CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, NATURE OF THE PROBLEM AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

With governments all over the world re-defining their roles to focus more closely on the needs of their citizens, improving service delivery has become a major priority of modern public institutions. Emphasis on service delivery in the public domain and the increasing expectation of service excellence derive from the fact that public institutions exist primarily and above all else to serve the people in order to meet their needs as well as make their lives better. In a country with a system of co-operative government, local government occupies centre stage in service delivery. Similarly, the employees of local government are at the sharp end of service delivery, undoubtedly, an important undertaking.

As the sphere or level of government that is closest to the people, local government, to a large measure, complements the activities of national government by performing functions that help fill the gaps in service delivery so as to increase citizen satisfaction with public services. The service nature and orientation of local government is clearly evident in the wide range of functions it performs. In Swaziland, for instance, the Urban Government Act, No 8.1969 (S.56) assigns to the country's urban government (municipal authorities) the responsibility of providing essential services such as roads, markets, streetlights, refuse collection and disposal, zoning, sale of plots, housing and infrastructure

development. The aforementioned services are important to urban dwellers as well as those that regularly visit the towns and cities for commercial, business and other reasons. Without local government, such services may be inadequately provided. Clearly then service rendering, for local government, is not just a matter of passing interest. Service to the people is, in the final analysis, its dominant purpose and *raison d' être*.

The national government and individual citizens in every country want to experience strong, vibrant, and dynamic local government institutions that are managed in a competent manner and which deliver the quality of public services that meet the needs of society. From this perspective, it may be argued, it is the continuing responsibility of local government to ensure that local residents, particularly urban residents, receive high quality public services and true value for money. This ought to be the case for all services that have been assigned to local government as part of decentralisation. These are services that are paid for by the inhabitants of a locality and, by their very nature, need to be tailored to the particular needs of the designated area and individual service users.

Thus, the research departs from the premise that local government, a recognisably important arm of the public sector, is there to fulfil the mandate of service provision. In pursuing this mandate, local government, especially in the urban environment, faces the same challenges as other public bodies: to act in a high-performance way, achieve excellence in service delivery, and manage public affairs in accordance with universally accepted norms and values.

However, the picture that is emerging concerning local government in urban communities across Africa points to daunting challenges. Africa has, at 4% per annum, the fastest urbanisation rate in the world. Yet, far from being something to celebrate, this is a problem because the urban environment in Africa is experiencing serious difficulties, and in some cases even some deterioration. National governments and local authorities are generally not coping well with the challenges accompanying rapid urbanisation. The challenges of urbanisation in Africa are wide-ranging; they include high levels of urban poverty, violent crime, health and environmental hazards, limited town and city planning, disregard for laws and regulations, and unacceptable living conditions typified by overcrowding in the slums. Even more crucially, from the point of view of the focus of this research, the challenges of urbanisation include glaring inadequacies in the quality and quantity of municipal services and lack of viable governance systems, at the local level, capable of translating the potential resources in the towns and cities into tangible development gains (Olowu, D.1999: 42; Thomson, D. 2006: 28; African Development Report 2001: 164).

The foregoing comment points to the two major aspects of local government administration that are the focal point of discussion in this research: the *performance* aspect and the *governance* aspect. The thesis postulates that these two aspects are critical elements in service rendering and merit serious consideration, examination and cross-examination. Both are considered in detail, in the relevant sections, with reference to urban government in Swaziland.

The performance aspect is considered in chapter 3 in the context of the need to prove that local government performance is well managed and improved. The question of performance, it is argued, has considerable importance in public administration in general and service delivery in particular, firstly, because of the demands for competency placed upon public bodies by national government and an increasingly sophisticated public; and secondly, because of the requirement to utilise scarce public resources in a more responsible and accountable manner. Striving for continuous improvement in service rendering to satisfy the needs and expectations of the community being served i.e. the pursuit of service excellence is an expectation of government and the general public alike.

Thus, local government performance is considered important to the inhabitants of towns and cities, who are not only the ratepayers but are also the recipients of municipal services. Local residents expect roads to be maintained efficiently, streets to be clean and safe, refuse to be collected timeously, limited resources to be managed judiciously and a wide range of other services to be delivered competently in order that they, as customers, may receive good value for money. In this regard, the perspective of local residents, as customers and as service recipients frequently overlaps with the interests of the national government. The latter, by virtue of being a provider of grant aid to municipalities, as well as being an overseer, expects excellent performance in service rendering from local government and is also due accountability e.g. financial accountability (Dilulio, J. Garvey, G. Kettl, D. 1993: 50).

The governance aspect is examined in chapter 5 in the context of the need to secure improvements in the management of public affairs particularly in local government by giving prominence to accountable and responsive forms of administration. For the past decade, undoubtedly, the issue of governance has featured prominently in the debate about how a modern organisation should be managed. Because of the significance attached to the question of governance, scholarly debate has inevitably focused on all its various dimensions i.e. international governance, economic governance, corporate governance, national governance and local governance. The present research considers the last of the aforementioned dimensions i.e. local governance. In considering this aspect, the thesis focuses mainly on good governance. It is postulated that good governance is a critical element in service rendering, which is the major function of local government. From this perspective, any local government institution that wants to achieve excellence in service rendering needs to give careful consideration to the various elements and/or principles of good governance.

Given the significance of the *performance* aspect and the *governance* aspect in public administration, in general, and local government administration, in particular, it is appropriate at this stage of the discussion to briefly introduce both concepts as well as allude to some of the various initiatives underway, throughout most of the world, to promote and advance both.

There is unanimity on the proposition that the performance of public sector organisations is a critical element in determining the success of service rendering and of development. Stemming from this proposition, it is postulated in this thesis that the measures required to create an efficient and effective local government system that is capable of delivering services in a satisfactory manner have to be seen in the wider context of the reforms that have been or are being implemented at the national level of government.

Most governments have programmes that are designed to improve performance. There are different view points, however, on how well-performing organisations ought to be created. It is considered that there are a number of approaches by which public sector performance might be improved. Contemporary theory and practice have focused on the approach outlined by Osborne and Gaebler in their influential book *Reinventing Government* (1992) – an approach often hailed as a new paradigm in public administration. It advocates that in order to improve the public sector, governments must abandon the traditional public administration paradigm which underpins their bureaucracies and introduce the new public management – an approach that emphasises less rather than more government as well as entrepreneurialism amongst public servants. The new public management (NPM) will be elaborated further in the relevant sections.

At this stage, it suffices to mention that whilst NPM has become a dominant ideology, writers hold different opinions about its major tenets. For instance there

are those who are concerned that the approach suggests directly or implicitly that *public is bad* and *private is good;* and that administrative reform necessarily means the diminution of the role and functions of government so as to create a minimalist state. The writers who hold this view are persuaded, contrary to the major propositions of NPM, that public sector activity can make a contribution to the achievement of developmental goals and the creation of reasonably stable societies that meet the material and social needs of the majority of their people. For this reason there is a degree of skepticism about the policy agenda that calls for the minimization of the role of the public sector and the rolling back of the frontiers of the state until it disappears (Turner, M. & Hulme, D. 2002: 129).

It is worth noting, in the same vein, the observations of McDavid and Marson concerning the various strategies for creating well-performing public organisations. They report that opinion over approaches is split. There are those who, having witnessed decades of change, would like to see a return to the kind of public administration that is typified by officials who represent the commitment, accountability, expertise and neutrality of the traditional government system. Central to this vision is the belief that serving the public interest is a key part of being a public servant. The contrasting view to this is a vision of the entrepreneurial public servant, a new breed of government employees, whose characteristics are: creativity, willingness to take risks, responsiveness to clients, and political flexibility. Such persons would have much in common with their private sector counterparts. Pursuing an abstract such as the public interest would not be part of their view of government (McDavid, J. & Marson, B.1991: 9).

These philosophical differences notwithstanding, it seems all are agreed about the need to pursue performance improvement – through administrative reform. Indeed all governments in Africa have programmes of administrative reform even though they provide different justifications for implementing them.

The need to remove faults, errors, and imperfections in the apparatus of government; the need for attitudinal change towards governmental, administrative and managerial matters; the requirement to achieve more efficiency, effectiveness and value for money; the need to increase the capacity to carry out core government functions; the desire to realise better quality services, more productivity and faster delivery; and the imperative to rightsize the very public organisations that had been encouraged to expand and multiply in earlier years but which are now perceived as obstacles to development - have all been quoted as reasons for reform (Thornhill, C. 1994: 4; Erik Lane, J.1993:122; Turner, M. & Hulme, D. 2002:105-106).

In addition, public sector reforms, particularly those of more recent years, have included measures aimed at promoting and entrenching the democratic tradition, with a view to transforming policies and practices and promoting good government. Administrative reform therefore has universally been sanctioned as a means to bring about the desired changes in the public sector i.e. improved performance and better governance. As Turner and Hulme argue, government is no longer credible (even might be without credit) unless it has an ongoing programme of administrative reform (Turner, M. & Hulme, D. 2002:105).

Accordingly, due to the reforms that have been introduced to improve the quality of public administration, the past two decades have witnessed a gradual but fundamental shift in the process and method of governance in various countries around the world. It is suggested in the managerial reform literature that, by the late 1990s, international best practice in public sector reform had three main features. The first is the re-definition of the role of the state with a view to ensuring that it only performs functions that should be at the level of the state while leaving the rest of the functions to other sectors, such as the private sector, alternatively, to statutory bodies. In pursuing this as a key objective, a number of measures were taken, including, privatization and decentralisation. The second feature relates to efficiency measures, which as indicated above, have been introduced to enhance public sector performance, in the interest of efficiency, economy and effectiveness. The third feature is an emphasis on measures to enforce the accountability of the governors to the governed through good governance (Osborne, D. & Gaebler, T. 1992; Adamolekun, L. 1999).

In the industrialized democracies, two factors combined to propel these changes: budget constraints and public expectations. With regard to the first factor, there were serious macroeconomic difficulties in the 1980s in some developed countries. As such, governments experienced budget constraints owing to the shrinkage of public revenues at a time when public spending was on the rise. Regarding the second factor, the managerial reform literature indicates that in the

last few decades, public views about governance were revolutionised, mirrored by a growing dissatisfaction with government's performance. There was a general view in the countries of the North and indeed of the rest of the world that governments could do more to satisfy public expectations, through the services they provide (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992: 138-165; Adamolekun, L 1999: 11).

As a result of the introduction of the reforms related to what has been referred to above as 'efficiency measures', governments in the developed world have increasingly become more entrepreneurial, customer-oriented, performance-focused, and more decentralised. The term managerialism came to be used to describe the various initiatives aimed at re-inventing government i.e. creating public bodies that would be as efficient and effective in service provision as the best corporations in the private sector anchored by a new breed of public servants – the entrepreneurial public servants – who would be the foundation of the well-performing organisation (McDonald, J. & Mason, B. 1991:9).

As already alluded to, along with the emphasis on efficiency measures, there has also been emphasis on reforms aimed at fostering the democratic culture and entrenching the various good governance principles. The more recent years witnessed a gradual shift globally towards good governance. Accordingly, there has been increasing emphasis on principles such as increased accountability, transparency, responsiveness, representation, and development-oriented leadership. These principles, it is now widely accepted, are essential pillars of

effective administration and management and are potentially important benchmarks of success in the future (Adamolekun, L.1999: 12; McDonald, J. & Marson, B. 1991:9; Hulme, D & Turner, M: 2002:105).

The United States, Britain and Australia, are some of the countries that made the greatest progress in implementing public sector reforms especially those which emphasise efficiency measures. The country of New Zealand became famous for implementing the most radical of these reforms, intended to address the country's macro-economic problems (Adamolekun, L.1999: 12).

Since public sector reform is a growing tendency, the wave of policy reform that swept across the developed countries also reached African countries. The measures that are being implemented in many African countries, as Ladipo Adamolekun (1999: 12) notes, are drawn from the international public sector modernisation movement which began in the 1980s, already alluded to above. At least four developments appear to have given impetus to the more recent public sector reforms in Sub-Saharan African countries: the economic crisis, the administrative crisis, the rise of the pro-democracy movement, and the global wave of reinventing government that began earlier in the advanced countries (World Bank, 2000; Minogue, M. et al 1998).

African countries have implemented either formal or informal structural adjustment programmes to deal with the macro-economic difficulties; introduced

administrative reforms to get to grips with the administrative crisis; and are now in the process of implementing further reforms to promote and consolidate good governance. The process of reinventing government, it has been observed, is not just a passing fad but a global phenomenon of significance that has now been put firmly of the agenda of most countries on the continent (African Development Report 2001:106-7). Consequently, African governments have, step by step, drifted in the same policy direction as their Western developed counterparts. In this way there has been a degree of convergence in the main thrust of policy reform across the continents.

Administrative reform, at national level, potentially can assist in creating more efficient, effective, democratic, and sustainable administrative systems; and by so doing meet the needs of the citizens whilst promoting sustained economic and social development. Since the reform measures being implemented at national level are potentially commendable, it is considered that they need to be implemented at the local level too. Stemming from the above observations, the main thrust of the thesis can thus be summarised in the following manner:

firstly, the current research has identified service delivery as a relevant and important contemporary issue that is significant from both a theoretical and practical viewpoint; and the aspects to be considered are the performance aspect and the governance aspect;

secondly, performance management and governance, are considered core issues in relation to service rendering, because the new orientation in public governance emphasises a service ethos that is concerned with improving government performance (Dilulio, J. Garvey, G & Kettl, D. 1993: 50-54), striving for organisational excellence (Wholey, J. 1987:3), creating well-performing organisations (McDavid, J & Marson, B 1991: 9 -11), and adherence to principles of good governance including responsiveness and effectiveness in public service (Steiss, A. & Daneke, G. 1980:35);

thirdly, whilst some studies have been conducted in many countries to examine the issue of performance and governance in relation to the national level of government, less attention has been given to local government. This research considers these aspects from the perspective of the local level of government, with special reference to urban areas in Swaziland; and

fourthly, the reform measures that are designed to improve government performance and foster better governance – hold the best potential to enhance public service delivery – because the ultimate aim of performance management is efficiency and effectiveness; and well performing and excellent organisations are those that are also inclined towards good governance. Since performance management and governance are central concepts in this research, both are to be given further consideration and elaboration in the appropriate sections of the research concerning the theoretical framework for public service delivery.

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

A number of developments influenced the decision to embark on the present study of local government in Swaziland. The need to investigate the questions that are central to this study arose in the 1980s when the issue of public sector performance was mooted and highlighted as a key element in public administration. Since the 1980s, many countries around the world, including those in Africa have witnessed significant changes in their governance situation. In practical terms there has been a re-orientation of government (still underway and with varying speeds and degrees of institutionalisation) throughout Sub-Saharan African countries.

As noted by various authors, this change or re-orientation has had consequences for the entire government administration system i.e. on its structures, functions and processes. The government re-orientation has had various features, including those that are crucial from the point of view of this study e.g. an enhanced role for sub-national governments and efforts aimed at achieving improved performance in public management (Khan, M. 1981; Adamolekun, L. 1999:12; Turner, M. & Hulme, D. 2002).

Owing to this situation, it became obvious that the performance of the public sector in Swaziland was worthy of scientific investigation. The significance of public sector performance as a research issue, in both recent and current

academic discourse, was underscored by a dissertation completed by the writer of this thesis in 1989 - 1990 that reviewed the question of performance with particular reference to the public service in Swaziland.

In more recent years, in Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries, discussion about the proper role of the public sector in contemporary society has extended to local government. This is in sharp contrast to the situation that prevailed in the years immediately after independence when attention in most SSA states tended to be focussed on the role played by national government, an approach that was influenced by the principles associated with state-led development, a dominant paradigm at the time. The notion of state-led development gave prominence to the commanding role of national government. In these circumstances, centrism prevailed and with a few exceptions, sub-national governments were generally underdeveloped, marginalized, and not given the necessary priority (Wunsch and Olowu, 1990: 3).

The principles associated with state led-development (referred to in the foregoing paragraph) are clearly explained by Cheema and Rondinelli, who argue that from the 1950s, control over development activities in developing countries was centralised in national government ministries and agencies. Central control was compatible with the major theories of economic development that had emerged in the 1940s, which were further elaborated in the 1950s and 1960s. They advocated strong intervention by national government in development activities.

With the support of international agencies such as the World Bank, central planning and management were introduced as a way of modernisation. It would allow the state to initiate, spur and steer economic development. Emphasis was put on large-scale investment in the metropolitan centres and it was assumed that the benefits of growth would trickle down and spread to the peripheral areas. Regional disparities would gradually be lessened and the people would benefit from continued economic growth (Cheema, G.S. and Rondinelli, D.A. 1983:10).

By the end of the 1960s it was widely recognised that centrism had not achieved these developmental goals. In fact the problems of underdevelopment – declining standards of living, income disparities, regional disparities, poverty, including absolute poverty – worsened. Much of the interest in decentralisation, undoubtedly, came from the realisation during the 1970s and beyond that central control and management were not answers to the development problems of the poorer countries of the world (Cheema, G.S. and Rondinelli, D.A. 1983:11).

The government re-orientation of the 1980s onwards, as suggested in the foregoing, is toward enhanced roles for sub-national and local governments, following the failures of centralised government (Adamolekun, 1999:14). Accordingly, in the past two decades, many countries in Africa have sought to decentralise government by transferring power (functions and resources) to local government.

The need for decentralisation is succinctly explained by Turner and Hulme who argue that the excessive concentration of decision making and authority within central government is a major obstacle to the effective performance of public bureaucracies in most developing countries. Public sector institutions are commonly perceived to be geographically and socially removed from the people and to take decisions without knowledge or concern about actual problems and preferences. The popular remedy for the problems of centralisation is decentralisation, a term that is associated with many positive connotations – proximity, relevance, autonomy, participation, accountability and democracy. Decentralisation is a theory and a policy that has appeal across the ideological spectrum. So great is its appeal that it is difficult to locate a government that has not yet unveiled a policy or programme of decentralisation in recent years (Turner, M. and Hulme, D: 2002:151). Accordingly, the Swaziland government has, in keeping with the international trend, experimented with decentralisation.

With the resurgence of decentralisation worldwide, there has been observed a corresponding emphasis on the efficiency and effectiveness of the devolved structures of government. This is because, from an administrative point of view, decentralisation promises more effective and efficient government, as well as improvement in the quality of services delivered (*http://portal.unesco.org*). It is against this background that the World Bank commissioned a study on fiscal decentralisation and sub-national government finance, covering a number of African countries, including, Swaziland in the 1990s (World Bank, Main Report on Fiscal Decentralisation and Sub-National Government Finance, 1999).

Additionally, in the same period of the 1990s the issue of governance in general and specifically good governance in Africa was propelled on to the centre stage of policy reform and academic discourse. International organisations such as the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) championed good governance as a prerequisite for Africa's economic recovery and long-term development and, furthermore, sponsored activities to promote the evolution towards good governance in Africa (ECA 2005: National Governance Assessment: Monitoring Progress Towards Good Governance in Africa).

Owing to the renewed focus on good governance in Africa, the ECA commissioned a study of national governance, conducted in 1999-2000, to measure progress towards good governance, both political and economic, covering 28 African countries, including Swaziland. It is noteworthy, though, that the aforementioned study focused on national government rather than local government (Economic Commission for Africa - African Governance Report, 2005). Yet, it should be obvious that the elements of good governance are significant for modern government in all its various spheres and/or levels, especially the local government level.

The issue of good governance is vital in the context of local government. Recent trends have advocated local governance as an international, national, and regional priority. Commitment is increasingly being expressed to: develop responsive, participatory and accountable systems of governance and

management at local levels; ensure the engagement and participation of civil society in the formulation, implementation and monitoring strategies for development; and to build national capacities to formulate and implement policies at the local level *(http://portal.unesco.org*). It has been argued convincingly that the various good governance elements – to be considered in detail in the relevant sections of the research – can contribute to the development and strengthening of public administration capacity (Adamolekun L, 1999: 8).

In the same vein, the issue of service delivery has assumed increasing importance in African countries in the wake of the growing emphasis on good governance. In the past decade, governments have awakened to the need to improve service delivery and increase the level of public satisfaction with public services. The creation of a competent system of public administration that is capable of formulating appropriate policies and delivering services adequately is considered as one of the key elements of good governance (World Bank, 1992). As an illustration, in the 1990s the government of the Republic of South Africa, as part of its pronounced commitment to democratise the state and promote a professional service ethos, initiated *Batho Pele*, a framework for delivering and improving the quality of services to meet citizens' expectations. Citizen satisfaction, in this case, is a goal that would be achieved when public servants, in their various service rendering activities, succeed in putting people first, through the application of a set of principles or guidelines for *Batho Pele*, outlined by the Government White Paper on Public Service Transformation (*www.info.gov.za.white papers/1995/transformation.htm).*

The above strategy for service delivery adopted in South Africa, to be elaborated further in the relevant section of this discussion, demonstrates that the promotion of a professional service ethos in service rendering, to ensure citizen satisfaction with public services, is not only a key element of good governance but is also a growing trend of significance for contemporary governments. It is for this reason that the Swaziland government found it appropriate to commission a study, in the form of a national survey, to investigate the state of service delivery by central government ministries (Government of Swaziland, Main Report: State of Service Delivery in the Civil Service, 2002).

Whilst the four studies on public administration in Swaziland, referred to in this section, addressed issues that were of major academic significance in the past decade (public sector performance, governance and service delivery), it has been observed, however, that in virtually all these studies, attention focussed on national government rather than on local government. It may be argued that – to the extent that local government has been given scant attention and/or relegated to secondary importance and in some cases completely marginalised – there are important gaps to be filled concerning research on public administration in Swaziland. Thus, it has been determined that a study such as this, which is focussed on local government, can assist to elevate this level of government in the policy and academic debate as well as add to existing knowledge about its proper role in society and the government system.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The study proceeds from a premise that local government acts in a service rendering capacity. Local government institutions are important as providers and administrators of essential public services paid for by the inhabitants of a specifically demarcated geographical area and supplied continuously to meet their needs. The national government and individual citizens expect to experience local government institutions that deliver public services competently.

Whilst research on local government, world wide, has been impressive, in particular the country studies, as evidenced by a voluminous literature in this area of Public Administration, serious gaps remain in terms of research pertaining to Swaziland. Evidence indicates that very limited research has been carried out on local government in Swaziland compared to other countries of the world, including those in the rest of Africa. Less well studied, are the factors underlying inadequacies in service rendering by local government in Swaziland in the period since 1968, i.e. the year of independence.

In this research, the question of public service delivery is examined from the perspective of the role played by urban government in Swaziland. The problem to be addressed by the study concerns the essential factors underlying success or lack of progress in service rendering and the requirements for competent administration in the country's urban areas.

Whereas, there is a paucity of evidence regarding service delivery by local government in Swaziland, research findings concerning a number of countries in Africa indicate that local government institutions face serious challenges in their quest to fulfil the mandate of service delivery. In a study of decentralisation in West African states, it was observed that local authorities were mere agents of central government. There was a tendency towards greater centralisation of power and authority and the stripping of local authorities of their authority, leaving them to perform only rudimentary maintenance functions (Wraith, R. 1972: 67). In Southern Africa, particularly in Botswana and Zambia, a similar picture is portrayed by some studies, which reveal that the capacities of local government have remained limited in terms of providing services, planning and implementing development projects as well as assuming additional responsibilities. This state of affairs is attributed to the central government's continuing tendency to play a dominant role in relation to the operations and activities of local government (Sharma, K 1999: 75; Mutahaba, G 1999: 97). In the same vein, studies of Kenya and Tanzania in East Africa, as reported by Wohlmuth (1999) and the African Development Bank, show local governments as being grossly inadequate with regard to service provision and administration. Local governments in the named countries have lacked autonomy, resources, real power and function and the capacity to raise revenue (African Development Report 2001: 164).

Thus, the picture that emerges concerning the performance of decentralisation is that there have not been many positive results in Africa. Decentralisation has not proven to be a panacea for making state-led interventions more effective in

promoting development. Under the banner of decentralisation, governments created a range of territorial institutions often with a great deal of fanfare. At the same time policies were introduced that concentrated power and decision-making, weakening opportunities for citizens to exercise economic and political power. Serious devolutions have been rare and deconcentration has been the favoured approach (Turner, M. & Hulme, D. 2002:174).

The above state of affairs concerning decentralisation and service delivery in Africa is judged to be unsatisfactory, disconcerting and precarious especially in light of reports that the continent has the highest rate of urban growth, estimated to be at 4% per annum (African Development Report: 2001:165). It is considered that the challenge facing local government in the towns and cities of Africa, in the wake of the unprecedented levels of urban growth, has two sides. The first relates to the lack of appropriate managerial systems and policy frameworks designed to foster better performance, promote greater efficiency and effectiveness of operation, and ensure a more competent service to the urban community. The second relates to poor governance, particularly the lack of systems and frameworks at this level of government, that foster meaningful participation and that also give local inhabitants the opportunity to exercise political and economic power.

Poor performance by municipalities is a serious weakness because, as the level of government that is truly grassroots, local government ought to be a vibrant structure for service delivery that offers the best prospect for countering the

inefficiency and ineffectiveness associated with the centrality of the state in development. Urban government is, therefore, expected to live up to its promise of efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery. Furthermore, the lack of strong and enduring local government systems that are manifestly democratic, accountable and responsive are also serious weaknesses because the primary role of local government – particularly urban government – is to serve as a catalyst to economic growth and development in urban neighbourhoods through public service delivery as well as create arenas for political debate and participation that afford citizens the chance to exercise political and economic power. Without effective local governance, urban municipal authorities will not be able to convert the potential resources available in the city or metropolitan area into essential inputs and/or outputs necessary for supporting urban growth and development. Consequently, urban government will not be able to contribute as much as it potentially could to the process of economic growth and development in the communities being served (Olowu, D.1999: 42).

The foregoing assessment of the performance of decentralisation policies in Africa is shown to be the dominant view. It can be noted, however, that this view needs to be recast against a more positive one, typified by Rondinelli and Nellis (1986), which hold that even though decentralisation policies have not proved universally successful their achievements are significant and increase as time passes; and that therefore there is a case for cautious optimism. It is also worth

noting the proposition that case studies are likely to provide a more balanced account of individual country experiences with decentralisation.

On the basis of the evidence that is available, it may be surmised that to a lesser or greater extent local government in Swaziland is likely to experience the same problems and challenges as those that have already been highlighted in relation to the experience of African countries in general. Since there is little evidence that decentralisation in Africa has succeeded in creating strong, vibrant and democratic systems of local government, capable of efficient and effective service delivery, it may be postulated that the local authorities (city councils, town councils, and town boards) in Swaziland too have yet to emerge as bodies that act in a high-performance way and, furthermore, that the local government system in Swaziland has yet to experience a significant shift towards a democratic dispensation.

The above state of affairs in Swaziland may possibly be attributed to a number of factors including centralisation and excessive control. Yet, the aforementioned are unlikely to be the only factors that undermine the performance and vitality of local government in the country's urban areas. There may well be constraints and hindrances to competent administration that stem from the external environment given that the activities and operations of local government involve conducting and maintaining formal relations with other role-players within the

broader social system. It is postulated that the external environment is likely to impact either positively or negatively on the operations of urban government.

The foregoing observation leads to the compelling proposition that urban government could be a primary structure for development in Swaziland, depending on its capacity to provide municipal services competently, in an efficient and effective manner, and provided that the function and purpose of urban government are reshaped sufficiently to produce a governmental system in the country's towns and cities that give citizens more economic and political power given that better urban governance could be instrumental in securing the livelihoods of people who live in urban neighbourhoods.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In light of the above statement of the problem and the observations already made about the major theme of the research, the thesis will examine the following question:

Does urban government in Swaziland possess the capacity to provide competent administration to deliver effective and efficient services that meet the material and social needs of citizens, particularly the inhabitants of towns and cities, given that they, as customers and service recipients, ought to be the focus of service delivery in a governance context where accountability and responsiveness to them should be the primary goal?

1.5 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

In determining the research objectives, consideration has been given to the main focus of the study. Since the research is aimed at assessing the performance of service delivery by urban government, which entails considering the factors that underlie success in meeting this task, the study objectives are as stated below:

The *first* objective is to examine the nature, structure, powers and functions of local government in the urban areas of Swaziland.

The *second* objective is to assess local government performance in the country's urban areas in relation to service rendering and ability to meet the needs of the people in terms of the quality and quantity of services as well as other development needs of the fast growing urban communities.

The *third o*bjective is to asses the extent to which key good governance criteria are observed in the management of local government affairs in the country's urban areas.

The *fourth* objective is to assess how local government in Swaziland is shaped by its external environment and the implications of this for local government's performance of service delivery in urban areas.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Performance management and governance – the two concepts employed by the research – are significant from a scientific point of view and have continued to receive growing attention in the field of Public Administration in more recent years. To illustrate the significance of the first concept - performance management - Joseph Wholey argues:

In times of important public needs and scarce government resources, improving government performance i.e. increasing the quality, efficiency, and value of public services is important to all. The task facing public managers, from this perspective, is to explore the political and bureaucratic constraints that inhibit high performance in government organisations and then examine the leadership strategies, management practices and analytical approaches that policy makers, managers and staff can use to stimulate, achieve and communicate organizational excellence (Wholey, J. 1987:3).

For Matheson, the growing emphasis on 'performance management' is aimed at achieving a reorientation of public management systems - which traditionally are rule-governed - to take more account of results i.e. what is done and what is achieved (Matheson, A 2002:7). Public sector and related organisations, it is argued, need to demonstrate that public money is spent in accordance with legal mandates and that high quality services are rendered to clients and communities. The new public service culture places the client at the centre of service delivery.

Public sector organisations need to strengthen their focus on performance improvement, monitoring and evaluation, both from a strategic and an operational perspective. Striving towards continuous improvement and aiming for excellence is an expectation of government and society alike (Van der Waldt, G. 2004:3).

The second concept — governance — is also of vital importance. In considering this aspect, the thesis highlights mainly the good governance elements. It is accepted, as a point of departure that a major development in public sector reform internationally has been governments' commitment to adopt best practice in managing public affairs, including the principles associated with good governance; these are principles that are held to be pillars of effective public administration, just as they are also held to be an essential prerequisite for social and economic development, especially in Africa. The aforementioned two issues, public sector performance and good governance, are clearly linked; but also, they are relevant for all governments, regardless of their stage of economic development.

As Matheson argues, due to the outcome-oriented approach in the field of public service delivery, governments now recognize the need to enhance transparency about what governments do and achieve, strengthen accountability for actions and results, increase efficiency in policy implementation and facilitate coherence. Matheson also argues, quite correctly, that – to the extent that these broad

objectives are influencing the reform of public management, it is likely that attention to an outcomes approach will continue to develop in countries already working in this direction and spread to other counties in the years to come (Matheson, A. 2002:22).

Thus, departing from the premise that service delivery, performance management and governance are issues of global interest that are also central to the academic discourse on public affairs, this study will document the Swaziland experience, focusing on urban municipal government. By investigating the issues implicated in the research objectives, the study will reveal whether there is an orientation within local government in Swaziland to meet the requirement(s) for efficient, effective, economical and equitable service delivery. The study will also indicate the extent to which local government in Swaziland has been re-oriented to the key elements of good governance e.g. accountability, transparency, responsiveness, grassroots participation, and good leadership. In addition, by investigating all these variables, the study will reveal the extent to which the key role players are able to influence management and the organisation as a whole to act in a high-performance way. The external factors that impact on local government are likely to become clearer as the study explores the horizontal and vertical linkages of local government.

In relation to the first aspect to be examined – performance management – it may be argued that local government currently evolves at a time of increasing

urbanisation and when urban populations are correspondingly becoming more educated and enlightened. Public expectations of service excellence have never been greater, fuelled as they have been, by a growing performance–oriented culture. There is a growing focus on what functions the managers and councillors within local government actually perform and how efficiently and effectively. This is a reversal of the previous tendency towards apathy concerning the performance of the public sector in general and local government in particular. Hence, it is important to consider whether there is an orientation within local government in Swaziland to adopt international best practice regarding performance management.

In relation to the second aspect to be considered by the study – the question of governance, evidence suggests that this issue has assumed special importance in Africa in recent years in the wake of the renewed interest in democracy and democratisation (World Bank, 1992). The evolution towards the desired form of governance — good governance — is being advocated throughout the continent as part of the reforms aimed at achieving stable and effective government as well as long-term economic development (Economic Commission for Africa, 2005:VI).

This study departs from the position that good governance is an essential requirement for organisational success, in particular through service excellence. Public bodies, such as local government institutions are likely to act in a high-performance way, sustain high levels of satisfaction as far as service delivery is

concerned, and contribute more to development, when they embrace best practice, especially good governance. Conversely, poor governance is likely to contribute to dissatisfaction concerning the performance of service delivery. The study will test this argument with particular reference to local government in Swaziland's urban areas.

It is postulated that this research on local government is significant because local government itself ought to be an important issue to urban dwellers who care about what services are provided in the immediate vicinity. National politicians need local government institutions to assist them to fulfill their promises concerning service rendering to members of society. The members of the public maintain an interest in local government because they are financed mainly through various taxes applicable to local government. Local residents, as recipients of services, need local government, because it acts as an important conduit through which important public services are delivered in their community. How local government institutions are managed and conduct their operations are matters of interest to students of public affairs, policy makers, and society both nationally and internationally.

Additionally, it may be argued that local government, in Swaziland, is an important area for scientific investigation for at least three reasons. Firstly, local government has relations with the national Treasury. There is government commitment to provide grant aid (financial resources) to municipal authorities.

How these resources are allocated and managed are issues that matter greatly, especially in view of their scarcity. Secondly, urban populations served by local government can be expected to be more conversant with and articulate on matters pertaining to government in general and local governance in particular – thus putting local government in urban areas on a different plane, from the point of view of the expectation to deliver public services competently, compared to local government in rural areas. Thirdly, urban residents, it is argued, expect to get not only real value for money, but also to be treated with fairness and involved in local government issues affecting their lives and livelihoods. Therefore, for Swaziland and indeed for any other developing country, the study of urban government is significant especially in an era of increasing urbanisation and one of increasing public expectations; local government is worthy of scientific investigation.

This study is not the first on local government in Swaziland. Beth Rosen Prinz (1976) asserts that her own research on urbanisation and political change in Swaziland, which was in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Ph D in Anthropology, University of California at Los Angeles, was the first of its kind. The fieldwork research by Rosen Prinz stretched from November 1971 to August 1973 and her dissertation was approved in 1976. Thirty years have passed since her study was completed. In the intervening period no other Ph D candidate was found to have completed a similarly extensive scientific study in the area of urban government with reference to Swaziland.

The current research inevitably makes reference to the research conducted by Beth Rosen Prinz much more than any other because her work, which touched on urban local government, precedes the present study. It may be argued that the present study builds on hers because of the similar focus on urban communities in Swaziland. It is asserted that this study complements in some important respects the work done by Rosen Prinz by investigating and reporting on the progress that has been made in the last 30 years since her study was completed. By so doing, the present study revises and updates existing knowledge on those aspects that were previously researched and also fills some of the remaining gaps concerning recent developments in the demands of society regarding the quality of public services.

Whilst acknowledging the contribution of Rosen Prinz to the understanding of urban government in Swaziland, the present study claims to be the first one to have been carried out at the same level in the discipline of Public Administration. Even more crucially, it will be demonstrated that the present study has a different focus to the research carried out by Rosen Prinz in 1976, as the latter was conducted within the framework of the discipline of Anthropology, and also does not concern itself with the issue of service rendering, performance, and local governance. That the focus of the present study is dissimilar to that which was completed by Rosen Prinz is clear from the abstract she produced for her dissertation. In the abstract she states the following about the focus of her dissertation:

"This dissertation focuses on the implications of political independence and majority rule for two urban centers (Mbabane and Manzini) which developed politically and economically under white minority control. Its major purpose is to investigate factors underlying continuity and change in urban local government by analyzing the formal political structure in the two towns in Swaziland, a recently independent Kingdom. More specifically, it examines the factors contributing to the development and decline of a foreign (British colonial) model of local government and the emergence of a uniquely Swazi solution to the widespread problem of adapting a socio-political system (Tinkhundla) developed under a pre-colonial period of independence to the demands of a rapidly urbanizing and industrializing society" (Rosen Prinz, B. 1976: x).

There are a few other theses on Swaziland in the libraries that were visited in Swaziland and South Africa. These theses have had to be reviewed to ascertain their focus, degree of similarity and possible duplication *vis-à-vis* the present study. The theses that were reviewed include one written by Menelisi Genge on Swaziland and submitted to the Michigan State University in 1999, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Ph D degree in History under the title "Power and Gender in Southern African History: Power Relations in the Era of Queen Labotsibeni Gwamile Mdluli of Swaziland, ca 1875-1921"; and another one written by Leon Fourie for the degree of Doctor of Administration, submitted to the University of Pretoria in 2000 on the "Role and functions of municipal councilors: guidelines for the training of newly elected councillors".

The first one (Manelisi Genge's dissertation) provides useful insights on the cultural dimension in Swaziland which are important to the current research. It may be stated that the review of the literature on Swaziland proves convincingly that, in the present research, the cultural dimension should be considered specifically. This is because the Kingdom of Swaziland remains one of the few countries in the world where indigenous culture is a dominant and pervasive social force influencing the administration of public affairs. Besides, Swaziland is a kingdom with an executive monarch, one of the very few remaining in the world and, as such, has to accommodate dualism in the governmental system. Therefore, this important dimension merits inclusion amongst the core issues examined by this research.

The second thesis reviewed for this study (Leon Fourie's thesis) considers the responsibilities of councillors in relation to their governing and representative functions, for the purpose of determining the requirements for core modules for the training of newly elected councillors. Leon Fourie's thesis is related to the focus of the present study in as far as both studies touch on the governance aspect of local government. Having considered the foregoing research projects by the named authors, the present study will agree with some of their arguments and assumptions whilst challenging others.

1.7 LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

In political decision-making, one of the important questions to be resolved relates to the organization of the government's administrative apparatus. This includes determining the institutional arrangements that must exist under the executive authority and how the whole complex arrangement would operate. Typically, the country's constitution creates a system of public administration encompassing a network of public bodies under the executive arm of government to provide public services, such as is the case in Swaziland. The manner in which public administration is organized assumes particular importance because the organizational framework that is created, inevitably, has a bearing on the efficiency and effectiveness with which the services are provided.

Since centralisation has not proved to be an efficient and effective approach to public administration, a number of territorial institutions or sub-national governments (states or provinces or local government) are established to assist in service rendering. Thus, local government is created as a third or second tier of government depending on the agreed institutional arrangement and/or whether the country is a unitary or federal state; the geographical area; and extent of centralisation and decentralisation.

As an illustration, in South Africa and USA, local government is the third sphere of government whereas in Swaziland and Botswana it is the second level of

government. In the above examples the USA may be regarded as a federal state and South Africa as a unitary state with federal characteristics, whilst Botswana and Swaziland may be considered as examples of unitary states.

The institutions of local government, in many countries, are created by statute as part of the policy of decentralisation, intended to give effect to the social and political values enshrined in the constitution and to bring government closer to the people as well as facilitate the peoples' participation in the political processes that shape their daily lives. The process of decentralisation implies moving away from centralised and/or hierarchical government structures to diffused but flatter systems. It connotes some form of local administration and provision of public services by local bodies, in particular local government institutions.

Local government, throughout most of the world, is increasing in terms of importance. There is a strong view today that local government is such an important part of the government system and, therefore, of society in general, that it cannot be ignored by anyone concerned with, and interested in the world in which s/he lives. In the Western world, local government is more important today than it was at the end of World War 2 (Stanyer, J. 1976; Reddy, P.S.1999; Alexander, A. 1982). In Africa it is probably more important now than it was at independence. Therefore, its significance in government is evident. Local government is vital in the quest for stable and effective government.

The above position is underscored by the fact that local government institutions employ an increasing number of public employees, receive and spend a substantial proportion of national income, and have been growing in terms of size and geographical spread. For Stanyer, J. (1976:16), another way of underlining the importance of local government is simply to mention some of the services for which local authorities are responsible – town planning, leisure and recreation, police and security, health, refuse collection, roads maintenance, street lighting and housing - all of which are the conventional denominations for public services often of vital importance to the individuals who consume them.

The foregoing arguments are further emphasised by Cloete and Thornhill whose account of the system of co-operative government in the Republic of South Africa indicates quite clearly that local government is essential because of the role it plays in the governmental system. The government in South Africa is constituted as national, provincial and local spheres of government - which are distinctive, interdependent, and interrelated. Each of the spheres plays roles that are prescribed to it by the Constitution and legislation. Local government, as the third sphere (consisting of municipalities established for the whole country) must govern, on its own initiative, the local affairs of its community, subject to the provisions of the Constitution as well as the relevant national and provincial legislation (Cloete & Thornhill, 2005:21-28).

It is reported by the same authors that local government institutions must strive, within their financial and administrative capacity to realise specific objectives, which are to: provide democratic and accountable government for local communities; ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner; promote social and economic development; promote a safe and healthy environment; and encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in matters of local government; in this way, local government provides citizens with more opportunities to make government and administration useful particularly in the local sphere and give effect to the theories of democracy as well as their practical application (Cloete & Thornhill 2005:28-29).

The foregoing observations about the nature and role of local government are true not only for South Africa but a significant number of other countries in Africa and the rest of the world. As Reddy observes, quite correctly, governments of different nations create local authorities to render services in defined geographical areas, primarily because of the inability of central government to attend to all the detailed aspects of government. Viewed from this perspective, local government can be defined as local democratic institutions or structures, which are subordinate members of the central government, vested with prescribed and controlled governmental powers and sources of income to render specific local services as well as control and regulate the geographic, social and economic development of the local areas (Reddy, 1999: 9-10).

Local government exhibits a number of distinctive characteristics. The following are some of the characteristics of local government that are common for most countries. They are in line with the classical model of devolved government advocated in the 1950s and 1960s as a blue print that newly-independent countries should pursue (Hicks, 1950; Maddick, 1963; Mawhood, 1987; Reddy, 1999; Alexander 1982; Rondinelli, Cheema & Rondinelli, 1983; Wraith,1972).

I. *Locality* - Local government should be a local body that is constitutionally separate from central government and responsible for a range of significant services. Local government is identified with and has jurisdiction over a defined geographical area. The boundaries of each local government are defined precisely through a process of demarcation. Through demarcation, it is possible to draw lines separating one local authority from another and also delineate areas that fall inside a council's jurisdiction.

II. *Legal personality* - a local government system owes its existence to some form of statute. An Act defines the powers and responsibilities of local government and spells out how it shall relate to the other spheres of government e.g. in a system of co-operative governance. As a legal person, a local government can sue and be sued in its own name.

III. *Governmental power* - local government has the authority to carry out formal governmental functions, implement binding by-laws, levy local taxes, charge rates and engage in commercial ventures to raise income. Local government is

empowered to make binding decisions and policy choices within a legally stipulated framework, to allocate resources and provide services other than those of the central government.

IV. *Autonomy* - Local councils are political institutions, and as such expect to have some autonomous decision making authority rather than to function as local out-stations of national government; and where local institutions have such autonomy they will wish to express it by responding to nationally created expectations in what they consider to be a locally determined way. It should have its own budget and accounts along with substantial authority to raise its own revenue. It should employ its own competent staff who it can hire, fire, and promote. Central government administrators should serve purely as external advisors and inspectors and have no role within the local authority.

V. *Representation and participation* - in a democratic system, those whose responsibility is to make decisions and direct the affairs of a local government are either elected or appointed from the community it serves. Local residents are accorded an opportunity to participate in local government affairs probably much more than it is the case with national government affairs. A majority elected council, operating on party lines, should decide policy and determine internal procedures.

VI. *Accountability* - local government is involved in a triangular relationship with the central government and the local citizenry. Those responsible for directing its affairs are accountable for their actions or inactions. Central government officials often do intervene in the affairs of local government because local government is funded, to a greater or lesser extent, by central government. The instinct to intervene on local issues is particularly strong where a particular local government body receives the bulk of its income from the national government. However, in a democratic system, which advocates the principle of autonomy, it is generally held that local government is accountable to the local citizenry rather than the national government.

1.7.1 Representative model of local government: development and decline

Having defined local government and explained its main characteristics, it is appropriate to highlight some major trends relevant to the study of contemporary local government. The following brief discussion provides a general integrated framework into which this study can be set and begins with a review of the background of local government in Africa.

During the colonial period in Anglophone Africa, there emerged two parallel streams of local government, one for the towns and another for rural areas. In the towns some form of representative local government (committees and councils) were introduced, while in rural areas the British attempted to govern through

traditional chiefs, real or putative, and councils e.g. native representative councils (Rosen Prinz, B: 1976:6).

In order to assert control and to introduce their policies the British operated field administration that concentrated decision-making power in the hands of a non-indigenous, centrally-appointed officer; the district commissioner (DC). He was responsible for co-ordinating both forms of local administration. There was minimal interest in devolving power to local representatives as, at least during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the colonial ideology defined Africans as lacking the intellectual apparatus for modern governance. The DC ensured that law and order were maintained and commonly performed a set of political, administrative and judicial roles (Turner, M. & Hulme, D. 2002: 163).

Inevitably there were clashes of viewpoints between the colonial and traditional authorities since each had distinctly different and often conflicting ideas concerning the priorities, functions and composition of local councils. Thus, while colonial officials emphasised the provision of services, and efficiency in the management of the day-day affairs, traditional authorities focused their attention on the settling of disputes and enforcement of custom and traditional practices (Richards, A. 1971:9-12).

The Second World War had a profound impact on the attitudes of colonial powers. For Britain, the government sought to introduce an efficient and

democratic system of local government to its possessions – an exercise in decentralisation. Behind the decision to introduce the representative model early in the 1950s were both political and administrative reasons. Independence at this time was considered to be a distinct possibility and it was assumed that these new institutions would be more effective in national development than traditional authorities (the former native representative councils). From another perspective, it was considered that participation at a local level would be an ideal training ground for preparing new leaders and their electors for democracy. The policy envisaged the gradual evolution of local government and, at least during the initial phases, the DC would play a prime role in tempering local autonomy with oversight by tutoring, advising, and inspecting local authorities. The colonial power feared that too much autonomy would lead to inexperienced managements wasting resources and would generate undesirable demands, such as calls for decolonization. British administrators were hopeful that following independence the local authorities would as assist in entrenching notions of democratic government and act as a countervailing force against possible abuse of power by powerful national government leaders (Cambridge University, 1961:5).

Nationalist leaders initially accepted the axioms of parliamentary democracy and with it the British system as its most effective expression (Mair, L. 1970:134). Underlying their acceptance, however, was the recognition that the representative model would serve as a means of weakening the power of chiefs (Wraith, R. 1972:30). As nationalist movements developed and identified local

government processes as one arena for the pursuit of independence, then the evolutionary approach of the colonial office came under attack. The attempt to establish local government was curtailed in the 1960s as African nations became independent. The national leaders of these new states faced a quite different set of problems than the colonial masters, and had a much more ambitious goal to pursue – development. Uppermost in many of their minds was the need to create a national identity and to introduce national planning. Popular participation in local government was perceived as having the potential to unleash nationalist political forces, whilst decentralised planning ran counter to the notions of efficient planning structures advocated by aid agencies, academics and technocrats (Turner, M. & Hulme, D. 2002:163).

Hyden (1983) and Wraith (1972) have analysed the African experience and argue that under the banner of decentralisation, the 1960s and 1970s actually witnessed the reduction of the power of local government and attempts by national government to exert even greater control over local decisions. As also argued by Rosen Prinz, B. (1976:8) a decade after it was introduced in Africa, the representative model was in a state of decline and stagnation. Local government had become a byword for inefficiency and corruption; and councils were viewed by their constituents as organisations where individuals can feather their nests with relative ease. In countries such as Nigeria, reports of irresponsibility and corruption started filtering out. Aggravating these problems were severe shortages of financial and human resources. The central government absorbed the bulk of available resources and the skilled personnel, leaving the local

councils to fend as best as they could. Without the guidance of experienced staff, and the backup of funds and equipment for public projects, the councils were unable to withstand the pressure of corruption (Rosen Prinz, 1976).

Later in the 1970s, in some countries in Africa, the three major functions of local government – education, health and roads – were transferred to central government as were the councils' major source of revenue; as a consequence local government was left with no meaningful responsibilities. Some African countries saw local governments being dissolved by the central government. Although the degree of devolution to local authorities at the time of independence differed, the general trend was that governments leaned towards deconcentrated authority at the expense of devolved authority in the 1960s and 1970s (Turner, M. & Hulme, D. 2002: 163. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that the representative model of local government collapsed in some countries even before independence and power reverted to the central government.

1.7.2 Centralised model

A major characteristic of governance in the African continent following political independence was the overt centralisation of governmental authority. On achieving independence, many countries retained the inherited structures (United Nations, 1962). This resulted in considerable reliance on centralised institutions and this often meant the neglect or suppression of local self-government or the

absence of any meaningful grassroots involvement in governance. Among the consequences of over-centralisation were the distortion of the development process and the stifling of the contribution that local talent and initiative can make to development; and under-mobilisation of local resources or failure to utilise them to best advantage (United Nations, 1962).

Many governments have, to varying degrees of success, made attempts to reverse the above state of affairs. A claim is made that Africa experienced a second round of decentralisation in the late 1970s and 1980s. The 1970s and 1980s in Africa were characterised by determined efforts aimed at addressing the problems associated with centralisation, to revive local government, and give more power to people at the grassroots level – through decentralisation (Turner, M. & Hulme, D. 2002: 163 -164).

1.7.3 Decentralisation

Decentralisation remains the most popular approach to strengthening public administration and of removing the faults or imperfections associated with central government bureaucracy. Its significance and appeal stem partly from the failures of the centralised state and the persistent feeling that national governments are removed from the people, unresponsive, inefficient, and probably irrelevant to local needs and aspirations. Decentralisation denotes a process whereby centralisation is reversed so that power is shifted from central bodies to a multitude of autonomous or semi-autonomous bodies concerned with

the formulation and implementation of policy in particular localities in answer to local and variable requirements. Thus, Mutahaba offers the following definition of decentralisation:

Decentralisation is ….the transfer of legal, administrative, and political authority to make decisions and manage public functions from central government to field organizations, subordinate units of government, semiautonomous public corporations, area-wide development authorities, functional authorities, autonomous local governments, or non-government organizations (Mutahaba, G: 1989:69).

Decentralised structures can bring the government closer to the people and has the potential for enhancing efficiency and accountability. This point is made persuasively by Turner, M. and Hulme who argue that:

In reality, all national leaders have no choice but to decentralise some decision – making and authority. Total centralisation (all authority being vested in a single individual who takes all decisions) is infeasible even for the most efficient autocrat in a micro state. The needs of the modern state to provide some services to at least part of its citizenry, to exercise political control over its territory and to bolster its legitimacy require that a degree of authority is delegated and dome decisions are made outside of the political and administrative centre (Turner, M. & Hulme, D. 2002: 152).

Most governments endeavour to promote decentralisation because it facilitates the unblocking of an inert central bureaucracy by 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 (Mawhood, P.1987: 20-22; Cheema, G. & Rondinelli, D.1983:14-16).

It is argued that the degree of political and legal power that is transferred or delegated i.e. the amount of power that the national government relinquishes to subordinate institutions may be one way of distinguishing between the approaches or forms of decentralisation, whilst the forms adopted will generally be a function of the motive for which decentralisation was introduced (Mutahaba, G 1989:69). It is worthwhile to consider the question of the degree of decentralisation and the forms that it may take. Decentralisation may be understood from two perspectives. The first is the transfer of authority on a geographical basis by *deconcentration*. The second is the transfer of authority to local government institutions by *devolution*.

Thus, deconcentration may be viewed as administrative decentralisation - the delegation of functions to field units of the same department i.e. to public servants working in the field offices geographically removed from the head office. In this case only a minimum transfer of power takes place to make decisions in the execution of central government policies (United Nations 1962; Wraith, R. 1972). Deconcentration may, on the one hand, merely involve the shifting of workload on an *ad hoc* basis, without shifting authority to decide on how those delegated functions may be performed. On the other hand, it is possible to have a greater degree of deconcentration characterised by a system of field administration with discretion to plan, make decisions, and to adjust the

implementation of central directives to local conditions, within broad guidelines set by the centre (Mutahaba, G.1989: 70).

Devolution is what may be described as political decentralisation. It implies the transfer of responsibilities and functions from the centre to relatively autonomous bodies, lying outside the command structure of the national government, in the form of regional or local governments. It implies a larger measure of autonomy in discharging functions and decision-making by elected representatives within local authorities (United Nations, 1962; Wraith, R. 1972).

The decentralisation purists point out that devolution is the only authentic form of decentralisation. All other forms of decentralisation are held to involve more concentration of power that democratic local government and when judged against the ideal are seen as exhibiting degrees of centralisation (Turner, M. & Hulme, D. 2002:154).

For Mutahaba, devolution should have particular basic characteristics that include the following: firstly, there ought to be a serious intent about the granting of autonomy by the centre to local authorities. Secondly, the local authorities ought to have clear and legally recognised boundaries over which they exercise authority and perform public functions. Thirdly, the local government bodies must be given corporate status and the power to raise sufficient resources to carry out specified functions. Fourthly, devolution implies the need to develop local government institutions as autonomous bodies perceived by the people as belonging to them, in the sense that the institutions provide services that satisfy

their needs and remain subject to the peoples' control, direction and influence. Finally, devolution does not imply federation i.e. the local government units remain linked to the central government and with other units in the political system through arrangements of mutual support and reciprocity. In all cases, the autonomy is granted by the centre (Mutahaba, G. 1989:72).

Some writers on decentralisation point out that decentralisation is a gradual *process*. In environments with poor traditions of citizens' participation, therefore, decentralisation is perceived to be an important first step in creating regular, predictable opportunities for citizen-state interaction. Decentralisation, from this perspective, should not be applied uniformly in a manner that presupposes that all local level structures have equal capacity to take on board devolved functions; it is considered that such a situation can lead to complex regulatory difficulties. The concept of *asymmetric decentralisation* describes a situation in which subnational governments are differentially treated with regard to the regulation, financing and/or delivery of public services (Wehner, J H-G, 2000:249-250).

Local government plays an important role in governing a country and promoting important values. Strong philosophical arguments are advanced, emphasising the potential local government has to promote the efficient and effective rendering of services and to promote and entrench democracy at both the local and at the national level (Reddy, 1999:15). The various factors that make decentralisation a desirable option i.e. the advantages claimed for it include

those that are outlined below (Reddy, 1999; Cheema and Rondinelli 1983; Mawhood, 1987; Hilliard, 1996; Hanekom, 1988).

The bureaucratic structure characterised by the concentration of power and authority at the centre is seen as an obstacle to efficient and effective administration. Through decentralisation, it is possible to reduce bureaucracy and red tape associated with governmental and administrative structures.

Decentralisation promotes democracy. Stronger regional or local governments can control the tendency of central governments to become all-powerful. It can support the process of democracy by facilitating the exchange of information from the local government to the central government and *vice versa*, improving the relationship between the government and the governed, changing the relationship between different social groups from confrontation to co-operation, and supporting the development of democratic institutions.

Decentralisation can facilitate co-ordination in the provision of services. It could promote development management capacity amongst local governments and the provinces, thereby taking over functions that are not performed efficiently and effectively by national governments; it would promote equity in the allocation of resources and ensure that development occurs and is initiated at grass roots level; it could provide an important vehicle for mass participation by the local citizenry and the mobilisation of the rural poor in actions against poverty; it can

promote political stability and national unity by facilitating the participation of groups in different parts of the country in decision-making thereby ensuring that they support the political system.

As the level of government that is closest to the people, local government could allow local citizens to actively participate in affairs which affect them directly. Consequently, at the local level, democracy is experienced and practiced more directly and immediately than any other level of government. Decentralisation could also ensure a more meaningful representation of the divergent political, religious, ethnic and tribal groups in decisions.

Decentralisation is a natural, indispensable counterpart to democracy and fulfils democratic aspirations. It could be stated that local government is of vital importance for promoting democracy in the African context. The absence of real, meaningful local democratic government results in a situation where power is concentrated in the hands of a few, often the elite at the centre. The elites at national level are likely to be self-serving and unresponsive to popular needs and aspirations. This state of affairs diminishes the prospects for local people to exercise both political and economic power or realise the benefits of development. Effective decentralisation could be a solution to the paradox of the African state, which is simultaneously too weak (soft) and too strong (powerful). The African state is weak in those areas where it should be strong (responsiveness) and strong where it ought to be weak (repressive power) (ibid).

However, it is worth noting that the experience of most African countries indicates that decentralisation has taken the form of de-concentration rather than devolution. National politicians have appeared reluctant to relinquish and/or devolve power and allow a degree of autonomy in decision-making at the local level. The key functions remained centralised in the hands of public servants who retained power and dominated decision-making and resource allocation, inspite of the fact that the public services they managed were weak in terms of capacity. In these circumstances, local participation continued to decline in Africa in the absence of meaningful devolution. Elections to local councils are either disallowed in favour of appointments or experienced a low turnout (Olowu, 1998:614). This is a point that will be elaborated further in the relevant sections of chapter 2.

1.7.4 Governance

The term governance is viewed by the Governance Working Group of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (1996) as referring to the process whereby elements in society who wield power and authority, influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life and economic and social development.

The World Bank (1992) defines governance as –

The exercise of political authority and the use of institutional resources to manage society's problems and affairs

An alternative definition suggests that governance is –

The use of institutions, structures of authority and even collaboration to allocate resources and co-ordinate or control activity in society or the economy

Davidson states that governance is about power, relationships and processes of representation, decision-making and accountability. It is about who decides, who has influence, how that influence is exercised and how decision makers are held accountable. Simply put, governance is the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). Government is one of the actors in governance. Other actors in governance vary according to level of government that is under consideration and include of course, local government institutions and communities. It is also includes the market mechanisms where market principles of competition are employed to allocate resources while operating under government regulation (Davidson, M. 2003:11).

Having defined governance this way, good governance can then be viewed as a state of satisfactory fulfillment of expectations and achievement of societal well being by the mandated authority. The attainment of good governance requires accountability, transparency, responsiveness, a strong civil society, popular participation, efficient and effective systems and structures. It has further been stated that for good governance to prevail, there ought to be a permitting environment in terms of political stability (Davidson, M. 2003:11).

The last decade witnessed growing emphasis on good governance. The trend toward democratic governance is a global phenomenon. This new century has often been described as the democratic century (African development Report 2001:179). The growing emphasis on governance is indicative of the fact that public interest on this subject has heightened, more recently. The renewed interest on this subject coincided with the period of time, dubbed the second wave of independence, when awareness in the continent of Africa increased about the need to reform the political and administrative structures. Ineffective governance or bad governance is increasingly being cited as the root cause of many of the development failures in Africa.

The African continent is potentially rich and prosperous, it may be argued. There are many counties in Africa that are endowed with natural resources such as arable land, oil, minerals, and good climate. Even more significantly, Africa has hidden wealth in its people, who are the continent's human resources. However, Africa remains poor, has not fulfilled her potential and has remained marginalized, not because of lack of resources (even though there are a number of countries that lack these resources) but because of the failure to devise stable and acceptable systems of government (World Bank, 2000:48). Yet the goal of reversing the development crisis, according to some views, is not impossible; the continent of Africa is not doomed because of its poverty or its development record. In facing the development challenges, Africa has enormous potential – in resource-based sectors and in processing and manufacturing. It also has hidden

growth reserves in its people – including the potential of its women, who now provide more than half of the regions labour but lack equal access to education and factors of production (ibid).

African economies can perform far better. The region has great scope for more effective use of its resources – public and private, financial and human – and much more scope for improving the delivery of the essential services needed to upgrade the capabilities and health of its people and increase their opportunities (World Bank: 12). Trends in Africa, it is argued, will need to change radically for a catch up process to materialise. This will require determined leadership within Africa. It will require better governance – developing stable and representative constitutional arrangements, implementing the rule of law, managing resources transparently, and delivering services effectively to communities.

1.7.5 Local Governance and democratic decentralisation

Part of the problem in Africa, argues Dele Olowu (1995), is that efforts to construct strong and enduring systems of governance have concentrated at the national level. Local institutions of governance have received limited attention or consideration. The democratisation process at the national level, it is argued, will turn out to be irrelevant to the majority of people without constructing a democratic tradition at the local level, because the new elites in Africa are likely to be self-serving and unresponsive to popular needs and aspirations.

The view is gaining currency that strong institutions of governance at the local level are required not only because of the need to improve the livelihoods of local communities, but also because effective local governance is a necessary condition for strong and viable institutions of governance to emerge at the national level. According to the above view, real democracy has to begin at the local level. It could be said that local government is of vital importance for promoting democracy and development in the African context. It can create barriers against authoritarian regimes, which have become a marked feature of governance in the African continent in recent years (Reddy, P.S. 1999:21-24; Turner, M. & Hulme, D. 2002:151-154).

The term decentralisation does not necessarily signify a democratic dispensation; however, the concept 'democratic decentralisation' implies a more desirable and democratic system and is likely to be the most efficient method for the realisation of the objectives of decentralisation. The process is democratic in the sense that the source from which power is decentralised has its democratic base and the body to which power flows is also democratically organised. In this context democratic decentralisation is a political ideal and local self-government is its institutional form. Democratic local government can prevent the emergence of alternative power centres that are not subject to the influence and authority of the central government. In addition, it provides an opportunity for a government to

communicate with members of society, to influence them and to get feedback from them (Reddy, P.S. 1999:18-21).

Local government, representing decentralised political decision-making, is closest to the people and allows the local community to actively participate in affairs which affect them directly. Local governments can regulate matters that pertain to the local citizenry (within the framework set by the law) using local knowledge and expertise and consulting a democratically elected, local and representative body. Consequently, at the local level, democracy is experienced and practiced more directly and immediately than any other level of government (Hilliard, 1996: 6-7 & Hanekom 1988:17).

Therefore, democratic decentralisation is inseparable from the fundamental principles of good governance. The commitment to democratic principles and good governance is ideally expressed in the constitution**.** The values enshrined in the constitution inform the system of public administration including local government administration in the country.

Building effective and efficient local governance is increasingly seen as crucial components of the democratic project in Africa and as a way to establish a well-functioning economic and political system. The relevance of local governance for socio-economic progress stems from the need for local economic development, improved service delivery, increased popular participation in governance, and the

desire to bring government closer to the people. Good governance must be rooted in the effective participation of the people in decision-making, and functioning local self-governance institutions (African Development Bank, 2001).

1.7.6 External environment

Local governments are semi-autonomous bodies, which is to say that, they enjoy a degree of autonomy from central government. The autonomy is political, administrative and financial. Thus, local government has powers to elect representatives (councillors) who must formulate policies, employ staff (personnel) whose responsibility is to assist in carrying out the policies, and levy taxes (raise income) in order to finance their operations.

Since all organisations exist in and relate to environments that affect their operations, local government too is no exception. Local government no doubt has links with the external environment. The organisational environment is a vital element in influencing the nature of policy. The links that are of vital importance for local government are those that it has with the centre through the ministry responsible for local government. In different countries, various types of relationships emerge between the centre and local authorities. The relationship is not an easy one especially because of the need for local government to be given autonomy and yet it is dependent on central government for resources due to lack of local capacity. This is particularly true for those countries where local

government relies to a large extent on the national government for resources. Autonomy, therefore, is a relative concept.

1.7.7 Public service ethos and values: implications for service rendering

The ethos and values of public service set the public sector apart from the private sector environment. The public sector, where local government is located, is to all intents and purposes, the service sector and it exists primarily if not solely for the provision of services to the public. What distinguishes public institutions from others is that they are recognisably public and have an unmistakable political element. They are also ultimately accountable to the electorate through the various mechanisms for enforcing accountability. All public bodies act in a service capacity. They should be oriented not just towards making life possible but making it good (Strong, 1970:17).

The political element inherent in the public sector environment broadens the focus of public management towards the vague notion of public interest and away from narrow specific interest orientation (Lane, J. 1983). Advocacy and advancement of the public interest then is or ought to be at the core of each and every government institution's programme of action. As argued by Sharpe (1985), the state is not just another organisation. The state and the various public bodies it creates have a different value system or context, as they are or should be oriented towards meeting the needs of the public. They have an obligatory character that implies a duty towards the public (Lane, J.1993:7). Their public

quality allows them to fulfill a mandate, issued through political direction, to advance the public interest, a goal that is qualitative and whose outcomes are not always amenable to quantitative measurement.

Public institutions are either wholly or partially funded through the taxpayers' money. Local government institutions, for instance, have powers of taxation and are in fact, the bodies outside central government with powers to tax (levy local taxes or charge rates). The manner in which public services are funded is the reason why there should be public scrutiny of the operations of public institutions in a way that would not be possible with private companies. Because they are financed through public funds, it seems only logical that the citizens should have a vested interest in how the public institutions and the officials employed in them perform. Since they have already paid, members of the public have a legitimate right to demand and expect to receive adequate services as well as question and influence how public institutions function.

For the reasons already discussed, the public sector environment presents a major challenge to public officials, be they the elected councillors whose responsibility is to make policies or public servants whose role is to assist in the execution of those policies. The decisions, actions and inactions of public officials remain invariably in the public domain. Whilst discharging their duties and responsibilities, public officials are acutely aware of the constant public scrutiny

of and interest in their actions as well as the enormous public expectations as regards performance.

In service delivery, public servants are at the interface between the government, whose role is to ensure the constant supply of services, on the one hand, and the citizens who expect to receive adequate services, on the other hand. Public servants, thus, occupy the frontline position between the service provider (government) and the clients (citizens). When the government's clients are happy or dissatisfied with services, they will direct their gratitude or feelings of discontent to public servants.

In more recent years, there has been growing acceptance of the view that those who receive services from public bodies (citizens) must be viewed and treated as customers or clients of government. Just as customers of private companies may be satisfied or dissatisfied with the quality of the service they receive and have a right to voice their views about them, so are the clients of the government. Since they have already paid, the customers are entitled to receive efficient and effective services, which closely approximate the value of the money they have paid in terms of taxes/rates.

It may be argued that when public servants comply with internationally accepted best practice and/or prescribed normative guidelines in doing their work, the level of satisfaction with services is likely to increase whilst the level of dissatisfaction

amongst clients should diminish. Expectations of fairness, equity and consistency in service rendering require that everyone - the strong, weak, minorities and the majorities – should get fair consideration from public officials in accordance with the constitutional provisions and what is considered as human rights. The members of society in a country (consisting of all races, sexes, ages, and social classes) are not just a means to an end but are in fact the end of the actions and activities of public bodies.

The initiative in South Africa to instill an attitude of *Batho Pele*, as outlined in the White Paper, cited below, provides an excellent example of an attempt to apply and institutionalise equity and fairness in public service delivery. The *Batho Pele* White Paper is the national government's *White Paper for Transforming Public Service Delivery*. It is about giving good customer service to the users of government services. The *Batho Pele* principles emphasise the right of the public to expect quality services, and further provide public servants with a written set of eight principles according to which they must carry out their tasks. All public servants are required to practice *Batho Pele,* which means 'people first'

The eight principles or guidelines for *Batho Pele* in the White Paper are:

1. Consultation
2. Service Standards
3. Access
4. Courtesy
5. Information
6. Openness and Transparency

7. Dealing with complaints
8. Giving Best Value

The above eight principles are explained in the Government's White Paper *WPTPS – (www. Info.gov.za/white papers/1995 transformation.htm)* as follows:

- **Regularly Consult**, with customers about the level and quality of services they are receiving and should receive in future;
- **Set service standards**, set out the level and quality of services that customers can realistically and consistently expect;
- **Increase access to services**, especially to those people who experience barriers to access (such as their - race, gender or disability; where they live; how much money they have; their access to modern communication systems; their culture and so on);
- **Ensure higher levels of courtesy** by setting out and sticking to standards of behaviour for the treatment of customers;
- **Provide more and better information about services**, so that customers have full, accurate, relevant and up-to-date information about the services that are available and that they are entitled to receive;
- **Increase openness and transparency** about how services are delivered, how well they perform, the resources they use and who is in charge;
- **Remedy failures and mistakes**, so that when problems occur, there is a positive response and problems are sorted out; and
- **Give the best possible value for money**, so that customers feel that the money they contribute to the state (through various forms of taxes) is used properly and that any savings are used to improve service delivery further.

Through the *Batho Pele* principles, service delivery and service excellence became a priority for those who are in public service, which requires consultation with the wider community, including the private sector, non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, academic institutions, and

citizens themselves, concerning the delivery of services as well as service standards, courtesy, openness, transparency, better value for money.

The strategy requires also that all government institutions should develop and communicate demonstrable service standards that can be used to assess the performance of government as well as feedback systems that are necessary to maintain quality. To ensure that the underlying objective is achieved the government system is expected to allow a monitoring of service delivery activities, through a performance measurement strategy, that puts emphasis on results (Kroukamp, H. 1999: 305).

The *Batho Pele* principles are, to all intents and purposes, universal values as evidenced by the fact that many other countries of the world, including some within the Southern African region, are constantly considering new ways of improving public service delivery as well as instilling the attitude that the public service quest is, first and foremost, about putting people first. Public officials have a professional responsibility to uphold high standards of honesty and integrity in their dealings with the public and in the management of public affairs. Their conduct should not be dishonorable and therefore bring the public service into disrepute but ought to be exemplary and a credit to the profession. The notion of ethics in the context of public administration suggests adherence to universally accepted norms.

1.7.8 Fiscal Decentralisation

The national government commands a substantial proportion of the state resources and so the degree to which national government is prepared to extend discretionary power to local government over resource generation, planning and utilization has important implications for the success of decentralisation. Fiscal decentralisation generally entails the devolution of power to independent local government authorities that are, in turn, given responsibilities and latitude to determine the level and quality of service to be provided; the manner in which those services are to be provided; and the source and funds to finance the delivery of those services (UNDP/ECA – 2002: 21).

In fiscal decentralisation, centralisation is seen basically as a negative policy. The principle of *subsidiarity* guides decision making with regard to the allocation of tasks amongst the various levels of government. This principle maintains that, under fiscal federalism, decisions should be taken as closely as possible to the citizens and that the transfer to higher levels should not happen unless the lower level is no longer in a position to efficiently continue to provide the service. This principle has been the main strategy in certain parts of the world and a guiding principle for many countries in transition. Local authorities in this way play a central role by having a close relationship with the citizens, influencing how democracy and efficiency develop in order to ensure the best possible interaction between the provision of public service and local needs (Steffenson, J.1999:22).

1.7.9 Alternatives and partnerships in service delivery

An important element in facilitating high performance in local government is the involvement of the various stakeholders in both the decision-making and implementation processes. It is considered that such involvement potentially can assist in mobilising available resources, experiences, and energies of a diverse number of local partners and stakeholders. Such partnerships potentially can facilitate the involvement of local level communities including the marginalised in a given locality in service provision.

Advocates of this approach draw attention to the need to recognize the distinction between *provision* and *production* activities in public service delivery. Provision activities, on the one hand, involve decisions generally associated with governing. They include decisions regarding (a) what services to provide and to whom, (b) the quantity and quality of services to be provided, (c) how to finance those services, and (d) how to ensure that the services are produced. Production, on the other hand, is the process of converting inputs into outputs (UNDP/ECA – 2002:21-21).

A variety of arrangements are possible for both provision and production activities. To allow for the entry of other stakeholders in service provision, it is considered that policy makers may take into account three important elements:

(a) the adoption of commercial principles in service provision; (b) the introduction of competition; and (c) more participation of beneficiaries in service provision especially when the adoption of commercial principles and competition are not easily forthcoming (UNDP/ECA – 2002:21-21).

1.7.10 Private sector and Public-Private Partnerships in service delivery

In the era of economic liberalisation, one of the main candidates in the production of services is the private sector. It is increasingly being recognised that public sector monopoly over the provision of infrastructure, social services, and other goods and services is part of the problem in service delivery. Carefully designed strategies of private sector entry, thus, hold promise as it enhances the prospects for efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery (ibid).

There is a growing recognition that in countries suffering from financial constraints, the government can collaborate with the private sector, allowing situations where operations are contracted out to the private sector; such public-private partnership (PPP) has the advantage of releasing additional private sector resources (both administrative and financial) to address both quantitative and qualitative shortfalls in public services. In spite of the merits of PPP, however, writers have also pointed out the limitations of PPP. Experience in Africa and elsewhere suggests that if not properly regulated and monitored through effective legislative support, the entry of PPP, while providing

opportunities for improved social service delivery, could relapse into inefficiencies that could introduce an additional fiscal burden on the generally poor local level communities. It is in this regard that it is proposed that PPPs should be cautiously introduced, and adopted as part of quality improvement in local government structures rather than as a sudden and radical departure from the direct involvement of municipalities. This is particularly the case in the poorer communities where income levels are insufficient to meet the relatively high prices often demanded by the average private sector provider (ibid).

1.8 RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The research is focussed on urban government in Swaziland i.e. the local level of government found in urban areas only. The term urban government, in the particular case of Swaziland, is used in the statute to refer to urban local authorities. Local government in the rural areas *(Tinkhundla)* is outside the scope of this study, even though reference is made to local government in rural areas in Chapter 2 because of the significance, currently, of the *Tinkhundla* in the country's system of government.

The research examines its subject matter with reference to three urban areas in Swaziland, namely, Manzini, Nhlangano and Mankayiyane. These three urban areas were selected because they exhibit features that are more or less a microcosm of the system of urban government in the country.

The Urban Government Act, 1969 distinguishes among three types of urban local authorities, namely, *city councils, town councils* and *town boards*. The above distinction is based on the level of development reached by a particular urban community. There are, at present, twelve urban local authorities in the country. Of these, two are city councils (Mbabane and Manzini), three are town councils (Nhlangano, Piggs Peak and Siteki), and seven are town boards (Mankayiyane, Hlatikulu, Lavumisa, Matsapha, Ezulwini, Ngwenya, and Vuvulane).

For this research the city council of Manzini was selected as a research site along with the town council of Nhlangano and the town board of Mankayiyane. Since, the views of the inhabitants of the aforementioned urban areas were also relevant, the urban community of Manzini, Nhlangano and Mankayiyane were research sites as well.

Manzini is a typically developed area characterised by modern infrastructure and amenities and is thus regarded as a city administered by a city council. The town of Mankayiyane is a typical small town in a typical rural setting where chiefs still exercise a great deal of power and influence and is administered by a town board. The town of Nhlangano is regarded as an intermediate urban area lying somewhere in the middle in terms of infrastructure, development and amenities and is administered by a town council.

It is contended that the choice of study areas is appropriate because all three categories of urban areas and types of local government – city council, town council and town board – are represented. The unit of analysis in this study is a local government institution. The research setting is a typical local government institution i.e. a city council, a town council and a town board. Accordingly, the population included in the study was as follows:

- Selected inhabitants of the towns and cities in the study areas whose responsibilities are to vote, pay rates and enforce accountability, and who by virtue of being ratepayers and service recipients in their particular town/city can expect to receive adequate services from the local government institutions mentioned above;

- Selected officials of the local government institutions whose responsibilities are to formulate policies and/or administer the provision of public services;

- Selected central government officials whose responsibilities are to enact laws, policies and decisions pertaining to local government in Swaziland.

The key informants within the selected local government institutions were identified and selected on the basis of their knowledge of and involvement in the issues or questions relevant to the study. As for the residents of the cities and towns, a sample of them was taken in the areas falling within the jurisdiction of

each of the identified local government institutions and a representative sample was taken.

There are three sources of evidence that served as the focus of data collection for this study: *documents, archival records*, and a *survey*. All the sources of evidence were deemed to be appropriate. The documents used as secondary sources of data were collected from local government institutions. Archival records were accessed from the National archives in Swaziland and the special collections section of the library of the University of Swaziland. From the special collections section it was possible to obtain theses written on Swaziland including some of those that were reviewed as part of the discussions.

As for the survey, the study relied on an instrument (questionnaire) that was prepared specifically for this purpose. The sampling procedure used in the research was the random sample based on a formal survey. The survey was considered appropriate for collecting views about the municipal authority. The questionnaires have been attached as Annexure A and Annexure B. Two hundred questionnaires in respect of Annexure A and ten questionnaires in respect of Annexure B were administered.

Annexure A is the questionnaire that was designed for the inhabitants of the municipalities and consisted of a series of questions and statements designed to obtain their opinion about the nature of service delivery in their community as

well as all the aspects that are covered by the study. Annexure B was administered to solicit information on the various issues that are central to the study from key informants (councillors, town clerks) in the local government institutions themselves and (policy makers) from national government officials of the parent ministry of local government (MHUD).

1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has limitations due to a variety of reasons. The limitations of the study relate to the following aspects.

- Scope of the study - it becomes necessary to delimit the study i.e. focus only on urban government because of the extreme differences between the traditional system and the western system.

- Coverage of the Research – The research does not cover all the urban areas in Swaziland because of the geographical distances separating the local government institutions in the country. The research will be confined to three urban areas - Manzini, Nhlangano and Mankayiyane.

- Dynamic Nature of the Environment - The public sector environment is constantly in a state of flux. In consequence, government policy is changing continuously, as a result of the dynamic nature of the environment. Inevitably, the current research takes place at a time when the government is

considering new policies, which are likely to impact on the management of local government affairs. It is neither possible nor desirable to incorporate, into the research findings, detail in respect of policy reform, given that the thesis is time bound. Thus, the research will only deal with systems up to December 2005.

1.10 CLARIFICATION OF TERMINOLOGY

There are a number of key issues about this topic, which are described in current literature and they include:

Accountability - the obligation imposed on public officials to provide information, explanations, and justifications concerning their actions, inactions, decisions and performance to overseeing bodies and to the people. It is answerability for one's actions, inactions or behaviour (Romzek and Dubnick, 1987:228);

Autonomy **-** the ability of lower level political institutions to make independent and binding decisions as well as policy choices within a legally determined framework in order to more effectively respond to pressing needs and expectations;

The Centre - the central government represented mainly by the ministry or department responsible for local government affairs, which may exercise powers

in relation to local government as specified in the Act - Urban Government Act (Urban Government Act, No.8 1969)

Council **-** a municipal or town council established under the provisions of the Urban Government Act (Urban Government Act, No.8 1969);

Councillors - the officials who have been elected directly by the people to represent them in a local government and also those who have been appointed by the Minister in terms of the Act, and who by virtue of this mandate are empowered to enact binding decisions (Urban Government Act, No.8 1969);

Customers - the people who, by virtue of having paid taxes and live and obtain services within a defined area, are entitled to receive public services, in this case, from local government institutions;

Decentralisation – 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….it indicates the existence of formal political structures, each covering a defined area, representing local interests as well as the interests of the central rulers (Mawhood, P. 1983: 4);

Democratic decentralisation - a democratic dispensation in which the source from which power flows has a democratic base and the body to which power flow is also democratically organized (Reddy, PS 1999:21);

Economy - is concerned with minimising the cost of resources (staff, material, and equipment) used for an activity in the pursuit of objectives. An economical organization acquires its input resources, of the appropriate quality and quantity, at the lowest cost. In summary, economy means minimizing the cost of resources used for an activity, having regard to quality (Jones, R. & Pendlebury, M. 1988:3)

Efficiency - is concerned with the relationship between the goods and services produced (the outputs), on the one hand, and the resources used to produce them (the inputs), on the other. Organisations must be efficient, which is considered to be the ability to produce maximum output from any given set of inputs, such that there is maximum productivity and lower unit costs. An efficient entity produces the maximum output from any given set of inputs. Alternatively, it may require minimum inputs to achieve a given quality of and quantity of output; (Jones, R. & Pendlebury, M. 1988:3)

Effectiveness - Public bodies are expected to be effective - which is judged to be the ability to help formulate policies and deliver the goods, standards, and services for which the organization was created. It is a measure of the organization's success or otherwise in achieving objectives. It is widely accepted

that effectiveness equates with the degree of success of activities or services in meeting their objective; in other words, that the outcomes specified in the objectives are achieved; (Jones, R. & Pendlebury, M. 1988:3)

Equity - is fairness in public service rendering. It implies giving to each individual what he deserves. It is about ensuring that the customers get fair treatment, such that they get the quality and quantity of services they deserve. It is about fair access to public services, but not equal access (Pauw, JC., Woods, G., Van der Linde, G.J.A., Fourie, D. & Visser, C.B. 2002:7);

Good Governance - the legitimacy of government; the accountability of both the political and official elements of government; the competence of governments to formulate appropriate policies, make timely decisions, implement them effectively and deliver services; respect for human rights and the rule of law (ODA & World Bank in Turner, M & Hulme, D. 2002:231);

Governance – the exercise of political authority and the use of institutional resources to manage society's problems and affairs; It is about who decides, who has influence, and how that influence is exercised and how decision makers are held accountable (World Bank, 1992; Davidson, M 2003: 11):

Participation - the opportunity to take part and be involved in the affairs of an authority and to make an input in the decision-making process; thus allowing for decisions to be made from the bottom-up rather than from the top-down.

Representation - the ability to make and direct the affairs of an institution on behalf of the people by virtue of a mandate;

Tinkhundla - the equivalent of local councils established in the rural areas of Swaziland.

1.11. Organization of the Study

This chapter provides the theoretical base for the thesis. It explains the need for the study; outlines the objectives of the research; articulates the problem statement; explains the significance of the study; indicates the approach and research methodology followed; defines the target population; and provides a theoretical framework for the study.

The second chapter reviews the country context to provide an understanding of the system of local government in Swaziland. It reviews the development of local government in Swaziland and assesses the concept of decentralisation in the country as well as the functions assigned to and powers bestowed on local government. It also assesses how the set up in urban areas differs from that

obtaining in rural areas. By so doing the delimitation of the study and the focus on urban areas becomes clearer.

The third chapter investigates the extent to which service delivery is performed efficiently, effectively, economically and equitably in the research areas. It is argued in this chapter that the "4 E" framework provides useful criteria for analysis and do assist in establishing a link between performance management, service delivery and the promotion of urban growth and development.

The fourth chapter considers the factors that impact on local government administration and management especially those that emanate from its wider environment. It is well researched by writers that an organization such as a city/town council does not exist in a vacuum but is part of a larger environment. Systems theory holds that the activities of an organisation are influenced as much by internal factors as by external factors.

As reported by various authors (Wraith, R. 1972:27) on this subject, the performance and legitimacy of local government in any country are to a lesser or greater extent influenced by the linkages it has with the central government and the wider political system. The chapter then assesses the effects of the environment on the activities and performance of local government. It is argued that the wider environment of local government is either enabling or restrictive

and that the linkages between the centre and local government have implications for local government in urban areas.

In addition to this, the chapter gives attention to the cultural dimension, which in the case of Swaziland inevitably assumes particular importance. The cultural dimension may be viewed as one of the external factors. Swaziland is a monarchy where traditional institutions and values have remained vibrant in the post-independence era in spite of their diminished importance elsewhere in the continent.

The traditional institutions are firmly entrenched to the extent that the country is considered to have a dual system of government, a term used to describe the co-existence of modern and traditional institutions. It is crucial to assess this aspect as well as consider its significance for public administration in general and local government administration in particular.

The fifth chapter is about the need for improvement in local governance. It assesses the extent to which the principles underlying good governance and representative government are observed in the practice of local government administration in the researched areas.

The final chapter, chapter 6, provides a conclusion to the discussion. It presents a summary of the research design and procedure, articulates the main findings of the research and gives an indication of the implications of the findings for further research.

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