

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this concluding chapter is firstly, to present a summary of the research design; secondly, to present a summary of the findings in relation to the questions examined in the previous chapters of the research; thirdly to offer a conclusion and, fourthly, to outline the implications of this inquiry for further research.

The focus of the study was on the requirements for competent administration in urban areas to ensure effective and efficient service delivery. The research has examined the subject of public service delivery against the backdrop of what may be considered as core governing principles that when embraced by the government sector could increase the capacity of public organisations to fulfil their primary purpose in society – the delivery of public services in a manner that improves the quality of life of citizens. Examined in the case analysis of urban government in Swaziland are arguments pertaining to what were determined as the two vital aspects of service delivery in the government sector: the performance aspect and the governance aspect. In addition to these two aspects the research assessed the influence of the environment on local government.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

This subsection presents a summary of the research design. This includes a summary of the research question, objectives of the research and methodology.

6.2.1 Research question

The research sought to examine whether or not urban government in Swaziland possesses the capacity to provide competent administration to deliver effective and efficient services that meet the needs of citizens, the inhabitants of towns and cities, given that as customers and service recipients they ought to be the focus of service delivery in a governance context where accountability and responsiveness to them should be the primary goal.

6.2.2 Objectives of the study

The study began with four key objectives: firstly, to examine the nature, structure, purpose, and functions of local government in Swaziland; secondly, to assess the performance of the urban government system in Swaziland in relation to service delivery and specifically to assess the extent to which municipal authorities have been sufficiently re-oriented to work towards meeting the requirements of efficiency, effectiveness, economy, and equity in their service delivery functions;

thirdly to assess whether urban government has been sufficiently remodeled to practice good governance and; fourthly to assess how the environment has impacted and shaped the local government system in Swaziland.

6.2.3 Methodology and approach

The above objectives led to the collection of the relevant primary and secondary data. The unit of analysis was considered to be a municipal authority and the research setting a typical local government institution. It was determined that all three types of urban government in Swaziland – city council, town council and town board – be included in the inquiry. For evidence, the research relied in part on primary data collected from the residential areas and central business districts of Manzini, Nhlngano and Mankayiyane and their municipal authorities. The research population consisted of the inhabitants of the aforementioned urban areas as well as selected key informants from the named municipal authorities and the national government. Secondary data, which proved to be a vital source of evidence, included documents collected from the municipal authorities and the special collection sections of the library and the archives.

The survey, based on a random sample, was considered appropriate for collecting views on the different aspects of the research. A representative sample of the identified population was determined and the respondents were interviewed using annexure A - the questionnaire specifically designed for this purpose. Two hundred questionnaires in respect of Annexure A were

administered. The key informants were identified and selected on the basis of their knowledge of the issues relevant to the study and were interviewed using annexure B, an instrument specifically designed for this purpose.

6.3 GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

This sub-section presents a summary of the main findings of the research. The summary of the main findings is presented in four broad headings that correspond to the analytical concepts utilised in the various sections of the inquiry: decentralisation, performance management, local governance, and the environmental factors of local government.

6.3.1 Decentralisation

As in other countries in Africa, successive governments in Swaziland have had to consider how best to achieve their declared promises of a better life for their citizens. Decentralisation became the official government strategy for improving public service delivery, promoting local self-government, meeting the objective of sharing power with local government and advancing socio-economic development. Since the early years of independence, attempts have been made by the Swaziland government to decentralise power to local government. This is illustrated by the promulgation of the Urban Government Act, 1969, Regional Councils Order, 1978, and the Establishment of Parliament Order of 1978 (amended in 1992). Collectively these are the instruments that created the

current system of local government. Even more recently, whilst the research was in progress, the national government was considering how best to strengthen the local government system in the country.

The research has reviewed the implementation of decentralisation in Swaziland. The discussion departed from the premise that local government in any country is best understood in terms of its history and in the context of the broader political, social, and cultural environment within which it operates. The research reveals that to a large extent, Swazi society is shaped by the adherence to culture and tradition. It is considered that traditional norms and values permeate almost the entire fabric of the Swazi society. Hence, the governmental system in the country is founded on the interaction between the traditional authority and inherited modern systems of government.

The *Tinkhundla* system, at its core, is designed to facilitate the practice of both Western and traditional styles of government, in a country where development is pursued following the political philosophy of traditional leadership. The hybrid nature of the governmental system embracing traditional and Western-influenced forms of government is a colonial heritage i.e. it derives from colonial policy in Swaziland which permitted the existence of a parallel structure of administration consisting of the Western system and the traditional authority system.

The dualism that is such a dominant feature in the political landscape of the country is clearly manifest in the local government system. The architects of the decentralisation programme in Swaziland constructed a system of local government consisting of modern municipal authorities found in urban areas and a traditional system, *Tinkhundla*, found in rural areas mainly.

The dualism characterising local government is deeply entrenched in the country's political dispensation and as such it is unlikely to disappear even with the coming into effect of the Constitution. In fact the constitution is drafted in such a way that it recognises the dual nature of the local government system, notwithstanding any reference to a single countrywide system of local government. In both the Constitution and the decentralisation policy document, reference is made to various levels of local government - regions, *inkhundla*, chiefdom and urban government. In a unitary state, where regional administration is to all intents and purposes part of the part of the national government bureaucracy, and not another of the levels or spheres of government, this comes down to the simple fact that there are only two levels of government in Swaziland, the national government and local government. The latter is organised in such way that there are two types - rural and urban.

The nature of the system described in the foregoing is an example of how culture influences economic and political conditions and determines the failure or success of public service delivery and of development initiatives. From a

theoretical perspective culture can be an agent of development yet it can also be an obstacle because not all manifestations of it are positive. This underlines why culture should be factored into analysis of development initiatives.

The importance of local government institutions in Swaziland derives from their responsibilities of service provision. Local government institutions are the providers and administrators of basic services in specified areas or localities intended to meet the needs of the people within the overall context of the principles set out in the legislative framework and/or the Constitution. The Swaziland decentralisation policy is very good on paper. It is argued that, as in other countries in Africa, the weakness of the decentralisation process in Swaziland is that the national government appears unwilling to share power with local government because, contrary to the official rhetoric about decentralisation, resources and key functions have remained centralised at the national level, leaving local government not only under-resourced but also performing rudimentary and insignificant functions.

The tendency towards de-concentration which characterises African governments' experiments with decentralisation is particularly evident in the Swaziland example. The emphasis has tended to be on decentralisation along the lines deconcentration and with a prefectural tendency. It is considered that inadequacies in technical, financial and human resource capacity have contributed to the prevailing state of affairs. In addition, the need to maintain

social cohesion, especially in a political environment where the state itself has arguably a very low level of legitimacy, tended to take precedence over the question of power sharing resulting in the present system which is characterised by the domination of local government by national al-be-it to varying degrees due to the asymmetric nature of the decentralisation system.

6.2.3 Performance management in local government

Performance management, it is argued in chapter 3, is critical and decisive in public service delivery as evidenced by the new orientation in public administration and management which emphasises strategies and frameworks that are aimed at improving government performance, achieving organisational excellence, and creating well-performing organisations. The ultimate aim of performance management, it is argued, is effective and efficient public service delivery. Well-performing and excellent organisations, according to this view, are those that put people at the centre and make customers the primary focus of service rendering efforts. In the application of the performance management concept to urban government in Swaziland the research relies on the 4E framework of efficiency, effectiveness, economy and equity.

It is found that there is a performance gap in the service rendering activities of municipal authorities in that they are not properly adjusted to achieving sustained high performance in their service rendering role. It is concluded that urban government in Swaziland does not yet possess the capacity to deliver services in

a high performance way. The above finding confirms the original assumption of the research that municipal authorities as evolving entities in a country that is itself in transition have yet to undergo a significant shift towards service excellence and that they have yet to reach a stage where they can be considered as high performing organisations that deliver services in an efficient, effective, economical and equitable manner.

6.3.3 Local governance

In examining the issue of service delivery, the research was anchored in a governance approach. This aspect is vital, it was argued in chapter 5, because a model public organisation, such as a municipal authority inclined towards service excellence, is expected not only to manage public affairs in an excellent and outstanding manner, but also deal effectively with the various interdependencies in government as well as observe universally accepted norms and values. Good governance is considered important because it implies a focus on accountability for performance and results in local government. Good governance directs attention to the need to provide public services to citizens in a competent and responsive manner – a paradigm shift that is of vital importance for the functioning of the public sector.

The question the study sought to examine was whether urban government in Swaziland has been re-oriented to good governance. To this end, the discussion identified several elements of good governance which are offered as potentially

the essential pillars of effective administration and management in local government in Swaziland. Those that were discussed were the following:

- *Accountability* – how well the public institution answers to the people;
- *transparency* – openness about decisions and greater access to information about the authority’s activities as a strategy to counteract corruption;
- *representativeness* – the right to make binding decisions on behalf of the body or person that is being represented;
- *responsiveness* - being sensitive to client needs, problems and views and taking action to meet the needs in a cost–effective way;
- *participation*– the involvement of citizens in decision-making and access to the process of government;
- *leadership* – existence of strong and effective leadership that is committed to development – which is considered as the most desirable type of leadership.

The results of the inquiry reveal that municipal authorities in Swaziland have not yet been sufficiently re-oriented towards good governance. None of the municipalities in the research areas were found to have outstanding ratings in relation to the universally sanctioned good governance criteria of accountability, transparency, responsiveness, representativeness, participation and effective leadership. This confirms the original presumption of the research that only limited progress has been made to construct a local government system that is oriented towards good governance in Swaziland’s urban areas.

6.3.4 Environmental factors of local government

It is considered that municipal authorities, like most organisations in society, are shaped by their environment. The environmental factors of local government were assessed in this research because of the compelling argument that high performing organisations do not reach excellence by accident but because they have an awareness of the environment. Paying attention to the challenges of the environment and the opportunities it offers is an important foundation upon which high performing organisations build their success e.g. in service delivery. The environmental factors of local government are political, social, geographical, economic and cultural. The research argues that all the above factors are instrumental in shaping the nature, direction and purpose of local government in Swaziland.

It is found that historical factors played a major part in engendering the current governmental system. The British colonial heritage laid the foundation for the present system of government by creating the political and administrative structures that were inherited at independence and which to a large extent were perpetuated by post-independence rulers. This includes the dualism that is clearly manifest in the country's political and administrative structures, at national and local government level, as well as the values that underpin these structures.

Geography is considered to be of great influence in shaping the urban government system in Swaziland. The most significant of the geographical factors is urbanisation. The phenomenal growth of urban areas in the country and the concomitant high concentration of people in the major towns have created acute environmental problems inside and outside town boundaries typified by informal settlements, poor housing, inadequate water supplies and sanitation, unemployment, rising levels of crime, uncollected garbage and the associated environmental hazards, inadequate resources to offset the risk of disease, and high mortality rates especially amongst children under five. The aforementioned problems are as much societal problems as they are local government problems. These are problems that require a public policy response. From the point of view of local government such problems pose a daunting challenge because, for the foreseeable future, they are likely to test the capacity of the country's burgeoning municipal authorities to respond to them in a confident and decisive way.

Social factors are found to have an influence on urban government in Swaziland. The traditional authority system is identified as the most pivotal and decisive of the social factors. In the post independence period, culture and the traditional authority system have been resurgent in Swaziland to the extent that they have even gained recognition in the new Constitution. The chiefs are considered as major role players in rural areas – communities which are administered in a traditional way, observing cultural norms and values as well as through the *Tinkhundla*.

Significantly, the influence of the traditional authority system has not greatly diminished inside the boundaries of the towns and cities. This is illustrated by the fact that even after 38 years of independence and 37 years since the major towns were created by the Urban Government Act, 1969, municipal authorities have not yet succeeded in asserting their authority fully in the areas within their jurisdiction. These are areas that were previously part of Swazi Nation Land and under the control of chiefs.

From this, it can be deduced that the declaration of an area as an urban area under the jurisdiction of a city council or town council or town board does not immediately transform the lives, attitudes, values and mindsets of individuals who have lived in those areas for a long time. In all the municipalities it was found that there were residents who have continued living their lives in the traditional way; they don't pay rates; they live in substandard accommodation similar to rural homesteads, and have no respect for council rules and regulations. In a country where culture is a dominant force, there is bound to be a level of co-existence of traditional and Western systems, as well as the norms and values associated with these systems, in the urban areas, resulting in a hybrid system which will take a long time to disappear. It is obvious that for both the councils and residents of urban areas there is a long learning curve to be navigated.

Political factors are bound to impact on urban government. It is suggested that the legal framework is a vital political factor that determines the autonomy, powers, functions, purpose and vitality of local government in Swaziland. In Swaziland the relevant statute provides for the elections of councillors as the representatives of the residents who must form the political component of the council. The elected councils must perform the various functions of council stipulated in the Act e.g. policy making.

A cursory look at the functions of councils (as stipulated in the Act) reveals that councils do not perform significant functions such as education, health, and security. These significant functions are at present performed centrally. Some of the functions that possibly could have been performed by local government were assigned to public enterprises. The Local Government Act was enacted in 1969 when the emphasis was still on control and supervision of local government by national government. Since the Act has not been amended or replaced by a new one, local institutions do not enjoy sufficient power and autonomy. Evidence suggests that many of the major decisions, relating to finance (borrowing), recruitment of senior staff (town clerks) require central government approval. In comparative terms, city councils have a higher level of autonomy, followed by town councils. It is not possible to entertain any notion of autonomy, political or financial, in respect of the administration of a typical town board in Swaziland. These are institutions that are considered as local outstations of the national government.

Finance is the single most important economic factor impacting on urban government, it is argued, because its availability and scarcity determine the ability of the local government system to finance projects and programmes and to make a difference in terms of improving the livelihoods of individuals and communities. Municipal authorities in Swaziland must raise money to finance their operations, which relate to the functions bestowed upon them by the Urban Government Act, 1969. The research identified three sources of income for urban government: grant aid, rates, and miscellaneous sources. A significant feature of urban government finance is the varying abilities amongst municipal authorities to raise income from home sources. It is concluded that a city council has a greater ability to raise money from home sources than a town council. A town board has the least ability to do this since the bulk of the income still comes from the central government.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

It has been argued in this research that the need for decentralisation is accepted by most governments and stems from the failures associated with the centrality of the state in development and in service delivery. The kind of decentralisation that is required in Swaziland is that which is truly democratic, avails opportunities to individuals to exercise political and economic power, and facilitates the sharing of power between national and local government. This implies granting meaningful rather than symbolic functions to local government in urban areas, providing adequate financial resources to municipal authorities to undertake the

various governmental functions entrusted to them, granting power and authority to councils to make and implement final and binding decisions on matters that affect their communities, and strengthening the capacity of local government institutions to undertake the range of functions assigned to them.

In addition, the study has highlighted the significance of reforms and the need for the range of improvement strategies introduced at national level to be extended to municipal authorities so as to improve performance and increase public satisfaction with services. Furthermore, prevailing social and political values call for more democratic forms of governance, emphasising the need for all public institutions to experience a shift towards a democratic dispensation.

Thus, it is recommended that urban government in Swaziland be remodelled towards high performance by giving prominence to best practice such as the various performance management strategies that are increasingly being adopted worldwide: devolution that is accompanied by a high level of expectations in terms of performance and outcomes, particularly the efficient, effective, economical and equitable rendering of services, new approaches to human resource management that emphasise the professional ethos. Furthermore, municipal authorities need to be re-oriented towards good governance and steps taken to ensure that they are not only accountable but are also responsive to the needs and aspirations of the citizens and that councillors are able to exercise good leadership.

6.5 CONCLUSION

This research was focused on service delivery by essentially public institutions. The research sought to consider the requirements for success in public service delivery. With the rise of the new public management in the latter part of the 20th century doubts were expressed about the dominant role of the government sector in development activity and in meeting the needs through service rendering. In spite of the lack of conclusive evidence, critics pointed out that the state had over-extended itself; that the government machinery was inefficient and ineffective; that public institutions generally have been at the centre of the spectacular failures of the previous decades typified by poor service delivery; and that the private sector ought to take over many of the functions previously associated with the government sector. However, this research advances the alternative argument that the public sector ought to remain a key player in promoting development and improving livelihoods. Public bodies ought to be at the cutting edge of development through the services they provide. The research suggests that there is great potential for success in the public sector i.e. in government. The main objective should be to invigorate public sector institutions in order that they may achieve more success in their primary mission and purpose – the delivery of public services in a competent manner that meets the needs and aspirations of the citizens.

In this research attention focussed on the service role of local government. Local government, an instantly recognisable feature of the political landscape in modern states and an important part of the governmental system, is considered in this research as having the definite purpose of delivering, in a satisfactory manner and for the benefit of all its customers, the range of services assigned to it by the national government. This research posits that this goal is achievable provided that local government is remodelled to take into account the essential core governing principles in public administration. The research considered a number of principles that are crucial and decisive in this regard namely, *decentralisation* - that which is designed to share power with local government; *performance management* – the principles of efficiency, effectiveness, economy and equity; *good governance* – the universally sanctioned criteria of accountability, transparency, responsiveness, representativeness, participation and effective leadership; and the *organisational environment* –the various factors that shape institutions.

Having assessed the various arguments by considering the situation in the urban areas of Swaziland, the inquiry concludes that, collectively, the above principles constitute the essential pillars of effective public administration and management. Thus, competent administration at the local government level of government requires firstly, that the local government system be reoriented towards sustained superior performance, with emphasis being given to efficiency, effectiveness, economy and equity; secondly, that public affairs at this level of government, be

conducted in ways that strengthen accountability, enhance transparency, encourage responsiveness, foster grassroots participation, and support effective leadership.

Thus, it is concluded that urban government in Swaziland could be a primary structure for development, depending on its capacity to provide municipal services competently, in an efficient, effective and responsive manner, provided that the function and purpose of government is reshaped sufficiently to produce a governmental system in the towns and cities that give citizens more economic and political power, given that more effective urban governance could be instrumental in improving the lives of urban residents.

6.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The present research only comments about the situation in Swaziland up to the end of 2005. The municipalities have included in their strategic plans their intentions to improve service delivery. Since strategic planning is a new approach to administration in urban government, future research will need to inquire into the contribution of strategic planning in improving local government performance or the factors that hinder the effectiveness of this new approach.

The government is in the process of formulating and implementing a decentralisation policy that articulates its new vision concerning the sharing of power with local government. The new Constitution also contemplates a higher

