weighed together with those of management in order to adopt what is considered best. This approach challenges communities to come up with intelligent ideas for developing their localities. It also encourages all stakeholders to work collaboratively for the success of the institution.

b) **Financial Management**

Another important aspect of management that needs improvement is financial management. This calls for the establishment of an Internal Auditor post within the Policy Planning and Development Unit. This incumbent should have ample knowledge of financial planning and should help council to maintain a desirable modicum of financial prudence.

Council should take seriously the process of budget preparation so as to come up with accurate budgets. Of significance here is the fact that a budget is an important tool for central planning and control. Consequently, it should be based on the principles of transparency, accountability, decentralisation to operational units, value for money, and living within means. All in Beitbridge should feel that they have a stake in the budget and as such, should realize the importance of making it succeed. It is also important that the budget have clear links with the corporate plan. This plan should be reviewed annually to keep in line with the council's focus and vision at any time.

The BRDC should also develop an elaborate financial management system that is consistent with the needs of Local Government Accounting Standards. This means that it should prepare a wide range of intelligible financial statements that include:

- A balance sheet;
- an income statement;
- a cash flow statement;
- notes to the financial statements, including accounting policies,;and
- appendices to the financial statements.

These financial statements should satisfy a wide cross section of users of these statements. These include central government and its agencies such as the District Administrator` s office, the Provincial Governor's Office, the Provincial Administrator's Office, communities, donor communities, money lenders such as

banks, employees, suppliers of materials and other services, the media and analysts. The diversity of these financial users is also indicative of the need to adopt a holistic approach to stakeholder involvement in the financial affairs of council. This is not only a democratic and transparent exercise but, one that allows cross-feeding, where each of these stakeholders may indicate dissatisfaction and come up with more meaningful ideas on how to undertake certain activities. This becomes empowering information for the council as it can be used for financial capacity building.

Besides these statements, financial benchmarks must be prepared. These are statements or ratios that show the relationship between two different amounts and are expressed in a simple manner. According to Burger and Ducharme (2000:152), three broad categories of benchmarks can be used for analysing financial statements. These are debt management, asset management and profit management benchmarks. These are indicated in Table 6.1 on page 330.

c) **General Management**

The BRDC also needs to overhaul its personnel system. This stems from the realisation that human resources are the most vital part of the organisation. In all the recommendations made so far, if council fails to recruit and place appropriate staff in the positions that have been identified, the whole performance enhancement effort will come to naught. In the same vein, Greer in Dessler (1999: 21) notes that:

> In a growing number of organisations human resources are now viewed as a source of competitive advantage. There is greater recognition that distinctive competencies are obtained through highly developed employee skills, distinctive organisational cultures, management processes, and systems. This is in contrast to the traditional emphasis on transferable resources such as equipment … Increasingly, it is being recognised that that competitive advantage can be obtained with a highly quality workforce that enables organisations to compete on the basis of market responsiveness, product and service quality, differentiated products, and technological innovation.

Table 6.1 Benchmarks and ratios shown below.

Benchmark	Ratio
Debt management	Debt to assets Interest paid on debt Interest as a percentage of operating Expenditure Current ratio Acid test ratio
Asset management	Return on capital invested Asset turnover Annual debtors collection rate Debtors collection period Long standing debtors reduction due to recovery.
Profit management	Operating expense as a percentage of revenue

Source: Burger and Ducharme, 2000:54 in *Administratio Publica.*

Thus, there is a need to link human resources with strategic goals and objectives of the council. This is vital for improved performance. The BRDC should realize that recruiting "homeboys", relatives and ethnic friends is anti- developmental and council should desist from this practice by all means necessary.

The linking of human resources and strategic goals of council can be realised by adopting a Human Resources (HR) strategy model. This model indicates interplay between the HR strategy and council's corporate plans, and results that are expected. A diagrammatic representation of this model is shown in Appendix 6.4. As soon as this strategy is in place, the BRDC should recruit staff using an open competition system based exclusively on merit even in situations where affirmative action policies have to be applied. Because of a clear strategy, it should attract capable people. Once this is done, a comprehensive performance

appraisal system should be attached to career advancement and salary increments. In addition, teamwork should be encouraged and leadership capacity developed.

Above all, the BRDC should have a performance measurement system in place. This system should focus on the entire organisation and should help to keep the council focused and predisposed to high-quality performance in whatever it does. In fact, high-quality performance should be part of its culture. The requirements of the performance measurement system as advocated by Wisniewski in Johnson and Scholes (2001:165) is shown in Appendix 6.5.

For all these recommendations to be put in practice, a rigorous training session should be conducted with council staff and councilors as a way of opening council management minds, providing change oriented information, and ensuring the success of this council perestroika. This is not only rational but imperative for the BRDC excellence.

In all, councilors and staff should adopt a multifaceted rationality strategy to form a basis for making choices of policy decisions and all actions intended to improve their service delivery, management capacity and acceptable performance levels. These include:

- Technical rationality: This is rationality based on the technical effectiveness of a solution. For example, is it technically feasible to provide rural communities with solar energy? The answer should be based on a thorough technical weighing of this project.

- Economic rationality: Here making a choice is dependent on the net gains that an option yields vis-à-vis others. The question is, which alternative has the highest net benefits? This means that council should engage itself in such a process to select one that yields the most net gains.

- Legal rationality: The actions of the BRDC have to be guided by the provisions of the act. Once actions are considered to be outside this legal frame, they should not be adopted.

- Social rationality: The BRDC should prioritise those options that are likely to satisfy the cherished norms and values of society as well as what society considers to be the best for it. Consequently, the actions of council should be consistent with what the people want. The people are the only ones who can determine what they want, hence the need for an intensive consultative approach in making decisions on a combination of services for communities.

- Substantive rationality: Here choices are made taking into cognisance what is considered to be the best under the given circumstances. This is based on a combination of other 'rationality' factors mentioned above.

These rationality considerations indicate the paramountcy of rationalist philosophy in running organisations. Thus, the BRDC management and councilors can use the wisdom provided by the rationalist philosophy to guide it in delineating council actions that would lead to the required levels of performance. This is not about councilors and managers using their powers of reason on their own but for them to adopt an interactive approach where they can engage communities to make decisions. All this is easily achievable if these officials have pride in serving the BRDC.

In conclusion, one should emphasize that the current performance of the BRDC indicates that there is need for continuous research in this area of local government. Research projects should specifically focus on community mobilization, participatory planning, ethics in local government and resource utilization and control. These researches would help to strengthen the capacity of

local government institutions to handle local affairs and to relate amicably with local communities. Once the communities are aware that the institutions are truly representing their interests, they are likely to make unreserved contributions towards sound institutional performance.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 6.1 Best value performance framework
Appendix 6.2 Joined-up thinking and action levels of planning and strategy
Appendix 6.3 5-Cs of achieving service excellence
Appendix 6.4 Key components of the HR strategy model
Appendix 6.5 Requirements of a performance measurement system
Schedules for data collection and a summary of responses

APPENDIX 6.1

National Focus		Local focus
'Corporate health' Pls	Establish authority-wide objectives and performance measures	Local aspirations
Service or cross-service Pls and some	Agree programme of Best Value Reviews and set out in Best Value Performance Plan	5 year cycle for all services
Service or cross-service Pls	Undertake Best Value Reviews of selected areas of expenditure	Challenge purpose Compare performance Consult community Compete with others
Year-on-year improvement	Set and publish performance and efficiency targets in Best Value performance plan	Follow-up action . Report on achievement of targets in Best Value Performance Plan
Test of robustness for local people and cultural government	Independent audit/inspection and certification	. Address shortcomings
Last resort powers to protect public	Areas requiring intervention referred to Minister MOLGAHN	. Deal with failure

Best Value Performance Framework: Source: Johnson and Scholes, 2001:116.

APPENDIX 6.2
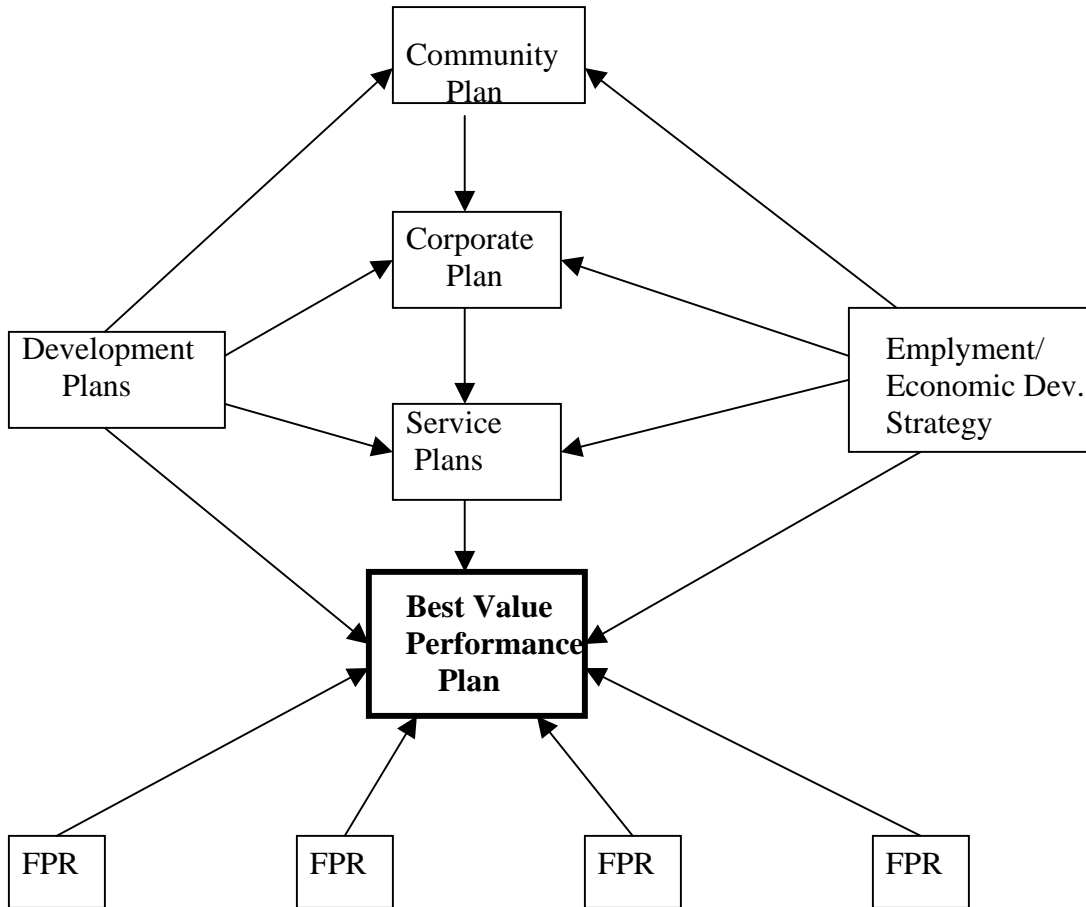
Key:

FPR – Fundamental Performance Reviews of specific services provided by a local authority.

Joined-up thinking and action levels of planning and strategy: Source: Johnson and Scholes, 2001:117

APPENDIX 6.3

The five Cs of achieving service provision excellence

Cs of Excellence	Questions to ask
Challenge	Ask questions for justifying service. Why the service? How should it be provided? Are current methods for service provision adequate? Are there other service providers who are better than us?
Compare	How does this service provision compare with similar ones? How does it compare with the best? How does it compare with others outside BRDC?
Consult	Who are the stakeholders and other network partners? What is their opinion on the provision of this service? How can the service be improved?
Compete	How do we compete with other services being provided? How do we compete with other service providers?
Collaborate	Can we work in partnership with other stakeholders from private, voluntary, public sector, community, and other neighbourhood groups?

Asking the right questions for improving service provision
Adapted from Speller in Johnson and Scholes, 2001:120.

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APPENDIX 6.4

Clarify the Council Strategy
- Increased stakeholder participation
- Improved Council operations
- Enhanced council efficiency
- Best value driven
- Enhanced administrative processes
- Improved customer service

Management Directly Controls this Strategy

Realign the HR Function for Excellence
- HR system innovation
- HR structural change
- Enhanced people management functions
  - Performance management
  - rewards and recognition
  - Communication
  - Training and Career Development
  - Rules and policies
  - Staffing, selection, succession
  - Leadership development

Under Direct Management Control

Create needed competences and behaviors
- Individual
- Organisational

No direct control by Management only influences

Achieving Council Strategy And Results
- Quality service provision
- Growth
- Sustainability
- Improved administrative process

No direct Management Control only influences

Evaluate
and Refine

Adapted from Dessler, 1999:22.

APPENDIX 6.5

THE REQUIREMENTS OF A PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT SYSTEM

A performance measurement system must:

- Be aligned with, and support the vision, mission, goals, objectives strategies and critical success factors of the organisation.

- Provide comprehensive and substantive information supporting better decision making, organisational learning and improvement.

- Provide quantitative, objective feedback that helps identify, understand and manage performance trends and makes accurate forecasts.

- Assist in workflow streaming, maximising throughout as well as eliminating waste and frustration.

- Minimise surprises.

- Reflect strategic, tactical and operational level realities.

- Measure only system relevant information, while avoiding too much measuring.

- Collect data and report results in a way that wastes few resources.

- Provide substantial clues as to the root causes of poor performance.

- Be a component of the total information strategy.

- Contain information, both on what needs to be measured and what the unit measurement can be.

Adapted from Wisniewski in Johnson and Scholes, 2001:165.

RURAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT AND STRATEGIC CHANGE

RDC AUTONOMY AND FUNCTIONAL CAPACITY SURVEY

SELF-ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE

Version for RDC Communities

In carrying out this survey, I recognise that RDCs should provide you with a wide range of services, allow communities to participate meaningfully in their (RDCs) daily operations, and be in a position to manage effectively and efficiently all council affairs for the local people. This survey seeks to find out from you the resident whether or not you are satisfied with the manner in which your RDC conducts its business with respect to the three issues indicated above. Your input is important as it may lead to positive changes in the RDC that may enhance your satisfaction.

In order to minimise the time taken by you in completing the questionnaire, most of the questions require you to simply put a cross in the relevant box or boxes.

Thank you for your valued assistance.

RDC:

SECTION I: BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

Put an X on one answer.

1. How old are you?

18 – 25 years	1
26 – 35 years	2
36 – 45 years	3
46 – 55 years	4
56+ years	5

2. Gender

Male	1
Female	2

3. What is your highest educational qualification?

No education	1
Some primary education	2
Primary education	3
Some secondary education	4
Secondary education completed	5
Some tertiary education	6
Tertiary education completed	7

4. What is the language spoken most at your home? Only ONE language please.

Venda	1
Ndebele	2
English	3
Sotho	4
Shangani	5
Shona	6
Afrikaans	7
Other (specify)	8

5. Residential Area

Communal Area	1
Resettlement Area	2
Commercial Farming Area	3
Urban Area	4

SECTION II: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Put an X on the selected answer and comment on the right hand side of the table.

1. How do you feel about the following in your ward?

001: The manner in which elections are conducted.

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

002: The manner in which people are consulted on policy matters.

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

003: The manner in which communities are made to debate issues before policy decisions are made.

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

004: The manner in which VIDCOs and WADCOs participate in project planning

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

005: The manner in which traditional authority of headman and kraalheads is integrated in ward or RDC business

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

006: The number of times per quarter (three months) my councillor organises briefing meetings

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

007: The manner in which VIDCOs and WADCOs are allowed to run local projects/programmes

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

008: The manner in which VIDCOs and WADCOs are trained to enhance their management skills

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

009: The manner in which council informs communities on what is going on in the district

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

010: The working relationship that exists between council officials and communities.

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

SECTION III: SERVICES OR FACILITIES IN YOUR WARD/NEIGHBOURHOOD

Put an X on the selected answer and comment on the right hand side of the table.

2.   How do you feel about the following services and/or facilities in your ward?

001: Educational facilities

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

002: Health facilities

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

003: Water provision

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

004: Transport facilities

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

005: Roads and streets

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

006: Recreational facilities

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

007: Level of crime

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

008: Sewerage system

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

009: Provision of housing

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

010: Shops

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

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SECTION III: RDC MANAGEMENT ACTION

</div>

Put an X on the selected answer and comment on the right hand side of the table

1. How do you feel about the manner in which council management:

001: Allocates housing stands

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

002: Allocates business stands

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

003: Deals with squatters

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

004: Deals with street vendors

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

005: Handles project funds

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

006: Initiates community projects

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

007: Creates employment

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

008: Distributes food relief

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

009: Conducts itself when it comes to your ward on business

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

010: Handles you when you visit RDC offices

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

SECTION IV: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

001: Three most positive aspects of your RDC

Positive aspect	Code
Council always consults communities	1
Councils maintains good communication with communities	2
Good service provision prevails	3
Good community projects are initiated and implemented	4
Council staff very helpful	5
Sound management of council affairs	6

002: Three most serious problems in your RDC

Most Serious Problem	Code
Poor working relationship between council and communities	1
Communities not informed on council operations	2
Poor maintenance of council infrastructure e.g. roads/streets, schools and clinics	3
Failure to initiate good income generating projects/programmes	4
Attitude of staff towards communities	5
Carefree staff	6

003: Three most important suggestions for improving your RDC

Most Important Suggestions	Code
Council should be committed to working closely its communities	1
People should always be informed and always encouraged to participate in council affairs.	2
Serious attention should be given towards improving present infrastructure	3
Council should create more employment opportunities for communities	4
Council staff should always be friendly to communities	5
Council staff should be trained to reorient them towards serving people better	6

004.   Any other related information that you wish to bring to my attention.

……………………………………………………………………………………………

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……………………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you for your cooperation.

COMMUNITY QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

(248 respondents (n); missing 2)

1. Age of respondents

Age (Years)	Number of respondents
18 – 25	35
26 –35	78
36 – 45	72
46 – 55	43
56+	20

2. Gender distribution

Male	132
Female	116

3. Educational qualification

No education	3
Some primary education	15
Primary education	66
Some secondary education	52
Secondary education	60
Some tertiary education	2
Tertiary education	58

4. Language distribution of respondents

Venda	115
Ndebele	35
English	3
Sotho	35
Shangani	33
Shona	27
Afrikaans	0
Other	0

5. Area distribution

Communal Area	123
Resettlement Area	12
Commercial Area	15
Urban Area	98

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

1 – Very Satisfied;   2 – Satisfied;   3 – Not Sure;   4 – Dissatisfied;   5 – Very

Dissatisfied.

Democratic Participation How do you feel about the following in your ward?	1	2	3	4	5
01. Conduct of elections	128	76	33	17	0
	(51.6)	(30.6)	(13.2)	(4.4)	(0)

02. Consultation on policy matters   33   68   12   121   14

     (13.2) 27.4) (4.8) (48.8) (5.6)

03. Community Debates on policies   21   73   8   120   26

     (8.5)   (29.4) (3.2) (48.4) (10.5)

04. Community participation in projects   63   117   5   51   12

     (25.4) (47.2) (2.0) (20.6) (4.8)

05. Integration of traditional leaders   42   47   14   122   23

     (16.9) (19.0) (5.6) (49.2) (9.3)

06. Ward report back by councilors   7   43   3   127   68

     (2.8)   (17.3) (1.2)   (5.2)   (27.4)

07. Community autonomy in project work 71   96   57   21   3

     (28.6) (38.7) (23.0) (8.5)   (1.2)

08. Training of VIDCOs and WADCOs   11   37   43   68   89

     (4.4)   (14.9) (17.3) (27.4) (35.5)

09. Councilor/Community Communication   32   57   43   72   44

     (12.9) (23.0) (17.3) (29.0) (17.7)

10. Staff/Community Relationship   10   23   57   91   67

     (4.0)   (9.3)   (23.0) 36.7) (27.0)

n = 250; missing =2.

SERVICE PROVISION IN YOUR WARD/ BEITBRIDGE

1 – Very Satisfied;   2 – Satisfied;   3 – Not Sure;   4 – Dissatisfied;   5 – Very

Dissatisfied

Service Provision	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
How do you feel about the following in your ward or Beitbridge in general?					

01. Health provision		30	46	43	111	18
		(12.1)	(18.5)	(17.3)	(44.8)	(7.3)
02. Education provision		185	22	20	11	0
		(74.6)	(8.9)	(8.1)	(4.4)	(0)
03. Water provision		42	63	33	83	32
		(17.0)	(25.4)	(13.3)	(33.5)	(12.9)
04. Transport provision		10	31	52	86	69
		(4.0)	(12.5)	(21.0)	(34.7)	(27.8)
05. Roads and Streets		63	67	26	43	40
		(25.4)	(27.0)	(10.5)	(17.3)	(16.1)
06. Recreation Facilities		21	24	23	123	48
		(8.5)	(9.7)	(9.3)	(49.6)	(19.4)
07. Security provision in urban Beitbridge		79	98	24	32	15
		(31.9)	(39.5)	(9.7)	(12.9)	(6.0)
08. Sewerage System in urban Beitbridge		17	21	107	67	36
		(6.9)	(8.5)	(43.1)	(27.0)	(14.5)
09. Housing provision in urban Beitbridge	93	68	21	33	33	
		(37.5)	(27.4)	(8.5)	(13.3)	(13.3)
10. The provision of Business Centres		48	110	11	75	4
		(19.6)	(44.4)	(4.4)	(30.2)	(1.6)

n = 250; Missing = 2

BRDC MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

1 – Very satisfied;   2 – Satisfied;   3 – Not Sure;   4 – Dissatisfied;   5 – Very Dissatisfied

Management Capacity	1	2	3	4	5

How do you feel about the manner in which
council performs the following:

	1	2	3	4	5
01. Allocating housing stands	38	49	93	47	21
	(15.3)	(19.8)	(37.5)	(19.0)	(7.7)
02. Allocating business stands	36	31	112	38	31
	(14.5)	(12.5)	(45.2)	(15.3)	(12.5)
03. Dealing with squatters 35		31	43	97	42
		(12.5)	(17.3)	(39.1)	(17.1)	(14.1)
04. Dealing with street vendors 20		47	54	89	38
		(19.0)	(21.8)	(35.9)	(15.3)	(8.1)
05. Handling council funds 83		0	15	22	128
		(0)	(6.0)	(8.9)	(51.6)	(33.5)
06. Initiating community projects 39		36	49	66	58
		(14.5)	(19.8)	(26.6)	(23.4)	(15.7)
07. Creating employment 57		12	23	74	73
		(4.8)	(9.3)	(29.8)	(24.9)	(23.0)
08. Distributing food relief 37		23	47	76	65
		(9.3)	(19.0)	(30.6)	26.2)	(14.9)
09. Assisting communities in development 62		43	46	29	68
		(17.3)	(18.5)	(11.7)	(27.4)	(25.0)
10. Cultivating council/community relations 79		15	24	32	98
		(6.0)	(9.7)	(12.9)	(39.5)	(31.9)

n = 250;   Missing = 2

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The most positive aspects of BRDC	Respondents
1. Council regularly consults with communities	117
2. Council/community communication is good	106
3. The provision of essential services is good	79
4. Good projects are initiated and implemented	123
5. Council staff are very helpful	26
6. Council is managed very well	13

n = 250; Missing = 2

The most serious problems of BRDC	Respondents
1. Poor community/council relations	89
2. Council operations not transparent	133
3. Poor maintenance of council infrastructure	117
4. Misuse of council resources	223
5. Managerial incompetence	183
6. Lack of accountability and responsiveness	171

N = 250;   Missing = 2

Important suggestions for improving BRDC	Respondents
1. Improve Council/Community relations	63
2. Involve communities in council affairs	101

3. Improve maintenance of council infrastructure   54

4. Reorient staff to improve customer service   132

5. Improve financial prudence of staff   121

6. Council staff should be trained   98

N = 250;   Missing = 2

Any other relevant performance information   **%**

1. There is favouritism in council   38

2. Managers are here to enrich themselves   33

3. Council should improve financial management   23

4. Council should have its own newsletter   13

5. There is little council supervision by government   7

6. Beitbridge needs a modern shopping centre   6

BRDC COUNCILLORS AND STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE

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SELF-ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE

Version for RDC Staff and Councillors

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In carrying out this survey, I recognise that the functionality of BRDC just like all other local government institutions, is affected by a multiplicity of factors of a micro and macro nature. These may invariably facilitate or hinder the council's performance. The aim of this survey is to take stock of some of these factors particularly those to do with democratic participation and community empowerment; the service provision disposition of council; and management capacity to plan, proffer essential services, maintain and sustain BRDC as a viable and indispensable institution for driving local development. This hopefully, would allow the survey to develop substantive and procedural policy guidelines that would enhance the council's operational efficiency and effectiveness.

In order to minimise the time taken by you to complete the questionnaire, most of the questions require you to simply put a cross (X) in the relevant box or boxes. Inevitably, there are some questions that call for comprehensive explications of your standpoint.

Thank you for your assistance with this important survey.

RDC:

Postion: Councillor ☐ Council Management Staff ☐ (Indicate with an X)

A.   HOUSEKEEPING INFORMATION

1. Your current position:…………………………………………………………………………….

2. What academic/professional qualifications do you hold?

a) Primary School (e.g. Std 6, Grade 7, etc)………………………………………………………………………………

b) Secondary School (e.g. Form 1I, IV, VI), etc)..……………………………………………………………………………….

c) Tertiary: College/University (e.g. Dip. Ed., B. Admin., etc)…………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

**3. Have you attended any specialist courses related to your position?
Yes/No…………………………………………………………………………..**

Specify:……………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

**4.For how long have you been with the
council?……………………………..…………………………………………..**

5. What previous professional experience were you able to bring to this RDC?

……………………………………………………………………………………

**B.   DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY
EMPOWERMENT**

**This section seeks to find out whether or not communities are given the chance to
actively participate in the affairs of council.**

1.   Indicate whether each of the following groups exist and are active in your RDC.

	Not Exist	Exist	Active	Not Active
a) Women's groups				
b) Farmers groups				
c) Business groups				
d) Youth groups				
e) Religious groups				
f) Elderly people's groups				
g) NGOs				
h) Government agencies				
i) Residents' Associations				

j)   **Political parties other than ZANU-PF**   _____

k)   **Other (Specify)**   _____

     ……………………………………..   _____

     ……………………………………..

     ……………………………………….   _____

2.   **Which two groups do you consider to be the most active?**

i)   ………………………………………………………………

ii)   ………………………………………………………………

3.   **At what level(s) are these groups most active?**

	Village	Ward	District
a) **Women's groups**			
b) **Farmers' groups**			
c) **Business groups**			
d) **Youth groups**			
e) **Religious groups**			
f) **Elderly people's groups**			
g) **NGOs**			
h) **Government Agences**			
i) **Residents Associations**			
j) **Political parties other than ZANU-PF**			
k) **Other (Specify)**			
………………………………………….			
………………………………………….			

4.   **Which of these groups participate in the RDC's policy-making process?**

	Formulation	Implementation	Evaluation
a) Women's groups			
b) Farmers' groups			
c) Business groups			
d) Youth groups			
e) Religious groups			
f) NGOs			
g) Government agencies			
h) Residents' Associations			
i) Political parties other than ZANU-PF			
j) Other (Specify)…………………………... ……………………………………………			

5. Who determines the relationship between groups and your RDC?

	Central Government
	RDC
	Groups themselves
	RDC and concerned group
	Other (Specify …………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………………………….

6. In line with Zimbabwe's rural development strategy, VIDCOs and WADCOs are supposed to take part in the district's development planning process. Are these organs involved in this process in your RDC?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure ☐

Explain…………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

7.   Does your RDC encourage community participation in the policy making process?

Yes ☐   No ☐   Not sure ☐

If yes, what systems are in place to make sure people participate in the policy process?

……………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

If not, why? ………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

8.   How does your RDC inform communities about issues concerning the district?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………………

9.   Does your RDC have a public relations department?

Yes ☐   No ☐   Not sure ☐

If not, why?…………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

10. Which community-based activities are predominant in your RDC (e.g. sporting activities, sewing clubs, agricultural projects, etc)? Enumerate any five of them in order of community preference and council support.

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

11. Indicate whether you are (1) Highly satisfied; (2) Satisfied; (3) Fairly Satisfied; (4) Not satisfied; (5)

Highly Not Satisfied with the following:

	1	2	3	4	5
a) **Community involvement in volunteer services (e.g. neighbourhood watch, building schools and clinics, etc.)**					
b) **Community attendance in village and ward meetings**					
c) **Community input in village and ward plans**					
d) **The quality of village and ward plans**					
e) **Community participation in income generating projects**					
f) **Willingness of communities to pay development levy**					
g) **The administration of local authority elections**					
h) **Community participation in local elections**					
i) **Black/white relations in commercial and urban wards**					
k) **Interaction between councillors and communities**					

If you are not satisfied or highly not satisfied with any of the items indicated above, explain your answer.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………….

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C.   BRDC SERVICE PROVISION

This section focuses on selected social services that BRDC provides to the communities. The interest is to determine service effectiveness, equity, and adequacy.

HEALTH PROVISION

1.   **Who is responsible for health provision in your RDC?**   Council   ☐

     Ministry of Health and Child Welfare   ☐   Council and Ministry   ☐

2.   **Does each rural ward have a clinic?   Yes**   ☐   **No**   ☐   **Not sure**   ☐

If No, Why?………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

3.   **Does your district have sufficient health facilities?**

     ☐   ☐   ☐

Yes   **No**   **Not sure**

If No, explain your answer.

………………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………….

4.   **What in should be done to improve the provision of health in your RDC?**

………………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………….

THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION

5.   **Who is responsible for proving education in your district? Ministry of Education** ☐

Council ☐   **Churches and other NGOs** ☐   **All three** ☐

6.   **Does each ward have a kindergarten/crèche? Yes/No……… If No, explain…………**

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………….

7.   **Does each ward have an adult learning center? Yes/No…………………… If No, explain**

………………………………………………………………………………………...

………………………………………………………………………………………...

………………………………………………………………………………………...

8.   **Does each ward have a primary school? Yes/No ………….. If No, explain ………………**

………………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

9.   **Does each ward have a secondary school? Yes/No………………… If No, explain ………**

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

10.   Does your district have tertiary institutions? Yes/No ……………. If yes, how many and what
       courses/programmes are offered in these institutions.?

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………

If No, explain ………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………

11.   Comment on:

a)   Teachers' accommodation ………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

b)   The supply of qualified teachers …………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

c)   Teacher/pupil ratio …………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………….

d)   Council's budgetary allocations to education ……………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………….

e)   Ministry grants to students and schools in general ………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………….

f)   Community participation in the provision of education. …………..……………………

....

....

THE PROVISION OF WATER

12. **How many dams have been constructed in the district since 1993?**

13. **How many boreholes have been constructed in the district since 1993?**

14. **Comment on the water situation in the district including the urban center**

Urban Beitbridge …………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

Rural Beitbridge …………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

THE PROVISION OF HOUSES

15. **How many housing units are in Urban Beitbridge?** ………………………………………….

16. **How many housing units were constructed since 1993**………………………………………….

17. **How many people are in the waiting list?** ………………………………………………………….

18. **At what rate per annum are houses being constrcted?** ………………………………………….

19. **Who is involved in the construction of houses?** …………………………………………………..

………..

……

20. **Comment on the housing sitiuation in Beitbridge taking into cognizance the following:**

Fairness in allocating stands: …………………………………………………………………..

……

……..

……..

The cost of housing units …………………………………………………………………………..

……..

……..

Adequacy considerations ……………………………………………………………………………

……..

……

The squatter situation viz-a-viz housing provision ………………………………………………

……

……

Other …………………………………………………………………………………………………..

……..

……

GENERAL SERVICE PROVISION COMENTS

21. Considering the years between 1993 and 2000, has your RDC improved the provision of the following services? Greatly improved (1); Improved (2); Improved slightly (3); Not sure (4); Not improved at all (5).

1	2	3	4	5

a)   **Telephone**

b)   **Sewerage**

c)   **Refuse collection**   _____

d)   **Electricity**

_____

e)   **Water**

_____

f)   **Public transport**

_____

g)   **Fire/ambulance**

_____

h)   **Road maintenance**

_____

i)   **Education**

_____

j)   **Health**

_____

k)   **Housing**   _____

l)   **Sport**

Where there are improvements, other than in health, education, water and housing, briefly explain how these came about.

   ………………………………………………………………………………………...

   ………………………………………………………………………………………...

   …………………………………………………………………………………………

   …………………………………………………………………………………………

   …………………………………………………………………………………………

Where there are no improvements, other than in health, water, education and housing, explain why such a situation has arisen.

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………………….


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D.        MANAGEMENT CAPACITY
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This section focuses on BRDC management in order to determine its capacity to manage council affairs as well as its performance since 1993.

RDC PLANNING MONITORING AND EVALUATION

1.   **Does your RDC have a mission statement? Yes** ☐   **No** ☐   **Not sure** ☐

2.   **Does your RDC have strategic plans?Yes** ☐   **No** ☐   **Not sure** ☐

3.   **Enumerate the different types of strategic plans that your RDC develops.**

   …………………………………………………………………………………………………..

   …………………………………………………………………………………………………..

   …………………………………………………………………………………………………..

4.   **Does each department have its own strategic plan?**

   Yes ☐   **No** ☐   **Not sure** ☐

   If yes, how are these coordinated into a single RDC plan?

   ………………………………………………………………………………………………….

   ………………………………………………………………………………………………….

   ………………………………………………………………………………………………….

5.   **Does your RDC have a Unit for project/programme development and implementation?**

   Yes ☐   **No** ☐   **Not sure** ☐

6.   **If yes what are the qualifications and experiences of the top three (3) members?**

POST	QUALIFICATIONS	EXPERIENCES

_____

7. **Does your RDC currently have projects/programmes running?**

Yes ☐   No ☐   Not sure ☐

8. **If Yes, enumerate them.**

………………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

9. **How often are these projects/programmes monitored**

☐ **Monthly**   ☐ **Quartely**

☐ **Annually**   ☐ **Every six months**

☐ **Daily**   ☐ **Not at all**

10. **How often are these projects/programmes evaluated?**

☐ **Monthly**   ☐ **Quartely**

☐ **Every six months**   ☐ **Annually**

☐ **Not at all**

11. **What methods are used for monitoring and evaluation?**

Monitoring …………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

Evaluation…………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

12. Does your RDC have any problems with monitoring and evaluation?

Yes ☐ **No** ☐ **Not sure** ☐

If Yes, enumerate them.

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

What has your RDC done to try and solve these problems?

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

13. What type of documents does the council produce for both councillors and the public?

☐ **Written Reports with statistical representations.**

☐ **Written reports with little or no statistical figures.**

☐ **Nothing at all**

14. Does your RDC have interdepartmental teams?

Yes ☐ **No** ☐ **Not sure** ☐

15. If not why?………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

16. **If yes, what teams are there? Name them.**

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

17. **From your knowledge are these teams functioning efficiently and effectively?**

Yes ☐ **No** ☐ **Not sure** ☐

18. **Explain………………………………………………………………………………………..**

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

19. **What are BRDC's sources of revenue?…………………………………………………..**

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

20. **Which are the five major sources of revenue from the best downwards………………..**

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

21. **Does your RDC manage to collect all its revenue every year?**

Yes ☐   No ☐   Not sure ☐

If not, what is the level of collection? (as a percentage)

…………………………………………………………………………………………………….

22. What constraints does the RDC have in collecting revenue?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

23. What can be done to improve the collection of revenue?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

24. How does BRDC control the use of its financial resources?…………………………………..

…….

…….

…….

Are these methods effective? Explain …………………………………………………………….

…….

…….

25. Has your RDC ever experienced problems with its financial management?

Yes ☐   No ☐   Not sure ☐

26. If Yes, describe these problems. ……………………………………………………………….

……

……

……

Have these problems been solved?   Yes ☐   No ☐   Not sure ☐

27. If Yes, how were they solved?……………………………………………………………….

……..

28. If not, how can they be solved?

…….

…….

…….

GENERAL MANAGEMENT

29. Comment on the following, and where possible, indicate the strengths and weaknesses.

a)   The manner in which council vehicles are managed ………………………………………..

…….

……..

……..

b)   The competence of council staff …………………………………………………………………

……..

……..

c)   The management of council staff …………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

d)   The relationship between councilors and management staff ………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

e)   The involvement of councilors in managing council affairs……..…………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..
f)   The relationship between council management and communities………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

g)   Community involvement in managing council affairs ……………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

h)   Involvement of subordinates in decision making ……………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

30. Indicate whether you are (1) Highly satisfied; (2) Satisfied; (3) Fairly satisfied; (4) Not satisfied:
     (5) Highly Not Satisfied with the following:

	1	2	3	4	5
a) Use and maintenance of council vehicles					
b) The conduct of duty of council staff					
c) Remuneration and fringe benefits for staff					
d) Allowances of councilors					
e) The manner in which the assets of council are controlled					
f) The manner in which budgets are drawn					

g) **Communication between councilors and staff** _____

h) **Communication between councilors and communities** _____

i) **The manner in which services are rendered to communities** _____

j) **Efficiency consideration in conducting council affairs** _____

k) **Fairness in distributing resources in different wards** _____

l) **The relationship between blacks and whites** _____

m) **Resource utilisation and control** _____

n) **Financial accountability** _____

o) **Quality of personnel** _____

Thank you

BRDC COUNCILLORS AND STAFF RESPONSES

HOUSEKEEPING INFORMATION

Distribution of respondents

Councillors	5
Staff	3

1. Positions: Councillors and BRDC appointed management/administrative staff

2. Education distribution of respondents

Primary	1
Secondary	2
Tertiary	3

3. Specialist training 2

4. Duration with the BRDC: 1 – 8 years

5. Experiences: Teaching and administration

DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

1. Presence of active community groups

	EXIST	ACTIVE	NOT ACTIVE
Women's groups	X	X	-
Farmers' groups	X	X	-
Business groups	X	-	X
Youth groups	X	-	X
Religious groups	X	-	X
Elderly people's groups	-	-	-
NGOs	X	X	-
Government agencies	X	-	X
Residents Associations	X	-	X
Political parties besides ZANU-PF	X	-	X

2. Women's groups and Farmers groups most active

3. Level where groups most active	Village	Ward	District
Women's groups	-	-	X
Farmers groups	-	X	-
Business groups	-	-	-
Youth groups	-	-	X
Religious groups	X	X	X
Elderly people's groups	-	-	-
NGOs	-	X	X
Government Agencies	-	-	X
Residents Associations	-	X	-
Political Parties besides ZANU-PF	X	X	X

4. Participation of groups in policy making

	Formulation	Implementation	Evaluation
Women's groups	X	X	X
Farmers groups	X	X	X
Youth groups	-	X	X
Religious groups	-	-	-
NGOs	X	X	X
Government agencies	-	X	-
Residents Associations	-	X	X
Political parties besides ZANU-PF	-	X	X

5. Who determines the following relationships?

	Cent. Govt	RDC	Groups	RDC/Grp
RDC/Community partnership	2 (25.0)	3 (37.5)	5 (62.5)	6 (75.0)
RDC/Business partnership	2 (25.0)	6 (75.0)	4 (50.0)	8 (100)
RDC/Central Government partnership	8 (100)	3 (37.5)	0 (0)	0 (0)
RDC/NGO partnership	8 (100)	4 (50.0)	3 (37.5)	4 (50.0)

6. Involvement of VIDCOs and WADCOs in development planning

Yes   2   No   6

Direct representation through VIDCO and WADCO chairmen

7.   Encouraging community participation in policy making

<div align="center">Yes   3   No   5</div>

Yes, councilors report back and annual meetings.

(i)   No, participation is just ignored
(ii)   No mechanism to encourage communities to participate except through political party.

8.   RDC/Council communication mode

RDC/Council communication mode	Frequency	%
Report back	4	50
Annual Ward meetings	8	100

9. No public relations department

10.   Dominant community based activities

Dominant community based activities	Frequency	%
Soccer clubs	3	37.5
Netball clubs	2	25.0
Agricultural clubs	8	100
Sewing clubs	6	75.0

11.   Satisfaction with the following democratic participation and community empowerment activities

1 – Highly satisfied;   2 – Satisfied;   3 – Fairly Satisfied;   4 – Not satisfied;
    5 – Highly Not satisfied

<div align="center">

1   2   3   4   5

</div>

Community involvement in volunteer services	0 (0)	3 37.5)	4 (50.0)	1 (12.5)	0 (0)
Community attending village and ward meetings	0 (0)	4 (50.0)	2 (25.0)	2 (25.0)	0 (0)
Community input in village and ward plans	0 (0)	2 (25.0)	3 (37.5)	2 (25.0)	1 (12.5)
The quality of ward and village plans	2 (25.0)	2 (25.0)	1 (12.5)	2 (25.0)	1 (12.5)
Community participation in projects	4 (50.0)	3 (37.5)	1 (12.5)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Willingness to pay development levy	1 (12.5)	1 (12.5)	4 (50.0)	2 (25.0)	0 (0)
Administration of local elections	4 (50.0)	4 (50.0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Community participation in local elections	2 (25.0)	2 (25.0)	3 (37.5)	1 (12.5)	0 (0)
Black/white relationships	5 (62.5)	2 (25.0)	1 (12.5)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Councilor/community interaction	3 (37.5)	2 (2.0)	2 (25.)	1 (12.5)	0 (0)

Comments on lack of satisfaction

1. Some members of the community are not keen to attend particularly those with no children at school. Proposition: They should pay to avoid discouraging others.

2. Communities do not attend because committees tend to tell people what to do than asking them what should be done.

3. Communities are not highly educated.

4. Communities are poor and do not have the money to pay council hence the apparent reluctance to pay levy.

5. Councilors need to interact more with communities through report backs and asking for suggestions to improve council activities.

SERVICE PROVISION

Health Provision

1. Health providers: Council and MOHCW.

2. Rural clinics in wards.   Not all. Depends on centrality of the pace within a ward, or

3. Health facilities sufficient but no medication and adequate trained staff.
   Two or three wards

   4. Improving health provision

   - Improve supply of drugs
   - Recruit more qualified nurses and doctors
   - Improve maintenance of facilities
   - Provide accommodation for health staff

Educational Provision

5. Education providers: BRDC, MOEC, Churches, and Commercial Farmers.

6. Creche/Kindergarten: Not in all wards. Parents failing to organize themselves for this service.

7. No. Some failing to organize themselves for this type of education.

8. Primary school in every ward? No, depends on concentration. Some wards can be serviced by schools in sister wards. The school establishment criteria should be met especially as far as the catchment's radius is concerned.

9. Secondary school in every ward? No Primary schools cluster around one secondary school located in one of the constituent wards.

10. Any tertiary institutions? No. Tertiary institutions are located in the provincial capital – Gwanda town.

11. Comments on:

a) **Teachers accommodation**: Not enough, poor quality, no electricity, no window panes, enough in urban Beitbridge and farmers' schools.

b) **The supply of qualified teachers**: Not enough. Recruit more qualified teachers, primary trained teachers are deployed in secondary schools.

c) **Teacher/pupil ratio**: Ratio too high in most cases. In primary schools it should be 1:40. In secondary schools it should be 1:33.

d) **Council'budgetary allocations to education**: Not enough. Council relies on students' grants from MOEC.

e) **Ministry grants to students and schools in general**: Not enough.

f) **Community participation in the provision of education**: A lot of participation through building levy, academic fees, labour in building schools, encouraging children to attend school.

The Provision of Water

12. Dams constructed since 1993: 3

13. Bore holes since 1993: 15

14. Water situation in:

- **Urban Beitbridge**: Water problems. The water system can no longer cope with the increase in population. There is need to up date the system.

- **Rural Beitbridge**: No water problems. If they exist, they are insignificant.

The Provision of housing

15. Number of housing units: approximately 3000

16. Housing units since 1993: 2 000

17. People on the waiting list: above 8 000

18. How many houses per year are constructed? 200 per year.

19. Who constructs houses? Building Societies, Private construction companies, individuals, and MOLGAHN.

20. Housing situation in Beitbridge.

- Fairness: Not fair. Riddled with favouratism.

- Cost of each housing unit: Reasonable and affordable. However, many people prefer to build on their own. This lowers costs even further.

- Adequacy considerations: Not adequate. Still too many lodgers. The waiting list is still long.

- The squatter situation: Still a problem. Squatters do not want to occupy houses built for them. They prefer shacks as they do not pay rent.

- Other: Council is doing its best. In fact, this is its best investment and it raises a considerable sum of money from these houses.

GENERAL SERVICE PROVISION

21. Improvement in the provision of services since 1993.

1 – Greatly improved;   2 – Improved;   3 – Improved slightly;   4 – Not sure;   5 – Not improved

	1	2	3	4	5
Telephone	2	3	2	0	1
Sewerage	0	1	3	0	4
Refuse collection	0	2	1	1	4
Electricity	2	2	2	1	1
Water	3	2	1	2	0
Public Transport	0	1	2	0	5
Fire/ambulance	4	3	1	0	0
Road maintenance	1	1	1	1	4
Education	4	2	2	0	0
Health	2	2	1	1	2

Housing	6	2	0	0	0
Sport	0	1	2	1	4

- Improvement in fire/ambulance has improved through donations from NGOs.

- There is no improvement in road maintenance. Council has no funds for that and DDF has similar problems and an overload of jobs.

- There is no improvement in sports since new facilities are needed for this. However, the council has no capacity to update its system.

MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

Planning, monitoring and evaluation

1. Mission statement   Yes   4   No   0   Not sure   4

2. Strategic plan   Yes   7   No   0   Not sure   1

3. Strategic plans in BRDC:

   - Short term plans

   - Housing plans

   - Project plans

   - Council/corporate plan

4. Department planning exists   Yes   3   No   3   Not sure   2

   Coordination mechanism: Corporate plan

5. Unit for projects   Yes   8   No   0   Not sure   0

6. Qualifications of most senior project officers

POST	QUALIFICATION	EXPERIENCES
Project Manager	'O' Level + Diploma	More than ten years of Project work.
Project Office 1	'O' Level + Diploma	More than five years service
Project Officer 2	'O' Level + Certificate	More than two years service

7. Projects currently running Yes   8   No   0   Not sure   0

8. Projects: Piggery; Gardening; Child protection; wildlife conservation; pottery; sewing.

9. Monitoring frequency

    Daily   2

    Monthly   2

    Quarterly   2

    Every six months   1

    Annually   1

    Not at All   0

10. Evaluation Frequency

    Monthly   2

    Quarterly   3

Every six months   1

Annually   2

Not at all   0

11. Monitoring and evaluation methods

- Physically checking that workers are following work schedules

- Writing reports

12. Problems with monitoring and evaluation: Yes   5 No   2 Not Sure   1

Problems: Failure to monitor. Failure to write intelligible reports

Any remedial action: none

13. Council documents for public consumption

- Written reports with statistical representation   8

- Written reports with little or no statistical figures 0

- Not at all   0

14. Interdepartmental teams Yes   0   No   5   Not sure   3

15. No reason

16. No reason

17. Not applicable

18. Not applicable

II. Financial Management

19. Sources of revenue:

- Government grants
-

20. Rank the five best sources of revenue

21. Does BRDC collect all revenue? Yes   0   No   8   Not sure   0

   Level of collection: 70%

22. Constraints in resource collection: No follow up for those who do not pay voluntarily.

23. Remedy: Have follow up mechanism

24. Control of financial resources: External auditing and centralised financial system.

   Methods have not been effective up to this point.

25. Problems with financial management: Yes   8   No   0 Not sure   0

26. Problems: Fund embezzlement by managers.

27. Problem solution: Those who embezzled funds were dismissed and new people were engaged.

28. Not applicable.

General Management

29. Comment on the following.

a) **Management of vehicles**: Not proper. People take vehicles and use them as they please.

b) **Competence of council staff**: Not highly competent. But current shake should bring results.

c) **Management of council staff**: Problem since there is a lot of division

    d) **Council/management relations**: Not appropriate

    e) **Involvement of councilors in management**: Insignificant

    f) **Council-management and communities:** strained relationship mostly because of poor management of funds and lack of skills to handle communities by management staff

    g) **Community involvement in managing council affairs:** Insignificant

    h) **Involvement of subordinates in decision making:** Yes during department meetings where each employee can contribute to the agenda being discussed.

30. Satisfaction with the following:

1 – Highly satisfied;   2 – Satisfied;   3 – Fairly satisfied;   4 – Not satisfied;   5 – Highly not satisfied

	1	2	3	4	5
a) Use and maintenance of council vehicles	0 (0)	2 (25.0)	3 (37.5)	3 (37.5)	0 (0)
b) The conduct of duty of council staff	1 (12.5)	2 (25.0)	1 (12.5)	4 (50.0)	0 (0)
c) Remineration and fringe benefits for staff	2 (25.0)	2 (25.0)	1 (12.5)	3 (37.5)	0 (0)
d) Allowance of councilors	1 (12.5)	0 (0)	1 (12.5)	3 (37.5)	3 (37.5)
e) Asset control	2 (25.0)	1 (12.5)	1 (12.5)	3 (37.5)	1 (12.5)
f) The manner in which budgets are drawn	0 (0)	2 (25.0)	1 (12.5)	3 (75.0)	2 (25.0)
g) Communication between councilors and staff	1 (12.5)	2 (25.0)	1 (12.5)	3 (37.5)	1 (12.5)
h) Communication between councilors and communities	2 (25.0)	1 (12.5)	2 (25.0)	2 (25.0)	1 (12.5)
i) How services are rendered to communities	1 (12.5)	2 (25.0)	1 (12.5)	2 (25.0)	2 (25.0)
j) Efficiency considerations in conducing council affairs	1 (12.5)	2 (25.0)	1 (12.5)	3 (37.5)	1 (12.5)

k) Fairness in distributing resources in different wards	1 (12.5)	1 (12.5)	3 (25.0)	2 (25.0)	1 (0)
l) Relationship between blacks and whites	2 (25.0)	3 (37.5)	1 (12.5)	2 (25.0)	0 (0)
m) Resource utilisation and control	1 (12.5)	1 (12.5)	1 (12.5)	4 (50.0)	1 (12.5)
n) Financial accountability	0 (0)	2 (2.0)	1 (12.5)	3 (37.5)	2 (25.0)
o) Quality of personnel	1 (12.5)	2 (25.0)	2 (25.0)	2 (25.0)	1 (12.5)

BRDC INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. RDCS are established through a decentralisation imperative that seeks to create autonomous institutions of local governance. How would you describe this autonomy vis-à-vis the power and influence of central government?

2. How would you describe your operational relationship with the following institutions and does this relationship hinder or facilitate the manner in which your council performs its duties?

   a) The Ministry responsible for local government;
   b) Other ministries;
   c) The District Administrator's Office; and
   d) The Provincial Administrator's Office

DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

3. One of the most important reasons for establishing rural local government structures is to enhance self-democracy, local participation and self-determination by local communities. To what extent are these imperatives fulfilled in your district?

4. What structures and operational guidelines are in place to facilitate democratic participation and what are the hindrances to this process?

5. How would you describe the relationship between council and communities?

6. How does council inform communities about what is happening in the district and how does it get input for decision making from communities?

7. RDCs are a result of amalgamating Rural Councils and District Councils. Has this new local government dispensation managed to unite blacks and whites in your district, or has it improved the relations between the two people (Blacks and Whites)? Explain your answer.

8. What would you say has been the performance of your council in enhancing democratic good governance and local participation? If there are shortcomings, what can be done to improve this performance?

SERVICE PROVISION

9. RDCs are expected to provide services of a local nature to communities within their areas of jurisdiction. Comment on the <u>successes,</u> <u>failures</u> or <u>impediments</u> your council faces in its attempt to provide the following services:

a) Education inclusive of kindergarten, adult, primary, secondary, and tertiary education

b) Health

c) Housing

d) Water

e) Public transport

f) Maintaining roads

g) Marketing community produce e.g. pottery, and knitting wares

h) Keeping Beitbridge clean

i) Eliminating squatting

j) Protecting communities from unscrupulous traders.

10. Provide a summary statement on the performance of your council in providing services to its communities and indicate what can be done to improve the situation in each case.

MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

11. Comment on the council's management cadres with specific reference to their qualifications and commitment to duty.

12. What has been the performance of council staff in:

    a) Drafting budgets, producing financial statements, monitoring and controlling the utilisation of council finances.

    b) Collecting revenue

    c) Managing council vehicles

    d) Maintaining public utilities

    e) Keeping records of council assets

    f) Implementing and evaluating projects

    g) Advising councillors on policy matters

    h) Mobilising communities to engage in self help projects and making an input in RDC activities

    i) Maintaining communities satisfied with the services they (council staff) provide.

    j) Handling and motivating subordinates

    k) Creating an appropriate working relationship with councilors

13. If there are shortcomings in any of the factors indicated in question 12, what can be done to improve the situation?