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THE CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL DECENTRALISATION POLICY BY LUSAKA CITY COUNCIL, ZAMBIA

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Abstract

Decentralisation, an approach for improved service delivery, has become increasingly popular in developing countries in the recent past, along with the importance given to governance and enhanced citizens' participation in the decision-making process. This article focuses on the challenges which Lusaka City Council (LCC), the largest council in Zambia with relative capacity to implement Government Policies on time, had experienced during the implementation of the National Decentralisation Policy (NDP). These challenges were noted during an assessment of the extent to which the NDP had been implemented by the Council mentioned above, as of July 2019. The evaluation adopted a qualitative approach. The sample size of twelve key informants and a Focus Group was purposively selected, and the data were thematically analysed.

The findings revealed that the failure to fully implement the NDP by LCC resulted mainly from, political interference, inconsistencies in the law, incomplete institutional restructuring, delimitation of political boundaries, resistance by some officers to be transferred to local authorities, and inadequate monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation at all levels of governance and unactualised fiscal decentralization. Thus, LCC had not yet attained full implementation of decentralisation by devolution as of July 2019. These challenges needed to be addressed if the benefits of decentralisation by devolution were to be realised in Lusaka City and the nation at large.

Keywords: National Decentralisation Policy, Devolution, Fiscal Decentralisation, Intergovernmental Fiscal Architecture, Lusaka City Council, Zambia.

1.0 Introduction

Decentralisation, an approach for improved service delivery, has become increasingly popular in the recent past, along with the importance given to governance and improved citizens' participation in the decision-making process of the affairs that affect them (GRZ, 2009). Many developing countries have been making strides towards the decentralisation of their governance systems, and Zambia is not an exception. However, several challenges have been encountered by various countries in the process of implementing the same policy. Thus, this article focuses on the challenges that were experienced during the implementation of the National Decentralisation Policy (NDP) by Lusaka City Council (LCC) of Zambia, the largest Council in the country with relatively adequate capacity to implement government policies on time.

Zambia's efforts to decentralise its governance system go way back to the time of independence in 1964. However, the formulation of a comprehensive decentralisation policy document commenced in the mid-1990s and the draft decentralisation policy document was only presented to the Cabinet Office for approval in 1998. Thereafter, the government made no significant progress on the initial document until 2002, when the Revised National Decentralisation Policy (RNDP) was adopted and enacted into law. The policy was later launched in 2004 with the hope of implementing it within a decade. However, no tangible progress was made concerning its implementation. With the policy in place, stakeholder expectations were that the government would prioritise its implementation to enable citizens to derive benefits from the process (Chikulo, 2014).

The decentralisation policy of 2002 was later reviewed in 2012, and in December 2013, the second RNDP was launched. Three reasons necessitated the review of the policy; Firstly, as a response to the changes in the policy environment, which required the policy to be tailored to address the policy perspectives of the Patriotic Front (PF) Party administration which took office after the 2011 general elections, secondly, to comply with the provision requiring the mandatory review of government policy documents after every ten (10) years, and lastly, the old policy was seen to be deficient in the articulation of some local governance and decentralisation issues, especially those related to the participation of traditional leaders in matters of local governance (GRZ, 2014).

Following a review of the NDP in 2012, the 2009 to 2013 Decentralisation Implementation Plan (DIP) was also reviewed to cover the 2014 to 2017 period. To attain meaningful implementation of the new DIP, a strategic framework was prepared as part of the DIP. This framework outlined the components which would be pursued as follows: legal and regulatory reforms, sector devolution, fiscal decentralisation and financial management, sensitisation and civic education, monitoring and evaluation, institutional and human resource capacity building, governance, local development planning and budgeting, and infrastructure development (GRZ, 2014).

To commence the implementation of the revised DIP in 2014 by local authorities, Cabinet Circular No. 10 of December 2014 was released by the Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ). The circular outlined the devolution process, since Zambia had opted for decentralisation by devolution. This type of decentralisation sees the district as the focus for development. The circular outlined milestones achieved and provided guidelines to ensure the smooth

transition of functions from central government departments to Local Authorities (Councils), and the modalities for devolving the same functions based on a sector-wide phased approach of over three years (2015-2017) (Chaunga, 2015).

In phase one, functions in five ministries and two institutions were devolved in the year 2015, as follows: Disaster and Risk Reduction Management under the Office of the Vice-President; Extension Services under the Ministry of Agriculture; Primary and Early Education as well as Adult Literacy under the Ministry of General Education; Primary Health Care under the Ministry of Health; and Social Welfare and Community Development under the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services. Others included Local Tourism and Cultural matters under the Ministry of Tourism and Arts; Urban and Regional Planning under the Ministry of Local Government; and Community Management of Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) and Tuberculosis (TB) Programmes under the National HIV/AIDS/TB/STI (GRZ, 2014).

In the second phase, functions from four ministries were devolved in the year 2016, as follows: Infrastructure Development and Management under the Ministry of Works and Supply; and Land Allocation and Utilisation, together with Management and Conservation of Natural Resources under the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources. Furthermore, Cultural Affairs under the Ministry of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs, and Business Development Services, Operationalisation of Standards and Quality Assurance, Consumer Protection and Welfare under the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry were also added to the list (GRZ, 2014).

In the third and final phase, functions in four ministries were devolved in 2017 as follows: Sports Development, Community Sport and Youth Development under the Ministry of Youth and Sport; Child Development under the Ministry of Gender and Child Development; Water Resource Management under the Ministry of Energy and Water Development; and Community Police and Community Prisons under the Ministry of Home Affairs (GRZ, 2014).

Furthermore, by 11th October, 2016 which was two months after the general election, all Local Authorities, of which LCC was not an exception, were expected to establish all the sub-district structures commonly known as Ward Development Committees (WDCs), which are platforms for community participation in the planning, budgeting and development process of their areas of jurisdiction (GRZ, 2014).

In addition, the National Government, through Cabinet Circular No. 10 of December 2014, stated that all financial resources earmarked for devolved functions would be transferred directly to council treasuries, effective in 2016. This implied that Councils were going to have additional resources and assets to undertake development programmes for quality service delivery (GRZ, 2014). However, the funds for several devolved functions had not commenced trickling into council bank accounts, and this entailed that there was no budget line that the council could follow to fund the operations of such functions.

On the other hand, the Central Government has been sending another type of funds to local authorities towards the implementation of the National Decentralisation Policy in the form of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) as CDF has been identified as a major tool to take resources closer to the people.

This fund evolved from K1.6 million in the year 2021 to K25.7 million per constituency (GRZ, 2022). In the year 2025, the National Government increased the CDF to at least K36 million. The objective of the CDF was to create an enabling environment for holistic development at the Constituency level where the local communities have the opportunities to make choices and implement projects which would improve the well-being of the people in the respective constituencies and the district as a whole. The selection of projects and programmes is done in a decentralised manner in accordance with the needs of the community (GRZ, 2022).

The National Government's target was that the implementation of the revised DIP of 2014 should be completed by the year 2017. However, it had not been clear as to what challenges, if any, had been experienced during the implementation of the same policy by the LCC of Zambia. Hence, this article discusses the challenges which had been experienced by LCC, as established under a study entitled "*An Assessment of the Implementation of the National Decentralisation Policy by Lusaka City Council of Zambia*". the article starts by presenting the introduction, then proceeds to present the literature review, methodology which was applied during the study, presentation and discussion of findings, conclusion and recommendations.

2.0 Literature Review

Chigumira et al. (2020) argue that it has been challenging to implement devolution in Zimbabwe because Officers under the Central Government resisted relinquishing power and authority to Councils. After all, Councils were perceived to have unqualified staff and councillors who could not properly discuss and implement government policy on time. Similarly, Local councillors are also considered to be constrained in their effective functioning due to a lack of experience, training and formal education in local governance (Mehauhelo & Daemane, 2012).

Further, PMRC (2023) argues that challenges exist in administering devolution in Zambia. The study established that resistance from centralised power structures causes some functions, such as motor vehicle licensing, not to be under the full control of the local authorities, as funds raised are transferred back to the central government, and the central government decides on its use (PMRC, 2023). This does not characterise decentralisation by devolution, which Zambia opted for from among the different forms of decentralisation, but deconcentration.

Rugeiyamu and Msendo (2025) state that decentralisation in Africa is faced with many challenges, and one of them is limited autonomy. For most African countries, decentralisation remains more of a theory than a practice. This is because local authorities still have limited autonomy from the central government. For instance, in Tanzania, Kessy (2023) reports that local authorities are confronted with little financial and administrative discretion. Further, local authorities still receive many directives from the central government, including how they should be spending their revenue (Rugeiyamu & Msendo, 2025).

Similarly, Zambia's Central Government has been issuing a lot of directives on what type of projects should be done using the decentralised Constituency Development Fund (CDF) a fund which is supposed to be spent in a decentralised manner and some of the directives may not be priority needs of the people at the grassroots or in communities. For instance, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development Circular Number 101/22/157

directs that the CDF should be used for purchasing a motor vehicle for Zambia Police, procurement of school desks, construction and rehabilitation of maternity wings, purchasing of ambulances and construction of Chief's Palaces (GRZ, 2022). These directives defeat the meaning of decentralisation by devolution, which Zambia opted for.

3.0 Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative approach, and this aided in collecting in-depth data, which was relevant for assessing the implementation of the NDP by LCC. The research participants were purposively selected, and these provided responses which were relevant to the study. The sample size was thirteen. The key informants included staff from LCC, MLG Headquarters, the Decentralisation Secretariat at the Cabinet Office, Devolved Departments, LGSC, District Administration Office, and the Foundation for Democratic Process. Regarding a focus group discussion, twelve members of Kanyama Ward Ten Ward Development Executive Committee, comprising six females and six males, were involved. The study generally involved the collection of both primary and secondary data. In terms of data analysis, the study employed thematic and content analysis to analyse the data collected for this research study.

4.0 Presentation and Discussion of the Findings

This section outlines several challenges which adversely affect the rate at which the NDP was being implemented in the City of Lusaka. These challenges included inconsistencies in the law, political interference, incomplete institutional restructuring, delimitation of political boundaries, resistance by some officers to transfer from ministries to local authorities, inadequate monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation at all levels of governance, and unactualized fiscal decentralisation.

4.1 Inconsistencies in the law

According to the study findings, there have been inconsistencies in the key pieces of legislation that relate to the implementation of the NDP in Zambia. This is a result of the unharmonised pieces of legislation. For instance, the Local Government Act No. 2 of 2019, which was enacted into law in May 2019, has accommodated the devolved functions, while the Acts of Parliament which were governing the devolving ministries under the central government still have the same functions which have been devolved to local government. This implies that there is duplication of functions in the different pieces of legislation. In addition, the inconsistencies in the law negatively affected the rate at which the NDP is being implemented by LCC. This is because the situation justifies the adherence by the transferred staff to their parent ministries under the central government, while not paying allegiance to the local government and the Lusaka City Council in particular.

In agreement with the observations above, Hussein (2013) indicated that inconsistencies in the law negatively affected the implementation of decentralisation in Malawi in that the Malawian Local Government Act recognises structures known as assemblies as the highest policy making bodies at district, town and city levels and these assemblies have been given the responsibility of planning and implementing development activities in their areas of jurisdiction. However, the aforementioned team observed that the process of fully empowering the assemblies to carry out their functions effectively had been delayed partly by the continued

existence of laws, by-laws and policies that conflicted with the Local Government Act. In this regard, a decision was therefore taken to harmonise the Local Government Act with the existing sectoral laws, by-laws and policies (Hussein, 2013).

Similarly, Mfune's (2013) study argued that there has been resistance by the bureaucrats in Zambian Government Ministries to properly re-align sectoral policies and legislations to the Local Government Act and the National Decentralisation Policy. This failure to harmonise legal and policy frameworks results in a situation where the devolution of a function to do with natural resources was characterised by over-lapping and conflicting mandates, and this was considered as one of the most important factors limiting the introduction of the new natural resource management regime in the forestry sector in Zambia (Mfune, 2013).

The problem of having inconsistencies in the laws is that it becomes difficult for decentralisation by devolution to be realised because it makes the Local Authority not have full control over the transferred staff since their functions have not been erased from the pieces of legislation, guidelines and policies governing their parent ministries. In Lusaka City, this situation resulted in a dual reporting system by the transferred Heads of Departments (HODs) where they are reporting to the local authority, and the District Administrative Office under central government at the same time. Dual reporting system creates fertile ground for insubordination by transferred HODs to the Chief Executive Officer at the Local Authority, and insubordination eventually affects policy implementation and public service delivery.

4.2 Political interference

From a focus group discussion, the majority of the participants stipulated that there was political interference in the operations of the four established community participation platforms commonly known as Ward Development Committees (WDCs). The WDCs which were affected by political interference from Ward Councillors included Raphael Chota of Mandevu Constituency, Munkolo, Harry Mwanga Nkumbula and Kanyama Ward 10 of Kanyama Constituency. In Kanyama Ward 10, the executive of the WDC was even displaced from their offices by political party supporters locally known as cadres who had the support from the ward councillor who had just defected from the opposition political party known as United Party for National Democracy (UPND) to the ruling political party by the name of Patriotic Front (PF).

One member explained that:

... the ward councillor does not want to work with the legally elected WDEC in his ward, and he has since appointed a parallel WDEC composed of members from the ruling party (PF) only, which is against the guidelines for the establishment, operation and management of the WDC's. Currently, a legally established WDEC has been evicted from their offices and the councillor's WDEC members are the ones occupying the WDEC offices, while the legally elected WDEC meet from one of the executive members' homes in fear of conflict. The ward councillor is from the opposition party by the name of UPND, but he defected to the ruling party and turned against the legally elected WDEC in order to gain support from the supporters of PF (Focus Group Discussion, Kanyama Ward 10 WDEC, 17th July, 2019).

Furthermore, the study findings establish that political interference was evident in the manner in which the elections of the Interim Committees (ICs) were conducted in the twenty-nine wards where LCC did not manage to complete the establishment of WDCs on time and in line with the WDC guidelines due to the suspension of the formulation exercise by the Minister of Local Government.

These ICs would perform the work of the WDCs up to the time when legal WDCs would be established. The elections for the IC members were conducted by only a Ward Councillor in his or her ward in a process of a single day. This was contrary to the 2013 revised guidelines of establishment, management and operations of the WDCs and the Local Government Act number 2 of 2019, which stipulate that WDC elections require programming or scheduling of activities, sensitisation of the public, voter registration, nominations and eventually elections, all executed on different days. These WDC elections are conducted by the district facilitation team, which comprises officers from the City Planning Department, Legal, Administration, Engineering, and Finance at the Local Authority, Community Development, Mother and Child Health, Health, Agriculture and Education from the devolved departments at the district level under the Central Government. These officers are not supposed to be affiliated with any political party.

One key informant from the City Planning Department of LCC said that:

... in February 2019, MLG HQ wrote to LCC to let the ward councillors in those wards which had no WDCs to conduct elections for ICs, which would act as community participation platforms. The meetings to elect the ICs members were called and chaired by the ward councillors. Then LCC submitted the lists of names of people who were elected to MLG HQ for approval (Interview, City Planning Department Official, LCC, 8th April, 2019).

Another informant from LCC noted that:

... in the absence of the WDCs in some wards, the ICs were put in place and the elections of the members of the same committees were conducted by only the ward councillors, and that there were high chances of hand-picking of the committee members. These ICs would be operational until the legal WDCs are established after the suspension of establishing WDCs is lifted by the Minister of Local Government (Interview, City Planning Department Official, LCC, 18th July, 2019).

The shortcomings of using ICs as community participation platforms at the sub-district level of governance are numerous. To start with, ICs work in favour of the political party to which the ward councillor is affiliated, just like political structures, and this eventually negatively affects public service delivery as it results in uneven distribution of resources and services in the ward and the nation at large. This is because community members who are not in support of the councillor's political party of affiliation may not have their aspirations taken into consideration, even when they are a priority need of the community. In addition, community members who may not belong to the political party of a ward councillor may not be in support of the decisions made by ICs because they may lack a sense of ownership of decisions that are made at that level of governance and eventually affect public service delivery. This is different from the legally elected WDCs, which are developmental

as they are elected through a process led by people who are not affiliated with any political party, and anyone who is affiliated with a political party is not eligible to contest for elections.

Therefore, it is right for one to conclude that ICs are not ideal structures for implementing the decentralisation policy by devolution because how they are constituted characterises that of political structures and not the legally established WDCs, which are developmental structures. There are higher chances of ICs directing their loyalty to the ward councilor and not to the majority of the community members, contrary to the WDC guidelines and the Local Government Act No. 2, May 2019. This in way hinders the community from receiving quality public services.

Moreover, one would support the establishment of WDCs whose members are elected and appointed in line with the WDC guidelines and the Local Government Act No. 2 of 2019 because they are not politically inclined. This is because the whole election process, starting from community sensitisation, voter registration, nominations and elections, is steered by a team of civil servants who are neutral and not affiliated with any political party. In addition, the WDCs elected in line with the aforementioned guidelines are likely to ensure the needs of the community in the wards and the nation at large are met with utmost fairness because the election process is steered by a team of people who do not belong to any political party. There is also a high level of transparency and accountability during project and programme selection, and implementation in the ward, and this is what is expected for the ideal implementation of decentralisation by devolution, which Zambia has opted for.

Therefore, political interference manifests itself in the manner some WDCs are established because according to the Local Government Act No. 2 of 2019, and guidelines for the establishment, management and operation of WDCs, the WDC members are supposed to be elected by the residents of the ward and the election process is facilitated by the members of the District Facilitation Team who are non-partisan. These members of the facilitation team are mainly civil servants from the devolving departments and the Local Authority, and the responsibility to form the facilitation team falls under the CEO of the council, who happens to be the Town Clerk in the case of Lusaka City Council (GRZ, 2013).

This is in agreement with a study on Policy Networks, Politics and Decentralisation Policies in Ghana, whose conclusion was that although the decentralisation policies display characteristics more related to supporting community participation, there was evidence that politics also exist within the decentralisation policy networks and they harm policy implementation and service delivery (Koranteng and Larbi, 2000). Ngenoh's study also revealed that political interference was a major problem that inhibited the implementation of decentralisation by devolution in Kenya (Ngenho, 2013).

In the same vein, a study by FODEP (2019) in South Africa had shown that political interference is one of the major challenges which the operations of the community participation platforms known as Ward Committees (WCs) were experiencing. In this instance, ward councilors were accused of manipulating deliberations and decisions to reflect the mandate of the political parties they represented, rather than the genuine aspirations of the community. Furthermore, investigations into the operations of WCs further revealed that functional WCs tended to be dominated

by party agendas, and in many cases, WCs have become a forum for political parties, deepening patterns of patronage as opposed to deepening local democracy and providing quality services to the public (FODEP, 2019).

It is therefore noted that political interference negatively affects the implementation of the NDP and eventually public service delivery because it creates inequality among different groups of people of different political affiliation and the non-partisan citizens, which is against Zambia's desired decentralisation by devolution. Due to this reason, political interference results in unfair distribution of public resources in the ward and the nation at large. Consequently, political interference is not supposed to find any room in the process of implementing the decentralisation policy if the benefits of decentralisation by the devolution model are to be realised with utmost efficiency.

4.3 Incomplete institutional restructuring

The article also unveils that incomplete institutional restructuring of the Local Government institutions (Local Authorities) by the Local Government Service Commission (LGSC), who are the employers of staff from divisions one to three, was contributing to the delay in the implementation of the NDP. This is because LGSC was still working on placing staff with particular qualifications in their rightful positions, and this entails that LGSC was still conducting transfers, promotions, demotions and new appointments. The restructuring process negatively affected the implementation of the policy by local authorities of which LCC is not an exception, as some of the staff who had been trained on how to implement the policy under discussion were transferred to other local authorities, and the resulting vacant positions were then filled by new staff some of whom had not undergone any training on how to implement the policy prior to their transfer. For instance, certain staff who were instrumental in the establishment of the first four ward development committees were no longer at LCC as employees, and the new members of staff needed some time to adapt to the new work environment. Thus, too many transfers at the same time, especially chief officers, erode institutional memory, which eventually affects decentralisation policy implementation by local authorities.

Similarly, a study by Siame et al. (2019) revealed that the transfer of council staff from one Local Authority to another by the LGSC after serving at one council for a short period led to the loss of institutional memory, and this hurt the implementation of the NDP in Zambia. According to the LGSC, the standard tenure length for being posted to a new local authority was between three to five years. However, there were instances when transfers had been effected even in less than three years of a staff member serving at one local authority. For instance, the same study by Siame et al. (2019) revealed that in Monze, a council staff was transferred to another council just after serving for four days (Siame et al., 2019). The LGSC should minimise the transfer of staff from one council to another after serving for less than five years at one council if the implementation of the NDP is to be realised.

4.4 Delimitation of political boundaries

The findings also established that the delimitation exercise which the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ) a board mandated to implement the Electoral Process, and conduct delimitation, among others, was undertaking in the City of Lusaka in the year 2019 contributed to the delay in the implementation of the NDP as delimitation involved the change in the political boundaries (ward boundaries). The study showed that the number of wards increased

from thirty-three (33) to thirty-eight (38). This consequently meant an alteration in the ward boundaries, size and number of wards, and ultimately population distribution by ward.

Therefore, the increase in the number of wards and the splitting of the population of a ward affected the already established WDCs, which were established in line with the old boundaries. This situation required that the process of establishing WDCs be restarted. This is because, according to the 2013 revised guidelines for the establishment, management and operation of WDCs, the number of elected members of a WDC shall vary from one WDC to another, considering the variation in the number of zones each ward has. A zone takes a boundary of a polling district, which is a subdivision of a ward. The elected members of the WDCs are elected according to the criteria in Table 4.1, and the maximum number of elected members in any WDC does not exceed eighteen (GRZ, 2013). The aforementioned criteria entail that the number of WDC members may vary depending on the number of zones each ward has. Thus, a reduction in the number of zones for a particular ward resulting from the delimitation of the ward boundary leads to an increase in the number of zonal representatives which should be elected in each zone.

Table 4.1. Variation in zonal representatives per ward

Scenario per ward	Required number of elected representatives per zone
One (1) zone	12
Two (2) zones	6
Three (3) zones	4
Four (4) to six (6) zones	3
Seven (7) and above	2

Source: Adapted from 2013 Revised WDC Guidelines

This situation delayed the establishment of sub-district structures, which are the National Government's legal community participation platforms under the implementation of the national decentralisation policy.

4.5 Inadequate monitoring and evaluation at all levels of governance

The findings further established that the lack of monitoring and evaluation of the way the policy was being implemented at all levels of governance, namely National, Provincial, District and Sub-district, adversely affected the rate at which the NDP was being implemented in the City of Lusaka. It was further established that at the national level, there is a monitoring and evaluation unit based at the Cabinet Office (Decentralisation Secretariat) under the leadership of the assistant director. The unit is charged with the responsibility of monitoring and evaluating the operations of the whole decentralisation system. However, the study revealed that the unit had not been very strong in carrying out its mandate. For instance, it has not been conducting field visits to all levels of governance to check on how decentralisation was being implemented because the activity is not prioritised among the roles of the monitoring unit.

Likewise, the Kenyan Government, while acknowledging the importance of monitoring and evaluation, has not developed a structure for this. Thus, the implementation of the policy was being done without monitoring and evaluation. This was regrettable because lessons derived from practice would be useful for further

development and for the anticipated country-wide roll-out of decentralisation efforts (Maina, 2004).

Moreover, at the sub-district level, LCC had not been consistent in conducting field monitoring of the operations and management of the established WDCs as it had been doing it only once annually. This is inadequate because the 2013 revised guidelines of the establishment, management and operations of WDCs stipulate that local authorities are expected to monitor and evaluate the operations of WDCs at least once per quarter, which represents at least four times a year. The implication of inadequate monitoring and evaluation meant there has been a delay for the council to learn of the challenges which were being experienced by WDCs, and to timely act to address those challenges. It was further revealed that conducting monitoring and evaluation of the operations of the established community participation platforms was challenging because of a lack of resources, such as transport, to enable them to conduct field monitoring.

According to the 2013 revised guidelines for the establishment, management and operation of the ward development committees, local authorities have a role in conducting monitoring and evaluation of the operations of the ward development committees to ensure timely implementation of the NDP (GRZ, 2013).

4.6 Unimplemented Financial and asset management devolution

All twelve (12) key informants expressed the same view that LCC had not commenced receiving and managing finances and assets for performing the devolved functions. This is because human resources and functions had been transferred from their line ministries under the Central Government to Local Authorities under MLG without matching resources, contrary to the expectation of decentralisation by the devolution model, which Zambia had chosen among the various types of decentralising governance systems. The delay in the receipt of matching resources of the devolved functions resulted in the benefits of devolution, such as improved service delivery by the local authority, not being fully witnessed by the members of the public. A key informant from LCC said that:

... LCC has not received any finances and assets such as vehicles and office equipment for the devolved functions because the National Government has not implemented fiscal decentralisation, and the transferred staff are still operating from their offices under Central Government (Interview, Administration and Human Resource Department official, LCC, 15th June, 2019).

A key informant from the Culture and Arts Department explained that:

... Finances for performing devolved functions at the district level are received from the National Level through the Provincial Administration Office, then to the District Administration Office under the Central Government and not through the Council; their assets have not moved to the Council. In other words, the funds for District Culture and Arts were disbursed from the National Level in a deconcentrated manner and not in a devolution manner since, by devolution, finances for performing devolved functions are supposed to be received by the Council (Interview, Culture and Arts Department official, 25th July, 2019).

The National Government through Cabinet Circular No. 10 of December, 2014 stated that all financial resources earmarked for devolved functions would be transferred directly to council treasuries effective 2016, and that to provide for appropriate expenditure management, guidelines contained in the Public Finance Act, the Local Government Act, and other relevant instruments such as the Council Audit and Financial Manuals would be fully applied. This implied that Councils were going to have additional resources and assets to undertake development programmes for quality service delivery to the public (GRZ, 2014). However, the funds have not commenced trickling into council bank accounts, implying that there is no budget line that the council can follow to fund the operations of the devolved functions.

In corroborating the views above, a study conducted in Indonesia by Sujarwoto (2013) suggested that any decentralisation by a devolution framework must link the local financing and fiscal authority to the service provision responsibilities and functions of the local government. However, in many cases, responsibility is given to local government without the accompanying fiscal authority either to raise revenue or to exercise discretionary power over spending decisions. A study conducted in Kenya by Sirite et al (2017) indicates that functions are devolved to local authorities, but the money allocated to these functions is not enough. This prevents the benefits of fiscal decentralisation from being realised.

Therefore, just as alluded to by Sujarwoto (2013), some reluctance by Zambia's Central Government to let go of the financial resources to local authorities had been manifested, and this continued to prevent the intended benefits of decentralisation by devolution not to being achieved. Ngui (2014) also established that the Nairobi City Council complained that the Kenyan Central Government had been sending inadequate funds to the council to allow the implementation of the devolution strategy, and this slowed down the rate of implementing decentralisation by devolution in Nairobi, the capital city of the country (Ngui, 2014).

It would not be, therefore, wrong to conclude that resistance by the central government to implement fiscal decentralisation negatively affects the rate at which LCC is implementing the NDP. This is because functions and human resources have been sent to local authorities without their corresponding resources. Currently, instead of the council receiving additional funding, what is being experienced is the opposite, where the council's meagre financial resources are being strained to perform those devolved functions. This is hampering quality service delivery to the citizens in the City of Lusaka.

4.7 Resistance from Central Government Departments

The study established that LCC had managed to align all the devolved functions to the standing committees where the Heads of Departments are expected to report administratively and functionally. A standing committee is a body of persons appointed by the council to perform a given function or functions. According to the Local Government Act, cap 281 of the laws of Zambia, a Local Authority may appoint standing or occasional committees consisting of such number of members as it may determine. Standing committees are permanent, while occasional committees are ad-hoc in nature and are formed only to perform a specific task, and once the task is completed, the committee is dissolved (GRZ, 2016).

The role of council committees is to discuss at length the motions or proposals submitted by the HODs before they are eventually presented to the council for approval. These proposals are presented to the committees in the form of a departmental report. The committee meetings are held once every quarter of the year.

However, the operations of these committees leave much to be desired as they are poorly attended due to resistance by members of staff who have been transferred from Central Government Departments to the Local Authority. The reasons for resistance include, lack of confidence in the calibre of ward councilors to discuss technical matters, as the qualification to be a ward councilor is only a grade 12 certificate. Additionally, the transferred HODs also think that the Council CEO cannot understand the technical language of certain professions. For instance, the health sector would prefer just reporting administratively or for information purposes to the Council CEO, but submit the technical report to the parent ministry through their provincial office. Others are reluctant due to fear of losing power and control over resources to local authorities. The key informants argued that the academic qualification to become a Ward Councilor should be more advanced than just grade 12 level if attendance of council meetings by transferred staff is to be improved.

One respondent from LCC stated that:

... Council Standing Committees were poorly attended by the Heads of Departments from the devolving ministries because of unwillingness to join the local authority (Interviews, Administration and Human Resource Department official, LCC, 30th June, 2019).

A participant from the District Community Development Office responded by stating that:

... it was difficult to attend council standing committee meetings because there was no instruction to do so from the Community Development Head Office (Interview, District Community Development official, 15th July, 2019).

Relatedly, Haule's (2013) study on the challenges of implementing decentralisation by devolution to the lower local governments in Kenya revealed that some officials were reluctant to implement the policy for fear of losing power and financial resources while the local authority enjoys the autonomy, and they perceive decentralisation to be a threat to the central government or the public sector. Still in agreement with the previous observations, Mfunze's (2013) study conducted in Chongwe District of Zambia, also revealed that state departments were hesitant to transfer devolved responsibilities to the councils because of the fear that they will lose control over devolved functions and responsibilities, and possibly the economic benefits derived from performing devolved functions.

5.0 Conclusion

From the findings above, it can be argued and concluded that LCC has taken many strides towards the decentralisation policy implementation. However, the council has been unable to arrive at full implementation of the policy on time. This has been evidenced by the council's failure to meet many targets outlined in the implementation plan, such as establishing all the thirty – three WDCs, performance of all the 17 devolved functions receiving of the transfer letters for all the devolved functions, financial and asset management, operationarisation of the new organization

structures, and establishment of a complete district devolution task force.

It has further been established that failure to fully implement the decentralisation policy on time by LCC has been mainly attributed to many challenges, including lack of effective monitoring and evaluation at all levels of governance, political interference, inconsistencies in the law, continued institutional restructuring by LGSC, and a delay in fully implementing fiscal decentralisation.

Given the difficulties which the Lusaka City Council is experiencing in implementing the decentralisation policy, it would be worse for other local authorities across the country, which are relatively not well-resourced, to implement this policy

It is also concluded that the type of decentralisation which was being practised in Zambia characterises deconcentration, rather than devolution, which Zambia opted for.

6.0 Recommendations

To enhance the implementation of the NDP, there is a need for the National Government to harmonise the inconsistencies in the pieces of legislation, and LGSC to minimise the transfer of Chief Officers within a short time. Furthermore, there is a need for LCC to enhance the establishment of legal community participation platforms and improve monitoring and evaluation. The National Government should also ensure that financial resources meant for the functions which have been devolved to local authorities also follow the same functions.

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