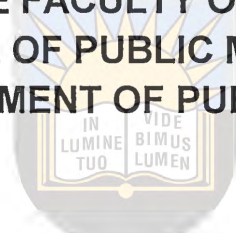


**AN ANALYSIS OF CHIRADZULU DISTRICT COUNCIL'S
IMPACT ON SERVICE DELIVERY IN MALAWI (1998 TO 2010)**

BY

BENNET FRANCIS NKASALA

**MINI-DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION IN THE FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND
COMMERCE, SCHOOL OF PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND
DEVELOPMENT, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**



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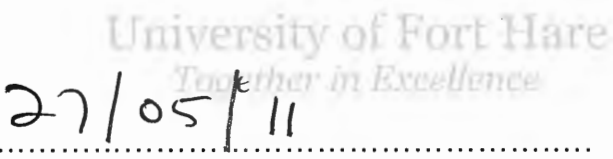
SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR M. H. KANYANE

COMPLETED: MAY 2011

DECLARATION

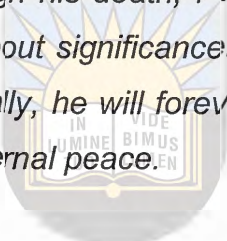
I, Bennet Francis Nkasala, hereby declare that this mini-dissertation submitted to the University of Fort Hare for the Degree of Master of Public Administration has never been previously submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university, that this is my own work in design and execution and that all material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

Signed..... .....

Date..... .....

DEDICATION

In loving memory of my late father, Francis Geoffrey Nkasala, who passed away on 12th February 2007 and laid to rest on 14th February 2007. Caring and loving, though poor and himself not educated, he managed to instil in us, his children, a sense of responsibility and love for education. His dedication thus created an environment conducive for my success. I sincerely thank GOD for his life, which at 59 was rather short, but full of achievement. Through his death, I was able to know and understand that life is not about longevity, but about significance. His life was of great significance to me. Although he is absent physically, he will forever live in my thoughts, through all the memories, may his soul rest in eternal peace.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Firstly, I give glory and honour to God Almighty for protecting me and granting me the ability, wisdom and strength to carry out this study.

A special word of acknowledgement goes to my supervisor, Professor Modimowabarwa Hendrick Kanyane, who, led by the spirit of abundant intellectual excellence, has supported me with expert advice, critical comments, and friendly encouragement in the entire process of production of this mini-dissertation.

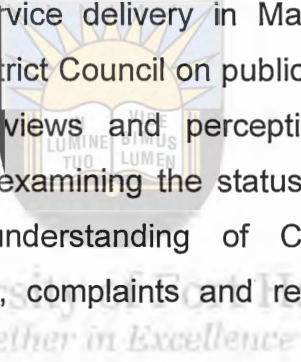
In addition, I am also greatly indebted to the Malawi Government, through the Department of Public Service Management, for granting me an opportunity to pursue this course and for funding my studies at the University of Fort Hare.

My sincere gratitude also goes to the following individuals and institutions for providing significant information: the Staff of Chiradzulu District Council, the Decentralization Secretariat, the Ministry of Local Government, Traditional Authorities, the Members of Parliament, and all respondents, who participated in focus group interviews. My classmate, Mr Harris Potani, also deserves special thanks for his brotherly advice and encouragement in discussions we had and ideas shared pertaining to the compilation of this thesis.

Lastly, I am very thankful to my beautiful wife Mary and my three children; Francis, Faith and Ian for their perseverance during the hard times I was away from home and for their encouragement and moral support throughout the study period.

ABSTRACT

Since Malawi became independent in 1964, the local government has undergone several transformations. These transformations have all been aimed at making local governments more responsive to the needs and expectations of the citizens they serve. The transformations took centre stage in 1998, when District Councils were established through the enactment of the Local Government Act no. 42 of 1998.

Councils (Local Governments) are the spheres of government, situated closest to the people, and considered to be in the best position to provide effective and efficient public service delivery. The assumption is that the establishment of District Councils has a potential to positively impact on service delivery in Malawi. This study, therefore, analyses the impact of Chiradzulu District Council on public services delivery from 1998 to 2010. The study explores the views and perceptions of service users and stakeholders about the Council, by examining the status of the facets that underpin public service delivery, namely understanding of Council roles, participation, communication, access, consultation, complaints and redress mechanisms, service quality and poverty reduction. 

The research employed qualitative and quantitative methods to extract data. Focus group interviews were conducted with Traditional Authorities, Non-Governmental Organizations, Community-Based Organizations, and Business Community representatives. Self-administered questionnaires were also used to collect data for this research from Members of Parliament, the Council Sector Heads of Departments and Constituency Governors.

The study reveals that the impact of the Council on service delivery, under the period of study, has not been successful. The findings of the study show that consultation mechanisms are less effective; access by communities to Council Officials as well as access by poor communities to public services delivered by the Council is poor. In

addition, the Council is ineffective in implementing development projects, due to inadequate financial resources. It is for this reason that the study has arrived at the conclusions and thereby drawn recommendations to bring a resolve to the problems and challenges of service delivery posed.



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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAPS	African Association of Political Science
ADC	Area Development Committee
APS	Australian Public Service
ASD	Alternative Service Delivery
ASDM	Alternative Service Delivery Model
CBO	Community-Based Organization
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DDP	District Development Plan
DLG	Department of Local Government
LDF	Local Development Fund
MDP	Malawi Decentralization Policy
MPRSP	Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PPP	Public Private Partnership
SEPs	Socio-Economic Profiles
SSDM	Shared Service Delivery Model
TQM	Total Quality Management
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VAC	Village Action Plan
VDC	Village Development Committee
VNRMC	Village Natural Resource Management Committee

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

In Malawi, the District Councils, which are also referred to as local governments, have evolved through three different regimes. These are:

- the Colonial Administration established from 1891 to 1960, where colonial political institutions were centralized and excluded the participation of the indigenous people;
- the One Party Dictatorial Regime of the late Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda from 1961 to 1994, where the statutory and politically oriented district councils were introduced; and
- the Multiparty Dispensation Regime from 1994 to date, where various reforms have been made on the local government's front with the main objective of ensuring quality and efficient service delivery to the citizenry.

For the past twenty years or so, local government systems across the world have come under intense scrutiny. Policy makers voiced a number of concerns expressed over various aspects of local government, including its operational efficiency. This has seen a wave of reform in many local government jurisdictions, which encompassed almost all dimensions of local government structure and function (Dollery, Garcea, & Lesage, 2008:1). The Malawian local government is not immune to these international trends. It is also subjected to vigorous change, and hence the need for a regular impact analysis.

The purpose of this study is, therefore, to analyse the impact of Chiradzulu District Council on service delivery in Malawi. The period of interest for the study is from 1998 when Malawi fully embarked on the National Decentralization Programme, and following

the enactment of the Local Government Act (Act no. 42 of 1998), up to 2010. Malawi has a total of 28 district councils.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

As is the case with its counterparts, like South Africa and many other countries, Malawi's local governments (the Councils), have the primary responsibility of supplying and delivering quality public goods and efficient services, such as, health delivery services, education, water, roads network among many others to the communities they serve. According to indicators in the Socio-Economic Profiles (SEPs) of the Councils in Malawi, the provision of public goods and services and accessibility of these by the communities, remain on an average low of 51%. The situation has often resulted in the communities complaining, as evidenced by the regular mass protests and non-payment of fees and rates to the Councils. Therefore, the question that often comes to mind, which needs to be addressed, is, "*Why is it that the Malawi District Councils are failing in their responsibilities on service delivery, despite the vigorous changes and operational framework reforms that have taken place?*"

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objectives of the study are to:

- Analyse the impact of the District Council under study on service delivery in Malawi.
- Attempt to provide ways and mechanisms to bring a resolve to the problems and challenges confronting service delivery in Malawi.

1.4 Hypothesis

The hypothesis of the research is postulated as follows:

H1: The establishment of District Councils has a potential to positively impact on service delivery in Malawi.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The results of this study attempts to provide a better understanding of the citizens' predisposition towards the District Council in terms of its impact on service delivery. The research also has an influence on policy makers, stakeholders, leadership and management, including the institutional organization of the District Council to appreciate how the Council is perceived by the communities in terms of its performance, and where possible avail an opportunity for improvement in case of poor performance. Through the review of various literatures, the research also endeavours to assist in adding value to the body of knowledge in the field of Public Administration.

1.6 Delimitation of the Research

The research focuses on the District Council of Chiradzulu, regarding the impact that this Council has on service delivery. The limitation is the availability of data considering poor records of management in state institutions. This includes the political affiliations by the politicians in government and Traditional Leaders, who have the potential to result in lack of cooperation to release information, which pertains to service delivery. In attempting to counter these problems, letters of declaration authenticating and indicating the objectives of the research and guaranteeing participants anonymity and confidentiality of their status for participation in the study, were compiled.

1.7 Outline of the Study

The research is structured as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

In this preceding chapter the introduction, background, rationale of the study, and the main assumptions of the problem statement were presented. It also delineated the research objectives and the hypothesis, stated the significance of the study as well as the issues (delimitation factors and ethical issues) that could affect the study and suggested possible interventions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides the study with a theoretical and conceptual framework to create a deeper understanding of the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings, within which local governments' (Councils') service delivery is discussed.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

The research design and methodology followed for collecting data for the study are explained in this chapter. This includes the techniques and procedures charted in investigating the problem.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

This chapter presents and discusses the findings from data collected. The chapter applies theory to practice in the case study by making cross references. The results are then analysed and interpreted.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

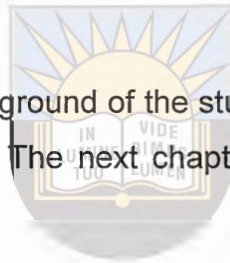
The concluding chapter recapitulates the findings and several emerging themes in the inquiry. It draws conclusions and suggestions for improvement. In addition, the chapter provides an area for further research.

1.8 Ethical Considerations

The researcher undertook to inform respondents fully about the purpose of the study as well as the procedures to be followed and how the questionnaire and interview surveys would be implemented. The researcher also strictly guaranteed that the privacy and sensitivity of the respondents would be protected. Consent forms describing the aim and objectives of the study were administered prior to commencing with the capturing of data.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter provided a general background of the study and some research questions, which the study intends to address. The next chapter addresses the conceptual and theoretical aspects of the research.



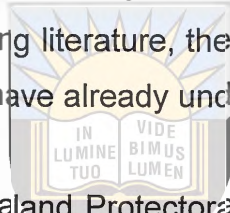
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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Literature review is a very important step in every research process. It is the power source of the conceptual framework. A comprehensive literature review is of prime importance before conducting any qualitative or quantitative research. Once ways have been explored to ascertain the feasibility of the identified problem and the need for the investigation, attempts must be made to verify the need for the study in the available literature (Taylor 2000:61). By reviewing literature, the researcher explores the research and findings, which various scholars have already undertaken in this field.

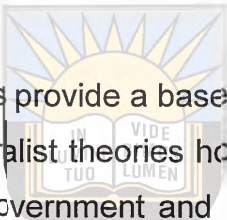


Malawi, formerly known as the 'Nyasaland Protectorate', was colonized by Britain from 1891 to 1964, a period of 73 years. During that time, the foundations of the local government system were laid. However, these colonial local government institutions were practically centralized and excluded the participation of the indigenous people. To add insult to injury, the level of service delivery was racially segregated (Kaunda 1999:579). Over the years, there have been several local government reforms in Malawi, which culminated in 1998, when the country embarked on the national decentralization programme, and enacted the Local Government Act (Act no. 42 of 1998). The object was to create and institutionalize District Councils (local governments) and task them with the duty of enhancing service delivery by responding to and meeting the needs of society.

However, it is disappointing to observe that despite the reforms which have taken place in the Malawian local government, indicators in the SEPs of the Councils in Malawi, (Chiradzulu District Council being one of them), still point to the fact that the provision of public goods and services, and accessibility of these by the communities remain at an average low of 51%, thus pointing to service delivery challenges.

This literature review, underpinned by organization theory, seeks to provide a review of the framework, against which the service delivery impact by local government institutions in Malawi, particularly, Chiradzulu District Council, may be analysed and interpreted. Definitions and theoretical framework will be utilized to enhance and support the argument as outlined in the study. The review of the literature will also define the concepts of decentralization, from which councils emanated as well as service delivery, as espoused by authoritative scholarly writers in the discipline.

2.2 Rationale for Local Governments



The centralist and decentralist theories provide a base for understanding the meaning of local government. On one hand, centralist theories hold the view that local government is a subservient part of the central government and is under its control. On the other hand, decentralist theorists view local government as local self-government through decentralized autonomous bodies (Ismail, Bayat, and Meyer, 1997:14). However, despite the differences in perspectives, local government essentially refers to a sphere of government that is closest to its constituents and involved in the provision of a wide range of services, which affect the lives of its inhabitants. It includes decentralized and representative local institutions, with general and specific powers, devolved and delegated to them by central government, in respect of a restricted geographic area within a nation (Zybrands, 1998:193). According to Matlosa (2003:102), local government denotes a transfer of power and authority to plan, make decisions and manage well-defined functions from central government to lower-tier public institutions. Kabwegyere, (2000) in Isingoma and Reddy (2006:93) further propound that local government councils are organs of local government, closest to the people. Through the exercise of executive and legislative authority, the elected local government councils are responsible for ensuring affordable and effective public service delivery as well as promotion of economic and social development within their areas of jurisdiction.

Ababio (2004:272) further subscribes to this notion by saying that local government is the sphere of government closest to the community, and this strategic position makes it the ideal tool for developmental government. No other sphere of government can exert more meaningful development than what local government can deliver. The understanding and argument for local governments (or councils in the context of Malawi), is their desirable democratic nature and potential for efficiency in the provision of local social services. In addition, local governments are considered as vehicles for local democracy that could provide services responsively to suit the local needs and conditions (Kaunda 1999:580). Thus, the Malawi decentralization process seeks to:

- “Create a democratic environment and institutions for governance and development at the local level;
- Facilitate the participation of grassroots in decision-making;
- Avoid dual administration (field administration as well as local government) and duplication of functions at the district level;
- Make public services delivery more efficient, more economical and cost effective;
- Promote accountability and good governance at the local level in order to help government reduce poverty; and
- Mobilize the masses for socio-economic development at the local level” (Republic of Malawi, 2000:2).

2.3 Legislative Framework for Councils in Malawi

Legislation refers to a law, which has been promulgated or enacted by a legislature or any governing body. Legislation comprises the collection of written principles that guide behaviour in society. All legislations have objectives intended to transform the present practice in organizations to a better one, and it primarily deals with transformation of organizations (Pakade, 2008:12). The following pieces of legislation guiding service delivery by councils in Malawi are reviewed:

- Malawi Republican Constitution Act, 1994 (20 of 1994);
- Malawi Local Government Act, 1998 (42 of 1998);

- Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy (White Paper) 2001;
- Malawi National Decentralization Policy (White Paper) 1998.

2.3.1 Malawi Republican Constitution of 1994 (20 of 1994)

Chapter 14 of the Malawi Republican Constitution of 1994 (Act no. 20 of 1994), Section 146(1) provides for the existence of councils. Section 146(2) specifically avails that local government authorities (Councils) shall be responsible for the representation of the people over whom they have jurisdiction, for their welfare and shall have responsibility for:

- The promotion of infrastructural and economic development, through the formulation and execution of local development plans and the encouragement of business enterprise;
- The presentation to central government authorities of local development plans and the promotion of the awareness of local issues to national government;
- The consolidation and promotion of local democratic institutions and democratic participation; and
- Such other functions, including the registration of birth and deaths, and participation in the delivery of essential and local services, as may be prescribed by any Act of Parliament.

2.3.2 Malawi Local Government Act of 1998 (42 of 1998)

According to Section 3 of the Local Government Act, no. 42 of 1998, the object of District Councils is, “to further the constitutional order based on democratic principles, accountability, transparency and participation of the people in the decision making and development processes”. The key responsibilities to be carried out by councils are provided in Section 6, these include:

- To make policy and decisions on local governance and the Council development for the local government area;
- To consolidate and promote local democratic institutions and democratic participation;
- To promote infrastructural and economic development through the formulation, approval and execution of district development plans;
- To mobilize resources within the local government area for governance and development;
- To maintain peace and security in the local government area in conjunction with the Police Service;
- To make by-laws for the good governance of the local government area;
- To appoint, develop, promote and discipline its staff;
- To co-operate with other Councils in order to learn from their experiences and exchange ideas on service delivery; and
- To perform other functions including the registration of births and deaths and participate in the delivery of essential local services.

2.3.3 Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (White Paper 2002)

The Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRSP) is the overarching strategy that forms the basis for all activities by all stakeholders, including Government Departments as well as Councils. The overall goal of the MPRSP is to achieve “sustainable poverty reduction through empowerment of the poor”. The MPRSP is built around four pillars. These pillars are the main strategic components grouping the various activities and policies into a coherent framework for poverty reduction.

- The first pillar promotes rapid, sustainable pro-poor economic growth and structural transformation.
- The second pillar enhances human capital development.
- The third pillar improves the quality of life of the most vulnerable.

- The fourth pillar promotes good governance.

2.3.4 Malawi National Decentralization Policy (White Paper 1998)

In post-independence Malawi, performance by local government institutions declined due to, among other factors, strict control and interference in local government affairs by central government, a narrow financial resource base as well as inadequate and inappropriately trained personnel in the local government system (Apthorpe, Chiviya and Kaunda, 1995:8). The continuing deterioration of people's welfare and public service delivery at the local level influenced the government to embark on the decentralization process. The rationale for decentralization was to establish a single institutional organization at district level, which will manage many of the functions, currently performed by line ministries to eliminate overlapping structures. The fundamental objectives of the Decentralization Policy are to:

- Create a democratic environment and institutions (Councils) in Malawi for governance and development at the local level, which facilitates the participation of the grassroots in decision-making.
- Eliminate dual administration (field administration as well as local government) at the district level with the aim of making the Public Service more efficient, more economical and cost effective.
- Promote accountability and good governance at the local level in order to help government reduce poverty.
- Mobilize the masses for socio economic development at the local level.

2.4 Organization Theory

Theory is necessary in research, in order to reinforce the study and to delineate a point of departure. In the process of conceptualizing organization theory, it is important for one to understand what is meant by "organization" and "theory". The word theory is

derived from Latin, “theoria” and Greek “theoreo”, meaning contemplation, speculation and sight. From different perspectives, it is deduced that a theory contains some generalizations based on facts and it can be used to explain or even predict eventualities. These facts are scientifically tested, valid, reliable and cannot easily be falsified over a certain longer period of time (Kanyane, 2009:8).

According to Fox and Meyer (1995:128), a theory can be defined as an explanation of some phenomena. It involves a set of interrelated principles that describe relationships observed in association with the phenomenon for the purposes of explaining and predicting the phenomenon. A theory consists of essentially three important qualities:

- It comprises concepts, assumptions and generalizations;
- It describes, explains and predicts behaviour of phenomenon; and
- It simulates and guides further knowledge development.

Fox and Meyer (1995:91) contend that contextually, organization theory can be defined and understood as:

- Concepts, theory and models used to explain the components and patterns of behaviour in an organization.
- An amalgam of sociology, business administration, public administration and psychology that focuses on the study of organizations, their structure, and their behaviour.
- Concepts, principles and hypotheses used to explain the components of, and behaviour in, and of organizations.

In addition, Fox and Meyer (1995:91) provide that the uses of organization theory in public administration are concerned with:

- Assisting managers in identifying the important aspect of problems and situations.
- Discovering and forecasting the relations between events.
- Supplying guidelines for discovering and evaluating alternative means of action.

- Defining criteria for isolating important information and decision-making situations.

According to Millett (1999:12), managers need to be exposed to organization theory, which offers a diverse range of insights. It is a field of study that involves a set of related concepts and principles, which is used to describe and explain organizational phenomena. Furthermore, organization theory can assist in understanding what organizations are, how these behave in a given environment, and how such organizations might behave in a different set of circumstances. It provides a way of thinking about organizations and a way of managing them. Moreover, organization theory is very concerned with the issues of organizational functioning and performance. Current organization practices can be appropriately understood through the exposition of theories that have guided the operation of these entities over the years. These theories form an arsenal of knowledge that can be used to explain organization processes. They are often classified as schools of thought, viewpoints or approaches (Tshiyoyo 2006:68).


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Tshiyoyo (2006:68) as informed by Waldo in Fry (1989:228-229), highlights the development of organization theory, into three stages as follows:

- The first stage is the classical period, epitomized by the works of authors, such as, Taylor, Fayol and Gullick. The classical stage of organizational theory based on the “machine model” of organization, emphasized the rational effects of human behaviour. This stage reached its peak in the 1930s and culminated in the publication of papers on the *Science of Administration*.
- Waldo labels the second stage in the development of organization theory the “neoclassical” approach. This stage began with the Hawthorne experiments in the 1920s and was of major importance through to the 1950s. In contrast to the classical stage, the neoclassical approach emphasized the emotive and socio-psychological dimension of human behaviour in organizations.

- The final stage in the development of organization theory is the modern organization theory, which, according to Waldo, began with the publication of March and Simon's *Organizations* in 1958. Modern organization theory based on an 'organic' or 'natural system' model of organization stresses organizational growth and survival. The modern approach endorses organizations that have less reliance on hierarchical controls, more recognized sources of authority, greater opportunity for personal mobility, and greater receptivity for organizational change.

There are varieties of definitions of the concept 'organization'. The word itself is derived from the Greek word "organon". Organizations are social entities that are goal directed, deliberately structured activity systems with an identifiable boundary. Pattanayak (2000:253) defines organization as a bounded sub-set within a society of independent relations among individuals, who interact with each other both directly and in meditated ways. In other words, organizations are social entities that are goal directed, deliberately structured activity systems with an identifiable boundary. Chester Barnard, in Robbins (1984:32) argues that success of any organization depends on maintaining good relations with those people and institutions outside the organization and with whom the organization regularly interacts. By recognizing that organizations cannot act as islands, but rely on investors, consumers, customers, suppliers and other external constituencies' dependence; therefore, managers must examine the environment, in which they operate and then adjust the organization's strategies in order to maintain a state of equilibrium. Barnard stresses that no matter how successful an organization would be, if there is no cooperation with people from within and outside the organization, the organization's survival would be threatened, (Robbins, 1984:32).

McKinney and Howard (1998:21), argue that organizations are essential to modern life, they are created to solve problems, but they are mirrors and are limited by culture replicating the "kinds of available roles, skills, beliefs, values and institutions that shape the behaviour of people". There are several ways of administering and solving the problems faced by organizations. Government has become the single most important

system of organization, it helps to do those things individuals cannot do for themselves, and it tells them what they can do or may not do. Those who deal with administration, management and organizations acknowledge this diversity. Various theories have been developed to offer a broader framework, which can be used as guidelines for managing or administering organizations. Theories can help one to realize that administration is not a haphazard trial and error oriented process, but that it follows a well-proven established way of doing things (Tshiyoyo, 2006:67-68). GoldSmith in Hope (2002:87) contends that good leadership and good governance are imperatives in public organizations, because these provide the means and represent the realm, through which good policies can be implemented in the national interest. Public organizations can thus be assimilated to public institutions.

Fox and Meyer in Crous (2002:17) describe public institutions as institutions that function in environments where there is a limited degree of market exposure and a great degree of reliance on appropriations from authoritative bodies. The authors add that the environment of public institutions is legal and formal, and a number of judicial constraints and political factors influence it. Public institutions are also exposed to close public scrutiny and unique public expectations, not only by the public, but also by other public institutions, as well as private sector organizations providing services or products to the public. A public organization is an institution, which has the legislative mandate of providing goods and services to the population within prescribed rules. Thus, public organizations refer to a complex network of public sector institutions characterized by bureaucracies, large-scale activities, and distinctively, public administration responsibilities. It should be quite well understood that a well-functioning bureaucracy could help to improve the efficiency, within which resources are allocated, simultaneously promoting growth and poverty reduction by providing sound policy input and delivering critical public goods and services in a cost effective manner (Gardner, 1990:1).

There are varieties of legal types of organizations, including corporations, governments, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), international organizations, not-for-profit

organizations, charities, partnerships and cooperatives. This study is more particularly focused on the governments' organizations, with specific reference to the decentralized local governments (Councils in the context of Malawi), as vehicles for public service delivery. Decentralization is an indispensable key to this study, and the phenomenon, which necessitated the establishment of councils, "as the institutional organization structures for the provision of effective and efficient service delivery" in Malawi (Kaunda, 1999:579). Consequently, the following section will discuss this concept of decentralization.

2.5 Organizational Dynamics – Issue of Decentralization

Dissatisfied with centralized approaches to delivering local public services, a large number of countries are decentralizing responsibility for these services to lower-level, locally elected governments. In the last quarter century, over 75 countries have attempted to transfer responsibilities of the state to lower tiers of government (World Bank, 2005). The motivation for the decentralization, however, has been varied. In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, its purpose was part of the political and economic transformation; in Latin America, it reinforced the transition to democracy; in Sri Lanka and Indonesia, it was a response to ethnic or regional conflict; and in Chile, Uganda and Cote d'Ivoire, it attempted to improve the delivery of basic services (Shah & Thompson 2004). Even when it is not explicit, improving service delivery is an implicit motivation behind most of these decentralization efforts by many governments in the world.

Decentralization entails the sharing of central government powers with other institutions, especially those geographically separated or responsible for specific functions, or those given jurisdiction over specific physical locations (Makumbe, 1998:3). Matlosa (2003:103) refers to decentralization as a generic concept for various forms of structural arrangements, by which power and resources are distributed to facilitate effective coordination of managerial functions. Mawhood (1983:18) understands decentralization

as, the “sharing of part of governmental power by a central ruling group with other groups, each having authority within a specific area of the state”. Fundamental areas in the decentralization process, according to Mawhood, are power, authority and responsibility, which start from the centre and are then diffused to the periphery (ibid).

Kasfir (1983:25), while adhering to Mawhood’s spatial aspect of a decentralized power structure, argues, “Decentralization means distributing authority and power horizontally rather than hierarchically.” Forje (2006:7) looks at decentralization as the transfer of power, authority or responsibility for decision-making from central to peripheral units within an institution or organization. It is a mechanism meant to boost participation of recipients of public services. Decentralization or devolution is embedded with the belief to improve efficiency in service delivery by “de-bureaucratisation” and thus radically reducing the number of intervening forces or obstacles in service delivery. It empowers various actors along the line to improve on quality, accountability, efficiency, good governance, performance and productivity for whatever services they render to the public.

Work (2002:5) contends that decentralization is, “the transfer of responsibilities for planning, management and resource raising and allocation from the central government and its agencies to the lower levels of government.” However consistent with the other authors, already alluded to in the discussion, the author also links decentralization to the concept of subsidiary, which proposes that functions be devolved to the lowest level of social order that is capable of completing them effectively and efficiently.

According to Bossuyt and Gould (2000:2) decentralization is the devolution of resources, tasks and decision-making power to democratically elected lower-level authorities, which are largely or wholly independent of central government. In a bid to give an all-encompassing definition of decentralization, the World Bank (2000:108) sees decentralization as, “...the transfer of political, fiscal and administrative powers to sub national units of government.”

Thus, from the various definitions above it is posited,

“...decentralization or devolution of power creates opportunities to improve efficiency in governance and in *the* delivery of public services. For effectiveness, decentralization goes with ‘*debureaucratisation*’ and serious reduction in the number of interacting mechanisms or forces involved in delivering services. It also entails empowering other stakeholders to be active partners in the process of quality service delivery, to ensure a social contract between the state, the governed and the private sector. It is only through such partnerships between the state, the governed and the private sector that accountability measures, such as, performance-based contracts; transparency and good governance can be attained to improve the quality of livelihood of the people” (Forje 2006:2).

Decentralization for public service delivery assumes three forms:

2.5.1 De-concentration of Authority

According to Mawhood (1983:4), de-concentration means, “the sharing of power between members of the same ruling group, having authority respectively in different areas of the state.” Therefore, Hyden (1983:85) postulates it is a power relationship within the same organization. The fundamental goal is to relieve the centrally positioned officials of the administrative onus by transferring some of this load to their colleagues in the periphery as a way of adapting central directives to the local conditions (Rondinelli, Nellis & Cheema, 1983:14). This allows the central government to penetrate the grassroots without necessarily relinquishing authority.

Olsen (2007:4) considers de-concentration as the transfer of authority and responsibility from one level of the central government to another, with the local unit accountable to the central government ministry or agency, which has been decentralized. De-concentration occurs when local entities act largely as the local agents of central

governments, manage personnel, and expend resources allocated to them by central government authorities. De-concentration refers to essentially the redistribution of central resources to localities on the sufferance of those central authorities (Wunsch 1998:20).

2.5.2 Delegation and privatization

Work (2002:6) on one hand propounds that, “delegation redistributes authority and responsibility to local units of government or agencies that are not always necessarily branches of local offices of the delegating authority.” It concerns the shifting of managerial responsibilities for specific functions from central government to the statutory corporations or parastatals, which are normally, “...outside the regular bureaucratic structure.” On the other hand, privatization occurs when government transfers planning and administrative responsibility or public functions to voluntary private organizations or NGOs for the benefit of the public, (Work, 2002:7, Makumbe, 1998:9).

Manor (1999:1) argues that this type of decentralization transfers power from one bureaucratic machinery to another in that it usually involves the transfer of power between two colossal entities, therefore, it cannot be regarded as authentic decentralization as it does not devolve decision-making powers to the people. Privatization is a once-off operation; contracting out can always be reversed (De Bettignies & Ross, 2004:138, Diale 2005:55). However, as governments become more comfortable with involving the private sector in public services, they are beginning to explore long-term solutions, where applicable. Increasing the use of the term Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) reflects this underlying desire to develop and sustain close working relationships with the external market and that public authorities as well as private companies should enter into a partnership for the management of safe, regular and reliable public services for citizens/customers (Domberger & Fernandez, 1999:1, Levy, 1998:24).

2.5.3 Devolution of Powers

Wunsch (1998:20) points out that devolution refers to the distribution (or re-distribution) of authority to make decisions and to take action by local governments independently of central administrative oversight. Devolution differs from federalism in that the powers devolved may be temporary and ultimately reside in central government. Crook and Manor (1998:12) as well as Work, (2002:6) define devolution as the transfer of legalized “elements of political power” to local government institutions or to specialized or functional authorities. Therefore, these bodies are vested with political powers to discharge certain functions and responsibilities within their areas of jurisdiction, such as, the provision of social services.

Hyden (1983:85), while espousing a spatial aspect of devolved power structure, discerns devolution as an inter-organizational transfer of power from the centre to the peripheral units, which although not normally within the command of central government, are indirectly controlled and supervised by it. These units are mostly recognized as autonomous, legalized bodies and are usually elected (Work, 2002:6).

Olsen (2007:5) emphasizes that devolution is often considered the most radical form of decentralization. When governments devolve functions, they transfer authority for decision-making, finance, and management to quasi-autonomous units of local government with corporate status. Devolution usually transfers responsibilities for services to municipalities/district councils that elect their own mayors and councils, raise their own revenues (at least partly) and have independent authority to make investment decisions. In a devolved system, local governments have clear and legally recognized geographical boundaries, over which they exercise authority and within which they perform public functions. It is this type of decentralization that underlies most cases of political decentralization.

2.6 Service Delivery Dynamics

Hanekom, Rowland, and Bain (1987:11) are of the opinion that the real core of public administration is the basic services performed for the public, such as, policing and the protection of property. Cloete (1998:11) adds that governmental institutions are continuously called upon to render with even greater intensity, a larger number of public services. To execute their functions in order to realize their goals and objectives, governments are bound to supply and deliver public goods and services to their communities. Du Toit, Knipe, Van Niekerk, Van de Walddt and Doyle (2002:24) are of the opinion that services refer to the results emanating from the execution of a variety of functions or processes, while public services are considered some of the most tangible outputs of administrative agencies (Sharkansky, 1975:334). Service can, thus, be defined as the performance of work or duty by an official or an act of helping others, or power to control or make use of resources, or an organization or system providing the public with something useful or necessary (Universal Dictionary, 1961:1394-1395). The act of delivery can be defined as producing or performing, handing over, taking goods to the intended recipient, or producing results as promised or expected (Universal Dictionary, 1961:413).

These definitions are adopted by Riekert (2001:90), arriving at a combined definition, which reads as follows, "service delivery is concerned with the provision of a product or service, by a government or government body to a community that it was promised to, or which is expected by that community". The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, 7th edn defines the act of service delivery as the system usually organized by the government or a private company that aims at providing something that the public needs. In the Public Administration Dictionary, service delivery is defined as the provision of public activities, benefits or satisfactions (Fox & Meyer 1995:118). Thus, service delivery is concerned with the provision of goods and services.

Fox and Meyer (1996), in Kanyane (2010:78), understand public service delivery “as the provision of public activities, benefits or satisfactions; the range of public services provided relates both to public goods, which are ‘tangible’, and to services, which are ‘intangible’. Apart from focusing too heavily on physical infrastructure of public service delivery, that is, tangible aspects of public service delivery, such as, roads network, schools and clinics, it is also imperative that governments should not overlook the more intangible, but equally vital impact of public service delivery – social aspects, such as, building as well as sustaining quality of life, and restoration of human dignity and respect in delivering such services. Kanyane (2010:78) contends that the concept of public service delivery embraces programmes and activities in relation to powers and functions that spheres of government are to perform, and that public service delivery is concerned with the provision of services by government and public entities. These public services include both physical infrastructure and social initiatives that will enable communities to improve their standard of living, to build sustainable livelihoods and even to prosper. Going by the current levels and quality of service delivery offered by many public institutions,

“... there are critical challenges that suggest that a new approach is needed to modernize public service delivery. The contemporary and globalised world is hugely influenced by the rapid development of information technology, which has created a digital divide. Somewhat ironically, perhaps, technology itself can serve as an effective tool for closing this digital divide; further, it can increase productivity and, in many cases, assist in applying new solutions for re-engineering government to respond with efficient and effective public service delivery” (Kanyane, 2010:82).

Kanyane (2010:81) further propounds that public service delivery is provided satisfactorily if the governance system in place is responsive to the needs of the people. According to Olowu and Sako (2002:19), governance can be defined as the formation of and stewardship of formal and informal rules that regulate the realm, the arena in which the state as well as economic and societal actors interact to make decisions. Kooiman

(1993:2) postulates that governance is a set of patterns that emerge from governing activities of social, political and administrative actors. For the author, these patterns form the emerging outcomes, which constitute a more abstract framework at a higher level for day-to-day governing activities. However, Kooiman (1993:258) also argues that governing can be described as those purposeful activities of social, political and administrative actors aimed at guiding, steering, controlling and managing aspects or facets of society.

Sindane (2009:2) emphasizes that the concept of “governance” refers to the process of decision-making as well as the process, by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). It is a process that includes elements from within society that possess power and authority to influence public policy and decisions concerning public affairs. Therefore, Sindane (2009:6) propounds that governance is a value-laden concept, which is normative by nature and emphasizes ‘ought’ instead of ‘is’ in the means-ends continuum, and can thus not be understood in the absence of clarity on the normative and the framework, within which it is operationalised. Halfani (1996:4) refers to governance as the relationship between civil society and the state, between rulers and the ruled, the state and society and the government and the governed. Thus, according to this definition, governance entails interaction of subsystems of a social whole. Improved governance is attained if people see that their interactions with elected local governments lead to decisions that are more consistent with their wishes than those made by higher levels. Being able to influence public affairs in at least some modest ways that directly affect them, empowers people, giving them a new sense of control and autonomy. Molekane and Mothae (2009:4) assert that in any democratic country citizens are significant in the manner in which they are governed and should be central to the day-to-day running of government. Being partners in governance implies the greater deal of participation and involvement of citizens in government programmes and decision-making processes. In this context, Peters and Savoie (2000:38 -39), argue that one of the most important elements of governing is goal setting or the determination of priorities.

Maserumule (2009:202) emphasizes that the effective delivery of services to enhance the well-being of a country's citizens is the most important aspect of good governance, which also needs to be emphasized in its definition. Therefore, good governance should be measured by the well-being of the people. In the Wikipedia Encyclopaedia, governance is defined as "...the activity of governing; what government does". It relates to decisions that define expectations, grant power or verify performance. Sindane, (2009:2) concurs with this definition and writes,

"...the concept of 'governance' refers to the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). It is a process that includes elements from within society that possess power and authority to influence public policy and decisions concerning public affairs. Thus governance signifies the existence of stakeholders and cannot be conceived of as the preserve of government alone".

Molekane and Mothae (2009:5) argue that the critical elements in governance include participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, equity and accountability; and propose that good governance as qualified governance, implies the reflection and application of these principles in the manner in which government, through public authorities, makes and implements decisions. According to Fourie (2009:1115), theories of good governance contend that governance and democracy are essential conditions for the development of societies. As for the public sector, the political environment requires a different mode of governance, wherein it mostly focuses on the checks and balances and especially the value systems that emphasize the issues of ethics and codes of conduct. Fourie (2009:14) further goes on to write that it is critically important that good governance should be based on the acceptance of ownership of all that are involved in the managerial process, that the highest standards of ethical behaviour and integrity are expected of all and that all actions are distinguished by transparency and consistency.

Shi (2009:29) informs that governance is, “for the role of public, private, and non-profit sectors in managing the common aspects of the lives of citizens.” Good governance can keep balance between the mutual expectations and self-interests, and therefore match the shared expectations of citizens. Good governance is to foster good civic life, such as, civic trust, civic engagement, civic discourse, and civic culture. Public service delivery will be achieved, provided the technical governance mechanisms, such as, accountability, administrative capacity and internal operations, are well structured and in place to meet the challenges. Accountability, effectiveness, responsibility and efficiency are regarded as the cornerstones of promotion of public service delivery. Ababio (2007) in Molekane and Mothae (2009:3) defines accountability as the answerability for performance and the obligation of public authorities to provide a satisfactory explanation to the public concerning the use of power, authority and resources entrusted on them.

As Leat (1986:3) explains, in its new form, accountability enshrines three dimensions.

- Firstly, it means being held to account by stakeholders or on their behalf, via sanctions or other approaches of redress that enforce the right to effect change.
- Secondly, it denotes giving account - furnishing stakeholders with an explanation or information to report what has taken place and the outcomes of that activity.
- Thirdly, it entails taking account of stakeholders’ needs and views and responding to these by examining and, if necessary, adjusting practices or increasing performance.

In addition, Kaul (1996:134) believes that accountability is emphasized to ensure that monitoring systems are strengthened.

Mountfield (1997:74) provides a distinction between accountability and responsibility, where accountability is defined as the obligation on political office-bearers to explain to the legislature “what went wrong”, what action has been taken to correct it, as well as prevent it from happening again. Responsibility is subsequently defined as taking the blame as well as facing the political consequences. Accountability is imperative to make public officials answerable for government behaviour and responsive to the entity, from which they derive their authority. The accountability mechanisms employed may vary

from audit covenants, at one level, to broadly elected legislatures or more narrowly conceived consultative committees at another. Fourie (2009:1117) further alludes to accountability as identified in Kings Report (2002) "as communities' rights to receive information relating to the stewardship of the organization's performance". Sikakane and Reddy (2009:3) inform that public accountability is an important component of local governance as it promotes community involvement and participation. Molekane and Mothae (2009:14) support this by saying that when citizens have confidence and trust in government they are willing to openly participate in government activities. Participation of citizens increases the government's resource base that will ensure the optimum use of available public resources. Effective use of resources, participation and having trust and confidence in government will therefore promote good governance, which will ensure sustainable development. Local government is at the core face of service delivery. One of the cornerstones of democratic local government is openness and transparency.

Transparency according to Ribot (2003:61) entails openness to public scrutiny. It is the extent to which decisions are perceived as being made in a clear and open manner; however, Bonfiglioli (2003:27) equates transparency to information sharing, open behaviour and clear decision-making procedures. Echoing Bonfiglioli, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development - OECD (2003:8) defines it as,

"...successful two-way communication about public policy...[it] starts from a core set of measures that are so fundamental as to be almost indistinguishable from governments' basic legislative, administrative and fiscal functions. Core measures help to ensure that people who are affected by policies know about them and can respond to them".

Every municipality/council should conduct its business in a manner that is open for the community to question its activities. The community should be informed how their municipality operates, especially with regard to financial activities. Lack of public accountability is usually a direct result of lack of transparency.

Public service delivery is perceived improved and impacting on sustainable quality of life and restoration of human dignity when the three key variables are attained. These are access, efficiency as well as standards and satisfaction.

2.6.1 Access to public services

According to the Wikipedia Encyclopaedia, accessibility is a general term used to describe the degree, to which a product, device, service, or environment is accessible by as many people as possible. Accessibility can be viewed as the "ability to access" possible benefit of some system or entity. Kanyane, (2010:79) propounds that public services must be delivered where the communities need them most, and delivery must be underpinned by a social agenda. Public institutions need to be transformed to deliver public services within a framework of a loftier vision of restoring human dignity and promoting the emancipation of the human mind and soul.

It is believed that local government allows for responsive and appropriate provision of public services to local areas, so avoiding the impersonality, remoteness and delays of central government delivery. The perceived accessibility of local government to the community is also believed to enhance accountability, as well as the capacity for building up public loyalty to the nation (King and Pierre, 1990:16-19). Crous, (2006:397) further writes that users of services judge the quality of services according to two criteria: Firstly, whether services assist them to achieve the outcomes they aspire to and, secondly whether services are delivered in ways, which empower them. The argument is made that for services to meet the aspirations of customers, customers themselves need to be involved in improving them, and this can only be achieved if there is access to the environment, in which the services are provided.

2.6.2 Efficiency of Public Service Delivery

Stoker, (1991:234-235) stresses that in terms of service delivery, efficiency emphasis should be made on the cost and time savings that come with the streamlining of long bureaucratic procedures, by adopting localized forms of service provision. Local government is, therefore, good for democracy and for efficient state administration. In terms of administrative efficiency, the argument emphasizes the cost and timesaving that come with the streamlining of long bureaucratic procedures, by adopting localized forms of service provision (King & Pierre, 1990:16-19).

According to De Bruijn (2007:4), efficiency measurement in the public service delivery is a very important communication tool as it reduces the complex performance of a professional organization to its essence. Therefore, it is able to detect poor performance, allowing an organization to be corrected if it underperforms. If an organization performs well, performance measurement might play an important role in making it transparent and in acquiring legitimacy from the citizenry. Thornhill and Hanekom (1995:195) state that in the public sector the endeavour should always be for action, which will lead to the improvement of the quality of service rendered by public institutions. Mitchell (1991:72) supports this by adding that public institutions should constantly strive towards improving their service delivery. There is no such thing as 'arriving' when it comes to service delivery. This notion therefore means that service delivery has to go through impact assessment processes to ensure quality, efficiency and effectiveness continuously. Improved efficiency is achieved, because sub-national governments are said to be closer to the people, have good access to local information and understand local context well. This enables the local governments to identify the mix and level of services, which their constituents need more effectively than the higher-level government, thus improving service quality and allocate efficiency (Smoke, 2003:9).

Gilbert (2004:7) defines quality as the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs. This definition can be summarized as consistent conformance to customers' expectations, as opposed to fitness for purpose. Deming (1986:34) draws the same distinction by considering quality as "delighting the customer", establishing a direct link to personal experience, as opposed to conformance to specification. Even though governments impose some services on people for the common good and ration others, the challenge of delighting the customer should lead to better treatment and possibly better outcomes than simply conforming to specification. If the users then are actively involved in developing specifications, the service is even more likely to meet expectations, if not actually to bring delight.



2.6.3 Standards and satisfaction of Public Service delivery

The primary objective of quality management is thus to create and maintain a system of practices and procedures that will assure that an institution's services satisfy its customers. Grenier (1988:1) is of the opinion that customer satisfaction is achieved by economically delivering services that meet customer requirements and Ovretveit (1992:2) describes quality as fully meeting the needs of users of a service, at the lowest possible cost to the institution, within the directives set by authorities. Riekert, (2001:88), states that all citizens, making use of a particular service, are in fact customers and that a customer can be defined as a person, with whom you must deal, or a person or institution, who buys goods and services. Customers of public administration would include all citizens, segments of citizens buying or receiving goods or services, such as, social services and licensing, business, economic development, and voluntary non-profit groups, who have dealings with the public sector. Customer service can be viewed as a philosophy and an attitude. The customer service philosophy is the belief that cooperating with the customer and offering what the customer wants is more efficient and effective than attempting to dictate and control what the customer receives. From the public administration view, "government exists to

satisfy the needs of the citizens”. Thus, customer service is a management strategy that focuses on meeting customer expectations. It is based on the concept that the organization will reach its goals effectively and efficiently through satisfaction of the customer. With this orientation of identifying, understanding and focusing on customer needs, processes are designed to satisfy customer expectations (Wagenheim & Reurink, 1991:263-264).

Based on the definition of quality established earlier, quality approaches with a customer focus are emphasized, rather than approaches like quality assurance, which can be defined as the prevention of quality problems through planned and systematic activities, emphasizing systems and procedures, rather than outputs or outcomes. In effect the quality assurance approach means that perfect systems can be developed – to produce goods or services that nobody wants or needs (Oakland 1989:10).

Customer focused quality approaches in service delivery involve programmes and actions, which emphasize the importance of the customers, these are, users, citizens and communities, as opposed to the service. Under these approaches programmes range from conventional customer-care training to all services that are labelled as “customer first”. Total Quality Management (TQM) is one such philosophy that aims to inspire the behaviour and interactions of people in work situations, through their attitudes, aspirations and motivations, to produce quality service (Pike & Barnes, 1996:54). The main concern in TQM is self-improvement and group-improvement through team building and commitment to more efficient working practices and all three of the basic TQM models (process analysis, integrated and charismatic) focus on the customer in order to determine what actions the institution should take in order to improve itself. TQM aims to change people’s behaviour towards the tasks they perform and their attitude towards other people gradually. TQM can thus be summarized as a process of change with the following characteristics (Gilbert 2004:1):

- focus on customer expectations;
- prevention of problems;

- building workforce commitment to quality; and
- open decision-making.

Apart from quality being essential to the survival and growth of any public institution, the philosophy of continuous improvement can aid the public service in fulfilling its service delivery or welfare function in that it addresses the management challenge of increased outputs with limited means to meet the ever-increasing needs of society.

The methodology of continuous improvement involves analysing the pattern of demand for a service, paying particular attention to understanding the causes of successes and failures. An improvement statement is then prepared using data, such as, public consultation results and complaints, as well as internal data and information.

Nowadays, no public institution should seek to assess the quality of services without drawing on the experience of those, who use the services, as both government policy and good practice require those, who use services to be consulted about and involved in their development and improvement. It is the experience of service consumers, which is the ultimate test of their quality and sustainability. Services, after all, exist for users – that is their prime purpose and function (Gaster & Squires, 2003:176). However, when aiming to implement the continuous improvement process by seeking customer feedback, public institutions should keep in mind that citizen involvement is not an end in itself, but rather a means of effecting the required changes in the outcome of services (Crous, 2006:402). Okafor (2009:7) further propounds that citizens now want high quality public services that are built around their own needs, where processes and systems are developed to enhance outcomes and not merely enhance internal mechanisms of ministries/department/agencies.

Fourie and De Jager (2005) in Kanyane (2010:89-90) argue that in an effort to ensure quality public service delivery standards by local governments, "... there has been a world-wide shift in focus from the traditional public service delivery approaches to

various alternative means, which may be more effective, cost efficient, customer oriented, flexible and innovative". These alternative service delivery (ASD) approaches embrace a shared service delivery model (SSDM) and manifest numerous forms, such as, outsourcing, establishing more service-oriented public entities operating under commercial business principles; and entering into partnerships or sharing public service delivery arrangements with other institutions like the private sector or CBOs. Broadbent (2003:332) observes that PPPs are recent extensions of what has now become known as the "new public management" agenda for changes in the way public services are provided. PPPs involve organizations, whose affiliations lie in respectively the public and private sectors working together in partnership to provide public services. PPPs are one form of the policy of liberalization in the way public services are produced and delivered to the public. PPPs open up the possibilities for the provision of public services, not to come only exclusively from organizations owned and controlled by the public sector, but also from both the public and private sectors in partnership.

Kanyane (2010:90) informs that PPPs are integral to building and strengthening effective, efficient and prompt service delivery. If properly managed and monitored, PPPs could serve to resolve major service delivery hurdles, though they do present opportunities for corruption. A strong 'state capacity' is thus critically important as a distinguishing feature of a developmental state; it is achieved through the creation of an inexpensive, efficient and effective public service. This principle reinforces benchmarks in public service delivery process to measure the extent, to which citizens are satisfied with the service or products they receive from government departments constantly. The principle also plays a critical role in the development of service delivery improvement plans to ensure a better life for the service recipients. Standards required are that they be precise and measurable so that users can judge for themselves whether they are receiving what was promised. Some standards will cover processes, for example, length of time taken to attend to a patient.

2.7 Conclusion

The intent of the literature review was to provide a conceptual framework for this study by covering important aspects, such as, the rationale for local governments, organization theory, the legislative framework for local governments (Councils) in Malawi, the concept of decentralization, and service delivery. Looking at organization theory the literature review has examined the different approaches to the theory of organizations. Emphasis is particularly placed on the notion, which holds that, in the organization theory, concern should not only be placed on the technical aspects and the human aspect of an organization, but it should also be on these together with the environment, within which they are found.

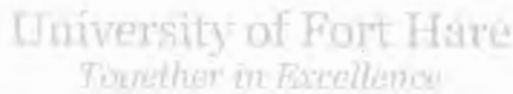
In giving a perspective of the legislative framework in the literature review, it has been expounded that local governments (Councils in the context of Malawi) are institutions tasked with primary responsibility of providing basic public services to citizens. Emphasis here is on the fact that local governments are the institutions that are closest to the people and are ideally appropriate institutions for the provision of basic services to the citizens. A focus on decentralization was about the new concepts of governments across the world devolving their authority and power through institutionalization of structures, where the services are actually required. To this end, in analysing service delivery, the focus was on accountability, which is a concept on the answerability for performance in order to bring about effectiveness and efficiency in the management of public affairs and delivery of public services. Chapter three will deal with the research design and methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the ways and means, through which data for the study were collected. Moko (2009:58) asserts that research design and methodology give a clear picture and road map to be followed in conducting a research study. It provides the necessary steps and procedures that were used to interact with all relevant participants in the study. The researcher takes into account issues relating to ethical considerations and sensitive views and ideas of the participants during the survey. Understanding research methods is the key to gathering, using, and evaluating information (O'Sullivan, Rassel and Berner, 2003:1). In this chapter, therefore, methodological issues are raised as to how the data for the study were collected.



3.2 Research Design

The word 'design' alludes to planning. To design a research project is to put together the various components of that particular research project. Therefore, a research project is a grand plan of a particular research project that shows how one wishes to proceed with the research, and how to guard it against external and internal factors, which may interfere with its processes (Tshiyoyo, 2006:31). The study was designed and conducted within both qualitative and quantitative paradigms. The researcher interacted with public service users and stakeholders of the Council, gathering information about their individual and independent feelings, views and ideas on the impact of the Council on service delivery. Questionnaires were also sent out for completion. In the course of the interactions, the views of the respondents were recorded in numerical and narrative format. The interactions and the process of recording the views of the respondents have

a qualitative research element while the capturing of numerical data has a quantitative element.

3.2.1 Qualitative research

Bless (2000:156) understands qualitative research as research that depends on unstructured interviews steered by the researcher to take a particular desired direction. According to Cohen and Manion (2003:415), the qualitative research approach is an approach, which attempts to understand human behaviour and the meanings people attach to their settings. MacMillan and Schumacher (1993:371) define the qualitative research approach as a primarily interactive type of field research or primarily non-interactive document research. The qualitative research approach attempts to understand human behaviour from the perspective of the individual, who is part of the ongoing action and who is being investigated. The focus is on understanding the human behaviour as it presents itself. In addition, the qualitative research approach strives to portray what it is like to be in a particular situation. Therefore, it describes the participants' life experiences, thoughts and feelings regarding the situation under study.

Mouton, (2003:194) postulates that one of the major distinguishing characteristics of qualitative research is the fact that a researcher attempts to understand people in terms of their own definitions of their world, and it focuses on the subjective experiences of individuals. In this study, the researcher interacted with respondents through focus group interviews conducted with Chiefs, NGOs, business community and the community-based organizations (CBOs). The views, expressions, feelings, experiences and thoughts of the respondents regarding the impact of the Council on service delivery were taken into consideration in chapter four of the study.

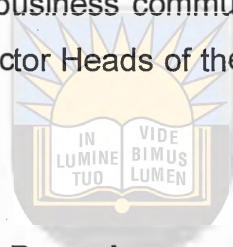
3.2.2 Quantitative research

Clark, Riley, Wilkie and Wood (2000:40) describe quantitative research in terms of collection of data, which relies on the instrument that is determined by the researcher's skills. Quantitative method places reliance upon research instruments used to gather data and analyse or measure it. In this case, the instruments are questionnaires. Bryman and Burgess (1999:36-37), consider quantitative research as essentially statistical where the aim is to quantify the data. The major purpose of quantitative research is to make valid and generate objective descriptions on phenomena. The researcher attempts to show how phenomena can be controlled by manipulating the variables. Quantitative research is thus considered an unpredictable way of conducting social investigation. In quantitative research, the study focus is on control of all the components in the actions and representations of the participants. On this basis, the researcher plans and executes this control in the way the study, and its instruments, for example, the questionnaires, are designed. In this study, the researcher designed and distributed coded questionnaires to Members of Parliament (MPs), Council Departmental Sector Heads and Constituency Governors for completion. The completed questionnaires were then collected and statistically analysed by the researcher.

3.3 Targeting and Sampling

Sampling is the process of selecting the individuals, who participate (observed or questioned), in a research study from a population (Regenesys, 2006:59). Stratified random sampling was used in the study. Cohen, Marion and Morrison (2000:101) define stratified sampling technique as one that involves categorizing population into homogeneous groups with each group containing similar characteristics. Stratified random sampling was chosen, because it ensures that a sample adequately represents the selected groups in the population (O'Sullivan and Rassel 1989:113). Analysts use stratified random sampling method if an interest group consists of a relatively small

proportion of the population, or when they compare groups. Leedy and Ormond (2005:202) further agree that stratified random sampling has the advantage of guaranteeing equal representation of each identified strata. In stratified random sampling, the researcher samples equally from each one of the layers in the overall population. The research target of the study was the NGOs, the business fraternity, CBOs, Traditional Leaders, Sector Heads of Departments of Chiradzulu District Council, the MPs and Constituency Governors. The aforementioned constituted the target, because they were more involved at the policy making level on service delivery through their representation in council meetings and community matters. The number of target people in the collection of the data was 65, comprising ten representatives from the NGOs, ten representatives from the business community, ten representatives from the CBOs, ten Traditional Leaders, 15 Sector Heads of the Council and ten politicians (MPs and Constituency Governors).



3.4 Data Collection Techniques and Procedures

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Cohen et al (2000:242) discuss various methods of data collection, which include questionnaires, interviews, documentary surveys, and observation. Data in this study were collected using questionnaires and focus group interviews. The study interacted with 65 participants, and during the survey, the researcher explained to the respondents the motivation for the survey and the need for honest responses in order to ensure that credible findings could be achieved. Respondents were also assured of anonymity to dispel any fears that they might have harboured. The survey lasted for four weeks.

3.4.1 Questionnaires

A questionnaire is a list of carefully structured questions chosen after considerable testing, with a view to eliciting reliable responses from a chosen sample (Hussey & Hussey, 1997:161). To investigate the opinions of the Council Officials, concerning the

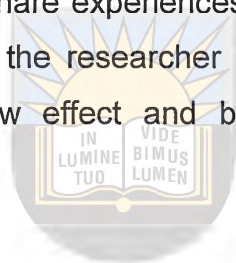
performance of their Council in the provision of public services, 15 Departmental Sector Heads were selected from different departments of the Council. Ten politicians (five MPs and five Constituency Governors) from within the council's jurisdiction were also targeted. Self-administered coded questionnaires (see Appendix 1A), with the same set of questions were administered. The questions employed were both open-ended and closed-ended structured. Questionnaires were utilized in the study, because they are inexpensive to administer, information is easy to tabulate, and confidentiality is maintained. Additionally, it requires relative expertise to administer. In order to seek the respondents' participation in the study, prior telephonic requests were made, and the researcher personally delivered questionnaires as well as letters explaining the purpose of the study (see Appendix 2), to all 25 respondents.

The distribution of questionnaires was undertaken two days after the telephone calls. The collection of data with questionnaires from the participants was estimated to run for two weeks. However, after the allotted two weeks, it transpired that only the 15 Council Departmental Sector Heads and the five Constituency Governors had completed and returned their questionnaires. Parliament was in session during this period, and the five MPs had to be reminded twice, through telephone calls, to complete the questionnaires, which was eventually done after another week lapsed. The researcher then personally collected these from Lilongwe City, where Parliament sits, undertaking a 300 kilometres journey to facilitate this service. At the end of three weeks, 100% of the questionnaires sent out were completed and collected.

3.4.2 Focus group interviews

Kruger, in De Vos, Strydom, Fouchè and Delport (2000:206), define a focus group interview as a planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive non-threatening environment. De Vos et al. (2000:305) understand focus group interviews as a means of understanding better how people feel or think about an issue, product or service. On the other hand, Mahlangu (2008:76)

sees focus group interviews as an opportunity to investigate what cannot be observed visually and to obtain alternative explanations for what is observed visually. The group is focused in that it involves some kind of collective activity. Carey, (in De Vos et al, 2000:291) asserts that this method is meaningful if one wants to explore thoughts and feelings and not just research behaviour. Focus group interview is an advantageous tool for collecting data since some respondents “may not read and write or provide answers in English. For this reason, the researcher can conduct the interviews in a language the respondents understand best” (Segwapa, 2008:8). The participants are selected, because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the focus group. Importantly, the researcher must create a friendly and respectful environment that encourages the participants to share experiences, wishes, concerns and points of view. In the focus group interviews, the researcher “asks the same questions in the same order, thus reducing interview effect and bias” (MacMillan & Schumacher, 1993:426).



Four focus group interview surveys using the same set of questions (as presented in Appendix 1B), targeting the CBOs (10 representatives), the business fraternity (10 representatives), the NGOs (10 representatives) and Traditional Leaders (10 representatives) were conducted. The process followed for the execution of the focus group interviews comprised that the researcher wrote letters seeking the organizing and convening of the focus group interviews to all the chairpersons of the concerned groups, two weeks prior to the conducted interviews (see Appendix 3). Then, in turn, the chairpersons identified and invited the participants to attend the interviews, as well as arrange for the venues for the interviews. On the interview days, the researcher firstly facilitated a briefing with the participants, explaining in detail the purpose of the study, and reconfirming their willingness to participate in the study. Signing of consent forms (see Appendix 4), was then conducted with all the interview participants. A brief analysis of how the focus group interviews were conducted as regards the dates, times, venues and number of participants, who turned up is highlighted as follows:

- **Focus Group Interview with Community-Based Organizations**

This was held at Chief Ntchema's headquarters, on Thursday, 25th November 2010 from 13:00. Ten representatives were invited, nine turned up (comprising four males and five females). One member was absent, due to illness.

- **Focus Group Interview with Traditional Leaders**

This interview was conducted at Senior Chief Mpama's Headquarters, on Friday, 26th November 2010, from 13:30. Ten traditional leaders, comprising six males and four females, were invited and all attended, because the researcher, through the District Commissioner's office, provided transport for them. After the interviews, they were also ferried back to their respective headquarters.

- **Focus Group Interview with Business Community**

This was held on Saturday 27th November 2010 from 15:00 at Chief Nkalo's headquarters. Ten business community members were invited, but only eight turned up (comprising five male and three female members). The two, who failed to attend, did not furnish any apologies. These interviews started slightly later than scheduled, due to late arrivals. In fact, the group chairperson had to use the cell phone of the researcher to make calls and remind the participants about the meeting.

- **Focus Group Interview with the Non-Governmental Organizations**


This interview was held in the Council Community Centre Hall office on Tuesday, 30th November 2010 from 13:15. Ten representatives were invited, and nine of them turned up (comprising four male and five female members). One member could not honour the meeting due to a funeral on the day of the interview.

The attendance of the respondents to the interviews was very satisfactory as it presented over 90% of the representation of the target group. The data gathered from the interviews presented a fair view of how the various interest groups perceived the Council's impact on public service delivery.

3.5 Data Analysis

According to Mouton (2001:108-109), the section of data analysis provides, or explains the stage, at which gathered data are transformed into information via the process of analysis. The data collected from the survey were analysed using statistical graphs in order to depict trends and patterns of perceptions of the respondents on the council's impact on services delivery. Through the extrapolation of the views, opinions and feelings expressed by the respondents during the interviews, descriptive data analyses were used in order to elaborate thematic issues in the questions.

3.6 Limitation of the Study



The research focused on the District Council of Chiradzulu regarding the impact that this council had on service delivery. The limitation encountered was due to the unwillingness of management officials in state institutions to divulge information regarding the performance of their departments. This included the political affiliations by the politicians in government and Traditional Leaders, who had a potential to resort to lack of cooperation to release information, which pertained to service delivery. In attempting to counter these problems, the researcher presented copies of a letter of authority from the University (see Appendix 5).

3.7 Conclusion

The chapter was intended to explore research methodologies used in the study, in order to reach the desired understanding of stakeholders on the impact of the Chiradzulu District Council on service delivery. The design and the methodology used assisted the researcher to pay special attention to scientific fundamentals of research, and the instruments employed facilitated the collection of appropriate data for the study. The

questionnaires and the focus group interviews helped the respondents to express their views freely and advance suggestions on how the Council's shortcomings could be addressed. The researcher had an opportunity to observe certain variables during the data collection exercise. The respondents were able to practically demonstrate and show the researcher some of the issues that surfaced during the interview process, regarding the subject under study. The following chapter will thus analyse the collected data.



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CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the design and methodology employed for data collection regarding the analysis of the impact of Chiradzulu District Council in public service delivery. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to unveil the empirical results of the research. In addition, significance of the results in relation to public service delivery is scrutinized. Thus, this chapter is a presentation and an analysis of the findings from the data collected after the interaction with the respondents. As stated in chapter three, the study was conducted within the paradigms of both qualitative and quantitative research. These data analyses methods provide an in-depth understanding of the results and the opinions of the various respondents as regards the impact of the Council on service delivery. In order to facilitate an in-depth examination and analysis of the data, specific references to the questionnaire and focus group discussion questions are made and elaborated on.

4.2 Quantitative Analysis of Data

4.2.1 Communities' understanding of the roles of the District Council

Figure 4.1 on the following page reveals that about 78% of the communities knew and understood the roles of the District Council. However, it was also observed to the contrary by the respondents that 16% and 6% of the communities were not aware of and neither understood or completely knew about and understood the roles of the council respectively.

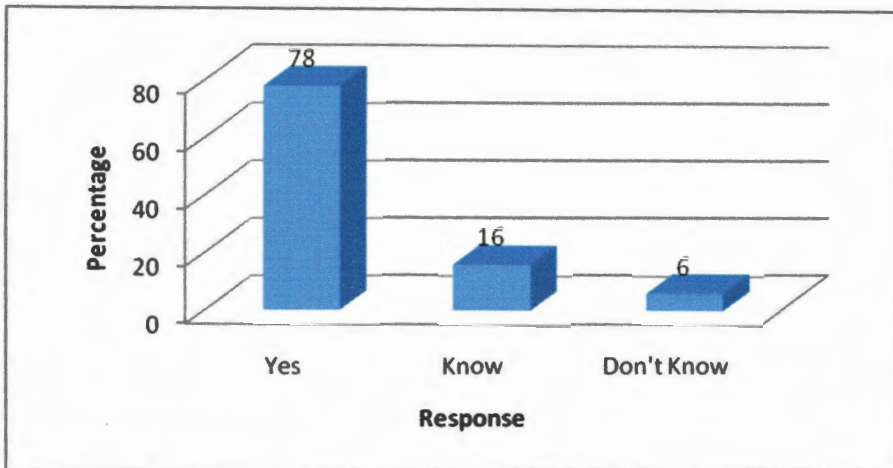


Figure 4.1: Communities' understanding of the roles of the District Council

4.2.2 Participative role of the communities in the functioning of the Council

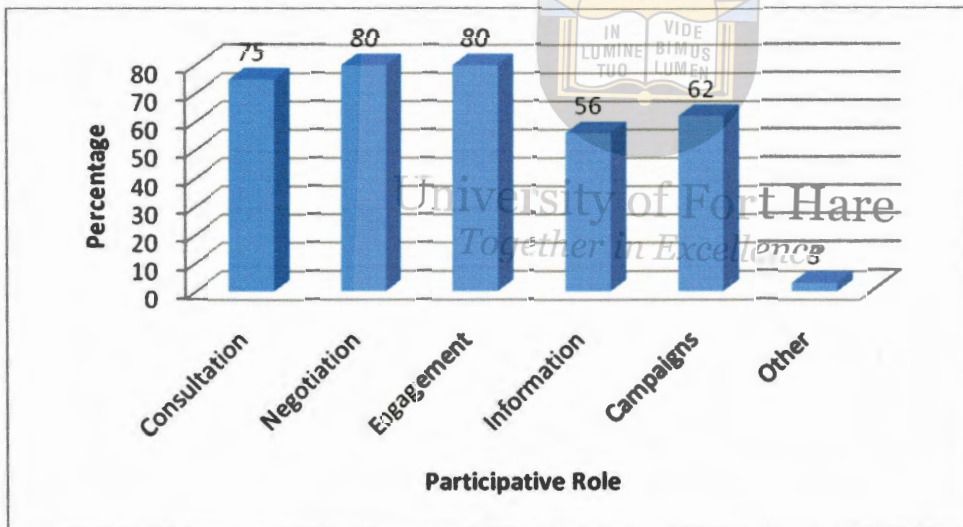


Figure 4.2 Participative roles of the communities in the functioning of the Council

Figure 4.2, divulges that the participative roles of the communities in the Council's functioning were pegged at 76% through consultations, 80% by negotiations, a further 80% by engagements, 56% through information, 62% with campaigns and 3% for other modes. It was highlighted that the participative role of communities in the functioning of the Council, had improved (on average by about 59%), because of the introduction of decentralized development planning.

4.2.3 Information to Council Stakeholders of Council planning meetings

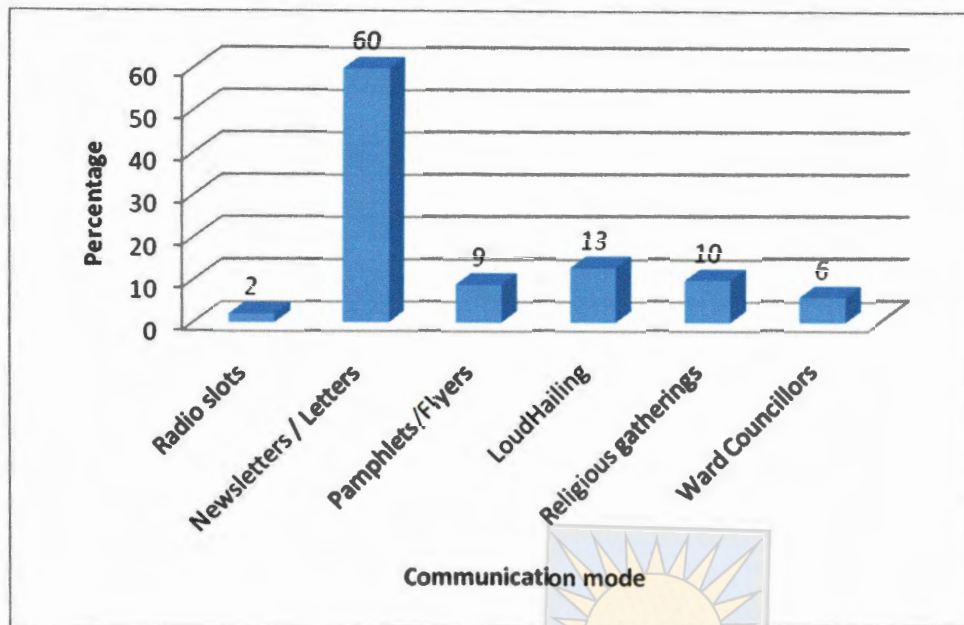


Figure 4.3 Information to Council Stakeholders of Council planning meetings

Figure 4.3 portrays that information flow from the Council to stakeholders regarding planning meetings, was mostly through letters/newsletters at about 60%. Other modes of communication that the respondents highlighted, as being used by the Council, were loud hailing about 13%, religious gatherings 10%, pamphlets and fliers 9%, and through Ward Councilors about 6%. At the time of study, it was construed from the respondents that the Council rarely used the radio as a mode of communication when inviting stakeholders to planning meetings. The use of this mode was quantified at only 2%.

4.2.4 Time of making information/documents on what would be discussed at meetings available to stakeholders

Figure 4.4 on the following page, discloses that about 80% of the times, the Council sent out information and documents of what would be discussed in planned meetings well in advance, before the meetings took place. The respondents also pointed out that it had never happened that the Council failed to make available any document after any

meeting. Incidences where documents were made available after the meeting took place were quantified at 8%; and for those that documents were made available during the proceedings of the meeting were at 12%.

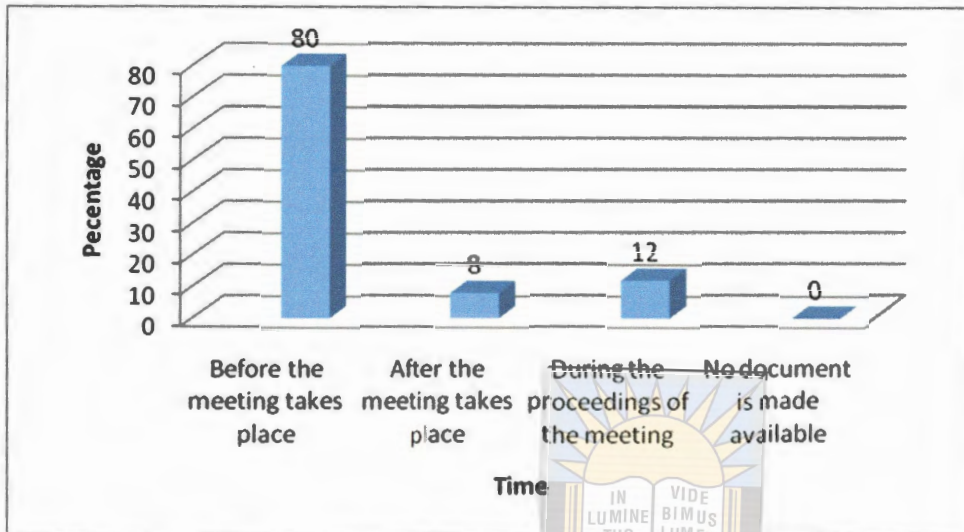


Figure 4.4: Time of making information/documents on what would be discussed at meetings available to stakeholders

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4.2.5 Communities' accessibility to Council Officials so as to seek clarifications on the Council's functioning

Figure 4.5 on the following page, represents that about 68% of the respondents affirmed that regarding this question, there was an access of the communities to Council Officials, so as to seek clarification on the functioning of the Council. However, about 27% and 5% respectively of the respondents expressed there was no access; neither did they know if there was any access at all.

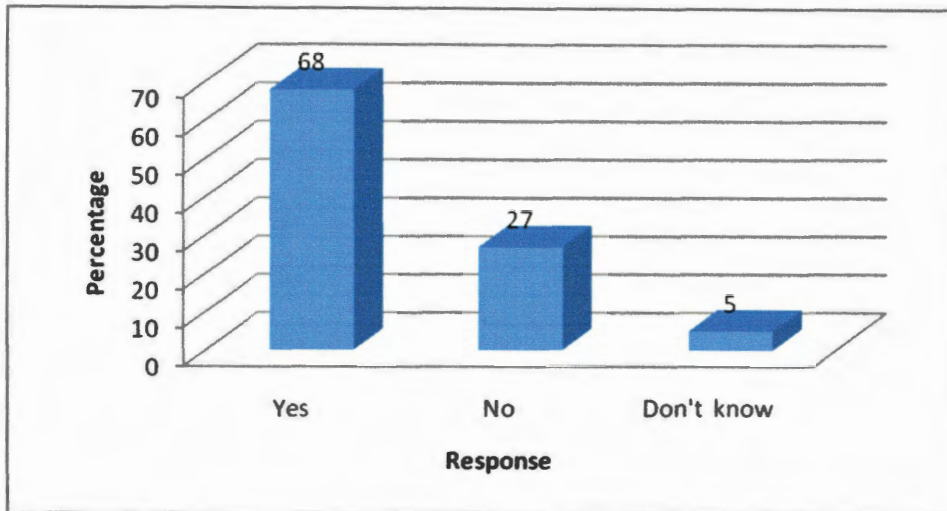


Figure 4.5: Communities' accessibility to Council Officials to seek clarifications on the Council's functioning



4.2.6 Clarity and existence of well-defined consultation mechanisms for public service users about their needs

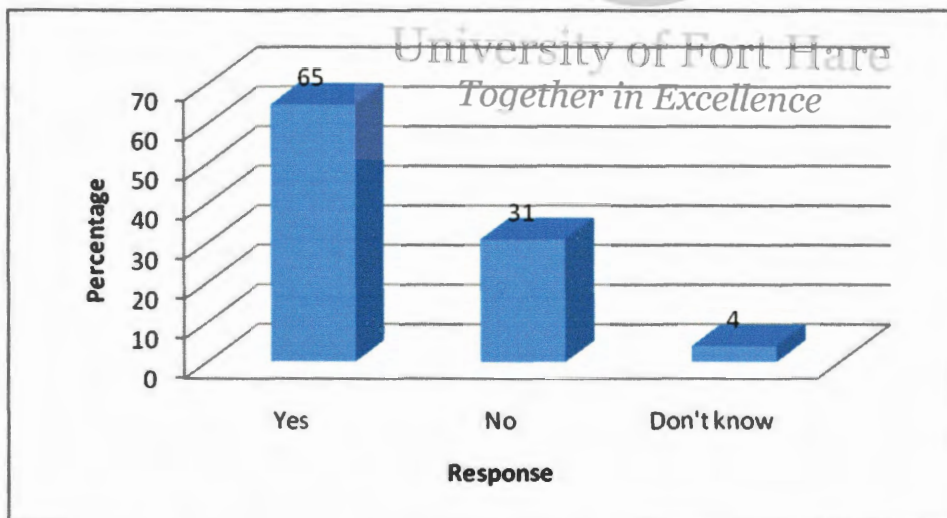


Figure 4.6: Clarity and existence of well-defined consultation mechanisms for public service users about their needs

Figure 4.6 reveals that 65% of the respondents confirmed that the Council did have clearly defined consultation mechanisms for public service users about their needs. Conversely, a further 31% of the respondents argued that there were no clearly defined

consultation mechanisms, whereas 4% clearly expressed ignorance about the existence of such consultation mechanisms.

4.2.7 Effectiveness of consultation mechanism

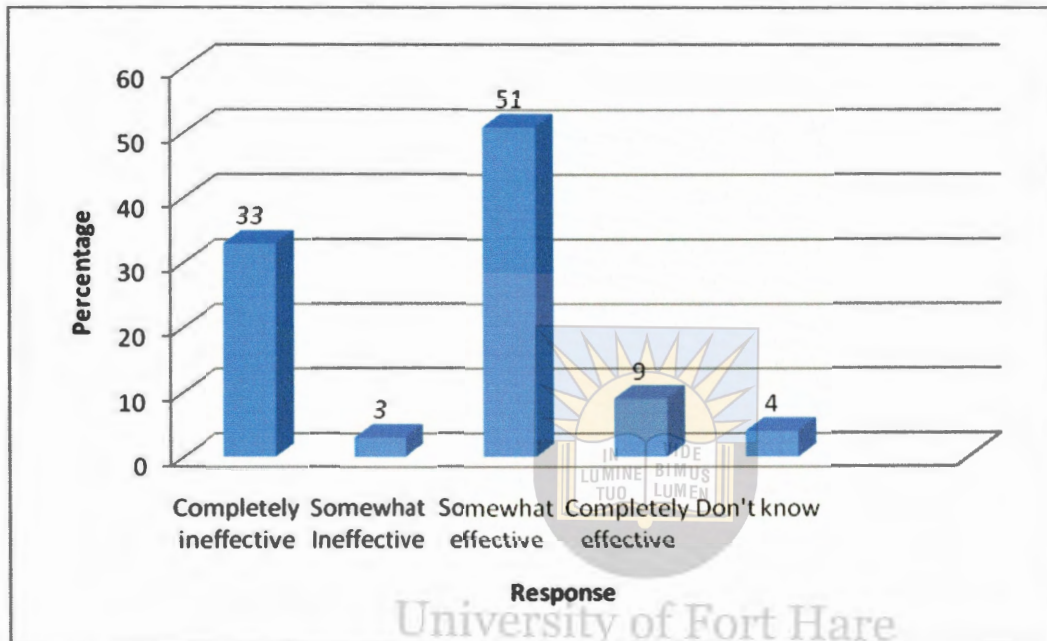


Figure 4.7: Effectiveness of consultation mechanism

Figure 4.7 depicts that according to data gathered on this question, 51% of the respondents agreed that the consultation mechanisms were somewhat effective. A further 9% were of the view that the consultation mechanisms were completely effective, whereas 33% and 3% respectively expressed that the consultation mechanisms were somewhat ineffective and completely ineffective. Only 4% of the respondents indicated that they did not know.

4.2.8 Clarity and availability of well-defined complaints and redress mechanisms for public service users to express themselves

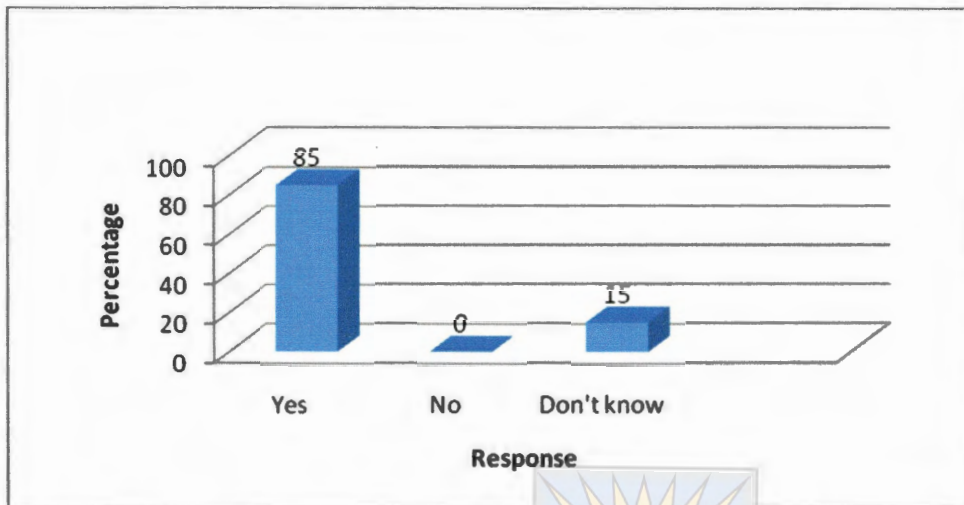


Figure 4.8: Clarity and availability of well-defined complaints and redress mechanisms for public service users to express themselves

Figure 4.8 specifies the findings on this question at about 85% of the respondents indicating that the Council did actually have clearly defined complaints and redress mechanisms for public service users to express themselves. A contrary observation was made though by about 15% of respondents, who had no knowledge of the existence of these complaints and redress mechanisms.

4.2.9 Effectiveness of complaint and redress mechanism

Figure 4.9 on the following page, discloses that even though the Council had clearly defined complaints and redress mechanisms in place for public service users to express themselves, according to Question 8, findings from respondents on Question 9 revealed that these mechanisms were merely somewhat effective, at only about 59%, while only 6% alluded to the fact that such mechanisms were completely effective. However, 32% of the respondents were of the view that the complaints and redress mechanisms were somewhat ineffective, and 3% of the respondents expressed ignorance.

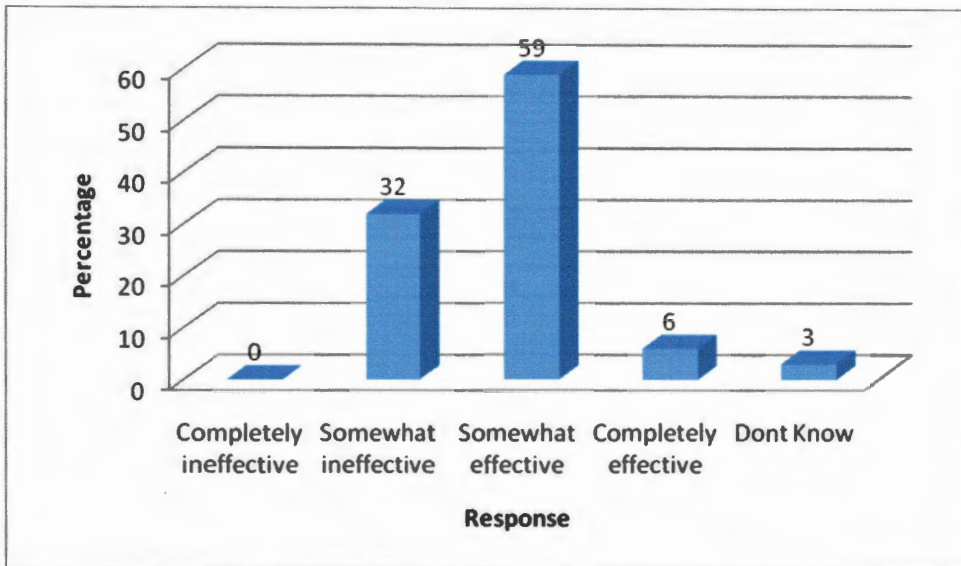


Figure 4.9: Effectiveness of complaint and redress mechanism



4.2.10 Perception of the Council on service delivery as of high quality

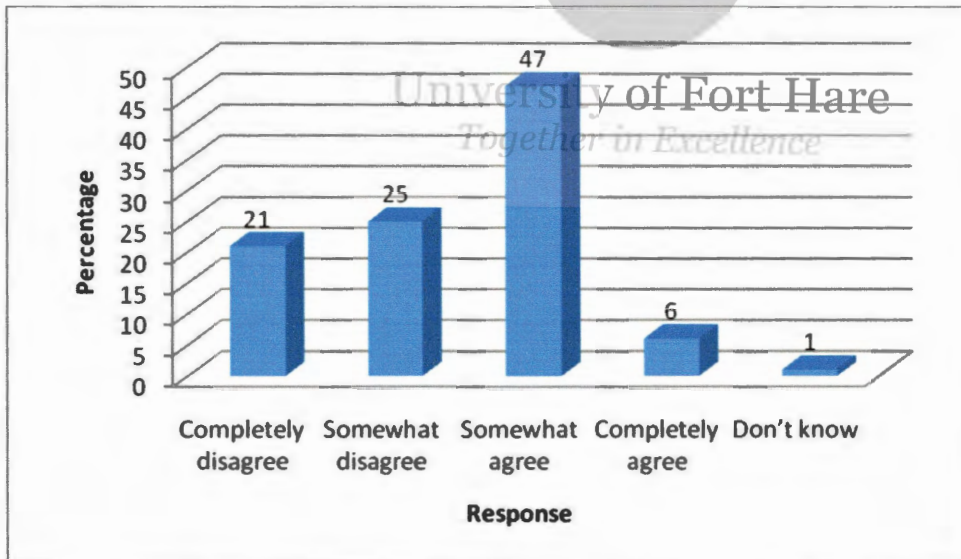


Figure 4.10: Perception of the Council on service delivery as of high quality

Figure 4.10 unveils that feedback from respondents regarding the question of public service delivered by the Council being perceived to be of high quality by users, only about 47% somewhat agreed that the public service delivered by the Council is

perceived to be of high quality, and only 6% completely agreed. Other respondents, about 21%, completely disagreed, and 25% somewhat disagreed.

4.2.11 Perception of the Council on service delivery as effective given the budget funding that it receives

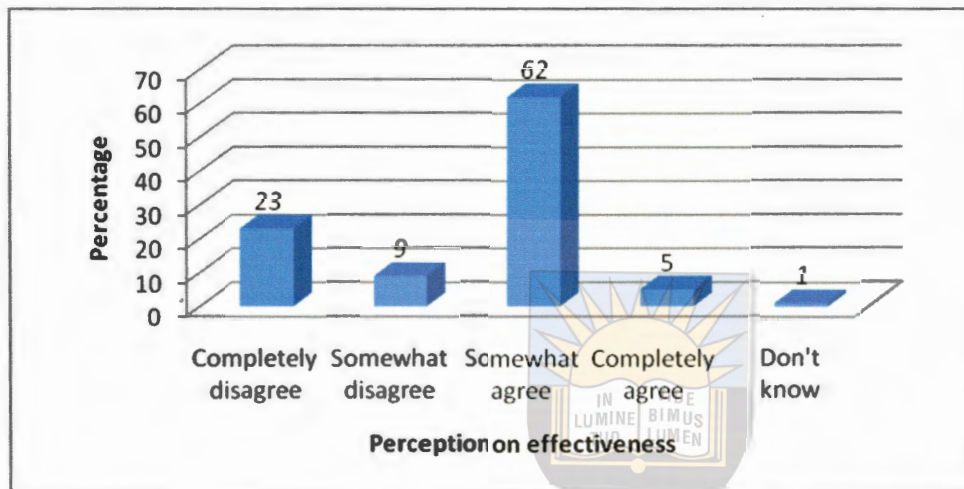


Figure 4.11: Perception of the Council on service delivery as effective given the budget funding that it receives

In relation to effectiveness and efficiency of the District Council, the results in Figure 4.11 indicate that about 67% of the respondents somewhat agreed that the Council was effective and efficient. Only 5% of the respondents completely agreed, whereas 23% completely disagreed, and 9% somewhat disagreed.

4.2.12 Perception on public services delivered by the Council as accessible by poor members of the community

Figure 4.12 on the following page reveals the questionnaire responses from the focus group discussions. This indicates that 43% of the respondents somewhat agreed that the public service delivered by the Council was accessible to poor members of communities. About 15% completely agreed, and about 30% somewhat disagreed. Those who completely disagreed were about 11%.

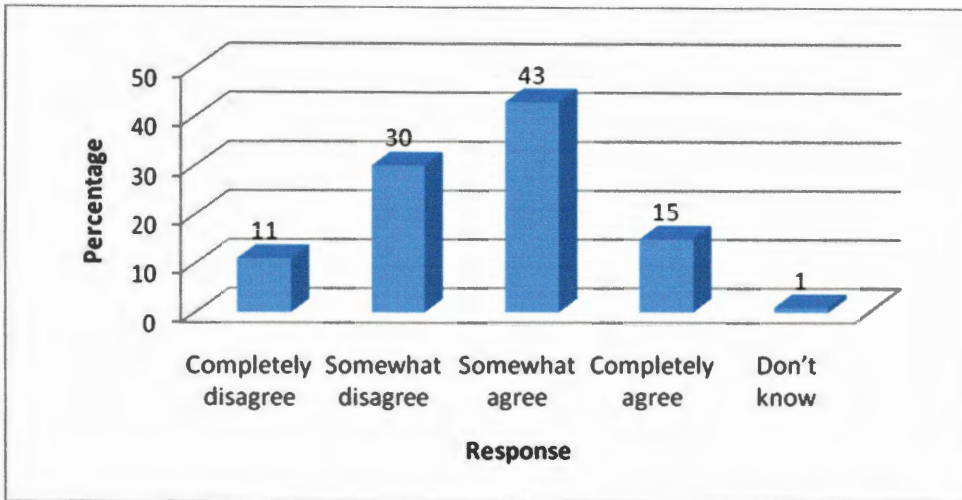
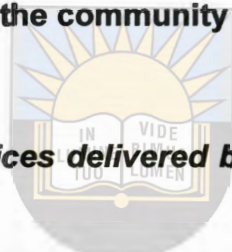


Figure 4.12: Perception on public services delivered by the Council as accessible by poor members of the community



4.2.13 Perception on public services delivered by the Council as being helpful to reduce poverty

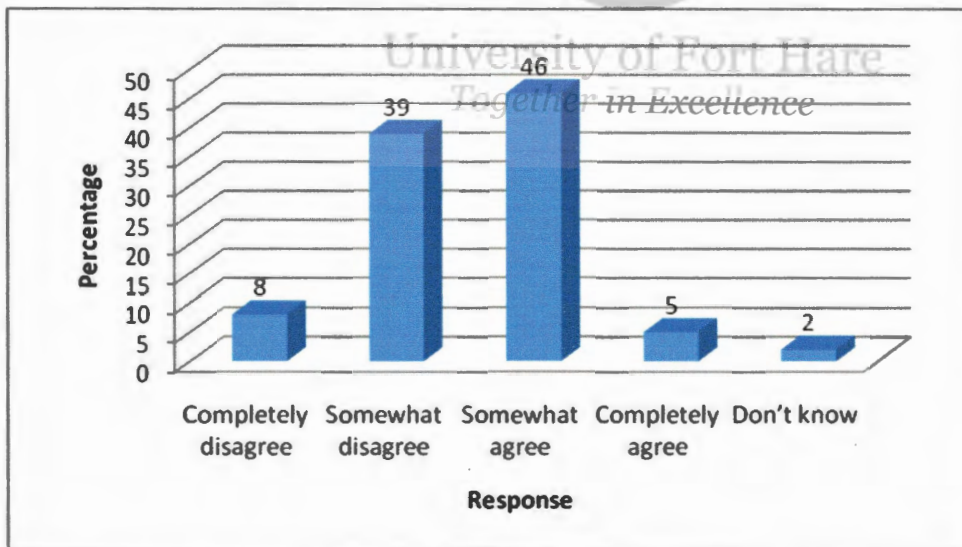


Figure 4.13: Perception on public services delivered by the Council as being helpful to reduce poverty

Figure 4.13 depicts that on this question 46% of the respondents agreed that the public service delivered by the Council was perceived to be helpful in reducing poverty. A mere

5% were in complete agreement, while 39% somewhat disagreed and 8% completely disagreed.

4.2.14 Perception on public services delivered by the Council as being effective in addressing the needs of communities

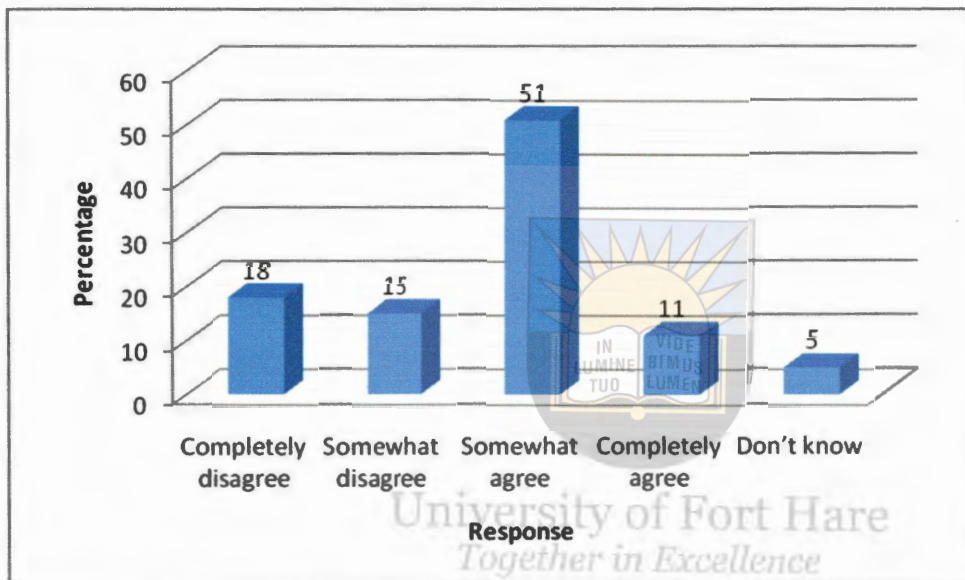


Figure 4.14: Perception on public services delivered by the Council as being effective in addressing the needs of communities

Data from Figure 4.14 reveal that 51% of the respondents somewhat agreed that the public service delivered by the Council was perceived to be effective in addressing the needs of communities. Only 11% completely agreed, whereas 15% somewhat disagreed and 18% completely disagreed.

4.3 Qualitative Analysis of Data

4.3.1 Communities' understanding of the roles of the Council

On the question of whether the communities understood the roles of the Council, the respondents from the questionnaire survey, which mainly targeted Council Sector Departmental Heads, the MPs and the Constituency Governors, were of the view that communities were aware of and understood the roles of the Council. This was supported by views from a focus group interview held with the representatives of the NGOs held in the Council Hall. These respondents, in order to show and confirm their knowledge about the Council's role, were even able to mention some such roles as provision of basic public services like water, education, health, passing of legislation (by-laws) to regulate orderliness as well as promotion and facilitation of infrastructural development in the district. It was interesting to observe from the respondents that because of this understanding of the Council's roles, the respondents highlighted that they were able to assess whether the Council was actually performing or not.

However, still on the question of whether the communities understood the roles of the Council, focus group interviews held with CBOs, Traditional Chiefs and the business community; the general view of the respondents was that communities did not understand or were oblivious of the roles of the Council. This group of respondents highlighted that lack of knowledge and understanding of the Council's roles was due to the inadequate information that originated from the Council about its functions, and the absence of interactive forums between the Council officials and the communities. In addition, it was pointed out that due to the absence of these interactive forums, the communities did not have an opportunity to avail themselves to see and know the officials that were there at the Council secretariat to serve them. Due to this lack of knowledge and understanding by these groups, it was observed that they were not able to know and assess whether the Council services were being offered to the required standards or not and thus, they did not have an opportunity to voice their concerns

accordingly. Therefore, it was suggested by this group that the Council should disseminate as much information as possible, and conduct as many interactive forums as necessary to enlighten the communities about its (the Council's) roles.

4.3.2 Participative role of the communities in the functioning of the Council

On the point of the participative role of the communities in the functioning of the Council, respondents from both the questionnaire survey and the focus group interviews highlighted that the communities participated mainly through consultations, negotiations, engagements, information and campaigns. It was observed from the data that participation had actually improved through the decentralized development planning system, because of the creation and enactment of the Council. Examples the respondents mentioned, where the communities participated in the functioning of the Council, were project development planning, project appraisals, project impact assessments, mobilization of local resources for the building of infrastructures, and policy formulation through their representation by the Ward Councilors in Full Council meetings and sub-committee meetings.

Until the time of survey, the communities were able to plan, identify and prioritize their development needs and participate in mobilizing materials. In Chiradzulu District Council, for example, people participated in the preparation of district development plans starting from needs assessment to evaluation. Community participation was also perceived as contribution of materials and labour to development projects when either a higher authority or influential local officials demanded such tasks for local development projects. Thus, for building projects moulding of bricks, collection of building poles, sand and willingness to offer free labour were some of the common contributions. In some cases, participation was seen as being synonymous to consultation. Projects were first designed and then as a way of targeting them, officers from the Council were sent to the grassroots to do some consultations with the people in the guise of participatory appraisals. Councillors filling the role as people's representative in the Local Council are

another highlighted dimension of participation. From focus group interviews with Chiefs and CBOs, views expressed by the respondents revealed a general satisfaction of the people with the work of many of the councillors as their representatives.

It was highlighted by the respondents that the situation was worse before Councils were instituted; previously there were no consultations with the people when government was implementing development projects. Government could just bring about a development project that it felt was necessary; for example, a school without the involvement and participation of the people, when in fact what the people wanted was a clinic.

4.3.3 Council stakeholders informed of planning meetings

In terms of how Council stakeholders were informed of planning meetings, the respondents from both the questionnaire survey and the focus group interviews pointed out that a number of modes were used including the use of letters, loud hailing, religious gatherings, pamphlets and fliers in descending order. Although there was a general view that the Council communicated to its stakeholders about its planning meetings, however, the mode that was utilized the most was of written communication, and that was not favoured by Chiefs, CBOs, or the business community as evidenced from the views expressed by them during the focus group interviews. It was lamented that most times invitation letters from the Council inviting stakeholders to such meetings were sent out and received late, thereby not enabling the invitees to plan accordingly for such meetings.

It was suggested during the interviews that apart from letters, the Council should also consider making full use of the radio. In addition, it was communicated that radio had a wide coverage and reached out to many people in a short time, and that with the high illiteracy levels in Malawi, the medium was the most preferred. The respondents also pressed the Council for maximum use of the other modes already being used, such as, loud hailers and religious gatherings. It was argued that loud hailers attract people's

attention, because people would want to hear more about the conveyed message. This medium was effective both in a rural as well as in an urban setting. Religious gatherings also usually attract big attendances, hence guaranteeing maximum exposure and dissemination of information. It was also pointed out those practical areas where the Council, to inform the communities of planning meetings were for example vaccination of dogs against rabies, immunization campaigns for the fewer than five children and agricultural field days, could apply the use of radio, loudhailers and religious gatherings.

4.3.4 Juncture at which information and documents are made available

On the question, at which juncture information and documents on the agenda were made available to stakeholders, the study results indicated that the Council sent out information and documents well in advance, before the meetings took place, specifically so with those meetings planned by the Council. The MPs, the Constituency Governors and the Departmental Sector Heads expressed satisfaction with this arrangement, because it was communicated that this gave them time to go through the information provided and thus enabled them to participate meaningfully in deliberations. This view was also echoed by comments from a NGO focus group interview. However, a concern was, raised by Chiefs, CBOs and the business community that just as the issue of invitation letters to the Council's planning meetings, the Council had often failed to provide them with the necessary information and documents of what would be discussed in meetings on time. It was argued that on many occasions the information and documentation for such meetings were only provided after the meeting had already taken place or worse still, they did not receive any information at all. This arrangement, according to these respondents, made it difficult for them to effectively follow and meaningfully participate in the Council meeting's deliberations. The Council clarified that representatives from distant regions experienced this problem more than representatives located closer to the Council Headquarters. The latter indicated that they received information and documents of what would be discussed at the meetings. This challenge was observed to be even worse especially for unplanned or emergency

meetings organized impromptu by other partners, mainly cabinet ministers and politicians.

4.3.5 Communities' access to Council Officials

On the point of whether communities had access to Council Officials to seek clarifications on the Council functioning, there were two diverse observations. Firstly, observation from the MPs, the Constituency Governors and the Departmental Sector Heads, indicated good access. These respondents pointed out that this access had been made easier through the installation of help lines for the offices of the Chairman of the Council, the District Commissioner and the Director of Planning and Development. Another initiative to promote access that was indicated by these respondents was the deployment of extension workers to every corner of the Council and the establishment of designated offices for the MPs and the Ward Councilors in the constituencies. This view was also echoed by the comments expressed in a focus group interviews conducted with the Chiefs and the NGOs.

Secondly, contrary to the previous observation to the issue of access by respondents from focus group interviews conducted with the CBOs and the Business Community, was that the communities did not have access to Council officials to seek clarifications on Council functioning. Their argument was that most often the help lines, which were put in place to facilitate this access, were constantly out of order, and meeting top officials, even with prior appointments on very pertinent issues about service delivery, had always been a tall order. It was also expressed that as much as offices for the MPs and the Ward Councillors were established in the constituencies for ease of access by communities to them as part of the Council machinery, these offices were often closed as the office bearers mostly stayed in towns away from their wards and constituencies.

4.3.6 Council's clearly defined consultation mechanisms

On the question of whether the Council had clearly defined consultation mechanisms for public service users about their needs, three views were expressed. The first view from the questionnaire survey from the MPs and the Council Departmental Sector Heads, and a focus group interview with the NGOs, confirmed that the Council did have clearly defined consultation mechanisms for public service users about their needs. These respondents were able to mention structures, such as, the Area Development Committees (ADCs) and the VDCs and other Council sub-committees as the mechanisms initiated and put in place by the Council to enhance the consultations about service users' needs. From the focus group interviews conducted with the Chiefs and the CBOs, there was a general feeling that there were no clearly defined consultation mechanisms. To support this view, one lady respondent said,

".....one day in March 2009 there was an issue in our village to consult on about the coupons for subsidized farm inputs. We first went to the Traditional Chief for our area to consult, the Chief referred us to the ADC, the ADC referred us to the Village Development Committee (VDC), the VDC referred us to the MP, the MP referred us to the Council secretariat, the Council secretariat referred us to the Agriculture Department. This not only confused us but it also showed to us that the whole system or mechanism is confusing and not clearly defined".

The third view by another small group though, from the four focus group interviews was that of ignorance about the existence of such mechanisms. The arguments advanced were that the Council had never informed them about the existence of such consultation mechanisms.

4.3.7 Effectiveness of consultation mechanisms

On the question of how effective the consultation mechanisms were, the study results indicated that these consultation mechanisms were less effective. The general view from the questionnaire survey with MPs and all four focus group interviews was that even though the VDCs and the ADCs were instituted as some of the structural mechanisms to enhance consultation and coordination, these mechanisms had not been very successful in facilitating the consultations as intended. Evidence from comments made by respondents from the focus group interviews with the NGOs, and CBOs revealed that these committees were inactive. For instance, it was pointed out by the chairperson of the CBOs that as of December 2008, of the eight ADCs, only two were active, whereas of the 76 VDCs, only eight were said to be active. The respondents also expressed ignorance of the existence of the so-called ADCs and VDCs. Instead, they expressed knowledge of other user committees, such as, the Village Natural Resource Management Committees (VNRMC), Village AIDS Committees, Village Health and Water Committees, to mention but a few.

The inactivity of the ADCs and VDCs was attributed to several factors.

- Firstly, the Council only remembered the VDCs when it wanted to use them for participatory rural appraisals for Village Action Plans (VAPs), but thereafter nothing else was done. For instance, the last time the VDCs were trained was in 2008, when the District Council wanted to formulate VAPs.
- Secondly, the VDCs themselves had no incentives to meet and discuss development needs in their respective areas.
- Thirdly, the behaviour of other development actors, such as, NGOs, who preferred to form their own user committees, which they could easily control. Consequently, as the number of NGOs and NGOs' activities increased in an area so did the number of user committees. The proliferations of the user committees brought new problems in as far as consultations mechanisms were concerned.

4.3.8 Council's complaints and redress mechanisms

In terms of whether the Council had clearly defined complaints and redress mechanisms, findings from both the questionnaire survey and focus group discussions showed that the Council had clearly defined complaints and redress mechanisms for public service users to express themselves. Examples, such as, the suggestion boxes placed at the Council offices and other strategic places, the District Commissioner's help line, and open community feedback forums were cited by the respondents as some of the defined complaints and redress mechanisms initiated by the Council. Other respondents observed, though, from the focus group interviews with the CBOs and the Chiefs about the need for the Council to make these mechanisms fully known to all service users, especially those areas far away from the Council headquarters.

4.3.9 Effectiveness of complaints and redress mechanisms

Relating to the effectiveness of the complaints and redress mechanisms that the Council had in place for public service users to express them, findings on this from the focus group interviews with the business community as well as the CBOs, and questionnaire survey from the Constituency Governors revealed that these mechanisms were less effective. Evidence advanced for this paltry effectiveness was that of the many complaints submitted to the council only a few were satisfactorily addressed. They were either addressed or attended to very late or were not responded to at all. For example, from a focus group discussion held with representatives of the business community held at Chief Nkalo's' headquarters, one concerned respondent said,

"....in June 2009, I called the Council through the District Commissioner's help line to complain about very poor condition of sanitation at Chimwawa Council market. It took almost six months for the Council to respond to the concern, of course after several reminders".

Another respondent had this to say,

“.....in April, 2008 at community feedback forum addressed by the Council Chairman and some Departmental Directors, I raised a complaint on the poor status of the roads in our community. The Council Chairman and the Director of the Department of Public Works assured the forum that funds for roads grading and rehabilitation were already identified and available and that works on the roads would start as soon as the rains subsidize sometime in July / August that same year. However, surprisingly five months down the line there was nothing happening and there was not any feedback to explain for the delays. Worse still the roads were even never worked on”.

These delays in attending to communities' concerns were indicated by the respondents as pointers to the ineffectiveness of the complaint and redress mechanisms put in place by the Council.



4.3.10 Quality of public service delivered by the Chiradzulu District Council

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Regarding the question of whether public service delivered by the Chiradzulu District Council was perceived to be of a high quality by users, feedback from respondents from all the focus group interviews and a questionnaire survey from the MPs, revealed a general dissatisfaction with the average quality of services being delivered. Evidence advanced for the observation for the average service quality were the high cases of abandoned projects, poor workmanship of works, and unnecessary delays in completion of projects. Examples that were repeatedly cited by the politicians in the questionnaire survey were of bridges and graded roads that were built and worked on by the Council in 2008 and 2009 across the district. Of the 39 projects implemented, 13 of the bridges and roads were abandoned mid-way by the Council, citing the inadequacy of funds as the reason; 29 were completed, but way beyond schedule. Of those bridges and roads completed, 14 manifested poor workmanship, and only lasted for an average of one year of meaningful use. Another area that the respondents from a

focus group interview with NGOs' representatives mentioned, that pointed to poor quality service delivery, were the unnecessary delays by the Council in the processing of deceased estates. It was observed that the Council took unnecessarily long to assist deceased estate beneficiaries. A process that supposedly should take an average of two weeks to conclude, took the Council over five weeks to complete.

4.3.11 Effectiveness and efficiency of public services delivered in terms of allocated funding

In relation to effectiveness and efficiency of the public services delivered by the District Council in terms of the funding that it gets, the results indicated two contradicting views.

- The first view from the questionnaire survey from three of the five MPs, and all 15 Council Departmental Sector Heads was that the public services delivered by the Council were generally effective and efficient in terms of the funding that it generated locally and received from central government. The main areas that were observed that the Council was most efficient included the administration of marriages, registration of births, issue of identity cards and other day-to-day activities performed in the office. Further, the Council was also seen as efficient in its administration of open markets, where it generated most of its revenue.
- The second view expressed by the respondents from all four focus group interviews and two MPs from the questionnaire survey, indicated that the Council was less efficient considering the funding it had at its disposal. Efficiency of the Council, especially on the issue of public toilets and disposal of refuse, was observed to be very inadequate.

Another area where the Council was perceived less effective was with regard to development projects. Respondents had reservations on the efficiency of the District Council; they claimed that it took a very long time for their proposed projects to be accepted (if they were accepted at all) and to be implemented. As such, this frustrated the communities that worked very hard preparing for the requested projects. In addition,

councillors complained that there was inadequate supervision of ongoing development projects, which was seen as something that compromised the quality of the infrastructures that were implemented. In the same vein, the frequency of field appraisals for proposed projects was realised to have declined considerably from at least two a month to one in three months, largely due to the lack of transport and financial resources.

The Full Council Meetings, which were supposed to be convened every quarter under normal circumstances, at times took six months without any meeting. For example as of December 2009, the Full Council was last convened in July 2009, when it was approving Local Development Fund (LDF) projects. The lack of meetings was the same with sub-committees, let alone the District Executive Committee. This meant that policies and decisions took a long time to be generated and implemented.

Efficient service delivery is synonymous to adequate availability of resources. It was sad to observe from the reports of the Council Sub-Finance Committee that since 2008, the Council had been beset with serious financial problems, which also had negatively affected its efficiency in service delivery. In view of the lack of adequate funds, only a few vehicles of the Council had been running, some of which were long overdue for service. It was also observed that the Council had seven vehicles, of these, only four were running (as of December 2009), but two of those running were overdue for service. All six motorcycles owned by the Council, were overdue for service and only three of them were running. The scenario was the same with computer equipment, printers, copiers and faxes. During the time of the research, of the two heavy-duty copiers the Council had, none was working, because either toner had run out or there was a total breakdown of the equipment.

Briefly, the data revealed that the District Council was efficient in some areas, most of which, apart from markets, were ironically not very essential in poverty reduction. Respondents from both the questionnaire survey and the focus group interviews observed that the Council was less efficient in delivering services that were more

connected to development. The issues of delays of project implementation, lack of funds to do field appraisals and to hold Full Council meetings were raised in the results. It was observed by the respondents that decisions took a long time to be generated and implemented, which in the end frustrated the people, who waited a long time for the Council to act on their development needs. In addition, delays in implementing development projects entailed to some extent, lack of pro-poorness of the decisions taken thereafter. The respondents pointed out for instance, that some projects were seasonal or dictated by the season or time, such as, bridges, and that by the time the Council responded, it might be too difficult to carry out the project or the pressing needs of the people might have changed, resulting in the project being irrelevant in the end. It was observed from both the questionnaire survey and the focus group interviews that the issue of efficiency of the District Council was complicated by the fact that the Council only had two sources of revenue. These were government grants and own revenues collected from the taxes, rates and the sale of its services. Both of these sources were not adequate to run the internal business of the Council efficiently. In addition, it was also highlighted that development projects were solely dependent on donor funds, as such due to the limitedness of these funds, development projects in the district, were in turn limited. Thus, it was feared that as long as the District Council remained solely dependent on the donors for its development, its efficiency remained in jeopardy, as donor support was unpredictable and heavily dependent on political factors prevailing in the country.

4.3.12 Accessibility of public service by poor members of communities

On the issue of whether the public service delivered by the Council was perceived to be accessible by poor members of communities, two views were revealed.

- The first view from the questionnaire survey respondents especially the Council's Departmental Sector Heads, and a focus group interview with the NGOs affirmed that the public services delivered by the Council were not only perceived to be accessible, but were actually accessible by poor communities. These

respondents, who affirmed this view, also pointed out that apart from the question of accessibility, public services delivered by Chiradzulu District Council were also tailored to meet the priority needs of the poor communities.

- The second view from focus group interviews with the Chiefs, the CBOs and the business community, indicated that there was a general feeling that the public services delivered by the Council were not just perceived to be accessible, but they were in fact very inaccessible by members of the poor communities. This latter group of respondents informed that most of those poor communities were located far from the Council headquarters, and also far from the Council's established community structures, such as, the ADCs, the VDCs, from where they could easily access help on various service delivery needs. It was realised, for example, that most of the Council's basic services, such as, health, education, water, policing and markets were only concentrated around the Council headquarters and major trading centres. The largest population of the district lives in the very remote areas, outside the major trading centers. Access roads from these remote areas to the trading centres were also a major concern, thus, completely isolating out a big percentage of poor communities from accessing public services.

4.3.13 Public service delivery's reduction of poverty

In relation to whether the public service delivered by the Council was perceived to be helpful to reduce poverty, respondents from both the questionnaire survey and the four focus group interviews were of the view that the public services delivered by the Council had not adequately helped in poverty reduction. The respondents made specific mention of the Council's remote areas, where the Council's presence in terms of public services delivery was minimal. Views from respondents from both the questionnaire survey and the focus group interviews argued that public services provided by the Council meant to address poverty, were only confined to those areas around the headquarters and major trading centres; rural areas were either inadequately served or

not reached out to at all. To confirm this, one lady respondent from a focus group interview with the CBOs held at Chief Ntchema's headquarters remarked,

"...since the Country became independent in 1964, and since the council was enacted in 1998, there is no single public service worth pointing at that has been delivered in our community by both the National Government before 1998, and by the Council from 1998. There is no supply of safe and portable water, there is no health facility, there is no school, there is no market and the roads are not maintained to allow ease of mobility. For us to access health services we have to travel 45 kilometres to the nearest health facility. The nearest primary school is 25 kilometres, at Magomero Trading centre".



4.3.14 Needs of community effectively addressed by service delivery

On the question of whether the service delivered by the Council was perceived to be effective in addressing the needs of communities, it was observed from the focus group interviews with the Chiefs, the CBOs, the business community and a questionnaire survey from NGOs that the public services delivered were less effective in addressing the needs of communities. It was expressed by some respondents that most often the Council did not implement and deliver what the communities wanted as contained in the VAPs, and consolidated in the District Development Plans (DDPs). Ideally, this situation should not have been the case, because the services the Council were obligated to deliver emanated from the DDP, which was a consolidation of VAPs. VAPs were prepared at a Group Village Head level, and these outlined the needs and aspirations of the communities according to their priorities. The respondents expressed concern that at times, communities received very different projects from what they put as priorities in the VAPs. Chief Chitera gave an example during focus group interview with Traditional Leaders held at Senior Chief Mpama's headquarters, and she said,

“...my community had requested from the Council for a construction of a clinic in our area in March, 2008 but what eventually came were two graded roads and not the clinic that the community actually wanted. Much as the roads eased mobility challenges but they were not effective in addressing the community’s need for health services provision”.

A clarification sought from the Council’s Director of Finance had him to reveal this, as quoted,

... “indeed at times what gets implemented in communities is different from what was planned in the Village Action Plans and consolidated in the District Development Plan primarily because of budgetary provision constraints. Most planned infrastructural development projects are tied to donor funding pledges. Sometimes what the donors pledge in the budgets is never fulfilled hence the Council’s failure to implement some planned projects”.



4.4 Conclusion

According to the findings in the study, a number of critical elements had a direct bearing on the Council’s ability to positively impact on service delivery. Communities were able to access council officials to seek clarifications on Council functioning. However, public services delivered by the Council were less accessible especially by poor communities. Consultation mechanisms for public service users to express their needs were clearly defined, though less effective. The structures instituted by the Council to facilitate and enhance the consultation, such as, the ADCs, VDCs, and constituency offices for the ward councillors and the MPs were inactive, and not known by communities. The quality of the public services delivered by the Council was average. Examples included delays in processing operational transactions by the Council, cases of poor workmanship on projects and high incidences of abandoned projects manifested. The Council was more effective in areas concerning general administration and markets where revenue was

generated, but was ineffective in projects implementation. The inability of the Council to generate adequate financial resources, lack of equipment, and its overreliance on donors to fund developmental projects, contributed to the Council's ineffectiveness in development projects implementation. Public services delivered by the Council were not adequately addressing the needs and priorities of communities, and the public services delivered were viewed as not helpful to reduce poverty. Public services were confined to areas around the Council headquarters and trading centres, away from poor communities in remote areas. The next chapter will thus summarise the main findings and place them in the wider context of the discourse of public service delivery by the Council.



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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The objective of this Chapter is to synthesise the main findings of the research. It highlights the major points of the research as discussed in the preceding chapters. In addition, it provides possible areas for further research and recommendations for improving public service delivery in Chiradzulu District Council. In the final analysis, the Chapter places public service delivery in the broader context to properly interpret the meaning of the results of the study.

5.2 Conclusion



The study dealt with an analysis of the impact of Chiradzulu District Council on service delivery for a period of 12 years from 1998 to 2010. To investigate the extent of the impact, an empirical research was conducted in order to collect the opinions and feelings of the stakeholders and public service users concerning the performance of the institution. This was conducted by means of a questionnaire, which was submitted to politicians as well as Sector Heads of Departments of the Council, and focus group interviews with the Traditional Chiefs, the representatives of the business community, representatives of the NGOs, and representatives of the CBOs. The objective of this chapter, therefore, is to synthesize the main findings of the research. It highlights the major points of the study as discussed in the preceding chapters. In addition, it provides recommendations and possible areas for further research for improving the impact on service delivery by the Council.

Whilst reflecting on the objectives of the study, the research sought to analyse the impact of Chiradzulu District Council on service delivery. Key performance indicators that impinged upon public service delivery were thus assessed. It became very clear

that community understanding of Council roles; community participation; effective communication; accessibility; consultation and complaints redress mechanisms; service quality; effectiveness; and public services that addressed the needs of communities and aimed at poverty reduction were all very critical elements when assessing and analysing the impact of an institution on public service delivery. The study's first objective of analysing the impact of the Council on service delivery was therefore successfully achieved. The respondents proffered a number of views and perceptions about the performance of the Council. The study also suggested possible interventions so that the delivery of public services could be addressed more effectively, and enable the Council to render its services in a more efficient and effective manner. For Chiradzulu District Council, it is clear from the findings that the hypothesis postulated in the study was empirically tested and confirmed, *the establishment of District Councils had a potential to positively impact on service delivery in Malawi.*

Chapter One of this research highlighted the introduction and overview, which drew the attention of the reader to the concept of the study under review. It included the statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, the hypothesis and the significance of the research. In addition, in this chapter there was a presentation of the delimitation of the study and finally the ethical considerations in relation to the study.

Chapter Two provided the conceptual and theoretical framework. The literature review entailed espousing the concepts and theoretical frameworks in order to prove beyond reasonable doubt the arguments advanced in the area under focus. Organization theory underpinned the study, which postulated that organizations could not act as islands, but relied on investors, consumers, customers, suppliers and other external constituencies' dependence. Scholarly proponents for the theory informed that organizations had to examine themselves and the environment they operated in, and then adjust their strategies in order to maintain a state of equilibrium. Moreover, it was further stressed that no matter how successful an organization was, if there was no cooperation with people from within and outside the organization; the organization's survival would be threatened. This literature review provided diverse scholarly writings about the multi-

dimensional perspective of local government and public service delivery. It had espoused that councils (local governments) were the spheres of government closest to the people and better placed to provide effective and efficient public service delivery.

Chapter Three elaborated on the research design and methodology that were followed during the interaction with the participants. This was a discussion on how the process of data collection was conducted. The instruments used in the study were self-administered questionnaires with both open- and closed-ended questions and focus group interviews. The study respondents were notified in advance, either in writing or by telephone, to seek their permission to participate in the study. They were informed in detail, about what was expected of them in order to get the right feedback. In brief, this chapter provided an account of the practical details of the whole desk and field process for the study.

Chapter Four, hitherto, provided the analysis of the data that were collected and the findings thereof. It presented meanings and interpretations of the data collected. The findings revealed varied perceptions of respondents on indicator areas that were critical and directly impinged upon the Council's influencing public service delivery. These included:

- Understanding of Council functioning by communities, which was in existence, but not adequate to those communities in the rural areas;
- Communication from the Council on planning meetings, which at times reached the concerned stakeholders very late;
- Consultation mechanisms, which were less effective, inadequate access by communities to Council officials as well as poor access by poor communities to public services; and
- Ineffectiveness of the Council in development projects implementation due to inadequate financial resources.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the critical issues raised in the study, the following recommendations are thus drawn and presented:

- a) On one hand, awareness of the roles of a service provider by service users is very important in the process of public service delivery. The Council needs to take full responsibility of informing the communities especially those in remote areas about its roles and functioning. The initiatives presently undertaken by the National Decentralization Secretariat should be there to supplement the Council's efforts and not the other way round, as is presently the case. The Council should develop local strategies, such as; newsletters and bulletins in the vernacular, as well as hold regular community briefing sessions, specifically targeting those communities in the rural areas, where the initiatives by the National Decentralization Secretariat are not reaching out. On the other hand, effective and timely communication to stakeholders about planning meetings forms the basis for effective and meaningful engagement of the stakeholders in deliberations. Much as the District Council communicates to the stakeholders about planning meetings, the mode of communication it, uses (letters) is found less preferred. The Council therefore, needs to make full use of the other modes of communication at its disposal like loud hailing, and telephone calls in addition to the use of letters when inviting stakeholders to planning meetings. The Council should also consider making use of the Traditional Leaders to help in this process. Traditional Leaders have local networks of reaching out to people faster and effectively,

- b) Consultation is very important in every public service delivery process. Stakeholders and service users co-operate when there is some level of consultation, because they consider themselves part of the decisions, and wherever there are challenges they even assist in identifying solutions. The

Council should consider reorienting the consultation mechanisms that are in place, such as, the ADCs and the VDCs by restructuring them, training the members, and building their capacity to make them more active and effective in facilitating consultations among the various Council structures,

- c) The whole essence of public administration is to provide efficient and effective services that are easily accessible by service users. It therefore becomes a worrying situation if public services are not easily accessible by communities or if the officials entrusted with the task of providing the services are not accessible. The District Council needs to increase its presence to communities by holding regular public interactive meetings with them. Procedures and protocols that are at the Council secretariat for communities to follow, for example, booking of appointments, whenever they want to meet officials needs to be reviewed. A policy also needs to be put in place by the Council for mandatory availability of MPs and Ward Councillors at specific times in their constituencies. Effective and full use of the constituency offices by these officials should be made as a rule and enforced.
- d) Efficiency of any organization is more determined by the level of resources available at its disposal. Public institutions are not profit making in nature. To sustain the effective and efficient provision of public services, they require being self-sufficient in resources (finances, personnel and equipment). Apart from relying on revenue from its traditional local sources of revenue (markets and government grants) to finance its operations, the Council needs to explore other service delivery models like the PPP and shared service delivery model pronounced by Kanyane (2010:90). Through collaborating with private organizations, the Council potentially could continue to provide services at a lower cost and with much innovation. However, when deciding on the adoption of this model, the Council needs to conduct a complete calculation of the cost of the services, thus to be provided under this arrangement. There must be a net benefit derived from the involvement with the private party in the delivery of the

services. Another model that the Council should consider exploring is the shared service delivery model where the Council can collaborate with other public bodies in the provision of shared public services with a view to sharing technical expertise, equipment and material resources to avoid duplication and excessive expenditure. In addition to exploring mechanisms to enhance financial resources availability, the Council should also consider putting in place good accounting measures and controls to ensure optimal use of the available generated financial resources. The central government should also consider increasing allocation of funds from the nationally collected revenue to the District Council especially funds for Development projects to improve timely implementation and delivery of projects to the people.

5.4 Area for further research

This study did not attempt to investigate in detail the effects of the poor relationship between communities and their council representatives, that is, MPs and Ward Councillors on service delivery. These officials work on behalf and for the interests of communities and are crucial in the Council's functioning through decision-making and public services delivery processes. It is thus proposed that in future, this area (the relationship between communities and their elected Council representatives and its effects on service delivery) be thoroughly explored.

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APPENDIX 1 A

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

The interview schedule is intended for the Non-Governmental Organizations, the business fraternity, Community Based Organizations, Traditional Leaders, District Council Management Staff and the Politicians for research on the topic: "An analysis of Chiradzulu District Council's impact on Service Delivery from 1998 to 2010."

Introduction

My name is Bennet Francis Nkasala. I am a student in the Masters of Public Administration Programme at the University of Fort Hare, Bisho Campus. As part of the curriculum of the programme, I am required to complete and submit a mini-dissertation on the topic of choice. The interviews I conduct form part of my academic work and have no material relationship with my current employment in Chiradzulu District Council. The primary focus of my research thesis is the analysis of the selected district councils' impact on service delivery in Malawi.

Questions

1. Do communities understand the roles of the District Council? Please tick the appropriate response.

Yes	
No	
Don't know	

2. What is the participative role of the communities in the functioning of the Council?

Please tick the appropriate response.

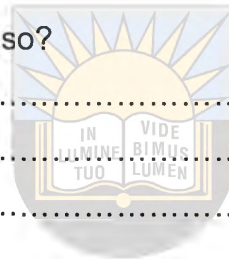
Consultation	
Negotiation	
Engagement	
Information	
Campaigns	
Other (please specify)	

Please expatiate why you say so?

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3. How are the Council stakeholders informed of the Council's Planning Meetings?

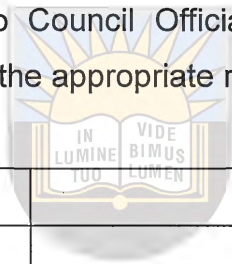
Please tick the appropriate response.

Radio slots	
Newspaper	
Pamphlets/ Flyers	
Loud hailing	
Religious gatherings	
By Ward Councillors	

4. At what juncture are information / documents on what would be discussed at the meeting made available to the stakeholders? Please tick the appropriate response.

Before the meeting takes place	
After the meeting takes place	
During the proceedings of the meetings	
No document is made available	

5. Do communities have access to Council Officials to seek clarifications on the Council's functioning? Please tick the appropriate response.



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Yes	
No	
Don't know	

If not, why?

.....

.....

.....

6. Does the Council have clearly defined consultation mechanisms for public service users about their needs? Please tick the appropriate response.

Yes	
No	
Don't know	

7. How effective is this consultation mechanism? Please tick appropriate response.

Completely ineffective	
Somewhat ineffective	
Somewhat effective	
Completely effective	
Don't know	

If ineffective or somewhat ineffective, explain briefly, your reasons thereof.

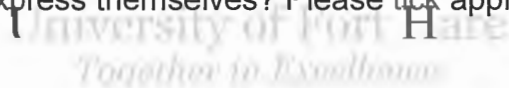
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8. Does your organization have clearly defined complaints and redress mechanisms for public service users to express themselves? Please tick appropriate response.



Yes	
No	
Don't know	

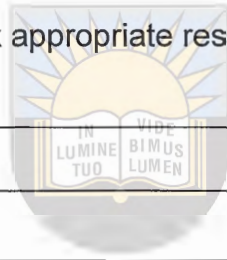
9. If yes, to Question 8 above, how effective is this complaint mechanism? Please tick appropriate response.

Completely ineffective	
Somewhat ineffective	
Somewhat effective	
Completely effective	

10. The public service delivered by the Council is perceived to be of high quality by users of the service. Please tick appropriate response.

Completely disagree	
Somewhat disagree	
Somewhat agree	
Completely agree	
Don't know	

11. The public service delivered by the Council is perceived to be effective given the budget funding that it receives. Tick appropriate response.



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Completely disagree	
Somewhat disagree	
Somewhat agree	
Completely agree	
Don't know	

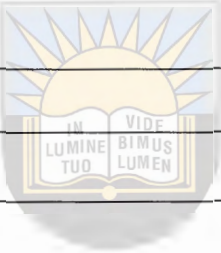
12. The public service delivered by the Council is perceived to be accessible to the poor members of the community. Tick appropriate response.

Completely disagree	
Somewhat disagree	
Somewhat agree	
Completely agree	
Don't know	

13. The public service delivered by the Council is perceived to be helpful to reduce poverty. Tick appropriate response.

Completely disagree	
Somewhat disagree	
Somewhat agree	
Completely agree	
Don't know	

14. The public service delivered by the Council is perceived to be effective in addressing the needs of the communities. Tick appropriate response.

Completely disagree	 University of Fort Hare University of Excellence
Somewhat disagree	
Somewhat agree	
Completely agree	
Don't know	

15. What impact has been registered by the council on service delivery for the past 10 years? Please explain.

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APPENDIX 1 B

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do you think are the roles of the Council? Please explain.
2. How are the Communities involved in the functioning of the Council? Is the involvement adequate? Please explain.
3. If the Communities' involvement in the functioning of the Council is not adequate, how could the participation be enhanced? Please explain.
4. Are you satisfied with the way the Council planning meetings notices are communicated to the Stakeholders? Please explain.
5. If not satisfied, how do you think the Council planning meetings notices to the Stakeholders should be handled to improve the situation? Please explain.
6. When do you think information/documents on what would be discussed at the Council meeting should be made available to the stakeholders? Please explain why?
7. How easy has it been for communities to access Council officials to seek clarification on issues of the Council's functioning and service delivery? Please explain.
8. If access by the communities to the Council officials has not been easy, how can this can be improved?
9. What consultation mechanisms are you aware of that the Council has in place for Public service users about their needs? Please also explain how these consultations can be made more effective.
10. What mechanisms do the Council have that you are aware about of handling complaints and redress from Public service users? Please also explain how the mechanisms can be made more effective.
11. How accessible is the Council's public service by poor communities? In addition, how effective is the service in addressing the needs of the communities to reduce poverty? Please explain.

12. How can you describe the quality and effectiveness of public service offered by the council and why do you say so?
13. In your opinion, generally comment how service delivery could be improved in the Council?

Closing

Thank you very much for your valuable time and views given in this discussion. I would also like to confirm that the views and information would be treated with the strictest confidentiality.



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APPENDIX 2

REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY

C/O Private Bag 1253
Blantyre
Malawi

22nd November 2010

Dear Sir / Madam



REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY

The above subject matter refers.

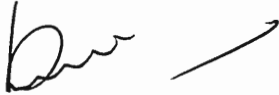
Further to our telephone conversation of 19th November 2010, I would like to confirm my request for your participation in a research study that I am doing, by you providing information through completing a questionnaire that I will bring to you soon. I have attached a copy of the introductory letter from the University of Fort Hare, which I referred to in the said conversation, for your reference regarding my request.

My study is about "Analysing the impact of Chiradzulu District Council on service delivery from 1998 to 2008". The reason why I have identified you to participate and contribute to this study is the influence you have and the roles you play in the functioning of the Council. I am very willing to explain and clarify any issues you may want to know, on the day I will hand in the questionnaire to you.

As suggested by you, I will call you in advance to confirm your availability before coming to your place. My contact phone numbers are 0999448832 or 0888663139, and my e-mail address is bnkasala@yahoo.com.

Thank you in advance for participating in this study.

Yours faithfully



B.F. Nkasala



University of Fort Hare
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APPENDIX 3

REQUEST TO HELP ORGANISING FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

C/O Private Bag 1253
Blantyre
Malawi

22nd November 2010



Dear Sir / Madam

REQUEST TO HELP ORGANISING FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

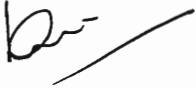
The above subject matter refers.

Further to our telephone conversation of 19th November 2010, I would like to confirm my request for you to help in organizing for focus group discussions. I have attached a copy of the introductory letter from the University of Fort Hare, which I referred to in the said conversation, for your reference regarding my request.

My study is about "Analysing the impact of Chiradzulu District Council on service delivery from 1998 to 2008", and I would like to have a focus group interview with ten Traditional Chiefs, ten representatives of Community Based Organizations (CBOs), ten representatives of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and ten representatives of the Business Community. Please help to ensure that the groups are gender balanced and should come from all corners of the district. Preferable venues are the Chiefs headquarters and the time will be from 2 p.m. and the interviews will take a maximum of 2 and half hours.

I will meet their transport costs, provide refreshments and will meet other related expenses that you will incur in the course of organizing this event. In case you need further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me on phone numbers 0999448832 or 0888663139 or e-mail bnkasala@yahoo.com.

Yours faithfully



B.F. Nkasala



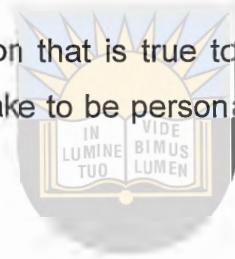
University of Fort Hare
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APPENDIX 4

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY

I give consent to fully participate in the research study on an analysis of Chiradzulu District Council's impact on service delivery by completing a questionnaire provided / attending focus group interviews (please tick appropriate participation).

I commit myself to provide information that is true to the best of my knowledge, and without prejudice and ill will. I undertake to be personally liable to information that shall be deemed false.



University of Fort Hare
United in the Name of the Lord

Signed:

Witnessed:

Date:

APPENDIX 5

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Date 11th October 2010

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST TO PROVIDE INFORMATION

I write to request you to provide information to Mr Bennet Francis Nkasala, a student at the University of Fort Hare in the Faculty of Management and Commerce, School of Public Management and Development. He is currently studying for a Master's Degree in Public Administration. He is researching on Chiradzulu District Council and its impact on service delivery.

University of Fort Hare

The findings of his study will be used for academic purposes and your honest responses will greatly assist and will be treated confidentially. He has also sworn an affidavit to confirm the anonymity and confidentiality of the information providers.

I look forward to your being of assistance.

Yours faithfully

Prof. E. Ijeoma, PhD

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

APPENDIX 6

EDITOR'S CONFIRMATION LETTER

**SOLI DEO GLORIA
EDITOR'S CONFIRMATION LETTER
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

I hereby state that I have edited the document:

**AN ANALYSIS OF CHIRADZULU DISTRICT COUNCIL'S IMPACT ON SERVICE
DELIVERY FROM 1998 TO 2010**

BY

BENNET FRANCIS NKASALA

**MINI-DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
IN THE FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND COMMERCE, SCHOOL OF PUBLIC
MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION**

UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR M. H. KANYANE

COMPLETED: MAY 2011

Disclaimer

At time of submission to student, language editing and technical care was attended to as requested by student and supervisor. Any corrections and technical care required after submission is the sole responsibility of the student.

Kind Regards

Hani Sammons

D.Litt.et Phil (University of Johannesburg)

SOLI DEO GLORIA

Language Editing

Cell: 073 778 1801

Email: sdgproofed@gmail.com

DATE: 27 May 2011