

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 years. 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 favouritism 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 destabilise 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 edge 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.